

# Chip Notes



## Backyard 9-1-1



### Why Are Woodpeckers Pecking At My House...

Tap - tap - tap. The cadence of a woodpecker provides the rhythm section to the avian chorus in our yards. It is a wonderful thing to hear UNLESS the sound is being made on your house! Why do woodpeckers peck? **There are three reasons to consider.** The **first** is that the drumming of a male woodpecker is used to communicate. It is a form of song substitution. When a male has selected an appropriate territory for raising a family, he will drum to announce to other males of his species that this location is spoken for. Continued drumming is meant to attract females to his territory in hopes of being selected for fatherhood based on his good taste in accommodations. The fascia boards, wood siding, or metal eaves of your house resonate well, causing the sound to travel far for the drummer. This use of your home is typically not damaging; your musician is all about making sound and not about making holes. And once his communication is successful, his mind will turn to other things than music! **Secondly**, woodpeckers forage for food by pecking. While they will readily visit a feeder filled with Aspen Song Nut & Fruit Woodpecker Mix, they also consume protein in the form of insects. Two favorite insect foods are carpenter ants and carpenter bees. If you notice woodpeckers making a series of holes or gouges in your home, it may be an indication that you have an insect infestation that needs your attention. Left unattended, these insects can cause serious damage.

Eliminate the insects, and the woodpeckers will forage elsewhere. And don't forget to thank the woodpecker who noticed the problem before you did! The **third** reason a woodpecker may show an interest in your home is for excavating a nesting cavity. Woodpeckers are primary cavity nesters. Part of the annual cycle is to create a new home each season. Healthy, live trees are rarely chosen as a nest site. Woodpeckers seek out dead or decaying wood for its ease of excavating. Pine boards and cedar siding are soft woods that potentially lessen the workload. This may be why they will occasionally attempt to "move in" to your home. Typically, once they are through the soft wood and hit a hard substrate of plywood or MDF they move on, but leave behind an unsightly hole. At this point it becomes necessary for you to do the communicating. The message is obvious: find another site for your home! Many "forms" of communication have been successfully utilized: Mylar strips hung over the area, a temporary piece of aluminum flashing or chicken wire, old CD's hung on fish line, or strategically placed wind chimes to name a few. The trick is to discourage the behavior without doing any harm to the bird. And the hope is that the relocation will not be too far removed from your suet feeder and wire mesh tube feeder. Who wants to miss out on the new family entertaining you at the feeders?