

First record for Red-bellied Woodpecker

BY GEOFF HOGAN

Sometime during the first week of December 1987 an adult male Red-bellied Woodpecker (Melanerpes carolinus) turned up on the property of Roy Riddlington in St. Catherines, Queen's County. The sighting by Mr. Riddlington and his family in the woods and old orchard trees near the house constituted the first record of this species for the Island. The bird continued to show itself almost daily thereafter, feeding on grains scattered for other birds. The Red-bellied woodpecker is easily recognized by its black and white "zebra back", a red crown and nape of the neck in the male (the female has only the red nape), and a buffy, unspotted breast. The mid-abdomen region may appear reddish although this may not always be apparent. The species is only a bit larger than a Hairy Woodpecker.

The Red-bellied Woodpecker is considered to be a rare Canadian species being found as a breeding bird only in extreme southern Ontario. Sightings elsewhere in the country are unusual. The normal range for the species is from New York to Florida and Texas. Interestingly, the few sightings of the Red-bellied Woodpecker in Nova Scotia over the years have been mostly during the late fall and winter periods and, when they do turn up, they are usually seen at bird feeding stations. The sighting by the Riddlingtons is in keeping with these observations. Mr. Riddlington also noted the woodpecker was not at all intimidated by Blue Jays and, in fact, reacted by driving them away from the feeding area.

For the next issue

This issue of the Island Naturalist was delayed a bit so that the results of the Christmas bird counts could be included. Deadline for the March-April issue will be the February 2 meeting of the society.

Well underway

Naturalists in the western part of Prince Edward Island now have their own club and newsletter. About 50 members make up the Lady's Slipper Naturalists, and four newsletters have been produced so far. President Les Homans said the group meets the third Thursday in each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Eptek Center in Summerside. They are exchanging newsletters with the NHS and one will be available at our meetings. The most recent issue contained reports of meetings, a story on birds in the U.K., sightings, checklists and a variety of other interesting articles. Geoff Hogan (who will be guest speaker at the group's Jan. 21 meeting), Susan Stephenson and Gary Schneider will be working from the NHS end to keep the two groups in touch and hopefully plan some joint outings.



LADY'S SLIPPER
NATURALISTS
DEC-JAN 87-88

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