

# 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.