

Adaptations of Acorn Woodpeckers with Sahas Barve

Companion Worksheet

Join scientist **Sahas Barve** to learn about acorn woodpeckers and how he has studied them in the wild. Sahas will share what he has observed and discovered about this bird species' exceptional family and group-living behaviors and their habit of gathering and storing their favorite food, acorns (you guessed it!).

Here are some basic facts about acorn woodpeckers. Sahas will take questions during the webinar that are focused on the discussion about adaptations of acorn woodpeckers and his work studying them. For even more information about acorn woodpeckers and our featured scientist, Sahas Barve:

- [The Acorn Woodpecker](#): an 8-minute video from bioGraphic, California Academy of Sciences
- [Acorn Woodpeckers](#): a webpage with information about acorn woodpeckers from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- [Scientist Spotlight: Sahas Barve](#): a brief video of our featured scientist, Sahas Barve, describing how he got interested in science and providing some advice for students

About Acorn Woodpeckers

Where do acorn woodpeckers live?

Acorn Woodpeckers live year-round in oak and pine-oak woodlands of western Oregon, California, and the Southwest through Mexico and Central America.

How big do they get?

Both male and female adult acorn woodpeckers measure 7.5-9.1 inches long, with wingspans of 13.8-16.9 inches. They weigh 2.3-3.2 ounces.

How can you identify them?

Acorn Woodpeckers are medium-sized woodpeckers with straight, spike-like bills and stiff, wedge-shaped tails. Male acorn woodpeckers are mostly black above with a red cap and a whitish forehead. Females have a black cap, with the red restricted to the back of their heads.

How many acorn woodpeckers are there?

The global breeding population of acorn woodpeckers is estimated at 5 million, with 57% living in Mexico and 30% living in the US.



A male acorn woodpecker clinging to a tree full of acorns. Image credit: Johnath, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

What do they eat?

Acorn woodpeckers rely heavily on acorns for sustenance, though they mainly eat insects. They store these acorns in holes they have drilled into oak trees. Some of these “granary” trees can have thousands of holes drilled into them.

How long does it take them to form a granary?

It can take up to 20 minutes to drill a single hole into a granary tree. Groups of woodpeckers may take many months to even make a small granary.

How long can acorn woodpeckers live?

The oldest Acorn Woodpecker on record was at least 17 years, 3 months old, identified in 2009.

Do acorn woodpeckers live in a community?

Acorn woodpeckers live in family groups of up to a dozen or more individuals, and they cooperate in raising young and in gathering, storing, and guarding food.

How big are their nests?

Acorn woodpecker nest within cavities in dead or living limbs of trees. The cavities are about 6 inches in diameter and can be from 8 inches to more than 2 feet deep. The nests are made up of the wood chips formed during the excavating process.

How many eggs do they lay?

An acorn woodpecker lays 3-6 eggs per clutch.

How long does it take an egg to hatch?

The incubation period is 11 days.