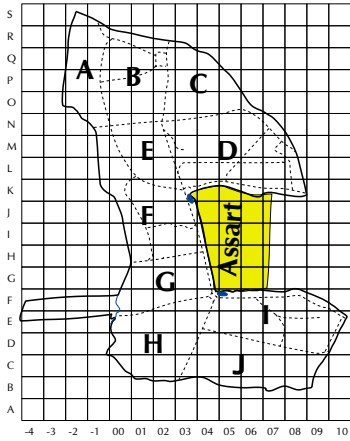


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

March 2013 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



2013/1 Number 91

After a relatively mild winter overall, the weather of late February and March came as something of a shock to man and beast alike - and to flora too. By mid-March the only flower we had noted in bloom in the wood was a single celandine (excluding, of course, Dogs Mercury which did bloom early as usual but its blooms are so inconspicuous that they really do not count). In contrast we have notes from earlier years with various flowers - primrose, celandine and coltsfoot in bloom during February. No butterflies were noted before the end of March. There will normally be signs of tits beginning to build nests by mid-March: not so this year. The north and east winds of late March and early April did nothing to hasten the arrival of migrants and the cold continued to suppress breeding activity. In spite of overall global warming, here we have a very late spring.

CBC for 2012 and the next year

John Marchant at the BTO has analysed the CBC data for 2012 and the results are presented on the next page. We are very grateful to John for his work and to the BTO for continuing to support this survey. In return John says *I have great admiration for the way you and the team have been able to keep this survey going. It's now the only CBC that is sent to BTO.* The results have come just as the 2013 CBC season begins. The maps are now with Steve Wain who is digitising them - we will send copies to all observers once he has completed that task.

The 2012 season had a most uncertain start with various retirements and other changes in circumstances. However, it was done and we have a team in place for this year. The outcome is pleasingly consistent with previous years' results. Most species show very little change. The few where there are noticeable changes have changes very much in line with what has been seen by the ringers. Dunnocks continued to decline - a major change from what was known as Dunnock City in the 1970s. Robins were also down but the ringers had noted how uncommon they had become at the start of 2012 after several years of abundant captures. Again, the low number of Great Spotted Woodpecker territories matches the low number trapped. Nuthatches, on the other hand, have increased and this too is reflected in the ringing captures (though, irritatingly, not in nestbox occupancy). So, overall, in spite of so many observer changes, it looks as if the CBC operation continues to give a consistent record of the breeding population in the wood.

Although the assart is not yet in NWT hands we need to begin territory mapping there. It will tell a most interesting and valuable story if we can record changes from the start of its journey from farmland back to woodland. The mapping work in the first few seasons should not be very onerous - perhaps many of the registrations will be of flyovers rather than territory holders. It could be an excellent starter patch for a new observer. Any volunteers?

John Marchant's feedback included suggestions for enhanced recording during CBC visits. These include notes about commonly confused species and activity codes. These are noted at the end of Twitter. It is worth re-reading the CBC instructions and code lists before the start of the survey (just as it is worth nest recorders looking at nest record codes and ringers looking at activity codes before the start of the season). It is amazing how much can be forgotten between one season and the next.

All should be set for the 2013 season. Would all CBC observers please confirm to Pat Quinn-Catling that you will be doing the survey this season?

"Learning about Treswell's Birds"

This is the heading on two big new interpretive boards which will soon be seen on the storage container in the Treswell Wood Car Park, close to the main feeders. They have been organised by NWT in association with its *Active Ancient Woods Project* in the north of the county, supported by a WREN landfill grant.

It has long been our ambition to create a permanent display to explain our work: now we have it. The displays give a brief explanation of ringing and why we do it; describe the nest record scheme, the Common Birds Census and Constant Effort ringing. They list some of our longest lived birds and most distant recoveries, show how Great Tit

Treswell Wood CBC - Numbers of territories - 2012 Results

Species	5-year averages							2011	2012
	76...80	81...85	86...90	91...95	96...00	01...05	06...10		
Mallard	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.3	1	p
Sparrowhawk	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.5	1	1
Buzzard	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.7	1	1
Kestrel	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.7	0.5	1	p
Red-legged Partridge	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0	0
Grey Partridge	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0	0
Pheasant	8.2	4.7	8.0	6.4	6.0	8.6	8.0	8	4
Golden Pheasant	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0	0
Moorhen	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.0	0	0
Woodcock	2.0	1.8	0.8	0.2	0.2	1.0	1.1	p	0
Stock Dove	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	7.0	3.1	4	7
Woodpigeon	0.0	1.0	0.3	0.0	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Collared Dove	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0	0
Turtle Dove	7.6	1.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0	0
Cuckoo	5.0	2.4	1.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.2	p	0
Barn Owl	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0	0
Tawny Owl	1.4	2.6	1.8	1.2	1.4	3.0	1.4	1	2
Green Woodpecker	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	1.6	2.2	2	2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1.6	3.6	2.4	2.4	2.4	5.6	6.8	4	4
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	0.0	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Skylark	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.5	2.0	3	3
Swallow	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	p
Pied Wagtail	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0	0
Wren	59.4	55.8	69.0	71.8	81.8	76.4	72.8	54	67
Duncock	27.2	23.8	22.2	13.4	12.6	8.4	10.6	7	4
Robin	58.4	60.4	46.6	48.0	54.0	81.4	73.2	51	34
Wheatear	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0	0
Blackbird	35.0	29.0	28.4	20.2	25.2	27.0	33.6	19	27
Song Thrush	29.6	23.6	16.8	7.2	5.6	6.8	10.2	5	3
Fieldfare	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0	p
Mistle Thrush	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.6	1.0	2.8	3.8	p	1
Lesser Whitethroat	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Whitethroat	5.6	1.6	1.8	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.1	1	0
Garden Warbler	15.0	15.4	9.4	4.4	7.2	6.8	3.0	1	p
Blackcap	15.4	12.4	20.4	20.6	25.4	27.2	25.8	18	23
Chiffchaff	14.8	8.2	8.6	15.8	19.0	18.6	21.2	27	29
Willow Warbler	27.6	44.0	31.4	18.2	6.8	5.0	4.3	4	5
Goldcrest	0.2	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.6	0.4	0.1	p	0
Spotted Flycatcher	1.6	3.0	1.8	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.2	0	1
Long-tailed Tit	3.4	3.0	3.6	4.8	5.0	8.2	6.2	2	4
Marsh Tit	1.6	0.5	1.0	2.2	4.2	2.1	1.1	3	4
Willow Tit	3.0	1.8	2.4	2.8	2.6	2.5	0.6	p	p
Coal Tit	2.0	2.6	2.0	6.2	7.4	6.4	4.4	5	5
Blue Tit	32.8	60.2	67.2	59.2	70.0	50.6	44.2	42	43
Great Tit	13.4	26.8	36.8	31.8	35.2	46.8	34.8	52	42
Nuthatch	0.0	0.4	0.4	1.0	1.2	1.2	3.0	6	10
Treecreeper	2.0	1.8	4.0	3.4	3.6	3.1	2.4	1	5
Jay	3.2	3.6	2.4	1.4	1.0	1.9	1.7	2	2
Magpie	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.0	0	1
Jackdaw	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	p
Carriion Crow	1.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.7	1.2	p	p
Starling	5.2	4.8	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0	0
House Sparrow	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Tree Sparrow	21.0	10.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	p	0
Chaffinch	33.4	38.4	39.0	39.0	40.6	48.8	45.0	47	32
Greenfinch	1.4	0.8	0.2	0.2	1.8	0.7	0.5	0	0
Goldfinch	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.5	0	2
Linnet	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Redpoll	3.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Bullfinch	5.4	3.2	3.0	1.4	0.6	1.8	2.0	p	3
Yellowhammer	1.8	1.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0	0
Reed Bunting	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0
Total territories	457.4	457.0	437.6	386.2	426.8	464.8	427.6	363	366

Notes: p - present but too few observations to determine any territory. nc - not counted

laying dates have changed and describe a seasonal pattern of mite occurrence which has been discovered.

The Trust's successful restoration of coppice management is described, with our hope that analysis of our records will lead to successful fine-tuning of the coppicing programme to benefit future bird populations.

Active members of TWIG will recall the many occasions when visitors have enjoyed seeing birds in the hand, and learning a little of what we do. These boards will inform visitors about ringing at times when we are not in action.

Development of the displays has required modification of our Treecreeper logo, and we thank Jenny Bell, based at the Marine & Wildlife studio on Steep Hill in Lincoln, for kindly allowing us to use her painting of a Treecreeper head, which also appears on this edition of Twitter.

Great Tit moult

Steph Harris has completed her third-year dissertation at Nottingham University. The dissertation will be included in our collection of publications. She examined moult in Great Tit juveniles from 1979 to 2012 - the years when we have had nestboxes. The fledging dates, clutch sizes and other details are known for the many nestling-ringed juveniles we have retrapped. Two results are very clear. First is that the timing of moult is associated with April temperature, brood size and abundance of juveniles in the wood. Second is that the duration of the moult period (i.e the time when some birds can be found in moult) is also associated with April temperature. Steph has carried out extensive literature searches and believes this is the first analysis which has demonstrated a change in moult patterns over time. Steph hopes (and so do we) that she can turn this dissertation into a paper for publication in an appropriate journal. Thanks to Steph for her work in analysis of this aspect of our data set. Thanks also to Andrew MacColl for his supervisory role.

TRAMS, CBC, ageing and sexing, data quality and the Ringers' Forum

This is a rather long section title but coincidence brings all these apparently disparate things together. Some 15 years ago, Neil Taylor produced extra notes about ageing and sexing birds to address particular features which we were finding difficult. When sorting through Neil's ringing box, a long-forgotten copy of these notes - TRAMS (Treswell Ringers Aide Memoire Service) - was unearthed. At the same time, postings were appearing on the Ringers' Forum about problems and proposed additional means of ageing and sexing of birds. These should contribute to the next edition of Svensson and all ringers are invited to contribute to it from their experience. We had, independently of TRAMS being unearthed and of the forum discussion, been concerned about problems of ageing and sexing some species, including some common species. The final piece of this jigsaw was feedback from John Marchant after he had analysed the CBC maps for 2012.

The outcome? The CBC feedback reinforced the importance of adhering exactly to the coding system laid down by the CBC protocols. It is well worth re-reading the general CBC instructions before the next season begins (and, of course John Marchant's notes which have already been circulated to CBC observers). Exactly the same applies to ringing details - although here it is probably easier not to deviate from the system because the data police are almost always near at hand at the ringing station (even so some errors slip in - SONGT is often seen as the code for Song Thrush rather than the correct SONTN) and moult codes are sometimes incorrectly applied.

It will be worth updating TRAMS and issuing it to all the ringers. The content will change somewhat because some things which we were looking at then are now known to be of no use; some new ideas have been proposed but need validating and some things we were trying are now known to be correct. The aim will be to improve our own ageing and sexing techniques and to add to the national pool of knowledge.

Because of our data entry and checking system, we rapidly discover the relatively few cases where we have aged or sexed birds inconsistently. Perhaps surprisingly, the chief problem maker is the Great Tit. This species has the general reputation of being easy to age with clear contrast between primary and greater coverts. We have not always found this so with some less obvious birds being examined particularly closely. The apparent contrast on these birds can change from blindingly obvious to not-at-all depending on the light and angle of viewing. To help with the problem we now have a list of Great Tits which have caused problems in the last year - this is with the ringing kit. When you handle a Great Tit, age it first then check to see if it is on the list. If so, double check by examining its full history in the 'bible'. One thing we do not know is whether all Great Tits can be difficult or whether it is just a small number of individuals which cause problems. Another little analytic job to do with our data archive.

Should we feel particularly bad about our apparent lack of ability to age this simple species? Certainly not! Many ringing operations do not have the high retrap rate we do and some may not examine recapture histories as closely as we do. It is only because of our high recapture rate and rapid checking of data that we discover these things. There has always been pressure on ringers to age and sex birds as precisely as possible - more information can be gained from ringing data if age and sex classes are known exactly. However, there is no point in assigning a precise age code if that age code is not accurate - doing that would lead to wrong conclusions being drawn from the data.

With increased communication between ringers it is becoming more obvious that many individual birds are simply not possible to age or sex reliably. In recent discussion with Jacquie Clark, head of the BTO ringing scheme, she suggested that in her group's experience the Great Tit was the third most likely bird to be misaged and, as we very rarely handle her top two offenders this puts the 'ever-so-easy' Great Tit as our Number 1 trouble-maker.

When ageing and sexing birds, accuracy is far more important than precision. Do not be afraid to age a bird as 'unknown' and, if you are not sure, call it unknown anyway.

Archival data computerisation

Work continues with computerisation of our old data. Peter Wilson has completed entering full nest record data for 1991. He is ready to begin on 1992 data. At present we have computerised, for each nest, just summary data - species, location, numbers of eggs, hatchlings, fledgelings, first egg date etc. Once the work is completed we will have computerised access to the individual visit information to every nest recorded with all the enhanced opportunities for analysis that it will bring.

Josh King continues to extract species records from text files and format them for loading into the NWT species records database. The extraction process is nearly complete with just a handful of years remaining to be dealt with.

Our ringing data, although computerised, have not all been submitted to the BTO ringing database. Prior to 1995 all ringing records nationally were submitted on paper only. Recently we have been gradually working through pre-1995 data, making a number of checks that were not possible with the software available at the time, before submitting records. There are only three years left to deal with.

Thanks to all those who have been involved with the computerisation of the archives.

Dormouse release

The People's Trust for Endangered Species is planning another release programme this summer in Treswell Wood. A problem with previous release and monitoring programmes, as has been outlined in earlier issues of Twitter, is that dormouse boxes have to be sited in greater numbers than is good for breeding tits. An excess of boxes leads to many more breeding pairs competing for food and territory. A consequence is that more nests are built, more eggs laid but hatching failure and nestling mortality are so great that fewer tits in total survive to fledging. To overcome this we have designed boxes which we hope will be used by dormice (and other small mammals) but which are not usable by tits. Rob Atkinson's volunteers have manufactured a batch of this design and we have sited 10 in the wood with PTES taking another 14 to test in a wood elsewhere which is known to hold populations of dormice. Our boxes have been in place since January. In that time we have no evidence that any birds have used them for roosting or even inspected them as potential nest sites, but we do think at least one has been visited by a small rodent for hoarding food. The nesting season (when it starts) should confirm that this design is quite undesirable to tits - we hope so.

News from an old friend

Many of you will remember Jose Tavares who worked on Great Tit song on the late 1990s. He now is a Partner Development Officer with the RSPB. His latest project is reported in RSPB News International - making a safe breeding haven for Cory's Shearwaters on the island of Corvo in the Azores. The species has been driven to near extinction on the island by non-native rats and cats. Jose's project is nestboxing on a grand scale. It is a 2.5 hectare fenced area, free from predators where 10 chicks, near to fledging were introduced and hand-fed in their last days before fledging. The hope is that when they come to breed in about seven years' time, they will remember Jose's big 'nestbox' and nest there.

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Barn Owl	4F	GR24203	19/6/2012	Near Laneham

Over recent years there has been a major national effort to monitor Barn Owl populations. This involves trapping adults on the nest. Very many nest sites in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire are systematically checked so there is a reasonable chance that nestling-ringed Barn Owls which survive to breed will be trapped on a nest. This is one such bird, ringed exactly one year earlier at Forwood Farm adjacent to the wood. But it is better than this. At the same time, this bird's mate was also trapped. It bore a ring and was, like this bird, in its first breeding season. It had been ringed by Dave Fogg at Cottam Power Station. Excellent to see one of the farm's birds surviving to breed and interesting to know the natal site of its mate. For the record, the Forwood Farm female moved 7km East South-east, the Cottam male moved rather less, 2km South. Females of many species tend to disperse further than males though it would be unwise to make any generalisation from these two captures.

Great Spotted Woodpecker 4M CT84464 27/1/2013 L07

After enjoying many encounters with this species in recent years, there seem to be fewer about now (only four CBC territories and very little predation of tits' nests by them last year). This is the only individual trapped so far this year. Although they are a major problem to nesting tits and, possibly, the prime cause of the extinction of our Willow Tits, they are spectacular in the hand and very often contrive to be caught when visitors are present. Excellent promoters of the ringing scheme.

Blackbird 5F CT84480 17/2/2013 B03

The breeding season of 2012 was very poor for many species. We only recorded two Blackbird nests of which one failed. The other produced four young of which this is the first to be recaptured. The nest was in a corner of the workers' shed. The pair will need a new site this year as the shed had 'relaxed' so much that it needed replacement.

Song Thrush 5 RS78300 17/2/2013 E02

Our first summer visitor of the year. Song Thrushes are usually absent from the wood during winter and the first of the 'migrants' to return. We suspect their migration is little further than nearby towns and villages, but who knows for certain? We await one of our birds to throw some light on this.

Blue Tit 5 L731765 3/2/2013 D07

In the late winter and early spring, there is always a great deal of fairly local movement by Blue and Great Tits in search of breeding territories. This bird is likely to be one such, having been ringed as a juvenile in the wood in September 2012, it was retrapped at Hillcrest Farm in Treswell village in early January and now is back in the wood again, possibly to remain to breed, possibly to move on elsewhere.

Blue Tit 6 V666940 17/3/2013 Q02 Feeder

Where do they hide? This bird was ringed as a nestling in May 2010. This its first recapture. It is unusual for one of our nestlings to remain so long without being captured, particularly when its first capture is at the feeding station. It obviously uses the feeding station so how has it avoided capture for so long? Has it been living elsewhere?

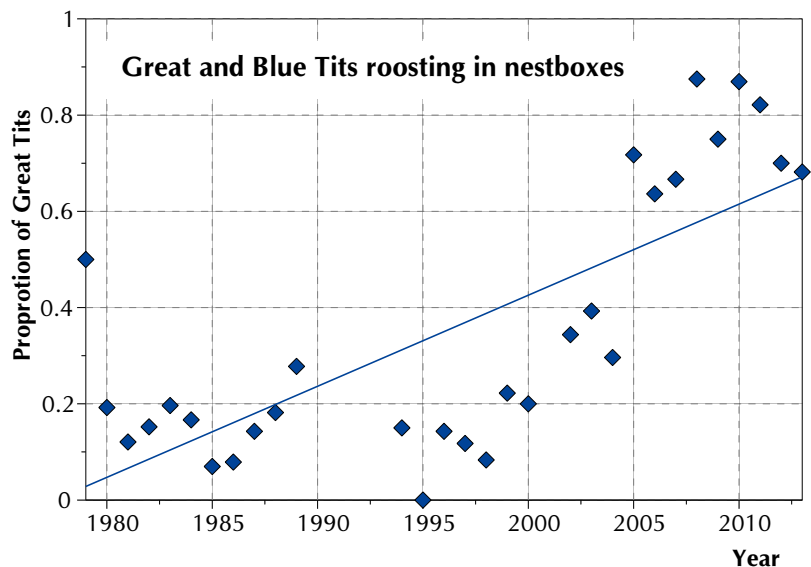
Blue Tit 6 X649317 3/2/2013 F04 Feeder

From time to time a Blue Tit poses a problem with ageing; happily less frequently than do Great Tits. This is one such bird. We know from its ringing history that it is now a respectably aged adult having been ringed as a juvenile in 2009. We also know it is a male from a capture in May 2010 when it had a clear cloaca and no brood patch. On this capture it was noted to have dull primary coverts and it was not clear from the plumage whether it was an adult or first winter bird. It is most unusual for an old male to be hard to age. More commonly it is old females which may have green-tinged primary coverts contrasting slightly with the greater coverts. However, such females' primary coverts are also far more glossy than those of first winter birds.

Great Tit 4F V053991 25/1/2013 L02 Roosting

This winter's roosting birds have been more numerous than for several years and several have interesting capture histories. This is the oldest bird, ringed as a first winter bird in October 2006. That age alone is noteworthy. However, in addition, we also trapped it as a nesting adult in a nearby box in 2009 and had not seen it since August 2011. Of the other roosting birds, several had been found on successive occasions and there was a much higher proportion of females than usual.

Over recent years we have noticed that Great Tits comprise an increasing proportion of the roosting birds but we have never before examined the data in detail. Happily, the historic time series does support our feelings. The diagram shows the proportion of roosting tits which are Great Tits. As with other



aspects of the data set - CBC territories, ringing captures and nest records, here we have evidence of a major change in the balance between the two most common tit species.

Great Tit 4F X649183 27/2/2013 R-2 Roosting

At three years and 8 months since ringing as a juvenile this is quite a respectably-aged bird. It also has a respectable history. All captures have been in the north-west corner of the wood including captures as a breeding adult in both 2010 and 2012 in box 5, another capture as a roosting bird in the same box in January 2013 and this capture, roosting in an adjacent box. We rarely catch Great Tits in the nest as they are liable to desert if handled before the young hatch. If we find them in the nest once young are a week or more old, handling them is quite safe. This female seemed to linger longer in the nestbox when feeding her young giving us a much greater opportunity of catching her there.

Chaffinch 6M R558937 17/3/2013 R00

Quite a vintage bird. We ringed this as a first winter bird in December 2006 and have retrapped in most years since then. Some Chaffinches are absent for two or three years between one capture and the next. We assume they have breeding territories outside the wood and appear only when visiting the feeding station. This one, though, is clearly a woodland resident with several captures during various breeding seasons, always in the north-west corner of the wood. How does it compare with our other aged Chaffinches? The record for the wood is 9 years and 5 months so this bird still has well over three years before reaching that record. It is only our 15th oldest recorded Chaffinch but is still in the top percentile.

Chaffinch 6F X649874 4/1/2013 Hillcrest Farm, Treswell

We ringed this bird in the wood in October 2010 and have not retrapped it there since. The species seems to be fairly mobile locally as we often retrap birds in the wood that we have not seen for two or three years but this is only the fifth to be retrapped at Hillcrest Farm. Of the total of 1944 Chaffinches we have ever trapped, 51 have been ringed or found elsewhere and only two at any great distance from the wood - Sutton Coldfield and Utrecht in Holland.

10 Week Summary 2013 Interval 1, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Dunnock	1	1	.	1	1	.	4
Robin	1	2	.	2	4	.	9
Blackbird	5	7	.	2	1	.	15
Goldcrest	.	1	.	2	5	.	8
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	9	.	.	9
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	3	.	.	3
Coal Tit	.	.	.	1	1	.	2
Blue Tit	.	1	.	4	4	.	9
Great Tit	.	2	.	3	4	.	9
Treecreeper	1	.	.	2	1	.	4
Chaffinch	.	1	.	1	.	.	2
Bullfinch	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Totals	8	17	.	30	21	.	76

CBC codes - the confusables, the omissions and uncertainties

Beware of **misuse of these codes**:

GF is Golden Pheasant, not Greenfinch (GR) or Goldfinch (GO).

CU is Curlew, not Cuckoo (CK).

WT is Willow Tit, not Whitethroat (WH).

GW is Garden Warbler, not Green Woodpecker (G).

Some **species are not included** in the census, or are noted by some observers but not others. This leads to uncertainty about the status of common species not recorded at all (RL Red-legged Partridge, CD Collared Dove, LW Lesser Whitethroat, WH Whitethroat, GC Goldcrest, RO Rook, SG Starling, GR Greenfinch, LI Linnet, Y Yellowhammer) or with very few registrations (WP Woodpigeon, MG Magpie, JD Jackdaw, C Carrion Crow). Please can all observers record all species, including flyovers and birds just outside the boundary of the wood.

Some observers ring every registration, rather than using the **standard activity codes**. John has not been able to assume, when drawing the territories, that every circled registration indicates a singing male. Inclusion of activity codes would improve the survey. If you have misplaced the list of codes, please ask for a new copy.