

Flickers

Photos courtesy of Chuan-Chu Chou

Spring has brought a new kind of woodpecker to Brightwood Park! Northern Flickers!



Flickers are a larger species of woodpecker, growing up to a foot in length with a wingspan of between 16" to 20." They can weigh between 4 and 5 lbs.

Flickers are beautifully feathered birds with mostly brown patterned plumage. Their breasts are spotted, their backs striped, and they have a bright red crescent on the back of grey heads.

Eastern flickers have yellow feathers on their tails, while western flickers tails sport red feathers.

Our Brightwood eastern flickers have beautiful yellow flight shaft feathers!



Male flickers have a black “moustache.” Females do not. Can you spot the males from the females in these photos?



Flickers live in tree cavities that they dig out themselves or find already drilled. Both male and female woodpeckers help with homebuilding.

Unlike many species of woodpecker, they do not primarily peck at trees for their food. Rather, they are ground feeders, pecking into the dirt to find a stash of tasty ants or beetles! They seek out insect larvae that live underground using tongues that can extend 2” to snatch their meals. Their diet includes all kinds of insects and even snails. In the winter, they eat berries and seeds – including those of poison oak and ivy.

This spring, the flickers were busy courting and making their homes in the park. If you walk in the park, you may hear them singing. If you want to read more about and hear what flickers sound like, you can listen to their call at The Cornell Lab’s All About Birds website: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Flicker/overview