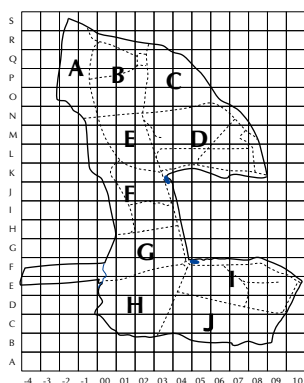


# TWITTER

2010/2

Number 77



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

## May 2010 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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### Project leaders:

**CBC** Pat Quinn-Catling

**Nest Records** Chris du Feu

**Ringling** John Clark & John McMeeking



After the long, cold winter which has been so different from other recent winters, we should not be surprised to find that the natural world is also rather different from usual. Our standard-site capture totals for the last ten weeks are lower than average, although no lower than the average for the last 10 years. First dates - arrival of migrants, first juvenile capture, first egg laying date are generally later than usual but there are exceptions. Stock Doves seem to be earlier than average for example. The winter has also affected other organisms. Some plants were very late to flower. Primroses were not seen in bloom until March 24<sup>th</sup>, the latest first date since 2006 and a far cry from the January 18<sup>th</sup> recorded in 2008. Perhaps the greatest observable change has been in the small mammal population, although changes are only indirectly observable. Small rodent numbers seem to be very low - there has been no wood mouse predation in nestboxes (so far) and our Tawny Owls (like others in the area) seem to be finding difficulty in catching sufficient prey. Weasels, the smallest of our mustelids, are the most susceptible to prolonged cold weather. Everything in life is a compromise and the cost of being small enough to gain access to nesting cavities is that the small body can lose heat fatally fast in cold weather. In spite of the lack of small mammals to prey on, the weasel population seems so depleted that we have, as yet, suffered no attacks from the 'weasels of mass destruction'. Nest failure caused by other animals has been limited to one nest commandeered by a bee and two attacked by Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Happily, attacks by woodpeckers on two more boxes have been unsuccessful thanks to a new defensive tactic we are testing. Some boxes now have a laminated front - a sheet of old tractor inner tube rubber sandwiched between two sheets of wood. The woodpecker hammers through the outer layer with ease but the beak just bounces off the rubber and they abandon the attack, without trying the non-laminated box sides. (It would be very interesting, and probably very amusing, to be able to observe such an attack directly.)

In the hard winter of 1978/79 we saw the complete extinction of the Wren population in the wood followed by its recolonisation from outside. It is likely that other species, including the common tits, survive better in gardens where food supply is good than they do in woodland. We might expect that adult winter survival in the wood is lower and the subsequent spring breeding population has a higher than usual proportion of incoming, often first year, birds. And this has, indeed, happened. Of the 16 Blue Tit females which we know to be nesting, only four are adults. Of the young, first breeding season birds, seven have no previous history in the wood, four were first ringed in the wood in the late winter and one was ringed as a nestling in 2009. Typically we will have about 45% of the breeding females being adults and no more than one or two with no previous captures in the wood.

Of our summer visitors, Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs seem to have arrived in good numbers with several having capture histories in previous years. In addition we have captured one Whitethroat and heard at least two Willow Warblers singing in the second-season coppice in block F. One Spotted Flycatcher has been captured. Summer visitors may have the opportunity to perform well with lower competing resident populations.

## Sexing Great Tits

Ulli Langemann, who studied the Great Tits in the wood a decade ago, continues to study the species in Germany. Happily, we do not seem to be alone in finding some individual Great Tits difficult to sex. She noted:

*I have a comment about sexing Great Tits. From time to time, I am not certain either, whether the bird in the hand is male or female. When the black belly stripe is small, is it small or are the feathers just very ruffled from the mist-net? I do not check wing length, so this is not the confounder for me (we need songs from identified male birds). While the black cap of males is really dark and shiny black all over the head, I find many females having a cap that is not so even. Many females tend to have nearly greyish (or thinner?) feather tips at parts of the back of the black head. Well Oldenburg (Germany) has another subspecies of Great Tits, I just can't remember what I have seen in Treswell Wood or Denmark. Long ago.*

## Analysis of Nuthatch data by Tessa Carrick

Tessa Carrick has been examining Nuthatch data for her MSc Ornithology work in Birmingham. For this she has looked at the national data set and our own data set too. She hopes to publish her results in full elsewhere, below are some points that she has found. The main thrust of the study was that, since Nuthatches are regarded as sedentary species and their range is expanding, there might be some variation in their attributes across their British distribution. They are so sedentary that there have been no movements recorded between Britain and the continent and, indeed, they do not occur as closely overseas as the Isle of Wight. Post natal dispersion is very low - on a par with that of other small residents such as Wren, Treecreeper and Marsh Tit. Because birds move so little, it is likely that there is variation between different sub-populations within Britain. Tessa found that our Nuthatches have a mean wing length about 1 mm shorter than the national mean.

Tessa also looked at the CBC territory maps. She noted that it would be very useful for us to know the identity of the individuals holding these territories. We can sometimes guess which bird might hold a territory but even a capture of a breeding individual may not signify that this individual is the bird holding that territory. If only they would use our nestboxes we might know better. The table below summaries the comparison between Nuthatch CBC and ringing records. The surveys do not give identical results - indeed we have noted, in the past, how often Nuthatches are heard in the wood but not captured. However, generally speaking, the more territories recorded, the more birds are captured during the year. The *Present* column refers to years when Nuthatches were recorded by CBC observers but there were not sufficient observations to determine any breeding territories. The *Individuals captured* column gives the number of adult Nuthatches captured in the breeding season - March to June inclusive.

**CBC territories --->**

<b>Individuals captured</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>None</b>	11	4	7	0	0
<b>1-2</b>	2	1	3	3	1
<b>3-4</b>	2	0	0	1	1
<b>&gt; 4</b>	0	0	0	0	1

Tessa wishes to thank all the surveyors and ringers involved in the wood for gathering the data over many years. (If you wish to see her full report, please email [chris@chrisdufeu.force9.co.uk](mailto:chris@chrisdufeu.force9.co.uk)).

## Funding the Treswell Wood ringing operation

Ringers will realise that equipment, rings and food for the feeding stations all cost money. So far, costs have been met by various group members on an ad hoc basis and from occasional donations, sales of nestboxes etc. We think that the time has come to make the system a little more formal. The fact that Keith Stedman, former finance supremo of Newark and Sherwood District Council, is now one of our group members is not entirely unconnected with this. Keith has 'volunteered' to hold the purse-strings. We think that £20 each for our regular attenders would be a suitable starting point and we will see how things go. Keith will keep a record of how the money is spent and will let us know when the kitty needs replenishment.

## Treecreeper sponsorship for the BTO Atlas Project 2007 - 2011

The Atlas project is in its third breeding season out of four. For the latest national results, look at [www.bto.org/birdatlas](http://www.bto.org/birdatlas). You will recall that we are sponsoring the Treecreeper for which we have promised to raise £2,000. Donations can be made directly to the BTO at [www.justgiving.com/bto\\_atlas](http://www.justgiving.com/bto_atlas). The web site total is not completely up-to-date at the time of writing this, but we still have not reached half way. All contributions (electronically or by cheque to the BTO) will be very welcome. If you send a cheque to the BTO please state it is for the Treecreeper sponsorship and mark it for the attention of Graham Appleton. Many thanks, in advance.

## Noteworthy Captures

<b>Species</b>	<b>Age/sex</b>	<b>Ring</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Grid</b>
<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	<b>7M</b>	<b>DA50897</b>	<b>21/3/2010</b>	<b>M00</b>

The first since February 2009. As usual, it is a male. Either males are more likely to hunt in dense woodland or females, being bigger, are not caught as well in nets, or, possibly, both reasons. If we were to judge the sex balance of the national Sparrowhawk population by our own catches, we would say that 75% were males.

<b>Tawny Owl</b>	<b>6F</b>	<b>GM61012</b>	<b>17/5/2009</b>	<b>J-1 On nest</b>
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An old friend - ringed on the nest in 2004, we have retrapped her in 2006, 2007 and 2009. She was, almost certainly, the bird that nested in that part of the wood in 2005 and 2008 but it is not always possible to catch the

adult at the nest. Her nest boxes have always been in the eastern-central part of the wood. Once a Tawny Owl knows its territory well, it is unlikely to move from it - the cost of having to learn a new patch in which to hunt could be very great indeed. Her life output so far is at least 7 chicks fledged and, in addition, she has just contributed two feathers to a PhD study in Switzerland.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker 4M CT84374 16/5/2010 E07**

This bird has not been seen for two years. The species tends to very sedentary and this one lives in the south of the wood and consequently rarely visits the feeding station in the north where most of our woodpecker captures take place. Our total catch of the species so far this year is six individuals including four recaptured birds and two new ones.

**Wren 6F BYP522 9/5/2010 E04**

Wrens are short-lived and highly sedentary. If we retrap one it is likely to be very near to where we caught it before; near in both time and space. This bird is near in space but it has been three years between ringing and recapturing. With them moving in such a restricted way it is surprising not to have retrapped it before this - it has had plenty of chances to be mist-netted in this patch over the last three years.

**Song Thrush 5F RS46093 18/4/2010 H02**

One of eight individuals this year - all of them new birds. Numbers do seem to be creeping up slowly from their very low point a decade ago. In addition, we have found rather more nests than usual although, sadly, all so far have been predated. The lack of recaptured birds also suggests high winter mortality within the wood - Song Thrushes are known to be vulnerable to cold spring weather. The table below shows a snapshot of our January - May captures at 10-year intervals.

Year	1980		1990		2000		2010	
Status	New	Retrap	New	Retrap	New	Retrap	New	Retrap
Number of birds	36	18	11	3	2	1	8	0

**Spotted Flycatcher 4M X649529 16/5/2010 E10**

Our first of the species for the year - these are now present only in very small numbers. This particular individual had a broken lower mandible - obviously a long-standing injury. Nevertheless, it was clearly still managing to catch sufficient suitable prey to itself alive and well.

**Blackcap 6M V475161 9/5/2010 D03**

This is our oldest Blackcap so far this year - ringed as a first breeding season male in 2007 and retrapped again in 2009. We can add to this veteran, records of V475635 (captured in 2008 & 2009) and V475708 (captured in 2008). Our first Blackcap of the year, X649152, was also a recapture - ringed in 2009.

**Chiffchaff 4 CXN186 4/4/2010 F01**

The first Chiffchaff to be heard in the wood was on March 21<sup>st</sup>. This is the first we captured and also our first summer visitor of the year to be captured - rather later than typical. It was newly arrived and not yet in breeding condition, so sex cannot be determined reliably (but probably a male). Numbers of this species have been a little lower than in recent years but still far higher than the numbers we used to catch in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Whitethroat 4M X649519 9/5/2010 B03**

This is our first Whitethroat since 1996, captured on the very edge of the wood. (Refer to Twitter 68 for details of all Whitethroat captures.) John Bartley wondered whether it could be that the extensive removal of trees on the north and west sides of the wood, thus exposing the hedges has made the latter more attractive habitat for Whitethroats. If he is right (and it would be good if he was) we should have some prospect of catching more of these through the season. Since that capture, a Whitethroat has been heard in the recently coppiced area west of the main crossroads.

**Blue Tit 6F V666806 5/5/2010 M-1 On nest**

It is always interesting to see which birds are nesting where, particularly when the bird is one of our own nestlings and where she has a previous nesting history. This is one of our 2008 nestling cohort, reared in a box in H01. Last year she nested in M01 - a dispersal movement of about 300 metres - and this year she is nesting nearby in M-1.

**Great Tit 6F TC61453 14/4/2010 Q02 Feeder**

One of a pleasing trio of birds trapped on the same day. This one had been ringed in 2007 as a nestling. Also trapped were TJ49643 (nestling of 2008) and TJ49728 (nestling of 2009).

**Marsh Tit                      4F                      X649130                      2/5/2010                      O-1 On nest**

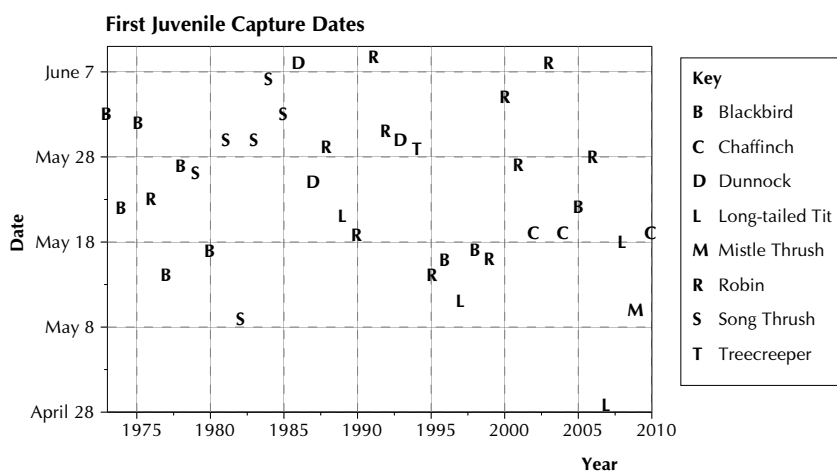
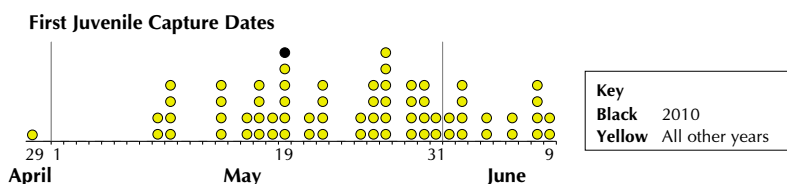
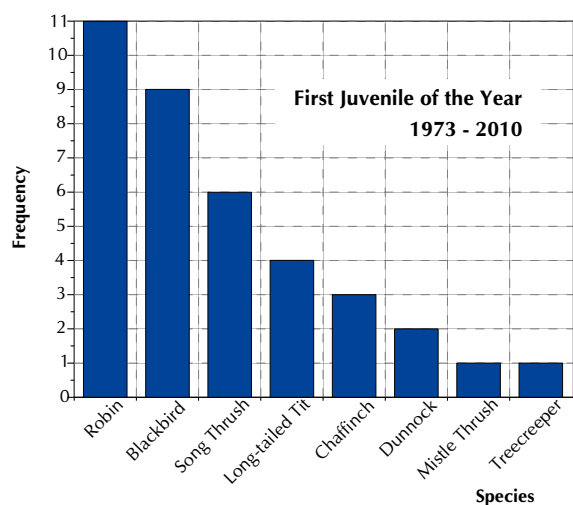
We have trapped this bird several times since ringing her as a fairly newly-fledged juvenile last summer. We considered she was a product of the wood, although not reared in one of our boxes. She is now mother to a brood of 8 which fledged during the last week of May. In addition we have enjoyed two other successful Marsh Tit nests in boxes.

**Chaffinch                      6M                      P400321                      5/5/2010                      Q02 Feeder**

We have trapped a handful of pleasingly old Chaffinches recently - R502532, ringed in 2003, R502940, ringed in 2003 and R353122, ringed in 2005 - all of which would normally be worthy of a note in Twitter. They are all eclipsed by this bird's capture. P400321 was ringed in November 2000 and was last seen by us in 2007. It is 9 years 5 months since it was ringed. This makes it our oldest recapture of any passerine within the wood. It still has a way to go to break the British record of 11 years 7 months and even longer for the world record of 14 years 0 months held by a bird in the Netherlands. Our only bird which has had a longer recapture history is a Tawny Owl. And how did this bird appear? Avian Zimmer frame? Mobility air-scooter? Far from it - its plumage was very bright and in good condition. If only we humans could moult and regrow our hair each year, we might appear young forever too.

**Chaffinch                      3J                      X649533                      19/5/2010                      Q02 feeder**

In complete contrast to the aged P400321, is this bird. It is the first juvenile to be trapped this year. Chaffinches are not particularly early nesters so it is not expected that the prize for the first juvenile capture of the year goes to this species. The figures below illustrate the earliest juvenile dates over the years. The scatter diagram does have a weak relationship of advancing date with time but it is not a significant connection (perhaps surprisingly). In spite of the long winter and cold spring, this first juvenile date of the year is a little earlier than the long-term average.



## Controls and Recoveries

Most of the recorded movements have been between Hillcrest Farm and the wood. These are summarised briefly below the other controls and recoveries.

Species	Age/Sex	Ring	Date	Place
<b>Blackbird</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>CT95946</b>	<b>26/5/2010</b>	<b>Q-1 Ring in Tawny Owl nest</b>

A victim of an owl, and one with a very short life. It was ringed in the nest on April 27<sup>th</sup> - the ring recovered one day short of a month after ringing. It is not clear if the owl took the bird from the nest before fledging. If it had done that we might expect to have found rings from the rest of the brood in the nest - as we did with a similar nest in 2007. There was just the one ring so it seems as if the bird was taken after fledging.

<b>Coal Tit</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>V666830</b>	<b>14/4/2010</b>	<b>Sturton-le-Steeple</b>
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Ringed on 14/5/2009 as a nestling and not seen in the wood since then; recaptured by Peter Harrison in Sturton.

<b>Blue Tit</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>X649425</b>	<b>14/3/2010</b>	<b>Rampton</b>
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This is a rapid movement by the bird at time of great flux in the tit populations. It was ringed a week before in Treswell Wood.

**Jay 2 DA51891 26/5/2010 Q-1 Ring in Tawny Owl nest**

Although we have seen Jay remains in Tawny Owl nests before, this is the first time we have recovered a Jay ring from a nest. This bird was ringed and retrapped in 2008 in the centre of the wood and has not been seen by us since. The owl box was cleaned, as usual, after the 2009 nest so this Jay is a recent victim of the owl.

**Movements from Hillcrest Farm to Treswell Wood**

Species	Age/Sex	Ring	Date (Hillcrest)	Date (Treswell)
Blue Tit	5F	V666887	9/12/2009	4/4/2010
Blue Tit	5F	X497695	19/1/2010	12/5/2010 D07 on nest
Great Tit	5F	X497614	12/8/2009	4/4/2010
Great Tit	5M	X497702	26/1/2010	1/3/2010
Goldfinch	4M	X497682	09/12/2009	17/3/2010

Strictly speaking a Treswell Wood bird, fledged from a nestbox in N06 in 2009 before heading to Hillcrest Farm. Now back with us again.

**Blue Tit 5F X497695 19/1/2010 12/5/2010 D07 on nest**

One of the incoming young birds to be found nesting in the wood. At least with this one we do know something of its previous life.

**Great Tit 5F X497614 12/8/2009 4/4/2010**

**Great Tit 5M X497702 26/1/2010 1/3/2010**

**Goldfinch 4M X497682 09/12/2009 17/3/2010**

Quite a change from the usual Blue and Great Tits. This bird has been retrapped twice more in the wood, both times at the feeder - once in April and once in May.

**10 Week Summary 2010 Interval 2, Captures in Standard Sites**

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult			Adult			
Sparrowhawk	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Wren	.	6	.	2	3	.	11
Dunnock	.	.	.	2	1	.	3
Robin	.	3	.	2	2	.	7
Blackbird	3	3	.	5	1	.	12
Song Thrush	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Whitethroat	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	3	6	.	3	.	.	12
Chiffchaff	1	1	.	1	.	.	3
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	5	.	.	5
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Blue Tit	1	3	.	1	6	.	11
Great Tit	.	2	.	4	11	.	17
Treecreeper	.	1	.	1	4	.	6
Chaffinch	1	2	.	5	.	.	8
Goldfinch	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>100</b>

Note that some birds mentioned in the interesting recaptures section do not feature in this table. This is because it gives only numbers of birds captured in the standard effort nets. These capture numbers can be used to compare bird abundance from one time to another because they are not influenced by variation in capture effort.

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

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2010	94	100				
<b>10-year Averages</b> since standard site netting began in 1978						
<b>1978 - 1987</b>	90	113	182	140	130	655
<b>1988 - 1997</b>	86	107	170	149	127	637
<b>1998 - 2007</b>	95	100	134	120	125	574
<b>Summary Data</b> since standard site netting began in 1978						
<b>Maximum</b>	128	145	288	253	177	864
<b>Minimum</b>	57	33	94	68	59	364
<b>Mean</b>	90	108	162	134	125	619