

The Coal Tit



The Coal Tit

Scientific name: Periparus Ater

Irish Name: Meantán dubh

Males: The upperparts are an olive-grey and the underparts are an off white colour. The crown and large bib are black, while the cheeks and nape are white. There are also two white wing bars on each wing. The legs are a blue-grey colour.

Female: The female Coal Tit shares the same characteristics as the male.

Juveniles: Juveniles are browner above. The underparts, cheeks, nape and wing bars are more yellow.

Song: The high pitch song of the Coal Tit is repetitive and is similar to that of the Great Tits but faster.

Length: 11.5cm

Diet: The Coal Tit eats insects and conifer seeds. In the garden, they prefer black sunflower seeds and sunflower hearts. The Coal Tit is a hoarder. When food is plentiful they place it in various hiding places so that they will have food for later when times are harder.



The Coal Tit

Breeding: Coal Tits start breeding around mid April. They will lay between 7 and 12 eggs and these will be incubated for between 14 and 16 days.

Nesting: Coal Tits will nest in hollows in trees or even in mouse holes. The nest is similar to that of the Blue Tit (i.e. made from moss, wool, dead leaves and spiders' webs) except that it is moss-lined. The Coal Tit's lays small eggs. The eggs are smooth, glossy and white with reddish-brown speckles. The female incubates the eggs by herself. After the young hatch, they are fed by both parents.

Interesting Fact: While the Coal Tit may be very good at hiding food, it is not always the best at remembering where it has hidden it. Oftentimes it will forget where it has stored its spare food. Great Tits will often watch a Coal Tit hiding its food and then go and steal it.