

# Vertebrate Pests: How can I keep woodpeckers from pecking my house?

The persistent tapping and drumming of woodpeckers, sapsuckers and flickers make them very noisy and destructive pests indeed—especially if they're drumming right outside your bedroom window! The noise and destruction is often worse in the spring, (mating season), when the birds announce their territories or their "availability" in the loudest way possible—sometimes making even *more* noise by tapping on metal siding and gutters. But these birds may also be pecking at your home or nearby trees to feed on insects or tree sap, or when they're looking for a soft spot in the wood to hollow out for a nest. So you should take some action as soon as you believe the woodpecker is a problem, especially because the longer they stay, the harder they are to get rid of!

The good news is that people have come up with a variety of ways to rid their homes and yards of these pesky birds but the bad news is that these methods vary widely in their effectiveness. And sadly, the easiest and cheapest ways are often the least effective.

But no matter which method you choose, your first step should be a close and careful inspection to look for insect damage in the area where the bird is pecking your home or trees. Since [carpenter bees and leaf-cutter bees are known to live in wood siding](#), if you get rid of the insects, ideally the annoying birds will leave as well.

Consider these methods to get rid of noisy woodpeckers:

- **Provide a food source.** Some people put out suet and nesting boxes well away from where the birds are pecking so the birds will be attracted to a better, tastier spot away from their homes. However, others claim this method can backfire and the additional food source can end up attracting even more woodpeckers!
- **Shout, bang a pot, or wave a broom at the birds** to get them to leave. For this to be effective, it must be done right after the birds arrive, and each time they make another appearance, which is usually several times a day at least.
- **Hang strips of aluminum foil or reflective Mylar**, Christmas garland, or windsocks, near the affected area. Or try fastening pinwheels near the bird's favorite spot or hanging used or unwanted CDs, after drilling a hole near the edge and attaching with string or fishing line so they can twirl and flash in the breeze.
- **Place plastic owl, hawk or snake models nearby, or helium balloons** with large eyes drawn on them. These items must be moved every few days, however, or the birds will get used to, and then ignore them.
- **Apply sticky substances or repellants to the area.** The birds won't permanently stick to the substances, but don't like the sticky feeling. However, repellants could cause paint or stain discoloration.
- **Use a physical barrier such as a 1/2" or 3/4" wire mesh**, (also known as hardware cloth) or a strong, nylon netting stretched taut over the area but kept away from the house by about 3 inches. This barrier will keep the woodpeckers from getting back to their preferred spots and, hopefully, they'll find another place they like better. Existing

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holes can be patched with thin pieces of galvanized sheet metal or thick plastic, which can be painted to match the house. The galvanized hardware cloth and netting can also be painted to blend in well with your siding.

Be aware that woodpeckers are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, so for any lethal methods such as trapping or shooting, it is likely that a permit would be required.

To learn more about other methods to keep woodpeckers away including sound-activated giant climbing spiders and bouncing, holographic eyes, check out these sites from [Iowa State University](#), [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#), and [University of California's Integrated Pest Management](#).

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