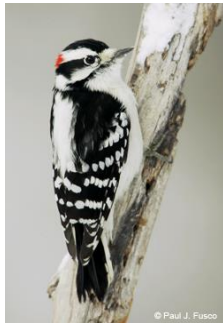




## Who's That Knocking on the Birdfeeder?

Woodpeckers are among the winter residents that make frequent visits to bird feeders. The species most commonly seen in this area are downy and hairy woodpeckers. The two are very similar in appearance; they differ mainly in size and beak length. The males of both species have an obvious red patch on the back of their heads, whereas the females lack this splash of color. At your backyard feeder, the downy is much more likely to be seen. It is about the size of a sparrow (versus the hairy which is about the size of a robin) and it has a small beak compared to the much longer bill of the hairy. Downy woodpeckers are the smallest American woodpecker and they are also the most common on the East Coast.



downy  
woodpecker

[www.ct.gov](http://www.ct.gov)



hairy  
woodpecker

[www.ct.gov](http://www.ct.gov)

In the summer these woodpeckers, like other woodpeckers, forage for insects and larvae and take advantage of nuts and seeds when available. In winter, they enjoy supplemental feedings of suet and sunflower seeds.

Did you know...?

- Most woodpeckers have two toes pointing forward and two pointing back for exceptional grip on vertical tree surfaces.
- Woodpeckers have a pad between their brains and their skulls to absorb the impact of pounding their beaks against wood.
- Woodpeckers generally peck slowly to feed, but drum quickly to attract a mate or communicate with other woodpeckers. They typically peck 8-10,000 times per day.
- Woodpeckers have long barbed tongues with which they can spear their insect prey.
- New Hampshire has 8 species of woodpecker: downy, hairy, pileated, red-bellied, red-headed, yellow belly sapsucker, northern flicker, and American three-toed.
- The largest North American woodpecker (16-19 inches tall) is the pileated woodpecker. It excavates rectangular holes for feeding but round holes for nesting.

- Northern flickers eat lots and lots of ants, often from the ground. One bird was found to have over 3000 ants in its stomach.