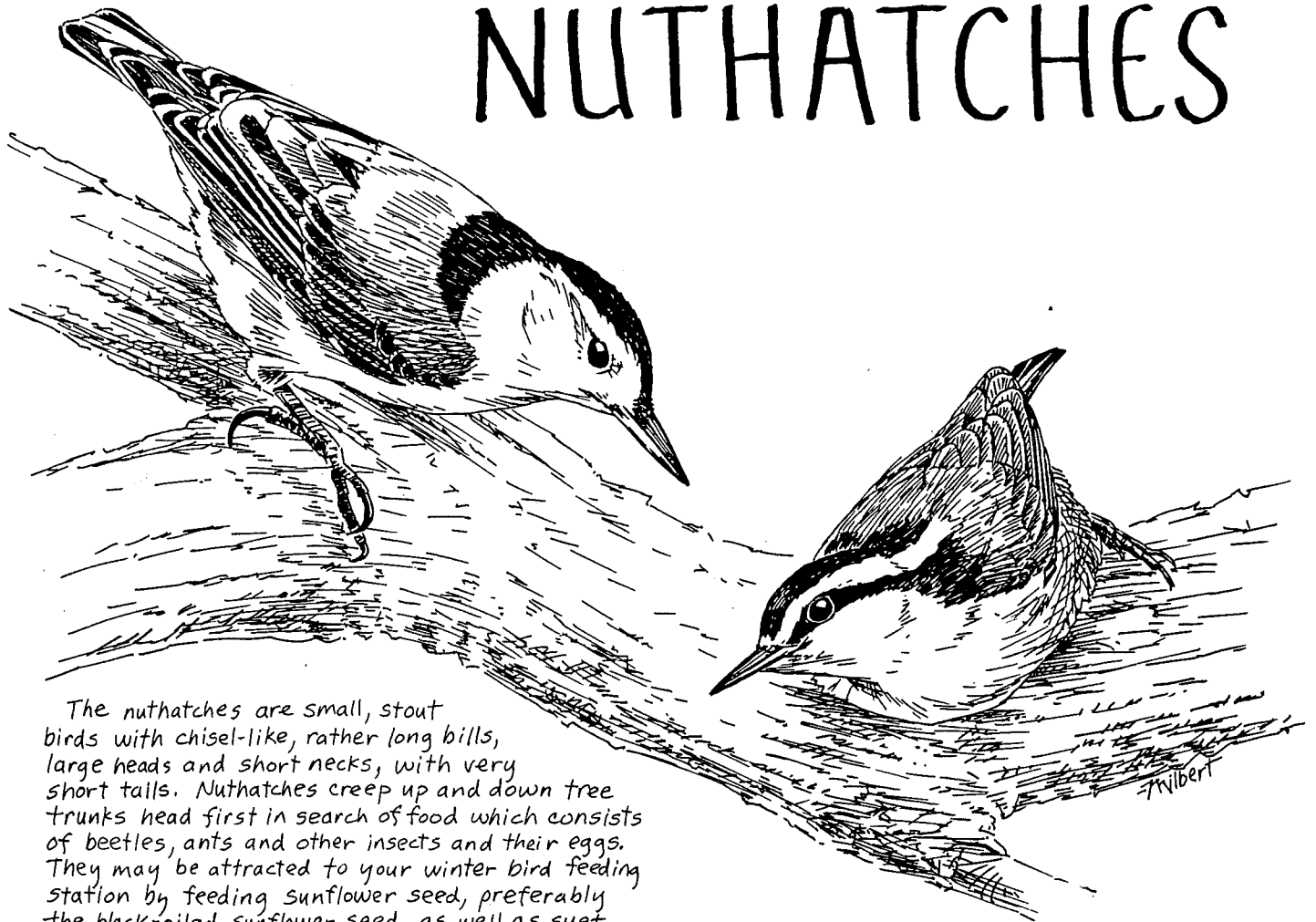


River Bend Naturalists Notebook

Presented by: RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, MN 55021

NUTHATCHES



The nuthatches are small, stout birds with chisel-like, rather long bills, large heads and short necks, with very short tails. Nuthatches creep up and down tree trunks head first in search of food which consists of beetles, ants and other insects and their eggs. They may be attracted to your winter bird feeding station by feeding sunflower seed, preferably the black-oiled sunflower seed, as well as suet.

The White-breasted Nuthatch is a local permanent resident which is found throughout the mixed hardwood forest of southern Minnesota. It prefers to nest in a knothole or natural cavity having an opening of an inch and a quarter in diameter, or a cavity of a deserted woodpecker. They have 5-8 white eggs which are speckled or spotted with brown.

The Red-breasted Nuthatch is somewhat smaller and is a frequent winter visitant at our bird feeders. It nests in the northern conifer forest of Minnesota and Canada. The Red-breasted Nuthatch is irregular in its appearance in the southern part of the state, for it comes south in large numbers some winters but few in numbers other years. Three or four years will pass when few are seen. They usually nest in the trunk of a conifer or the scarred and split top of some old tree killed by a fire.

-text by Orwin A. Rustad