

# FACT SHEET : SAPSUCKERS



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The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (*Sphyrapicus varius*) is a woodpecker that migrates through Missouri in the early spring and occasionally can be seen in the Southern half of the state throughout the winter. Their summer breeding territory is around and North of the Great Lakes Region into Canada. It is often seen as a pest as it pecks holes into tree trunks and, as its name implies, feeds on sap.

Sapsuckers diet primarily consists of tree sap with more Insects included during their breeding season. They feed by stopping from tree to tree and peck new holes into trees along the way. They are known for having good memory to be able to return to their preferred feeding trees year after year as they migrate. Birds such as Hummingbirds and various insects benefit from the sapsuckers work and will feed from the oozing sap holes.

The sap holes can be recognized, and distinguished from birds and insects, by the distinct pattern of holes in tree trunks. They are commonly found on pear, maple, birch, pine, spruce, and other trees with thinner bark. You don't typically find them on oak or walnut trees that have thicker corky bark.

**Control:** There is no known spray or chemical deterrent to keep the sapsuckers at bay. While their damage may be minor at first it can get progressively worse. If you must get them under control you can wrap burlap or canvas around the bark in the winter time to late spring as the birds are around.



Left: Sapsucker damage can be identified by the horizontal patterns of holes on the bark of a tree. Damage can be progressive and increase through the years as the woodpeckers prefer certain trees.