# Red-headed Woodpecker

*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*



Robert Taylor

The Red-headed Woodpecker is a federally and provincially Threatened woodpecker that is easily recognized due to its striking red head and neck, which dramatically contrast with its black and white body.

Once abundant in the 19th century, Red-headed Woodpecker populations have declined by upwards of 60% in the past 50 years. The limited availability of dead trees and snags in open-forest habitats are the biggest factors limiting Red-headed Woodpeckers. Management programs that create and maintain snags and dead branches may help this species by providing valuable habitat.

Habitat          Diet          Federally Threatened

**Red-headed Woodpecker Range Map**



* Range map based on potential range.

## Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)

- Keep large trees on land
- Where safe, leave dead branches and trees - Save that Snag!
- Remove invasive shrubs and use controlled burns and timber thinning in oak woodlands
- Maintain preferred open woodlands through grazing and other means
- Reduce pesticide use
- Plant and/or maintain shelterbelts

Co-benefiting Species: The BMPs listed for this species may also benefit Golden-winged Warblers and Olive-sided Flycatchers.

## Red-headed Woodpecker

### Description

An adult Red-headed Woodpecker (20 cm long) is easily recognized by its vivid red head and neck, contrasting white underbody, and black back. Immature Red-headed Woodpeckers have grey-brown heads and white wings, with rows of black spots near the trailing edge.

### Habitat

The Red-headed Woodpecker prefers to nest in open woodlands and woodland edges, such as oak savannahs or riparian forests. They are sometimes found in burned areas, recent clearings, and shelterbelts. These habitats tend to contain higher densities of dead or partially dead trees, which are vital habitat for nests and perching.

### Threats

Habitat loss due to forestry, agriculture, and general removal of the dead trees in which they nest, is considered to be a strong cause of the Red-headed Woodpecker population decline, particularly in breeding grounds like Manitoba. Further, the use of pesticides in this region may limit the availability of required insects during the breeding season. In addition to habitat loss and a decrease in food availability, some areas see a high number of birds killed by vehicle collisions.

### Outlook

Continuing population declines are expected due to ongoing loss and degradation of habitat. As Manitoba is on the northern limit of Red-headed Woodpecker range, changes in climate could allow an influx of southern populations, provided habitat is available.

### Producer Benefits

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) is a voluntary, confidential, self-assessment process, enabling farm managers to develop an action plan to address agri-environmental assets and risks in their operation. Completion of an EFP may qualify you for funding to implement BMPs on your land. For more information or to register, contact your local Manitoba Agriculture office.

Beyond the species benefits, BMPs can help your operation through:

- Access to on-farm programs and incentives
- Meet emerging market demands for sustainable sourcing
- Increased agricultural sustainability
- Greater resilience to events such as insect outbreaks, floods and droughts
- Better pest control and management
- Improved water quality, quantity and erosion control
- Improved pasture and forage

For more information regarding beneficial management practices on your land, please contact Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation or the organizations listed below.

### FUN FACT

1 of only 4 North American Woodpeckers known to store food. Grasshoppers and other bugs are often stored alive, wedged so tightly into crevices that they cannot escape.

**Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation**
www.mhhc.mb.ca

**Conservation Data Centre**
www.manitoba.ca/sd/cdc

**Manitoba Agriculture**
www.manitoba.ca/agriculture

MANITOBA HABITAT HERITAGE CORPORATION

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