



## The Coal Tit

You have to be really quick sighted to see this bird which is the smallest member of the Tit family in the British Isles. It is not as colourful as our more familiar tits and it also has a tendency to grab a seed and immediately fly off with it. I see the Coal Tit in my garden more often in the winter months than any other time of the year. It usually comes to the feeders on its own, when things have quietened down a little.

The Coal Tit has an olive-grey back, buff underparts, white cheeks, a black cap and a small black bib. It can be distinguished from its similar relatives, the Marsh and Willow Tits, by the white patch on the nape of its neck.

It is predominantly a bird of coniferous woodland but it may also be present in parks and gardens that have suitable conifers. It is particularly suited to coniferous trees because its slender bill enables it to easily take seeds and invertebrates from cones. You may attract this tiny bird in to your garden with seed and suet feeders. The Coal Tit often caches seeds to help see it through very cold winters. However, it doesn't have a particularly good memory and is not so clever at retrieving them. Sometimes, the more intelligent Great Tit will watch where they hide their seed and will pinch it. If you find an odd Sunflower plant growing in an unusual place, it is most likely that a Coal Tit originally hid the seed there.

Keep your eye out for this small tit at your bird feeders, but you will have to be quick!

*Jean Parrott*



*Jean is a voluntary Ambassador for the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Garden BirdWatch scheme in Nottinghamshire. If you enjoy watching birds and other wildlife which visit your garden, then BTO GBW may be perfect for you. If you would like a free information pack, please contact Jean at [jpbirds@talktalk.net](mailto:jpbirds@talktalk.net)*

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