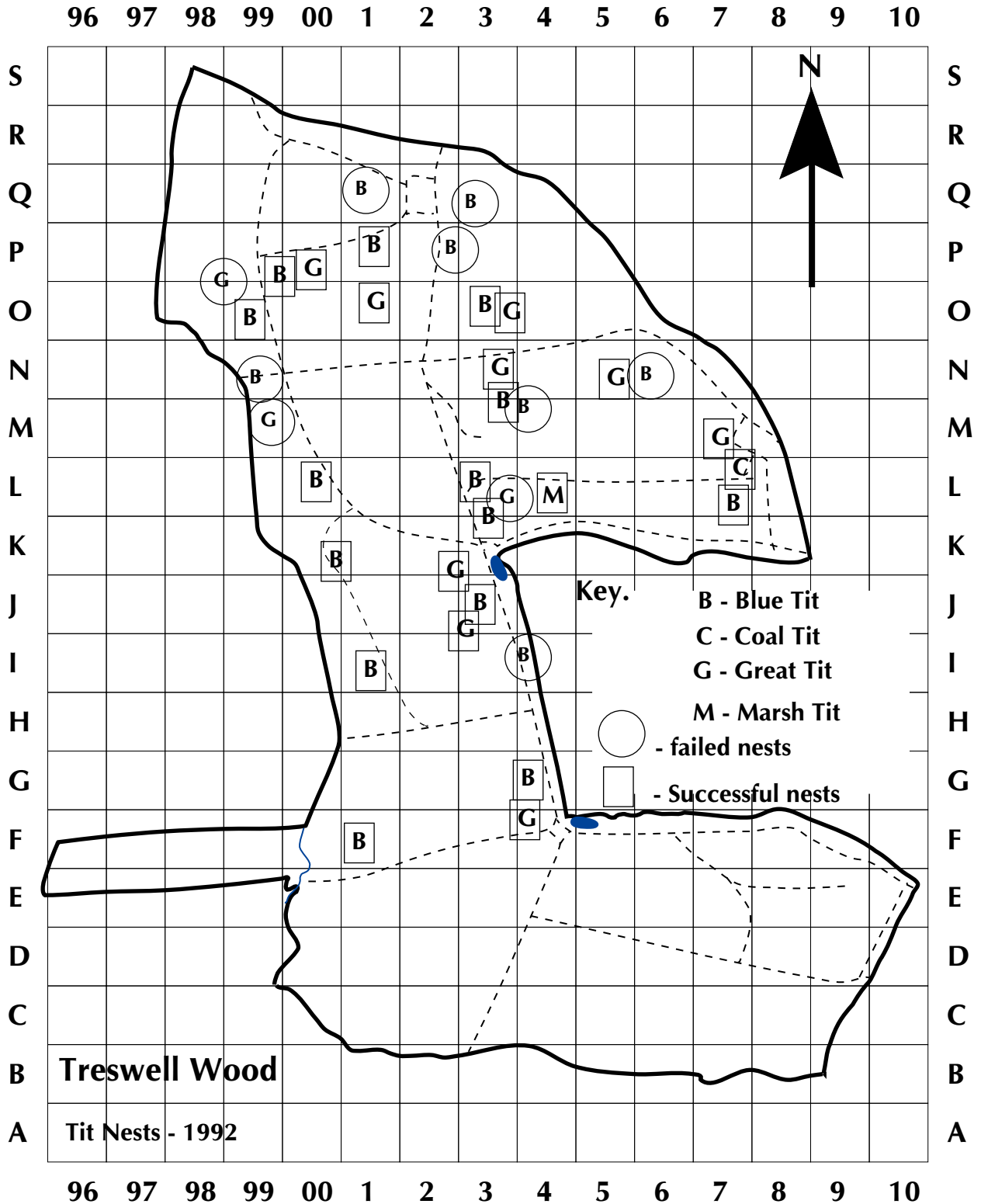


# Treswell Wood

## Nestbox Report - 1992



### Introduction

Last year, it is generally agreed, was exceedingly poor in most places for most birds. Treswell Wood, you will recall, was no exception. The winter of 1991/92, although cold at times, was not particularly severe and it was

expected that winter survival of birds would be good enough to give a higher breeding population than in 1991. This has been true, but only just. As far as the tits are concerned it has been a fairly early and very short season. Table 1 shows the starting dates of the earliest and middle (median) nests for Blue and Great Tits. There has been little depredation of tit nests and, as expected, relatively more predation of open nesting birds such as Blackbird and Chaffinch. Table 2 gives a summary of the year's events in Treswell Wood and Figure 1 shows the locations of some of Treswell Wood's nests.

**Table 1 First egg dates, Treswell Wood 1979 - 1992**

Year	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
<b>Blue Tit</b>														
Earliest	17 Apr	15 Apr	14 Apr	20 Apr	25 Apr	27 Apr	22 Apr	4 May	20 Apr	20 Apr	16 Apr	5 Apr	16 Apr	19 Apr
Median	29 Apr	23 Apr	20 Apr	24 Apr	6 May	2 May	30 Apr	8 May	24 Apr	25 Apr	27 Apr	21 Apr	31 Apr	24 Apr
<b>Great Tit</b>														
Earliest	2 May	20 Apr	21 Apr	24 Apr	28 Apr	30 Apr	25 Apr	6 May	22 Apr	20 Apr	19 Apr	12 Apr	27 Apr	15 Apr
Median	7 May	3 May	4 May	27 Apr	5 May	5 May	4 May	12 May	26 Apr	30 Apr	5 May	27 Apr	30 Apr	24 Apr
<b>Marsh Tit</b>														19 Apr
<b>Coal Tit</b>														12 Apr

## Species Notes

### Open nesting Birds

Relatively few nests have been found this year (Table 2). Firm conclusions cannot be drawn from these low numbers but it is interesting that the Song Thrush nest succeeded and the Blackbird nest did not. This is the first year since 1987 that we have ringed more nestling Song Thrushes than Blackbirds. At home too, Song Thrushes have been much in evidence, littering concrete paths with broken snail shells. Are they making a comeback?

**Table 2 Nests recorded, Treswell Wood 1992**

Species	Failed Nests	Successful Nests	Young Fledged	Recaptured
*Moorhen	0	1	♂4	-
*Woodcock	0	1	4	0
Tawny Owl	1	1	1	0
Wren	1	2	12	0
*Blackbird	1	0	-	-
*Song Thrush	1	1	4	1
Marsh Tit	0	1	8	0
Coal Tit	0	1	10	0
Blue Tit	9	20	120	2
Great Tit	6	7	38	10
*Chaffinch	1	0	-	-

Note: \* nests not in boxes, ♂ young not ringed, data correct to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1992.

### Tawny Owl

At last after a few years without successful breeding, the Tawny Owls have just made it. Two nests were started. One had only one egg, which was infertile. The female give up attempts at incubation when hatching was about two weeks overdue. The other box had a clutch of three eggs. Two hatched, but only one chick fledged. Owl chicks hatch on different days so that at any time the young will be at different growth stages. If there is a food shortage, the older, larger birds may eat their smaller siblings. This obviously gives them additional food but also increases the amount of food brought to each remaining chick because there are fewer mouths for the parents to feed.

The nest was, as usual, examined minutely to find bird rings. One was found - from a Blue Tit whose capture

history is detailed below. A second ring was found in an owl pellet, probably from the same pair. It was from a Chaffinch ringed on 4/11/90 and not recaptured since then.

## Wren

Two early attempts were successful with 6 young fledged from each. A third nest was pirated by a Blue Tit. This is, on reflection, surprising because the pirated nest was in a box in G 1. It was the only Blue Tit nest found in that part of the wood and there were many vacant boxes around. Why did the Blue Tit choose an occupied box?

## Marsh Tit

This was the third attempt in Treswell Wood boxes and the second success. The two previous nests were in 1987 and 1989. Both adults from this nest are well-known individuals. The male was first captured in 1988 and has been trapped in the wood about a dozen times since then. His mate is much younger. She was first trapped as a first-winter bird at the feeding station during the 1991/92 winter, although never on the same day as her mate who also frequents the feeders. They produced 8 young. Last year we wondered whether Marsh Tits would nest in the near future. I hope this is the beginning of a secure nest-box breeding population. (But, alas, Nuthatches have not yet bred our nest boxes.)

## Coal Tit

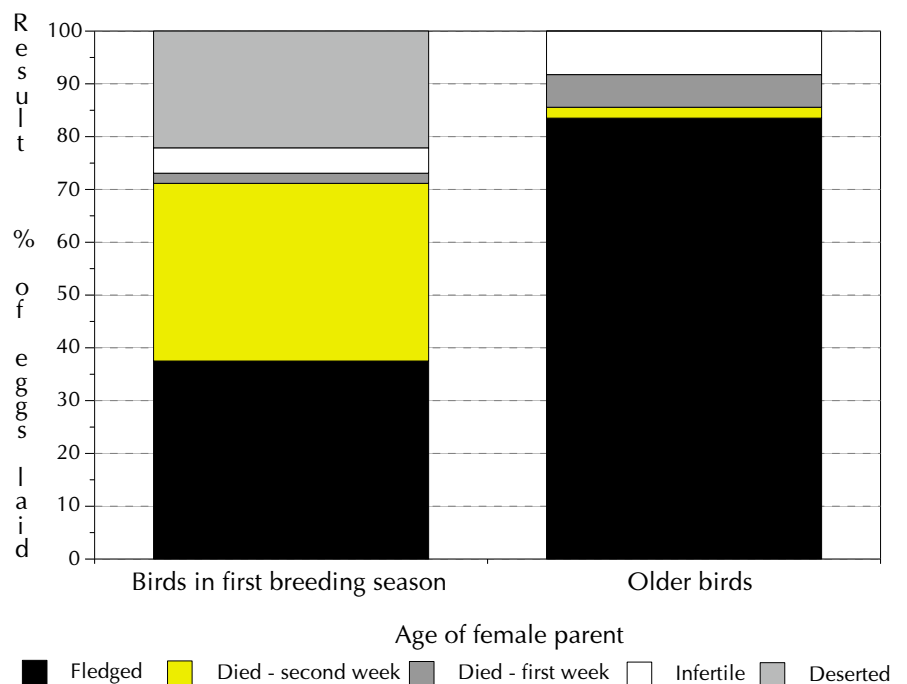
This is the first year since 1985 that we have had a successful nest of this species. It is also the first year that we have enjoyed both Marsh and Coal Tit nests. Coal Tits in our boxes seem to be much more consistent in their nesting habits than do Blue or Great Tits. As always before with Coal Tit nests in Treswell Wood, 10 eggs were laid and 10 young fledged. Coal Tits were much more frequent than normal at our winter feeding station, and perhaps the low Blue Tit population allowed Coal Tits to use boxes.

## Blue Tit

A year like 1991 should make almost any other year seem quite respectable. As it turned out, the numbers of Blue Tits fledged were exactly the same in both years. For some reason there were fewer nests than expected, with large areas of the wood having no box-nesting Blue Tits. I expected that, since numbers of breeding birds were so low, clutch sizes would be large. (This is normal with tits - fewer pairs allow larger territories with a greater food supply, enabling them to rear more young.) Not so this year. Clutch sizes were low. Although there was no depredation of Blue Tit young, about 30 young died as a result of the heavy rain in the beginning of June. Their nest boxes remained quite dry inside, but presumably the continuous cold and rain throughout the daylight hours of Friday 5th June made parents unable to remain dry and to find enough food for their brood. All the broods affected belonged to

females in their first breeding season; older birds seemed to cope better with the cold and wet. The situation was further worsened by the cold which made the young require more food and parental attention to keep warm. Two complete broods of 11 each died, as did with some nestlings in other nests. A total nest failure is serious for individual birds like Blue Tits which are single brooded. They rely on one successful nest; half of them will not live to see another breeding season. Their strategy is different from that of Blackbirds or Wrens which have smaller clutches but normally have three successive broods in a season. A loss of one Blackbird clutch will not generally mean a complete breeding season failure for the pair.

What happens to Blue Tit eggs?



Examination of the various statistics for younger and older females showed, as usual, that young birds laid slightly fewer eggs, they laid slightly later and suffered a little more desertion and coped less well with the rain.

However, the result of all these small differences combined was spectacular. Only 38% of eggs laid by first breeding season birds resulted in fledged young whereas 86% of eggs of older birds produced fledged young. The figure illustrates this difference.

## Great Tit

Numbers are back up this year to their level of the early 1980s, but not yet back to the 100 or more of the late 1980s, with a good number of captures of young soon after fledging. There was one very late nest. Few adult Great Tits have been captured on the nest this year so it is not clear if the bird was attempting to bring off a second brood or, more likely, attempting to rear at least one brood after her earlier brood was predated. The second brood was not a success. There were seven eggs laid, but of these only one hatched and this one failed to fledge. Overall fledging success was only an average of 6.0 per successful nest. This is well below our best (10.0 in 1982) and below the overall average of 7.7 per successful nest.

**Table 3 Numbers of nestlings ringed in boxes and later recaptured, Treswell Wood 1979-1991**

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
<b>Blue Tit</b>														
N	101	240	231	171	117	155	189	233	272	103	258	174	120	120
R	63	91	81	56	29	45	50	51	69	32	60	21	8	2
P	62%	38%	35%	33%	25%	29%	26%	22%	25%	31%	23%	12%	7%	2%
E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	.
O	7	8	15	10	2	15	5	9	6	5	4	0	0	.
B	1	1	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	.
<b>Great Tit</b>														
N	65	53	56	50	48	61	104	126	133	77	126	38	38	65
R	34	10	10	10	13	19	18	9	43	8	13	1	10	10
P	52%	19%	18%	20%	27%	31%	17%	7%	32%	10%	10%	3%	26%	15%
E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	.
O	4	1	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	.
B	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	.

Note: data are correct to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1992

N nestlings ringed and fledged

R found ('found' means retrapped in the wood or found alive or dead elsewhere)

P found as % of total

E first found since 30 September 1991

O found outside the wood

B found outside the wood and subsequently recaptured inside the wood

## Recaptures of Nestlings

Many of our birds have interesting recapture histories. Table 4 gives a summary of Blue and Great Tit recaptures over the years. Some histories may show a long life, repeated nesting in Treswell Wood, long distance movements or captures outside the wood followed by a return to the wood. Below is a selection of recaptures of tits ringed as nestlings over the past few years.

**Table 4 A selection of capture histories**

Ring	Box	Ring Date	Recapture Dates	Notes
<b>Blue Tits</b>				
F485645	46	01 06 89	16 02 92	Captured in Treswell Wood (D 9). It is unusual for a Blue Tit to survive this long without it being recaptured in the wood. Has it eluded us in the wood for nearly three years or has it been elsewhere?

<b>E343094</b>	46	24 05 87	12 05 90	Nesting in box 57 (F 1)
			18 05 91	Nesting in box 24 (K 0) (What happened to E343384? -see below. Why didn't it continue using box 24?)
			03 05 92	Nesting in box 40 (I 1) This is our oldest known surviving nestbox Blue Tit. It exhibits a fairly mobile nesting history.
<b>E343384</b>	58	29 05 88	13 05 89	Nesting in box 24 (K 0)
			18 05 91	Nesting in box 37 (L 0)
			10 05 92	Nesting in box 24 again (K 0)
<b>F485604</b>	42	25 05 89	11 05 91	Nesting in box 80 (O 3)
			03 05 92	Nesting again in box 80 (O 3)
<b>F783267</b>	79	04 06 91	03 05 92	Nesting in box 79 (L 3) This is one of our very few Blue Tits known to have nested in its natal box.
<b>F485675</b>	23	04 06 89	28 09 91	Captured in Sturton-le-Steeple. A typical local dispersal movement.
<b>F485714</b>	29	04 06 89	19 11 89	Its first recapture, at the feeding station. This was followed by a total of 14 more captures here over the next 3 winters.
			07 06 92	Ring found in used nest of our successful Tawny Owl.
<b>Great Tit</b>				
<b>C824198</b>	-	28 02 88	21 05 88	Nesting in box 35 (O 3) This female was not ringed as a nestling in one of our boxes but has been a regular user since 1988.
			23 05 89	Nesting in box 93 (N 5)
			12 05 90	Nesting in box 93 (N 5)
			29 12 91	The only time she was captured in 1991; possibly nested (but most Great Tits not captured at the nest in 1991)
			21 06 92	Nesting in box 22 (O98) - the very late failed clutch.
<b>NH52318</b>	81	07 06 84	03 02 85	Captured at feeding station (Q 2)
			09 02 85	Captured in Babworth, Retford. This was also at a bird feeding station, only 6 days after its capture in Treswell Wood.
			18 05 85	Captured back in Treswell Wood (Q99)
			14 06 92	The most recent recapture of this long-lived Great Tit 8 years and 1 week since ringing (R99).

## Populations in Treswell Wood

In the last few reports, we have outlined the constant effort ringing operation in the wood. Because we use the same amount of mist netting for the same time in the same places each year, our captures reflect, as well as we can manage, the bird populations. Last year's table of captures of common species is extended to compare these two poor years. Adult captures in March - May were nearly the same. Possibly Blackcaps and Wrens have increased. The March - May figures should reflect the breeding population. Productivity is reflected in the May - August juvenile catch. Our adult captures are overall about the same - perhaps Wren and Blackcap captures reflect higher breeding numbers. Our juvenile captures are generally improved on 1991's dismal figures but are overall well below average, with only Treecreepers being much above. Blue Tit juvenile captures are well down. I suspect that the unsettled weather at, and after, fledging time dramatically increased the mortality of newly fledged Blue Tits. Other species must have suffered, although species like Wren, which are multiple brooded, are not so badly affected by a short spell of bad weather. If one brood fails they have another chance.

**Table 5 Captures of adults and juveniles of common species in constant effort nets, 1978 - 1992.**

Species	Adult Captures			Juvenile Captures		
	Interval 2 March-May			Interval 3 May-August		
	Mean 78-90	1991	1992	Mean 78-90	1991	1992
Wren	10.6	5	10	10.0	3	13
Dunnock	15.1	4	3	6.2	3	0
Robin	13.4	7	7	19.5	8	7
Blackbird	14.8	7	6	5.8	0	0
Song Thrush	9.7	2	0	2.1	0	4
Blackcap	6.4	2	6	3.5	0	1
Willow Warbler	5.7	1	2	0.8	0	0
Long-tailed Tit	3.2	5	4	1.2	0	2
Blue Tit	15.8	6	6	17.0	1	0
Great Tit	10.4	3	4	7.0	4	10
Treecreeper	5.6	7	5	1.4	0	6
Chaffinch	5.5	3	2	0.0	1	0
Bullfinch	6.2	0	0	1.6	0	0
<b>All species</b>	<b>92.9</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>83.3</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>45</b>

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This was originally published in October 1992 for the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust as the *Treswell Wood Nestbox Report 1992*. It was distributed to nestbox sponsors, ringers and CBC workers in Treswell Wood and various NWT officials. It was produced on the Acorn A3000 computer using Impression. The front cover contained the map of the tit nest sites. This, and the figure were produced using Draw+ and Chartwell.

This edition has been produced from the original Impression computer files using Techwriter on the Acorn RISC PC.

Chris du Feu, December 2000