

Facts at a Glance

TYPE OF ANIMAL

Avian/Bird

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Poecile atricapillus

FOUND WHERE

Northern U.S. into southern Canada

HEIGHT/LENGTH

5.24 in (13.3 cm)

WEIGHT

Averages 110 – 11 g

CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern



Silvery gray, greenish wings accompany these birds' solid black-capped head and chin. They commonly have plush, white cheeks. Their short, round bellies are typically white or light cream with yellowish ochre patches. They have small pointed beaks designed for seed-eating. These birds are easily distinguished by their twittering songs, a cheery “chick-a- dee-dee-dee-de” chirped call. They are a warm winter favorite in Massachusetts.

HABITAT

Chickadees are northern forest birds that tend to prefer deciduous woodlands, parks, and willow thickets. They are most commonly spotted near the borders of forest areas and are frequent visitors to urban spaces, including backyard feeders. These small birds are not too particular and will live in suburbs, so long as nesting sites are available.

DIET

As identified by their pointy black beaks, chickadees feed mostly on insects, seeds, and berries. Their diets will vary slightly depending on the season, ranging from caterpillars, spiders, snails, and invertebrates to seeds, berries, small fruits, and even fat from dead animals. These buzzy birds will also regularly visit birdfeeders for seed or suet.

LIFE & BEHAVIOUR

Chickadees are extremely active daytime birds with a highly social dominance-based hierarchy between individuals. Males are dominant to females and dominance generally increases with age. Both males and females typically spend most of the day feeding, and can often be seen feeding upside down at birdfeeders. Chickadees generally form monogamous pairs and will stay with their breeding partner for several years. They breed from April to August and raise about 6 to 8 eggs once a year.

ATTRACTING BIRDS

Chickadees are some of the few birds that do not migrate long distances to escape winter.

Heated bird baths are an easy method to attract these birds and provide a source of freshwater and warmth in the cold winter months.