

Well Hello, Chickadee!

Article by Caroline Cardile, Rio Grande Valley Chapter

Today I really appreciated technology. Using Google and a high-tech bird feeder, I got a special birding experience. My son-in-law put up a new bird feeder that he gave my daughter for Mother's Day. This amazing feeder has a built-in camera and sends a signal to your cell phone whenever a bird lands on the food platform.

Amazing! Today he assembled the feeder, filled it with seeds and meal worms, and put it on a tree outside the kitchen window. It wasn't long before a chickadee found the feeder, landed, and grabbed a beak-full.

I looked in my *Birder's Life List and Diary* to where I'd recorded seeing these birds in the past. In July 2010, I saw them in the mountains of central Colorado. In May 2014, we watched Black-capped Chickadees at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge near Rochert, Minnesota. Only a couple of months ago we saw them in Ladybird Johnson Park in Fredericksburg, Texas. Could this be possible, I wondered. So, I asked Google.



High-tech bird feeder with built-in camera

According to an article on Google from TheLongmontLeader.com, Black-capped Chickadees can be found in all those locations. Black-capped Chickadees are only 4.5 to 5.5 inches long and weigh only 0.03 to 0.04 ounces. The males are slightly larger than the females and it is difficult to tell which is male or female. These birds eat mostly insects in summer and more seeds and berries in winter. They live in monogamous pairs for several breeding seasons. The article states that the males feed the females in early spring, although scientists are not sure whether this is a courting behavior. Females lay one clutch of eggs per year which they incubate for 12 to 13 days. The male brings food to the incubating female. The hatchlings fledge after about 16 days, but the parents continue to feed them for about another month before they are on their own. Once they leave their parents, they usually join a different winter flock than their parents.

This is just some of the information from research by Robert Taylor, Ontario, Canada, that was summarized in the article I read.