

# Black-capped Chickadee

## Black-capped Chickadee

### Appearance

This small bird measures about 5 inches in length. Sexually monomorphic, males and females are colored the same with a black cap and bib, gray back, and a buffy wash on their sides.



# Black-capped Chickadee

## Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home>

### SONGS

In most of North America, the song is a simple, pure 2 or 3-note whistled *fee-bee* or *hey, sweetie*. In the Pacific Northwest, the song is 3 or 4 notes on the same pitch; the song is also different on Martha's Vineyard in MA. In much of the range, males begin singing in mid-January, and the song increases in frequency as winter progresses. Females also sing occasionally.

### CALLS

Chickadees make their *chickadee-dee-dee* call using increasing numbers of *dee* notes when they are alarmed. They also have a gargling call, often given aggressively when a lower-ranking bird gets close to a higher-ranking one; also exchanged between members of a pair. Black-capped Chickadees make a high pitched *see* as a high-intensity alarm call, often when a fast-approaching predator is detected. When chickadees hear this call, they freeze in position until they hear a chickadee-dee call signifying "all clear." High *see* calls most often given by males.

### OTHER SOUNDS

Chickadee nestlings make an explosive hiss and also slap the inside of their nest cavity when an intruder looks in.

Listen to the songs and calls at [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-capped\\_Chickadee/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-capped_Chickadee/sounds)

# Black-capped Chickadee

## Diet

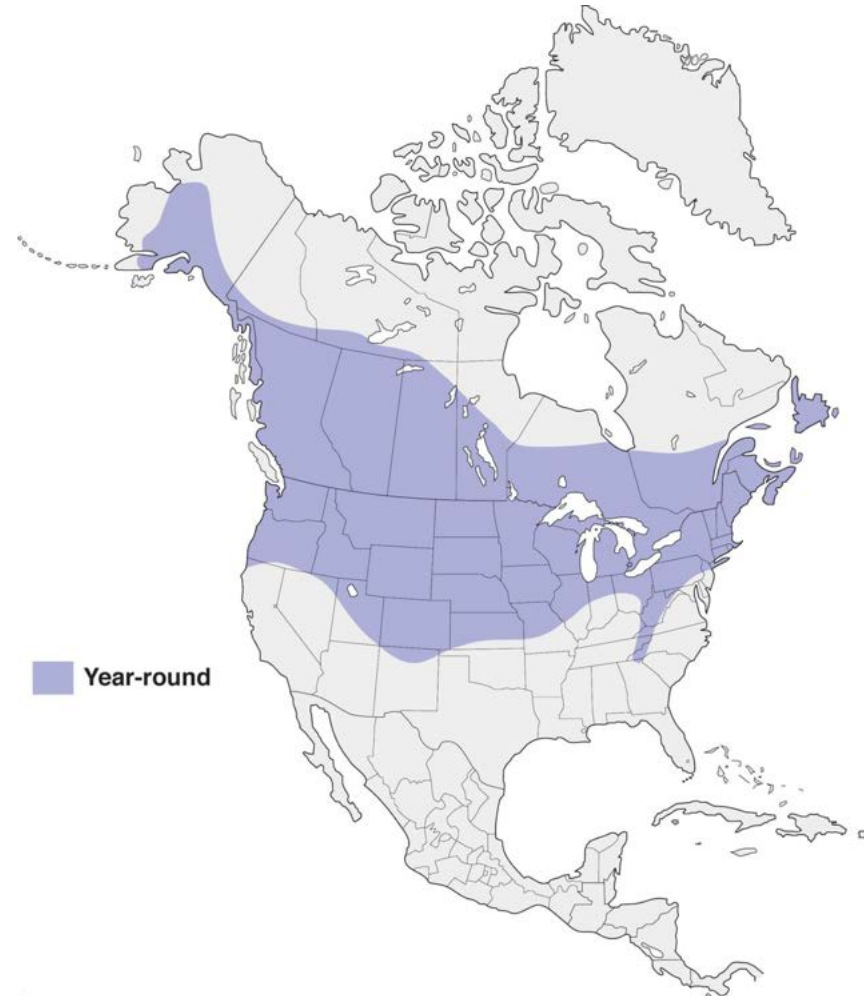
The Black-capped Chickadee diet consists of seeds, fruit, and insects, plus spiders and their eggs. Planting native berry bushes and sunflowers will attract these birds to your garden.



# Black-capped Chickadee

## Range

Black-capped Chickadees can be found year-round in DuPage County.





# Black-capped Chickadee

## Habitat

These birds are found in a variety of wooded habitats from forests to neighborhoods. They are a common backyard bird in all seasons, even in the coldest winter weather.



# Black-capped Chickadee Behavior

Adult Black-capped Chickadees do not migrate, though the young sometimes move southward within their range, especially when reproduction is high. These movements are irregular though, so they are more accurately labeled “irruptions” rather than “migration.”



Spring and summer



Autumn



Winter



# Black-capped Chickadee

## Behavior

Both members of a pair will excavate a nest cavity in rotten wood or will enlarge an abandoned woodpecker cavity. Chickadees will use a nest box or birdhouse. The female builds the nest, often using moss and animal fur in its construction.





# Black-capped Chickadee

## Behavior

Even when temperatures dip below zero, Black-capped Chickadees virtually always sleep in their own individual cavities, which they can excavate on their own.



# Black-capped Chickadee Behavior

Small songbirds migrating through unfamiliar areas often associate with Black-capped Chickadee flocks. An observant birder might be alerted to interesting migrants by observing Black-capped Chickadee flocks, especially during fall migration.



# Black-capped Chickadee

## Literature/Prose

### *The Chickadee*

By Ralph Waldo Emerson

Then piped a tiny voice hard by,  
Gay and polite, a cheerful cry,  
“Chick-a-dee-dee!” saucy note  
Out of a sound heart and merry throat  
As if it said, “Good day, good sir!  
Fine afternoon, old passenger!  
Happy to meet you in these places  
Where January brings few faces.





## Black-capped Chickadee Feeders

The Black-capped Chickadee is one of the most common birds attracted to feeders. They eat sunflower seed, peanuts, or suet. Chickadees will hide seeds to eat later and remember thousands of hiding places.



## Black-capped Chickadee Feeders

Chickadees are friendly birds and can be taught to feed from your hand.



# Black-capped Chickadee Names

Common name  
Black-capped Chickadee

*Black-capped* refers to the bird's black crown.

*Chickadee* or *Chick-a-dee-dee* is its familiar call.



Scientific name  
*Poecile atricapillus*

*Poecile* is Latin meaning “colonnade” or “gallery.”

In Latin:

- *atri* comes from *ater*, meaning “black.”
- *cap* comes from *caput* meaning “head.”
- Latin for “hair” is *pilus*.

So, *atricapillus* translates as “black head hair.”





# Black-capped Chickadee Names

## Collective name

A group of Chickadees is called a *banditry*, perhaps because of the mask-like appearance of its face!

