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THE INCREDIBLE WOODPECKER - by David Juhasz

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Woodpeckers have long elicited fascination and admiration from humans. Their winter visits to suet feeders in the northern hemisphere are anticipated and enjoyed by millions. They are usually seen as a flash of colour disappearing through trees. They live solitarily in woods and can be identified by their characteristic undulation flight: three or four rapid wingbeats carrying them up, followed by a downward glide. They are more likely to be identified by their harsh or ringing calls, such as the loud laugh of the Green Woodpecker, or by their drumming a rapid tattoo as they drill nest holes with their bills in dead branches and occasionally metal roofs.

There are about 200 species of true woodpeckers, spread over the wooded parts of the world, except Madagascar, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and surrounding islands. Woodpecker species vary in size from about 15 to 53 centimetres (6 to 21 inches).

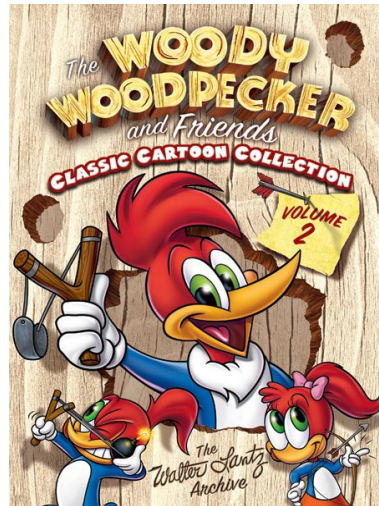
The woodpecker is very specially constructed, exhibiting design and purpose. So unique is the woodpecker that it is difficult to

accept that it is the product of purposeless evolutionary forces. In fact, study the woodpecker carefully and you find evidence that points to its being wonderfully designed by God the Creator.

Woodpeckers spend most of their time spiralling up tree trunks searching for insects. When a woodpecker has searched one tree it flies to the base of the next and repeats the operation. Its ability to climb vertical trunks and to maintain its position while pecking the tree is because it has been designed with two backward-facing toes and an associated arrangement of tendons and leg muscles, sharp claws, and stiff tail feathers tipped with spines which are used as a prop while climbing. It also has exceptionally strong

flight.

Because of the energy they expend, woodpeckers are very hungry birds. A Black Woodpecker, a native of North America, for example, can eat 900 beetle larvae or 1,000 ants at a single sitting; a Green Woodpecker may eat up to 2,000 ants in one day. This seemingly insatiable appetite has a purpose, for



woodpeckers are valuable in the control of insects, even helping to limit the spread of tree diseases, such as Dutch elm disease, by destroying insect carriers. This plays great importance in preserving many of the world's forests.

To find its food, a woodpecker hammers wood at the rate of 15 to 16 times a second - a "rate of fire" nearly twice as fast as a submachine gun.

The forces involved in the woodpecker's hammering away at trees are incredible, for the suddenness with which the head is brought to a halt during each peck results in a stress equivalent to 1,000 times the force of gravity. This is more than 250 times the force to which an astronaut is subjected in a rocket during liftoff!

How is the woodpecker able to withstand such forces? What prevents woodpeckers from beating out their brains? The woodpecker survives this head-bashing and these exceptional forces because God in His wisdom has designed the head, beak, and neck in a special way.

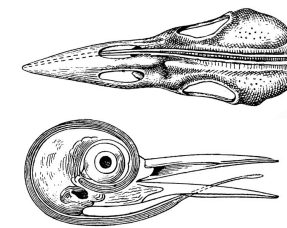
For starters, the Creator has greatly reinforced the woodpecker's skull with bone. This is necessary if the head is not going to break into pieces. He has given the woodpecker a stronger bill than most birds. It must be strong enough to dig into a tree without folding up like an accordion. The bill is chisel-tipped, and when the woodpecker is chiselling away there is a lot of sawdust. Normally in birds, the sawdust would enter the nostrils, but the woodpecker has been designed with slit-like nostrils covered by fine wiry feathers to prevent the sawdust from entering. Also, the beak and brain itself has been cushioned against impact. In most birds, the bones of the beak are joined to the bones of the cranium - the part of the skull that surrounds

the brain. But in the woodpecker the cranium and beak are separated by a sponge-like tissue that takes the shock each time the bird strikes its beak against a tree. The woodpecker's shock-absorber is so good that scientists say it is far better than any that humans have invented.

For added protection to its brain, the woodpecker has special muscles which pull its brain-case away from its beak every time it strikes a blow. But this is only part of the story. If the woodpecker's head were to twist even slightly while hammering the tree, the rotation of its head, combined with the force of pecking, would tear away the bird's brain. But God, the ultimate Designer, has created the woodpecker with superbly co-ordinated neck muscles to keep its head perfectly straight. Thus the bird can withstand the enormous shock it inflicts on itself year in, year out, many thousands of times a day.

Added to the uniquely designed neck muscles, shock-absorbers, head, and the other amazing aspects of the woodpecker, there is the unique tongue. The typical woodpecker, after flaking off bark and drilling a hole in wood to expose insect tunnels, uses its long tongue to reach deep into the tree to retrieve insects and larvae. Without the long tongue, there is no way the woodpecker could retrieve the insects.

To help capture the insects, the long tongue has been specially designed with glands that secrete a thick substance. The insects and worms stick to this long tongue like flies to fly-paper.



How does the woodpecker know it has caught the insects? The Creator has given it a tongue with a hard spearhead

with bristles pointing rearward, which is attached by tiny fibres of the protein collagen. As the tongue probes a tunnel, the impact of the spearhead on any object jams the head back along the shaft. Nerve endings are precisely located in the fluid-filled spaces between the collagen fibres. They provide the brain with information about the type of material contacted; thus, the woodpecker knows whether it has secured an insect or hit the hard wood of a tree. Once the insects stick to its tongue, the woodpecker pulls them from the tree, then pulls in its long tongue and scrapes the insects off into its mouth.

Where does the woodpecker hold such a long tongue when it is not in use? It cannot just roll it up and store it in its beak, for there isn't room. The Creator has provided a unique solution to this problem. The tongue of an ordinary bird is anchored in the back of its beak, but this will not work for the woodpecker, because the tongue is too long. Therefore, the tongue of the woodpecker is anchored in the right nostril. After it emerges from the right nostril, it splits into two halves. Each half passes over one side of the skull underneath the skin, comes around and up underneath the beak, and enters through a hole in the beak. Here the two halves combine. Thus, when the woodpecker is not using his long tongue, he rolls it up and stores it in the right nostril!

Evolutionists would like us to believe that the woodpecker's uniquely designed toes, stiff tail, strong flight, head, beak, neck muscles, shock-absorbers and tongue are the result of its evolving slowly over many millions of years. Instead, the design of the woodpecker presents a great problem to those who believe in evolution.

First, how could the woodpecker have evolved its special shock-absorbers? If it had

started without them, then all the woodpeckers that were alive would have beaten out their brains long ago. Therefore, there should be no woodpeckers left. And if there had ever been a time when woodpeckers did not drill holes in trees they would not have needed the shock-absorbers anyway.

Second, how could the unique arrangement for the woodpecker's tongue have evolved, if, in the beginning, its tongue was anchored in the back of the beak, as it is in ordinary birds? How did the tongue manage to move into the right nostril? If the anchor suddenly hopped from the back of the beak up into the right nostril, the tongue would be too short. And during all the intermediate stages, would the tongue have been long enough to reach the insects and worms inside a tree so the woodpecker could eat and survive?

To look at it from another angle, suppose a bird developed a long tongue anchored in the right nostril, but he did not develop a strong beak, or powerful neck muscles, the shock-absorbers, and so on. What possible use could such a bird make of the long tongue without the other apparatus employed by the woodpecker? On the other hand, suppose a bird developed all that special apparatus needed to drill a hole in a tree, but not the long tongue. He would drill a hole in a tree in anticipation of a meal of insects, but would not be able to reach the insects. Nothing works here until everything works. Design is evident in the woodpecker, but the fossil record is another problem for those who believe woodpeckers have evolved. Fossil woodpeckers are virtually unknown, so the alleged gradual development of lower bird life into the more complex woodpecker over many millions of years cannot be traced in the fossil record. Many fossils claimed long ago as early woodpeckers have now been rejected or called

into question.

The woodpecker must have had all its special designs right from the start to survive all that head-bashing. And this means it must have been created intact, as the Book of Genesis says birds were. It could not have come into existence by the slow and cruel process of evolution. The woodpecker simply did not, and could not, have evolved. It is truly an incredibly designed bird, and strong evidence of God's creation. **Via - Published in The Christian Bird Observer's Magazine, October 1996**

A WORD STUDY....

"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9).

The word "gressive" is from the Latin and means "to walk or go," and has many interesting compounds. "Transgressive" means "To step or go beyond" (as in 2 John 9 above), "digressive," "to turn aside" (see 1 Tim. 1:6), "retrogressive," "to go back" (see Ruth 1:8ff; 2 Tim. 4:10, "progressive," "to go forward" (see 2 Pet. 3:18), "aggressive," "ready to go" (see Titus 3:1; 1 Cor. 15:58).

Let us have a marked readiness toward growth and activity in the Lord's cause, and shun falsehoods and worldly endeavors that hamper and destroy.

"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. 3:12-13).

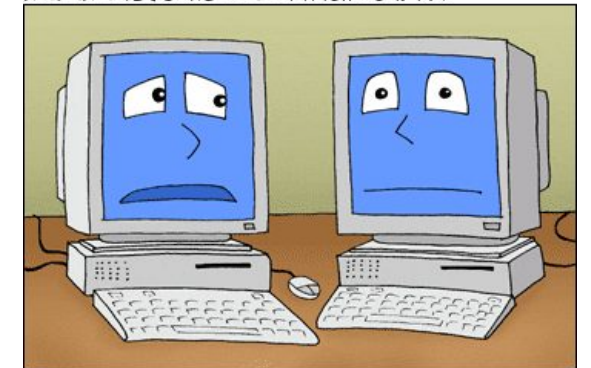
"I was driving down a bumpy country road when I

saw a bag of cement beside the road. It appeared to have fallen off a delivery truck as it hit one of the bumps in the rough road. Being a person who does not like to see anything wasted, I stopped to pick up the lost bag of cement. When I reached down to pick up this heavy bag, to my surprise, I discovered it was not soft and limber as I had expected, but had solidified into an immovable piece of cement.

"Often our lives are like that bag of cement. They take on shapes that were not intended and become hardened in that shape. That bag of cement was meant to become a part of some beautiful structure but, because it did not reach its place of service, it became a useless rock in the form of a bag of cement." (Author Unknown).

Let us be meticulously careful not to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin or of false knowledge.

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Thanks to Kerry Hodgkinson 11-29-2005
OH MY NO ... HUMANS DIDN'T INVENT US AT ALL ... WE EVOLVED FROM PLASTIC, WIRES, AND LITTLE MICRO THINGERS

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