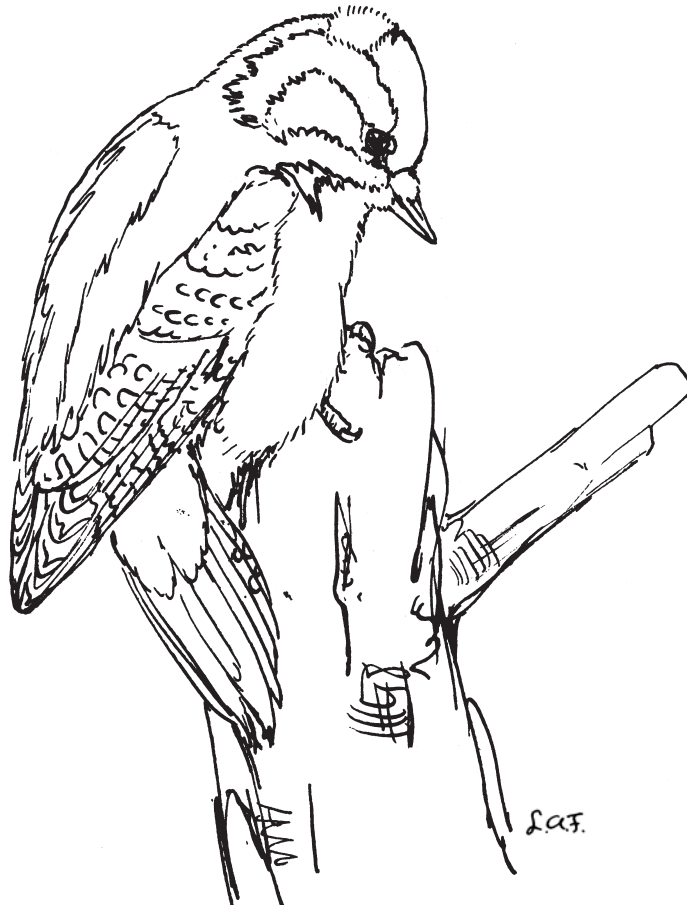




Downy Woodpecker



A familiar sight in Sapsucker Woods, the Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*) is the smallest and most widespread woodpecker in North America. It is primarily insectivorous, and focuses its foraging on the bark surface, shallow crevices, and excavations in trees, shrubs, and woody weeds. It is named for the soft white “downy” feathers of the white stripe on the lower back.

Identification Tips

- Small woodpecker (6–7 inches from bill to tail) with very short pointed chiseling bill.
- White back and underparts. Black nape and rump.
- Black wings with white spotting.
- Black tail with white outer tail feathers barred in black.
- Sexes similar except male has red patch on back of head; female has black patch.
- Call note a sharp *pik*. Also a harsh rattle or whinny.

Cool Facts

- Downy Woodpeckers join mixed species flocks in winter where they can spend less time looking for predators and more time foraging.
- Males and females stay in the same areas in winter, but forage separately. Males feed on smaller, more productive branches, making females feed on larger branches and trunks. When males leave the woodlot, females will forage on the smaller branches. Downies also use food sources that larger woodpeckers cannot, such as the insect larvae inside of weed stems.