

BOGDIVERSITY THURSDAY



—*from Head Naturalist Clinton*

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

POST #71—May 4, 2023

It is finally feeling like Spring in the northwoods, with early arriving bird species singing, ice leaving lakes, and temperatures finally reaching about 40 degrees! In honor of this new energy on the landscape, let's take a closer look at one of the most energetic species we have in our region: Ruby-crowned Kinglet!

In that post we considered the winter hardiness of Golden-crowned Kinglets and their ability to overwinter in northern climates. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, do not overwinter in our area and choose to migrate entirely out of North America. Kinglets are a really interesting group of birds, with a global distribution, primarily in northern climates. In Europe, Kinglets are called Firecrests (with red crowns) or Goldcrests (with golden and yellow crowns). However, in North America, our members of the family Regulidae are called Kinglets. These tiny balls of energy are named Kinglets from the Latin *regulus* meaning petty king or prince! These charismatic birds seem to never stop moving, flitting to and fro between branches foraging on insects.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, as with most kinglets, is named for the color of its crest! However, you seldom get to see the lovely bright red crest of these kinglets. They only showcase their bright crest as a warning when they are agitated or have spotted danger. Male kinglets are especially likely to show their crests on breeding grounds when interacting with other kinglets. Kinglets are not very showy birds, with their olive plumage being only lightly marked with faint wingbars and a bright eye ring. Both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets often get confused with warblers or vireos, but their tiny, narrow bills, as well as short tails make them a different shape than both warblers and vireos!

A prolific songster, Ruby-crowned Kinglets have a thin wispy start to their call, which erupts into a loud warble! Their songs carry significantly compared to their small size. One of the smallest birds in Minnesota, Ruby-crowned Kinglets weigh only a few grams, though they are larger than Golden-crowned Kinglets. Unbelievably, Ruby-crowned Kinglets can lay up to 12 eggs during nesting season!

These birds are making their way north now, with lots of Ruby-crowned Kinglets roaming the riparian areas, blooming willow shrubs, and woodland near you! More information about these lovely birds can be found below!

(Photos included by Sparky Stensaas)



What a cute bird! All kinglets show the same very round profile, especially in cooler weather.



The red crown of Ruby-crowned Kinglets is only really shown when they are agitated, so it is not a plumage trait often well see from this species.



Ruby-crowned Kinglets are at home in the boreal forest in the Sax-Zim Bog! Listen for their calls along the bogs adjacent to Owl Avenue, Admiral, and McDavitt Roads!