



How to Help

Bushtits

Small gray insect-eating birds that roam widely in flocks of 10-40 birds over open wooded or shrubby habitats in the Western United States from Western Washington to West Texas, including suburban neighborhoods. Bushtits prefer landscapes dominated by native trees and shrubs, and can be helped by providing appropriate foraging and nesting habitats free of harmful pesticides.

What Bushtits Need

Food: Specializes in gleaning food from leaves and branches of trees and shrubs, especially leaves and smaller stems and on the outer branches. The bulk of Bushtit's diet (about 80 percent) consists of small insects and spiders, the remaining 20 percent is comprised of tiny seeds and other plant materials. Flocks forage over a large home range of at least 250 acres.

Nesting: Breeds in open deciduous and coniferous woodland, scrub, and areas with scattered trees and shrubs. Nests are located in trees or shrubs, 4 - 50 feet up, suspended from a twig fork or from two or more adjacent twigs and built of a variety of materials including twigs, rootlets, lichens, moss, grass, blossoms of trees and shrubs, plant down, small dry leaves, spider cocoons, and thickly lined with feathers, fur, and down.

Shelter: Roosts in trees or brushy tangles. May roost or rest huddled together in groups at night and during the day, especially in cooler weather.

Other: Bushtits will drink or bathe in birdbaths or small ponds in suburban areas.

How You Can Help

- Plant a wide range of native trees and shrubs, especially those with the greatest density of branches and leaves to provide the most foraging opportunities.
- Organic gardening or Integrated Pest Management techniques that minimize the application of insecticides will best protect the food resources (insects) that this species requires.
- Maintain a suet feeder in your landscape for birds, which Bushtits will readily visit.
- Work with neighbors to provide foraging habitat across the whole neighborhood used by foraging Bushtit flocks.
- Provide a combination of trees planted at low densities and interspersed with shrubs. Appropriate species will vary by latitude but could include oaks (especially Arizona white oak, emory oak, silver oak), pine (Chihuahua pine, Apache pine, piñon pine), vines, and shrubs such as buckbrush, willow, and serviceberry.
- Dedicate a part of your landscaping to shrubs and trees with a less "manicured" look to provide thick cover for roosting birds.
- Provide a birdbath or small pond with flat shallows that birds can stand on for drinking and bathing. Keep water clean and free of mosquito larvae.