



AUDUBON SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND NATURE AT HOME

AUDUBON Kids

By Lauren Parmelee, Senior Director of Education

White-breasted Nuthatch



Who Lives in That Hole?

As you hiked through the forest, have you ever seen a hole in a tree and wondered what lived there?

Openings in trees can form slowly due to damage or much more quickly through the work of woodpeckers. When a branch snaps off a tree, it can take many years for bacteria, fungi and insects to create a hole large enough for a small animal to sleep in. When a pair of woodpeckers start to create a nest hole, it only takes few weeks before they have a comfy cavity to hold their young.

Tree cavities provide shelter and safety for animals like raccoons, opossums, mice and squirrels. Owls don't build their own nests, so they often use tree cavities to lay their eggs and raise their young. Keep an eye out for the well-camouflaged Screech Owl sleeping in the doorway of her hole.

Little birds like Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatches will use abandoned woodpecker holes for homes and Eastern Bluebirds will nest in holes in trees on the edges of fields. All these little birds will also snuggle together in holes during cold winter nights.

Believe it or not, ducks can also be found tree holes! Wood Ducks, Hooded Mergansers and Bufflehead all lay their eggs in tree cavities. As soon as the young hatch, they jump out of the hole and waddle down to the water, ready to swim.

Trees are full of tiny holes too. Look closely for evidence of boring insects like bark beetles and termites. If you find neat lines of small holes in the bark of a tree, it may be evidence of the elusive Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. This woodpecker drills holes in live trees so the sap flows, attracting small insects that make for a tasty woodpecker lunch.

You can attract birds that nest in tree cavities to your yard by putting up nest boxes. Depending upon the size of the box's entry hole and the habitat, you can attract Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, Screech Owls and more.

For more information visit: nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses



Eastern Gray Squirrel



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



Raccoon



Eastern Bluebird



Tufted Titmouse



Pileated Woodpecker



Opossum



Eastern Screech Owl



Wood Ducks

