



*Male Northern Flicker*

# Natural Resource Bulletin

## Woodpecker Damage Management

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### Quick Facts:

Aurora is home to three common woodpecker species, but the **NORTHERN FLICKER** is generally the species responsible for property damage related to woodpecker activity. *Other species found in Aurora include Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers.*

### Identification:

Flickers are a large, brown woodpecker with a large black "bib" in front, black dots on the breast, black bars on the back.

In flight, look for a prominent white patch on the rump and a flash of red under the wings.

Males have a bright red "mustache" that starts at the corner of the mouth and extends down along the cheek.

### Food habits:

Flickers eat insects and other arthropods. Residents might note "flicker holes" or shallow divots in the ground where flickers have been foraging for ants and beetles.

### Species status:

Flickers are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It is unlawful to harm a flicker, an active nest site, or flicker eggs. Residents can combine habitat modification, passive deterrents and active deterrents, such as hazing, to mitigate flicker damage.

### Why is that woodpecker drumming on my roof?

Spring is an important time for wildlife to seek out and impress potential mates. The male northern flicker is no exception. Flickers use drumming—rapid banging on anything that makes a lot of noise—as a means to not only assert their territory but also attract potential mates. The louder the drumming, the more impressive it is to female flickers. The suburban landscape is rich with effective noisemakers such as chimney tops, flashing, roof venting and gutters. While the loud drumming may be annoying, it usually does not cause damage to the substrate.

Simple solutions such as hanging some metallic ribbon or holiday garland in the area may scare the bird off and prevent early morning drumming events. Also, if you are patient, the drumming season doesn't last long. Once territories and mates are settled, the drumming should end.

### What can I do if woodpeckers are damaging my home?

Woodpeckers are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). It is unlawful to harm individual birds, an active nest site or eggs. Residents can combine habitat modification, passive deterrents and active deterrents, such as hazing, to mitigate flicker or other woodpecker damage.

#### Habitat modification:

Flickers are insect eating birds, and they forage year-round. For this reason, honeybee, wasp and hornet nests/hives or other insect infestations can attract flickers and result in flicker damage year-round. Consider removing hives, nests or other infestation from the affected area. In the case of nest building activity, consider purchasing or making and installing a flicker box in the area of the damage. This way, flickers can nest without causing structural damage.

#### Passive deterrents:

Flickers don't like shiny, unpredictable things. Residents can hang a windsock, reflective tape, cut up pie tins or holiday garland in the damage area. The unpredictable movement of the material often scares flickers away from the area.

#### Active deterrents:

Residents can use a water gun to actively haze flickers away from homes. Remember that the goal with hazing is not to harm the animal, but rather to train it to avoid certain areas.

