

THE VILLAGE BIRDING LIFE

“Nuthatches”

by HSV Audubon

Nuthatches are a pretty small family of birds with less than 30 species world wide and only four species in N. American. The White-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatches are found in the Village year around. Red-breasted Nuthatches, apparently the only Nuthatch species that migrates, are infrequent winter visitors here when the weather becomes especially nasty up North.

Nuthatches are energetic, small birds with a long spear-like bill and a short tail. They are most often seen climbing up and down tree trunks as they probe the bark for insects or seeds. They behave like small woodpeckers but they are not. The name Nuthatch comes from their propensity to wedge nuts or seeds in a crevice so that they can break them open with their strong bills.

The visual differences between our three nuthatches- Red-breasted, White-breasted and Brown-headed exactly matches their names which makes them easy to identify within the context of “a small bird with a long bill and short tail”. The honking White-breasted and Red-breasted both have “horn-like, honking” calls. The squeaky, bathtub rubber duck call of the Brown-headed is unmistakable once you’ve heard it a few times.

We in the Village are very proud of our bluebirds but it is the brown-headed nuthatch that is the must see bird for visiting birders from other parts of the country because their range is limited to the southeast states. They have a strong preference for pine trees and are especially numerous on the eastern side of the village.

As always HSVBIRDS.ORG has a lot of information about everything you’d like to know about birds and some of Nature’s other wonders. You will see on the website that HSV Audubon has available a Village birding checklist. It lists over 200 species of birds that might be seen in the Village, when they might be seen and how common they are. It’s a great way to keep track of the birds at your feeder.

HSV Audubon meets the 2nd Friday of each month, except in the summer, at 10:00 at the Coronado Center. Guests are always welcome to join us in our love and pursuit of birds and all things Nature.

Photos by Vic Prislipsky