
TALES FROM THE TREE

The Quarterly Newsletter of Ziggy's Tree Wildlife Rehabilitation Center



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WOODPECKERS

Family Picidae

Over the years, we've played host to several members of the woodpecker family. Our most common woodpecker is the Red-bellied Woodpecker, but we've also admitted Northern Flickers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Red-headed Woodpeckers and Downy Woodpeckers.

All woodpeckers have very stiff tails that they use as props while they cling to tree bark. Their beaks are also very stout and chisel-like and are used to peel bark or excavate wood to uncover insects. Their skulls have special sacs that cushion the brain from impact. Most woodpeckers have very long tongues which wrap around the skull and enable them to probe deep into cavities of trees and dead wood. The feathers around their nostrils help filter the wood dust.

Woodpeckers "drum" or tap their beaks rapidly against wood to proclaim their territory and attract a mate. This will generally occur in the spring. This drumming may be annoying to homeowners if their house is being used as the sounding board. In most cases, the woodpecker will not cause damage to the house. However, it is always wise to check the area where the woodpeckers are drumming, as it may be an indication of an insect infestation which can be treated by a professional exterminator.

Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

The Pileated Woodpecker is our largest woodpecker and is roughly the same size as a crow. The male's red cap is more extensive than that of the female. They are easily distinguished from the other woodpeckers by their size and prominent red crest. They are typically found in mature forests and their favorite food is carpenter ants. Their call is a loud rising and falling *wuck-a-wuck-a-wuck-a*.

We typically do not admit many Pileated Woodpeckers. In fact, we may receive only one every other year. This year was unusual for us – we admitted four fledglings/juveniles in a one month period. Sadly, three of the birds were very seriously injured (two head injuries, one spinal injury) and did not survive.

Pileated Woodpecker, Patient #A88, was transferred to us from the Chattanooga Zoo on May 19. She was found just after she fledged (left the nest cavity) and had not fully mastered the art of flying.



However, she had mastered the art of eating, and consumed massive quantities of mealworms every day. She was moved to one of our flight cages the first part of June so that she could exercise and be exposed to natural weather conditions and sounds. She was provided with a couple of large rotting limbs to practice climbing and drilling for food.

As release day approached, we wondered how she might integrate with the local woodpeckers. Pileated Woodpecker families can stay together for most of the summer. Would she be alright on her own?

Then a magical moment occurred. As we were refilling her food dishes on July 2, we heard a noise. There, just outside the cage on a neighboring tree, was an adult Pileated Woodpecker. The two birds began talking to each other. They seemed more intent on each other than the human that was also present. So, taking a deep breath, we opened the cage door. Our youngster immediately flew out and landed on a large tree. The adult followed her. They stayed together on that tree for about another 15 minutes before flying off into the woods together. It was an early Independence Day celebration for all of us!

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*)

The Red-bellied Woodpecker is one of our more commonly seen woodpeckers. A medium-sized bird, they have a black and white barred back, with a small reddish patch or tinge to the belly. The males have a red crown and nape, while the females have the red nape only. They are generally found in open woodlands, suburbs and parks. Their call is sometimes described as a rapid descending chuckling sound – *chighchhchhchhchhchh*.



We hosted a family of three Red-bellied Woodpeckers this year. Transferred to us from the Chattanooga Zoo on June 2, these youngsters were displaced when their nest tree was cut down. They arrived as young nestlings, just starting to get their feathers. Soon after they fledged, they were eating a variety of natural foods. They were a very vocal group, and immediately after moving out to the flight conditioning cage, they attracted the attention of some of the resident Red-bellied Woodpeckers. They were released as a group on July 15.

More Woodpecker Facts

- The nest cavity can be anywhere from ground level to 80 feet up.
- The young are tended by both parents
- Typical clutch size is 3-5 eggs
- Young are born altricial (naked, blind and helpless)
- Young leave the nest at 20-28 days
- There are 22 species of woodpeckers in North America
- Sapsuckers are part of the woodpecker family
- In addition to bugs, some members of this family also eat fruit, seeds and nuts.
- The Northern Flicker, a member of the woodpecker family, is most often seen on the ground, eating ants.

WISH LIST

- Fruit
- Gift cards (grocery store, Lowe's, Home Depot, Tractor Supply)
- LCD Projector
- Heating Pads (without automatic shut-off)
- Laundry Detergent
- Nuts (pecans, walnuts, acorns)
- Vegetables (broccoli, carrots, kale, potatoes)
- Paper Towels

It has been a busy spring and summer baby season. We have admitted 281 birds and 115 small mammals as of July 20.

Most of our spring mammal intakes have been released, but we have begun admitting our second round of orphaned opossums, and are already receiving calls about baby squirrels. The second squirrel season can last into November.

We have admitted 50 different species of birds so far this year. This includes a new species for us – Tree Swallows. These little beauties are a dark, glossy greenish blue on their back with a bright white belly. The five siblings were successfully released near Tims Ford Lake on July 11, and their joyful chirps immediately brought in several other Tree Swallows!

2013 RELEASES

April	24 Eastern Gray Squirrels 1 Carolina Wren 1 Barred Owl 3 Eastern Cottontails
May	22 Eastern Gray Squirrels 3 Eastern Cottontails 1 Eastern Meadowlark 1 American Robin
June	1 Brown Thrasher 3 Killdeer 2 Song Sparrows 1 House Finch 3 Carolina Wrens 9 American Robins 2 Eastern Bluebirds 7 Eastern Cottontails 24 Virginia Opossums 4 Eastern Gray Squirrels 9 Groundhogs
July	1 Pileated Woodpecker 3 Red-bellied Woodpeckers 3 Northern Mockingbirds 5 Tree Swallows 1 Carolina Chickadee 2 Carolina Wrens 7 Eastern Phoebe 6 House Finches 1 Killdeer 1 Ruby-throated Hummingbird 1 House Wren

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QUOTES FOR THE QUARTER

“Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.”
William James

“Never, never, be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way.”
Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Nothing but what you volunteer has the essence of life, the springs of pleasure in it. These are the things you do because you want to do them, the things your spirit has chosen for its satisfaction. The more you are stimulated to such action the more clearly does it appear to you that you are a sovereign spirit, put into the world, not to wear a harness, but to work eagerly without it.”
Woodrow Wilson

For information on volunteering or to schedule a program for your school or civic group, contact LouAnn at 931-393-4835 or louannpartington@yahoo.com.

SUPPORT ZIGGY'S TREE

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Shop at Kroger's using one of our rechargeable gift cards. Four percent of the amount you recharge on the card goes to Ziggy's Tree, and you can recharge as many times as you want to. Information on the program is available on our website. Contact us at 931-393-4835 to get your card now!

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92 Maple Ave.
Tullahoma, TN 37388**

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Members receive our quarterly newsletter and invitations to special events and programs held throughout the year.

Ziggy's Tree strives to be environmentally conscious. If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of our newsletter, please check the box above or e-mail louannpartington@yahoo.com to be placed on our mailing list.