

# Songbirds of Missouri

# Woodpecker



## Vocabulary

Match the word with the definition, then write a sentence using each word. Share your sentences with the class.

___ Species	A. A distinguishing feature or quality
___ Incubate	B. The newly hatched, wormlike form of many insects before metamorphosis
___ Larvae	C. A class of animals that have certain distinctive characteristics and which are able to interbreed
___ Courtship	D. The process of engaging in specific behaviors to attract a mate
___ Conspicuous	E. Easy to be seen, clearly visible
___ Repellant	F. To eat
___ Cavity	G. The larva of an insect, especially a beetle
___ Grub	H. A hollow place
___ Consume	I. Something that repels, or drives away a pest
___ Characteristic	J. To provide the heat necessary for hatching

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: CA.1, CA.6, Goal 2.1)

## Short Answer Q&A

1. What is the most distinguishing characteristic of the red-bellied woodpecker?
2. How did the red-bellied woodpecker get its name?
3. What benefits do woodpeckers provide to the natural world and how?
4. What two purposes does pecking on trees serve for the woodpecker?
5. What are two important foods in the woodpecker's summer diet?
6. How do woodpeckers nest? How many eggs do they typically produce?
7. How can woodpeckers be a nuisance to homeowners?
8. How many species of woodpeckers can be found in Missouri?

(Missouri Show-Me Standard: Goal 1.5)

## Classroom Activity

(Missouri Show-Me-Standards: S.3, S.4)

Grade levels: K-3

**Objectives:** After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Explain why woodpeckers are able to find grubs and insects in trees
- Explain how woodpeckers help keep our forests healthy
- Explain how woodpeckers are affected when forest habitat disappears

### Materials:

- Several large pieces of cardboard. If available, use boxes from washers, dryers, refrigerators, long fluorescent light bulbs or other types of large appliances. If these aren't available, use whatever types of long pieces of cardboard can be found
- Pieces of clay
- Duct tape
- Colored markers or crayons
- Plastic toy hammers or other type of tapping devices

### Background:

Woodpeckers find hidden insects and insect larvae by pecking on tree trunks until they hear a different sound, indicating something is hidden under the bark. This activity will test how good your students' "woodpecker" skills are.

### Procedure:

Prior to the activity, explain to the students what woodpeckers are and how they find their food.

- 1) Divide students into groups of three or four. Have enough pieces of cardboard so that each group has one. Have each group draw and color the middle portion of a tree trunk on their cardboard. Make sure the trunk is wide — several feet across if possible.
- 2) After class or when students aren't around, attach pieces of clay that are marble-sized or slightly larger in a scattered arrangement on the un-colored side of the cardboard. Secure the clay to the cardboard with pieces of duct tape.
- 3) The next class period, explain to each group that they are woodpeckers that will have to find food. Demonstrate with a toy hammer or some other type of tapping device, such as an ink pen or kitchen utensil, how the tapping sounds are different at different locations on the cardboard. (The tapping sound is less hollow when they tap where the clay is.)
- 4) One by one, hold each teams' piece of cardboard and have the team members take turns coming to the cardboard to look for "food." Without peeking on the other side, the team members should try to find the pieces of clay by lightly tapping. When students think they've found a piece, they should circle the spot where they think it is with a colored marker and put their initials by the circle. Each team member should try to find two pieces of clay on their teams' piece of cardboard.
- 5) When the activity is completed, have all the teams turn over their cardboard to see how accurate they were.

If possible, have a tree or insect expert speak to the class about what these under-bark insects are and how some of them can harm trees. Explain that woodpeckers help trees by eating these insects. Explain that woodpeckers also use old dead trees for nesting purposes. Teachers, or if possible, a local bird expert, can discuss with students what happens to woodpeckers when forests begin to disappear.