

NATURE STUDY LESSONS

(b) To the teacher.

All the woodpeckers build their nests in trees. A hole is made inside of a rotten trunk usually, but rarely a living tree with a decayed centre is chosen. They select a great variety of trees for the purpose. The hole is as round as if made by an auger, and is just large enough to admit the bird. After passing into the centre, the cavity passes down, and as it does so it widens so as to form a bottle-shaped cavity. The chips are either scratched out or removed by the beak, and in the case of the downy woodpecker are removed to some distance so as not to reveal the nest. The walls of the cavity are very smooth. Both male and female take part in the excavation and in incubation. It takes from 5 to 10 days to complete excavation. From 4 to 7 pure white eggs are laid on a few chips that are left in the bottom. The white color is useful for revealing their position to the parent in such a dark place, otherwise in entering they might easily be broken. One is laid almost every day. If the eggs are removed as rapidly as laid, the bird will continue laying for weeks or months. Incubation last from 12 days in the smaller species to 14 in the larger. While the red-headed woodpecker brings the insect food in its bill to the nestlings, the flicker and the hairy woodpecker regurgitate the food from the crops into the mouths of the young. In from three to four weeks the young are ready to leave the nest. The male often drills a second hole into the same or an adjoining tree so that at night he can remain near his mate. Nesting usually takes place during May.

2. GENERAL HABITS AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE.

(a) Observations to be made by pupils.

Which of the woodpeckers remain all winter and which migrate?

When do the migrants arrive?

When do they go south again?

In what kind of habitat are the woodpeckers found?

Of what use are they to man?

Are any harmful and in what way?

How should man act toward them?