



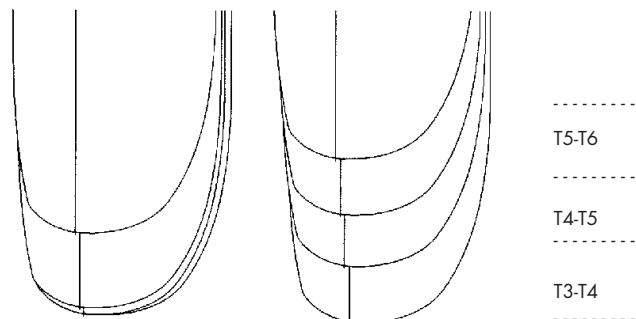
# Separating Marsh and Willow Tits



	Marsh Tit	Willow Tit
<b>Wing Length<sup>1</sup></b>	58-67 mm	55-63 mm
<b>Tail Difference<sup>2</sup></b> (see Fig below)	6th Tail feather < 5 mm less than tip of tail (1.5-6.0 mm) Tail must be fully grown - caution with juvs and moulting adults	6th Tail feather > 4 mm less than tip of tail (3.0-7.5 mm)
<b>Secondaries<sup>3</sup></b>	Outer webs of the inner SS uniform with the mantle and wing	Inner SS and tertials edged whitish forming a light panel clearly visible on closed wing
<b>Bill</b>	White margin to lower cutting edge	No white margin
<b>Cap<sup>4</sup></b>	Extending less far down nape	Extending further down nape
<b>Bib</b>	Clearer cut and less extensive	Less clear cut and more extensive
<b>Cheeks</b>	White	Buff, off white
<b>Flanks</b>	Uniform with rest of upper-parts	Richer buff than rest of upper-parts
<b>Crown<sup>5</sup></b>	Glossy black	Black with brown tinge
<b>Mantle</b>	Warm greyish brown	Greyish with white tinge

## Notes

- 1 Differences in the reliability of people's measuring cause difficulties. Even without that complication reliance on this character would lead to about 14% of the birds being wrongly identified.
- 2 The tail difference is the distance between the tip of the outermost tail feathers and the longest pair of tail feathers, measured with the tail closed. Beware of feathers that are not fully grown. The sample suggests that this character will produce about 23% inaccuracy, but this may be improved by careful measurement (based on a sample of 122 Willow Tits and 63 Marsh Tits trapped at the same site by two consistently measuring ringers).
- 3 Abrasion or ruffling can make this very difficult to see.
- 4 The 'shorter-necked' appearance of the Willow Tit often accentuates this. To obtain the best effect, hold the bird by the thighs - ie the photographic grip.
- 5 Best judged by looking from behind the bird: does not work on juveniles - all seem to be Willow Tits!



TIP OF T4 MAY BE JUST VISIBLE BELOW T5

Tips of outer four tail feathers, tail closed, view from below  
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## Note

**Marsh Tit:** T6 shortest. T5, T4, T3 of about equal length with no more than 1 mm difference between the longest and shortest of these three feathers. Longest feathers T5 (T4).

**Willow Tit:** T6 < T5 < T4 < T3 with at least three of these feathers visible. Longest feather T3 (T4).

From *Ringers' Manual* BTO, Thetford