

Willow Tit (*Poecile montanus*)

Habitat: Eskrigg Reserve provides the ideal habitat for Willow Tits, a damp wooded area with birch, alder and willow trees and shrubs growing next to water.

Food: They feed on invertebrates in summer and mostly on plant material, such as alder and birch seeds, in autumn and winter. They will hoard food if the opportunity arises.

Breeding: There are normally two Willow Tit breeding territories within Eskrigg Reserve each year. Nesting begins in April. The tits makes a new nest hole every year, often in rotting wood and usually close to the ground. The female excavates the nest, carrying away the wood chippings and lines the hollow with wood chips and a little plant material. The 6-8 eggs are incubated by the female alone for 13-15 days. The young are then fed by both adults and fly after about 17 days.

Feeding the young:



1. One of the parents checks that it is safe to leave the nest.
2. It then quickly takes to the air ..
3. .. and flies off in search of food.
4. It gathers many caterpillars, grubs and other soft food ..
5. .. and, if the way is clear, it returns to the nest.
6. It feeds the young. When the chicks excrete the faecal sacs the parents remove them from the nest to keep it clean.



Photo credits: Tom Langlands (TL) and Jim Rae (JR)

Conservation: The species is **RED** listed because the population of breeding pairs has been in severe decline since about 1970. In many areas the lack of dead wood, the drying out of some woodland and the loss of the shrub layer caused by changing woodland management are all possible causes of the decline. At Eskrigg Reserve, we will try to maintain the habitat so that Willow Tits have a home for years to come.