

Nuttall's Woodpecker

Common in oak woodlands, this small acrobatic woodpecker lives almost exclusively in California.



CARPENTERS OF THE FOREST

Wood chips fly as a woodpecker's powerful beak chisels into a tree trunk. Drilling after insects, it may strike at 16 miles per hour, 20 times each second, for hours on end. Just one of these blows would give other birds a concussion, or at least a severe headache, but a woodpecker's spongy skull and shock-absorbing muscles protect its brain. Special "equipment" helps the woodpecker cling to the bark; two toes angle forward and two angle back for a secure hold, and stiff tail feathers act like a prop.

Pileated Woodpecker

Nearly the size of a crow, the pileated (crested) woodpecker is California's largest woodpecker. Its nest holes are reused by more than 30 species of birds, mammals, and reptiles.



Northern Flicker

Woodpeckers have exceptionally long tongues. On this continent, flickers have the longest tongues of all—the perfect tool for lapping up ants.



Acorn Woodpecker

A tree studded with thousands of small holes signals the presence of a colony of acorn woodpeckers. The tree is their winter storehouse. In the fall, an acorn is tucked into each hole—perhaps as many as 50,000 of them.

