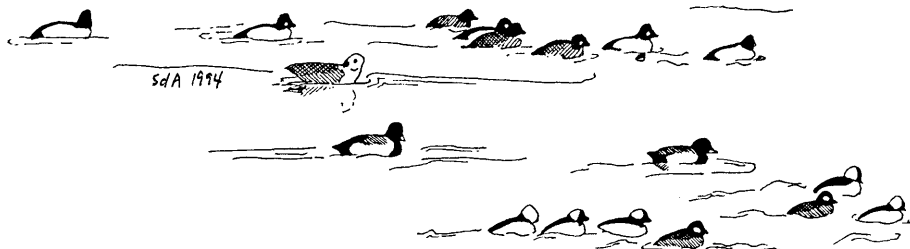


LITERATURE CITED

- Cozzolino S. 1996. 1996 New York State Midwinter Aerial Waterfowl Survey. NYS DEC, Latham. 8 p.
- Paxton RO, Boyle WJ, Jr, Cutler DA. 1996. Hudson-Delaware Region. *NAS Field Notes* Spr;50(1):25-31.
- Serle JR 1996. Results of the 1996 midwinter waterfowl survey in the Atlantic flyway states. US Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Migratory Bird Management, Laurel MD. Feb: 1-5.



HAIRY AND RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS USE BARK CREVICE TO BREAK OPEN SEEDS

Kelly M. Erlwein

Sullivan County Community College
1000 Leroy Road, Loch Sheldrake NY 12759

The Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*) is known to have a diet that consists of more than 75% insects, but will come to feeding stations for suet, fruits, nuts, and sunflower seeds (Terres, 1991). On several dates during a snowy March 1996 I observed a male Hairy Woodpecker at a hanging feeder containing black oil sunflower seeds. The bird removed a seed, flew to a nearby tree trunk (a distance of about 3 feet) and inserted the seed into a small niche in the bark. He then proceeded to pound open the shell and eat the contents. The bird returned to the feeder and the entire process was repeated up to 11 times in one feeding session. The Hairy Woodpecker frequented this particular feeder on the Sullivan County Community College campus in Loch Sheldrake, New York so

often that the crevice he used as his vise is clearly visible on the tree trunk. Similarly, a Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) was observed in early May at this feeder using the same technique and the same niche to hold its seed.

Seeds are mostly taken by the Hairy Woodpecker in the fall and winter months, while the Red-bellied Woodpecker is more likely to eat vegetable matter and is rather easily attracted to feeding stations (Bent 1964). Perrins (1985) noted that Great Spotted Woodpeckers (*Picoides major*) make so-called "anvils" into which they wedge cones in order to peck out the seeds. He suggested that the ability to manage seeds in anvils is a significant aid in regions of cold temperatures and resulting scarcity of insects. Kilham (1983) records that Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) have the expertise to place an insect in an anvil in order to peck it into manageable pieces, but that the Hairy Woodpecker possesses none of these talents. Winkler (1995) cites the fact that practically all woodpeckers carry items they cannot ingest easily to a crevice which allows the item to be held firm, where it is prepared for eating. Such sites are most often used only once, although some woodpeckers may use a site repeatedly. Perhaps the severe Sullivan County winter contributed to the birds' ingenuity in using a tree niche as a vise to enable them to obtain food.

LITERATURE CITED

- Bent AC, (Beal FEL, in part). 1964. Eastern Hairy Woodpecker. Redbellied Woodpecker. In: *Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers*. New York, Dover Publications, p 13-24, 237-245.
- Kilham, L. 1983. Hairy Woodpecker. Redbellied Woodpecker. In: *Woodpeckers of Eastern North America*. New York, Dover Publications, p 38, 129-149.
- Perrins C M, Middleton ALA. 1985. Woodpeckers. In: *The Encyclopedia of Birds*. New York, Equinox (Oxford), p 298.
- Terres JK. (1991 ed.) Woodpecker Family. Woodpecker, hairy. Woodpecker, red-bellied. In: *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*. New York, Wings Books, p 1021, 1024-1025.
- Winkler H, Christie DA, Nurney D. 1995. Food and foraging. In: *Woodpeckers, A Guide to the Woodpeckers of the World*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, p 24.