
How Woodpeckers are Built to Survive in Nature



- ♣ **Strong, sharp toes** – Well-adapted to living in trees, woodpeckers have four strong toes—two pointing forward and two back—with sharp claws that enable them to cling upright on the bark of trunks and branches. They also have stiff tail feathers to prop them up vertically.
- ♣ **Hard, pointed beak** – Woodpeckers use their beaks to chisel into wood in search of insects and sap or to excavate cavities for nesting and roosting. They also use their beaks to drum or tap out sounds during breeding season.
- ♣ **Thick skull** – Woodpeckers' skulls are protected from the concussive force of pounding by a narrow space around the brain that functions as a shock absorber.
- ♣ **Long, flexible, bristled, sticky tongue** – With their tongues, woodpeckers can probe small holes in wood to catch insects. In feeding, most woodpeckers start at the base of a tree, searching for insects and spiders, and then move up the tree in spirals until they reach the larger limbs where they explore the undersides of branches.

Give wildlife a helping hand.

The goal of the Mercer County Wildlife Center is to protect the future of native wildlife species through education, rehabilitation, and release.

You can help the Center meet this goal by donating your time or resources.

Volunteer opportunities:

- ♣ **Animal technicians** - Dependable, compassionate people to help feed and administer medications to the animals in our care.
- ♣ **Community outreach volunteers** - Enthusiastic people to greet the public at community events, raise funds by selling merchandise, and educate others about wildlife by distributing literature.
- ♣ **Publications** - Writers, copy editors, and layout people to help develop our newsletters, brochures, and handouts.
- ♣ **Publicity** - Volunteers to write press releases that help spread the word about the Center.
- ♣ **Flea market** - People to help run our flea market fund raisers. We also gratefully accept certain donated items.

For more information about these volunteer positions, call the Volunteer Coordinator at (609) 397-8435.

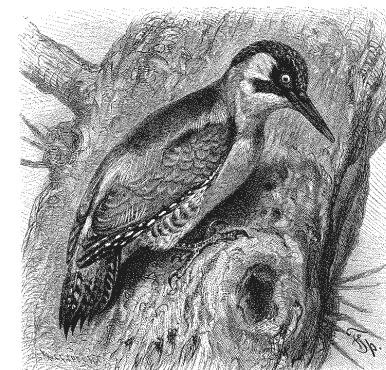
Wish list items:

Caring for the injured, ill, or displaced animals that come through our door involves various supplies, many of which you probably use in your own home. Visit our web site to see our wish list.

Mercer County Wildlife Center



Coexisting with Woodpeckers



Woodpeckers have long, flexible, sticky tongues for probing small holes to catch insects.

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www.mercercounty.org/mcwc/mcwc.htm



Getting to Know Woodpeckers

Where Do They Nest?

- Some species, such as the sapsuckers and hairy woodpeckers, excavate holes in live trees. Others, such as flickers and downy woodpeckers, prefer to drill in dying trees or snags. In either case, the birds tunnel down six to eighteen inches deep, making the excavation wider at the bottom for the egg chamber.
- Both male and female woodpeckers take turns incubating two to eight eggs. Hatchlings are naked and blind. Depending on the species, young leave the nest between 21 to 30 days after hatching.

What Do They Eat?

- Woodpeckers use their beaks to chisel into wood for insects and sap.
- In the winter, woodpeckers will also visit backyard bird feeders for suet and seeds.

Coexisting with Woodpeckers

Occasionally, woodpeckers may cause damage to the outside of buildings and the sound of their drumming may be annoying to occupants inside. Before taking remedial action, determine which of the following reasons are causing their annoying behavior:

- Territory** – Since resident woodpeckers drum against hard, resonant surfaces to proclaim their territory, they are likely to return to the same spot repeatedly during breeding season. This can become a problem when the site is a metal gutter, downspout, or wooden siding of a house and when the woodpecker pecks on it in the early morning. To discourage drumming, modify the surface of the chosen site by covering it with fabric or foam.
- Search for food** – If activity is not restricted to one site on a building, and if it occurs throughout the year, the birds are likely to be drilling for food. They are attracted to insect-infested wood where they can drill small holes into the surface to extract the insects. Repair the site as necessary.

- Nesting, roosting, or caching food** – Woodpeckers may also drill cavities for nesting, roosting, or caching food. Look for round, deep openings, often near knot holes in boards. In the spring or summer, assume there is an active nest with eggs or hatchlings inside. Wait until you are sure all the birds have fledged and left the nest on their own, then immediately repair the openings. Plug small holes with caulking or wood filler and fill larger holes with wooden plugs, steel wool, or wire screen before sealing.

At the first sign of activity, you can scare woodpeckers away from a site by making noises at a nearby window or against the adjacent inside wall. You can also hang strips of foil, fabric, or bird-scare tape (available in bird supply stores) from eaves to deter the birds; however, first make sure there is not an active nest nearby.

Thanks to the HOWL Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Washington state for providing the information in this pamphlet.