

# Listen carefully to soft song of Say's Phoebe

BY BRUCE MCCAMMON

Of the birds that visit north central Washington during the spring nesting season and early summer, the Say's Phoebe is one of my favorites.

This long-tailed flycatcher prefers dry, open areas and is found in prairies and ranch land as well as on the edges of urban areas.

Say's Phoebes eat insects and will perch on low rocks, shrubs or wires to hunt by flying out to snatch a flying insect. They will also hop down to the ground to pick up food.

Being about 6.5 inches in length, they are smaller than an American Robin.

I think of the Say's Phoebe as being a subdued bird, overall. Their cinnamon belly, gray breast and dark tail make them a pleasant, but not overly showy color mix.



*Bruce McCammon is retired, color-blind and enjoys photographing the birds in north central Washington.*



**If you see a Say's Phoebe, listen for its soft, pleasant song.**

I think the Phoebe's song is one of the most pleasant sounds I know. You can listen to their soft-voiced, pleasant song here: [www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/says-phoebe](http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/says-phoebe).

Sometimes it can be challenging to identify the flycatchers that visit our area. Knowing

their songs will help you separate one bird from another.

This photo was taken on April 1, 2020 on the Waterville plateau.

I, like everyone else, was trying to maintain social distance during the Covid-19 pandemic. I can't think of a better way to be isolated than to be driving the rural roads of north central Washington.

The road between Rock Island Dam and Waterville is a great place to wander while looking for birds.

I was stationed at a bluebird nest box and enjoying watch-

ing, photographing and filming Mountain Bluebirds as they brought in nest material. I was surprised to see this Say's Phoebe fly into the area and land on the fence directly in front of my camera.

I took several photos before the bird flew off and I redirected my efforts back to the bluebirds. I was thrilled to have the Phoebe punctuate my hours of isolation with a brief visit and posing session.

I hope you get the chance to see a Say's Phoebe. Please, if you do find one, stop and listen for their soft song.

Hopefully you will be able to watch the bird perform its flycatching routine while it sings for you.

Remember your binoculars and camera. Good luck.