

# Bird of the Month



## DESCRIPTION: RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH

*Sitta canadensis*

**SIZE:** 4.5"

**MALE:** A small, gray-backed bird with a black cap and a prominent black eye stripe and white eyebrow and cheek. Sports a rust red breast and belly and a pointed, slightly upturned bill.

**FEMALE AND JUVENILE:** Similar to male, with a gray cap and more lightly colored underparts.

## NESTING:

The female builds a nest of rootlets, grasses, mosses, and shredded bark in a natural cavity, old woodpecker hole, or birdhouse 5 - 120 feet above the ground. The entrance is smeared with sap or pitch to deter predators and catch insects. The female incubates 5-7 eggs which are white or slightly pink with brown speckles.

**RECOMMENDED NEST BOX:** Countryside Culture Chickadee-Nuthatch box, Woodlink Designer Chickadee House.

## FEEDING:

The nuthatch creeps headfirst down trunks of trees searching for insects. Eats seeds of conifers, and visits bird feeders for sunflower seed, nuts, and suet. They will grab a seed and fly off to crack it open by wedging it into a crevice and pounding it open with several sharp blows.

**RECOMMENDED ROGUE SEED:** Rogue Deluxe, Rogue Premium, Rogue Chickadee, Black Oil Sunflower, Rogue Nut Treat and suet.

## HABITAT:

Breeding: almost any coniferous forest from sea level to timberline.

Migration and winter: almost any woodlands. Has periodic irruptions south in winter in years when there is a failure of cone crop in northern regions. Birds must therefore move south to find food and often become more abundant at bird feeders in those years.

## OTHER INTERESTING FACTS:

Nuthatches are unique among tree-climbing songbirds in that they use one foot to brace themselves while the other holds onto the bark. Woodpeckers and the Brown Creeper use their tails for stability. The Red-breasted Nuthatch has a breeding territory of 20-30 acres. They will use birdhouses and cavities to roost in, as well as for breeding.

## COMPARE TO:

The **White-breasted Nuthatch** is larger, has a plain white head with dark crown stripe and no rust on its underparts. The **Pygmy Nuthatch** is smaller and stockier, lacks the eye stripe and has no rust on the belly.

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