



RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET

A winter walk through the core, densely tree-filled Urban Forest offers the opportunity to view the diminutive and spritely Ruby-crowned Kinglet that spends its winter months gleaning insects and tiny seeds in the mid to upper canopy of our lush abundant trees and leafy bushes.

This tiny, oval shaped dynamo measures less than 4" and its drab olive coloring offers natural concealment. It does broadcast its presence, though, by its distinctively chattering voice and nervous hyper-active behavior as it flits continually from branch to branch, flicking its wings to startle and devour insects. From this tiny bird, the startling loud ji-dit call directs observers to its obscure location.

Viewing the well-concealed "Ruby Crown" is an astonishing reward for patient observation. An attentive observer will be delighted to see the

infrequent, abrupt flashing of bright red crown feathers that pop up menacingly when males display aggressively or excitedly.

Doppelgänger! A remarkably similar looking Hutton's Vireo resides year-round in the Urban Forest. A practiced eye will note subtle but definitive differences. The vireo has two distinctive white wing-bars whereas the Ruby-crowned Kinglet has one pronounced wing-bar backed by black markings. The vireo's bill is larger and sturdier and its slower sedate movements contrast markedly against the Ruby-crowned Kinglet's frenzied, jittery behavior.

It often takes a second serious look, along with attentive listening, to achieve absolute certainty in winter months. It's a worthwhile challenge that only enhances the pleasure of a brisk-air winter walk through the Urban Forest.



Can you tell the difference? The Hutton's Vireo (bottom right) has two distinctive white wing-bars whereas the Ruby-crowned Kinglet (all other photos) has one pronounced wing-bar backed by black markings. Also, the vireo's bill is slightly larger.