



# LONG TERM TREE OCCUPANTS



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**WOODPECKERS** differ morphologically from other bird species, as they have a strong pointed bill that they use for hammering and drumming on tree trunks, a long sticky tongue for grabbing woodboring insects and other invertebrates and a foot arrangement (two toes directed forward and two backward) that allows them to walk up the trees. They mostly forage for insect prey on the trunks of trees, drilling at a speed of up to about 20 times a second!

They keep their body upright, clinging with their claws to the rough protrusions of tree bark, while the hard outer feathers of their tail work together to support them. Their skills attract the interest of humans, who give them various local names, mostly derived from pecking wood.

## DON'T LET THEIR HOME BE DESTROYED

Woodpeckers are directly affected by management practices in the forest. Their survival depends on the presence of mature forests that are comparable in shape, structure and composition to the now rare natural forests. In the Nestos Delta, the forest consists mainly of trees with soft wood, such as poplars, willows, elms and maples, which woodpeckers prefer for nesting as they are easy to excavate.

Tree felling is a human activity that has a significant impact on woodpeckers. Selection of specific trees for felling is carried out by scientists with appropriate knowledge (Forestry Service staff) according to a management plan created for the area and implemented in a systematic manner. Any other tree felling without the Forest Service's permission is prohibited and will result in prosecution.

## WHY ARE WOODPECKERS IMPORTANT?

Many woodpeckers are considered as "keystone species" for the forest, because, during feeding and nesting they excavate holes in trees, which then also become available to a variety of other species, including birds, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates. As they are the only species that make holes in trees, they are considered the master "builders" of the forest. Since at least 10% of forest species are closely dependent on them, their presence is particularly important.

The presence of woodpeckers, the variety of species as well as their population size in a forest ecosystem serve as a biodiversity indicator of the area, while at the same time demonstrate the quality of the habitat.



European Green Woodpecker



Eurasian Wryneck



Great-spotted Woodpecker



Narrow-leaved Ash  
(*Fraxinus angustifolia*)



White Willow  
(*Salix alba*)



Black (Common) Alder  
(*Alnus glutinosa*)

## EVERY TIME ONE CUTS DOWN A TREE ILLEGALLY

Let it be said that the trunk of this tree could originally house the nest of a woodpecker, a permanent resident of the forest. Later, that same hole could also host several other forest species. In the Nestos Delta, you will see or hear eight out of the ten species of woodpeckers found in Europe and Greece.

The forest is their home, and the trees are their life; no one has the authority to take them away.

## REMEMBER THAT THE TREES:



STABILISE THE SOIL



REGULATE TEMPERATURE



PREVENT DESERTIFICATION



SEQUESTER CO<sub>2</sub>



SUPPORT BIODIVERSITY



PREVENT RUN-OFF OF RAINWATER



REDUCE THE RISK OF FLOODING



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