

while working in my extensive garden which is approximately ½ acre in size, consisting of mixed fruit trees, raspberry shrubs, roses, lilacs and a vegetable section. It is a common sight to observe American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) foraging for food in this landscape. On this particular day, several adult robins were pulling worms from a grassy area of the garden and feeding their newly fledged young. As I was digging in the flowerbed, I heard this mix of excitement from the robins and observed them scattering in flight just as a Pileated Woodpecker (Figure 1) swooped down from an aspen tree. I watched in disbelief as the woodpecker grabbed a recently fledged robin in its bill and flew away through the trees.

About 15 minutes later I heard the woodpecker call as they do when in flight. I saw it land on a large aspen branch then move to try to camouflage itself by pressing its body close to the trunk and remaining

PILEATED WOODPECKER CAPTURES A RECENTLY FLEDGED AMERICAN ROBIN

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The Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) is a regular summer visitor at our 80-acre rural property on Francois Lake in central British Columbia. The mature trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) trees, which border the lake, offer ideal nesting habitat for this large woodpecker.

In late July 2005, I witnessed an unusual event



Figure 1. The Pileated Woodpecker is a regular visitor each summer to the mature trembling aspen forests surrounding Francois Lake, BC. Grand Forks, BC. 22 June 1981 (Mark Nyhof). BC Photo 3451.

very still while viewing the garden. This bird spotted me and eventually flew off. I couldn't help but wonder if this was the same bird placing himself strategically for another attack.

Throughout the year the diet of the Pileated Woodpecker consists mainly of insects, primarily carpenter ants (*Camponotus* spp.) and wood-boring beetle larvae (Bull et al. 1995) while wild fruits and nuts are consumed when available (Hoyt 1957). Typically this woodpecker gleans insects from tree branches, trunks, and logs, scales bark off trees, and excavates large rectangular openings in its search for food (Bull et al. 1995). Preying on a recently fledged songbird would be considered aberrant behaviour for the Pileated Woodpecker and a rare event to witness in the natural world.

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About the Author

Corine was born and raised in Edmonton, AB and moved to Francois Lake, BC where she has lived for the past 40 years. She has two married sons who in their early years had to endure northern climates without electricity and running water. Corine spends time gardening, fishing, and cross-country skiing and teaches basket weaving (willow), painting, rug hooking, and wood-carving (cottonwood bark).