

**A woodpecker has invaded a  
Massachusetts neighborhood.  
Residents are taking it in stride**

Rockport residents have a history of fighting off invaders, but not this time.

During the War of 1812, townsfolk in the tiny fishing village hurled rocks at British soldiers using their stockings as slings. Now, they're slinging trash bags and towels over the side mirrors of their cars to protect them from a destructive and determined pileated woodpecker.



Over the last few weeks, the bird has broken more than two dozen mirrors and at least one vehicle's side window. But residents are taking the violence in stride.

"Everybody's having a good laugh about it," said Ben Favaloro. "Nobody wants harm to the bird. He's always welcome back."

"Initially, we just noticed that all the mirrors had been adjusted. It looked like maybe there's a child in the neighborhood that was going around pushing the mirrors down," he said. But then his sister-in-law spotted the roughly 21-inch tall woodpecker on Favaloro's truck, pecking at the side mirror.

Given their enormous size, pileated woodpeckers are plenty strong enough to break mirrors, but such behavior is "definitely

weird,” said Pamela Hunt, senior biologist at the New Hampshire Audubon Society.

“Lots of birds will be aggressive against reflections in mirrors, but I don’t usually hear about woodpeckers,” she said. “They don’t usually peck at their opponents, they kind of chase them around.”

She said the woodpecker might be “a little stupid” and is trying to defend its territory and scare away what it sees as competition. The damage coincides with the mating season for pileated woodpeckers and resident Barbara Smith said she’d be fine with “lots of little woodpeckers” around, though she hopes they won’t be as destructive.

“Woodpeckers have to do what woodpeckers do,” she said. “Good luck, woodpecker.”

“This small town of Rockport that I live in is one of the safest communities around,” he said. “I think this is probably one of the biggest crimes in years. It’s kind of funny, but it’s nice as well.”