

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER

Melanerpes erythrocephalus

ID TIPS Medium-sized woodpecker with a large red head, black back, white belly, and white wing patches. Sexes look alike. Juveniles have a brown head, dingy belly, and blackish brown back.

SONG Red-headed Woodpeckers give all kinds of chirps, cackles, and other raucous calls. Their most common call is a shrill, hoarse “tchur.”

HABITAT Open forests with clear understories, favoring areas with dead or dying trees. Look for these birds in scattered, open woodlots in agricultural areas, dead timber in swamps, pine savannas, or mixed oak/pine forests.

NEST Cavities in dead trees or dead parts of live trees, including pines, maples, and oaks, in fields or open forests with little vegetation on the ground. They often use snags that have lost most of their bark, creating a smooth surface that may deter snakes.

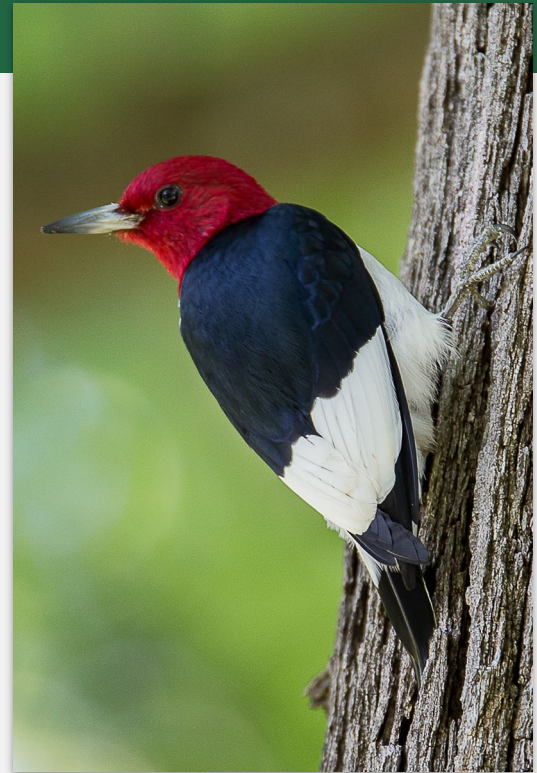
FOOD Insects, fruit, and seeds. Cache food in crevices in wood, under bark, and even roof shingles.

Forage on the ground and up to 30 feet in the forest canopy during the summer, but higher in the canopy during the winter.

ACTIVITIES & STRATEGIES

Maintain open pine stands with prescribed fire and selective thinning.

Retain snags, in groups if possible. Wherever they breed, dead (or partially dead) trees for nest cavities are an important part of their habitat.



CONSERVATION STATUS

Declining

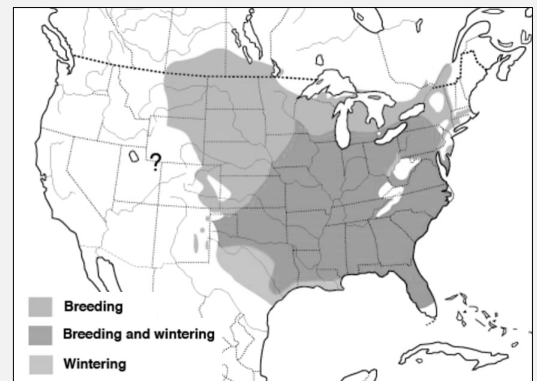
NC Species of Greatest Conservation Need

FOREST USE AT A GLANCE

Open woodlands with standing dead trees

SPECIES RANGE

Year-round residents in NC.



DID YOU KNOW?

One of four North American woodpeckers known to cache food, these birds regularly store grasshoppers alive, wedging them into crevices to prevent escape.