



Red-cockaded Woodpecker. First State Record. 7 September 2000. Illinois Beach State Park. Lake County. Photo by Dennis Oehmke.



In its search for insects, the Red-headed Woodpecker turned its head 180 degrees to get a better look under the bark. Photo taken 6 October 2000 at Illinois Beach State Park in Lake County by Eric Walters.

above and behind each eye. There was a black mustachial mark, not quite reaching the nape. The back was barred black and white, and the wing coverts were black with many small white spots. The flanks were white streaked with black, and the undersides were white to the extent that we could see. The tail was black, with several outer feathers on either side white. The feet were black. Although we didn't note the legs at the time, later observations by numerous people showed the bird was not banded.

We did not observe any red plumage on the bird, and since then photos have confirmed the absence of a red "cockade" behind the eye, indicating the bird was a female. David B. Johnson spent several hours at the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago examining 52 specimens of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, and concluded the bird was not a juvenile (personal communication.). Others have suggested the contrast between blackish-brown remiges (as revealed in photos) and blackish-brown wing coverts indicated a second-year bird, but the age of the bird can only be considered uncertain.

After lunch and a few phone calls, we returned to the area to try to relocate the bird. In spite of adding several more observers, however, we were unable to find it again. The same applied the next day, when several hopeful people visited the park. The bird was not seen again until 24 August 2001, when Eric Walters spotted it in the south pines section of the park.

Although this area is normally open by special permit only, the nature of this sighting convinced park manager Bob Grosso and biologists Susan Wright and Bill Wengelewski to issue permits to anyone desiring to see the bird. Thanks to this generous decision, a week after we had first spotted the bird, more than 50 birders had added it to their Illinois list. By the end of the year, the park had issued over 400 permits. Several hundred people observed it, including personnel from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and several obtained excellent photographs as well.

Distribution and Status

Despite the name *borealis*, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are endemic to the southeastern United States, breeding from southeastern Oklahoma, southern Arkansas, eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, and southeastern Virginia south locally to eastern Texas, the Gulf coast and southern Florida. Until recently, they were also found in southern Maryland, northern Arkansas, and southern Missouri (AOU 1998). North of this range, the species has been reliably recorded in New Jersey, where a specimen collected at Hoboken prior to 1866 (Leck 1984); in Ohio, where a specimen was collected at Columbus on 15 March