

Black-capped Chickadee

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Named for its characteristic call of "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" and the cap of black feathers adorning its head, the Black-capped Chickadee is one of the most easily identifiable North American birds.

Their pleasant disposition and confident demeanor toward humans make them a backyard favorite in most yards. In fact, wearing a red coat while filling your feeders in the winter often provides an open invitation for chickadees to feed right from your hand.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Paridae

Scientific Name: *Parus atricapillus*

Location: Found in over much of North America, centered mainly in Alaska, Canada, and the northern half of the United States. These sweet, social birds can be found in deciduous and mixed forest regions as well as open woodlands. In winter they will often venture into suburban areas in search of food.

Migration: The chickadee is a year-round resident in many areas, without much evidence of migration - although they may winter south into Texas.

Nesting: Chickadees generally have one brood per season and nest in the hollowed out areas of rotted trees, or in natural cavities, and [nesting boxes](#). Both the male and female create the nest by excavating a cavity and filling it with grass, hair, plant down, moss, and feathers. Females lay 6-8 brown-speckled white eggs and will brood nestlings up to 12 days after hatching, while gradually decreasing her amount of time with them. The male does most of the feeding until the female is done brooding. after

which time they begin to share the feeding responsibility. Juvenile chickadees will generally fledge within 16 days but continue to be fed by parents for 2 to 4 weeks.

Diet: In warmer months the Chickadee's diet is made up of various insects pulled from the underside of leaves and tree bark as well as berries and seeds. Their young are fed a consistent diet of insects as well.

Size and Color: The average size of the Black-capped Chickadee is 4-3/4" to 5-3/4". Both the female and male are similar in appearance with a black cap and throat, white cheeks, gray back and white underparts.

Special Characteristics:

- Chickadees express the musical sound it is named for, a buzzy *chick-a-dee-dee-dee* or *dee dee dee*. Also *fee bee*, or *fee bee e*, with the first note higher than the last.
- Chickadees will stockpile food for the winter by hiding it under a piece of loose bark or in a patch of moss. This is often a benefit to other birds that find it while foraging for food in the winter.
- Black-capped Chickadees mate for life.
- Naturally curious creatures, Chickadees can be easily attracted by pishing (a "psh" sound made repeatedly), often coming within an arm length away or closer.
- Chickadees have the amazing ability to become hypothermic at night - going from 108° F to 50°F - thus preserving their energy during cold winter weather.

Life Span: 2-1/2 years