

Woodpeckers of Minnesota

I have pasted a photo of a Red Headed Woodpecker that lives on our Snake River Farm

Not great resolution but I think you will get the picture.

This woodpecker is not common in central Minnesota.

In fact, most people have never seen one.

We have had several families of Red Headed Woodpeckers every summer for years.

The favorite habitat of Red Headed Woodpeckers is dead Elm trees.

Dutch Elm disease killed all of the Elm trees in central Minnesota about 50 years ago.

Since then, Elm trees continue to sprout as seedlings and to grow as young trees.

When they reach between 12 and 20 inches in diameter, the Elms succumb to Dutch Elm Disease.

It is a pity.

Many of you are too young to remember the majestic elm trees that grew everywhere in central and southern Minnesota.

Until they reach 36 to 48 inches in diameter, elms are a normal shaped tree.

When they reach their full size, they have a way of spreading their gigantic limbs in the classic shape of an enormous shade tree.

I have noticed a few Elms getting larger and larger before they die.

I assume that means they are being selected by nature for resistance to the disease.

Perhaps after a few more centuries of natural selection, enormous Elms will populate Minnesota again.

When the Elms die, they continue to stand for ten years or more.

Dead elms seldom fall but rather are slowly dismembered by decay over time.

Most trees of other species fall within a few years after they die.

Birch rot quickly because their water-resistant bark holds moisture in.

That accelerates decay.

The same trait that makes them great for canoes makes them rot quickly.

Oaks tend to rot just below the ground.

Because of that, a dead oak is a real hazard and may drop unexpectedly in a terrific crash.

Elms have a unique way of recycling themselves. In the first year or two after death, the small limbs fall. Then gradually the larger diameter limbs fall.

Finally, after about ten years, the trunk is all that remains. Still standing straight.

The Red Headed Woodpeckers find food and make nests in these decaying upright elms.

If you have dead Elms and can leave them stand safely, do so.

You may attract these beautiful woodpeckers.



Red Headed Woodpecker



Red Bellied Woodpecker

I have also attached photos of a Red Bellied woodpecker, which people sometimes call red headed because it also has a red head. Almost all woodpeckers have some red on their heads.

Here is a photo attached of a Pileated Woodpecker. The Pileated is the size of a crow. I have pasted photos of Hairy and Downy woodpeckers.

The Hairy and Downy have almost identical markings but the Hairy is twice as large as the Downy. There is one other woodpecker on the Farm, the Flicker.

The Flicker has the unique and characteristic undulating flight of a woodpecker, but it spends so much time on the ground that most people may not recognize it as a woodpecker.

We see the Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker only occasionally.

All seven of these woodpeckers' varieties are here in the summer.

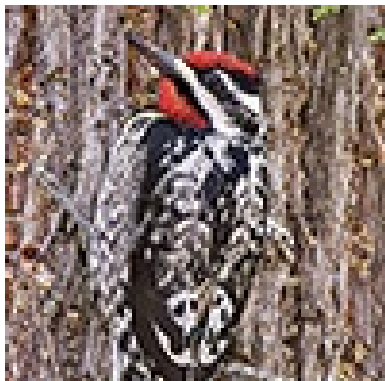
I have seen six varieties visit our bird feeders in a single day, when they are feeding young.

Best regards.

Tom



Pileated Woodpecker resting after hitting a window



Yellow Bellied Sapsucker



Hairy Woodpecker



Downy Woodpecker



Northern Flicker