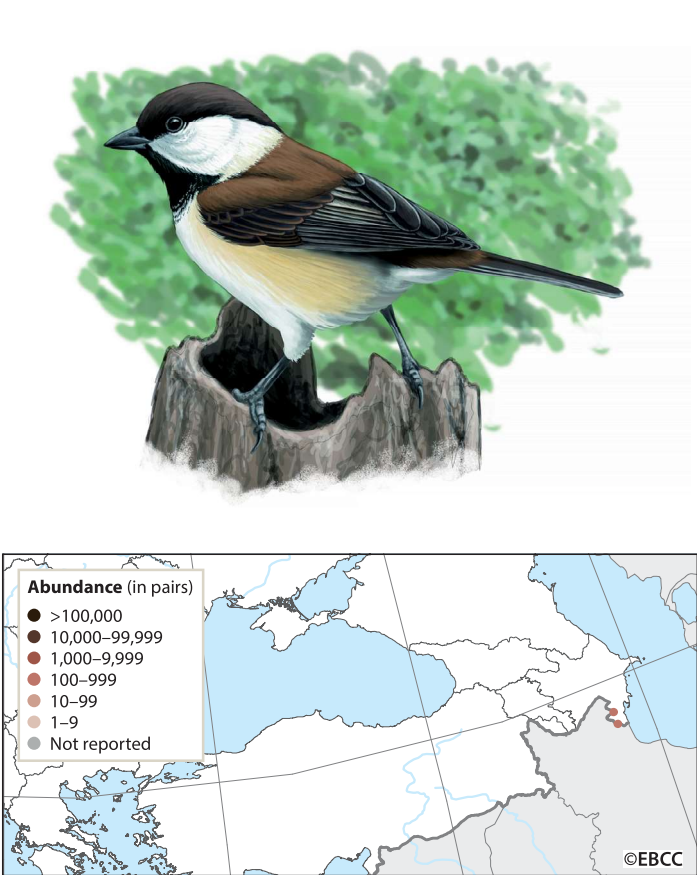


Poecile hyrcanus

Caspian Tit



The relationship of the Caspian Tit *Poecile hyrcanus* to the Sombre Tit *P. lugubris* has been debated, but recent molecular analysis appears to confirm species rank (Johansson *et al.* 2013). The species is monotypic and its world range is confined to montane forests along the S shore of the Caspian Sea in SE Azerbaijan (Talysh Mountains) and N Iran (Elburz Mountains). The Caspian Tit is considered to be sedentary, with very few records away from known areas [HBW].

Azerbaijan forms the extreme W edge of the species' range and the current known distribution is restricted to the Talysh Mountains in the S of the country. Breeding was confirmed in just one square, with possible breeding detected in another; the population is estimated (based on the abundance map) to exceed 200 pairs.

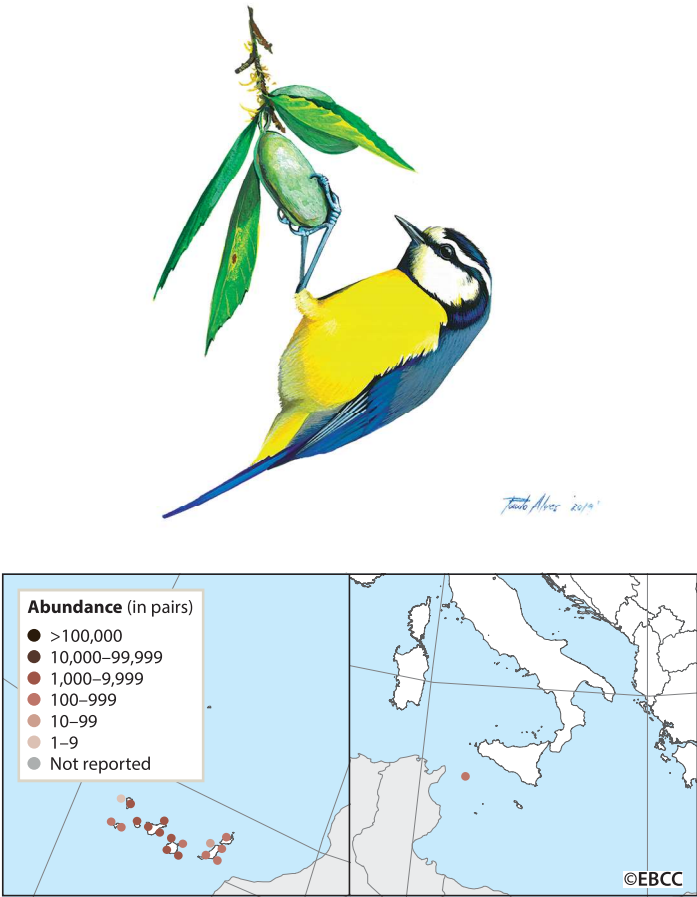
In a survey of the Hyrcanian forests no estimate could be made of the number of breeding pairs of Caspian Tits due to difficulty in accessing the upland forest, though the species was found to occur in many parts of the mountain areas (Tohidifar & Moser 2015, Tohidifar *et al.* 2016). The Caspian Tit is dependent on snags in standing dead trees for nesting (Loskot 2014). It has been found in habitats at an altitude of 400–2100 m asl, and in Azerbaijan mainly at 550–1250 m, though usually above 1000 m. There is no known overlap with *P. lugubris*, previously considered conspecific, which occupies more open and maquis-like habitats [HBW].

The species has been little studied in its Azeri range. Further research is required on breeding biology, habitat preferences and foraging behaviour. There do not appear to be any indications of changes in range or population. Its habitat is not thought to be under threat, and given its relatively large though poorly known range, the species is considered of Least Concern by IUCN.

Stephen McAvoy Illustration: Àlex Mascarell Llosa

Cyanistes teneriffae

African Blue Tit



Previously considered conspecific with the Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, the African Blue Tit is distributed in N Africa, the Italian island of Pantelleria between Sicily and Tunisia (subspecies *ultramarinus*; Corso *et al.* 2012, Stervander *et al.* 2015), and the Canary Islands, where five endemic subspecies are described: *palmensis* on La Palma, *ombriosus* on El Hierro, *teneriffae* on Tenerife and La Gomera, *hedwigae* on Gran Canaria and *degener* on Fuerteventura and Lanzarote (Illera *et al.* 2016). Molecular results suggest three independent waves of colonisation from the African mainland to the Canaries over the last 3.5 million years (Stervander *et al.* 2015). This taxon shows the highest level of differentiation of all avian taxa breeding in the Canary Islands, which warrants considering each of the Canarian subspecies as a full species (Illera *et al.* 2016).

The African Blue Tit breeds on the seven main islands, and is common on all islands except Fuerteventura and Lanzarote. This is especially apparent on Lanzarote, where it is restricted to the N area. On the central and W islands it shows a widespread distribution with presence in all squares. There is no reliable estimate for the Canarian population. On La Palma the population was estimated at 7,755 birds, on Fuerteventura and Lanzarote at less than 2,000 individuals (Carrascal *et al.* 2008a, HBW). The African Blue Tit occurs from the coast to over 2000 m asl, reaching the highest densities in pine and evergreen broadleaved woodlands. It is also common in coastal and open habitats with high presence of tall shrub cover and dispersed trees, urban habitats and agricultural areas (Martín & Lorenzo 2001, Carrascal *et al.* 2008a).

Population trends are unknown on all islands except the E ones, where populations seem to be stable.

Juan Carlos Illera Illustration: Paulo Alves