

## Chickadee — Uksullaq

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UKSULLAQ ATURTAARTUQ UGNERKAMI. – THE CHICKADEE ALWAYS SINGS IN THE SPRING.

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Image: Chickadees, by Lena Amason. Purchased with support from the Rasmuson Foundation.

Alaska is home to five species of chickadees, each with a different range. The most common and widely distributed variety is the black-capped or Yukon chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*). These small birds thrive in Alaska's meadows and forests and can be found across the Kodiak Archipelago. Chickadees often travel and feed in small flocks of up to a dozen birds. They are known for their acrobatics, flitting between trees as they collect bugs, seeds, and occasionally, berries or fat from an animal carcass.

The black-capped chickadee is a bold little bird that may eat out of your hand. These chickadees have a round black head and black bib, white cheeks, and a tan belly. They are only about five inches long and weigh less than half an ounce. A thick layer of down covers their tiny bodies and allows them to winter in Alaska, even in the bitterly cold interior.

In winter, chickadees can eat up to eight percent of their body weight in bugs and seeds during the day. At night, they retreat to snug roosts, often a hole in a tree, where they burn off the day's calories to keep warm. The Alutiiq word for the black-capped chickadee—*Uksullaq*—reflects the bird's remarkable adaptation to the far north. It means, "winter one." Some Alutiiq speakers also use this word to refer to the Pacific wren (*Troglodytes pacificus helleri*), another songbird that winters on Kodiak.