

# Marvelous Animal Adaptions

By Jenn Roe Photos by Dirk Muehlner & Staci Hobbet

## Acorn Woodpecker

DIRK MUEHLNER



*This female acorn woodpecker peeks out of her nest holding an acorn, possibly considering where to store it.*

### A Bird that's Nuts for Acorns!

Acorn woodpeckers are easy to identify. Many people describe them as clown-faced birds, with a red cap, black chin, and bright white eyes. You might hear their loud *waka waka* call before seeing them, although they do not try to hide. And where there's one acorn woodpecker there are more, because they live in family groups called **clans**. Can you guess what else you will always find

around acorn woodpeckers? Why acorns, of course!

Acorn woodpeckers have **evolved** with oak trees over thousands of years and depend on acorns, the fruit of oaks, to **survive**. Although acorn woodpeckers eat insects and sip nectar, they **rely** on acorns in winter or during **droughts**, times when other food is scarce.

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### Hammer-Head Bird

Acorn woodpeckers have many **specialized adaptations** for their oak woodland lifestyle. They use their heads like hammers to drive their strong beaks into tree trunks and branches, **excavating** holes for nesting. They also pound out smaller holes for acorn storage. The head of the acorn woodpecker is built to bang on wood all day. Their tough skulls act like hard-hats, designed to protect their brains from shock. Their necks are **rigid** to stop their heads from twisting while pounding wood. And their beaks keep growing as they wear down. The acorn woodpeckers' stiff tail feathers

STACI HOBGET



*Acorn woodpeckers drill acorn-size holes in dead or living tree trunks and branches for acorn storage. These acorn storage trees are called "granaries."*

help them balance as they perch on trees every which way.