

SEPTEMBER 1- 14, 2021 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES  
By Dick Harlow

**RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER**



1. **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, *Melanerpes carolinus*,  
Male, © Dick Harlow

The Red-bellied Woodpecker, *Melanerpes carolinus*, has been given a peculiar name because of very little to almost a lack of observable red color on the belly. Before this species was named there was already a name for the woodpecker that had a red head. However, the inconsistencies for common names given to some bird species is for another article.

The range of this species is from MA South to Florida and from the North to the Great Lakes, then West to just over the Mississippi River into the Mid-West. Here in Vermont, however, this species was not known until about 10-15 years ago. Now it is and has been a visitor since 2013. It is a regular visitor to our sunflower feeder.

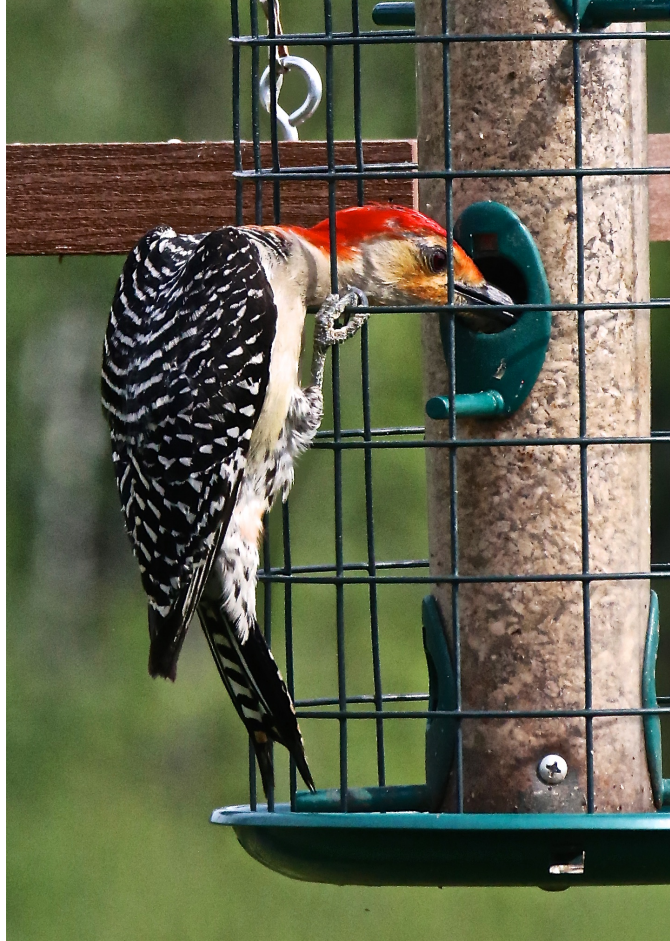
We now see Red-bellied Woodpeckers arrive here in Middlebury in late April or early May to find an acceptable nesting tree and to build a nesting hole and nest. Along with this it will set-up its territory

The Red-bellied Woodpecker is monogamous and stays with its mate throughout the nesting season.

The means by which this species communicates is by drumming with its bill to communicate a threat as well as to maintain pair bonding. Actually, it is not unusual for any woodpecker species to peck or drum on manmade items to make loud noise for simple communication or for attracting the female during mating. This can include house siding, drainpipes, windows, screens, etc.

The primary predators of Red-bellied Woodpeckers are Accipiter Hawks such as the Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, as well as black rat snakes or the house cat.

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2. **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, *Melanerpes carolinus*.  
Male, © Dick Harlow

## **BLACK SWALLOWTAIL**



1. **Black Swallowtail**, *Papilio polyxenes*,  
© Dick Harlow

It should be noted that there are four species of black type swallowtail butterflies in New England. As seen in photo #1 & #2 is the Black Swallowtail Butterfly. Along with this species there is the Giant, Pipevine and Spicebush Swallowtail and the black form of the female Eastern Tiger Swallowtail.

If you notice on photo #2 the yellow orange colored cell spots on the underside of the hindwing and the subapical yellow spot on the forewing separate this species from the rest.

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This is a swallowtail that can be found in meadows, fields, backyards, or any open area from southern Canada in the North to the Rocky Mountains in the West to the northern part of South America.



2. **Black Swallowtail**, *Papilio polyxene*,  
© Dick Harlow

This specie's primary food plant is Wild Carrot, or parsley as well as other plants found in *Umbellifera*. It also is particular about certain types of clovers as nectar sources. Black Swallowtails prefer clover nectar which tends to keep this butterfly closer to the ground level rather than feeding on higher flowering plants. Other black swallowtails prefer other types of flowers that cause them to nectar on plants higher above the ground than this species.

When do we see them here in Vermont? Between late April extending to September and October dependent on the weather such as freezing temperatures.

### OBSERVATIONS

#### MAMMALS

Red Fox

#### REPTILES

Garter Snake

#### BUTTERFLIES

Cabbage White  
Yellow Sulphur  
Monarch  
Viceroy

[All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).](#)

#### PRECIPITATION

**Average September Precipitation for Vermont = 3.62 inches.**

**Total precipitation for first two weeks in September was 17.4 mm or 0.7 inches. This is a **2.92-inch deficit** for the month so far just to reach the average.**

**Overcast Days 1-14: We had 7 days of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies 4 days produced rain. This month definitely added to the draught we are in even though it may not feel like it did.**