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WOODPECKER ¹

by Lanny and Marilyn Johnson

The woodpecker is an amazing bird! The woodpecker hangs onto a tree with his special strong feet and sharp toes (2 toes that go forward, and 2 toes that go back) and begins to do something very peculiar. He begins to bang his head on the tree. To steady himself and help hit the same place twice, the woodpecker pushes his tail into the tree. His tail feathers are very stiff, almost like wire. The stiff tail and two feet form a tripod, steadying him to be able to hit the tree with great accuracy.

The woodpecker can hit the tree very fast (15 to 16 times a second!²) and hard; so hard that you might think he gets a terrible headache. However, he doesn't. Between his beak and skull is a special shock absorber made out of cartilage (the same stuff that bends in your nose and ears). The woodpecker's cartilage is full of little holes



that act as a sponge to absorb all the energy, so it does not rattle his brain every time he hits the tree.

The woodpecker does something else that is peculiar. Every time he hits the tree, he closes his eyelids which are clear in color. Not only can he still see what's going on, but the eyelids protect his eyes from all the wood chips and sawdust he is making! But an even more important reason is that the woodpecker is hitting that tree so hard that if he did not shut his eye lids, his eyeballs would pop out of his head! His eyelids actually help hold his eyes in!³

Why does the woodpecker peck holes in the tree, anyway? He is looking for his next meal ... bugs. As he pecks on the tree, the not-so-dumb bugs, realizing they are in danger, will scoot through their tunnels behind the bark of the tree, out of harm's way.

So the woodpecker sticks his beak in the hole and ... no bug. He goes around to the backside of the tree and pecks another hole, sticks his beak in, and still no bug. The bug just moved again. So how does the woodpecker get that bug?

The woodpecker uses his very long tongue ... 4 to 4 1/2 times longer than his beak.⁴ Can you imagine the woodpecker hanging on to a tree, pecking away with his long tongue flopping about? At some point in time you know that tongue will get in the way of that beak, and.... POW! The

woodpecker could not do that very many times. His tongue is a lot longer than the frog's, and he does not have soft cheeks, so he can't roll it up in his mouth. So what does he do with his tongue?

His tongue goes through a special hole in his bottom beak; He is not swallowing it! Once the tongue goes through the hole, it splits into two parts ... the two parts of the tongue now go underneath the skin, around the back, over the top, and finally connect in the woodpecker's right nostril!

The woodpecker's tongue is like a big rubber band. He pecks a hole that connects with the bug's tunnel, and stretches his tongue down that tunnel until it gets to the bug. On the end of the woodpecker's tongue is some sticky glue (or sometimes barbs). The glue sticks to the bug, and then he sucks in. Now the tongue and the bug are in the beak, but the bug is still stuck to the tongue. Again, by special design, the woodpecker has some special equipment. There is a gland that secretes an enzyme (I call it special spit) in the mouth that dissolves the glue, so he can swallow and enjoy his meal!

Do all of the fantastic features of the woodpecker look like something that could have happened by chance and accident over millions of years of evolution? To do what the woodpecker does, he needs each and every one of those special features working together and at the same time. A woodpecker never could have developed by chance and accident. Woodpeckers have such special designs, that those designs had to have come from a designer. And that designer is God!



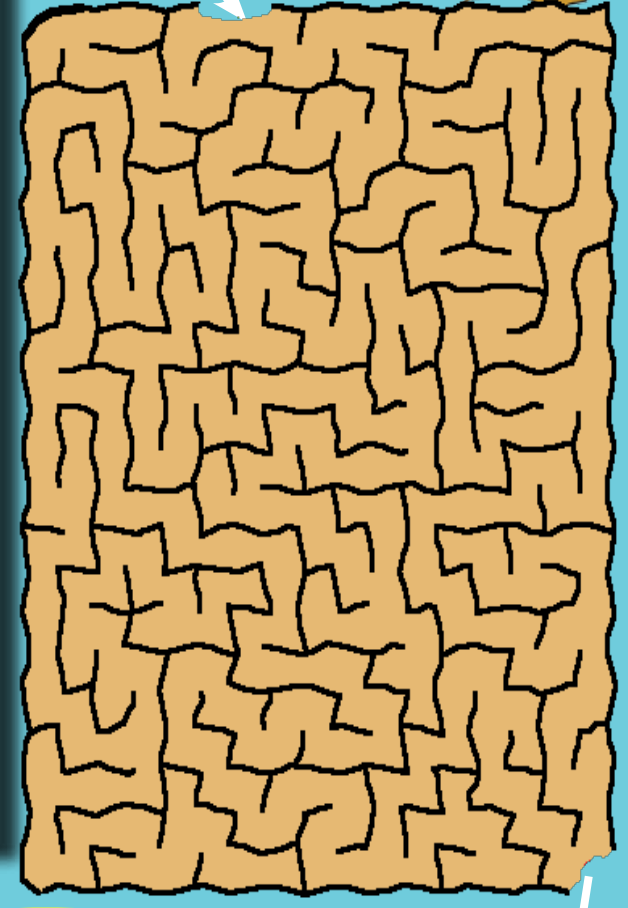
(Foot Notes on next page)

Find the 14 Hidden Woodpeckers in picture below.



Help the bug through the tunnels to escape the woodpecker's tongue.

Start



End

FOR ANSWERS GO TO: <http://www.discovercreation.org/kids/NewsletterAnswers.htm>

Foot Notes

- ¹ A shortened version of Lanny's talk on the Woodpecker
- ² David Juhasz. Creation. (18 (1): 10-13., Dec. 1995 – Feb. 1996). www.answersingenesis.org.
- ³ Bruce A. Malone. Search for the Truth. (Search for the Truth Ministries, Midland, MI., 2001) pg. I-14.
- ⁴ Garner Ted Armstrong and Paul W. Kroll. A Theory For The Birds. (Ambassador College, Pasadena, CA., 1971)
- ⁵ Woodpecker art in article by Mark Sonmor © AOI