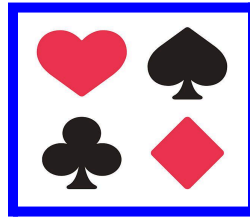


# ***ALERT! October2025***

*A Publication of ACBL Unit 206*



Editor: Mary Robertson



## **A Message From Richard Splanger Our President...**

For the club to succeed long-term, we are focused on two key goals: more people playing bridge and current members playing more often. To bring new people into the club, as you know, Learn Bridge in a Day restarted and Suzy is leading the Saturday lessons to continue to advance these players' understanding and appreciation of the game. This will lead into Bridge Tips, led by Margie Moses and Janie Hunt at the start of 2026. As the new people become more comfortable with the game, we will encourage them to attend two real games - the Monday night game led by Dan Chandler

and the Friday afternoon <199 game which also includes the Mentor/mentee game.

WE NEED YOUR HELP when it comes to successfully migrating the new players from lessons to actual game play. Some of the opportunities for you to help include: 1). assisting with the Saturday lessons; 2). mentoring at Dan's Monday night game (this includes a lower, \$5 game fee and does include the opportunity to gain master points); 3). being a mentor to these new people once they start to sign up for the monthly Mentor/mentee game; and, finally 4). KEEP DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING - when you see new people, introduce yourself as you normally do, provide guidance when time allows on any hand on how to improve, be supportive when you compete against them in a hand (they are literally "shaking in their boots: when you approach!!); and FINALLY, something somewhat uncomfortable for me to say/support - be VERY hesitant to shout out or call out for the director. The new people will make mistakes. We need to help them lessen the types of mistakes they make over time, but try to soften the blow when asking a director to come over. Reassure them, joke with them, provide an anecdote - anything to lessen their fear or embarrassment of what just transpired. The goal is to help them get better and to get them to come back. Thanks for your support ahead of time in everything that you do to support this effort!!

Richard

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## A MESSAGE FROM MYRA RENEAU

### OUR CLUB MANAGER

I am here again in my column to reiterate what an amazing Bridge Club we have. I am super proud of the Chattanooga Bridge Club! As my directing season is winding down in North Carolina, I feel like I've taught them a lot, and it's things that we do naturally at our club. For example, playing a Howell and moving on time, not discussing hands between rounds and the general great attitude towards all players. Just this month, we held a great Speedball event where everybody

played all the hands in five minutes. Remarkable!

We have had lots of illnesses/surgeries with club members this year and a fair bit of loss. The way we support each other is so beautiful to me.

Please take a moment and pat yourself on the back for being a great member of the Bridge community!

Myra

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## HATS OFF TO... Joe Viola

Hats off to Joe Viola as he helps ALL of us to advance our understanding of the game. As you know, Joe has been hosting a "fireside chat" the second Tuesday of every month to address and assist anyone on key questions concerning bidding or playing a hand. His thorough understanding of the game has helped many to improve a part of their game.

Related to this, Joe has also agreed to write a monthly article for intermediate to advanced players (which everyone can benefit from) as an added measure to improve our game. This newsletter is the first of his articles and we look forward to each one of us having another opportunity to move the game ahead!!

Thanks to Joe, he is always willing to describe his bids in games being played to ensure we have a common understanding of their meaning, even when he is not required to do so. Plus, we appreciate his feedback to quick questions as the hands unfold throughout the game.

Thanks from the Board for all that Joe does for the club!

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## CBC CALENDAR UPDATES & REMINDERS

Look for email updates from Margie Moses

For the most current events calendar, follow this link to our club's website calendar for more information: CBC Calendar

[Calendar of Events](#)

Enjoy a short lesson at 6:30, followed by a game at 7 and ending at 9 PM. More experienced players are encouraged to come play with Novices. A Novice (newer player) can have zero masterpoints, but simply wants to learn more about playing duplicate bridge. \$5 per player.

#### LBIAD Lessons

Saturday. Sept. 13-thru end of October  
10 AM Led by Suzy Bryant

#### 199er Game

Sunday, October 12th-1 PM  
Game only, no lunch  
Feel free to bring snacks

#### Chat With Joe

No October Chat

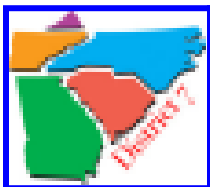
#### TLD Celebration

Friday, October 24-for those playing on Friday, we will be celebrating our huge success for our outstanding The Longest Day campaign.

#### 8 Is Enuf Team Party

Saturday, October 25-Lunch and Game  
Put a team together for this festive event!  
Lunch at 12:30 Game at 1  
Look for a sign up sheet for a dish to bring

## Chattanooga Open Sectional Fall 2025



***Thursday -Saturday Oct 2-4, 2025***

**St. John United Methodist Church**

**3921 Murray Hills Dr, Chattanooga, TN 37416**

***Tournament Chair:*** Richard Spangler (805) 231-8917 raspangler58@gmail.com

**Partnership Chair:** Bruce Antman (423) 290-8207 bruceantman1@gmail.com

This is a great opportunity to pitch in and volunteer in one of several open capacities to make this Sectional a huge success. Richard will share these opportunities, please pitch in and help.

**Fee All sessions: \$12. TEAM GAME: \$100 per team**

**Thursday**

9:30 a.m / 2:00 p.m. Open Pairs, single sessions

9:30 a.m / 2:00 p.m. 499er Pairs, single sessions

**Friday**

9:30 a.m / 2:00 p.m. Open Pairs, single sessions

9:30 a.m / 2:00 p.m. 499er Pairs, single sessions

**Saturday**

9:30 a.m. .... Swiss Teams, counts as 2 sessions

Strats for pairs games: 3000+/3000/1000 (open games), 500/300/100 (499er games) - stratification for all games based on attendance and pair/team average.

There will not be an Ambassador, please pair up with another player for each session. Please consider volunteering to help make this a huge success!

Bruce Antman is ready to help everyone find a suitable partner for these games. Contact him at: **Partnership Chair:** Bruce Antman (423) 290-8207 bruceantman1@gmail.com

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## One Small Thing

By Bruce Antman

### Alert!

The ACBL rules on alerts are confusing and change often. Even the most experienced players (and directors) rarely know all the calls (bids, doubles, passes) that are alertable. While alerts are mandatory, the rules specifically say you will not be penalized for “failure to alert” unless the opponents can show that they have been damaged, or unless you keep willfully ignoring the rules.

The first rule is that anything in red on the convention card must be alerted. [Things in blue must be “announced” instead.] But some alertable calls don’t have checkboxes or separate lines, and the convention cards we use are often out of date.

The general idea is that calls are “alertable” if they are “non-standard” to a player of “advanced beginner” or “early intermediate” status (about 100-300 masterpoints). What’s standard locally isn’t necessarily so elsewhere. Still, if you follow that guideline, you will be right most of the time.

If you’re a true beginner, you probably don’t play conventions that need alerting, and you don’t need to worry much about the process. If you don’t know what an opponent’s bid means, ask their partner – immediately if it affects your next bid, otherwise after the auction. But as you learn new conventions, remember to learn also which calls should be alerted.

Please, when you alert, **do not explain unless the next bidder asks you to!** If you do, you’re giving your partner unauthorized information, which can lead to a director call and even a penalty.

**Starting with the opening bidder’s rebid, no bid of 3NT or higher is alerted until after the bidding is over.** This is called a “delayed alert”. If you’re not sure what an opponent’s 4 bid means, just ask. For example, a splinter bid is a jump indicating a singleton or void. The splinter  $1\heartsuit - (p) - 4\spadesuit$  must be alerted when it happens, but  $1\clubsuit - (p) - 1\heartsuit - (p) - 4\spadesuit$  is not alerted until after the bidding is over.

A couple of bids that are very common in Chattanooga are alertable. If partner bids 1NT and you bid  $2\spadesuit$  as a relay to  $3\clubsuit$  for either minor, alert the  $2\spadesuit$  bid. Don’t say

“transfer” or “relay”, and don’t explain unless the opponent asks. Also, many of us make non-forcing responses to weak 2 bids. For example, 2♥ - (p) - 2♠ requires an alert if opener is allowed to pass.

Some calls used to be alertable but no longer are. Very few doubles should be alerted; the only one we normally see is the DONT double of 1NT. Support doubles and maximal doubles are no longer alerted.

Finally, you are supposed to wave the Alert card in addition to saying “Alert”. We don’t enforce that locally, but some tournament directors do. If you know your opponent has hearing problems, it’s only polite anyway.

Don’t stress over alerts and announcements. But please make a reasonable effort to get them right!

## FIRESIDE CHAT WITH JOE-INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED BRIDGE TIPS (Thank you, Joe, for your willingness to create monthly intermediate/advanced bridge lessons for the newsletter)



### OPENING BID WITH A BALANCED HAND

Hello, this is Joe Viola. I have been playing bridge for about 60 years. In that time, maybe I have learned a few things that can help you enjoy this wonderful game better. I believe that playing better is more enjoyable than not playing better.

I am going to begin with basic bidding on balanced hands.

*I am going to assume that we are playing the bidding system called “2-over-1”.  
This is the current “Standard American” system.*

Some of these articles will include very basic stuff. I want to show you, dear reader, how these bids fit together to help partner develop a good picture of your hand.

Balanced hands are very common. By “balanced” hands, I mean hands with 4-3-3-3 distribution or 4-4-3-2 distribution or 5-3-3-2 distribution. These distributions account for more than 47% of bridge hands. Hands with 5-4-2-2 distribution are “semi-balanced” and may be treated as balanced. These include another 10% of bridge hands.

*A note on notation: when I describe the distribution of a bridge hand with hyphens, the suits can be in any order. 4-3-3-3 distribution does not designate the longest suit. When I use equal signs, the suits are in order, SHDC. 4=3=3=3 means 4♠-3♥-3♦-3♣.*

It is important to understand how to bid these hands.

Beside the distribution of a bridge hand, it is also important to know the strength of the hand. The most common way to evaluate the strength of a hand is the Work Point Count. This values the high cards in your hand as A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1.

If you have a balanced hand – 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, 5-3-3-2, or maybe 5-4-2-2 – and no one has opened the bidding. Your first bid should be:

0-11 hcp (high card points) = Pass

12-14 hcp = 1x, followed by minimum NT bid

15-17 hcp = 1NT

18-19 hcp = 1x, followed by a jump in NT

20-21 hcp = 2NT

22 or more hcp = 2C

When opening 1x (which means 1 of any suit),

If you have a 5-card major, open 1 of your major.

If you do not have a 5-card major, open 1♣ or 1♦

Open 1 of your longer minor.

If you have 4♣s and 4♦, open 1♦.

If you have 3♣s and 3♦, open 1♣.

The purpose of describing this in detail is to encourage you and your partners to have definite and clear understandings. This helps in two ways:

1. You don't use a lot of energy working out what to bid on these common hands. Playing bridge well can be very tiring, so conserve your brain power. Take care of those little gray cells.

2. Partner will have a clearer picture of your hand if s/he knows what you bid on certain hands.

My next article will look at how responder bids after a 1♣ or 1♦ opening.

## GETTING TO KNOW OUR VOLUNTEERS

### Learn more about Ann Keown's Bridge Journey

After retiring from a demanding 25 year career in Government Programs management at BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, I made a list of "to-dos" during my retirement years. These included ballroom dancing and bridge-both are supposed to help prevent Alzheimer's. The Bridge Center was a little more than a mile from my new condo and Mike Sherman was beginning new beginning bridge classes-so convenient! I had always been intrigued by duplicate bridge. In addition to classes by Bill Adams and Sandy Cervantes, I went to 2 bridge camps taught by Marty Romanus who became the owner of "Easy Bridge." I still use many of the bridge tips and instructions taught in these camps.

Initially, the only bridge game for novices was the Non-Life Master game on Monday nights. But during my early days, the Friday Game 99er game was begun and it became very popular. I always have enjoyed helping newer players and at one time, I held a Friday morning session focusing on some basic bridge strategies. For several years, I oversaw the annual Mentee/Mentor game and one of these was very successful - extra tables were brought in - possibly 16-18 tables. I also began a Mentor Program and several new partnerships were formed during this time.

When I bravely began playing in one Open bridge game a week, my bridge knowledge increased significantly. Around this time, Pat Whitaker, whom I had carpooled with when our daughters were in preschool, became my mentor and we played together a couple times a month. I found I learn best by being told right away when I make a mistake. I can still "hear" Pat, along with some other better players, on what I should have done.

As many new players feel, I never dreamed I could reach the Life Master goals. After getting points in tournaments in Gatlinburg, Destin, and even Washington, DC with several different partners, I knew Life Master was within reach. Bruce Antman attended the Atlanta Tournament with me-we only had 2 days to get my 2 points and got them the 2<sup>nd</sup> day.

My love of travel is widely known and besides many other trips with Bill, my companion for many years, I took my first Larry Cohen Bridge cruise in 2019. Since then, I have been on 4 others and am going to his Bridge Camp and New England cruise this October. Fortunately, many of my Chattanooga Bridge friends have gone on these cruises as well. I learned quickly that you can get many gold points on these tournaments at sea! Plus, you have a great time with a set of new bridge friends, many are Larry's followers! At least 40 -50% of the attendees are previous attendees. I would urge any of you who love travel and bridge to consider a bridge cruise or camp as you will not feel uncomfortable, and you will learn a lot. At the suggestion of some of my Destin bridge friends, 4 of us are going to the Bermuda Tournament at the end of January.

Being an active bridge player in our club and my Florida club has certainly introduced me to so many new friends and along with tennis, has kept me active, mentally and physically.

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## History of Our Club's Ambassador Program Created by Ann Keown

In 2015, while visiting San Antonio, I noticed that their bridge club had an Ambassador to partner with anyone who needed one-I played twice that week with their Ambassador - a most enjoyable experience. San Antonio had "copied" their program from the Houston Bridge Club. After reviewing both clubs' websites and talking to both club managers, I decided to recommend this program to our club. As a member of our Board at that time, I submitted an Ambassador proposal to the Board. However, Board members were very skeptical of this program and, after several months, a Board member asked what the costs would be (minimal) and suggested I be allowed to try it - it was approved in the October 2015 Board Meeting. Since I am in Florida during the winter months, the program began on May 31, 2016.

Many thought I would never get enough players to volunteer, but I had already recruited several people willing to be an Ambassador. A key theme of our recruitment program was "Give Back" to the club-a theme we need to keep in mind to continue the success of our club.

The initial Ambassadors included Suzanne Atchley, Nancy Fletcher, Bruce Antman, Susan Kimm, Mary Pierce, Bucky Hughes, Harriett Hereford, Iris Abelson, Pat Whitaker with Alice Greenleaf, Gloria Poynter, and Janie Hunt as subs. We began with 8 ambassadors and expanded to 11 when the Friday open games were scheduled.

At a subsequent annual Club Meeting, the President recognized the success of the program and how it had contributed to the club's bottom

line! I think everyone who was skeptical personally told me they were wrong -I truly appreciate everyone's support. Although rare, we have had as many as 5 players show up without a partner and recently, we had 4 on one day - that's an entire table! We frequently need subs or new Ambassadors - please let me know if you are willing to participate!

### ***199 High Card Points or Less?***

If you enjoy playing bridge and have 199, or fewer, high card points and are having difficulty in finding a partner for the Friday game (or any other game), reach out to the interim Partnership Coordinator, Mary Robertson at 423.605.7702. She can help you try and find a great partner. One suggestion is that those who need partners try and establish a regular partner on designated days. For example, if you know you are usually only available to play on the first and third Fridays, seek out someone who can play one of these Fridays regularly. Once you have established a regular partner for that date, then look for someone who is available on a regular basis to play the other open dates. It's easier to find a regular partner if you look for someone once a month versus every single Friday. If you have questions or need more help with this, reach out to Mary or one of the Bridge Center's instructors.

### ***Nooga East Bridge Club***

Every Monday at 12:30 p.m. there's a bridge game at Christ United Methodist Church located at 8645 East Brainerd Road across from Hurricane Creek Shopping Center. Players are asked to arrive no later than 12:15 p.m. so the game can begin promptly. For those of you in Cleveland or North Georgia, this is just a hop, skip and a jump away. We are a very welcoming, fun group and are always looking for new players of all levels. Are you interested? Just email [noogabridgeeast@gmail.com](mailto:noogabridgeeast@gmail.com) to make a reservation. Need help finding a partner or have a question? You can text or call Sue Riddle at 423.509.3583 or Sharon Lewis at 423.240.5360.

### ***The Fairyland Duplicate Bridge Club***

The Fairyland Bridge group plays every Thursday at our Club. This group often combines celebrating special occasions along with a delicious lunch and great cards. Stay tuned to upcoming game announcements to make sure you don't miss the fun. Players should be registered before 10:15 to allow play to begin at 10:30. Lunch is provided between 12-12:30, afterward the game resumes. Reservations are appreciated, please reach out to Susie Crouch at 423.443.6889.

## *Friday Face-to-Face Mentor/Mentee*

Our popular Friday Face-to-Face Mentor/Mentee Game occurs on the fourth Friday of the month. Bruce Antman coordinates this game and will have sign-up sheets at the CBC for both Mentors and Mentees. If you can't sign up in person, you can text or call Bruce at 423.290.8207. The Mentee group is growing, and we always need Mentors to help our newer players with valuable on-the-spot advice. Don't be bashful. Sign up early and make Bruce's life easier.

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## *Partnership Committee*

If you need a partner, our Partnership Committee can help. During the month of September, contact Mary Robertson at 423.605.7702. Anne will be back as the regular Committee Chair in mid October.

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## *2026 Directory*

We are beginning our annual process of updating all of our club members' information for the Chattanooga Bridge Club Directory. This handy booklet provides members' contact names, telephone numbers and email addresses. A printout of the current directory will be made available for the next few weeks so that each of us can review our own personal data and update it as needed. Please take time to review your data. Thank you, Winnell, for undertaking this big task!

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With deep sadness we say farewell to Elizabeth  
"Betsy" Henry Walley Caldwell

## Sunday School Teacher And Ardent Adventurer



Elizabeth "Betsy" Henry Walley Caldwell went to be with the Lord on Sunday, September 7, 2025. She was preceded in death by her loving husband, L. Hardwick Caldwell, Jr. She is survived by her two sons, Zach Walley (Auburn), and Ned Walley (Kurt), and her five stepchildren, Hacker Caldwell (Kitty), Ted Caldwell (Beth), Charlotte Caldwell (Jeffrey), Mark Caldwell (Ann), and Tina Currin (Sam). She has four Walley grandchildren, 16 step grandchildren, and 29 step great-grandchildren.

Betsy was born June 2, 1940, in Wilmington, DE. Her parents, William Anderson Henry, and Bessie Maynard Henry, as well as her sister, Mary duBignon Lyne, all predeceased her. She attended the Tower Hill School in Wilmington for 11 years before graduating from the Dana Hall School in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Next, she graduated from Vassar College.

When not loving and helping her family, she enjoyed her many Bible studies, small groups, and teaching about the Lord. She took great pleasure in the many Sunday school classes she taught to young children, which was a big joy throughout her life. Giving back to the community as a volunteer was also very important.

She was always active and thrived in many sports such as tennis, golf, diving, walking, and especially croquet. Betsy was a passionate and competitive bridge player, and was never one to shy away from challenges, such as repelling down the side of Chattanooga's tallest building to raise funds for charity and skydiving more recently at age 82. During her life, she was an ardent adventurer and relished her many travels all over the world.

For over 30 years each winter, she enjoyed her second community at the Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, Florida, and her many friends, Bible studies and bridge groups there.



## *Remembering My Dear Friend, Betsy Written by Anne Donovan*

### *Tribute to Betsy Caldwell*

*Betsy always greeted everyone with a cheerful smile on her face. She usually had a little funny story to tell you, and her positive attitude was a pleasure to be around. Betsy was a very generous giver of her time and money to anyone in need, and any charity that she believed in. Betsy was always up for a fun time and doing something new. She loved card games and bridge in particular. Many a family gathering would be spent playing a game after dinner. She and I often traded Liberty puzzles to work together.*

*She embraced her large family that she married into, and they loved their "GB". Betsy never missed a chance to share Jesus Christ with anyone. Many a summer she spent working with kids at Vacation Bible School or throughout the year in Sunday School.*

*Betsy was quite the croquet queen at her home in Ocean Reef, and could be found practicing for the next upcoming tournament.*

*I will miss my dear, sweet friend daily, but am celebrating because I know where she is and that she's happy and healthy. I salute you dear friend and miss you terribly.*

Anne

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## *Memorial Donations*

Are you considering making a memorial gift to the Chattanooga Bridge Center? Please note that though your contribution is truly needed and appreciated, it is not tax deductible. Our club is registered as a social club, 501(c)7 not a 501(c)3. Don't let that stop you from making a meaningful donation to the club in memory of a special bridge player.

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**Happy Anniversary to Myra and Larry - 31 Years of Bliss**



**Arnie's Angle - For Those Who Wish To Learn More  
About The World In General**

By Arnie Meagher

## The Woodpecker—My Story

Good morning! If you step outside and listen, you may hear me working. My name is Echo and I live up to my name as my methodical drumming on tree trunks echo through the woods. I belong to the family Picidae that evolved from a hawk-like ancestor. This means that we woodpeckers share a lineage with a much broader group of birds that eventually diversified into the varied forms we see today. We belong to the order Piciformes, which includes a diverse array of birds such as toucans, barbets, and honeyguides. Our earliest known ancestors can be traced back to the Paleocene epoch, approximately 55 million years ago. These early proto-woodpeckers were likely small, arboreal birds that fed on insects and other small prey found in the crevices of tree bark. 40 million years ago came the development of specialized adaptations; 20 million years ago we diversified into a wide range of species. Today, we are over 200 species strong and are found on every continent except Antarctica, each with its own unique evolutionary story.

The specific evolutionary journey from a hawk-like progenitor to the specialized creatures we have become has involved significant adaptations over millions of years. One of our most significant developments is the evolution of our strong, chisel-like beaks, which enable us to effectively drill into wood and extract insects. Other adaptations include a unique skull structure with a hyoid bone that wraps around the cranium, helping to absorb and dissipate the force of our hammering blows. Our specialized tongue is another evolutionary marvel - long, barbed, and sticky, this appendage allows us to reach deep into crevices to extract insects. We also developed stiff, pointed tail feathers that we use as props to support our bodies while we cling to tree trunks. And we also developed strong claws that enable us to latch onto tree trunks and climb up and down as needed. These attributes have helped us thrive in a niche that very few other birds have explored so extensively - the world of tree trunks.

**The Art of Listening:** If you are a keen observer you will notice that before we commence our characteristic hammer blows we have a ritual that all woodpeckers follow. When we land on a tree or branch we cock our heads slightly, remain absolutely still, and listen intently. This silent, almost meditative moment of intense listening is a critical preparatory act to our foraging, refined over millennia. We are listening for the minute sounds of insects moving, chewing, or tunneling within the wood. Larvae gnawing on wood create faint scraping or clicking noises. Adult beetles might make soft rustling sounds as they navigate their galleries. These are sounds entirely inaudible to the human ear, but our auditory system is highly tuned to detect them. Besides direct sounds, we can detect subtle

vibrations. As we give exploratory taps, we are listening for changes in resonance that indicate hollow spots or tunnels where insects reside. A hollow sound could mean a chamber, and a change in vibration might signal the presence of living organisms. By tapping in different spots, we use our acute hearing to triangulate the exact location of the sound source, pinpointing the insect's gallery with remarkable accuracy. This precision minimizes the hammering needed to reach our prey. This 'listen before we peck' strategy is ingrained in our behavior. Pecking wood is incredibly strenuous. Each strike delivers immense force. Randomly hammering away at a tree is a colossal waste of our energy. By listening and pinpointing, we ensure that each powerful peck is purposeful and productive, leading directly to a meal. This makes our foraging highly efficient. Furthermore, the act of pecking generates a lot of noise, which can attract predators. By limiting pecking to only necessary strikes, and quickly obtaining food, we reduce our exposure time to potential threats. The listening pause is a moment of focused attention, not just on prey, but also on the ambient sounds of the forest, including potential dangers. The universality of this 'listen-first' behavior across all our species underscores its evolutionary significance and effectiveness.

**Beyond Listening:** While listening is paramount, we use a combination of other cues to find hidden meals. We look for visual clues that are subtle external signs of insect activity. This may include the exit holes where adult insects have emerged, or the sawdust-like insect droppings pushed out of tunnels, or 'galleries' that show visible grooves or lines on the bark. The detection of visual cues and the art of listening is part of our multi-sensory approach, where all information is integrated to achieve maximum foraging efficiency.

**Hammering on Metal Surfaces:** Yes, we hammer on chimney caps, vent pipes, and gutters. We do this primarily during the springtime mating season and this very loud drumming is telling all potential male competitors to stay away and all potential female mates to join the party.

### Interesting Facts About Us:

- 1) A "descent" is the term used to describe a group of us woodpeckers. The term likely originated from our habit of starting at the top of trees and working our way down.
- 2) We hammer on wood at a rate of up to 20 times per second, with an impact force equivalent to a human hitting their head against a wall at 10 mph!
- 3) The red color on the back of the heads of some of our male woodpeckers is believed to have evolved as a way to deter predators. By focusing the predator's attention on the red area of the head instead of the body, we are better able to avoid becoming an easy meal.
- 4) The ivory-billed woodpecker is considered the rarest member of our

family, and some scientists have declared it extinct.

5) We play a crucial ecological role in controlling insect pest populations, and our abandoned nest holes provide shelter for other birds and small mammals.

6) While some members of our family, like the acorn woodpecker, form lifelong pairs, most of us form pairs for one breeding season only.

7) 23 of our woodpecker species are native to the United States. We are widespread and can be found relatively easily.

8) While a significant number of our species maintain healthy populations, none are free from human threats, which range from habitat loss to harmful pesticides. These dangers have already proven disastrous for two of North America's largest family members — the Ivory-billed woodpecker and Mexico's Imperial woodpecker — which are almost certainly extinct.

9) The American Three-toed Woodpecker has one toe less than most of us, a trait that allows it to lean further away from trees, delivering more forceful blows.

10) We range in size from the diminutive piculets with lengths of 3.5 inches and weights around .07 ounces to the imposing imperial woodpecker which is nearly 2 feet tall and weighs over 1.3 lbs.

11) Our average lifespan in the wild varies by species but typically ranges from 4 to 11 years.

12) The pileated woodpecker is the largest family member and makes the loudest drumming noise in North America. Its powerful excavations leave distinctive rectangular holes. Its body length ranges from 16 to 19 inches, while its wingspan measures between 26 to 29 inches. The average weight for males is around .66 lbs, while females can weigh up to .77 lbs.

Thank you for reading my story. I hope it gave you an understanding of our remarkable journey over millions of years involving multiple adaptations. The next time you spot us working, look carefully and see if you can detect us listening. Please share my story with your friends.

Yours truly, Echo

Email: [ajmeagher@aol.com](mailto:ajmeagher@aol.com)