



WILDLIFE NOTES

Flicker

Tok-tok-tok! Perhaps you have heard the staccato sound of a colorful flicker as it drills into a tree, or even the wood trim of your house, in search of insects. One must admire the appearance and bravado of this woodpecker.

The Northern flicker, *Colaptes auratus*, also known as the red-shafted flicker, yellow-shafted flicker, or gilded-shafted flicker, is a foot-long bird. You can see its white rump and its red markings under its wings and tail when it flies. It has a unique way, when disturbed, of bowing and swinging its body back and forth on an elevated perch.

Flickers have a black crescent across the chest and many round black patches on their feathers. The male has a red "mustache;" the female a brown one. These birds often feed on the ground and hop awkwardly. In flight they are slow and erratic.

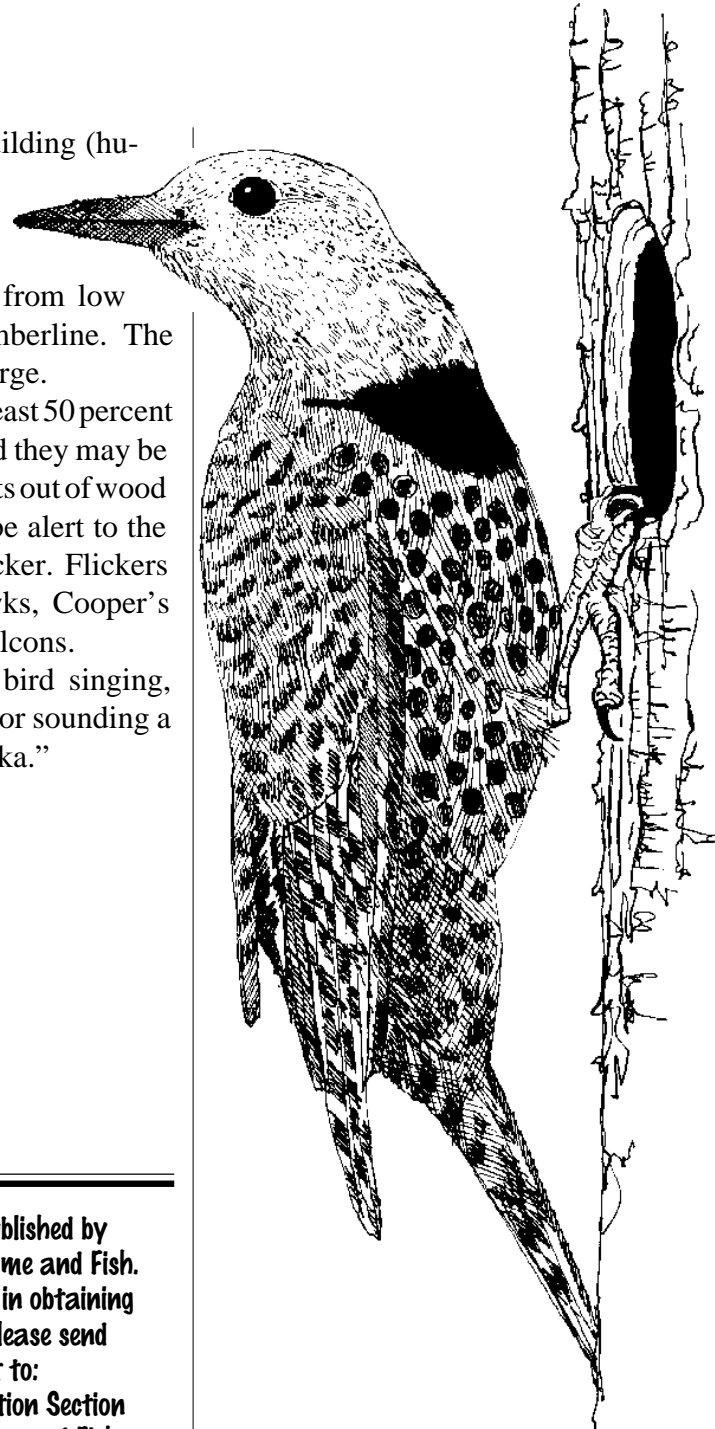
Flickers are found not only in New Mexico but from southern Alaska to Alberta, south to Mexico and Guatemala. In the winter, flickers may withdraw from northern haunts, though many winter in the state. They live in diverse habitats, including wooded groves, river woods, open forests, towns, and canyons.

A clutch of five to 10 white eggs is laid in a tree excavation or a hole

made in a pole or building (humans may consider them a nuisance when that occurs). Nests can be found from low elevations up to timberline. The clutch is relatively large.

Ants comprise at least 50 percent of a flicker's diet, and they may be so intent on prying ants out of wood that they neglect to be alert to the rush of a winged attacker. Flickers are prey for goshawks, Cooper's hawks, and prairie falcons.

You may hear a bird singing, "Wick, wick, wick," or sounding a squeaky "Flicka, flicka."



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