



### March 2010, Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*)

*Peter! Peter! Peter!* I heard one of these sweeties singing for his honey just the other morning in my backyard—a sure sign spring is on the way. Grey-crested and orange-flanked, they are cheerful and curious but shy. At winter feeders they'll collect one seed at a time, breaking cover to snatch it then flitting off somewhere private to whack it open with pointy round bills, or stash it nearby in some nook or cranny for a later date (they like sunflower seeds and peanuts). You can't tell the sexes apart but juveniles lack the black foreheads of adults.

In winter they're often found with chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers making the neighborhood rounds. But you don't see titmice flocking together with many other titmice. If it's two together that's probably the local pair, and if more than two, the others are likely juveniles. Sometimes a young titmouse will even stay with its parents to help raise the next summer's brood. Surprisingly you won't find them in any of the boreal forests north of the border. Their range is the Eastern US and they are quite the homebodies—pairs stay put year round anywhere you find them, none of the populations migrate or travel far from their summer territories. They nest in tree cavities, natural ones or old woodpecker homes, and can be attracted to birdhouses with 1 and a quarter inch holes.