

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*



photo credit Elaine R. Wilson

The Northern Flicker is a unique woodpecker that prefers to forage on the ground to look for food over hammering on tree trunks, as other woodpeckers do. The “yellow-shafted” male and the “red-shafted” female looked so different that they were once considered different species.

Description

Size and Shape- Large woodpecker with a long beak, a slim head, and a long tail

Color Pattern- Gray, brown, and red head, yellow-orange bodies, white chest, black tail, and black spot all over the body, Males are “yellow-shafted” (more yellowish in color) with a red spot on back of the head while females are “red-shafted (more reddish in color) with a red spot on cheeks.

Behavior- Unlike typical woodpeckers, they prefer to feed on the ground, though they do fly up and down smoothly like most woodpeckers.

Song- Loud *kyyeer*, long rattle

Habitat- Woodlands, open fields with scattered trees, suburban parks and lawns

Range- The Northern Flicker is abundant in the US. Many migrate to Canada during the summer. Frequently seen at the Garden City Bird Sanctuary.

Diet- Mainly insects like beetles, flies, and ants from the ground. They also eat fruits and seeds such as sunflowers and thistle seeds.

Bird Statistics

Scientific name- *Colaptes auratus*

Family- Picidae (Woodpecker)

Conservation Status- Least concern

Length- 11-12.2 in (28-31 cm)

Wingspan- 16.5-20.1 in (42-51 cm)

Weight- 3.9-5.6 oz (110-160 g)

Egg Statistics

Color- White

Nest- Tree cavity with a nest of wood chips

Clutch size- 5-8 eggs

Number of broods- 1

Length- 0.7-1.4 in (1.9-3.6 cm)

Width- 0.6-1.3 in (1.6-3.3 cm)

Incubation period- 11-13 days

Nestling period- 24-27 days

Additional Information

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Flicker/id

<http://birding.about.com/od/Woodpecker/p/Northern-Flicker.htm>