

# red-bellied woodpecker

*Melanerpes carolinus*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Aves  
Order: Piciformes  
Family: Picidae

## ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native



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adult male at nesting site

## ILLINOIS RANGE



## FEATURES

The red-bellied woodpecker averages nine to 10 and one-half inches in length. Its back and wing feathers have a series of black and white stripes. There is a white-feathered, rump patch. The belly has buff-colored feathers. A red-feathered patch covers the area from the bill to the base of the neck in the male but only is present on the back of the head in the female. The immature has brown head feathers, but its other coloring is similar to that of the adult.

## BEHAVIORS

The red-bellied woodpecker is a common, permanent resident statewide in Illinois. Nesting takes place from April through June. The nest may be placed in a cavity in a dead tree, usually in a hollow limb, a live tree, a wooden building, a nest box or a wooden pole. The male does most of the nest excavation, placing the cavity anywhere from five to 70 feet above the ground. Three to five white eggs are laid by the female. Both sexes incubate over a 14-day period. One brood is raised per year. This bird may be found in upland and bottomland deciduous forests, coniferous forests, residential areas and parks. It makes “kwirr,” “churr,” “chaw,” and “chiv” sounds. The red-bellied woodpecker eats acorns, fruits and insects.

adult male





adult male

**Aquatic Habitats**

bottomland forests

**Woodland Habitats**

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands;  
upland deciduous forests

**Prairie and Edge Habitats**

none