A variety of scare tactics use movement and reflective light to frighten woodpecker away. Try using items such as pinwheels, wind chimes, aluminum pans, strips of aluminum foil, scare tape or plastic streamers. Attach or hang them over the damaged area so they can move freely in the breeze. Hanging a silhouette of a falcon has had some success scaring woodpecker but silhouettes of other animals have not been found effective. Mylar party balloons or a scare balloon with large eyes printed on it can be hung as well. All of these techniques may work for only a short time, at least until the birds figure out it is not a threat.

When you hear the drumming use harassment techniques like shouting, banging on pots, gently squirting water from a hose or throwing tennis balls.

Sapsuckers

Sapsuckers behave as their name implies – they eat sap. Sapsuckers bore small parallel rows of hole in the trunk or limbs of trees to make the sap flow. Sapsuckers eat the sap and insects caught in the sap. They rarely cause permanent damage to a tree. However, if the trunk is girdled with holes it could kill the tree and provide and entrance for disease or insects.

If you have a lot of trees it may be best to sacrifice a few for sapsuckers. If discouraged from one tree they may move on to another tree nearby and start to bore holes. If protection is necessary, covering the entire tree with netting is an option. The damaged area can also be wrapped with burlap, plastic mesh or hardware cloth.

Woodpeckers and sapsuckers are migratory birds and are federally protected. When warranted, a bird may be killed under a special permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Before a permit will be issued it must be demonstrated that other methods of exclusion or deterrence were attempted first. Contact the nearest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office for details.

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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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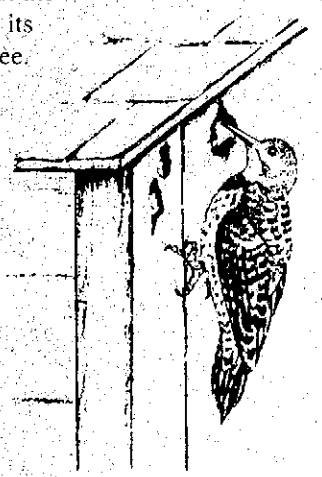
Living With Woodpeckers,

Flickers and Sapsuckers



If you live in or near a wooded area you may be familiar with the rhythmic drumming of the woodpecker as it pounds its beck into the bark of a tree. This drumming is unique to the woodpecker and a welcome sign of springtime. Montana is home to 7 species of woodpeckers (Red-headed, Downy, Hairy, Three-toed, Black-backed, Pileated and Lewis'); the Yellow-bellied and Red-bellied Sapsuckers; and the Northern Flicker. All of these bird species are in the Family *Picidae* and can be collectively called woodpeckers.

Living with Wildlife

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EXHIBIT 10
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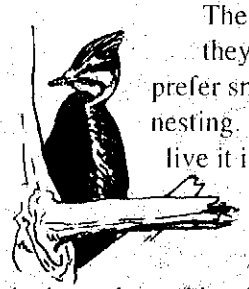


These birds are beneficial since they eat quantities of insects. They prefer snags or partially dead trees for nesting. In areas where woodpeckers live it is wise to provide appropriate habitat by leaving dead trees standing and removing limbs that may be hazardous. Nest boxes built to attract woodpeckers are also available. Providing habitat may eliminate their attractions to homes.

What's All That Noise?

When a woodpecker drums it is, either finding insects to eat, making a nesting cavity or marking its territory and attracting a mate. If a woodpecker takes a liking to your home, successful deterrence depends upon the following:

- Prompt action – responding quickly when you first hear a bird drumming will reduce the time and effort required to relocate the bird. A woodpecker is more likely to leave the site if it was used briefly rather than for several days.
- Diversity – using a variety of scare tactics will make your effort more effective.
- Persistence – once started, you must stick with the program everyday until you achieve success.

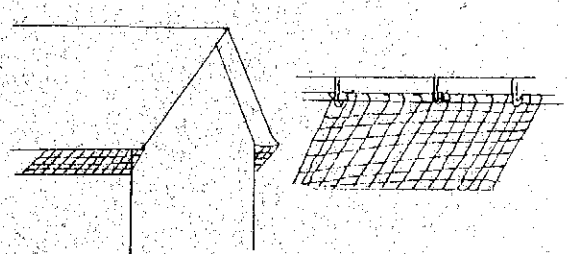
Woodpeckers are attracted to homes with siding made of wood, stucco and DryVit. They prefer natural or stained wood over painted surfaces. Homes built to look rustic and newly built homes are the most vulnerable. It's important to maintain the exterior of homes and prevent insects from moving in.

Insects - Woodpeckers can cause damage to houses when seeking insects. Insects may congregate in imperfections or gaps in wood siding where the woodpecker will break out the gaps to get to the insects. Once a feeding area is established the bird will be persistent. If insects are the attractant, it's best to take care of the infestation before trying to exclude or deter the woodpecker. The services of a professional exterminator may be needed. Apply pesticides that are safe to use around birds. Damaged siding should be repaired or replaced to prevent future damage or infestation.

Nesting - Nest construction is rarely a problem but can create the largest hole in siding. A woodpecker may start to make one hole, then abandon it to start another hole—often just inches away from the first hole. Usually these holes are not large enough for the woodpecker but may be adequate size for starlings or house sparrow. Prompt repair of these holes is necessary.

Drumming - Each spring male woodpecker seek to establish their territory and attract a mate. The males do this by drumming, a repetitive rapping on the best sound-producing object it can find. Woodpeckers will drum on utility poles, gutters, chimney caps, TV antennas or other metal found on homes. Drumming starts at dawn and can last several days or months, which can be very annoying to a homeowner. The best way to deter a woodpecker from drumming on a home is to get rid of the sound it likes to make. Secure loose boards or use filler behind those boards sounding hollow. Temporarily cover chimney caps or other metal with cloth, foam rubber or insulation. Take away the sound and the woodpecker will likely move on to another area.

If a woodpecker starts to peck, repair the damage promptly and use scare tactics to encourage it to move on. Shallow holes can be repaired with caulking or wood fiber available in colors to match the siding. Mix jalapeno juice in with the caulking so it tastes unpleasant. Large holes can be filled with wooden plugs or wadded window screen and then caulked. Small mesh hardware cloth can be painted and used to cover damaged areas or raised outward with 1" wood spacers. Metal or plastic sheeting placed over a pecked area and painted to match can be a permanent solution.

Discouraging Woodpeckers

To exclude woodpeckers hang netting, such as ¾" lightweight bird netting, to protect siding. When properly installed netting is nearly invisible from a distance and is a long-term solution. Leave at least 3 inches of space between the netting and the building so birds can't cause damage through the netting. Netting can also be attached to the eaves and angled back to the siding to hang below the damaged area. Secure it taut to ensure that bird can't get trapped behind it.