

# Oak Titmouse

*Baeolophus inornatus*

Nondescript save for its crest, the Oak Titmouse might not wow many bird watchers at first sight. But these vocal, active birds characterize the warm, dry oak woods from southern Oregon to Baja California—they're "the voice and soul of the oaks," according to one early naturalist. Mates pair for life, and both partners noisily defend their territory year-round. The Oak Titmouse and the nearly identical Juniper Titmouse of the Great Basin were once treated as a single species, the Plain Titmouse.

## Keys to Identification

### Size and Shape

Oak Titmice are small songbirds with short, stubby bills, a short crest on the head, and a medium-long tail.

### Color Pattern

Oak Titmice are plain gray-brown birds. They are slightly darker above than below, and may show a slight buffy wash on the flanks.

### Behavior

Active and constantly moving in flocks, Oak Titmice eat seeds and insects that they glean from bark and leaves. Listen for their rapid, harsh calls as they mix in foraging flocks with other small songbirds such as warblers.

### Habitat

Oak Titmice are strongly tied to oak trees, although they also live in areas of open pine or mixed oak-pine forest. The species is almost entirely restricted to dry slopes in California, though it ranges north to Oregon and south to Baja California as well.



## Cool Facts

- The Oak Titmouse mates for life, and pairs defend year-round territories. Most titmice find a mate in their first fall. Those that do not are excluded from territories and must live in marginal habitat until they find a vacancy.
- In its pursuit of insects and plant materials, the Oak Titmouse forages at a rate of about 40 food-catching attempts every 15 minutes.

## Measurements

### Both Sexes

- Weight - 0.4 - 0.7 ounces