



Thorndon Birdlife

May 2024

A bold character with a scolding 'pitchuu' call, the **Marsh Tit** (*Poecile palustris*) has declined significantly and has been Red-listed in the UK since 2022. Globally, the marsh tit is classified as Least Concern, although there is evidence of a decline in numbers.



It is a Eurasian passerine bird in the tit family *Paridae* and genus *Poecile*, closely related to the willow tit. It is a small bird, around 12 cm (4.7 in) long and weighing about 12 g (0.42 oz), it has an average wingspan of 19 cm (7.5 in), the wing length ranges from 60–68 mm (2.4–2.8 in)

The oldest recorded marsh tit in Europe reached the age of 11 years, 11 months. It has a black crown, nape and rather small black bib, pale cheeks, brown back and greyish-brown wings and tail. Between 8 and 11 subspecies are recognised. Its close resemblance to the willow tit can cause identification problems, especially in the United Kingdom where the local subspecies of the two are very similar: they were not recognised as separate species until 1897, care is needed to identify these species in the field. It can be found throughout temperate Europe and northern Asia and, despite its name, it occurs in a range of habitats.

Widely distributed in England and Wales, the marsh tit favours mature deciduous woodland habitat with understorey in which to forage. It is quite scarce in urban areas. Never numerous, the species is seen mostly in singles or pairs, and adults will stay on or near territory all year round. The marsh tit is omnivorous; its food includes caterpillars, spiders and seeds. If supply is abundant, marsh tits have the habit of hoarding stocks of food for the harsh struggles of winter weather and rainy days. It nests in natural tree holes, choosing existing hollows to enlarge, rather than excavating its own, they may also take to nest boxes close to the ground.