

# Black Phoebe

*Sayornis nigricans*

The Black Phoebe is a dapper flycatcher of the western U.S. with a sooty black body and crisp white belly. They sit in the open on low perches to scan for insects, often keeping up a running series of shrill chirps. Black Phoebes use mud to build cup-shaped nests against walls, overhangs, culverts, and bridges. Look for them near any water source from small streams, to suburbs, all the way to the salt-sprayed rocks and cliffs of the Pacific Ocean

## Keys to Identification

### Size and Shape

Black Phoebes are small, plump songbirds with large heads and medium-long, squared tails. They often show a slight peak at the rear of the crown. The bill is straight and thin.

### Color Pattern

Black Phoebes are mostly sooty gray on the upperparts and chest, with a slightly darker black head. The belly is clean white, and the wing feathers are edged with pale gray.

### Behavior

Black Phoebes sit upright on low perches near water and make short flights to catch insects. They pump their tails up and down incessantly when perched. They nest in mud cups anchored in protected nooks, often under a bridge or the eaves of a building. They often keep up a string of sharp chip calls.

### Habitat

In the U.S., you'll almost always find these flycatchers near water. They live along streams, rivers, lakes, and the Pacific Ocean—even around cattle tanks. As long as there is water present and some kind of ledge or overhang on which to anchor a mud nest, Black Phoebes could be around.



## Measurements

### Both Sexes

- Length - 6.3 inches
- Weight - 0.5 - 0.8 ounces