

## Red-headed Woodpecker

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

the striking &  
aggressive

# red-headed Woodpecker



An aggressive species, the Red-headed Woodpecker has often been sighted attacking other birds to defend what it considers its territory. This species is easily identified by the male's brilliant, solid red head. While other species may have a patch or spot of red on the head, the Red-headed Woodpecker is the only woodpecker species with this feature. Another interesting species fact is that the Red-headed Woodpecker has been known to cache food during the winter months and cover caches with bark and other wood to hide it from other birds.

### Interesting Facts:

**Family:** Picidae

**Scientific Name:** *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

**Location:** The Red-headed Woodpecker can be found on farmlands, open woodlands, suburbs, and groves/orchards throughout the eastern half of the United States from Canada to the Gulf states.

**Migration:** A majority of this species will stay in the same location throughout its lifetime. However, some of the northern inhabitants may move south for a short period of time during the winter season.

**Nesting:** This species nests in holes found in dead trees, but also has been known to nest in [birdhouses](#). The male and the female both participate in nest building. A typical Red-headed Woodpecker lays a clutch of 4-7 white eggs.

<b>Diet:</b>	This species has a varied diet and has been referred to as the most omnivorous woodpecker. It feeds on nuts like acorns and beechnuts, <a href="#">seeds</a> , fruit, berries, bird eggs, nestlings, and mice. Also, the Red-headed Woodpecker catches insects in midair, making for an acrobatic mealtime event.
<b>Size and Color:</b>	The Red-headed Woodpecker is a medium-sized woodpecker ranging in size from 7"-9". The male and female feature similar markings. The most obvious and striking feature of this species is the brilliant red head. This species also features black wings with large white secondary panels and a white underside and tail. The bill is a blue-gray. Immature Red-headed Woodpeckers feature a pattern similar to the adult; however, they have a brown-beige head and back. Juvenile birds usually molt into their adult plumage during the late fall or early winter.
<b>Song:</b>	A loud "kwirr."
<b>Attracting:</b>	The Red-headed Woodpecker can sometimes be seen feeding from feeders in its range. To attract this species, place <a href="#">suet cakes</a> in <a href="#">suet feeders</a> and locate the feeders at least 5 feet from the ground and close to a tree trunk. Most birds that enjoy suet cling to tree trunks in search of insects.