

# Red-headed Woodpecker

*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*



Status: **Special Concern**

## Threats:

- ◆ Habitat loss: removal of dead and dying trees, succession to closed-canopy forests
- ◆ Road mortality
- ◆ Competition with other species, especially European starlings, for available nest sites



Photo: USFWS

## Description:

- ◆ Medium-size bird 21-24 cm long; females slightly smaller than males
- ◆ Adults: bright red head, neck and upper chest; black back, wings and tail; white underparts, wing patches and rump
- ◆ Juveniles: less vibrantly coloured with a brown head
- ◆ Call is two loud, high pitched notes separated by a pause; sounds like 'queer-queeah'

## Biology:

- ◆ Omnivorous; feeds on insects, nuts, eggs, seeds, berries and fruit
- ◆ One of the few woodpecker species that collects and stores food by hiding it in cracks in wood and under bark
- ◆ Nests by creating a cavity in a dead deciduous tree; will also use living trees, hollow posts and utility poles
- ◆ Lays 4-7 eggs between May and July
- ◆ Will aggressively defend its territory by attacking other birds, destroying their nests and removing their eggs

## Habitat:

- ◆ Prefers woodland edges, treed urban areas, and open deciduous forests, such as oak savannah with large mature trees; also found in riparian forests
- ◆ Found in areas with a high density of dead trees or trees with large dead branches
- ◆ Overwinters in south-western Texas

Species at Risk  
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

# Red-headed Woodpecker

*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

## STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

Status: **Special Concern**

### Red-headed Woodpecker on Your Property? Here's What You Can Do:

- ◆ **Don't disturb nests, young or adults.** Be respectful and observe from a distance.
- ◆ **Support sustainable forestry practices when you purchase wood products.** Look for the FSC logo.
- ◆ **Provide habitat.** If it is safe to do so, leave large dead or dying trees standing on your property or avoid removing dead limbs from live trees. This will provide food and shelter for a range of species from woodpeckers to owls and flying squirrels.
- ◆ **See a Red-headed Woodpecker?** Submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at [nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species\\_report.cfm](http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species_report.cfm). Photographs with specific locations or mapping coordinates are always helpful.
- ◆ **Contact the Ministry of Natural Resources.** If you find a Red-headed Woodpecker or a nest on your property, you may be eligible for stewardship programs that support the protection and recovery of species at risk and their habitats. Contact the MNR for more information.
- ◆ **Learn More.** Check out the Species at Risk section on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at [www.mnr.gov.on.ca](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca).

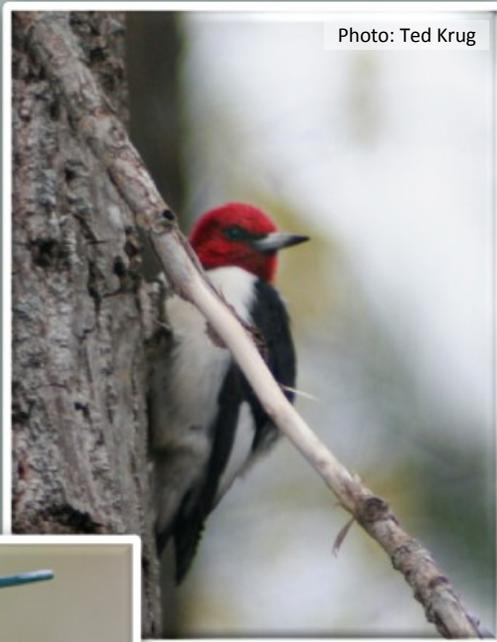


Photo: Ted Krug



Photo: Ted Krug

### Ontario's Endangered Species Act

Ontario's *Endangered Species Act, 2007* came into force on June 30, 2008, making Ontario a North American leader in the protection of species at risk and their habitats.

Compared to Ontario's previous Act, written in 1971, the new ESA 2007 provides:

- ◆ Science-based assessment of species' status
- ◆ Automatic protection of a species and its habitat once it's listed as endangered or threatened
- ◆ Broader protection for species at risk and their habitats
- ◆ Greater support for volunteer stewardship efforts of private landowners, resource users, and conservation organizations
- ◆ A commitment to recovery of species through recovery planning
- ◆ Greater accountability, including government reporting requirements

Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species, most of which have stable populations.

However, more than 180 species in Ontario, 34 of which are found in Parry Sound-Muskoka, are currently considered "at risk" because of threats like:

- ◆ Habitat loss
- ◆ Global changes in insect populations
- ◆ Pollution
- ◆ Invasive species
- ◆ Climate change
- ◆ Over-harvesting
- ◆ Road mortality



Learn more about Species at Risk on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at [www.mnr.gov.on.ca](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca).