

USE OF GARAGE CONFINES BY NORTHERN FLICKERS

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Although some species of North American woodpeckers, such as the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*, Jackson 1994), have experienced extensive habitat loss and population declines as a result of human development, others have behaviorally adapted to occupying distributed habitats (Winkler et al. 1995). Many woodpeckers have learned to use not only these modified habitats but also the structures that humans have created within them. Some species have come to be considered pests due to damage inflicted upon utility poles, fence posts (Dennis 1964), log cabins, wooden houses, and shutters (Winkler et al. 1995).

Northern Flickers (*Colaptes auratus*) have been very successful in exploiting human structures (Moore 1995), often in non-damaging ways. They have been reported to nest in utility poles, fence posts, wagon hubs, barrels, chimneys, haystacks, the sides of houses, a plank shaft surrounding a water tower pipe (Ben 1939, Dennis 1969), and barns (Farley 1901). Roost sites include external building surfaces, chimneys, under bridges, and beneath the eaves of buildings (Bent 1939, Royall and Bray 1980). Here

we report on the periodic roosting and foraging of a male Northern Flicker inside a garage at the senior author's house, located about 5 km south of Mississippi State University in Oktibbeha County, from November 1998 to January 1999.

We observed a male Northern Flicker roosting in the rafters of the garage roughly 45 min. before sunrise on 9 and 11 December 1998. On both occasions the individual was seen perched on a board laid across rafters near the center of the garage almost 1 m from a light that was left on the entire night. The individual perched passerine style on the board, with its back to the light. Early morning searches of the garage were made between and after these two dates, but no birds were present.

On a single day during the last week of November 1998, 1 December 1998, and 4 January 1999, we observed a male Northern Flicker foraging on the walls of the garage. On each day the individual was observed between 09:30 and 10:00 searching and gleaning among scattered spider webs and abandoned wasp nests along horizontal wall supports about 1 m above ground. The immediate area was searched for potential prey items after the bird flew away, but none were found. However, active insects were found nearby. It is not known whether the same individual was observed on each occasion.

The garage is located in a rural area and is enclosed on three sides but lacks a door. Internal measurements are approximately 6.3 m wide by 6.3 m deep and the roosting site was about 1.3 m above the ground. The garage is regularly used for the night storage of two cars, one of which was in the garage during both roosting observations. No cars were present during foraging observations.

While winter reports of the indoor use of buildings are not completely absent for this species, they are rare. Bent

(1939) reported the only other accounts the authors are aware of. The first was the use of a barn as a roost site, and the second account was the finding of a dead Northern Flicker in a garage that had remained closed all winter. The individual apparently found its way in but was unable to find its way back out (Bent 1939).

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