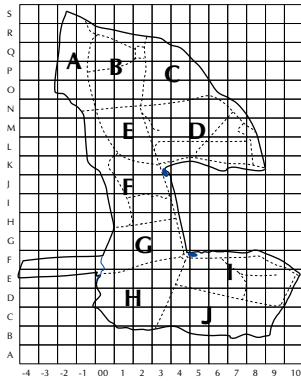


TWITTER

2008/3

Number 68



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

August 2008 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

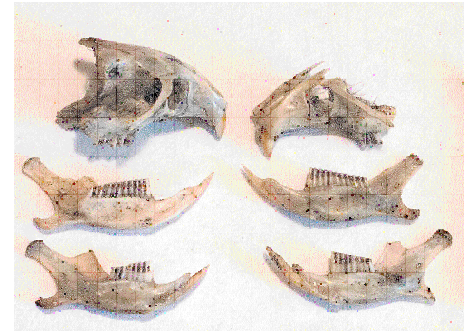
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Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringing John McMeeking



The breeding season

What a disaster - just look at the table. Note the low numbers of nests, eggs and birds. Again, we have suffered the double problems of weather and weasel predation. Are there any crumbs of comfort? Possibly, that we are not alone in this. Weasel predation, particularly in the east of England, has been very high. This seems to be linked to a shortage of small rodents. (Unfortunately, hard data on rodent abundance are not so readily available as are such data for birds. It would be very useful if we were able to mount some long-term rodent abundance recording operation within the wood.) In general Tawny Owls and Barn Owls have not fared well this year because of this shortage. This has caused the predators to look elsewhere for food. We know how bad predation has been on our nestbox birds - what it must have been for open-nesting species, where nests are even more exposed, we dread to think.

Events in Nestboxes - Treswell Wood, 2008

Species	Nests		Eggs laid	Adults caught on nests	Birds		% Success rate	
	Recorded	Successful			Nestlings fledged	Nestlings recaptured (to Sept. 1)	Nests	Eggs
Stock Dove*	5	1	3	.	1	.	33	33
Tawny Owl	2	1	4	.	1	.	50	25
Wren	10	3	52	11	.	.	30	21
<i>Robin</i>	1	1	5	.	5	1	100	100
Marsh Tit	2	0	13	2	.	.	0	0
Coal Tit	6	3	56	4	24	.	50	43
Blue Tit	34	5	207	15	31	1	15	15
Great Tit	48	15	249	.	66	15	31	27
Totals (2008)	108	29	589	22	139	17	27	24
Totals (2007)	129	64	922	52	313	35	50	34
Totals (2006)	175	37	885	31	225	33	21	25
Totals (2005)	153	49	852	47	245	22	32	29
Totals (2004)	141	94	917	41	538	41	67	59
Totals (2003)	133	41	769	29	213	17	31	28

Notes: Nests of species in italics were open nests found incidentally during the nestbox rounds. The numbers of nests recorded, for all species, exclude nests which were abandoned before any eggs were laid. Numbers of eggs laid is a minimum figure; some eggs were, almost certainly, taken by predators before being counted. * Some Stock Dove nests still active.

The weather has also been a major problem with many broods being depleted in numbers as nestlings died through cold or lack of food. In gardens locally, the situation has been similar with many broods failing to produce even a single fledgeling. (In general, predation in gardens will be lower than in woodland but food supply for tits is worse.)

Examination of our capture totals for the year so far is interesting. In our first two intervals we enjoyed captures well above average, indeed nearer to the maximum figure than to the average. In this third interval our capture numbers are down to well below average. Within these figures, number of juveniles of almost all species are very low. Robin is the only exception to this. They seem to be doing very well. (Their nests are always very well hidden and their multiple-brooded strategy allows them more chances to succeed than the single, large-brooded species

such as the tits.) What is the outlook? Some individuals have succeeded (including, pleasingly, some Marsh and Willow Tits in the wood but not in boxes). If the weather over the next year is favourable, the small number of juveniles in circulation can allow each individual to survive more easily through lack of intra-specific competition for resources. There are two contrasting views about the quality of these young birds - and the quality will also affect their survival prospects. The first view is that these juveniles are of very hardy stock - they have already proved their fitness by surviving in the worst of conditions. They will provide a very dynamic breeding population. The opposing view is that these birds will not be very fit at all. Their start in life has been very poor and they are weakened, impoverished individuals with little chance in life. Which viewpoint is the truth? Probably both.

BTO Constant Effort Sites Scheme, Treswell Wood, 2008

The CES recording season, ending on August 31st, shows much the same dismal picture as did the nestbox work. The total number of adults is, as expected, a little up on the previous year with the very small extra number of juveniles being primarily a result of what looks like an excellent breeding season for our multiple-brooded Robins. Overall, however, the productivity is a little (but not significantly) down on 2007 and very much down on the 73% figure achieved in 2006.

Species	2007			2008			Change 2007 - 2008		
	Ad	Juv	Prod%	Ad	Juv	Prod%	Ad	Juv	Prod%
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	0	X	1	0	0	+	-	X
Wren	20	17	85	22	17	77	+	=	-
Dunnock	1	2	200	6	3	50	+	+	-
Robin	13	22	169	18	35	194	+	+	+
Blackbird	23	9	39	28	4	14	+	-	-
Song Thrush	12	1	8	5	0	0	-	-	-
Mistle Thrush	0	0	X	2	0	0	+	=	X
Lesser Whitethroat	0	0	X	1	0	0	+	=	X
Blackcap	26	7	27	23	6	26	-	-	-
Chiffchaff	13	1	8	11	3	27	-	+	+
Willow Warbler	0	0	X	1	0	0	+	=	X
Spotted Flycatcher	1	0	0	1	0	0	=	=	=
Long-tailed Tit	6	3	50	7	2	29	+	-	-
Marsh Tit	1	4	400	3	1	33	+	-	-
Willow Tit	1	0	0	0	1	X	+	-	X
Coal Tit	1	1	100	1	1	100	=	=	=
Blue Tit	12	5	42	3	0	0	-	-	-
Great Tit	8	3	38	9	1	11	+	-	-
Nuthatch	1	2	200	2	0	0	+	-	-
Treecreeper	6	0	0	5	9	180	-	+	+
Chaffinch	6	3	50	14	1	7	+	-	-
Bullfinch	10	3	30	12	1	8	+	-	-
Totals	161	83	52	175	85	49	+	+	-

Key Ad - adults caught Juv - juveniles caught

Prod% - productivity (Juv/Ad) - down, + up, = no change, X not calculable

Treswell Wood on the BBC

At some point in the near future, it is likely that our ringers will feature in a short item on the BBC *East Midlands Today* programme. This will then be available on the Radio Nottingham web-site and on the NWT site (www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/nottinghamshire) with a gallery of Jo Surgey's pictures of Treswell Wood. They visited us on 27th July and took a series of video recordings of the day's operations.

Archiving the Treswell Wood data set

Over the thirty five years since John started ringing in the wood, we have built up a large collection of information on paper. The ringing field sheets make up the bulk of this and the A4 ring files in which they live occupy nearly two metres of shelf space. Some months ago, the county archivist suggested that we might consider lodging these original field sheets in the county archives. Their interest, as far as the county archives are concerned, is mainly in

the human side of the operation. From our point of view, their value lies mainly in the data they hold. We were unwilling to lodge them with the archives for safe keeping until we had been able to scan the originals in order to be able to have access to the original material on a computer screen. In Twitter 65 we mentioned the problem of scanning so many sheets - it seemed to be a task that required commercial facilities. However, Steve produced a most effective solution. He has a combined printer/scanner/fax/photocopier and realised that that the multiple-sheet feeder which can create multiple-page faxes might also be used for scanning multi-paged documents. With a little experimentation in dot-resolution and output formats, the problem has been solved. The quality of the scanned images is far better than what was possible commercially just a few years ago. Steve has completed the task of scanning these documents - even with the multiple-sheet feed not a task which can be done instantly. Now that is done, the way is clear to deposit the paperwork with the archives - this should be done early in September. Thanks, again, to Steve for his tireless, painstaking work.

But what of the data held within these papers? The table below shows the state of computerisation. Our major gap is in the computerisation of the background notes to mist-netting visits. This gives you a great opportunity to fill your long winter evenings productively. Display the scanned image on the computer screen and enter the text into a word-processor - no need any longer to have the bulky source documents. (Why not use the modern optical character recognition software for doing this automatically now that everything has been scanned? Sadly, one major fault of John McMeeking's master plan for the operation was that he did not decree that we must all, always, record everything in Times New Roman writing of 12 point size. So easy to be wise in retrospect.) Volunteers welcome.

Information	State of computerisation
Ringling data	All computerised (including birds ringed in nestboxes and sight records)
Background notes	12 years' information from mist net visits, mainly 1986 - 1994 still to be entered. Data from other sources (e.g. nestbox visits) 1979 - 1994 to be entered.
Scanning field sheets	All field sheets scanned. Data in 'black books' (1972 - 1975) still to be scanned.
CBC maps	All digitised except 1995 and 1996 (maps apparently mis-filed and not yet recovered).
Photographs	Many older photographs scanned and digital images stored. No systematic method of cataloguing or organising yet developed.

In addition to these operations, Mike Archer is investigating entering our combined bird observation and ringing data into the BTO BirdTrack system. Chris Holliland has made some progress towards extraction of our 'other species' records for compilation into a systematic format.

Analysis of Treswell Wood data

We have been fortunate, again, to be able to help students from Nottingham University in their biological project work. The Treswell Wood data set is very large, much of it systematically computerised and all of it amenable to all sorts of analyses. It is always useful when other people are able to make use of the data in their work and, at the same time, add to the value of our joint efforts. We have received three dissertations so far this summer.

Lucy de Wesselow aimed to discover more about the mite loadings on Robins. From past work we know there is a clear annual pattern of abundance (Twitter 47). We also know from Nottingham University field work in Portugal, in which we have been involved, that mite loads differ between two very different habitats (although it is possible that the differences between these two habitats results from differences in populations rather than habitats). Lucy examined mite loadings in sub-habitats within Treswell Wood (the coppicing cycle provides an excellent semi-natural laboratory of differing habitats). She found no real difference between these habitats nor any real differences between the sexes or ages. It often seems disappointing when examination of data reveals nothing. However, very little is known about what drives mite infestation. Indeed it is not even clear if mites are beneficial or harmful to the birds. Lucy has helped eliminate some possible driving forces and that does increase our understanding.

We have recorded moult on birds since the beginning of the Treswell Wood operation and now have a very long computerised data set. We already knew that some things have changed in this time. For instance, we have found that higher proportions of juveniles are moulting their tail feathers now than 25 years ago. We had not looked systematically at any other aspects of moult. Katy Holvey has now done this, particularly in order to see whether the timing of moult has changed. There was not sufficiently strong evidence to link changes in timing of moult to long-term changes in climate. However, Katy did find significant relationships between various weather variables and the timing of the onset of moult. In particular high temperature and low precipitation levels in June and July of the previous year were associated with earlier moult, as were high temperatures and low precipitation levels in July of the same year. The fact that weather in the previous year may affect timing in the subsequent year is interesting.

The quality of feathers depends on conditions at the time when they were regrown and this could explain why timing of the following moult - when these feathers are shed - might be related to weather at the time when they were grown.

Last, but definitely not least, Jo Surgey, has completed the Master's dissertation for her Biological Photography course. Her study is entitled *The Ecology and Conservation of an Ancient Woodland*. It is an account, in words and pictures, of Treswell Wood. It is the most comprehensive single account of the wood and the place of our studies within it that we have produced. It also has some rather fine photographs - the front page photograph showing the remains of some of this year's produce of a Tawny Owl nest is one from Jo's work. Jo will be happy to supply you with a copy of her dissertation on CD (Please send her £2 to cover the cost of the CD and postage).

These works have been added to the Treswell Wood data set (which no longer fits on a single CD but requires the additional capacity available on a DVD.)

We have also, rather belatedly, added another analysis to the collection. In the mid-1990s, Neil produced a summary of the annual capture numbers of our most common species and related these to weather and land management practices. Although it was produced on a computer, it was before we had developed a centralised system of collecting such material. It was only very recently that we realised his work - which is still the only comprehensive account of the what the ringing totals tell us - was not in the collection. That has now been put right. Neil is very conscious that the publication is somewhat out-of-date and that there is opportunity for an enhanced work with another 15 years' data, not to mention CBC and nest records too. Neil's paper is in the collection and is available, on request, by email. He would welcome assistance in bringing this analysis up to date. Volunteers, again, welcome.

CBC Maps

The BTO Dyeline machinery for producing master copies of CBC maps is on its last legs and now very expensive to use (it is 1960s technology, pre-dating modern photocopying). The BTO holds the A2 size 'master tracings' of the blank species maps from which copies were made. Photocopying A2 sheets commercially is not cheap so we have invested in conventional printing of enough blank maps to last several years. With a relatively large print run the cost, per sheet, is much lower than for photocopying. The first stage was to produce a computer image from the master tracing and this image was used to produce the printed copies. The work has been done at a commercial rate by G W Belton in Gainsborough. We are very grateful to this company for providing us with the computerised master image at no extra charge.

This master image is now held in the Treswell Wood data set and can be used to print our own copies of the map at any scale. In addition, I have cut the map into separate sections corresponding to the different CBC survey areas within the wood. If these are of use in the field, please ask for a copy.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Great Spotted Woodpecker	4F	CT84060	27/7/2008	Q02 Feeder

This is our 28th capture of this fine bird and the 6th in which we have been able to record its primary moult in detail. It was one of three of the species recaptured on that day - very pleasing because of the presence of the BBC Nottingham crew. We now have a very comprehensive record of plumages of birds of known age and hope that this will help towards the new BTO non-passerine ageing and sexing guide. Our conclusions seem likely to be that, after the post-juvenile moult is over, most birds of this species cannot be reliably aged as anything more than *full-grown* (age codes 2/4).

Robin	3J	V666754	27/7/2008	M07
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We found only one Robin nest this year and ringed all the young. It is often difficult to be sure of the outcome of a Robin nest. The young fledge very rapidly and leave a nest which can be as clean as one from which the young have been removed by a predator - and open nests are very vulnerable to predation, particularly in a year like this one. This first recapture of any of the brood gives confirmation of success of the nest.

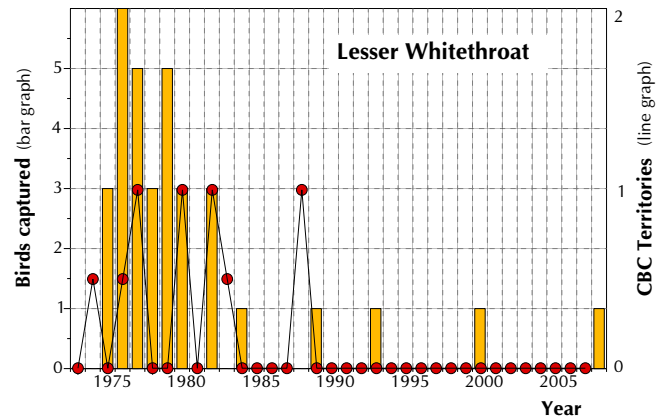
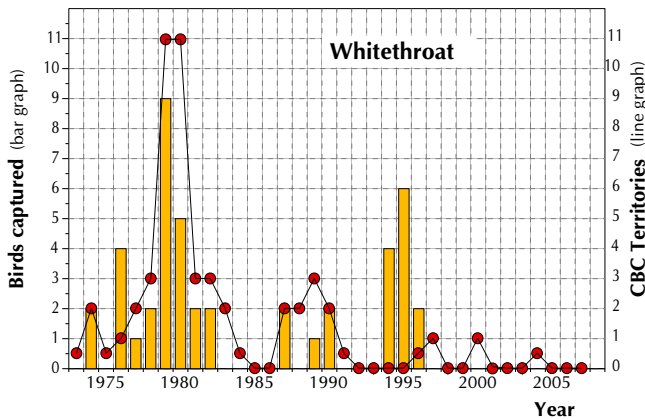
Spotted Flycatcher	4M	V475695	24/6/2008	R-2
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We have no proof of success of breeding of this species but this male, possibly the one seen a few days earlier in the same part of the wood, was in breeding condition when trapped. Our first, and so far only, bird of this species for the year. Numbers in the area are far below what they used to be but, at least, they still have a toehold here.

Lesser Whitethroat	4	V475678	15/6/2008	H04
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This our first Lesser Whitethroat to be captured since the year 2000. Like almost all of the captures of the species, this individual was an adult trapped during the earlier part of the breeding season. Only five of the 32 individuals

trapped have been juveniles, three of these being caught in the drought of 1976, one in 1979 and the other being the bird of 2000. It is quite clear, from both CBC and ringing data, that the species has reduced from an uncommon breeding bird to a very infrequent breeding species. Incidentally, the story is much the same for the Whitethroat but with an interesting twist. Without any additional knowledge it could appear that the Whitethroat responded well to the NWT's acquisition of Treswell Wood and its breeding population increased rapidly to a peak in the late 1970s. However, it is well known that the national population crashed in 1973 because of problems in its wintering grounds. The increase during the first years of the Treswell Wood operation seems more likely to be a partial recovery to its former levels (although we do not know what they were, of course), before the long-term decline. This is slightly different from the national picture where numbers have shown a small, long-term increase although still remaining vastly below the pre-1973 levels.



Marsh Tit **3J** **V475754** **13/7/2008** **D03**

Like the juvenile Willow Tit below, we cannot be sure of the origin of this bird. However, it is most likely that it is a bird reared within the wood - there are no known nearby populations of Marsh Tits and it is unlikely that juveniles will have dispersed any great distance by mid-July. Our two Marsh Tit nests in nestboxes this year both failed - all the young dying during the period of prolonged cold and wet weather. It is good to see that another pair did manage to succeed.

Willow Tit **3J** **V475719** **6/7/2008** **D08**

We know only too well how few tits have fledged from our boxes. It was very pleasing to catch this fairly recently fledged juvenile. We cannot be sure it is a genuine Treswell Wood product but, if not, it is almost certainly fairly local. It has remained in the wood - its last capture to date being on 10th August.

Blue Tit **3J** **V666745** **4/6/2008** **D09**

The first of our very small number of nestling-ringed Blue Tits to be recaptured. Sadly, the total recapture score is still only this one out of the 31 fledged this year.

Great Tit **3J** **TJ49602** **24/6/2008** **Q02 Feeder**

The very first of this year's nestling-ringed birds to be retrapped. It beat three of its siblings (including TJ49601, the first Great Tit nestling to be ringed in the nest this year) to win this honour by all of 40 minutes. We are now building respectable recapture histories for several of these Great Tits, and can trace, in detail, the timing and extent of post-juvenile moult. On 27th July, for instance, we found the first of the cohort to be in moult - although the week before there had been no signs of moult. Further, by this time two more of the juveniles trapped had already initiated the more extensive moult of tail or tertials.

Chaffinch **6M** **R502532** **4/7/2008** **Q02 Feeder**

Chaffinches are very like proverbial London buses - not just in the colour. You wait a long time and see none then, suddenly, a cluster arrives. This bird is the oldest of a number of old friends trapped in early July. It was ringed in March 2003 as a young male and has made a point of being recaptured at least once each year since then.

Chaffinch **4M** **V475190** **1/6/2008** **Q02 Feeder**

Warning: In the field, after assessing the age of a retrapped Chaffinch and before release, it can be worth examining its recapture history in the 'bible'. This particular problematic Chaffinch was ringed in June 2007 and identified as an adult female. On a later capture it was identified as a juvenile but a note made that ageing was difficult - the tail feathers were broad with the central ones having distinct black markings on the tips. In September it was retrapped again and, now in post-juvenile moult, it showed a few red breast feathers. Clearly a juvenile male moulting from brown juvenile plumage to its adult colouration. In April we retrapped it again and it was identified as age 6, the broad, black-tipped tail feathers being the deciding factor. On this latest recapture, it was clearly a problem bird; examination of its capture history in the field was most instructive. This is not the first Chaffinch that we have captured recently with apparently full-adult tail

feathers in its first year. We have also trapped some known adults with rather narrow tail feathers without the black tips. For instance, P400853 which we had ringed in June 2002, was retrapped on 28th June this year with not a trace of black on its central tail feathers.

Controls and recoveries

Species **Age/sex** **Ring** **Date** **Grid**
Great Tit **3J** **TJ49644** **11/6/2008** **Hillcrest Farm**

The first of this years meagre crop of nestling-ringed birds to be found elsewhere - and at a very early date - much before many of its cohort which remain in the wood have been captured. This bird was retrapped again at Hillcrest Farm at the end of July.

Great Tit **3J** **V475759** **30/7/2008** **Hillcrest Farm**

A rapid, but short, movement of a juvenile bird. It was ringed at the feeder, in company with other juvenile Great Tits on 11th July and has not been seen in the wood since ringing.

10 Week Summary 2008 Interval 3, Captures in Standard Sites

Visits 1912 1914 1908 1904 1906 1917 1910

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	2	4	6	3	3	.	18
Dunnock	1	2	3	1	.	.	7
Robin	2	4	24	2	4	3	39
Blackbird	2	3	3	10	3	.	21
Song Thrush	.	1	.	.	1	.	2
Lesser Whitethroat	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	3	1	4	7	2	.	17
Chiffchaff	2	3	1	1	1	.	8
Spotted Flycatcher	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	2	1	.	.	3
Marsh Tit	.	.	1	1	.	.	2
Willow Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Coal Tit	.	.	1	1	.	.	2
Blue Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Great Tit	.	.	.	1	3	.	4
Treecreeper	.	.	6	.	1	.	7
Chaffinch	.	2	1	4	1	.	8
Bullfinch	2	4	.	2	1	.	9
Totals	16	24	53	35	20	3	151

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2004	103	128	126	165	132	654
2005	107	140	150	88	133	618
2006	128	98	185	125	166	702
2007	107	110	138	73	92	520
2008	125	130	151	---	---	(406)

10-year Averages since standard site netting began in 1978

1978 - 1987	90	113	182	140	130	655
1988 - 1997	86	107	170	149	127	637
1998 - 2007	95	100	134	120	125	574

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978

Maximum	128	145	288	253	177	865
Minimum	57	33	94	68	59	364
Mean	90	107	163	136	127	623