



Why do they do what they do???

(and when will they stop pecking on my house?)

A Bird Brain Article by Wayzata Manager and Backyard Habitat Naturalist Melissa Block

Woodpeckers love suet. They love peanuts. They may even love the side of your house. Peanuts and suet are great, but we're guessing you'd prefer they leave your home alone.

As with most animal behavior, it's not random – they have their reasons. In the spring, it is usually a case of a woodpecker "drumming" to claim his territory or advertising for a mate. It's also nesting season so the birds may be looking for a nesting cavity. Late summer and early fall house attacks usually means the birds are after bugs that live in the siding. (for future reference, woodpeckers prefer cedar and redwood siding)

The good news is that you can deter them from using your house as a food source or nesting spot. Remember that not every method will work every time. You may have to try a different things to find what works best for your birds.

First, cover and repair the holes. Other woodpeckers see the holes and think it's a good food source, or nesting place.

If you suspect that they're going after wasp and beetle larvae (if they're after your siding in the late summer and fall, this is what they're finding), squirt a small amount of linseed oil in each opening, before repairing the hole. Depending on what type of

insect infestation you have, this may kill them. Fill in the hole with wood putty.

If you have Carpenter Bees, which incidentally create round half-inch size holes in the siding often mistaken for woodpecker holes, there's a great reference page on how to control and eliminate them at: <http://www.pestproducts.com/carpenterbee2.htm>.

You can use "Bird Scare" balloons – put the balloon up in front of the affected area and leave it up for about a week. Sometimes this is enough to keep them away.

Another deterrent is Mylar (shiny) tape. This is easiest to use on the first floor of a house. Tack several streamers (6'-8') over the affected area, about a foot apart. Leave the ends unattached so that the streamers move in the wind. You can also hang old CDs or DVDs, or even shiny pie tins in the same way. Make sure that they move in the wind.

Create a woodpecker feeding station away from your



house. Offer suet and peanut feeders in the area, ideally in an area near large trees.

Now, some things that we can tell you will not work. Odor repellents: Birds have a very poor sense of smell. Fake owls do not work. It may fool the woodpeckers for about 15 minutes, but that's all.

Remember that all woodpeckers are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Act: you may not trap or kill them. Fines can be very, very expensive.