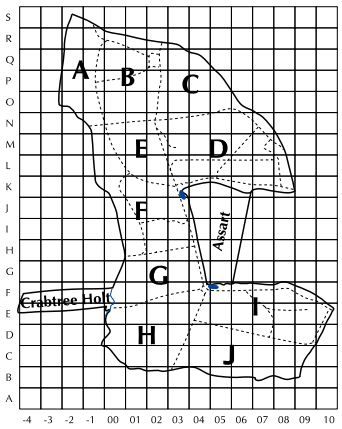


TWITTER

Treswell **W**ood - **I**nformation **T**o **T**ell **E**very **R**ecorder

May 2026 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

2026/2

CBC Ellen Marshall

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Number 157

Ringing John Clark ***www.treswellwoodipmg.org***

After the clearing of ash along those rides which are still open to the public, the wood had looked in a rather sorry state. We are pleased to say the growth we have had this spring has made it feel much better. The recently coppiced compartment has had deer fencing and other areas have had brash piled over the coppiced stools to stop the deer destroying the new shoots. This seems to be working. It is a step in the right direction, sadly such steps will continue to be needed until the local (and national) deer problem is overcome.

Nestboxes are in full swing, first indications are of a good, early start with healthy broods although there is more spread to the season than last year. The first Blue Tits, already with primaries at medium length, were ringed on May 8th. This is just one day later than our earliest which was in 2017. At the same time, though, many birds are still on eggs. In the previous issue we mentioned the new mist-netted species - Mallard. The species continues to make its presence felt. We were shown a nest with a sitting bird, well away from any pond in the centre of the wood. Unfortunately because of undergrowth, brash etc it could not be inspected closely enough to count the eggs but we believe the nest was successful. At the same time as that bird was sitting a female Mallard with about 10 fluffy ducklings was seen on the pond at Piccadilly Circus (grid F04). That is at least two breeding pairs.

Frass (caterpillar droppings) collection has started early to match the nesting time and there have now been four weekly collections. We are pleased to hear that Jamie Weir, under Ken Smith's oversight, has submitted the paper about frass and hope it will be published in due course. The paper is based on 15 years worth of frass collection in several woodlands around the country including, of course, Treswell Wood. Initially the frass study was aimed at looking at the effects of mismatch in timing of tit nesting and the caterpillar crop. We realised that caterpillar abundance was also important (see TWITTER 124, October 2019) where we showed that, in Treswell Wood, caterpillar abundance and total tit productivity were very highly correlated. Jamie's paper looks at both timing and food abundance together. It seems that food supply can compensate for phenological mismatch most of the time. If the seasons change more, or if the caterpillar crops reduce, then there would be serious consequences for tit productivity.

There has been considerable damage done to nestboxes by Grey Squirrels, more than for some time although not the worst ever year. Curiously of the eight boxes where entrance holes have been gnawed wide, only one had any nest or eggs, the eggs were taken. Why go to the trouble of enlarging entrance holes when there is no reward inside? The Dormouse team has also suffered damage with 30 boxes having been destroyed by the squirrels. One thought is that the boxes, all made marine ply, contained some sort of glue of which the squirrels liked the taste. The same cannot be said for the bird boxes - no marine ply and certainly not garnished with tasty glue.

CES feedback

As usual, Lee Barber who deals with the BTO Constant Effort project has given us feedback and thanks for our efforts. He writes:

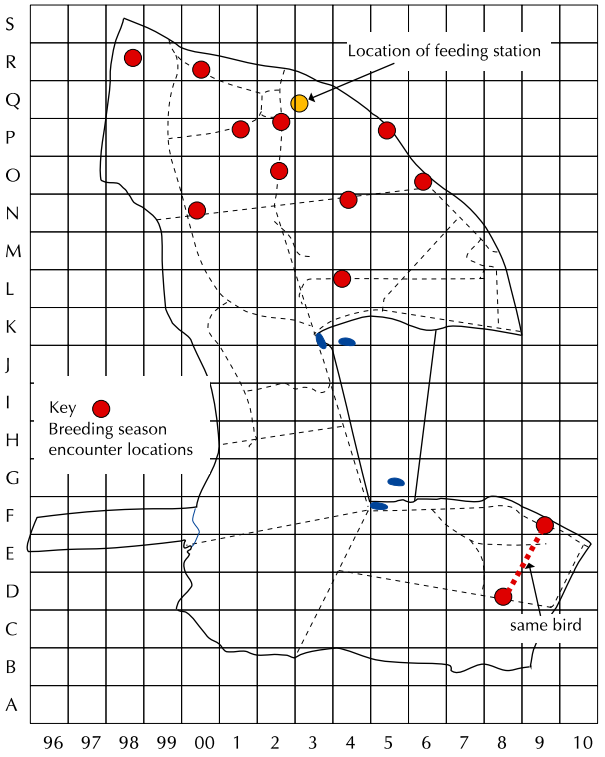
> *Firstly, we would like to thank you for your contributions to the CES scheme, whether you have been involved from the beginning, or were new to the scheme last year. Thanks to all of you, the scheme is continuing to be vital for providing information on how the breeding season went and how species are faring. We currently have 114 standard CES projects in the scheme and it would be great to have a few more to improve the trends for a few species as well as getting a better regional spread of sites.*
>
> *Having information which compares your CES with the national picture can be really informative, especially as you and your team put so much time and effort into getting the best quality data possible, we are able to give you access to site-specific feedback for your CES project based on your last year's data.*
>
> *We hope you will find this information interesting and helpful. Feel free to let me know if there is anything that you would find useful to be added to this document in the future. Thank you again for all your efforts and contribution to the CES scheme and I hope your CES is going well.*
>
> *All the best, Lee*

The information from Lee gives the capture rates of birds per metre of mist neting. The full feedback will go into our archives. In summary, as usual our capture rates are well below the average for all CES sites. This is because we operate in high woodland as opposed to relatively low scrub or reedbeds. Birds have plenty of habitat to forage in above mist net height. In reedbeds the nets will reach well up to the top of the habitat and will thus catch many more birds. Nevertheless we are still in the top quartile for some species - adult Blackcap, Robin, Treecreeper, and Song Thrush. For juveniles we have Wrens and Dunnocks in the top quartile. Of course, numbers of birds are only a part of the picture. It is the between-year recapture rates and ratios of adults to juveniles which provide the vital information about survival and productivity.

Movements of Wintering Robins

Dave Fogg, who began his ringing in Treswell Wood in the 1970s and was a CBC observer for some years now lives in Granton-on-Spey - somewhat north of Treswell Wood and in a very different habitat. He remains, of course, on the TWITTER mailing list. He contacted us after receiving the March issue of TWITTER:

> *Yesterday I re-read the latest edition of TWITTER (always worthy of a second read) and found the notes about a very sedentary Robin. The note suggested Robins are very territorial and, presumably, seldom moved too far from their territories. Is there any evidence that Treswell Robins visit feeding stations away from their normal territories in the winter months?*
>
> *I ask because in the first three months of this year I have caught 15 individual Robins at my feeders and just one of them was caught a second time. I presume these are local birds foraging more widely for food but if that is true why only the one retrap?*



Whereas it is gratifying to hear that TWITTER is always worthy of a second read, such communications as this from Dave do really demand that we look into the data to see what is going on.

We searched for records of Robins caught at the feeding station during winter (November to February inclusive). Quite a surprise here. In all the nearly 50 years since we established the feeding station we have only encountered 68 individual Robins there. Of these 28 were not re-encountered there, 17 were encountered in one winter only and the remaining 23 had capture histories at the feeding station stretching from two to four winters.

Robins set up winter territories which are generally not the same as the breeding territory. Males and females each create their own separate territory usually in different places from each other. The low number of individual Robins caught at the feeding station is consistent with individuals defending a winter territory, as is the capture over different winters of the same bird.

Perhaps a partial answer to Dave is that there is one Robin which holds the territory and chases away any would-be challengers. That would explain why they do not return. It does not explain why the territory holder (if that is what it is) is not retrapped more often. Perhaps it has become net-aware.

In answer to Dave's specific question, again there is a surprisingly low number of individuals to look at. Of all the 68 winter Robins only 11 have any breeding season (March - June inclusive) captures in the wood. The map shows where their breeding season captures were in relation to the feeding station. It does show that those that seem to stay in the wood during winter have not generally moved much from their breeding territory. Just one individual (there always has to be one) comes from the south of the wood although it is the only one of these birds which has been found in two different places in subsequent seasons. Maybe that one has no fixed abode.

We hope that throws more light than confusion on Dave's question.

Not-sexing Blue Tits on wing length

Of course we should not sex Blue Tits on wing length, we have documented the dangers of doing that from time to time (some might say *ad nauseam*). However in the recent past I have noted a couple of Blue Tits with very short wings being sexed as male on account of perceived cloaca. When I entered the data I did make a mental note about it. Although we do not sex on wing length these two birds (one in 2024, one in March this year) with wings of 59 and 62 did seem very small indeed to be male. By happy chance both these two were lifted

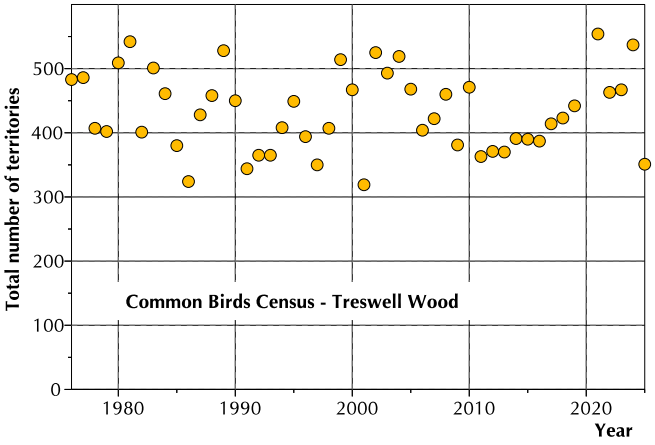
from nestboxes as sitting females and that seems to justify the misgivings when the data were entered.

We do not assign sex solely on wing length. However these two cases suggest that sometimes it is wise to refrain from assigning sex because of an inappropriate wing length even when some other features might suggest sexing is possible.

2025 Common Bird Census

The work is now done - apologies it is as late as this. Thanks to all who have been involved - the surveyors, Chris Bennet for turning the visit observations into maps from which Ellen is able to determine the territories.

It seems that 2025 was not a good year for most species and, overall, the total number of territories was the fifth lowest. At first glance, particularly when coupled with English Nature's assessment of deer-related declining quality of habitat, this seems bad news. However one feature shown clearly the graph is the sometimes remarkable between-year variation. The drop from 2024 to 2025 is no greater than the rise from 2001 to 2002. We look forward to see what surprises the 2026 survey may bring.



Treswell Wood - Common Birds Census – Number of territories determined 2025

Species	2022	2023	2024	2025	1973-2025 Min.	Max.	Mean
Mallard	0	F	X	X	1	2	0.2
Sparrowhawk	1	X	0	X	1	1	0.4
Buzzard	1	0	X	0	1	3	0.3
Woodcock	X	1	X	X	1	3	0.8
Stock Dove	17	12	13	14	1	17	3.4
Woodpigeon	7	8	6	2	1	25	2.1
Tawny Owl	1	2	2	1	1	3	1.8
Green Woodpecker	2	4	4	2	1	4	1.1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	5	10	6	2	1	10	3.9
Skylark	3	A	A	A	1	5	0.8
Swallow	X	F	F	F	1	1	0.1
Wren	91	68	113	67	16	127	73.3
Dunnock	8	9	12	12	4	37	15.8
Robin	50	54	74	56	27	98	57.3
Blackbird	27	32	27	26	16	42	28.7
Song Thrush	18	21	17	14	3	33	14.7
Mistle Thrush	1	1	X	1	1	7	1.2
Whitethroat	1	0	1	X	1	11	1.1
Garden Warbler	1	F	1	X	1	24	6.7
Blackcap	22	24	39	38	8	39	23.2
Chiffchaff	29	49	57	42	1	57	20.5
Willow Warbler	2	3	3	2	1	54	15.4
Goldcrest	1	X	0	X	1	5	0.4
Long-tailed Tit	3	1	X	0	1	12	4.2
Marsh Tit	2	1	1	0	1	6	2.2
Coal Tit	2	2	1	1	1	11	4.2
Blue Tit	71	86	76	58	25	86	55.4
Great Tit	42	38	45	38	8	58	34.4
Nuthatch	14	12	8	4	1	16	2.9
Treecreeper	3	X	X	X	1	7	3.0
Jay	4	0	1	0	1	6	2.2
Jackdaw	3	1	X	1	1	5	0.4
Carrion Crow	1	0	X	0	1	4	0.9
Chaffinch	21	26	23	11	21	62	39.2
Goldfinch	X	X	X	X	1	2	0.2
Bullfinch	1	2	1	X	1	10	3.0
TOTALS	**463**	**467**	**537**	**362**	**319**	**554**	**445.2**

Key: **A** Recorded in the assart. **F** Species recorded flying over the wood but no territorial activity recorded

X Recorded in the wood but too few registrations to determine a territory.

Biased sampling of birds using mist nets

Bob Furness, formerly of Glasgow University, recently published a paper, *Biased sampling of birds by mist nets*, in Ringing & Migration (Vol 40, Part 1, June 2025) which reviewed all papers which referred to bias in mist netting captures. It is, of course, well known that mist netting, like any other method of assessing bird abundance, is subject to bias. Bob's paper catalogued sources of bias and these included, for example, artificially provided attractants, height and mesh size of nets and habitat. Bias is known. What is more difficult is quantifying bias in order to be able to compensate for it in any analysis. It occurred to us that our data from the last half century, should throw some light on the problem. We have data for constant effort netting, opportunistic netting, artificial attractants (food, water, bird calls). We also have the vital CBC data which does assess breeding territories (with, of course, its own biases) and our casual records of bird sightings made during constant effort mist netting visits. We had already contributed to the subject in a paper of 1991 *Does constant effort netting measure juvenile abundance?* and it was pleasing to see that Bob had cited this in his review.

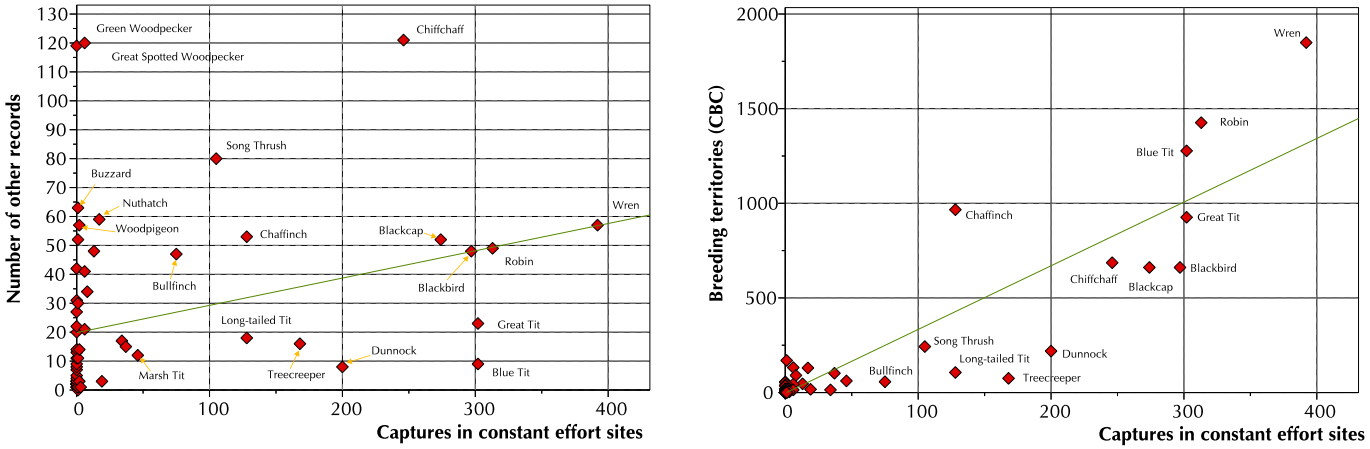
Bob, very kindly spent a morning discussing our dataset having recognised it was very worthy of investigation. He thought the comprehensiveness of our data set would be best tackled by a group of people working under the guidance of an academic supervisor. The best way forward would be to find an academic institution which can devote several students to projects each examining separate aspects of the effects of bias. He is putting out feelers to some university departments in the hope that some may be able to reveal some of what is held in the data set. How happy John McMeeking would have been if this happens.

It might be tempting to think each species of bird might be a given a bias factor. Count the number of birds caught, multiply by this factor and you have a reliable assessment of the species abundance. An attractive idea but quite clearly as useful as the proverbial chocolate teapot. Even if it applied to our data there is no guarantee that the same would apply in other habitats, with other netting regimes in other places. What we can hope for, perhaps, is to be able to classify species into broad categories indicating where mist netting seemed to over-estimate, under estimate or fairly estimate abundance.

We discussed one approach to this and below is a quick and suprficial analysis. It compares what the CBC territory numbers, our 'other records' and our constant effort captures. (Other records are notes of birds seen or heard during our ringing visits.) The numbers are the total captures for years 2000-2025 (excluding the COVID and foot and mouth years) during the second constant effort interval of the year (March to May), the total numbers of other records on days on which we did this mist netting, and the CBC breeding territories. These numbers were totalled for all the years. Although the analysis needs a great deal of refinement to bring it to the rigorous statistical standard now required, there seems to be promise here of something very worthwhile.

In a sense we do not expect to discover anything surprising. What we do hope is that eventually we will be able to show that our gut feelings about biases are well justified and that is a first step to being able to compensate for them in any analyses using mist net data.In both graphs the x-axis gives the constant effort numbers, the y-axis the Other records or CBC territories. If two methods have the same biases then we would expect all points to lie close to the line of best fit. The points furthest from this line give the species where the two methods differ most. There are many points with low values, clustering around the origin or along one axis or the other and this will affect the validity of the line of best fit - but this is just exploratory work and we can leave log transformations and general linear models for another day.

First the comparison of other records and constant effort captures. No surprises here. The noisy, high flying species are also very high above the line. Mist-netting under-estimates their abundance and, probably, sight records overestimate abundance. The passerines above the line include those with distinct, far carrying songs and calls - Chiffchaff is the clear winner. Below the line we have the quieter birds which may be caught often but heard less.



Comparisons of total constant effort captures 2000 - 2025 with total sight records and total CBC territories

The Wren sits on the line of best fit - a noisy little bird but also one which spends a great deal of time at mist net height.

Comparing the constant effort netting with breeding territories tells a different story - and this is to be expected because every form of assessing bird abundance has its own particular biases. The cluster of points at or near zero on the CES axis rising to about 400 on the CBC axis includes Stock Dove, Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jackdaw and Carrion Crow - all high flying, noisy birds. Treecreepers and Long-tailed Tits, which Ellen noted seemed to be relatively hard to detect in CBC surveys, are under-represented. I wonder how territory size affects the relationship between these two measures.

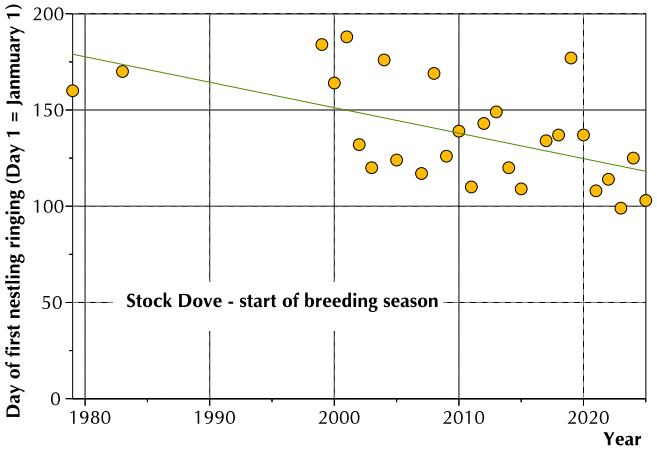
There are obviously many questions to be answered and many refinements to be made to any analysis. However the results here do indicate that this is a line of approach which can bear fruit

Noteworthy Encounters

Species **Age/Sex** **Ring** **Date** **Grid**

Stock Dove **1** **EM32946** **26/4/2026** **K00 Nestling**

This was the first nestling (of any species) to be ringed this year. Stock Doves nest record have an interesting history since we installed nestboxes in 1979. In those days, Stock Doves were far less common than they are now. We did find one nest in 1979, very late in the season another in 1980 and one in 1983. That was it until 1999 - a gap of 16 years - when they started nesting in boxes again. In the next few years, nesting was very late and it appeared then that the species was just a late nester. Looking back, this seems odd as the bird was known to have a long breeding season, starting in March according to John McMeeking's 1948 copy of Witherby's Guide. However, their nesting in the wood rapidly became earlier. This year's early nests, not the earliest ever, but are much in line with recent years. The graph shows how the timing of their nesting has changed using the day on which the first nestling was ringed .



Great Spotted Woodpecker **4F** **LK39224** **5/4/2026** **Q03**

This is the first woodpecker capture this year. We had not seen this bird since 2024 it having been ringed in 2022. At just of four years since ringing it is still seven years short of our internal age record (which is also the national age record). Because of constraints of weather and ringers we have not been able to visit the feeding station as often as normal. This does reduce encounters with this species. Over the years we have had 644 encounters with Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Of these 550 have been at a feeding station. This mean only 15% of our captures are in mist nets without an artificial attractants. More evidence for bias in mist net captures.

Marsh Tit **5M** **BVD0309** **13/4/2026** **N02**

A welcome appearance of a Marsh Tit, particularly as it was in breeding condition. This is one of four encountered so far this year. All are birds which fledged last year (probably in the wood but we do not know). We hope we will find them nesting in boxes but, at least, they still seem to be breeding in the wood.

Blue Tit **6F** **AJN3691** **10/5/2026** **F03 On nest**

This is our oldest bird so far this year to be found nesting although at somewhat over four years old it is a still a youngster compared to ANA4766 (below). It was ringed in November 2021 at the feeding station in the north of the wood and retrapped there three times. After October 2022 it was not seen again until April 2024 when it was found nesting nearby. We encountered it again at the feeder in January of 2025. As it already had a history of visiting the feeder we would have expected to see it there again that winter and this winter too. No sign of it. One might have considered the lack of captures for a year at a site it was known to frequent should indicate that it had died. But no. It appears again, on a nest but this time at the other end of the wood about 700 metres distant.

Blue Tit **6F** **ANA7466** **26/4/2026** **M07**

Our fourth oldest record of a Blue Tit - 7y 231d since ringing but still over six months short of the record. Unusually for a long-standing Blue Tit it has only been encountered once at a feeding station even though all other captures within 300 metres of the feeding station. It was found roosting in a box in December 2018 but all other captures (apart from once at the feeder) have been on the same constant effort site in the wood.

Great Tit 5M PY79026 10/5/2026 H04
Retrapped just a day short of a year since being ringed as a nestling in a box in the centre of the wood. We caught it a few times during its juvenile and pre-breeding explorations. These took it to north and south of the wood. But, at this capture, it was in breeding condition so presumably had found a breeding territory a mere 130 metres from its natal box. Not a great breeding dispersal distance at all.

Chiffchaff 4 RCA538 19/4/2026 L04
A welcome returning bird ringed last year. Having travelled, we presume, to southern Europe over the winter it managed to return to the same part of the wood where we caught it last year, just a mere 30 metres away.

Blackcap 4M AEZ3320 19/4/2026 L00
Another returning summer visitor. It was caught about 30 metres from its first capture position in 2023. Returning to exactly the same part of the wood is typical for Blackcaps. What is not so typical is that we did not see it in 2024 or 2025 even though we net in that constant effort site at least twice during each breeding season.

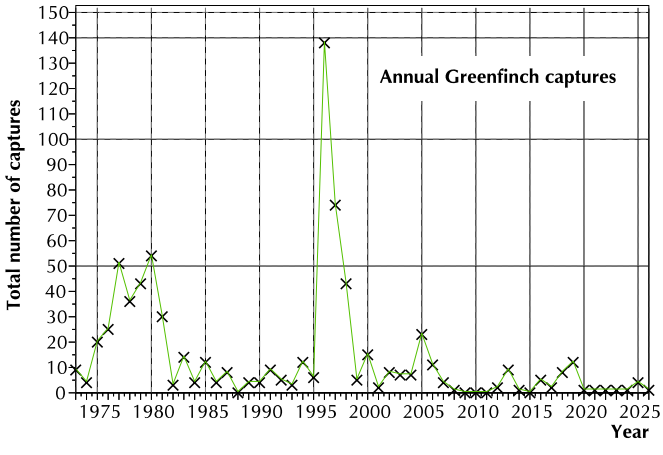
Blackcap 4M AEZ3681 13/4/2026 N02
Our first returning Blackcap of the year. It missed being our earliest Blackcap for the year by a matter of only the time it takes to do a net round. Like AEZ3320 it missed being captured last year but, unlike AEZ3320 this year's capture position is in a different constant effort site, about 250 metres distant

Treecreeper 6M DRA462 4/5/2026 D08
The sixth capture of this bird in just over two years. Treecreepers usually rove fairly widely within either the northern or the southern half of the wood. This one, however, is not at all keen on travelling anywhere at all. Its captures have been exclusively in grid square D08 except one where it ventured as far as D09.

Blackbird 6M LK39350 13/4/2026 N01
One of two male Blackbirds caught in the day which were retraps from 2023 with no intermediate recaptures. We seem to have had several birds, of different species, which are 'missing' a year or (as in these two cases) more than a year between captures. Why? Answers, as usual, on a postcard please.

Song Thrush 6 RX91282 22/3/2026 R00
It is just over four years since this bird was ringed. We re-encountered it in 2023, twice, but had not caught it since then. This one has always always appeared in the North-West corner of the wood, in the early Spring but never in breeding condition. Does it just pass through the wood on a well-worn migration route?

Greenfinch 5M TY35168 5/4/2026 Q03
Greenfinch captures in the wood are now a rarity. This is partly because of their massive local and national decline resulting from trichomonosis. In the wood, though, they used to be attracted to Pheasant feeding stations and that increased our capture rate.



The graph shows our annual totals of Greenfinch captures in the wood showing the drop from the early years dropping around 1980 and remaining low until a sudden, short-lived spike from 1995. Thereafter very few or none at all.

Curiously the 1995 spike was not connected with Pheasant feeding in the wood. It seemed to be concentrated at the north edge of the wood with birds commuting across the road between the wood and feeding stations at Wood House opposite. We have no idea why numbers were so high at Wood House for those three years. With the present state of Greenfinch populations it seems unlikely we will see such numbers again in the near future.

10-Week Summary: 2026 Interval 2, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	**5**	**3**	**Adult**	**5**	**3**	
Marsh Tit	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Blue Tit	1	10	.	5	8	.	24
Great Tit	2	3	.	3	7	.	15
Long-tailed Tit	4	.	.	3	.	.	7
Chiffchaff	15	1	.	1	.	.	17
Blackcap	15	1	.	5	.	.	21
Wren	1	7	.	4	4	.	16
Nuthatch	.	1	.	.	1	.	2
Treecreeper	.	1	.	2	3	.	6
Blackbird	4	1	.	7	.	.	12
Song Thrush	3	3	.	1	.	.	7
Robin	2	5	.	4	1	.	12
Dunnock	2	5	.	6	.	.	13
Chaffinch	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Bullfinch	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Totals	**50**	**40**	**.**	**41**	**24**	**.**	**155**

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
2008, 2017	93	133	151	109	120	606

This millennium

2000	75	106	106	159	170	616
2001	57	33	94	121	59	(364)
2002	85	89	141	176	117	608
2003	117	116	146	104	114	597
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	86	100	592
2009	57	130	156	85	80	508
2010	94	100	144	119	143	600
2011	96	112	120	105	101	534
2012	69	125	132	66	72	464
2014	83	132	181	123	120	639
2015	105	123	136	137	158	659
2016	102	185	193	109	109	698
2017	106	198	163	150	163	780
2018	95	108	182	184	119	695
2020	120	---	---	93	174	(387)
2021	...	163	129	90	109	(491)
2022	83	120	175	99	131	608
2023	106	118	181	91	121	617
2024	102	173	207	84	120	686
2025	62	121	183	146	107	619
2026	108	**155**				