



Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

Eastern phoebes are a small flycatcher, measuring about 7 inches. They are dull gray-brown above, with a white underbelly. There is usually a slight brownish hue to the sides of the underbelly. The head is darker than the rest of the body. The bill, legs and feet are black.

Eastern phoebes are migratory birds, overwintering in the southern United States and Central America. They return to their breeding grounds the earliest and are the last to leave in the fall. They often build their nests under eaves and on ledges. Nests are built by the females out of mud, moss, and leaves with grass stems and animal hair mixed in. It takes the females 5-14 days to build their nests. They typically raise two broods a year, with an average of 4-5 eggs per brood.

These birds are very active. They will make short flights to catch insects and then return to a low lying perch. While perched, they wag their tails up and down often.

They live in open woods, yards, parks and wood edges.



Ask A Naturalist

Fun facts about eastern phoebes:

- Their call sounds like their name.
- They were the first bird to banded in North America by John James Audubon.
- A collective group of phoebes can be referred to as an “outfield”, “swatting”, “zapper” or “zipper”.
- Eastern phoebes often reuse their nests from year to year.

