



**MASSACHUSETT'S AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Results of the 1983 Cardinal-Tufted Titmouse-Mockingbird Census

Just twenty-five years ago the sighting of a Cardinal or Tufted Titmouse in New England was a rare sight. They were virtually absent in northern New England, and there were only a handful of reports from Massachusetts. In fact the most recent Massachusetts state bird book, published in 1955, listed the occurrence of Tufted Titmouse as hypothetical. In the winter of 1957-1958 a few of both Cardinals and Tufted Titmice appeared at feeders in widely scattered locations across the state primarily in the Connecticut River Valley and eastern Massachusetts west of Boston. The appearance of the birds prompted a rush of birdwatchers to favored feeders. The initial influx of birds remained to become permanent residents. At the time Cardinal was an occasional breeding species but the first nesting record for Tufted Titmouse was in 1958 when young were observed being brought to a feeder with adults. Apparently there was a second influx of Tufted Titmice during the winter of 1961. In subsequent years both species increased gradually and were well established by the late 1960s. Despite the fact that Cardinals have been established for fifteen years phone answerers at Audubon headquarters continued to receive calls for the identity of the red bird with the large red beak.

The 1983 census recorded 4947 Cardinals, 4949 Tufted Titmice and 894 Mockingbirds in New England. The Massachusetts share of the total was 3062 Cardinals, 2887 Tufted Titmice and 618 Mockingbirds. Compared with recent totals the results indicate that there have been no significant gains or losses. Prior to the census on the second weekend in February the winter had been characterized by much warmer than usual temperatures and bare ground. About one week before the census the first major snow of the winter fell. Then the Friday before the census New England was clobbered with more than a foot of snow. Ideally this should have brought flocks of birds to feeders that up to that time had been earning at least some subsistence from available natural foods. However it is always difficult to correlate weather and census results.

Since the range and numbers of these "southern" visitors have been stable for a number of years any apparent changes must be sought at the northern limit of their range. The best comparative figures available are for Vermont where the Tufted Titmouse is scarce but witnessed a noticeable increase on the 1982 census. The Tufted Titmouse total for 1983 was nearly identical. However the Cardinal figures are quite different. The 1983 totals were only one third of the 1982 figures. Should we interpret this as a range contraction or population decline for the Cardinal in Vermont? According to Nancy Martin of Vermont Institute of Natural Science "Cardinal numbers are down this winter, as indicated by Christmas Count results, but not as drastically as might be indicated here." She attributes the low totals to lack of advertising by at least one major

newspaper. She also indicated that titmouse numbers are actually up but reduced number of reporters produced the striking comparative results.

One of the common laments from feeder watchers for the past few winters has been the lack of birds at the feeder. For the majority this is probably true: A partial explanation is the warm, open ground winter. Another significant factor is the growing number of people feeding birds are now in competition with each other. The birds will select the feeding station that provides better cover and a more diverse habitat. However, if we revert to our so-called standard New England winter the lack of feeder birds will no longer be a complaint. We'll see what 1984 brings.

The census was originated in 1963 by a group of birdwatchers in Western Massachusetts in response to Cardinals and titmice becoming well established after an unprecedented influx in the fall of 1957. The concept soon caught on and the census became statewide in 1965. In 1974 the Mockingbird was added because of its significant increase in the late 1960s. In Massachusetts there seems to have been very little change in the numbers of Cardinals and titmice since 1974. The general public has been instrumental in documenting the spread and each year thousands of reports are received.

The continued popularity of the Cardinal-Tufted Titmouse-Mockingbird census is due to the local and regional coordinators who assist in compiling records. We owe special thanks to Bird News of Western Massachusetts, Allen Bird Club, the Audubon Societies of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Connecticut and the Vermont Institute of Natural Science for their help in compiling the reports.

We would like to thank Dorothy Arvidson for compiling the census results.

11/29/83

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1983 Results by State and County

	Cardinal	Tufted Titmouse	Mockingbird
CONNECTICUT	34	18	3
MASSACHUSETTS			
Barnstable	99	50	12
Berkshire	182	47	7
Bristol	336	278	56
Dukes	-	-	-
Essex	293	259	61
Franklin	48	37	3
Hampden	651	629	141
Hampshire	188	176	34
Middlesex	482	645	123
Nantucket	51	0	5
Norfolk	157	205	38
Plymouth	283	237	67
Suffolk	10	4	1
Worcester	282	320	70
Total	3062	2887	618
RHODE ISLAND			
Bristol	10	6	2
Kent	3	15	6
Newport	64	22	10
Providence	75	52	18
Washington	39	42	8
Total	191	137	44
NEW HAMPSHIRE			
Belknap	54	95	7
Carroll	15	35	1
Cheshire	74	44	7
Coos	5	1	-
Grafton	38	48	3
Hillsboro	330	452	78
Merrimack	161	219	30
Rockingham	493	766	76
Strafford	54	89	11
Sullivan	29	15	-
Total	1253	1764	213
VERMONT			
Addison	3	3-	

Bennington	232	71	10
Caledonia	15	-	
Chittendon	10		1
Essex			
Orange	36	14	
Orleans	1		
Rutland	3		
Washington	15	12	1
Windham	43	30	3
Windsor	49	13	1
Total	407	143	16

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY (1979 – 1983) OF THE
CARDINAL-TUFTED TITMOUS-MOCKINGBIRD CENSUS BY STATES

	1979			1980			1981			1982			1983		
	C	TT	M	C	TT	M	C	TT	M	C	TT	M	C	TT	M
CONNECTICUT	115	63	6	10	15	5	1	-	-	2	5	-	34	18	3
MAINE	128	64	35	153	93	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MASSACHUSETTS	4935	4992	1003	5135	6262	1414	2291	2610	670	2662	2707	627	3062	2887	618
NEW HAMPSHIRE	403	466	95	614	914	87	3	8	-	4	5	-	1253	1764	213
RHODE ISLAND	354	297	58	34	14	11	94	78	16	70	88	24	191	137	44
VERMONT	619	171	10	762	182	18	575	74	21	1220	149	23	407	143	16
Total	6554	6053	1207	6708	7480	1565	2964	2770	707	3958	2954	674	4947	4949	894

C=Northern Cardinal

T=Tufted Titmouse

M=Northern Mockingbird