

Pileated woodpecker

by [Sarah Rossiter](#) in the [January 27, 2004](#) issue

He didn't see me which is why I was able
To sit beneath him in bare woods, close enough
To almost touch his six-inch prehistoric beak,
Curved scimitar that searched and tapped
As he hopped, bobbing, up the oak.
His broad black back, shy sweep of wing,
Ungainly, yes, but such a sight, and
Better yet his outsized head topped
By a tuft of flaming red that stuck up straight,
And made me smile. A cartoon's joke,
Yet he was real. So were my thoughts
That bitter day, mind and memory
Bleak as steel until I looked and saw and felt
The sudden wild gift of life.