

Woodpeckers are Banging Away on My House! Help!

From allaboutbirds.org:

Researchers at the Cornell Lab have performed studies on nuisance woodpeckers. One study, [External Characteristics of Houses Prone to Woodpecker Damage](#), found that lighter colored aluminum and vinyl sidings are less likely to be damaged by woodpeckers. If you are building a home in the woods or in a tree-filled neighborhood, consider choosing lighter colors on the outside of your house and do not choose wooden or log siding.

Some homeowners have success deterring woodpeckers with windsocks, pinwheels, helium balloons (shiny, bright Mylar balloons are especially effective), strips of aluminum foil, or reflective tape. Other people keep woodpeckers away by covering an affected area with burlap or attaching bird netting (the kind designed for gardens and fruit trees) from overhanging eaves to the siding. If you use netting, make sure it is taut and set at least 3 inches from the siding to avoid birds pecking through it. Close off openings on all sides to prevent birds from becoming trapped between the netting and the house.

If there are woodpecker holes, plug them with wood putty and then paint or stain to discourage further activity. If a woodpecker has dug a nesting hole into your house, make sure there are no birds or eggs inside before sealing it up. If there are either, allow the eggs to hatch and the young to fledge – the damage has already been done. Once the birds are out of the hole, then seal it up.

Never use any sticky or greasy “repellent”. These types of products can fatally injure birds and other animals.

I asked my friends who live either in the woods or in tree-filled neighborhoods what has worked for them. I also have always lived in tree-filled areas and these suggestions have worked for me:

1. Do not plant trees close to your house and if some are there, remove the branches that are right at your house. Having as much of an open space as you can between trees and your house will discourage woodpeckers because they must fly across that open space to get from the trees to your house. Woodpeckers tend to avoid that. They are much more comfortable within trees – they are woodland birds.
2. Place a birdfeeder in your yard – away from your house – with seed and mixes that will attract woodpeckers. If you provide them with an easy access to food, they may not be as eager to search the siding or eaves of your house for insects. Even though the feeder may attract a few more woodpeckers than would be there without the feeder, the idea is they eat at your feeder, not off your house. (The upside to this is if you have woodpeckers foraging on the side of your house and they are actually getting insects, then they have alerted you to a potential problem. Contact a pest control company for an assessment of what insects are present and what damage they are doing.)
3. Woodpeckers can use your house for drumming. To discourage that, if you have a dead tree or hollow stump, do not remove it – there is a good chance the woodpecker will use that instead of your house. If you do not have a dead tree or stump, you can temporarily attach padding or foam strips to wherever the bird is drumming on your house. This will deaden the sound and make the area much less desirable. Woodpeckers use drumming to communicate and like a loud sound – if all they can obtain is a muffled ‘thwump’ they will most likely move on to another spot – hopefully away from your house.

4. One of my friends had luck with hanging several sets of wind chimes close to the roofline of her house – she did this instead of removing the branches. I don't know if it was the movement of the chimes – they were shiny – or the sound, or a combination of both, but the woodpecker left her house alone.

5. Colorful windsocks, flags and pinwheels hung near the spot the woodpecker is using can also be a fairly reliable deterrent. Hanging just one does not seem to work – hang several.

6. Using decoy birds (such as an owl or hawk) or snakes. These seem to work but only for a short time. Unless you change the position of these decoys often – probably twice a day or more – the birds get used to them fairly quickly and ignore them. But these decoys can be used until a more permanent solution can be found.

Most of my friends agreed with me that reflective shiny objects that move or twirl in the wind are the best deterrent. And to hang several to many, not just one. Aluminum pie plates were a favorite. One of my friends actually used old CD's that no longer played – an interesting way to recycle! My deterrent of choice is strips of aluminum foil that can blow with the breeze. I space them about 2 inches apart.

And remember - never remove eggs, or capture or harm the birds in any way. Besides being cruel, it is also against the law. Woodpeckers are protected under the Migratory Bird Act and such actions are illegal. Fines and/or jail time can be imposed. (For more information on this treaty, look under "Articles I Have Written" on this website: [Organizations that Not Only Help Birds, But Will Help You Understand Birds](#))

If you have tried several remedies and given them at least a week or more to work, and you are still having trouble, then contact local wildlife offices or even pest control companies that have experience in discouraging birds. And remember one of the reasons you moved into the woods or a tree-filled neighborhood was probably to be closer to nature. Woodpeckers are a part of that. Trees are where they live and they have lives to lead – just as we do. Remember, you can live in almost anywhere, woodpeckers cannot. So you are encroaching on their only type of habitat. Try to live with them and not fight against them. There is no peace or harmony in that.