

### ***The Right Beak for the Job***

Have you ever tried to eat a pine cone?

You shouldn't. That's a bad idea.

But if you *did* try (and, again, you *shouldn't*), you'd discover that the seeds are tightly packed under the tough scales of the cone and difficult to extract—especially for a human who, we cannot stress enough, *should not be ripping up his or her lips trying to eat pine cones*.

Crossbills, on the other hand, are literally built for eating the seeds out of the cones of coniferous trees. God designed them with specialized beaks that are perfectly suited to pry between the scales of a cone while extracting the seeds with their tongue.

What's more, crossbill beaks aren't a one-size-fits-all solution. Different species of crossbills are better suited to open cones of different species of conifers thanks to their unique beaks. The white-winged crossbill, for example, prefers the cones of white spruce trees.

Pictured: white-winged crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*)



***Photography by James Capo***

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