



Male Red-bellied Woodpecker ready to enter the nest cavity as the female leaves



The female returns with an insect. Note The female does not have red her forehead

Brunswick Wildlife Woodpecker Home Invasion

Woodpeckers are generally “keystone species” because mammals, other species of cavity-nesting birds, and even other woodpeckers depend on them to excavate cavities. While birds such as nuthatches are able to make minor renovations of abandoned woodpecker cavities, the primary excavators are the woodpeckers.

This photo, taken at The Nature Conservancy’s Boiling Spring Lakes Preserve, documents a “home invasion” by a Red-bellied Woodpecker of an endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker’s cavity. The fresh resin indicates the tree had not been abandoned.

The female is exiting as the male delivers the next meal for the little ones. This exchange was repeated continually as the insect-bearing adult entered the cavity and stayed until its mate returned with food.

The Red-cockaded Woodpecker pair used a better tree for their nest cavity...one that was only twenty-five feet away. The peaceful coexistence of this year’s nesting may conceal a future problem for the Red-cockaded because their homes are not easy to come by. They excavate cavities in live trees and may take two to three years to create a new one.

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