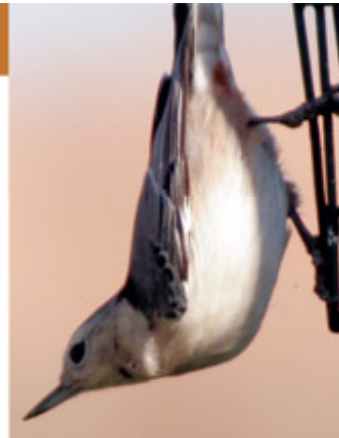


## White-breasted Nuthatch

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

# WATCH THEM HUNT UPSIDE DOWN



joyful black, white and gray birds are the largest and best known of the four North American nuthatches. Like all nuthatches, White-breasted Nuthatches have a unique ability to move head-first down tree trunks. This trait gives them an advantage at finding insects that are wedged into the top edges of bark. Upward-moving birds, like woodpeckers, often overlook these morsels.

Because of their active lifestyle and pleasant personality, nuthatches are fun to watch. If you get the pleasure of hosting a nesting pair in your back yard, you'll note the male plays an important role during this exciting and stressful period.

### Interesting Facts:

- Family:** Sittidae
- Scientific Name:** *Sitta carolinensis*
- Location:** White-breasted Nuthatches are found throughout most of the U.S., preferring habitat of deciduous (especially oak), as well as mixed woods.
- Migration:** It is unusual for a pair of White-breasted Nuthatches to migrate. They may move around in winter, however, to find food. They sometimes form foraging flocks with chickadees and titmice.
- Nesting:** Females build nests in abandoned woodpecker holes, other natural cavities, or [birdhouses](#). The nest is made of twigs, bark shavings, and hair or fur. The female lays 3-10 eggs, white with rust-colored marks, and incubates them for 12 days. The male brings food to the female during the incubation period. Both sexes feed the nestlings. Fledglings leave the nest after 14 days, and pairs usually have just one brood per summer.

<b>Diet:</b>	White-breasted Nuthatches eat insects and larvae they find wedged into tree bark. They also eat nuts, <a href="#">seeds</a> , and berries.
<b>Size and Color:</b>	This 5-3/4" bird has a wingspan of 11". It is grayish on its upperparts, with a black cap and nape and a white breast and face. Flanks are brownish-gray and their eyes are solid black.
<b>Special Characteristics:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head-first movement down a tree trunk, unlike other birds' upward movement</li> <li>• Bill sweeping behavior, where it sweeps its bill from side to side in a motion so pronounced that the whole body sways</li> <li>• Named for its habit of taking one seed at a time from feeders, flying to a nearby tree, and "hatching" it open with its bill</li> <li>• Males feed females during incubation</li> </ul>
<b>Song:</b>	Song is a soft "whir-whir-whir" and call is a sharp "ank ank ank" given in rapid succession.
<b>Attracting:</b>	White-breasted Nuthatches are likely to feed at your <a href="#">feeders</a> when you offer <a href="#">black sunflower seed</a> , sunflower kernels, or <a href="#">suet</a> .