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Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus*

Although Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers resemble one another in color and pattern, the Hairy Woodpecker is considerably larger, and much rarer, than its small look-alike. The breeding range of the Hairy Woodpecker is similar to the Downy Woodpecker, but the southern edge of the distribution of the Hairy Woodpecker extends to Panama, Belize, and the Bahamas (AOU 1983).

Habitat. The Hairy Woodpecker inhabits pine forests, oak hammocks, and river bottomlands and is rarely found in residential areas. Individual pairs tend to be isolated from other Hairy Woodpeckers. The diet is 75 to 80% insects (e.g., beetle larvae, ants, caterpillars); the remainder consists of seeds and fruit (Howell 1932, Martin et al. 1951).

Both sexes assist in excavating the cavity 4 to 12 m (12 to 40 ft) above the ground, usually in a snag but occasionally in a fence post or living cypress. Three or 4 white eggs comprise a typical clutch. The eggs are incubated for 11 to 12 days, and the young fledge in approximately 3 weeks (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Parental care continues for several weeks after the young have fledged (Kilham 1983).

Seasonal Occurrence. Winter frequencies for the Hairy Woodpecker are somewhat lower than those in summer (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Eggs for this species have been found from April through June.

Status. Although the Hairy Woodpecker is not an endangered species like its relative, the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, some observers feel that in Florida it is rarer than the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. If one compares the number of quadrangles with confirmed breeding for both species 84 for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and only 31 for the Hairy Woodpecker such a case might be made. However, the Hairy Woodpecker is not restricted to old-growth pine forests, does not breed cooperatively and does not have state and federal biologists searching for it. The total number of quadrangles with Hairy Woodpeckers, 225, outnumbers the 118 quadrangles with Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.

Historically, the Hairy Woodpecker has never been abundant in Florida (Owre 1978). It is considered rare to uncommon in north Florida, and its abundance decreases southward in the peninsula (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

The Atlas map shows that Hairy Woodpeckers are scattered rather uniformly across the state, except for the southeastern peninsula and the Keys. Only Baker, Gilchrist, and Broward counties reported no Hairy Woodpeckers, despite the presence of extensive pine forests. The apparent absence may, however, be a result of inadequate coverage.

The species appears to be declining, perhaps due to current forestry management practices, which emphasize shorter harvest rotations, and continued fragmentation and loss of forested habitats (Owre 1978). Hairy



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Woodpeckers do not tolerate human disturbance very well, even though individual birds do not seem especially shy.

Robert W. Loftin

Hairy Woodpecker

