



Phillip's Fetching Birds
August 2010, Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*)

More often Eastern Phoebe's appear greyer than this bird, but the dark head, no white ring around the eye, no wingbars, and a lot of tail-wagging set this most familiar of the eastern flycatchers apart from its cousins. This one is just a flit away from its nest, housing 3 naked fuzzy chicks under the eaves of a garage, and its mate is also nearby. These are the earliest of our flycatchers to arrive in the spring, around here that's late March, which inclines me to believe this pair was raising its second clutch of the season.

Like other flycatchers, Eastern Phoebes sally out from trees and shrubby perches to catch insects on the wing or near the ground. They call *fee bee* in 2 short buzzy or scratchy notes, unlike the Black-capped Chickadee which sings *fee bee* in a slow and sweet whistle. In the colder months when insects become scarce they'll also eat fruits and berries. More than any other flycatchers, Eastern Phoebes like to build their nests in or on man-made structures, which has helped expand their range. After the breeding season they tend to be loners, and avoid others of their kind.

The entire *Phillip's Fetching Birds 2010* compact desk calendar can be found at www.fetchingbirds.com