

Tufted Titmouse Feeds Young in Fallen External Squirrel Nest

The Tufted Titmouse (*Parus bicolor*) normally nests in tree cavities. A literature search led us to one exception, namely an old record by Wayne (*Auk*, 14:98-99, 1897) of a pair that laid two successive clutches in a large mass of Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*); both nesting attempts failed when strong storm winds blew down the nests and eggs. To this we add another attempt by the species to nest in other than a tree cavity. These observations may prove valuable to field observers searching for nests of the Tufted Titmouse.

On the afternoon of 15 April 1975 in Temple Terrace, Hillsborough County, Florida, Mumme discovered two adult titmice feeding nestlings in an external nest of a Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) that was lying on the ground. The nest was beneath a lone Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*), from which we strongly suspect it had blown down during the severe storm that passed through the area earlier the same day. The exact original location of the nest in the oak could not be determined, although probably it was somewhere in the branches 6 to 10 m from the ground. The nest was a spherical mass of fairly fresh Spanish Moss with one entrance hole, typical of local Gray Squirrels. It was lined with finer materials, both hair and plant fibers. The habitat is mature suburbs with numerous houses and a golf course. Live Oaks and Longleaf Pines (*Pinus palustris*) are the dominant trees, and Gray Squirrels are numerous.

The nest, when found on the ground, contained 5 young about 9 days old (see Laskey, *Bird-Banding*, 28:135-145, 1957) and one egg. Two adults continued to care for the nestlings, feeding them and removing their fecal sacs. Attempts to relocate the nest 3 m away and 3 m up in a tree failed. During two or three minutes of observation the adults did not go to the relocated nest but instead searched the ground, and especially the bits of moss near where the nest had been. After returning it to the ground, Mumme again placed the nest in the tree, this time while the adults were nearby, and still they failed to go to it.

With the nest returned to the ground at least one adult was seen carrying food to the young the next day, 16 April. On 17 April, in the afternoon, the nest was partially torn open, and the 5 young were scattered nearby and dead. Some had punctures and we suspect a dog killed them. The adults were not seen. The young were preserved as fluid specimens at the University of South Florida.—*Ronald L. Mumme and Glen E. Woolfenden, Department of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620.*