

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

LATE FLEDGING OF RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER IN NEW YORK STATE

Red-bellied Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes carolinus*) have been regular winter visitors to my feeders in Nassau County, Long Island, since at least 1994-95, when I began keeping systematic records for Cornell University's *Project Feeder Watch*. In 2001-02, my interest in the activities of these Red-bellied Woodpeckers increased, and I began keeping more detailed notes throughout the year. In 2001-02, I was just getting started and noted only that I had a male here all winter but that he did not seem to have a mate. From the way I wrote that statement, there had probably been females—and possibly fledglings—present here before that year. Since then I have seen adult Red-bellied Woodpeckers bringing fledglings to my feeders to be fed every summer except that of 2005 (a very hot, dry summer with heavy rains in spring and early summer). The earliest date I have for a first fledgling is 5 July 2007, and the latest is 5 August 2009. The latest date I have ever seen fledglings being fed was 14 August 2009.

During the summer of 2010, both male and female Red-bellied Woodpeckers were present here. When the female appeared alone at the feeders on 12 July, following an absence since 27 June, I assumed that their nest had failed (I usually don't see females during incubation, until they reappear at the feeders with newly fledged young). Consistent with this conclusion, I saw no fledglings throughout July and August. Much to my amazement, however, I saw a male bird feeding at least one fledgling on 12 September (I barely glimpsed what might have been a second fledgling).

According to the species account in *Birds of North America* (Shackelford, C.E., R. E. Brown, & R. N. Conner. 2000. Red-bellied Woodpecker. *Birds of North America*. No. 500) one successful brood is typical in the northern parts of the Red-bellied Woodpecker's range, although in the South they may have two to three broods. The most northerly instances of second broods noted by these authors include single examples in Connecticut (Sullivan, E. 1992. Red-bellied Woodpecker raises two broods in Connecticut. *Conn. Warbler* 12: 24-25) and New York (Crumb, D. W. 1984. Late nesting of a Red-bellied Woodpecker. *Kingbird* 34: 231). In the case of the New York record, nestlings were observed being fed at a nest site in Onondaga County through 30 August, with fledging suspected that day (an earlier successful nesting at the site was strongly suspected to pertain to the same pair). Red-bellied Woodpeckers in New York may attempt a second nest when the first fails, but the latest published fledging date is 1 September (McGowan, J.K. & K. Corwin, Eds. 2008. *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY). A search of 491 Nest Record cards (1954-2009) for Red-bellied Woodpecker in the collection of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology yielded late dates for young in the nest of 15 and 26 August, both from Florida (Jim Lowe, pers. comm.).

My 12 September 2010 observation of a Red-bellied Woodpecker fledgling being fed in Nassau County appears to represent the latest recorded fledging date for this species in New York State, but circumstances suggest that it probably involved a re-nesting rather than a second successful brood.

I would like to thank Jim Lowe of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for going through the nest card records for me.

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