

TWITTER

2018/2

Number 117

Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

May 2018 Treswell Wood IPM Group

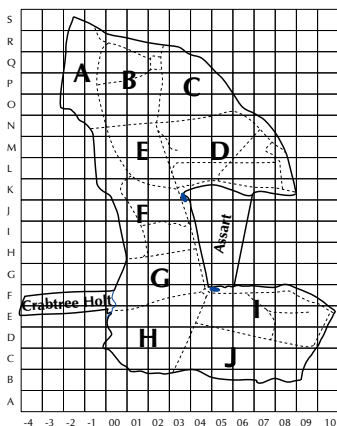
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

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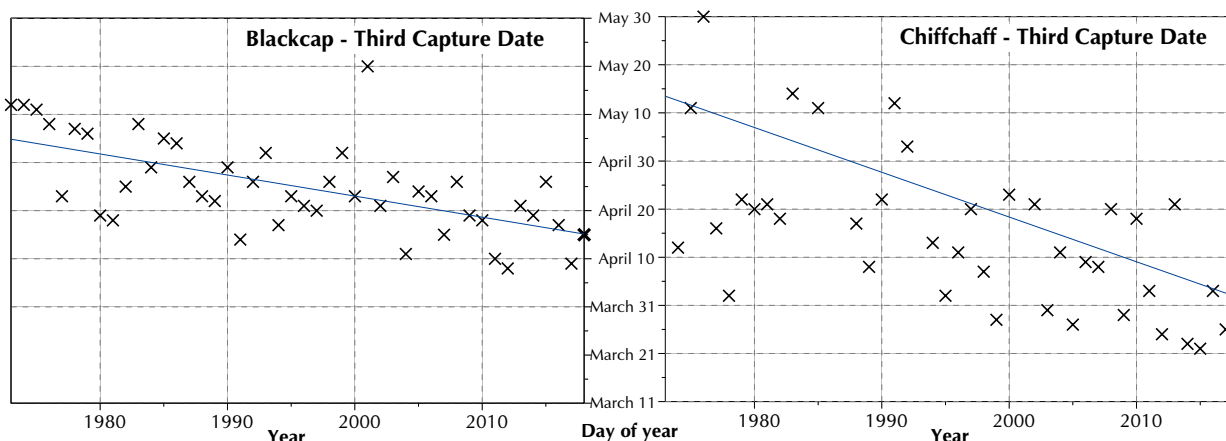
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The weather has been difficult for humans and wildlife alike. The wood is wetter than we can remember - many gardeners and farmers are saying much the same about their land. Spring flowers seemed to be later than usual with a rather different balance of species. Wood Anemone seems to be flowering in many more small clumps but the main flowering patches were relatively short-lived. Bluebells did not seem to provide the same carpets as usual although Greater Stitchwort bloomed in abundance. Primroses have continued to flower for several weeks and Lady's Smock is blooming along much more of the main ride and in various glades. Coltsfoot has put on a wonderful display on the heap of ride surfacing material in the car park - 300 blooms make quite a sight, as do 300 seed heads a little later, all working in synchrony. Early Purple Orchids have had a poor year with only 50 blooms at the east end of Nightingale Ride compared to a maximum of 400 and average of about 200. The nearby patch on the Green Lane, though, has increased from about 20 spikes to 40. Frogs have benefited from the wet with the ditches remaining under water for much longer than usual which should allow many tadpoles to survive to adulthood rather than die as the water drains away.

We have heard or seen several species which we are unlikely to catch. Ravens are now not uncommonly heard or seen over the wood. A Peregrine was seen hunting over the assart and a Grey Wagtail observed on the edge of Crabtree Holt. Mallard are recorded fairly often, usually near the assart pond.

The number of birds caught in our standard sites (108) is just a little lower than average (110) and very much lower than last year's record high (198). This is a little disappointing after the number caught in the first 10-week standard site cycle was a little above average. It is possible that late arrival of summer visitors may have reduced the total number caught. But, did the summer visitors arrive late or not?

Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs arrive in sufficient numbers for us to be able to look at the historical records. We know that we need to beware of statistical outliers: 'One Swallow does not make a summer'. The first bird may be unrepresentative of the rest - perhaps an over-wintering individual which did not have to travel across Europe to reach its breeding territory. However, if we ignore the first two captures and note the date of the third, that should reduce the effect of the exceptionally early birds and give a more reliable idea of the timing of arrival. For both species there is a clear trend for earlier arrival, more marked in the Chiffchaff than Blackcap. Blackcap arrival this year is more or less at the expected time whereas Chiffchaff arrival is about a week later than expected - although still much earlier than in former times. It is likely that the late tit nesting was driven by the prolonged cold and often wet weather in March and April whereas warbler arrival was driven by factors outside the country.



The breeding season is in progress. Our initial feeling was that things were later than in recent years. The earliest Blue Tit egg was probably laid on 20th April (but we cannot be sure until we have looked at all nest records in detail once the breeding season is over). The graph shows the history of first egg dates over the years and this

confirms our impression that it is a late year - much on a par with dates 30 years ago. The earliest first egg date is probably not too reliable a measure of timing because it depends on one nest only - the statistical outlier problem again. A much more reliable measure is the median first egg date but that we will not know until the end of the season. First egg date will have to suffice for the time.

Bird diversity and Coppicing

Max has completed his dissertation at Nottingham Trent University in which he looked at bird diversity in an unmanaged part of the wood (Nightingale Ride) and a coppiced part (Windy Ride). Readers will recall the paper by Andrew MacColl in which the connection between bird abundance and age of coppice was examined. Max's work is related but looks at something different - diversity rather than abundance. He also (wisely) confined himself to two of our standard sites only. In summary his results show that diversity in the unmanaged area has declined over the years. This is not unexpected - generally our national bird populations have suffered in recent years - woodland birds in particular. The decline in diversity in this unmanaged area is just a reflection of the overall local picture. On the other hand, diversity in the managed area remains generally higher than in the unmanaged area although, as with bird abundance, diversity may be very low in the year or two after coppicing before climbing to a peak, then drifting back slowly to 'unmanaged' levels as the coppice ages.

The importance of Max's work is that it has acted as a pilot project which provides a sound basis for a study on a much larger scale. Thanks to Max for his work.

Ash dieback

Last year it was apparent that many of the wood's ash trees were infected with dieback. However, it was only by taking a close look that this could be seen. To the casual observer all would look well. This year it looks as if things will be far, far more obvious. Many saplings and young shoots growing from coppiced stools will not come into leaf and many more mature trees will have branches that are dead and leaf-free.

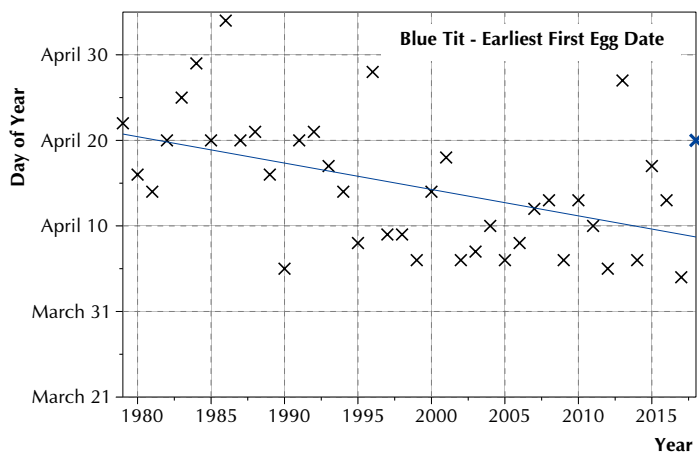
Michael Gilman from Lincoln University is engaged in a long-term study of woodland regeneration in the assart. In last autumn's survey he found almost all ash seedlings in the assart were infected and dying, if not already dead (see Twitter 115). He now has a student who will look at ash throughout the wood rather than just in the assart. This will, as a minimum, give an idea of the real extent of the disease. We hope, though, it will give much more, providing insights into the impact of various factors (such as coppice management, density and age of trees) on the spread of disease within the wood and within individual trees

Frass

We are very pleased that our frass data, collected over the last seven breeding seasons, have contributed to a major study of the timing of the caterpillar crop in relation to the demands for food of nestling tits - *Tritrophic phenological match-mismatch in space and time*, (Malcolm Burgess, Ken Smith et al. in *Nature Ecology & Evolution*). Ken Smith does all the work of separating frass from dross, then drying and weighing the frass. All the study sites except Treswell Wood are in pure oak woodland. In earlier issues of Twitter, the results shown demonstrate that Treswell's frass crop is lower than in pure oak woodlands but, more importantly, that ash seems to produce very little at all. We wondered whether what we have found under ash results from drift from nearby oak rather than from the ash above the collecting tray. To test this we have now installed an additional tray in an area which is free of oak. Any frass collected here will come from ash. Of course, this will give Ken additional work of separating the frass from debris but we suspect that it will not take him very long to weigh what is left.

Tony Kennedy - Thank-you and Goodbye

News that Tony was retiring from his role as volunteer manager of Treswell Wood has come as a shock to us all - he is one of those people who has been around for as long as anyone can remember, can always be relied upon to do whatever is needed, and we cannot imagine being without. The Trust has owned Treswell Wood for 45 years and my guess is that Tony must have been involved for at least half that time - he will be the only one who knows exactly when he first made his skills available to ensure that there was someone based near-by who could deal with the problems which constantly arise in 45 hectares of woodland with volunteers and contractors, birders and botanists, photographers and dog-walkers all wanting to enjoy or exploit access to one of the County's finest woodlands. Tony and his volunteers have kept our rides open, cleared our fallen trees, helped manage our boundaries, completed countless 'burns' to create our charcoal, and repaired the damage caused by the occasional



villains who sadly visit us from time-to-time. We probably do not know half the things Tony has done or organised and hope his absence will not cause too many crises. So it is a very big 'Thank you', and do keep coming back to see us whenever you can.

Watch out for Springwatch

If all goes to plan, Treswell Wood and its Tree Slugs will feature in one of this year's BBC Springwatch episodes. You have been warned.

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Robin	6M	Z782478	22/4/2018	M00

We find Robins are not always easy to age. This one appeared to have a sudden break between outer, unmoulted greater coverts with very well marked 'rose thorn' tips and the inner unmarked adult coverts. Tail shape is not always reliable because we have recorded juveniles of many species moulting tail feathers in their post-juvenile moult. In fact it was an adult, having been ringed as a juvenile in 2016. Clearly the presence of large tip markings on the outer coverts, even with a moderately sharp (rather than absolute) break between marked and unmarked coverts is not a reliable indicator of age.



Song Thrush	6	RS78290	15/4/2018	N02
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When we caught this bird we realised from the ring number that it had been ringed some years previously. On examination of the database it was shown to be our oldest Song Thrush on record. - 6 years and 260 days since ringing, as an adult in July 2011. That makes it at least 8 years old. The next oldest in the wood is 5 years and 331 days, the national record is 11 years 8 days - some way to go yet to reach this. However, 6y 260d is not to be sneezed at - the typical life length for the species is just 3 years.

Willow Warbler	4	JTE115	22/4/2018	K00
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A very welcome capture of what has become a rarity in the wood. Over the past years most of our very few Willow Warbler captures have been of probable juveniles in the late summer as they moved southwards. This bird could have been just passing through on its northward journey. However, the species has been heard frequently (most weeks) singing throughout the season so far in various parts of the wood. It seems as though this year will be much better for them than for many years and this is confirmed by initial reports from the CBC observers.

Lesser Whitethroat	4	ANA7220	22/4/2018	M00
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Another uncommonly caught warbler on the same day as the Willow Warbler. One Lesser Whitethroat was caught in 2017 and, in total, we have only ringed 34 individuals. There are occasional CBC records of probable breeding but only one confirmed territory ever (1982). At least one individual has been heard singing by the CBC observers this year, so it may be that this bird has stayed rather than just passing through the wood on its northward journey.

Chiffchaff	4F	EYD430	13/5/2018	G04
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It is always pleasing to see an old friend - particularly such a small bird which has managed to survive at least 4 winters, probably migrating at least to and from the Iberian peninsula each time. We ringed it as a breeding female in 2015; we did not see it in 2016 but retrapped it in 2017, again in breeding condition as it was on this capture. Welcome back.

Blackcap	4M	Z782360	29/4/2018	P01
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This is the third year in which this bird has been caught in the wood. In May 2016 it was ringed in the south of the wood. At the end of May it was retrapped in the north of the wood. It seems now as if it had just arrived from its winter quarters when it was first ringed and this second capture - by which time it was in breeding condition - took place where it had managed to secure a territory. It was retrapped in 2017 in the same northern part of the wood - again in breeding condition and this year's capture is also in this part of the wood. No need now for it to explore the south of the wood on arrival as it knows where its territory is waiting.

Coal Tit	6F	D309604	1/4/2018	Q03
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This was not an April Fool's joke but now a seriously old little bird. Typical life span for the species is just two years. This bird, ringed as a juvenile in 2014 has lasted two and a half times its expected life span. It has been recaptured in every year since ringing except 2017. All captures have been at feeding stations, mostly in winter months. However on this capture, and in its capture in May 2015, it was in breeding condition with sufficient development of the brood patch to be able to identify it as a female. Although the ageing and sexing guides advise

use of the shape and size of the black bib to identify sex, we have found this to be about as reliable as tossing a coin. Males tend to have longer wings than females but, again there is a great deal of overlap between the sexes. Our recaptures of birds, such as this, which we can sex on brood patch or cloaca, have convinced us of the advice in BWP that *individual variation is great in both sexes and determination of sex is often impossible*.

Blue Tit **5** **ANA7067** **25/3/2018** **Q03**

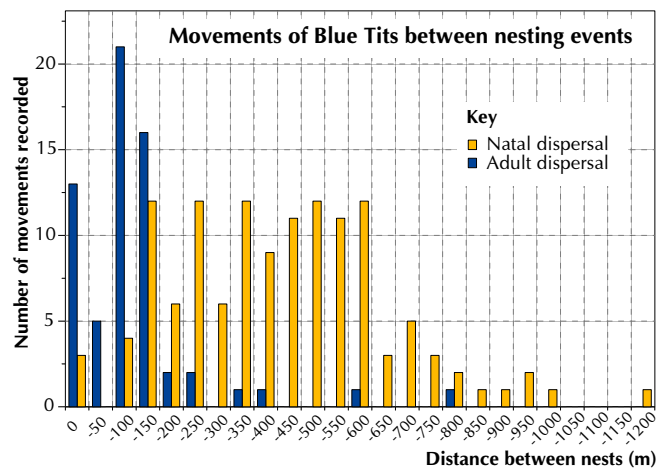
From time to time we have records of tits leaving the wood for the winter, being captured some distance away before returning to the wood the following spring. This bird was ringed in the wood in the middle of October last year and, two weeks later caught by Peter Cobb at Darlton. It has returned. Whether it remains in the wood to breed or is merely using the wood on passage to somewhere else we do not know.

Blue Tit **6F** **D309061** **14/5/2018** **M01** **On nest**

This bird has a fairly well documented history. This is its 27th capture in the wood. It was ringed as a juvenile in 2013 so has already lasted over twice its expected life span. In that time we have captured it only nine times in mist nets. The other captures have all been either when it was roosting or else nesting in a box. It always nests in one of two boxes about 50 metres apart in block E but its winter roosting takes it all of 100 metres northwards to roost in one of four boxes in the centre of compartment B. Hardly a world record for long-distance winter migration.

Blue Tit **6F** **S078585** **10/5/2018** **K00** **On nest**

Like ANA 7067, this bird, from the 2016 nestbox cohort, was caught away from the wood - albeit only as far away as Treswell village - during its first winter. In 2017 it returned and nested successfully in the same box as it was found this year. This capture is, again in exactly the same nestbox. Of its seven young, two have been found nesting in boxes this year - at distances 150m and 450m from their natal nestbox. These two movements prompted a quick look at movements of birds ringed as nestlings which have been subsequently found nesting in boxes. The picture is unsurprising but pleasing to see it so clearly demonstrated. The graph shows 'natal dispersal' (i.e. distance from nest where they were reared to position of first nesting site) and 'Adult dispersal' (i.e. distance between nesting attempts in one year and the next). These data are only for birds initially ringed as nestlings. Note that the data probably under-record the extent of natal dispersal because some birds will move away from the wood (indeed, the longest recorded movement was from a nestling ringed at Stanhope Farm at the south of the wood to a nest site in the north. All other movements were strictly within the wood. Note that the 0 bars indicate a bird used exactly the same box for two successive breeding attempts (or nested in its natal box).



Great Tit **6F** **D309675** **25/3/2018** **Q03**

This is our most captured Great Tit now with 34 captures to its credit - its nearest rival only managed 28 captures. There are five Great Tits with more records in our data set but these are all birds which had been colour-ringed and resighted by Jose Tavares and Ulli Langemann in their Great Tit song work in the 1990s. In spite of the large number of captures (or because of them?) this bird seems fairly sedentary - all its appearances have been in either compartments B or C - and it has built this record in only three years. Its captures include two on a nest (same box in 2016 & 2017), seven while roosting (in a total of four boxes including its nesting box), 12 in mist nets away from feeders and the rest mist-netted at the feeding station.

Blue Tit **5F** **S877312** **8/4/2018** **K02**

This was ringed on 30th October at Retford Sewage Works by North Notts. Ringing Group. We have recorded several birds in the past which have been caught in autumn and winter in the Retford area then moved to the wood for the breeding season.

Of particular note is the speed with which details of this bird were provided by the BTO system. Details were submitted with the 10-week batch of data to the BTO late in the afternoon of May 15th. Confirmation that data had been checked and loaded came early in the afternoon of May 18th together with ringing details of this bird. A far cry from the 'old' days when manual processing of such data could mean a wait of several weeks between reporting the bird and receiving its ringing details. Well done, BTO ringing staff.

Jay 5 DK98436 15/4/2018 N00

We catch, on average, two Jays a year. This is our first for the year. We had ringed it in the autumn of 2017. Of the 86 individuals we have ever ringed, 33 have a live recapture history within the wood, four have been shot elsewhere, one found dead elsewhere and the rings of two more found in our Tawny Owl nests.

House Sparrow 5M TT49348 29/4/2018 Q04

In former times we could only age these sparrows as 'full grown' at this time of year because juveniles have a full autumn moult. However, guidance in Demongin's guide suggest that males can be aged as first year birds by looking at the median coverts - adults have almost all white coverts, first year birds have white only on the distal part of these coverts - as did this bird.

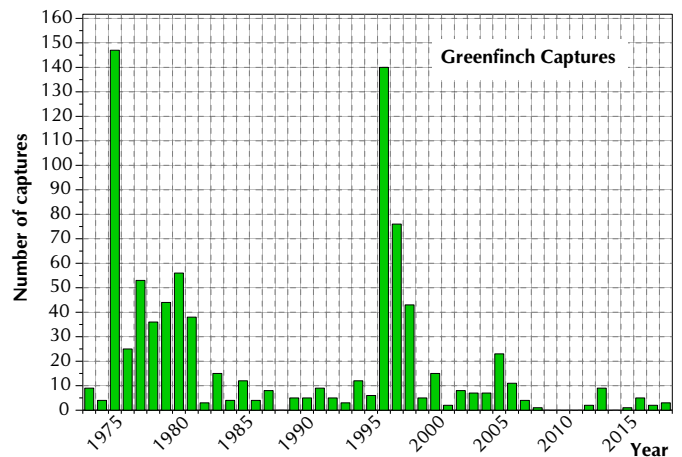
This is the first House Sparrow we have caught since early 2017 when we had a total of 11 captures of the species.

Goldfinch 6M ANA7224 29/4/2018 Q04

This is one species which we do catch more often than in earlier years, although we hear and see them in the tree tops far more often than we catch them. Curiously the pattern of captures over the past two years is much the same as for House Sparrows - 18 caught in late 2016 or early 2017 followed by no more until this one.

Greenfinch 6F TT49346 15/4/2018 Q03

This species used to be much more common nationally, locally and within the wood. Numbers declined because of the spread of the lung disease trichomonosis. Greenfinches are now very rarely caught in the wood - this is our second this year. The graph shows the sad decline in catches in the wood. The peak in 1976 resulted from the drought which brought many birds to drink at the pond. In the following years it remained fairly common, often caught at Pheasant feeding stations. The sudden fall in the early 1980s coincided with a far less-dramatic fall in the overall national population but which was probably more noticeable in woodland than in some other habitats. The spike in the mid-1990s was almost exclusively of birds caught at our feeding station (not the Pheasant feeding stations) but did not seem to be driven by any change in the national population - this recovered some 10 years later before its rapid decline after the arrival of trichomonosis.

**Bullfinch 4M Z782947 22/4/2018 K00**

According to ageing and sexing guides, Bullfinches do not usually moult carpal coverts during their post-juvenile moult. Thus a bird with a brown-edged carpal covert can be reliably aged as in its first year until its first full moult in its second summer. This bird was examined closely and used to show trainee ringers the ageing technique. The carpal covert was clearly of the adult type. On later examination of ringing details we found it had been ringed the previous year still in full juvenile plumage (and that is very hard indeed to misidentify). However, the various guides also note that a very small proportion can moult the carpal coverts and so will be misaged using this feature. There is no precise figure given but the suggestion is 'one or two in several hundreds' - perhaps about 0.5%

Looking back through our records of Bullfinches ringed still in juvenile plumage (which we can assume have not been misaged at the point of ringing) we find 150 have had a subsequent recapture after losing their juvenile plumage but before their first full moult the following autumn. Of these eight were identified in the hand as adults with the grey-tipped carpal coverts. In five of these cases there are notes on the field sheet which make it clear that the carpal covert has been examined very closely. This gives a post-juvenile carpal covert moulting rate of around 5%, rather higher than the earlier quoted rate. The first of these birds was ringed in 1989 and all the rest ringed from 2005 onwards.

Jenni & Winkler's guide to moult and ageing does note that the extent of post-juvenile moult varies between years and places; indeed in southern Europe some juveniles may undergo a complete moult just as do adults. Treswell Wood enjoys a very high recapture rate of its ringed birds. For that reason we are more likely to notice this (and similar) problems with ageing and sexing techniques - the ringer who rarely has retraps is clearly not in a position to detect these problems. We wonder whether the earlier breeding season together with possibly extended autumn gives more time for moulting allowing more juveniles to moult these coverts. That is consistent with the lack of similarly misbehaving birds in earlier years.

In future we must also examine the edges of the alula which should show, albeit less clearly than the carpal covert, the same difference between brown-edged juvenile feathers and grey-edged adult feathers.

10-Week Summary: 2018 Interval 2, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	3	4	.	4	2	.	13
Dunnock	1	1	.	.	.	.	2
Robin	2	3	.	6	2	.	13
Blackbird	2	3	.	3	1	.	9
Song Thrush	1	1	.	3	.	.	5
Lesser Whitethroat	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	8	3	.	.	.	.	11
Chiffchaff	10	1	.	4	.	.	15
Willow Warbler	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Long-tailed Tit	1	.	.	1	.	.	2
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	2	1	.	3
Blue Tit	.	1	.	5	7	.	13
Great Tit	.	1	.	1	6	.	8
Treecreeper	.	1	.	1	2	.	4
Jay	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Chaffinch	.	3	.	3	.	.	6
Bullfinch	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Totals	30	22	.	34	22	.	108

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

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Maximum	128	198	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	89	66	59	364
Mean	91	113	159	130	124	615

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	150	109	120	605

Totals from 2000 onwards

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
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
2013	76	90	89	100	157	512
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	149	163	779
2018	95	108				