

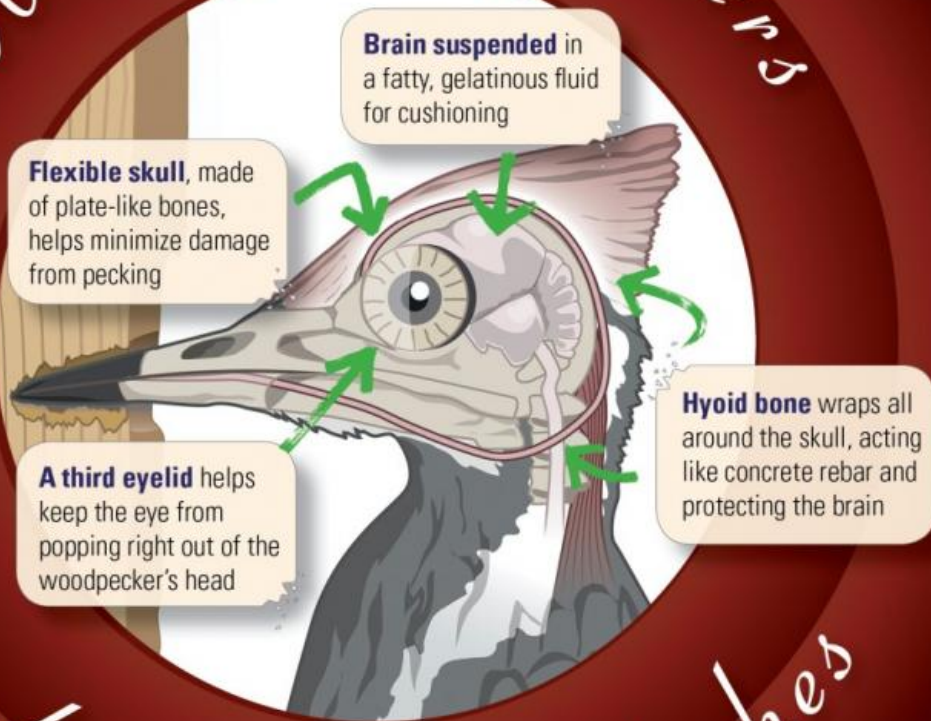
# Infographic: Why don't woodpeckers get headaches?

June 5 2015

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Students in McMaster's Integrated Science Program study the physiology of woodpeckers to better understand how the bird's features protect its brain. Mimicking the woodpecker's head structure could one day lead to safer helmets for sports like hockey and football.

# Why woodpeckers



# don't get headaches

Pileated woodpeckers can cause a lot of damage to trees.

The large birds, common in forests across Canada, can hammer deep holes while in search of insects or excavating a nest.

But while the pileated woodpecker spends much of its day hitting its head against [trees](#), it doesn't ever injure its [brain](#).

That fact has led the woodpecker to become a valuable teaching tool in McMaster's Integrated Science Program, where instructors teach students about its unique physiology.

Better understanding how the bird protects its brain could even lead to the development of better helmets for high-impact sports like hockey and football.

MPP Garfield Dunlop recently toured iSci facilities and learned about the use of the woodpecker – which he frequently sees in his own backyard – in the program's curriculum.

He later donated a large piece of wood, filled with holes made by a pileated woodpecker, to the program.

Provided by McMaster University

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