

White Breasted Nuthatch

Sitta carolinensis

General Information:

- This year round resident is the largest and most widespread of the North American nuthatches. This nimble bird can balance upside down on tree trunks, catch a falling nut in midair, and rapidly hop down skinny branches. In the winter it joins mixed-species flocks and often feeds together on the same tree with Black-capped Chickadees, Downy Woodpeckers, and Brown Creepers. It is quick to accept bird feeders, and will often attempt to intimidate other avian visitors by spreading its wings and tail and swaying back and forth.

Song:

-Sings an ascending *wee-wee-wee-wee-wee-wee-wee*. Call is a hoarse *yank-yank-yank*.

Behavior:

-Solitary or in pairs; sociable in non-breeding season. Eats various nuts, seeds, spiders, and insects. Inspects trees with head pointed downward and circles around and underneath limb in search of food. Spends most of its time in trees. Roosts in tree cavities in the winter; often roosts in the crevices of bark in the summer, some sleeping with their heads down and their tails up.



Breeding:

-Monogamous and solitary. Sometimes known to form small colonies.

Nesting:

-Incubation 12 days by the female. The 1 brood per year of altricial young are brooded by the female, fed by both sexes, and stay in the nest for 14 days.

Population:

-Common in deciduous woodlots and in mixed coniferous-deciduous woods.

Conservation:

-Vulnerable to habitat loss due to logging operations.

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

- If you would like to create an environment friendly to the White-breasted Nuthatch on your shoreland property I would recommend concentrating on a nice solid mixture of trees and shrubs. Furthermore, I would encourage you to feed these little birds. I know that I have had many a hour of entertainment by watching them, and they have become one of my favorite birds. There are many tree and shrub options to go with, but I have concentrated on ones that have bark that is more tailored to the White-breasted Nuthatches likings. Some tree options are the Swamp White Oak, Silver Maple, River Birch, Paper Birch, Yellow Birch, White Ash, American Elm, Shagbark Hickory, Ironwood, Red Pine, Eastern White Pine, and Northern White Cedars. Some shrub options are Ninebark, Juneberry, Nannyberry, and American and Beaked Hazelnut. I would then fill in the remainder of the area with either ferns or a Butterfly Garden.