

JUST FOR U.S.*

GRADES 4-7

* UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE

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HAMMER HEAD

RAT-A-TAT-TAT

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Chips fly and the hammering goes on and on. It is dinner time for the pileated (pil' ee ate ed) woodpecker. The big bird is finding wood-chewing insects like beetles and carpenter ants.

Woodpeckers were the first drummers in America!

These birds use the outside of a hollow tree to make their tapping **LOUD**. Sometimes they drill on metal like a rain gutter. This loud drumming is a woodpecker's way of telling every one this is its territory.



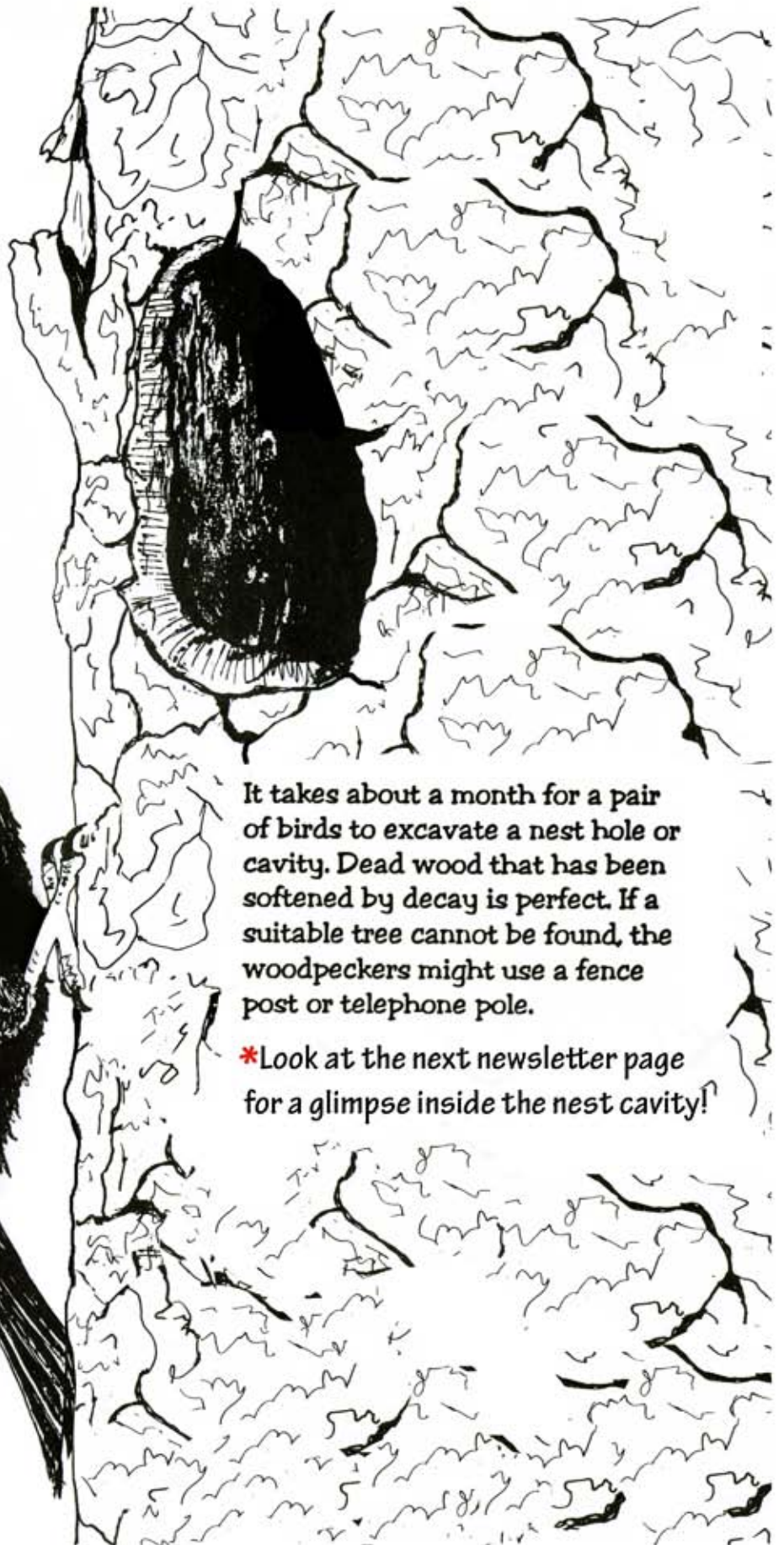
The jet-black pileated woodpecker is the biggest woodpecker in Georgia.
(shown here 1/2 actual size)

Males and females have red top-knots. Males also have red feathers near their beaks.

This hammering bird has strong neck muscles. A thick skull protects its brain and eyes from all the pounding.



Two toes point forward and two backward on each foot to give the woodpecker a good grip. Stiff tail feathers are used as props.

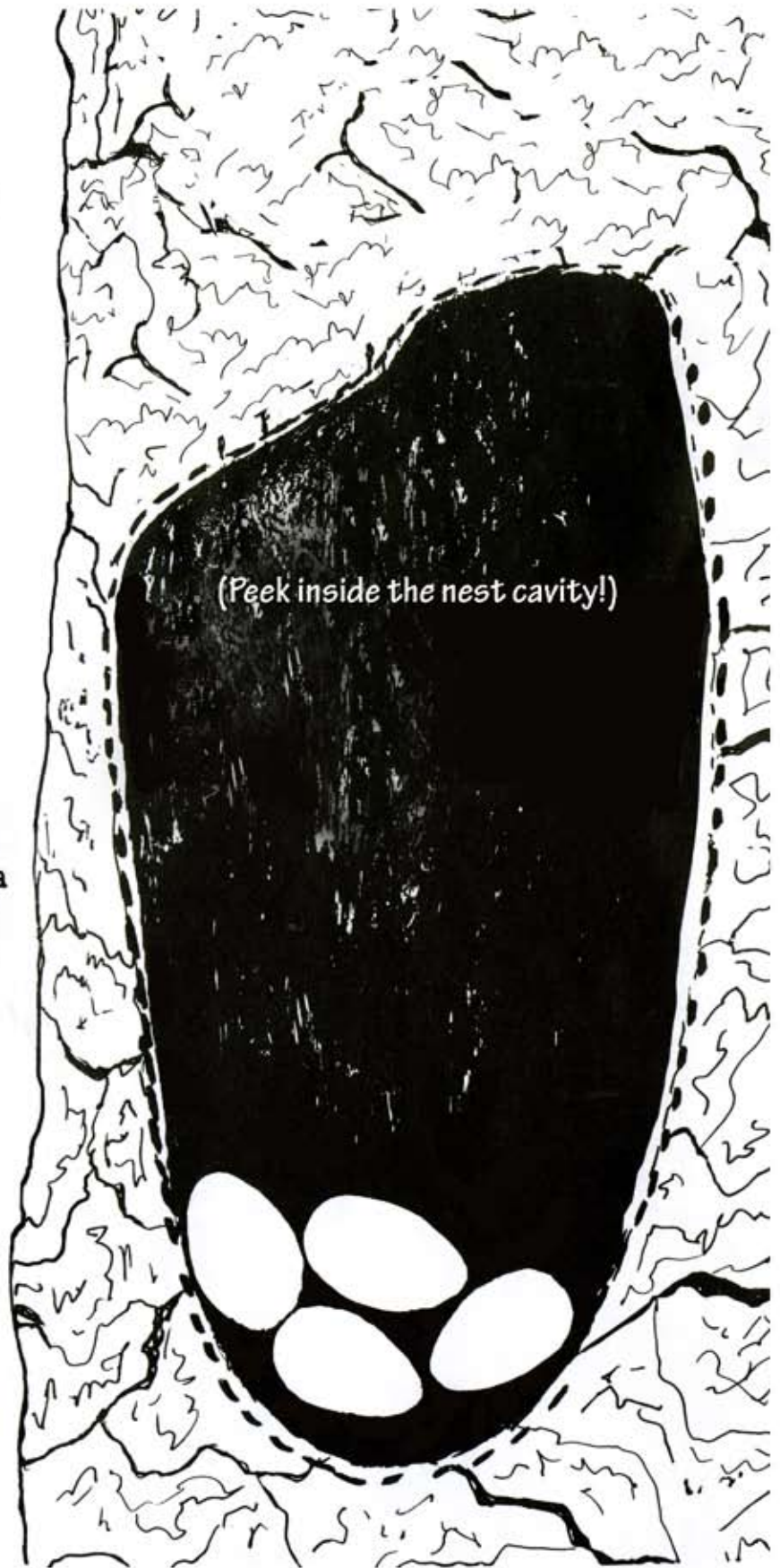


It takes about a month for a pair of birds to excavate a nest hole or cavity. Dead wood that has been softened by decay is perfect. If a suitable tree cannot be found, the woodpeckers might use a fence post or telephone pole.

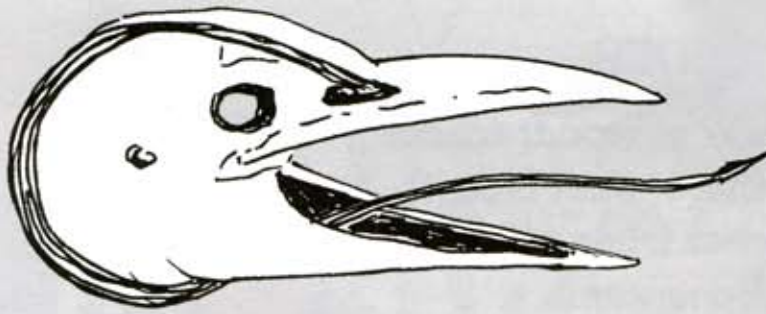
*Look at the next newsletter page for a glimpse inside the nest cavity!

The nest cavity must be deep enough so raccoons and possums cannot reach in and steal the eggs or grab the young.

In April, the female will lay glossy white eggs and both parents will incubate them. After 18 days, the featherless young hatch. In about a month, they will be ready to leave the nest. The young will stay near their parents for the rest of the summer.



When a woodpecker family leaves its nest, other hole-nesting animals like starlings, bluebirds, owls, or flying squirrels move in. Gray squirrels may chew the entry larger and use the cavity for their snug winter home.



The woodpecker's remarkable tongue can reach two inches beyond the tip of the beak. The tongue is like a spear with barbs. It is coated with sticky saliva that helps capture quick-moving insects. When the tongue is pulled in, it fits around the top of the skull behind the eyes. The back of the tongue is anchored in the right nostril and this bird breathes through its left nostril.

One pair of pileated woodpeckers needs nearly 200 acres for its territory.

When roads and houses are built, the trees woodpeckers need are cut down. Unless they are dangerous, dead trees should be left standing for hammer head habitat.



Once you learn to recognize the loud, laughing call of a pileated woodpecker, you can always identify them.

Check out the special announcement on page 6.

WOODPECKER FEEDER

You can get a closer look at woodpeckers by making a feeder for them. Suet (sue it) is the white fat the butcher trims off meat. Ask for suet at the meat counter in a grocery store.



SUET/PEANUT BUTTER CAKES

- 2 cups suet, cut into pieces
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 2 cups finely cracked corn or rolled oats
- 2 cups oatmeal
- several small containers like milk cartons or muffin cups
- 1 mesh bag like the ones onions are sold in

INSECTS

CAKES

Directions:

1. Melt suet in small saucepan placed inside a larger pan that contains boiling water, or use a double boiler.
2. Cool in saucepan until it hardens, then melt again.
3. Cook over low heat until the suet begins to thicken, stir in the peanut butter.
4. Slowly add other ingredients and continue stirring.
5. Pour into containers and freeze.
6. Put one or more suet cakes into a mesh bag and tie the top closed. Nail your feeder as high you can reach on a large tree.

Watch the woodpeckers enjoy their treat.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!

FINISH OUR JOKE:

**KNOCK! KNOCK!
WHO'S THERE?
WOODY.
WOODY WHO?.....**

**DRAW A PICTURE OF AN
ANIMAL THAT WOULD
MOVE INTO AN EMPTY
WOODPECKER NEST.**



Photo: Wikipedia public domain

**This female Pileated Woodpecker
is feasting at an ant infested log!**

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