

# Woodpeckers

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## Controlling Woodpecker Damage

Woodpeckers are an interesting, valuable part of the environment but occasionally they do considerable damage to wooden houses and trees. The type of damage however, determines the control methods.

Woodpeckers pecking for insects - One reason woodpeckers peck on wooden siding is because it contains insects. The resultant holes occur in a regular pattern. The kind of pattern depends on the kind and style of siding. In panel siding, the holes are approximately dime size and often occur in straight lines. This pattern occurs because insects have gotten into openings called core gaps or voids between plies in the panel created during the manufacturing process. In overlap siding, insects get between overlapping boards and under trim boards. Woodpecker damage occurs where boards overlap. Summer damage occurs because leaf cutter bees have paralyzed spiders, stuffed them into the core gaps, laid their eggs on the spiders, and sealed the gaps with leaf fragments. Fall and spring damage occurs because many kinds of insects go into voids and openings to hibernate for the winter, but move around when warm days are preceded by cold nights. Woodpeckers apparently detect this insect movement and peck through the siding to get to them. The only effective damage control technique is to spray an appropriate insecticide into the voids or openings and into the holes made by the woodpeckers. Subsequently, the openings and voids should be sealed with wood filler, or caulking, etc. to prevent re-infestation.

Woodpeckers pecking to drum or to make cavities - Woodpeckers also peck on house siding to drum. Drumming in the spring is the woodpecker's way of announcing its territory. Drumming usually does not penetrate completely through the wood and usually resembles an up-side down rain drop in shape. Woodpeckers also peck to create fall roost and spring nest cavities, thus penetrating wood, insulation, etc. The resulting hole is round and about the same size as the woodpecker that made it. Woodpeckers can be repelled from drumming and cavity sites with frightening devices that include aluminum foil strips, small aluminum foil pie pans on strings, and balloons on strings that are fastened to the siding and allowed to dangle over the damaged site. Use at least 2 different devices and alternate them every 3-5 days. As an alternative, tape a wooden-based mouse snap trap over the damage site with the trigger on the up side. When the wood pecker sets the trap off, it is frightened away. The woodpecker is rarely caught in the trap. Reset sprung traps. If the frightening devices or traps cause the woodpecker to peck on a new site on the siding, immediately add additional devices

or traps to the new site.

The yellow-bellied sapsucker is the only member of the woodpecker family that pecks holes in straight lines around the tree trunk and branches. Sapsuckers punch rows of 1/4 inch holes through the bark to obtain sap. The same tree is often revisited. Bleeding wounds often disfigure the tree and become access sites for disease and insects. In most cases, sapsuckers attack trees injured by insects, disease, drought excessive soil moisture, wind ice, or by humans using machines or tools. The best method to correct the problem is to help the tree by treating the problem (insects, disease, moisture, mechanical damage, etc.) In plantations or orchards, heavily damaged trees should be left alone. Sapsuckers will concentrate on these trees. Killing the woodpecker is usually ineffective. If necessary, permits from the Law Enforcement Division, Michigan DNR, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, can be obtained to shoot or trap the woodpecker.

To repel drumming and packing of insects, use several of the below techniques, (alternating them if they lose their effectiveness):

- \* furring strips
- \* 1/4" strips of colored aluminum foil or bird scare tape or monofilament line.
- \* Aluminum foil-Mylar balloon
- \* Eye in combo of red, black yellow hole under balloon
- \* Mouse traps: Hole under trigger, Trigger side up



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