



BIRD OF THE MONTH - MAY



BLACK PHOEBE

The Black Phoebe is a dapper black and white flycatcher that seems comfortable living close to people, so long as a fresh water source is nearby. It's a year-round familiar feature in tree filled neighborhoods, flowering gardens, verdant parks and stream sides where it perches on low branches or shrubs lying in wait for an opportunity to suddenly sally out and skillfully snatch a flying insect. When perched, Black Phoebes appear to wag their tails, pumping them up and down.

Its striking appearance includes black sooty upper-parts contrasting against a white belly. Male and female look alike with juvenile birds displaying brown fringe on the wing tips. In springtime they form a monogamous pair, building a sturdy nest of mud and plant fiber oftentimes concealed securely under the eaves of buildings. A successful nest-site may be loyally reused year after year. Both parents feed 3 to 6 nestlings for nearly three weeks until successfully fledged and capable of catching insects in flight independently.

This robust flycatcher has earned the name Phoebe, due to its sharp whistled call resembling fee-bee that can be heard continually along creeks and ponds throughout the southwest. It is largely non-migratory with a narrow range spanning from California through Central and South America.

PHOTOS BY JAMES KENDALL. WRITTEN BY BETTY KANNE.

