

# red-headed woodpecker

## *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

### FEATURES

The red-headed woodpecker averages eight and one-half to nine and one-half inches in length. Its head feathers are entirely red. The back, wing and tail feathers are black. A white-feathered, rump patch is present as is a rectangular, white patch on each wing. The immature red-headed woodpecker has brown head feathers and is generally brown where the adults are black.

### BEHAVIORS

The red-headed woodpecker is a common migrant, summer resident and winter resident statewide in Illinois. Spring migration begins in February. Nesting occurs from May through July. The nest is placed in a hole in a live or dead tree or telephone pole or may be placed in a nest box, if one is available. The nest may be located from eight to 80 feet above the ground. Both the male and female excavate the nest. Three to six round, white eggs are laid by the female. The male and female take turns incubating the eggs for the 14-day incubation period. One brood is raised per year. Fall migration begins in August and usually follows waterways. This bird lives in woodland edges, open areas within deciduous and coniferous woodlands and open areas with scattered trees and telephone poles. It makes a “queer” or “queerah” sound. The red-headed woodpecker catches insects while flying, feeding on the ground and boring into trees. In summer it eats mainly insects while in winter it eats acorns and corn.

### TAXONOMY

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

### ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

### ILLINOIS RANGE



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adult

## **Aquatic Habitats**

bottomland forests

## **Woodland Habitats**

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

## **Prairie and Edge Habitats**

edge