

JANUARY 15 - 31, 2021 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

By Dick Harlow

PILEATED WOODPECKER



1. **Pileated Woodpecker**, *Dryocopus pileatus*,
Female, © Dick Harlow



2. **Pileated Woodpecker**, *Dryocopus pileatus*,
Female, © Dick Harlow

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Notice that the behavior of this female is concentrated on searching for and hearing grubs in the wood that are close to the surface. Therefore, she does not have to go very deep to find a meal.

I feel very lucky that this female was more interested in finding food rather than worrying about me. She didn't look up once as my camera kept clicking away!

This is a female, noted by the fact it has no red mustache. Because this image was taken in the late spring it cannot be an immature; its feather coloring and feather condition says it is an adult.

The Pileated Woodpecker is North America's largest woodpecker. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker, thought to be extinct, was larger, being just under 20 inches, whereas the Pileated is around 17 inches long.

This Woodpecker prefers deciduous and/ or coniferous forests, preferably mixed but can be found in a variety of ecosystems.



3. Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*,
Female, © Dick Harlow

For example, here at EastView we are not in a forest, nor are we next to a mature mixed forest. We are in the vicinity of the Green Mountain National Forest park system and the Green Mountains. Yet we have had Pileated Woodpeckers flying over and beside EastView property every year since 2013. I don't know whether it is the wooded area around the Middlebury College compost and dump or the scattering of trees in and about the Middlebury Golf course; but whatever it is we all enjoy seeing these large woodpeckers whenever they decide to show themselves.

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4. This is an example of the type of hole or excavation chiseled into a tree by a Pileated Woodpecker. © Picuki.com

Knowing that a Pileated Woodpecker has been in the vicinity is easy when it leaves evidence as in picture 4. The primary insect that these woodpeckers are after are insect grubs and Carpenter Ants, but they will take whatever insect they find burrowed or hiding in a tree or its bark.

Although this woodpecker is after ants and other insects it will also eat fruit and nuts, or visit your feeder for seed and suet.

Competition for nest sites between this large woodpecker and other hole nesting species can be a problem if there aren't enough dead trees for the various species.

Picture #4 could have been the beginning of a nest hole or simply turned into a food source and needed to be elongated. Whatever the case, this is the type of excavation that Pileated Woodpeckers make and therefore are easily identified.

The normal clutch size of a Pileated Woodpecker is three to five eggs and it only has one brood a year.

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

- **Red Fox (thanks Max)**

Month of JANUARY 01-31, 2021

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

PRECIPITATION

Average January Precipitation for Vermont = 2.05 inches.

Total precipitation for January was 43.8 mm or 1.72 inches. This is a 0.33- inch deficit for the month.

Overcast Days: We had 26 days, three weeks and five days of overcast skies. Of those overcast skies 10 days produced precipitation, one day of rain, nine days of snow or snow flurries.