

## **IORC EVALUATION FORM**

**Record #:** 2012-039

**Name of bird form:** Red-naped Sapsucker

**Committee member name:** Josh Engel

**Date of review:** 13 July 2017

**Circulation number:** 1st

**Vote:** A-E(p)

**Comments:** [required since this is a potential first state record]

Sapsucker identification is tricky and is compounded by hybridization among three species in the genus. Additionally, non-Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are virtually unknown in the eastern United States, yet there are records of hybrids, both Red-naped x Yellow-bellied and Red-breasted x Yellow-bellied.

That said, I think that Paul's photos are sufficient to identify the bird in question as a pure Red-naped Sapsucker. The red of the throat covers the malar region, obscuring the black, the nape is red, and at least in some photos, the white barring on the back forms two neat vertical lines. I don't see any signs of hybridization with Red-breasted Sapsucker, such as red in the breast, or between Red-naped and Yellow-bellied.

## **IORC EVALUATION FORM**

**Record #:** 2012-039

**Name of bird form:** Red-naped Sapsucker

**Committee member name:** Robert E. Fisher

**Date of review:** 12 July 2017

**Circulation number:** 1st

**Vote:** A-E (OEO)

**Comments:** [required since this is a potential first state record]

A-E (OEO); note that this acronym is for outside expert opinion - perhaps it should be an available option, especially when hybridization is an issue. I do not consider myself competent based on the photos alone to rule out a hybrid...but I'm not an expert. From the other perspective: perhaps IORC should adopt the policy that 1st state records will not be accepted w/o DNA evidence in support, when hybridization or extreme lookalikes are possible.

## **IORC EVALUATION FORM**

**Record #:** 2012-039

**Name of bird form:** Red-naped Sapsucker

**Committee member name:** Matthew Fraker

**Date of review:** 15 July 2017

**Circulation number:** 1st

**Vote:** U-I

**Comments:** [required since this is a potential first state record]

The documentation on this bird is excellent. My biggest concern, especially for a first state record, is being able to 100% rule-out a hybrid. I agree that many things on this bird "look good" for RNSA; but I think it would be difficult to impossible to 100% rule-out a hybrid or even a YBSA variant. The extensiveness of the red in the throat; the back pattern; the retained juvie feathers; none are 100% damning or supportive but all do present subjective doubt in my mind to accept this as a pure RNSA.

## IORC EVALUATION FORM

**Record #:** 2012-039

**Name of bird form:** Red-naped Sapsucker

**Committee member name:** McMullen

**Date of review:** 7-4-17

**Circulation number:** 1st

**Vote:** U-I

**Comments:** [required since this is a potential first state record]

It's a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. I don't see anything that points to a different species.

Hybrid? How can we prove it?

## **IORC EVALUATION FORM**

**Record #:** 2012-039

**Name of bird form:** Red-naped Sapsucker

**Committee member name:** Douglas Stotz

**Date of review:** 10 July 2017

**Circulation number:** 1st

**Vote:** A-E(photo)

**Comments:** [required since this is a potential first state record]

I've wanted to vote against this record from the very start, but it does seem like everything aligns to call it a Red-naped. It has a reasonable amount of red in the nape, the red interrupting the black malar is pretty classic classic Red-naped. The back pattern in photo 5 looks good for Red-naped. The relative lack of yellow on underparts is also consistent with Red-naped. I think the only argument against this being a Red-naped is the location.

## **IORC EVALUATION FORM**

**Record #:** 2012-039

**Name of bird form:** Red-naped Sapsucker

**Committee member name:** Paul Sweet

**Date of review:** 6/30/17

**Circulation number:** 1st

**Vote:** A-E(p)

**Comments:** [required since this is a potential first state record]

Looking over all the literature, I'm voting to accept based on: Extensive red on the nape (not diagnostic, but lacking it would be a problem). A small amount of red visible on the malar and more at the rear of the throat, invading the black. Rather pale yellow on the belly. A back pattern that in one photo looks just fine for Red-naped. I've seen online photos of birds in breeding season in Red-naped areas that seem to have very similar patterns, even getting slightly messy when they're active. I haven't yet seen photos of Yellow-bellied that show the neat pattern visible in the last shot. Finally, outer rects that are all-black with a small white edge on the left side, and with a very small white spot on the right side of the bird. (Those are apparent in other photos that I didn't realize would be useful – I hadn't noticed that mark in the literature at the time. I'd be happy to supply those photos if anyone else would like to see them.)

I do realize that this is a very difficult ID. I can definitely see this one being revisited in the future!

## IORC EVALUATION FORM

**Record #:** 2012-039

**Name of bird form:** Red-naped Sapsucker

**Committee member name:** Geoffrey A. Williamson

**Date of review:** 26 June 2017

**Circulation number:** 1st

**Vote:** A-E(photo)

**Comments:** [required since this is a potential first state record]

This individual appears to be mostly in adult plumage, and it is evidently a male, based on the red chin and throat. Though this feature does not exclude the possibility of a female Red-naped, the lack of a complete black border to the throat suggests against female Red-naped per Mlodinow et al. (2006). Below I look at various plumage features noted by Mlodinow et al. (2006) as helpful for separating sapsucker species.

- **Presence or absence of red on the nape.** This individual shows a noticeable red patch on the nape (photo #4 and photo #5), consistent with Red-naped but perhaps not inconsistent with Yellow-bellied. Per Robbins et al. (2005), only two of 23 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers they examined showed red on the nape in an amount within the range of Red-naped, which appears to be what we have here. Mlodinow et al. (2006) estimate about 3% of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers can show enough red in the nape for it to be evident in the field.
- **Back markings.** This bird shows in photo #5 a black back with two columns of white barring. The columns of white bars are separated by a black area with only a few white spots in the upper zone and a bit more white lower down. This pattern is also seen in photo #4 and hinted at in photo #3. This pattern is considered by Mlodinow et al. (2006) to be suggestive of Red-naped, but not definitive. After looking at a number of photos of both species, I get the sense that this feature can be hard to judge, but that this individual seems more of a fit to Red-naped.
- **Back color.** There appears to be little in the way of buff coloration on the back of this individual (photo #1, #3, #4, and #5), and any buff present is not strong in tone. This is helpful to the case for Red-naped.
- **Brightness of yellow on the belly.** Photo #2 and photo #3 seem to show a very white belly. There is little in the way of yellow coloration at all on the underparts, with just a little close to the lower border of the red throat. Photo #1 shows this aspect more strongly. The white belly is consistent with Red-naped but doesn't rule against Yellow-bellied.
- **Throat color.** The entirely red throat indicates either a male Yellow-bellied, a male Red-naped, or possibly a female Red-naped (but see below).
- **Pattern of the "frame" around throat.** The red throat patch lacks a black border at the rear side, and the upper section of the black border thins away as it

extends back from the bill (photo #1 and photo #2). This is a strong character in favor of Red-naped.

- **Facial pattern.** This bird has a white supercilium that appears broad and flares out onto the nape. This feature perhaps favors Yellow-bellied.

Robbins et al. (2005) suggest that the back markings and throat frame are the two most important features to assess. Given that these seem to favor strongly Red-naped, and that everything else lines up as okay for Red-naped with the one exception being the breadth of the white supercilium, I will vote for accepting this as a Red-naped Sapsucker.

Also, photos #6, #7, and #8 show the underside of the tail. Per Pyle (1997), helping to separate Yellow-bellied from Red-naped is that “outer rectrs [of Yellow-bellied] show more white by sex.” With reference to Fig. 1 below, female Red-naped Sapsuckers show outer rectrices in the range of A, B, or C, and males show in the range of C or D. The photos of this bird suggest that its outer tail feather is similar to D, possibly C, in the figure. This appears to support Red-naped in the identification.

I will note that I do have some reservations regarding this bird given the subjective nature of almost all feature evaluations. I will add here also that because “everything” seems to fit Red-naped, I don’t think the possibility of a hybrid is necessary to bring up.

### References

S.G. Mlodinow, J.H. Barry, and C.D. Cox, “Variation in Red-naped and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers,” *Birding*, vol. 38, no. 6, pp. 42-51, November-December 2006.

P. Pyle, *Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part 1*. Bolinas, CA: Slate Creek Press, 1997.

M.B. Robbins, D.E. Seibel, and C. Cicero, “Probable Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) x Red-breasted Sapsucker (*S. ruber*) from eastern Kansas, with comments on the field identification of adult sapsuckers,” *North American Birds*, vol. 59, no. 2, pp. 360-363, 2005.

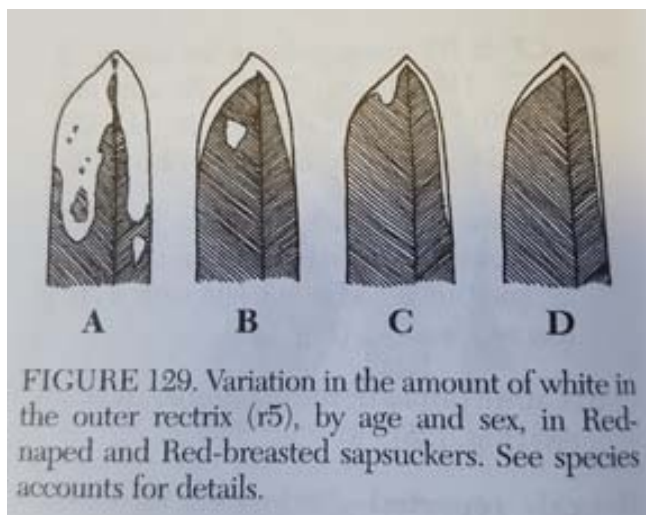


Fig. 1. Reproduction of Figure 129 of Pyle (1997).