Tufted Titmouse

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

You'll find it very amusing watching this energetic bird search for food. It spastically flits from branch to branch, searching trees upside down for insects or their eggs. At feeders, it removes a seed quickly and then flies back to a nearby branch to crack it open with its small, but sharp, black bill. And then back to the feeder it goes. And back to the branch. You'll exhaust yourself just watching them.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Paridae

Scientific Name: *Baeolophus bicolor (Parus bicolor)*

Location: The Tufted Titmouse makes its home in deciduous and mixed forests in the eastern United States, portions of Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, most of Texas, and parts of Mexico. Its habitat consists typically of moist woodlands or of shade trees in villages and city parks. It nests in natural tree cavities, old woodpecker holes, or nest boxes located in or near swamps, orchards, parks, and other suburban areas.

Migration: The Tufted Titmouse is not a migratory bird. In the winter, it joins up with titmice, chickadees, and nuthatches to forage the winter woods and backyard feeders for insect eggs, seeds, and berries. Its range has increased to the north because of the consistency of well-stocked feeders. In early spring, the flocks break up and pairs are formed. Pairs are usually monogamous for several years.

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Nesting:	Once the pair chooses a site in early March or April, the nest is constructed exclusively by the female. The female builds it with moss and leaves, and lines it with softer materials like fur and hair. It is even known to swipe a billful from dogs, horses, woodchucks, and even humans! The female lays 5-7 eggs total, (single broods in northern parts, double broods in the south). The cream-colored eggs are dotted brown. The female is solely responsible for incubation. During this time, the male feeds her. After about two weeks of incubation, all the eggs hatch within one or two days. Both parents share the task of feeding the young. The young usually leave the nest when they are 15 to 18 days old, but are still fed by parents for the next four weeks. Young may stay with the parents throughout the winter.
Diet:	Titmice eat a wide range of insects, invertebrates, and spiders, including: caterpillars, beetles, wasps, ants, bees, and treehoppers. They eat snails by opening the shells with their strong bills. They also eat seeds and fruit, and they habitually store food for winter use in pockets of loose bark or on the ground under twigs. They frequent bird feeders, and in the winter often in mixed flocks with chickadees and nuthatches.
Size and Color:	Adults are 4-1/2" to 6". The male and female are similar in color and plummage, with mouse-colored head, back, wings, and tail; buff-colored breast and belly; and rust-tinted sides. They have a characteristic, pointed, gray headdress, a black patch between their eyes, and a black bill.
Song:	The male's song is the easily-recognizable "peter, peter, peter".
Special Characteristics:	• Its prominent characteristic is its gray headdress. • It is not easily frightened and can be a rascal at feeders - occasionally chasing away birds the same size or smaller. • During winter, it retrieves food it stored in bark crevasses. • Helps control insect pests in your yard.
Attracting:	Titmice are regular visitors at winter feeders, where they prefer pear peanut kernels and sunflower seeds. You can also attract this bird by smearing suet or peanut butter directly onto tree trunks or branches, or by hanging a suet feeder. In the summer, you can lure these birds out of the woods with a birdbath.
Life Span:	Its maximum lifespan in the wild is up to 13 years.

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