



Pileated Woodpecker

Grand pic en bois

Nipissing Ojibway:Che Bapase (big woodpecker)

Laurier Woods C.A.(LWCA) offers ideal habitat for North America's largest surviving woodpecker. The Pileated Woodpecker are year-round residents in LWCA which provide plenty of large hardwood and conifer trees for food and nesting cavities. You will hear them calling through the Woods with their distinctive loud, high, and clear, series of piping calls. The loud percussive drumbeat they make as they excavate feeding or nest cavities rises and falls and is easy to identify.

Walking the trails in LWCA you will see dead or dying conifer and hardwood trees with large oblong holes at eye-level made by Pileated Woodpeckers, these are feeding cavities. Their nest cavities are a little more difficult to spot, the opening is usually the size of a golf ball and is located higher up on a tree.

About 25 percent of all vertebrates in Ontario use tree cavities at some point in their life cycle for nesting, roosting, feeding or escape. The nest cavities of Pileated Woodpeckers are very important as they are large and provide homes for many other birds, mammals and invertebrates that are unable to create their own tree cavity home. For example, we have seen the porcupine, flying squirrels or occasionally a barred owl uses the Pileated Wood Pecker's nest cavity in LWCA.

In the spring you are able to see the Pileated Woodpeckers display by spreading their wings, raising the crest on their heads, gliding near one another and drumming on potential nest cavity trees. A new nest cavity is excavated every year by the pair. Both parents take turns incubating the 3-5 eggs. When the young hatch, both parents feed their young usually with carpenter ants, beetle larvae, fruits and nuts. The nesting pair will stay around the nest site all year. Other Pileated Woodpeckers are tolerated around the nest site during the non-breeding season.

Please note that woodpecker nest cavities are desired homes to other species. You may see skirmishes during the breeding season between other birds and mammals with woodpeckers as they fight to take over a nest cavity. Often the woodpeckers will lose out or have their eggs destroyed. When the young hatch their loud cries will attract the parents but also predators that are looking for a meal. This is life and death in nature, we can allow nature to unfold as it should by keeping our distance from nest holes until the young have fledged.

This strikingly beautiful bird is a favorite with photographers because of its dramatic beauty.