

THE ARCTIC THREE-TOED WOODPECKER.

+PICUS ARCTICUS, *Swains.*

PLATE CCLXVIII.—MALES AND FEMALE.

This curious species of Woodpecker is found in the northern parts of the State of Massachusetts, and in all portions of Maine that are covered by forests of tall trees, in which it constantly resides. I saw a few in the Great Pine Forest of Pennsylvania, and my friend, the Rev. JOHN BACHMAN, observed four near the Falls of Niagara, about twelve years ago, and is of opinion that some may breed in the upper part of the State of New York.

It is a restless, active bird, spending its time generally on the topmost branches of the tallest trees, without, however, confining itself to pines. Although it cannot be called shy, its habitual restlessness renders it difficult of approach. Its movements resemble those of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, but it is still more petulant than that bird. Like it, it will alight, climb along a branch, seek for insects there, and in a very few moments remove to another part of the same tree, or to another tree at more or less distance, thus spending the day in rambling over a large extent of ground. Its cries also somewhat resemble those of the species above mentioned, but are louder and more shrill, like those of some small quadruped suffering great pain. During the middle hours of the day it becomes silent, and often retires to some concealed place to rest awhile. In the afternoon of warm days, it very frequently makes sorties after flying insects, which it seems to secure in the air with as much ease as the Red-headed Woodpecker. Besides insects, it also feeds on berries and other small fruits.

Its flight is rapid, gliding, and deeply undulated, as it shifts from one place to another. Now and then it will fly from a detached tree of a field to a considerable distance before it alights, emitting at every glide a loud shrill note. When alighted, the rolling tappings of its bill against a dead and dried branch are as sonorous as those of the Redhead. I never saw one on the ground, but I have not unfrequently met with them searching the decayed wood of a prostrate tree.

The nest of this species is generally bored in the body of a sound tree, near its first large branches. I observed no particular choice as to the timber, having seen it in oaks, pines, &c. The nest, like that of other allied species, is worked out by both sexes, and takes fully a week before it is



Banded three-toed Woodpecker.

1. Male 2. Female.

completed, its usual depth being from twenty to twenty-four inches. It is smooth and broad at the bottom, although so narrow at its entrance as to appear scarcely sufficient to enable one of the birds to enter it. The eggs are from four to six, rather rounded, and pure white. Only one brood is raised in the season. The young follow their parents until autumn, when they separate and shift for themselves. They do not attain their full plumage until the second year.

The number of these Woodpeckers is greatly increased in the State of Maine during winter, by accessions from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Labrador, in all which countries I have found the species in summer, but where, if I am rightly informed, few remain during severe winters.

PICUS TRIDACTYLUS, Bonap. Syn., p. 46.

NORTHERN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER, *Picus tridactylus*, Bonap. Amer. Orn., vol. ii. p. 14.

PICUS (APTERNUS) ARCTICUS, *Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 313.

NORTHERN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 578.

THREE-TOED WOODPECKER, *Picus tridactylus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. ii. p. 198.

Male, $10\frac{1}{2}$, 16.

From the northern parts of New York to the Fur Countries, as well as along the eastern declivities of the Rocky Mountains. Rather common. Partially migratory.

Adult Male.

Bill longish, straight, strong, angular, compressed toward the tip, which is slightly truncate and cuneate; upper mandible with the dorsal line straight, the ridge distinct, the sloping sides quite flat, the lateral angle or ridge close to the edges, which are acute and overlapping; lower mandible with the ridge distinct, the sides convex, edges sharp and inflected. Tongue comparatively shorter than that of the *Picus villosus*, but of the same form, the extensile part being vermiform, the tip flat above, convex below, and serrated backwards on the thin edges. Nostrils basal, elliptical, covered by the feathers. Head rather large, neck short, body robust. Feet very short; tarsus scutellate before and behind; two toes before, one only behind, which is versatile and larger, all scutellate above; claws strong, extremely compressed, very acute, and uncinat.

Plumage blended, glossy, on the back and wings rather compact. Feathers of the top of the head stiff and silky. Wings longish, third and fourth quills longest and equal. Tail graduated, of twelve decurved stiff feathers, worn to a point, excepting the outermost, which is extremely small. Base of the bill covered by recumbent bristly feathers.

Bill bluish-black, the lower mandible greyish-blue, as are the feet, the scutella and claws black. Iris bluish-black. The general colour of the upper parts is deep glossy black, the head with blue reflections, the back with green. Crown of the head yellow, tinged with orange. Quills blackish-brown, the outer primaries with seven rows of white spots. Two middle tail-feathers black, two next of the same colour, but with three cream-coloured spots on the edge of the outer web towards the end; two next black at the base, cream-coloured towards the end, black at the tip; two next cream-coloured, with little black at the base, and a mere touch of black on the tip; two next of the same colour, with very little black at the base; the two outermost, which are very short, rounded, and generally concealed, barred with black and cream-colour. A white band from the base of the mandible passes under the eye, and there is a very slender line of the same behind it. Throat, fore neck, and anterior part of the breast, white; the rest of the under parts also white, but barred with black.

Length $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches, extent of wings 16; bill along the ridge $1\frac{2}{12}$, along the edge $\frac{7}{12}$; tarsus $1\frac{1}{2}$, middle toe and claw $1\frac{1}{2}$, of hind toe and claw $1\frac{1}{4}$.

Adult Female.

The female wants the yellow patch on the crown of the head, and has the line of white behind the eye rather more conspicuous, but in other respects resembles the male.

BANDED THREE-TOED WOODPECKER.

+ *PICUS HIRSUTUS*, Vieill.

PLATE CCLXIX.—MALE AND FEMALE.

The difference between this bird and that described under the name of *Picus tridactylus* was unknown to me until clearly pointed out by the minute and accurate description of Mr. SWAINSON in the Fauna Boreali-Americana. Indeed I had looked upon it as the young of the species just mentioned. Not having met with it myself, I can only refer you to the very short notice of Dr. RICHARDSON, who says: "This bird exists in all the forests of spruce-fir lying between Lake Superior and the Arctic Sea, and it is the most common Woodpecker north of the Great Slave Lake. It much



Banded three-toed Woodpecker.
1. Male 2. Female.



Audubon, John James. 1842. "The Arctic Three-Toed Woodpecker, *Picus arcticus*, Swains. [Pl. 268]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 4, 266–268. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319383>.

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