

**California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System**  
**California Department of Fish and Wildlife**  
**California Interagency Wildlife Task Group**

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OAK TITMOUSE

*Baeolophus inornatus*

Family: PARIDAE  
B358

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: T. Kucera, 1998

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Former plain titmouse was recently split into the oak titmouse and the juniper titmouse (*B. ridgewayi*) and placed in the genus *Baeolophus* (Cicero 1996, Slikas et al. 1996, AOU 1997). The oak titmouse is a common resident in a variety of habitats, but is primarily associated with oaks. Occurs in montane hardwood-conifer, montane hardwood, blue, valley, and coastal oak woodlands, and montane and valley foothill riparian habitats in cismontane California, from the Mexican border to Humboldt Co. Range encircles San Joaquin Valley, extending east from the coast through Kern Co. onto the western slope of the Sierra Nevada north to Shasta Co. Scattered and local populations north of Humboldt Co. near the coast, and locally in Siskiyou Co. (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981). A narrow contact zone between the oak titmouse and juniper titmouse, which inhabits pinyon-juniper, juniper, and desert riparian habitats from northeastern California to the eastern Mojave species, occurs on the Modoc Plateau (Cicero 1996).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Eats insects and spiders, berries, acorns, and some seeds. Forages on foliage, twigs, branches, trunks, and occasionally on ground. Gleans, hammers hard seeds, chips at bark, and sometimes hovers (Hertz et al. 1976, Wagner 1981).

**Cover:** Cover provided mostly by oak and pine-oak woodlands. Also finds cover in riparian habitats. Roosts in cavity in tree or snag.

**Reproduction:** Builds nest of grass, moss, mud, hair, feathers, and fur (Harrison 1978) in woodpecker hole, natural cavity, or nest box. Sometimes partially excavates own cavity. Nests up to 10 m (32 ft) above ground, but usually lower (Bent 1946). Often breeds near water.

**Water:** Drank occasionally in summer in a coastal California oak woodland (Williams and Koenig 1980).

**Pattern:** Prefers open woodlands of oak and pine and oak. Sometimes forages and breeds in riparian areas, and ventures into residential areas.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Yearlong, diurnal activity.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Yearlong resident.

**Home Range:** Same as territory.

**Territory:** In Alameda Co., territory averaged 2.6 ha (6.3 ac) in 1 study (Dixon

1949), and averaged 2.3 ha (5.7 ac) in another (Dixon 1954, 1956). In oak woodlands in San Mateo Co., territory averaged 0.8 ha (2.0 ac) (Hertz et al. 1976). Territory occupied year-round.

Reproduction: Breeds from March into July, with peak activity in April and May. Pair nests solitarily. Lays 3-9 eggs, usually 6-8. Incubation 14-16 days, usually by female only. Altricial young tended by both parents in nest about 20 days, and for another 3-4 wk after leaving the nest hole (Harrison 1978, Erlich et al. 1988).

Niche: Vulnerable to the usual predators of woodland passerines: small mammals and hawks. Scrub jay apparently a common predator on eggs and nestlings (Bent 1946). May join flocks of mixed species in winter.

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