

Hairy Woodpecker

Picoides villosus

The Hairy Woodpecker is one of the most widespread members of its family in North America. This species occurs from the tree line in Alaska and Canada south to Baja California, the mountains of Central America, the Gulf Coast, Florida, and the Bahamas. Eastern populations breed from sea level to timberline (Short 1982). This woodpecker is both migratory and sedentary, wandering outside of its summer territory in fall and winter to find food (Lawrence 1967).

Hairy Woodpeckers are essentially forest dwellers that breed in extensive mature woodlands. They occur sympatrically with Pileated and Downy Woodpeckers, but appear to favor more extensive forest than do Downies. Hairy Woodpeckers will tolerate wide variance in such forest characteristics as basal area, density of stems, canopy height, and distance from clearings (Conner and Adkisson 1977). They will occasionally nest in clear cuts, if some snags or stubs remain for nest sites. Snags and live trees with dead branches are important components of Hairy Woodpecker habitat as they provide suitable nest sites (Conner et al. 1975). Fall and winter habitats include residential areas and strips of timber along streams. In residential areas and towns they are attracted to feeding stations.

The Hairy Woodpecker is often heard before it is seen; its call is a sharp, high-pitched *peek* or a rapid series of notes slurred into a rattle. During the breeding season, the territorial and courtship drumming of the species is heard.

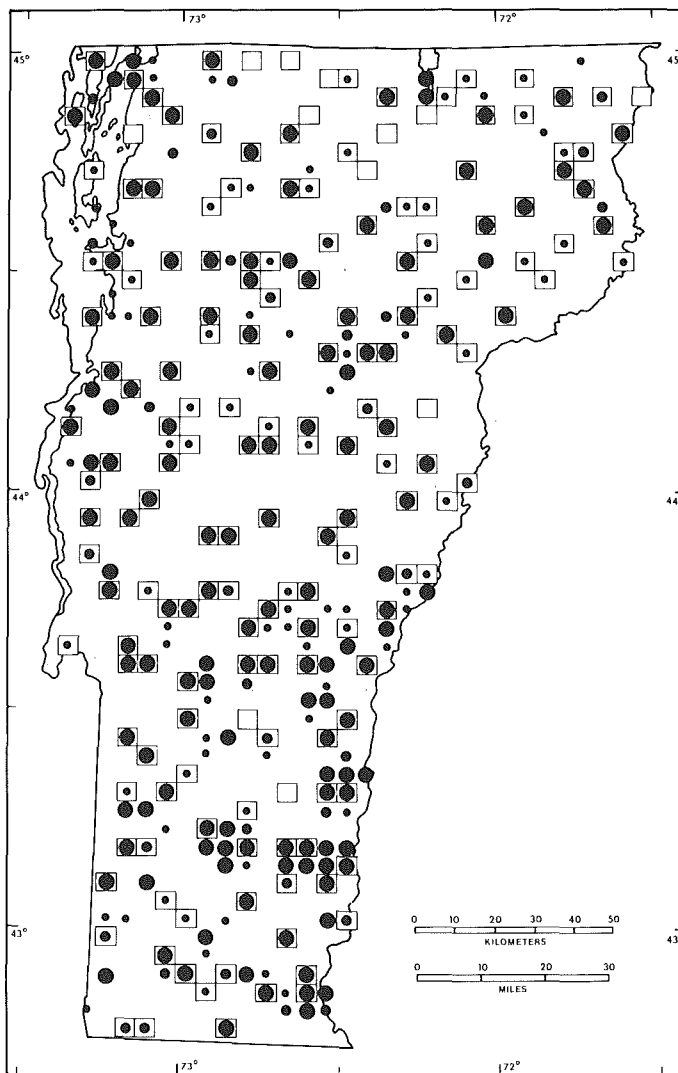
The nest, a gourd-shaped cavity approximately 5 cm (2 in) in diameter at the entrance and 20–41 cm (8–16 in) deep (Forbush 1925), is excavated at a height of 0.9–12.2 m (3–40 ft) in a snag, a dead branch of a living tree, or in a live bole. Females often choose sites proximate to those used in previous years (Kilham 1960). Lawrence (1967) stated that these woodpeckers prefer to nest in live trees, while Conner et al. (1975) re-



ported 50% nesting in snags and 50% in dead sections of live trees. Cavities are excavated in trees infected with fungal heart rots, and often below the stub of a dead branch (Conner et al. 1976). These stubs may provide the woodpeckers with a visual clue to suitable nest trees. Nest cavity openings often face slightly downward, an angle which may shield the nest from rain (Conner 1975).

In Vermont, tree species used for nesting include aspen, white birch, yellow birch, American beech, red maple, and red oak. Two Vermont egg dates are May 6 and June 16. Clutches usually number 4 eggs, although the range is 3 to 6. Incubation lasts 11 to 12 days, and the male broods at night (Harrison 1978). Twenty Vermont dates for nests with young range from May 21 to June 24. May 23 to July 23 is the range of fledgling dates. Nest predators include red squirrels (Lawrence 1967) and flying squirrels (Kilham 1983). Hairy Woodpeckers tend to avoid nesting in trees that host flying squirrels; apparently the flying squirrels displace the woodpeckers from their cavities (Kilham 1983).

The Hairy Woodpecker's diet consists primarily of grubs of wood-boring beetles and larvae, as well as tent caterpillars found during infestation years (Lawrence 1967). In clear cuts, Hairy Woodpeckers feed on in-



No. of priority blocks in which recorded

TOTAL	167 (93%)
Possible breeding:	44 (26.3% of total)
Probable breeding:	19 (11.4% of total)
Confirmed breeding:	104 (62.3% of total)

Physiographic regions in which recorded

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	29	94	17
Green Mountains	48	89	29
North Central	18	95	11
Northeast Highlands	15	94	9
East Central	18	95	11
Taconic Mountains	16	100	9
Eastern Foothills	23	96	14

sects found under the bark of logging slash (Conner and Crawford 1974). During an elm bark beetle infestation of American elms that were infected with Dutch elm disease, Hairy Woodpeckers fed on beetles (Kilham 1965). In this and other situations, Kilham noticed differences in feeding locations and behavior on the part of male and female woodpeckers. Hairy Woodpeckers also consume fruits and seeds (W. J. Norse, pers. observ.).

The Hairy Woodpecker was confirmed as breeding in all seven physiographic regions. The percentage of occurrence by region ranged from 89% to 100%, indicating a

fairly uniform distribution of Hairy Woodpeckers statewide. Most confirmations were made by observing adults carrying food.

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