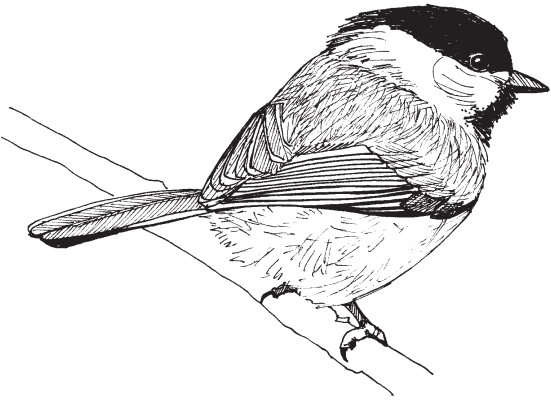


How to Help

Carolina Chickadees



The familiar black-capped and bibbed gray songbird is a year-round resident of the southeastern U.S., from south of the Great Lakes to northern Florida, and to central Texas. Chickadees need tree cavities for nesting sites, and forage for insects on the leaves and branches of trees. They can be helped by providing nest boxes and feeders, and by planting shade trees as

What Carolina Chickadees Need

Food: Spring through fall, animal foods (mostly insects and spiders) make up 80-to-90 percent of the diet. In winter, animal and plant foods are consumed in approximately equal proportions. Research shows that their diverse diet includes true bugs, bees, ants, wasps, aphids, tree-hoppers, leaf-hoppers, caterpillars, spiders, and fruits or seeds of poison ivy, blackberry, blueberry, pine, mulberry, honeysuckle, redbud, and Virginia creeper.

Nesting: Builds nest in tree cavity usually 8-15 feet above the ground. Often uses cavities in trees near the edge of a forest or woodland. Usually defends a breeding territory of 3-6 acres, though sometimes pairs may build nests within 30 feet of each other.

Shelter: During the breeding season, females sleep in the nesting cavity, while males sleep on nearby sheltered branches in trees, vines, or shrubs. When not breeding, birds sleep individually on sheltered branches or, especially when cold, in tree cavities.

Other: Chickadees use bird baths and small ponds for drinking and bathing. Chickadees, especially young birds, may fall victim to roaming house cats.

How You Can Help

- Provide feeding stations stocked with suet or seeds, including sunflower seeds and nuts. Hang feeders a short distance from tree and shrub cover, perhaps 6-to-10 feet so birds can quickly seek cover if raptors like hawks and owls appear, but can also spot approaching ground predators such as stray cats.
- Plant native shade trees and shrubs that offer opportunities for feeding on insects.
- Plant sunflowers and native berry bushes.
- Avoid applying pesticides that kill insects on trees and shrubs, and may harm chickadees.
- Provide nest boxes, 8-15 feet up on large shade trees. Boxes should be at least 4 x 4 inches wide and 6 inches deep, with a 1 1/8 inch entrance hole.
- Plant maple, box elder, oak, or other large shade trees for potential cavity-excavating opportunities.
- Provide additional nesting boxes for winter roost sites.
- Plant large shade trees that provide sheltered roosting opportunities and cavity-excavating opportunities.
- Provide a birdbath or small pond for drinking and bathing. Keep water clean and free of mosquito larvae.
- Keep cats indoors where they are safe from outdoor dangers and won't threaten birds.