

Woodpeckers

Woodpeckers are so named because they routinely peck wood to find insects for food, for nesting and for drumming to establish territories and attract mates. They might be irritating and destructive, but they are federally protected.

Woodpeckers found around our region are Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker and Pileated Woodpecker. There are actually 22 species found in Canada, the United States and Mexico.

Downy Woodpecker

Adults 6" long; color black and white, head with black and white stripes, back black with white in center, wings black with white spots, outer tail feathers white with narrow bars, under parts white, male with small red patch on nape (back of neck); bill short, about half head length.

Females lay 4-5 white eggs. When the eggs hatch the young are dependent on parental care. 1 to 2 broods are raised per year. They feed on a variety of insects including wood-boring beetles; also found at feeders for suet and sunflower seeds.

They excavate a nest cavity in dead wood. Males drum to announce their territory and to attract a mate during breeding season. They are typically found in woods, wood lots, parks, gardens, farms, suburbs, and frequent suet feeders in winter.

Hairy Woodpecker

Adults are about 9 to 9 ¼" long; color black and white, similar to downy woodpecker except outer tail feathers white, lacking black bars; bill almost as long as head.

Females lay 4-6 white eggs. The young hatch dependent on parental care. There is only 1 brood per year. They feed on a variety of insects including wood-boring beetles; also found at feeders for suet and sunflower seeds.

Hairy woodpeckers habits are similar to downy woodpeckers except they prefer deciduous/hardwood forests in addition to the other habitats given.

Pileated Woodpecker

Adults are about 16 ½ to 18” long; color mostly black with white face and neck stripes, white long linings, and male with bright red crests, crown, forehead, and mustache, but female with red crest and crown only.

Females lay 3-5 white eggs. Young hatchling is dependent on parental care. There is one brood per year. They feed on carpenter ants, beetles and other insects; they also feed on seeds and come to feeders for suet mixes.

Pileated woodpeckers excavate nests in cavities in dead wood about 15-70’ off the ground. The entrance hole is about 3 ½” in diameter and the cavity may be 10-24” deep. Feeding holes are a basically a square shape and about 3-6” in size; occasionally they may excavate a long gash when after ants. Unmated males drum to attract a mate, or drumming can be done between mated pairs as part of the courtship. They are typically found in mature forests and along their borders as well as in the suburbs. Their territory size may be 150-200 acres.



Pileated Woodpecker



Pileated Woodpecker Damage