

# I Live in a Hole!

By Andy Dickerson, Executive Director,  
Cardinal Land Conservancy

While on a walk this week, I happened upon a tufted titmouse **making loud noises** outside of a newly constructed cavity in a standing dead tree or snag. One titmouse was in the hole and one was outside. All of a sudden, a downy woodpecker flew up and landed on the hole and **began pecking at the titmouse** until they flew away. The downy woodpecker was puffing out its feathers, spreading its wings and chirping loudly, **proudly defending its home**. Within a minute, there were bluebirds, chickadees, a hairy woodpecker, a red-bellied woodpecker and a white-breasted nuthatch all within 10 feet - trying to get a front row seat to the battle. I was so **intrigued**, that I wanted to research a bit more and share what I found. All of these birds are cavity nesters and they forage in guilds during the winter months with all the species listed above.

**Cavity nesting birds** are very common in our part of the world and this is the time of year when those birds are in need of securing shelter for the colder weather. They vary from woodpeckers to chickadees, owls and ducks. Woodpeckers are “**primary cavity nesters**”. This means they chip out a new cavity every year as a regular part of courtship and nesting behavior. Many also create a new cavity in the fall for shelter. The white-breasted and red-breasted nuthatches also create new cavities but in a bit softer wood. The bulk of the remaining cavity nesters in southwest Ohio are **secondary cavity nesters, meaning that they do not make their own cavity but move into one that has already been created** by the woodpeckers. Bluebirds, tree swallows and prothonotary warblers all fit into this category as do the owls and wood ducks.



Photos by Andy Dickerson



## How You Can Help!

Threats to cavity nesting birds involve any activity that reduces or eliminates snags or suitable foraging habitat. Almost all of these birds eat only insects. If you have the ability to safely **leave a standing dead tree**, especially large diameter, please do so. You can also keep larger trees with defects or dead limbs and create and maintain foraging habitat like large live trees or downed wood. Another opportunity to help is by **putting up nest boxes**. Bluebird boxes are the most popular but by varying the size of the opening, you can dictate whether the nest box is inhabited by the larger bluebird or smaller chickadee. Nest boxes should be made of untreated wood, have rough interior walls, have no exterior perches and have access panels for annual cleaning. You should also install a **predator guard** to increase the chances of the boxes being utilized.



### **Feed the Hungry**

Don't forget you can put up a feeder to help during those lean winter days. If you can find one that can be stocked with sunflower seeds and keep the squirrels away, you'll be doing well. I also hang a couple **peanut suet** cakes for an additional source of calories for the cavity nesters.

Find out more about [Cardinal Land Conservancy](#) and how we help Protect the Land You Love by visiting our website.



---

**Join us for our Fall Tree Planting in Wilmington!**

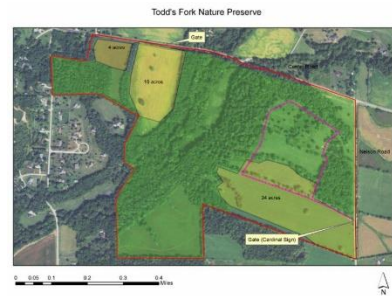
**November 9th and 16th**



We will be preparing to plant over 300 potted trees on 30 acres to restore lost woodland habitat with native tree species. With a maternal colony of Indiana bats on-site, our work will help to preserve this iconic endangered species. Please bring wire cutters, a shovel, gloves, and be prepared for the weather. Times are listed below. Click the link for directions: <https://goo.gl/maps/eLGHbi4ALmS2TYk3A>

We have so many great people that receive our emails. Let's see how many we can get to become members! Please feel free to share!

**[Click here to see How You Can Get Involved](#)**



---

Check out our Facebook Page for upcoming events and volunteer opportunities

**November 9th** - Todd's Fork Workday 10-2

**November 16th** - Huge tree planting at Todd's Fork NP - 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

**End of December** - Christmas Bird Counts in Wilmington and East Side of Cincinnati

---

Office at Arrowhead Farm  
790 Garfield Avenue  
Milford, Ohio 45150  
(513) 752-2828

**JOIN US! WE NEED YOU TO PRESERVE THE LAND YOU LOVE!**

<http://www.cardinallandconservancy.org>  
[andy@cardinallandconservancy.org](mailto:andy@cardinallandconservancy.org)