

Mindre meddelelser

Female Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* roosting far from its nest

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Female woodpeckers may have more extended home-ranges than males, even when breeding (Ruge et al. 1999), and the home-range may surround the nest- or roost sites asymmetrically depending on the availability of food and tree cavities (Smith 1987). Blume (1961) recorded a distance of more than 3 km between roost and nest for a female Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*. This note reports on such a case where a Black Woodpecker female roosted overnight far from its nest before and after the nesting period, and occasionally also in the incubation period.

The forests around Åbenrå in southwestern Denmark had breeding Black Woodpeckers in 1990 and again in 2001-2002. These hilly, mainly deciduous forests cover about 16 km² around the 6 km² flat area of the city of Åbenrå (Fig. 1). The history of both members of the pair that became established in 2001 is fairly well known because both birds had been ringed as nestlings and were subsequently colour-ringed in connection with a long-term study in an area spanning the border between Denmark and Germany (Christensen 2002). The male (Helgoland 5319172), ringed in a nest 30 km south of the Åbenrå forests on 22 May 1999, was colour-ringed 20 km farther north on 30 October in the same year. It was last observed in that area on 25 March 2000 when it was still unpaired, and was first seen again on 3 October 2000, when it roosted in its future nesting cavity. The female (Copenhagen 6229898), ringed 15 km south of the Åbenrå forests on 16 May 1999, was colour-ringed on 13 February 2000 when roosting in a cavity just north of Åbenrå (cf. Fig. 1). At that time it was still unpaired. It later returned to the same roost where it was seen between 28 October 2000 and 26 March 2001, before it moved 5.8 km SSW and joined the male (first seen here on 8 April). Except for a not quite new hole discovered near the roosting site of the female between the breeding seasons of 2001 and 2002, the two roosting cavities (of the male and female, respectively), situated on each side of Åbenrå city, were the only known usable Black Woodpecker holes in the area.

In 2001 the pair was regularly watched by telescope between 8 April and 7 June, when their two young fledged. Egg-laying was initiated around 27 April, as indicated by the estimated age of the young when ringed on 24 May. The roosting of the female was studied by observing the last nest-relief in the evening and, at other evenings, by watching its roosting site north of the city (in woodpeckers the male invariably incubates overnight (e.g., Blume 1996)). Before laying, the female stayed overnight in its roost 5.8 km from the nest on 26

March and 11 April, but not on 26 April. After laying had begun, it stayed overnight in the roost on 29 April, but not on 23 May. After the young fledged it was found at the roost on 15 June, 9 August and 12 September. It was seen at the nest during daytime on 8 April and 24 May, and seen leaving the nest after the last incubation shift on 3, 9 and 12 May.

In 2002, when the same pair bred and the same cavities existed within the study area, similar results were obtained, although less information is available on the female's roosting during the breeding period. Egg-laying started around 18 April and three young, ringed on 23 May, fledged on 29 May. The female roosted at its distant site on 10 March and 26 June, but not on 3 May. No other Black Woodpeckers or other species are known to have used the female's roosting cavity between January 2001 and June 2002.

In conclusion, the female usually roosted overnight at its distant site until shortly before laying and from about one week after its young left the nest. Remarkably, it also did so at least once during or immediately after laying, on 29 April 2001.

Female woodpeckers are normally relieved from incubation some time before sunset (and take over from the male some time after sunrise), thus gaining some extra daytime to feed. They should therefore have ample time to go to distant roost-sites, but apparently will not normally do so. Where the female at Åbenrå roosted



Foto: Erik Thomsen.

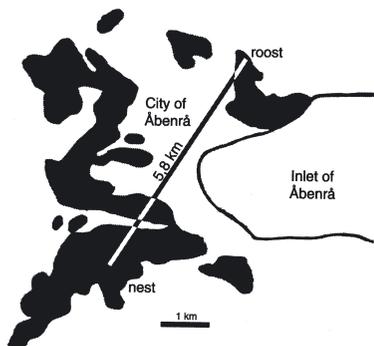


Fig. 1. Outline of the forests around Åbenrå city, showing the shortest route between the nest and the distant roosting cavity of a Black Woodpecker female in 2001 and 2002.

Skitse af skovene ved Åbenrå fjord. Linien viser den korteste vej (5,8 km) mellem redehullet og hunnens periodisk benyttede overnatningshul nord for byen.

overnight during the nesting period is not known, unless it was somewhere in a group of deciduous trees 100 m from the nest where it landed after a late last incubation relief on 9 May 2001; a similar observation was made on 18 May 2002, although this time the relief occurred a full hour before sunset. Night-roosting in the open (in a group of spruce close to the nest) was sometimes recorded during a study using radio-telemetry (K. Ruge pers. comm.).

This study shows that colour-ringing may be a valuable alternative to telemetry ("Even today colour-ringing is very important, because high-tech radio-tagging do not last as long as coloured plastic rings", K. Ruge pers. comm.). However, the study gave no indications of the size of the female's home-range, but only showed that a Black Woodpecker female could roost overnight at a distance of 5.8 km from the nest before and after breeding, and also during the early incubation period. Neither is it known to which extent the female participated in guiding of the young after fledging. Factors that might have influenced the behaviour of this particular bird are the small number of usable cavities in the area and the absence of neighbouring pairs between nest and roost.

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Resumé: Sortspættehun *Dryocopus martius* ved Åbenrå overnattende 5,8 km fra redehullet

I litteraturen findes eksempler blandt spætter på, at hunner kan udnytte et større hjemområde end hanner. F.eks. fandt Blume (1961) hos Sortspætte *Dryocopus martius*, at hunnen i yngletiden kan have sit overnat-

ningshul over 3 km fra redehullet (hvor spættehanner overnatter), men vha. telemetri er det også vist, at hunnen kan overnatte på stammer nær redetræet (i tæt granbevoksning, K. Ruge pers. medd.).

I skovene ved Åbenrå i Sønderjylland (Fig. 1) blev et ynglepar etableret i 2001. Begge mager var blevet ringmærket som redeunger i maj 1999, hhv. 30 km (♂) og 15 km (♀) syd for deres fremtidige ynglehul, og senere også forsynet med farveringe (jf. Christensen 2002). Hannen opholdt sig 10 km syd for Åbenrå frem til i hvert fald 25/3 2000, hvor den stadig var uparret, og blev først set i Åbenrå-skovene 3/10; her overnattede den i det fremtidige redehul. Hunnen (ikke udparret) blev 13/2 2000 fundet i et hul lige nord for Åbenrå (jf. Fig. 1) og blev senere konstateret overnattende i samme hul mellem 28/10 2000 og 26/3 2001, før hun sluttede sig til hannen 5,8 km mod SSV (set her første gang 8/4).

I 2001 startede æglægningen ca 27/4, bedømt ud fra de to ungers alder ved ringmærkning 24/5, og ungerne fløj ud 7/6. Ved at overvåge dels hunnens overnatningshul nord for byen, dels (på andre aftener) den sidste rugeafløsning om aftenen, kunne det konstateres, at hunnen overnattede i sit gamle hul 11/4 (før æglægning), 29/4 (tidlig læggeperiode), samt 15/6, 9/8 og 12/9 (efter ungerne udflyvning), men ikke 26/4 (omkring eller lige før æglægningsstart) eller 23/5 (i ungerne redetid).

Samme par yngled i 2002, hvor forløbet var nogenlunde det samme. Æglægningen startede ca 18/4, og tre unger (ringmærket 23/5) fløj ud 29/5. Selvom der kun blev gjort få observationer vedr. hunnens overnatning, vides den at have brugt hullet nord for byen 10/3 og 26/6, men ikke 3/5. Hvor hunnen overnattede i redetiden vides ikke. Af brugbare sortspættehuller i området fandtes begge år kun de to omtalte (redetiden, også benyttet af hannen til overnatning, og hunnens overnatningshul 5,8 km mod NNE) samt et ældre hul nær hullet benyttet af hunnen. Dette, og fraværet af andre Sortspætter i området, har formodentlig haft indflydelse på hunnens overnatningsvaner.

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