

SIGHTING PILEATED WOODPECKERS

Leland Jamieson

For G.K.J., Spring Equinox, 2005

“Quick. Hurry!” you whisper. “A red moustache,
a brilliant hue, just like his swept-back crest!”
A Pileated pounds on our dead ash,
hollows an oval hole, big as his vest.
The rout of carpenter ants he’s hard-pressed
to swallow up, but for his backward toss
of head that swills them down like applesauce.

With sweeping wingbeats, bigger than a crow’s,
revealing bright white undersides, he flies
away—*kik-kik—kik*—leaves us on our toes
beside the window, no time for good-byes.
“A sight for sore eyes,” I say. “What a prize!”
“Oh, look!” you say. “He’s back! And *look! Quick! See?*
He’s brought—his mate? Black forehead. It’s a she!”

A second Pileated! No moustache!
She perches higher, in a rotted birch,
shucks off its wasted bark as though mere trash.
The bug-filled tree repays her for her search....
Both flapping off, they give my heart a lurch.
“I hope,” you say, “they nest with us—or near—
I think they like our bark-bug atmosphere.”

“Sighting Pileated Woodpeckers” © 2005 by Leland Jamieson