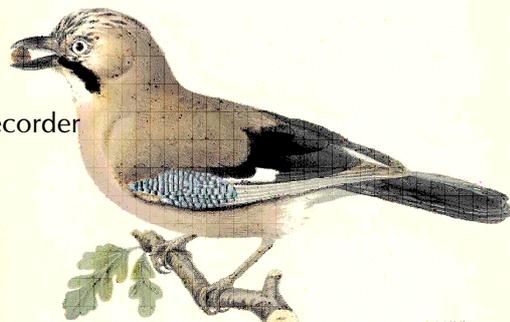


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

May 2022 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Ellen Marshall

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John Clark

2022/2 Number 137

www.treswellwoodipmg.org

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Strong winds which caused cancellation of some ringing visits earlier in the year returned again forcing the cancellation of more visits. However the standard site visits were just completed with no weeks at all to spare. We are now in the BTO Constant Effort season and the first two of 12 sessions have been completed. The weather has been exceptionally dry. Nightingale Ride is now largely covered in grass rather than the normal marsh-like vegetation. On 15th May the ride, normally waterlogged in places, was passable without wellington boots. Brambles and nettles seem to manage their rampant growth in spite of dryness. This year Ash Dieback is very much more obvious than before with many trees almost devoid of growing leaves but many more dead twigs and branches on the ground.

The first nestlings ringed this year were on 24th April with four broods of Stock Doves. This is the second consecutive year in which Stock Doves have been first to be ringed in nestboxes. They were first also in 2015, 2014 and 2011 but never before that. Their long breeding season does seem to be lengthening even further. By early May the first broods of Great Tits had been ringed. Sadly, although we often hear Tawny Owls in the wood they have not nested in the boxes this year. Dormice are doing very well in the wood now. The design of entrance which the dormouse group has produced seems to be almost bird-proof. This year we have only two boxes used by birds – one Blue Tit and one Wren. In return dormice have been found in two bird boxes. Conventional wisdom is that dormouse boxes must not have any form of preservative, even non-toxic ones, as the smell will deter the dormice. Should we put warning signs on the bird boxes to tell the dormice that preservatives have been used? Overall, what is extremely pleasing is that the discussions we have had with the dormouse group over the years have resulted in their modifications to the standard dormouse box. It has eliminated the excess of potential breeding holes for tits which proved so damaging to their productivity after the revival or the dormouse project in 2003. TWITTER 2007-3 described the problems and first attempts at the solution. The current design with the slit entrance just 14mm wide is clearly better for the bird population, better for the bird nestbox inspectors and also seems to be preferred by the dormice too.

After the disruptions of the two pandemic years, trainees are creeping back. We look forward to seeing more of them as time goes on but do find university vacations are disruptive to the training process.

As some of you know, Chris du Feu has moved to Scotland to be closer to his family. I am very pleased to say that he will continue to manage the data for the Treswell ringing operation and produce TWITTER with his analyses and insights of the data. He is also continuing the drive to organise the Treswell data. His presence in the wood will be sorely missed, where his detailed knowledge has been a huge help in training and inspiring the many ringers who have spent time in the wood. We expect to see him in the wood again from time to time when he returns to continue work he started such as the survey of the assart (see TWITTER 134), for the 50th anniversary of the start of ringing in the wood in December, and any other excuse we can think of to tempt him back.

Twig Data in the Cloud

As noted in the previous issue of TWITTER, we have been placing our data in 'cloud' storage. This will mean all the data set will be in one place rather than scattered around various people's different computers. At the same time we are arranging things more systematically and documenting what we have. The aims of this are twofold. First is to have the whole data set stored securely in one place (obviously with adequate, secure backups which Google Drive provides). Second is to allow easier access to the data.

We have been organising the data set so that finding what is needed will be simpler. For example, all photographs are being renamed to include relevant information. If you need to look at images of a Magpie Ink Cap you will find them in *Species Records/Photographs/Fungi*. And if you need to examine the mist-netting visit field sheet for 16th April 1995 look no further than *Fieldsheets/MistNetting/Visits* and open the file of scanned fieldsheets for that year.

At the same time we have been documenting what we have and each section in the cloud will have documents to explain the contents. These documents show the substructure of the section and have relevant information. For example the Mistnet section document includes, amongst other things, a full description of the data file format.

Whereas access to the data set will be by request and will be arranged by Amy who is the cloud administrator, we are making a catalogue of the contents freely available on the web site. This will be posted on the web site at the same time as this issue of TWITTER. The document will help publicise our exceptionally long, wide and consistent data set. We hope it will lead to more use being made of the data. Feel free to download this document and pass it on where it could be useful - *Treswell Wood IPM Group Data Set.pdf*

PIT Tagging

The PIT tagging operation has been working since late December. We now have over 5,000 records of the tagged individuals – 9 Marsh Tits, 7 Blue Tits and 1 Great Tit. Of these 366 represent the first visit on any day by an individual and these have been submitted to the BTO database. The project is aimed at understanding more about Marsh Tits. However we tagged other tit species early on, choosing birds which were frequent visitors at the feeding station and therefore very likely to come to the PIT tag reader. They would show us that the system was working. We need not have bothered - only four of these other tits have ever come to a reader. The one Great Tit that was noted in the previous issue of TWITTER and still continues to be visit the southern station. The Marsh Tits, on the other hand, have been excellent with all but one of them recorded at a reader.

We are hoping to find patterns of daily feeding activity, seeing if different individuals behave in the same way. However, so far the only pattern we can see looks like randomness.

We had tested the readers extensively and thought that we had made them squirrel proof. Alas, in May we found a squirrel, presumably one which was not yet full-grown, had managed to put its head through the cage entrance, reach as far as the antenna, and chew it to destruction. A new antenna has been bought, the cage round the feeder is being modified and we hope to have the reader back in operation soon.

The table shows the complete record up to May 15th of registrations at the two feeding stations. The third column gives the total number of registrations for each bird. Note that the reader polls for a tag several times a second and if a bird remains at the feeder for more than a few seconds it will generate several registrations. The fourth column shows on how many separate days the birds have visited a feeding station. The last two columns show the total number of registrations at the feeders in the south and north of the wood separately.

Ring	Species	Registrations	Days with visits	South feeder	North feeder
AJN3566	MARTI	58	7	0	58
AJN3624	MARTI	313	45	2	311
AJN3839	MARTI	1226	13	1226	0
AJN3876	MARTI	2	1	0	2
ANA7378	MARTI	742	51	1	741
ANA7592	MARTI	736	27	736	0
ANE3302	MARTI	0	0	-	-
L327798	MARTI	53	8	0	53
S078947	MARTI	226	53	0	226
ANE3022	BLUTI	0	0	-	-
ANE3181	BLUTI	34	12	0	34
ANE3452	BLUTI	275	51	0	275
AVC1858	BLUTI	0	0	-	-
AXD9984	BLUTI	26	13	0	26
S078669	BLUTI	0	0	-	-
S078963	BLUTI	0	0	-	-
TV35693	GRETI	1498	85	1151	347
Totals		5189	366	3116	2073

Treswell Wood Marsh Tits, we have noted before, once they have finished their juvenile wanderings, usually by the autumn, will remain in their chosen half of the wood. One Marsh Tit, AJN3876, was caught and ringed at the northern feeder in late March. It was then found later the same day visiting the station in the south of the wood where it has appeared several times subsequently. We can only assume it was a bird which had just arrived in the wood (and that, in itself, is unusual for this very sedentary species) and after being caught in a mist net decided the northern part was not suitable and moved to the south where it has remained.

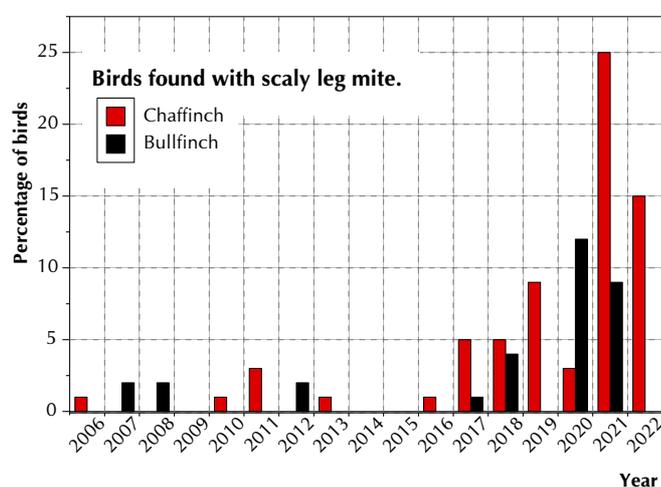
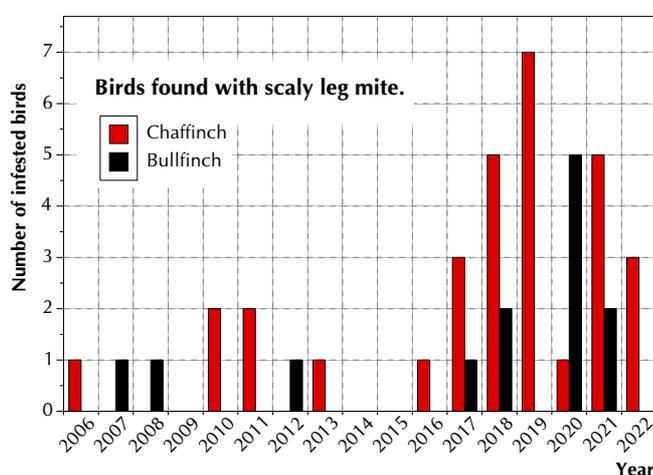
Two Marsh Tits have visited both feeders. One, ANA7378, is a 'northern' bird, never having been encountered before in the south of the wood the other, AJN3624, was ringed as a juvenile in the south of the wood last summer

but thereafter has only been found in the northern part. Almost all of its registrations have been in the north but it has ventured south. We do have a very few ringing records of adult Marsh Tits crossing the north/south divide (an E/W line between compartments F and G) and dearth of tagged bird movements between the two feeders shown by the registrations confirms that it these movements happen but only very rarely.

Scaly Leg Mite

Scaly Leg Mite is now well known not just to bird ringers but also to many who watch garden birds. Severe cases are very obvious, even to the naked eye with the bird some distance away in the garden. It has become widespread and much more common in recent years. We cannot ring birds which are infested. If we catch a ringed bird which has become infested since ringing it is sometimes possible to remove the ring but often the infestation has encased so much of the ring there is nothing that can be done but to leave it. In some extreme cases ringers elsewhere have reported that up to a third of their Chaffinches are infested and unringable.

In Treswell Wood we did not note any cases until 2006 and there followed just a few cases until 2017 when it became more common. The two species affected are Chaffinches and Bullfinches. The first graph shows the numbers we have recorded from 2006 onwards. These numbers themselves do not show the whole picture because the numbers captured varies between years. Chaffinch captures have declined considerably and Bullfinch captures have fluctuated without any overall trend. The lockdowns of the previous two years also reduced the total numbers caught. More telling than the raw numbers is the percentage of birds which have been infested. The highest proportion was that of Chaffinches in 2021 – 25% is very near the high values we have heard of in the worst infestations elsewhere.



Long-term Trends – Feelings v Facts

Sometimes we notice what seems to be rather more, or fewer, than normal captures of some species. When we examine the data, sometimes these impressions result from a few birds of that species caught on one visit. It is always good to look back at the data rather than rely on these impressions. This spring we felt that Song Thrushes and Wrens were more commonly caught than usual. In the Noteworthy Captures there are several Wrens mentioned because their captures were particularly noteworthy. However there have been only 'ordinary' captures of Song Thrushes and these are not mentioned there. (We should say that these 'ordinary' captures are the core of the data. John McMeeking used to say *Record what is there, not what is rare.*)

The most reliable measure of species abundance from the mist net data set is to look at the standard site captures. These do not depend on anything but the number of birds present (and a good measure of chance, of course). Other captures depend on the catch effort, location of nets, numbers of nets used and various other things.

1978 to 1999	2000 onwards	2022
Blue Tit	Great Tit	Blackbird
Blackbird	Blackbird	Blue Tit
Dunnock	Blue Tit	Robin
Robin	Robin	Wren
Great Tit	Wren	Great Tit
Long-tailed Tit	Long-tailed Tit	Dunnock
Wren	Dunnock	Chiffchaff
Goldcrest	Treecreeper	Bullfinch
Treecreeper	Blackcap	Song Thrush
Bullfinch	Goldcrest	Blackcap
Song Thrush	Chiffchaff	Goldcrest
Chaffinch	Chaffinch	Treecreeper
Willow Tit	Bullfinch	Marsh Tit
Blackcap	Marsh Tit	Long-tailed Tit
Willow Warbler	Song Thrush	Nuthatch
Coal Tit	Coal Tit	Chaffinch
Chiffchaff	Willow Tit	Coal Tit
Marsh Tit	Yellowhammer	G.S. Woodpecker
Tree Sparrow	Nuthatch	Sparrowhawk

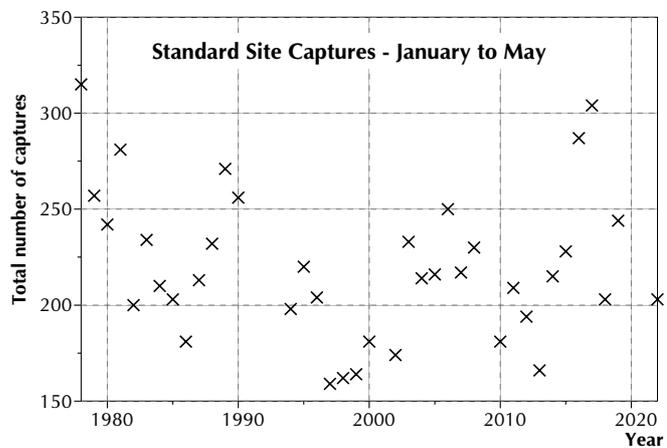
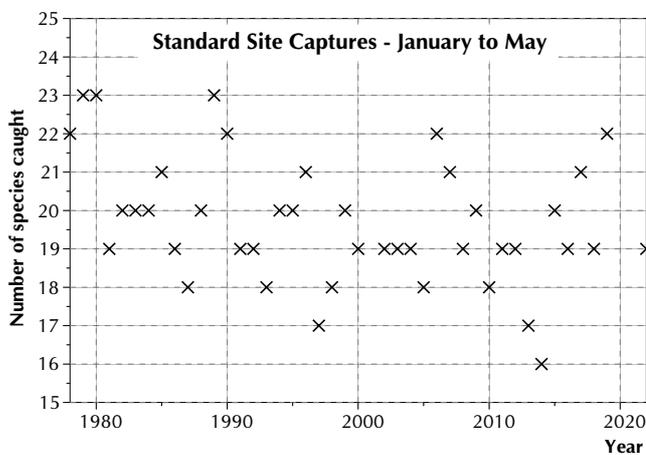
We know that some species have declined or vanished from the wood – e.g. Willow Warbler and Willow Tit. Others have colonised the wood or increased – e.g. Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker. When we look back to the ‘good old days’ we ‘know’ that present day captures are smaller and less diverse. But what are the facts?

The table lists the top 19 species caught in standard sites from January to mid-May in the pre-millennium years, the more recent years (excluding the disrupted years of 2001 – Foot & Mouth, 2020 and 2022 – Covid) and this year. Why 19 species? Simply because we caught 19 species in this year’s standard site operation. Yes, Wren has been creeping up, Song Thrush is back from the previous low. Great Spotted Woodpecker and Sparrowhawk appear for the first time. Other impressions too appear well founded – the decline and slight recovery of Dunnock, the rise and fall of Great Tit and the spectacular climb of Chiffchaff.

The table, though, is only part of the picture. Naturally we do not expect to catch as many different species in one year as we do in a run of several years. How does 2022 compare with all other years? Surprisingly there is very little variation in the number of species caught - as the first graph illustrates.

But we do know that catches are declining, don’t we? The facts are not as simple as that. For the first two intervals of the year the catches did decline in the very early years to a low point around the turn of the millennium. Since then the trend has been upwards. Note that these numbers represent only wintering birds and birds in the earlier part of the breeding season.

At a later date we should look at what happens in the rest of the year. Lower numbers later in the year would indicate reduced breeding success in spite of the numbers of adults increasing. It would also be interesting to examine any relationship between the arrival dates and the numbers of adults caught, or the numbers of breeding territories found. Are earlier arrivals associated with higher numbers?



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More on Mites on Robins

As some of you will know TWIG has once again provided the data and support for a paper in the Journal of Zoology entitled *A Long-term study of temporal variation in wing feather mite infestations on robins in Nottinghamshire, U.K.* (R. Peet, A. Kirk & J.M. Behnke)

The study took into consideration birds captured in the period 1998 to 2014 inclusive. We tested the hypothesis that the abundance of wing feather mites on Robins changed during the breeding season regardless of sex and also changed between mature birds and juvenile. The assessment of the age and sex of the birds was established, where possible, by the ringers, and then an assessment made of the number of mites, and on which flight feathers they were found.

As expected, the results bore out previous studies where the abundance of feather mites decreased in May during the breeding season. It is reasonable to conclude that this is by transference from the parent birds to the young which are now living in close proximity. It is still not thought that the abundance of mites has any detrimental effect on the health of the bird. It may even be a benefit to the birds if the mites are acting as detritivores, cleaning debris which accumulates in the oily feathers.

Studies such as these may answer some questions but usually pose even more. For example, a future further study could include a more accurate logging of ambient air temperature. This would address the question of whether mites move outwards on the wing in warmer conditions and inwards, nearer the bird’s warm body in cooler conditions. Even with our existing data we could examine whether the spread across the wing varied with the time of year, perhaps being nearer to the body in colder months.

It would also be good to attempt to collect data from both parents and their brood to ascertain if heavily burdened

parents result in heavily burdened young through transference. However, this would be extremely difficult to manage in meaningful numbers for analysis because of the secretive nesting behaviour of Robins.

Our feather mite data are largely for Robins but other species carry these mites too. We do not know if the annual pattern of occurrence is the same in other species. The matter of transference between adult and nestlings could be explored, more easily than with Robins, in nestbox using species where we know the identity of many of the nesting females and where it would be possible to trap the males.

Andy Kirk

Noteworthy Encounters

Species **Age/sex** **Ring** **Date** **Grid**
Great Spotted Woodpecker **4M** **LK39016** **24/4/2022** **E06**

Great Spotted Woodpeckers are usually very sedentary. They are most often caught at a feeding stations rather than in mist nets elsewhere. This is probably because they spend most of their time high in the trees, well above mist-net height. To take advantage of the feeders they have to descend to the level of mist nets. Because of their sedentary behaviour and our consistent mist netting operation it is rare for there to be as much as a year between two successive captures. This bird is a non-conformist. It was ringed just over three years ago in the north of the wood and had not been captured since then until now – and to add to this unusual behaviour it was caught in the south of the wood about 750 metres distant from the previous capture.

Jay **6F** **DT21913** **10/4/2022** **Q03**

Jays are, like Green Woodpeckers, very annoying birds - almost always heard, often very close, but very infrequently caught. Two caught in one day when we have an average of under three birds per year seems exceptional. However, looking at the number of times we have caught more than one on a single day, and doing a little statistical work, it is clear that Jay captures are clustered (in the strict statistical sense) rather than being random. We have had some times where the reason for the cluster of captures was clear. For example in the late autumn of 1978 there was an influx from Scandinavia and in the drought of 1976 several were caught when coming to drink at the pond. In other cases the reason for clustering is not clear – it is certainly not pairs being caught together as we have never caught two Jays together at the same time on one day. Neither does it seem to be related to the woodland population - the CBC territory numbers are fairly stable.

Captures on one day	Number of days
0	2508
1	107
2	12
3	1

Marsh Tit **6** **L327798** **10/4/2022** **Q03**

It is always rewarding to catch birds we ringed as nestlings, more so when they are of some age and even better if we can fit a PIT tag. This excellent bird was ringed as a nestling in 2013 in a box in the south of the wood. As happens frequently, the juvenile dispersal is an N-S or S-N move between one half of the wood and the other. True to form all subsequent captures have been in the north of the wood. Curiously we did not catch it at all for four years from November 2015 to November 2019. Since this capture we have records of visits at the PIT tag reading station up to May 6th making it almost nine years since she was ringed. The national age record is just over 11 years. With a PIT tag now fitted, if it survives long enough we have a good chance of setting a new national record.

Blue Tit **6F** **ANA7135** **3/5/2022** **M01** **On nest**

This is the oldest, so far, nesting Blue Tit we have captured this year. This is the fourth time it has been found nesting in boxes. In 2018 she nested in a box under 50 metres distant from her nestbox in 2019. She used that box again in 2020 and this year. We did not find her in 2021 but the same box was used for nesting so it seems most likely that it was her again. In 2018, 2019 and 2020 she fledged 7, 5 and 3 young respectively but so far none have been recaptured.

Blue Tit **6F** **ANE3124** **12/5/2022** **F09** **On nest**

Several of the Blue Tits we have found nesting have histories of nesting in previous years, usually in the same or a nearby box. This bird is one such having been found nesting in the same box in 2020, 2021 and this year. It was also found once roosting in an adjacent box during the winter. That is one extreme of between-year lack of movement. Contrast this with the non-conformist Blue Tit AXD9845 which over the same three years has nested in the south of the wood (2020), the far north (2021) and the centre (2022). Only three unringed Blue Tits have been found so far on nests. These were all in the south of the wood. We wondered at first whether this was because newly arrived birds which nested in the north were very likely to have been caught at the feeding station so would already be wearing a ring by the time they nested. A look at the ringing histories of the northern nesters show this not to be the case at all. Perhaps the unringed southern birds result from chance alone.

Blue Tit **5** **S831349** **13/3/2022** **Q03**

February and March are the months where there is very much movement of Blue and Great Tits with birds seeking a breeding territory. This brings many new birds to the wood. Some of these may remain and others merely pass through not having secured a breeding territory in the wood. Most of the incomers are unringed but, from time to time, they already wear a ring. To catch two ringed incomers on one day is exceptional, even at this time of year. This bird remained at least for a week. The second has not been seen again. This one was ringed by Peter Harrison at Sturton-le-Steeple (about 6km northwards) in December 2021. The other, ATX5042, was ringed by Peter Cobb at Darlton, also in December (about 6km southwards). Both birds are, as one might expect, in their first breeding season.

Chiffchaff **4** **JTE898** **13/3/2022** **P01**

This was the first Chiffchaff of the year – just one day later than our earliest record of 1995. We also heard the first singing bird on the same day and that is only four days later than our earliest ever record of a singing bird in 2008. What a difference from last year when the first Chiffchaff was only the 92nd earliest.

Blackcap **4M** **ANA7808** **10/4/2022** **N-1**

The first retrapped Blackcap of the year, being caught just an hour after the first, unringed, Blackcap of the year. Normally we would expect retraps to be caught in almost exactly the same place year after year. This one has moved all of 250 metres from the first capture in 2019. We had not seen him again in the two intervening years. We suspect the missing years are likely to be a result of covid-related disruptions to our system rather than the bird not having returned to the wood.

Wren **6** **AXD466** **15/5/2022** **D08**

This has been a good spring for Wren captures and brought with it some noteworthy individuals. This bird is one of four nestling-ringed birds caught this year (three from the 2020 cohort and one from 2021). This bird is one ringed in 2020.

In addition we have retrapped two of the three Wrens ringed as roosting birds in January. Of the 30 unringed Wrens we have ever ringed while roosting, only 10 (including these two) have a subsequent recapture history. Both of these two were retrapped, as you would expect, very near their roosting site.

Further interest was added by three recaptured Wrens on 17th April. All had been ringed in full juvenile plumage on 15th August 2021 and all retrapped in the same run of nets as when they had been ringed. The three seem to be unaware of the concept of post natal dispersal.

Nuthatch **4M** **TT49638** **24/4/2022** **E02**

We routinely measure the tarsus on this species. We began this in response to a data request for a student project several years ago but have continued doing so. It is important for ringers to be able to make such measurements for the cases when they are critical to identification or for various studies. Some measures are difficult to do and really need practice. Unlike wing length, which can vary with age, wear and moult, the tarsus is a bone which does not vary once it is full grown. All the tarsus measurements should be the same. When a bird is captured many times we have opportunity to see how consistent we are with this tricky measurement. We have not done badly. We have made 13 measurements on this bird, all to the nearest half millimetre. It looks as if the true length is a little under 23.5 The worst measurement is only 1.5mm above this. Pretty good but we do need to keep practising.

Blackbird **6M** **LE35273** **15/5/2022** **D09**

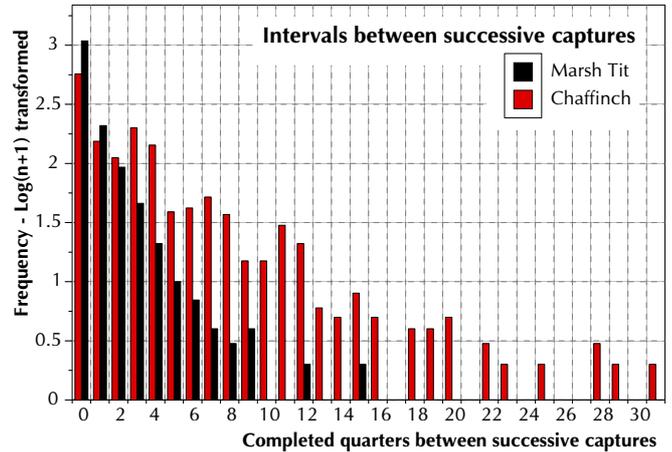
Wrens, Robins, Dunnocks and Blackcaps often demonstrate very sedentary behaviours with recaptures very close to previous encounter places. Blackbirds are normally not quite so sedentary. They may return to breed in the same place having spent the winter in some other chosen place. This bird was ringed in May 2016 and retrapped the following mid-winter. It has been retrapped in May in the last two years as a breeding adult. Its four captures including those in both mid-winter and breeding season, have all been within a circle of radius of 50 metres. Perhaps rather less of a wanderer than most.

Chaffinch **6M** **Z782621** **17/4/2022** **Q03**

We have often remarked on the way Chaffinches can be ringed and then not seen again until some years later. We do not know whether they remain in the wood and evade capture or else travel elsewhere and then return. This one has certainly done the latter. It was ringed in December 2016 as a first winter bird. Peter Cobb then trapped it in Darlton (6km southwards) in January 2017. It came back to the wood – for how long we do not know – five years after its last capture anywhere.

Chaffinches seem to be the main species which exhibit these long gaps between captures. The chart shows just how long they can be. Each data point in the chart represents the time between one capture and the next of an

individual. A bird captured just once will not contribute to the data where as a bird captured, say, five times will give a total of four points. In order to keep the time axis manageable, the times are measured in completed quarters. The frequencies have been $\log(n+1)$ transformed in order to make the important differences in the longer intervals clearer. Compare the Chaffinch pattern (red) with the corresponding pattern for Marsh Tit (black). Marsh Tits are highly sedentary but, perhaps surprisingly for a bird only half the weight of a Chaffinch, their life spans are similar – the oldest of each species recorded in the wood being around 9 years. Because of the transformed axis, values around three represent around 1,000 captures. At the other end of the scale the shortest bars represent one and two captures. No Marsh Tit has ever given a gap as much as 16 quarters (i.e. four years); L327798 (noted above) has just contributed the rightmost Marsh Tit bar. On the other hand, several Chaffinches have been found after intervals of up to nearly eight years with no intermediate encounters.



Goldfinch

6M AJN3837 20/3/2022 Q03

We now often hear or see Goldfinches in the wood but generally they stay high in the tree canopy far, far about mist net height. Goldfinch captures have been very variable through the years with very few in the first years of the Treswell Wood operation. In the drought of 1976 we caught a total of only seven coming to drink at the pond. Between 1986 and 2001 we caught none at all. Small numbers appeared for the next decade with larger numbers in the next few years. Captures dwindled again with only two and one in the two pandemic years. So far we have caught eight this year. All have been at the feeding station and we wonder whether the sunflower hearts provided for Marsh Tits at the PIT tag reading station have attracted them.

10-Week Summary: 2022 Interval 2, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Coal Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	1	.	2	1	.	4
Blue Tit	.	2	.	2	5	.	9
Great Tit	1	1	.	4	5	.	11
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Chiffchaff	8	2	.	1	.	.	11
Blackcap	6	.	.	2	.	.	8
Goldcrest	2	.	.	1	1	.	4
Wren	1	9	.	2	5	.	17
Nuthatch	1	.	.	2	.	.	3
Treecreeper	.	.	.	4	.	.	4
Blackbird	4	1	.	7	.	.	12
Song Thrush	.	5	.	3	.	.	8
Robin	2	6	.	1	.	.	9
Dunnock	2	4	.	1	2	.	9
Chaffinch	1	1
Bullfinch	2	.	.	3	1	.	6
Totals	30	31	.	39	20	.	120

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods - Summary table

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Maximum	128	198	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	89	66	59	364
Mean	92	115	159	130	126	611