

TUFTED TITMOUSE *Baeolophus bicolor*

**Rare, widespread
permanent resident.**

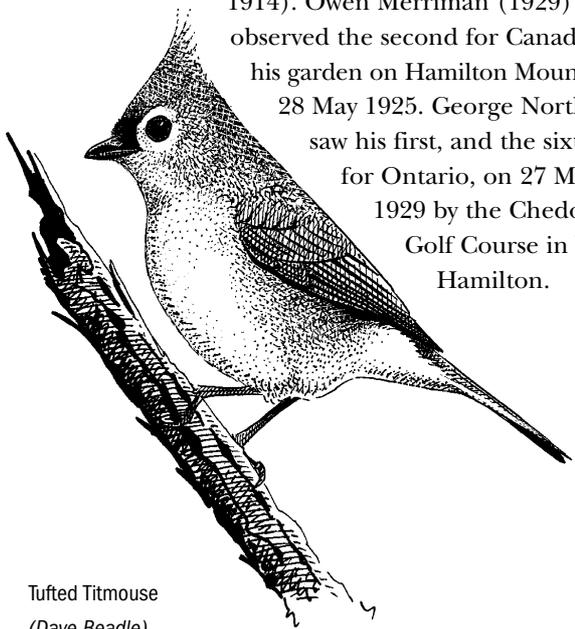
Breeds.

RECORD HIGH COUNT: 7

The Tufted Titmouse is a common songbird of the deciduous forests of eastern North America. Over the past century it has

expanded northward, finally crossing the barrier of lakes Erie and Ontario. It is now a scarce but interesting member of our provincial avifauna. Ontario birders still go out of their way to see Tufted Titmice in the province. Explanations for the expansion include climatic amelioration and winter bird feeding (Grubb & Pravosudov 1994).

W.E. Saunders saw the first two Tufted Titmice for the province at Point Pelee on 2 May 1914 (Saunders 1914). Owen Merriman (1929) observed the second for Canada in his garden on Hamilton Mountain, 28 May 1925. George North saw his first, and the sixth for Ontario, on 27 March 1929 by the Chedoke Golf Course in West Hamilton.



Tufted Titmouse
(Dave Beadle)

The next Hamilton titmice provided the first breeding record for Canada. North and Harvey Williams observed a pair on the north shore of Dundas Marsh beginning 1 December 1935. The following

year, on 6 September 1936, he and Harvey Williams observed the two adults accompanied by two apparent juveniles. In contrast to most species of chickadees and titmice, young Tufted Titmice often remain with their parents during their first winter and do not disperse until the following spring (Grubb & Pravosudov 1994).

Over the next few decades, other Tufted Titmouse were occasionally noted. Richard Saunders (1947) described a trip that he, Jim Baillie and others made to Ancaster on 7 April 1946 to see a titmouse at the Hutchinson feeder on Church Street.

The fall of 1961 witnessed a major invasion of Tufted Titmice into southern Ontario and western New York (Webster 1962). The titmice accompanied a flight of Black-capped Chickadees. Beginning on 14 November, a total of 12 was reported in the *Wood Duck*. Six were tallied on the Hamilton Christmas Bird Count. Thereafter, the species became entrenched as a permanent resident in the HSA and elsewhere in the Niagara Peninsula and southwestern Ontario. This expansion by a northward pulse, rather than a gradual movement, is not noted in the literature. All through the 1960s, a pair of titmice brought young to Olive Newcombe's feeder in Dundas. She counted seven on 30 October 1963. Similarly, in the 1970s a pair visited my feeding station in Ancaster; many birders in Ontario added their first Tufted Titmouse by visiting 92 Hostein Drive. This pair brought three young to the feeder in July 1972.

OBBA2 showed Tufted Titmouse in 16 of the 47 HSA squares, a net increase in 10 squares since 1985. Most of the oak woodlots south and east of Hamilton now have titmice. For example, 34 of 39 Niagara Peninsula squares, about 10 of which fall within the HSA, produced some evidence of Tufted Titmouse breeding—an increase of 20 over OBBA1 results.