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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 Americal

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)



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.



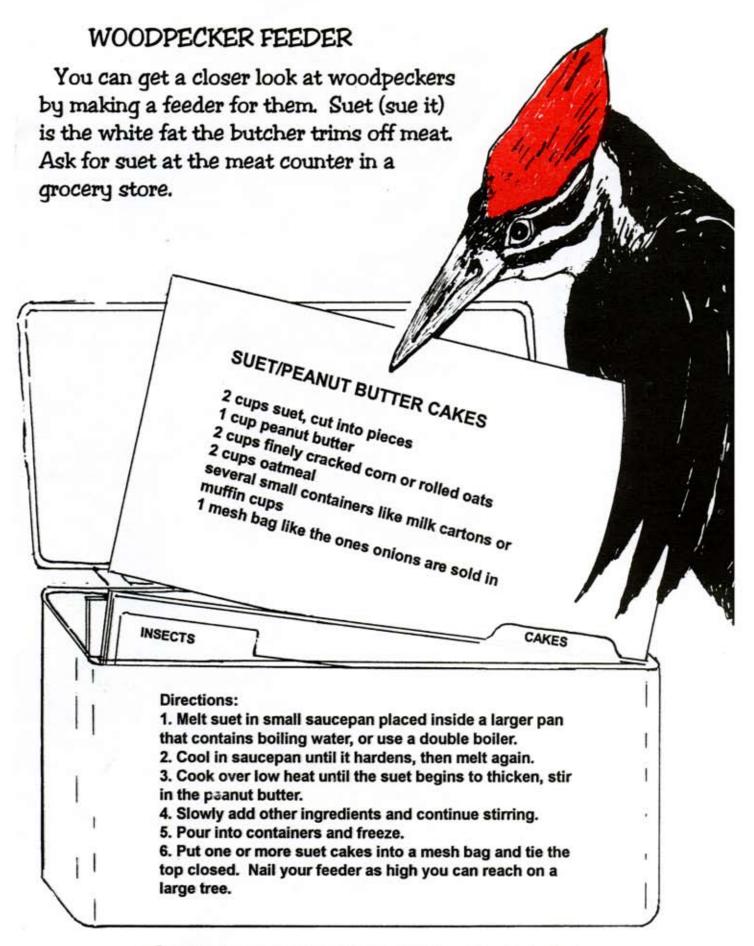
The woodpecker's remarkable tongue can reach two inches beyond the tip of the beak. The tongue is like a spear with barbs. It is coated with sticky saliva that helps capture quick-moving insects. When the tongue is pulled in, it fits around the top of the skull behind the eyes. The back of the tongue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

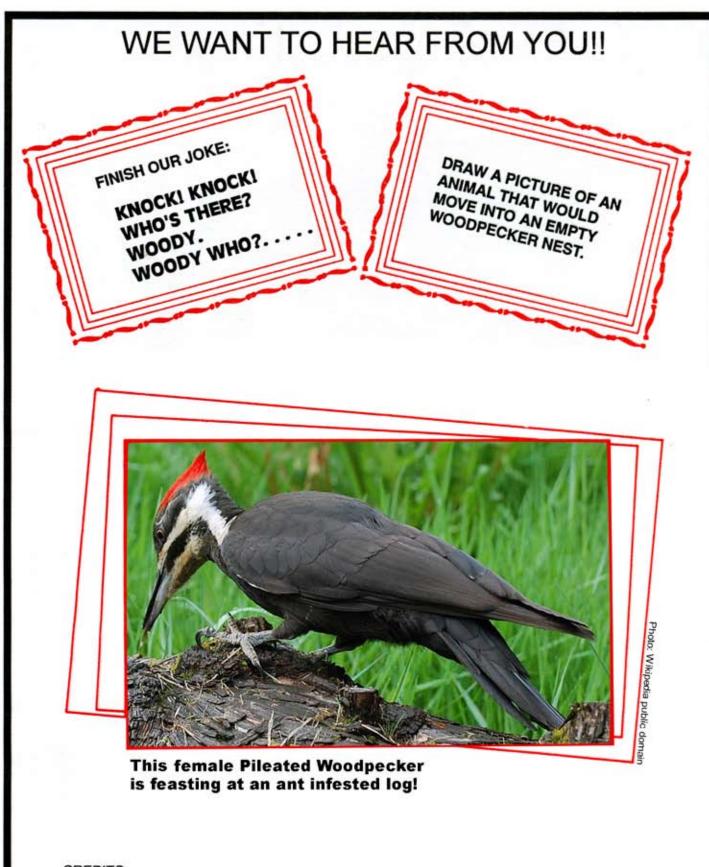
When roads and houses are built, the trees woodpeckers need are cut down. Unless they are dangerous, dead trees should be left standing for hammer head habitat.

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.



Watch the woodpeckers enjoy their treat.



CREDITS:

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