

## Facts at a Glance

### TYPE OF ANIMAL

Avian/Bird

### SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Sitta carolinensis*

### FOUND WHERE

Most of North America

### HEIGHT/LENGTH

5.9 in. (15 cm)

### WEIGHT

Averages 20 g

### CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern



With a black crown like a chickadee and blue-ish gray wings, white-breasted nuthatches are an energetic and cheeky sight to New England's deciduous forest. They typically have white cheeks, white undersides, and a slightly rosy or orange flushed undertail. Nuthatches have long bills that are lightly pointed and distinct black and white marking patterns on the backs of their wings. Their nasally “yank yank” calls are a common sound and dead giveaway of this bird on a Massachusetts morning.

## HABITAT

As birds that enjoy nuts and seed-eating, the white-breasted nuthatch prefers forests, wood lots, and shaded tree-covered areas. They are rarely found in purely coniferous areas and often favor edge forests and suburban backyards. They are a common visitor for backyard feeders and prefer suet or even peanut butter.

## DIET

As noted, these birds are seed-eaters, however, they mostly eat insects. Nuthatches commonly eat a variety of insects, including spiders, and will supplement this diet with seeds and suet in the winter. They forage for insects by probing and prying along the crevices of tree bark, trunks, and limbs for insects and seeds. Their name comes from their habit of storing larger seeds in tree crevices for later.

## LIFE & BEHAVIOUR

The white-breasted nuthatch is typically monogamous, remaining with its paired partner from the time of courtship throughout the year. They do not migrate; instead, pairs will establish a territory and defend it year-round. The two will typically only leave when food becomes scarce and will occasionally join flocks of chickadees and titmice at birdfeeders. Pairs will breed once a year beginning in late spring and early summer. Females lay about 6 to 8 eggs and care for their chicks for several weeks before they are old enough to fend for themselves.

## ATTRACTING BIRDS

Nuthatches will readily use nesting cavities, like birdhouses. These birds are slightly larger birds and they will even use old woodpecker homes.

Try placing bird boxes in a more secure area facing away from the wind or sun to attract these birds.