

Chestnut-backed Chickadee

Poecile rufescens

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Review Status: Reviewed (Alaska)

Version Date: 02 February 2023

Note: Formerly known as *Parus rufescens*.

Conservation Status

Table 1 Conservation status according to state, national, and international organizations and agencies.

| Organization | Rank |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| NatureServe | S5/G5 |
| ADF&G | Species of Greatest Conservation Need |
| IUCN | Least Concern |

Final Rank

Conservation Category: **IX. Blue**

Low status and low biological vulnerability and action need

Table 2 ASRS categorical scores. Higher numerical scores denote greater concern.

| Category | Range | Score |
|------------|-----------|-------|
| Status | -20 to 20 | -6 |
| Biological | -50 to 50 | -26 |
| Action | -40 to 40 | 0 |

Status

Variables measure the trend in a taxon’s population status or distribution. Higher status scores denote taxa with known declining trends. Status scores range from -20 (increasing) to 20 (decreasing).

Population Trend in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Suspected stable based on a combined analysis of Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data and off-road surveys (Handel and Sauer 2017). This species is considered "questionably monitored" on BBS routes in Alaska (Sauer et al. 2017).

Score: -6

Distribution Trend in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Unknown.

Score: 0

Status Total: -6

Biological

Variables measure aspects of a taxon's distribution, abundance and life history. Higher biological scores suggest greater vulnerability to extirpation. Biological scores range from -50 (least vulnerable) to 50 (most vulnerable).

Population Size in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Unknown, but suspected large. Several inventories from Southeast to southcentral Alaska list this bird as "common" (Isleib and Kessel 1973; Van Hemert et al. 2006; Johnson et al. 2008b).

Score: -6

Range Size in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Year-round resident along coastlines from Southeast to southcentral Alaska, including several islands (Dahlsten et al. 2002; eBird 2023). Estimated range ~150,000 sq. km, based on range map from ACCS (2017a).

Score: -8

Population Concentration in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Often found in small flocks (Isleib and Kessel 1973), but does not concentrate in large numbers.

Score: -10

Reproductive Potential in Alaska

Age of First Reproduction (-5 to 5)

Unknown in Alaska. Elsewhere in range, usually 1 year (Dahlsten et al. 2002).

Score: -5

Number of Young (-5 to 5)

Little data available for Alaska. Based on information elsewhere in its range, most clutches contain 6 to 8 eggs (Dahlsten et al. 2002; Gaddis and Corkran 2008). Double broods are considered rare, though they have been observed at least once in Alaska (Heinl and Piston 2009).

Score: 1

Ecological Specialization in Alaska

Dietary (-5 to 5)

Little data available. Diet is thought to consist mainly of arthropods and insects. Plant matter is also consumed, especially in the winter when invertebrates are scarce (Dahlsten et al. 2002). Because invertebrates are an ephemeral and potentially unpredictable food source (e.g. Nebel et al. 2010), we rank this question as B- Moderately adaptable with key requirements common.

Score: 1

Habitat (-5 to 5)

Inhabits coastal coniferous forests; to a lesser extent, also found in mixedwood and deciduous forests (Isleib and Kessel 1973; Van Hemert et al. 2006; Johnson et al. 2008b). Chestnut-backed Chickadees have been observed in forest stands of various ages, from early

successional to old-growth, and of various widths (Kessler and Kogut 1985; Kissling and Garton 2008). In natural areas, nests are restricted to tree cavities, however, this species also nests in buildings and nest boxes (Dahlsten et al. 2002; Heintz and Piston 2009).

Score: 1

Biological Total: -26

Action

Variables measure current state of knowledge or extent of conservation efforts directed toward a given taxon. Higher action scores denote greater information needs due to lack of knowledge or conservation action. Action scores range from -40 (lower needs) to 40 (greater needs).

Management Plans and Regulations in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA 1918).

Score: 2

Knowledge of Distribution and Habitat in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Frequently detected during multi-species bird surveys throughout its range in Alaska, with knowledge of habitat associations (see references in Range Size and Habitat Specialization).

Score: -10

Knowledge of Population Trends in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Population trends are available from roadside BBS data, as well as off-road surveys (Handel and Sauer 2017; Sauer et al. 2017). Because this species is commonly detected, survey data are often sufficient for modeling localized densities (Van Hemert et al. 2006; Kissling and Garton 2008).

Score: -2

Knowledge of Factors Limiting Populations in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Little is known about the factors that limit this species' population in Alaska. For example, although the Chestnut-backed Chickadee nests in tree cavities, it is unknown whether the availability of nest sites is a limiting factor. Some studies have considered the effect of logging and forest fragmentation on population density and nest survival (Kissling and Garton 2008; Sperry et al. 2008); these studies did not find differences between treatment sites. It is unknown whether avian keratin disorder, which has been seen in other chickadee species in Alaska, also affects Chestnut-backed Chickadees.

Score: 10

Action Total: 0

Supplemental Information

Variables do not receive numerical scores. Instead, they are used to sort taxa to answer specific biological or management questions.

Harvest: None or Prohibited

Seasonal Occurrence: Year-round

Taxonomic Significance: Monotypic species

% Global Range in Alaska: >10%

% Global Population in Alaska: 25-49%

Peripheral: No

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