

Black-capped Chickadee Profile

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

This lovely bird was named for its "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" call and its cap of black feathers on top of its head. The Black-capped Chickadee is one of the most easy-to-recognize North American birds.

Black-capped Chickadees are not afraid to feed at feeders when humans are present. Some will even become tame enough to eat from your hand. It is fun to watch them taking turns using a feeder. While waiting their turn, they rest on nearby tree branches or hanging flower baskets.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Paridae

Scientific Name: *Parus atricapillus*

Location: Black-capped Chickadees are found in much of North America, mainly in Alaska, Canada, and the northern half of the United States. These sweet, friendly birds live in deciduous and mixed forests as well as open wooded areas. In winter, they will often venture into suburban areas in search of food, especially from feeders.

Migration: The chickadee is a year-round resident in many areas, but some may winter in south Texas. You can find them roosting with other chickadees inside nest boxes or other large cavities on cold winter nights. This helps them retain their body heat.

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 finding a cavity and filling it with grass, hair, plant down, moss, and feathers.

Females lay 6-8 brown-speckled white eggs. The female incubates the eggs for 12 days. During this time, the male does most of the feeding. After hatching, male and female share the task of feeding the fledglings. Nestlings usually leave the nest 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 insects they pull from the undersides of leaves and tree bark. They also eat berries and seeds. Their young are fed a diet of insects, too.
Size and Color:	The average size of the Black-capped Chickadee is 4-3/4" to 5-3/4". The female and male are alike in appearance. They have a black cap and throat, white cheeks, gray back and white underparts.
Special Characteristics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chickadees sing the song they are named for: "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" or "dee dee dee." Also, "fee bee," or "fee bee ee." • Chickadees stockpile food for the winter by hiding it under a piece of loose bark or in a patch of moss. • Black-capped Chickadees mate for life. • Chickadees have the amazing ability to lower their body temperature several degrees on cold winter nights. This behavior helps them preserve their energy to survive the cold.
Attract Them:	Chickadees can be attracted easily by "pishing." Simply make a "psh" sound and repeat it over and over. When they hear this sound, they will often come within an arm's length away or closer. They love a feeder offering of black sunflower seed, and some will even eat from your hand.
Life Span:	2-1/2 years