

# Treswell Wood

# Nestbox Report - 1994

## Treswell Wood nestboxes 1994

In the early 1980s, after looking after the Treswell Wood nestboxes for a mere 3 or 4 years, I thought I knew it all. There were three types of year - good, bad and ordinary. Now after 16 seasons I am sure that there is only one type of year, namely, different from all previous years.

Nationally the season has been poor for tits with small numbers of nests, low nest success and probably low post-fledging survival. Treswell Wood has behaved in much the same way, unlike the past three years when we went against the national pattern and suffered terrible years. This year, then, is an improvement of sorts.

The real winners this year were Wrens. Normally there are a handful of nests, but this year we have had 10 nests with eggs laid and more boxes used for so-called cock nests. (The cock builds several nests and the hen selects the most suitable for nesting. Other nests may be selected later for second or third broods.) I have tried a new technique with Wrens this year with some success. As soon as a box shows signs of use by Wrens, I put up two more near it - perhaps 5 or 10 metres distant. Since the male is clearly well enough educated to select a box for a nest site, he should have the good sense to choose other boxes for his other nest attempts. Two such boxes have been used in this way. The Wrens continued their nesting until mid-August, not an ideal time for nestbox recorders amidst rampant bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, nettle *Urtica dioica* and goosegrass *Galium aparine* cocktail. Normally I have put up open-fronted boxes for Wrens. In addition this year I have used standard tit boxes with an oversize entrance hole (50 mm diameter). These have been used by Wrens (and one by a Robin).

## Events in Treswell Wood Nestboxes 1994

Species	Nesting attempts	Successful nests	Young fledged	Retrapped
Wren	10	9	41	8
Robin	1	1	5	1
Marsh Tit	1	1	9	4
Coal Tit	2	1	9	0
Blue Tit	18	15	124	9
Great Tit	26	4	40	2

Note: The actual number of Great Tits fledged is probably fewer than 40. This number includes all the birds whose rings were not recovered from nests which were depredated at a late stage in the nesting cycle. It is possible that some of these birds hopped away from the predator, but more likely that they were carried off and eaten elsewhere.

Recapture figures for birds within the wood are correct to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1994

Great Tits began well, with 26 nests started in boxes. Of these only 20 were used for laying, and of these only 4 succeeded in producing any fledged young. Causes of failure included depredation (11) (probably by stoats *Mustela erminea* and wood mice *Apodemus silvaticus*), rain (2), bees (1) and desertion from unknown causes (8). The rain killed young, not directly, because boxes remained dry inside, but by making conditions so hard for parents to find increased amounts of food (needed because of cool weather) and to remain themselves dry. Desertions may have been caused by adverse weather conditions or by killing of one parent by a predator. We have achieved fewer Great Tits fledged from boxes, but only just (30 in 1993). What promised to be a good year at first did not turn out so well. This year was the pilot year for a PhD study, by José Tavares from Nottingham University, involving Treswell Wood Great Tits.

Blue Tits suffered less than Great Tits, although there were some wet weather losses. Sadly one of our two Coal Tit broods also failed because of the rain. Our one Marsh Tit nest succeeded and at one stage we had recaptured more free-flying young from this brood than from all the Blue Tit broods combined. The female Marsh Tits is an experienced bird - the table shows her long retrap history - so she was expected to perform well.

**Marsh Tit H229133**

- 8-12-91 First capture, retrapped 3 times over the winter.
- 3-5-92 Nesting in nestbox 27, her first breeding season. Her mate, E893706 captured nearby later in the month. E893706 a bird which fledged in 1988 - quite an oldie. Eight young reared.
- 2-5-93 Nesting in nestbox 90, about 100 m away from box 27. Seven young reared.
- 12-12-93 Captured together with E893706. Presumably they had bred together again in 1993.
- 24-4-94 Captured near box 29 with J033615, a male which fledged in 1993.
- 7-5-94 Nesting in box 29, midway between her two previous nesting sites. Nine young reared.

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Chris du Feu, December 2000