

Chipping Sparrow

Spizella passerina

A crisp, pretty sparrow whose bright rufous cap both provides a splash of color and makes adults fairly easy to identify. Chipping Sparrows are common across North America wherever trees are interspersed with grassy openings. Their loud, trilling songs are one of the most common sounds of spring woodlands and suburbs.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

The Chipping Sparrow is a slender, fairly long-tailed sparrow with a medium-sized bill that is a bit small for a sparrow. Learning the shape of this classic *Spizella* sparrow is a key step in mastering sparrow identification.

Color Pattern

Summer Chipping Sparrows look clean and crisp, with frosty underparts, pale face, black line through the eye, topped off with a bright rusty crown. In winter, Chipping Sparrows are subdued, buff brown, with darkly streaked upperparts. The black line through the eye is still visible, and the cap is a warm but more subdued reddish brown.

Behavior

Chipping Sparrows feed on the ground, take cover in shrubs, and sing from the tops of small trees (often evergreens). You'll often see loose groups of them flitting up from open ground. When singing, they cling to high outer limbs. On the ground they hop or run through grasses searching for seeds.

Habitat

Look for Chipping Sparrows in open woodlands and forests with grassy clearings across North America. You'll also see them in parks, along roadsides, and in your backyard, particularly if you have feeders and trees.

Cool Facts

- The oldest known Chipping Sparrow was 11 years, 10 months old.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 4.7 - 5.9 inches
- Wingspan - 8.3 inches
- Weight - 0.4 - 0.6 ounces

