

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*



Folk Name: Bandana, Jam-jack, Chad

Status: Resident

Abundance: Common

Habitat: Mature forest

The Red-bellied Woodpecker is one of the most common birds seen in this region. It surpasses even the Downy Woodpecker as our most widely distributed and common woodpecker. It has black-and-white barring on its back and a white rump and white wing patches that are visible in flight. The males have an orange-red cap from the bill to the nape, while the females have orange red only on the back of the head and nape. Both sexes have a yellowish-orange-red patch on their white belly that gives them their common name. The Red-bellied Woodpecker is a year-round resident in wooded areas throughout the region and is a regular visitor to backyard bird feeders.

Leverett Loomis noted the Red-bellied Woodpecker as a common resident throughout Chester County during the late 1800s. Elmer Brown observed a Red-bellied Woodpecker in Salisbury on January 12, 1924, and, later that year, he included this nest report in a letter to C.S. Brimley at the North Carolina State Museum:

Practically the only places in which we have found the Red-bellied have been in tall low-ground timber. However, on June 22, 1924 Frank found a nest right in the back yard of a large house near Mt. Gilead, Montgomery County. The nest was not more than thirty feet from the house, and was only about fifteen feet from the ground in an elm tree. The old birds were carrying food to young in the hole.

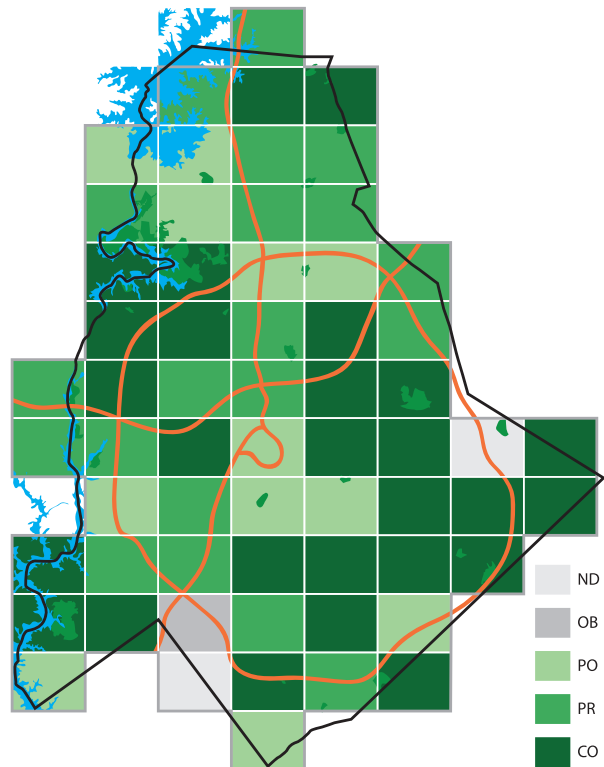


Male Red-bellied Woodpecker. (Will Stuart)



William McIlwaine recorded Red-bellied Woodpeckers in Charlotte on January 15, 1929.

Today, the Red-bellied Woodpecker remains a common resident bird. It makes the lists of both the top 30 birds recorded on Christmas Bird Counts and the top 30 birds recorded on Spring Bird Counts in the Central Carolinas. Nest excavation has been observed as early as 30 January, and nesting can continue well into the summer months. A nest at the Mecklenburg County Conservation Science Office was excavated 20 feet up in a dead black gum tree. The fledglings left the nest on 15 July.



Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas:

Ubiquitous (PR/20, CO/27)