inSTALLations

chippewa naturecenter

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Creature Feature

Black-capped Chickadee

In the winter, when many other birds leave our chilly forests, the tiny Black-capped Chickadee stays to face the challenges the cold temperatures and short days bring.

Chickadees feed primarily on insects in the summer, but in the winter their diet consists mainly of seeds supplemented by the occasional spider egg sack or fat from an already scavenged animal. Chickadees add about 10% to their body weight each day in the winter. This extra fat enables them to live through the long, cold nights when they cannot feed. By morning, the fat store is gone and Chickadees must again feed heavily to make it through the next night.

On the very coldest nights, Chickadees can drop their body temperature 12-20 degrees Fahrenheit. This reduces the amount of energy required to maintain their metabolism. Sometimes Chickadees practice communal roosting which helps each Chickadee stay warmer than it would on its own.

As you walk through the woods this winter, listen and look for Chickadees as they work to survive another winter night in Michigan.

Winter Birds

Winter is a wonderful time to become a birder. It's easier to see birds in the winter (no leaves on the trees), there are fewer to learn than in the summer, and they can bring some life to a gray day.

Common winter species include Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Tufted Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, American Goldfinches, and Dark-eyed Juncos.

If you choose to feed birds in the winter, sunflower seeds, thistle seeds, and suet all attract a variety of species. Providing clean water will also be a big help to the feathered residents of your neighborhood.

Visit the Information Desk for program information.

This inSTALLation is available online at www.chippewanaturecenter.org under the Naturalist Section.