

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER

Melanerpes erythrocephalus



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Physical characteristics

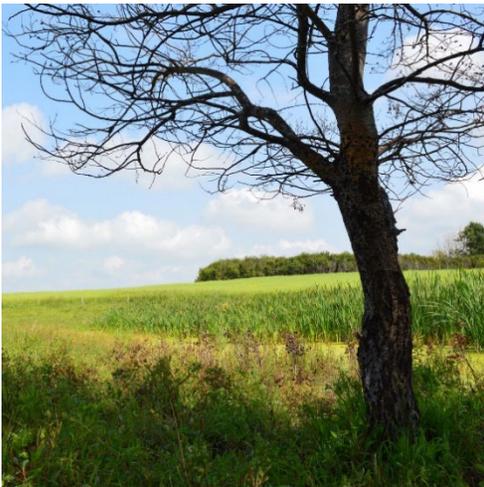


As its name suggests, the red-headed woodpecker has a red head, as well as a red neck, throat, and upper breast. The rest of its body is white on the underside and black on the dorsal side. Males and females have identical plumage, making them difficult to differentiate.

Diet



Highly opportunistic omnivores, red-headed woodpeckers feed mainly on seeds, nuts, berries and other fruits. It also feeds on insects and other invertebrates, as well as on eggs and nestlings of other birds. It sometimes feeds on small rodents.



Habitat



This species can be found in a variety of treed habitats, including deciduous woodlands, open woodlots, agricultural areas or grasslands with trees, and wetlands. It needs dead or dying trees, like snags, for nesting, and an open canopy.

Periods of vulnerability



- In general, the nesting period extends from mid-May to end of August.
- In Quebec, this species is rarely seen during the winter.

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Threats



- Loss of woodland habitat, especially due to the removal of standing dead trees. Wood harvesting also reduces the quantity of mature trees.
- Competition with other species, notably starlings, for nesting sites.
- Further research is needed to better understand the threats that affect this species.

Sustainable practices



- Maintain mature deciduous woodlands and windbreaks of at least 3 ha in size (minimal territory needed for nesting).
- Maintain a high density of dead or dying trees in woodlands and on woodland edges.
- Reduce the use of pesticides, particularly insecticides and herbicides, near the species' habitat to increase quantity of prey.

- As of 2023, **endangered** species listed on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*
- Recovery strategy: www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/recovery-strategies/red-headed-woodpecker-2021.html

Sources

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