

Tufted Titmouse

Parus bicolor

While Tufted Titmice have been expanding northward through the Great Lakes and New England regions during the 20th century (Beddall 1963, DeVos 1964), this species has been widely distributed in Ohio since the late 1800s. Jones (1903) considered them to be common permanent residents throughout the state. Hicks (1935) cited breeding records from every county and described their status as common to abundant in most counties, although they were “somewhat less numerous” in the northern third of the state and locally uncommon to rare in northeastern Ohio. Their numbers may have increased within northern Ohio after 1940 as they have become fairly common to common residents in these counties (Peterjohn 1989a). Between 1965 and 1975, however, their numbers have declined on Breeding Bird Surveys in Ohio, a trend that was accentuated during the severe winters of 1976–1977 and 1977–1978 (Robbins, C. S., et al. 1986). Titmice populations quickly recovered after these severe winters, and their numbers have remained reasonably stable during the 1980s.

The Atlas Project data indicate Tufted Titmice remain widely distributed permanent residents in Ohio with records from 754 priority blocks (98.7% of the statewide total). These records span every county. Titmice were unrecorded in only three blocks in the Till Plain region and seven blocks in the Lake Plain region. These blocks were primarily within intensively farmed areas where few woodlots remain and in urban areas. As indicated on Breeding Bird Surveys, this species is most numerous in the Glaciated Plateau and Illinoian Till Plain regions. Fewer Tufted Titmice are recorded on surveys in the Unglaciated Plateau region, a surprising trend given the extent of wooded habitats in this portion of the state. Their numbers are considerably reduced in the Till Plain and Lake Plain regions, reflecting the relative scarcity of woodlands in the intensively farmed counties.

Breeding Tufted Titmice were confirmed in 434 of these priority blocks. The “30” code was used to confirm this species in 231 blocks, primarily in the Unglaciated Plateau, Till Plain, and Glaciated Plateau regions (96, 58, and 52 blocks respectively). Adults carrying food for young were noted in 84 blocks, active nests were discovered in 61 blocks, and recently fledged young were observed in 49 blocks. Most of the remaining Atlas Project records pertained to probable breeders, primarily territorial individuals and pairs occupying suitable habitats.

Tufted Titmice frequently forage with chickadees and nuthatches, sharing the same wooded habitats as these species. Breeding titmice occupy a full spectrum of woodlands from extensive mature forests to isolated second growth woodlots with a few large trees. Wooded riparian corridors are equally suitable while a few pairs find refuge in urban areas within parks, cemeteries, and shaded residential areas. They normally avoid small woodlots of only a few acres in size, narrow wooded corridors along fencerows, and brushy successional habitats.

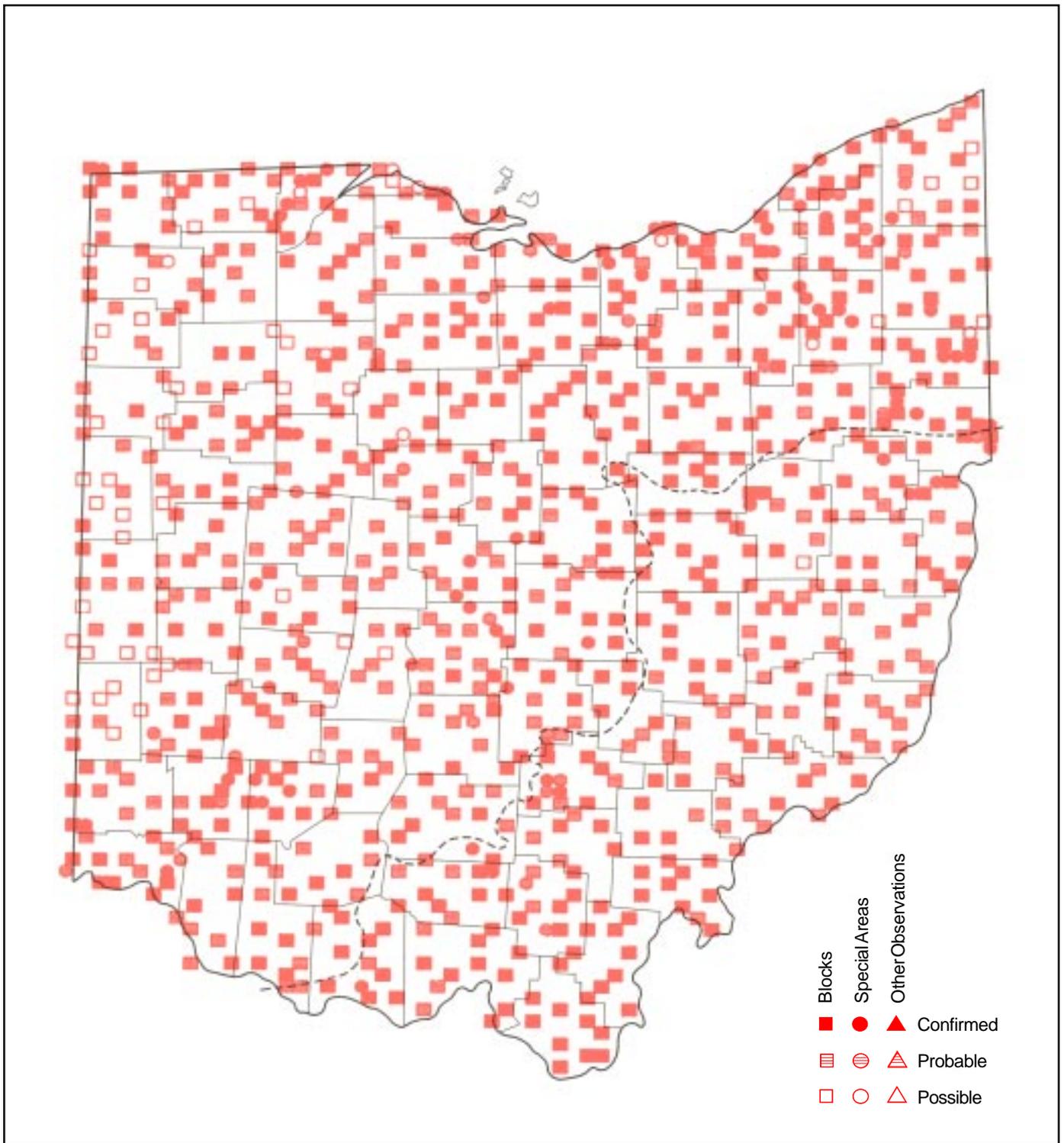
Within these wooded habitats, the most critical factor for breeding titmice is the presence of large trees with suitable cavities for nesting. Unlike chickadees that primarily excavate their own nest holes, titmice prefer natural cavities and aban-

doned woodpecker holes. However, some titmice will excavate their own cavities and a few pairs may occupy bird houses (Campbell 1940, Mathena et al. 1984, Trautman 1940). Most nests are placed at heights of 10–25 feet, although a few have been found at heights of only 3–5 feet in fenceposts while others may be 40–50 feet above the ground in tall trees.



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Nest construction activities are most prominent between mid-March and mid-April. The earliest reported clutch is April 21 (Trautman 1940), although earlier clutches are likely in the southern counties. Most nests with eggs have been discovered during late April and May. The young titmice normally hatch during the second half of May and fledge during June, although recently fledged young have been reported as early as May 18 in central Ohio (Trautman 1940). Titmice raise only one brood annually but will renest if their first attempt is unsuccessful. Late nests are responsible for construction activities into the first half of May, nests with eggs through June 10, and reports of recently fledged young during the first half of July (Peterjohn 1989a, Trautman 1940).



Analysis of Block Data by Physiographic Region

| Physiographic Region | Total Blocks Surveyed | Blocks with Data | % with Data | Regional % for Ohio | Ave. # Individ per BBS Route (1982–1987) |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|--|
| Lake Plain | 95 | 88 | 92.6 | 11.7 | 2.1 |
| Till Plain | 271 | 268 | 98.9 | 35.5 | 5.0 |
| Ill. Till Plain | 46 | 46 | 100.0 | 6.1 | 15.3 |
| Glaciated Plateau | 140 | 140 | 100.0 | 18.6 | 13.9 |
| Unglaciated Plateau | 212 | 212 | 100.0 | 28.1 | 9.9 |

Summary of Breeding Status

| No. of Blocks in Which Species Recorded | | |
|---|------------|--------------|
| Total | 754 | 98.7% |
| Confirmed | 434 | 57.6% |
| Probable | 276 | 36.6% |
| Possible | 44 | 5.8% |