



House Wren & Black-capped Chickadee

HOUSE WREN

Description & Identification:

The House Wren is cinnamon brown above, buff or gray below, and has fine bars on the wings and up-lifted tail. It has a short bill and pink legs. It measures 4.25 - 5 inches. The male and female look alike, but only the male is the singer, and most of his singing occurs during courting times. Both sexes give a harsh, scolding call characteristic of most wrens.

Habitat:

The tiny little bird with the big voice is common throughout most of North America. They like the undergrowth and thickets, and some like marshy areas.

House Wrens are friendly and will live near human habitation. They prefer suburban yards or open areas with trees and shrubs nearby. The House Wren migrates to southern states for the winter.

Diet:

Wrens feed primarily on insects such as caterpillars, flies, aphids, spiders, beetles, grasshoppers, crickets and moths, but they may be attracted to a feeder by suet, peanut butter, and sunflower seeds.

Nesting Habits:

The male starts building nests in anticipation of a mate. He will stuff a house with twigs, nearly enough to exclude himself, and then sometimes build a nest in another nearby house or cavity. When the female arrives, she chooses the nest she likes best and lines it with leaves, grass, feathers, moss, hair or wool before laying 5 to 8 eggs in it. The eggs are oval with pale pink color and speckled brown. Two broods are raised within the season. Incubation is mainly by the female and lasts approximately 13-14 days. The first young will leave the nest 13-17 days after hatching.

Nesting Boxes:

Wrens are most likely to be used if they are 5 to 10 feet above the ground and located under the eave of a building or in a tree. As soon as one family of wrens leaves a house, clean it out so another brood of young ones can be raised.

The habit of the male wren taking up several birdhouses, leaves fewer for other songbirds. By observing the wrens, you may discover where the male's territory is (about half an acre), and move some nestboxes out of that territory. If you come near a nest, the birds will scold you loudly, letting you know that a nest is close by.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

Description & Identification:

This small bird can be identified by its black cap and bib and white cheeks. The back is light gray with white underparts; the wings are edged with white. They have black bills, brown iris, bluish gray legs and feet.

Both the male and female have similar plumage. In the winter, their sides are a deep brown. They are about 4.5 inches in length. Their characteristic call is a buzzy "chick-a-dee-dee-dee".

Habitat:

It is a bird which prefers mixed hardwood and coniferous forests, woodland tree groves, and shrubbery. In North Dakota, it is common along the riparian forests associated with rivers and streams and in the ash/cedar woodlands of the badlands. They are year-round residents in Alaska, Canada, and the northern half of the U.S.

Diet:

In the summertime the diet consists primarily of animal matter, especially caterpillars. During the fall and winter, a chickadee's diet is mixed: half seeds and berries (goldenrod, ragweed, hemlock, blueberries, balckberries, wild cherries, poison ivy, and bayberries) and half insects, spiders, and fat from dead animals like white-tailed deer. Black-capped Chickadees are not very picky at the feeder and will eat cornmeal, sunflower seeds, suet, pumpkin seeds, old bread and peanut butter.

Nesting Habits:

They prepare their nest with grass, fur, plant down, feathers and moss in a hole in a rotten tree stump, a natural cavity or a bird box. They lay 5-7 white eggs that are dotted with brown that hatch after an incubation period of 12 days. The young fledge at 16 days of age

Nesting Boxes:

The house should be mounted 5 to 15 feet high with 40-60 percent sunlight. About an inch of sawdust should be placed in the bottom of the nesting box.

Life Span:

Many of the young Black-capped Chickadees do not make it past their first year. Of those that do, they have been known to live up to 6 to 12 years.

Winter Survival:

Black-capped Chickadees survive the freezing weather by storing food they can use later in the season. They can remember where they stored seeds for up to eight months.

Black-capped Chickadees also survive the winter by lowering their body temperatures at night, entering a state of controlled hypothermia. In essence, they slow the blood flowing to the parts of their bodies they don't use while they are sleeping. This helps them save much-needed energy.

For more information:

River Keepers
325 7th St. S.
Fargo, ND 58103
701-235-2895
info@riverkeepers.org
www.riverkeepers.org