



Red-headed woodpecker by MarvinnAnn Paterson

Resourceful Woodpeckers Brave Local Winter Weather

by Education and Visitor Center Services Coordinator Kim Compton

While many birds are forced south during the winter to find ample food and open water, woodpeckers stay in northern Illinois the whole year, due to adaptations that allow them to find food throughout the winter.

Most insect eating birds do not have access to insects' winter hiding places and therefore, cannot find food here in the coldest season. Woodpeckers however, characterized by their strong long beak, can pry under tree bark, drill through nut shells, and probe into the ground to find food, often dormant insects. Another way woodpeckers survive through the long winter is by caching or hoarding food. Different woodpeckers are known to stash nuts, seeds, and insects into holes in tree bark to have easy access for later.

Be on the lookout this winter: You can regularly see up to seven different species of woodpeckers in your local conservation areas!



Marty Hackl



MCCD Archive

Downy (above left) and **hairy woodpeckers** (above right) look very similar. They both have the laddered pattern of black and white feathers on their backs, and the males have a small red patch on the back of their heads. If you see them together they are easy to tell apart because the hairy woodpecker is significantly larger than the downy. When they are not next to each other it is harder to tell; look at the beak in relation to the width of the head. If the beak is as long as the head, it is a hairy. Downy woodpeckers have shorter beaks in relation to their heads.

Red-headed woodpeckers (top) are the only woodpeckers in this area with a solid red head. Contrasted with their solid black and white parts of their body, they are quite striking. Both male and female have the same coloration.



Marty Hackl



Laurie Sheppard/USFWS

Red-bellied woodpeckers (above left) really do have a red patch on their bellies but we rarely see it. You are more likely to recognize the large red patch on the back of the neck. Notice too, the black and white back and the solid greyish front. **Yellow-bellied sapsuckers** (above right) do have a yellowish tint to their bellies as well, but also look for the red forehead and chin on the male, and solid white patches in the center of the wings.



Marty Hackl

Northern flickers (left) are the most terrestrial of North American woodpeckers. You are more likely to see them on the ground feeding than in the trees. Look for a red patch on the back of their neck, a black stripe across their breast, a spotted belly, and a white rump patch.



Jay Paje

Not as common, but still a possible sighting is the **pileated woodpecker**. This woodpecker is much larger than the rest — nearly the size of a crow! Also note the distinctive red Mohawk or crest.

Get out and about on the trails this winter to spy some of our more colorful winter resident bird species. Look for woodpeckers at Glacial Park, Rush Creek, Coral Woods, Marengo Ridge, Hickory Grove, Harrison Benwell and other wooded conservation areas. Pileated woodpeckers, while rare, have been spotted in both Boone Creek and Marengo Ridge Conservation Areas.

Wacky Woodpeckers!

While Woody the Woodpecker brought a lot of awareness to the woodpecker species through his fun adventures on television, we have several exciting woodpeckers right here in our area! How well do you know your woodpeckers of McHenry County?

Who Am I? — Woodpecker Edition

See if you can fill in the blank with the right woodpecker name using the names from the word bank below. If you become stuck, read the previous page to help find your answers and look at the pictures next to the clues! After you can name the woodpeckers, go outside and see if you can find some!



I have a red patch on my belly that is rarely seen, most people see the red patch on the back of my neck.



I often get confused with another woodpecker who looks very similar to me. But I have a beak as long, if not longer, than my head.



I am the largest woodpecker in North America. I am known for my red Mohawk-like crest.



My whole head is red in color. I feel very unique because I am the only woodpecker with an entirely red head.



I am sometimes confused with a bigger woodpecker than me because we look so alike. But I am much smaller and have a shorter beak.

WORD BANK:

Downy woodpecker Red-bellied woodpecker Red-headed woodpecker Hairy woodpecker Pileated woodpecker

Answer Key: 1- Red-bellied Woodpecker, p/c Bob Williams 2- Hairy Woodpecker, p/c MCCO Archive; 3- Pileated Woodpecker, p/c Jay Pajic; 4- Red-headed Woodpecker, p/c Robert Novak; 5- Downy Woodpecker, p/c Brad Wackelin

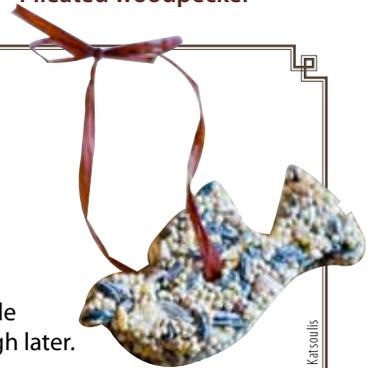
Christmas Cookies for the Birds!

Follow the instructions to make some fun bird feeders for the winter birds, like woodpeckers, that are sticking around McHenry County!

Materials: birdseed, a spoon, cookie cutters (any shape), ribbon or twine, a bowl, spatula, coconut oil, straw, cookie sheet

Directions:

- Take 2 big spoon fulls of coconut oil and put them in the bowl. Melt the coconut oil in the microwave until it is a liquid.
- Add about 1 cup of birdseed to the coconut oil and use the spatula to mix it all together.
- Put the cookie cutters on the cookie sheet. Scoop the birdseed mixture into the cookie cutters.
- Place a straw through the middle of the birdseed in the cookie cutter to make a hole to put the ribbon or twine through later.
- Place the cookie sheet in the refrigerators to let the cookies set, about 30 minutes to an hour.
- Once the birdseed cookies have set, string the ribbon or twine through them.
- Set them outside on a tree limb and wait for the birds to come enjoy them!



bird seed ornaments...Heather Katsoulis

In Search of Woodpeckers

Go for a hike at one of the McHenry County Conservation District's sites and see how many woodpeckers or signs of woodpeckers you can find. Use the scavenger hunt sheet below to guide you along your hike.

- A woodpecker with red on its feathers
- A hole in a tree that a woodpecker might live in
- Small holes in a tree where a woodpecker has been looking for food
- Listen for a woodpecker pecking into the wood
- Seed shells left over from seeds eaten by a winter animal
- A woodpecker with black on its feathers



The Owl and the Woodpecker
by Brian Wildsmith

A Woodpecker's Tale
by Sean Cassidy

Woodpeckers
by Kari Schuetz

