



Congratulations to last month's artist! – Jaxon Brasher (age 7)

September 2020

## How Do Seeds Travel?

Plants can not move from one place to another but their seeds can. Plants need their seeds to move in order for plants to grow in new areas. Seeds travel in many different ways. Wind, water, or animals can help seeds **disperse**.

If you are traveling by water, you ride in a boat, but if you are traveling by air you would use an airplane. Seeds also use different ways to travel. Seeds that travel by wind often have wings or hairs to help them float. For example, some people call the seeds from maple trees helicopters. These seeds have wing like structures that help them float and swirl towards the ground. Wind also disperses dandelion seeds. The white, fluffy, hairs help carry small dandelion seeds in the breeze.

Seeds that disperse by water must be able to float. Willow trees often grow next to rivers and streams. Their small seeds can travel by wind or float in the water. However, not all seeds that float are small. Coconuts are one of the largest seeds in the world and they also travel by water. But, you won't find any coconuts growing outside in Michigan.

Animals disperse seeds by eating the fruit or sometimes seeds get stuck in their fur. Seeds are often hidden inside a tasty nut or fruit in order to attract an animal to eat it. The animal gets nutrition from the nut or fruit and the seed is dispersed when the animal goes to the bathroom. Both the plant and the animal benefit in this **mutualistic relationship**.

Other times, the seed will have hooks or barbs that help it stick to an animal's fur. The seed can be carried a long distance before falling off. The inventor of Velcro, George de Mestral, was inspired by the hooks and barbs on a seed. He used the same concept to create the Velcro that we use on our shoes and clothes today (Chandiraman).

Think about it....

What would happen if seeds never traveled?

### Definitions:

**Disperse:** Spread over a wide area

**Mutualistic Relationship:** A relationship where two different species both benefit.

## ▶ Seed Dispersal Matching

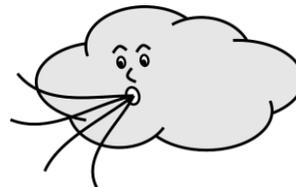
Draw a line from the seed to how it is dispersed.



Buried and forgotten



Attached to fur



Blown in the wind



Eaten and deposited



## ► Featured Plant: Poison Ivy

Poison ivy is an important plant to know. This plant can grow along the ground or climb up trees as a vine. Many people are allergic to the oils in poison ivy and contact with the plant can cause an itchy rash. The leaves are made up of three leaflets so a popular saying is “leaves of 3, let it be.”

What good is a plant that causes itchy rashes? Most humans dislike poison ivy but it is very



Photo by Samantha Howard

popular with other animals. Birds especially enjoy eating the white berries. Birds actually help poison ivy when they eat the berries because they don't digest the seed. When they eat the berry the seed passes through them and is deposited to grow in a new area. Unlike humans, birds are not allergic to poison ivy (Brown). This mutualistic relationship benefits both birds and poison ivy.



Photo by [All About Birds](#)

## ► Featured Animal: Black-capped Chickadee

The Black-capped Chickadee is one of the many birds that will feed on poison ivy berries. The chickadee does not **migrate** so as the weather turns colder it must add plants to its insect-based diet. Poison ivy berries ripen in the fall so they are the perfect food for winter.

Chickadees are found in many

areas and frequently visit bird feeders. Chickadees get their name from the call they make. (The Cornell Lab). Listen for the chickadee-dee-dee sound and see if you can spot this round, little bird in your yard or park.

**Migrate:** a seasonal move from one place to another

## ► Try at Home: Seed Bombs

Make your own seed bombs to plant or share with family and friends. Be sure to include seeds for native plants and flowers.

### Supplies:

- Recycled paper
- Water
- Assorted seeds
- Blender or food processor



Photo by [Simple Living Mama](#)

## Seed Scavenger Hunt

Seed inside a fruit



Pinecone

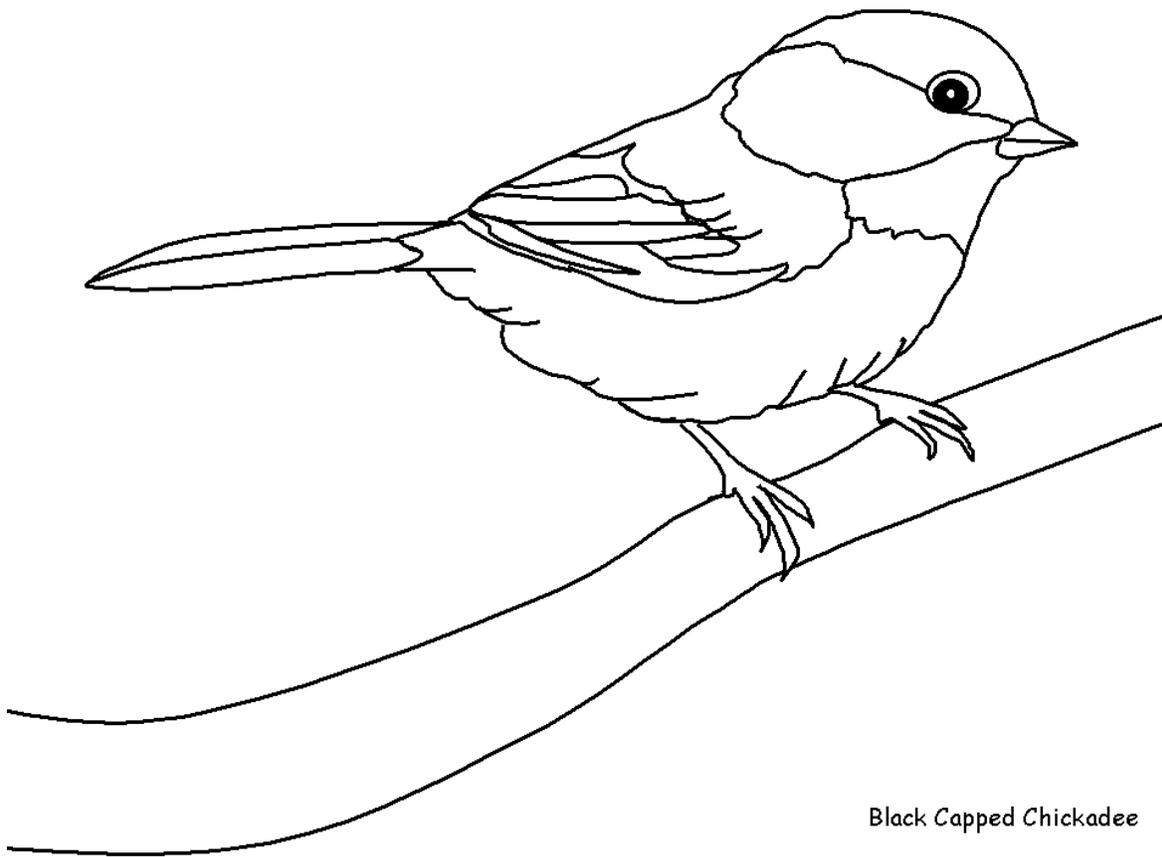


Maple tree seed



Seed inside a nut





Black Capped Chickadee

## ► Contact Us

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Please email a clear photo or color scan of your finished coloring sheet (including child's name and age) to Samantha Howard at [howar279@msu.edu](mailto:howar279@msu.edu) by September 20<sup>th</sup>.

## ► References

Brown, D. (2016, July 25). *Identifying poison ivy isn't always easy to do*. MSU Extension. [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/identifying\\_poison\\_ivy\\_isnt\\_always\\_easy\\_to\\_do](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/identifying_poison_ivy_isnt_always_easy_to_do)

Chandiraman, S. (2016, October 28). *Biomimicry – The Burr and the Invention of Velcro*. Micro Photonics. <https://www.microphotonics.com/biomimicry-burr-invention-velcro>

The Cornell Lab. *Black-capped Chickadee*. All About Birds. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-capped\\_Chickadee/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-capped_Chickadee/overview)