

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus*



Folk Name: Sapsucker

Status: Resident

Abundance: Uncommon to Fairly Common

Habitat: Forests and heavily forested neighborhoods

The Hairy Woodpecker is the larger doppelganger of the Downy Woodpecker, and the fine points of differentiating between the two are provided in the account of the Downy Woodpecker (just above). The Hairy was once considered “rather common” in the Central Carolinas, but its relative abundance appears to have slowly declined in many areas over the past century as development has increased. In Charlotte in 1944, Elizabeth Clarkson designated the Hairy Woodpecker as simply a permanent resident and noted the Downy as a “common” permanent resident. Forty years later, the designation remained the same for the Downy while the notation for the Hairy was changed to “declining in recent years.”

In *The South Carolina Breeding Bird Atlas*, published in 2003, John Cely examined Breeding Bird Survey route data from the state and wrote: “The Hairy Woodpecker shows one of the most significant population declines of any bird in South Carolina during the past 30 years.” (Cely also felt it important to note that the sample size was small and that regional populations were not exhibiting the same trend decline.) A look at recent BBS trend estimates for this species shows a continuing decline in South Carolina, and the trend is apparently flat, or “holding steady,” in North Carolina.

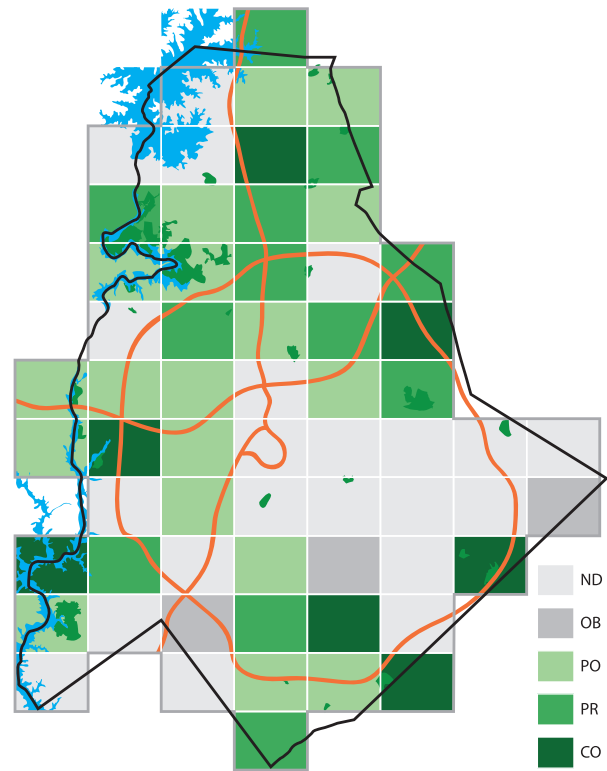
Research has shown that, despite their similarity of appearance and habits, the habitat needs of these two species differs in subtle but important ways. Both species are found in mature forest patches, wooded suburban neighborhoods, and urban areas with dense canopies. However, Hairy Woodpeckers appear to require more extensive patches of mature forest (at least 10 acres) than



the Downy Woodpecker, in order to insure the long-term success of their breeding population. The Hairy is able to survive in urban areas as wooded patches get smaller, but may not be able to survive for as long as the Downy, and may ultimately disappear. The presence of wooded riparian corridors and larger islands of wooded habitat would be beneficial to the survival of the Hairy Woodpecker in most urban and suburban areas.



Male Hairy Woodpecker in Charlotte backyard.
(Leigh Anne Carter)



Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas:
Somewhat Local (PR/12, CO/7)