

The golden-fronted woodpecker (*Melanerpes aurifrons*) is a species of bird in subfamily Picinae of the woodpecker family Picidae. It is found in the southern United States (mostly Texas), Mexico and parts of Central America.

#### Taxonomy and systematics.

The golden-fronted woodpecker's taxonomy is yet to be settled. The American Ornithological Society, the Clements taxonomy, and BirdLife International's Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW) assign it 12 subspecies. The International Ornithological Committee (IOC) treats it as a monotypic species and assigns the other 11 subspecies to Velasquez's woodpecker (*Melanerpes santacruzi*).

The golden-fronted woodpecker is 22 to 26 cm (9 to 10 in) long and weighs 65 to 102 g (2 to 4 oz). Males and females have the same plumage except for the pattern on their heads. Adult males have a red crown and a golden orange to yellow nape with a gap between them; females have a grayish crown and a paler yellow nape. On adults of both sexes the rest of the head is various shades of gray. Their upperparts are mostly barred black and white, with white upper tail coverts that have a few black spots. Their flight feathers are black with variable amounts of white on the primaries. Their tail is mostly black with variable amounts of white on the outermost three pairs of feathers. Their underparts are smoke gray to drab gray with light blackish bars on the flanks and undertail coverts and a yellow patch on the belly. Their iris is deep red to reddish brown, their bill is black to grayish black, and their legs and feet are grayish green to greenish gray. Juveniles are duller overall than adults, with little or no orange on the nape, indistinct barring on the upperparts, and fine dusky streaks on the underparts. Males have a small red crown patch and females just a few red feathers there.

#### Distribution and habitat.

The golden-fronted woodpecker is found from southwestern Oklahoma through central Texas onto the Mexican Plateau as far as Jalisco, San Luis Potosí, and Hidalgo. It is a casual visitor to New Mexico and East Texas and has been recorded once each in Michigan and Florida. It inhabits both mesic and xeric landscapes. It favors the latter, which include mesquite brushlands and riparian woodlands. It also frequents urban parks and suburban areas.

#### Feeding.

The golden-fronted woodpecker's diet includes adult and larval arthropods, some aerial insects, much fruit and nuts, and corn. It has been observed predating other birds' eggs. The species forages mainly in trees, especially on major limbs and typically below 6 m (20 ft). It also forages on open or grassy ground but seldom underbrush. It takes its food by gleaning, pecking, probing, and, least frequently, aerial flycatching.