

Living with Woodpeckers

General information

Several species of woodpeckers can be found in Florida at different times of year, including red-headed woodpeckers, red-bellied woodpeckers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, downy woodpeckers, hairy woodpeckers, red-cockaded woodpeckers, northern flickers, and pileated woodpeckers. Woodpeckers are often seen clinging to the bark of trees. They have sharp bills used for digging into trees to find insects, to create nest cavities, and to communicate with other woodpeckers.

What can be done to prevent problems with woodpeckers?

- Hang Mylar streamers, compact discs, pie tins, mirrors, or other shiny objects off eaves or in trees where the birds are seen pecking. Moving, reflective objects tend to make birds nervous so they may avoid those locations.*
- Set up a motion-activated sprinkler or alarm device that will go off when the woodpecker lands on the structure or tree to scare the bird away.*
- Cover wood structures with metal mesh/screening, aluminum flashing, sheets of plastic, or non-wood siding to prevent the birds from accessing the wood easily and causing damage.*
- Treat insect-infested wood structures to eliminate the possible insect food source woodpeckers are looking for.
- Provide artificial nest boxes or suet feeders to attract woodpeckers to specific locations rather than structures.

*Note: Deterrents cannot be placed covering the opening of an active nest cavity or at a location that will cause birds to abandon a nest cavity during nesting season, possibly causing loss of young birds.



Pileated woodpecker



Red-cockaded woodpecker, by FWC



Northern flicker, by USFWS



Downy woodpecker



Red-bellied woodpecker, by USFWS



Red-headed woodpecker, by FWC

See reverse side for permit and contact information.



Legal status

Woodpeckers are Federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and state protected by Florida's adoption of the MBTA (Florida Rule 68A-16) and general prohibition for nest take (Florida Rule 68A-9.002). It is illegal for anyone to "take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird." Since woodpeckers are known for pecking, they can cause property damage to structures. Because woodpeckers are protected, options to reduce or eliminate property damage must be non-harmful to the birds. A permit is required to remove a nest cavity tree or structure.

Who can I contact for additional assistance?

Inactive Nest Permit:

For guidance on how to apply for an inactive nest

removal permit in the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) on-line permit system (link below) contact the Protected Species Permit Office at (850) 921-5990. There is no fee for this application:

public.myfwc.com/CrossDOI/PermitSystem/.

Active Nest Permit:

For an active nest removal permit, you must apply for the FWC permit (above) and a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Download, fill out and print a Migratory Bird Depredation Permit form from the USFWS Web site:

fws.gov/forms/3-200-13.pdf.

Mail the original form and the check for the permit processing fee to the Region 4 Migratory Bird Permitting Office at P.O. Box 49208, Atlanta, GA 30359. Fax a copy of the permit application to USDA Wildlife Services at (352) 377-5559. Contact the USDA Wildlife Services (352-377-5556) if you do not have access to the internet or have permit questions.

If you have further questions or need more help, call your regional Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission office:

★ MAIN HEADQUARTERS

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Farris Bryant Building
620 S. Meridian St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600
850-488-4676

● REGIONAL OFFICES

Northwest Region
3911 Highway 2321
Panama City, FL 32409-1659
850-265-3676

North Central Region
3377 East U.S. Highway 90
Lake City, FL 32055-8795
386-758-0525

Northeast Region
1239 S.W. 10th Street
Ocala, FL 3441-0323
352-732-1225

Southwest Region
3900 Drane Field Road
Lakeland, FL 33811-1299
863-648-3200

South Region
8535 Northlake Boulevard
West Palm Beach, FL 33412
561-625-5122

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Regional Offices

