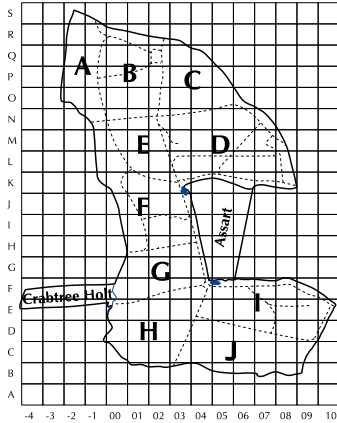


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

October 2025 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Ellen Marshall

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John Clark

2025/4

Number 154

www.treswellwoodipmg.org



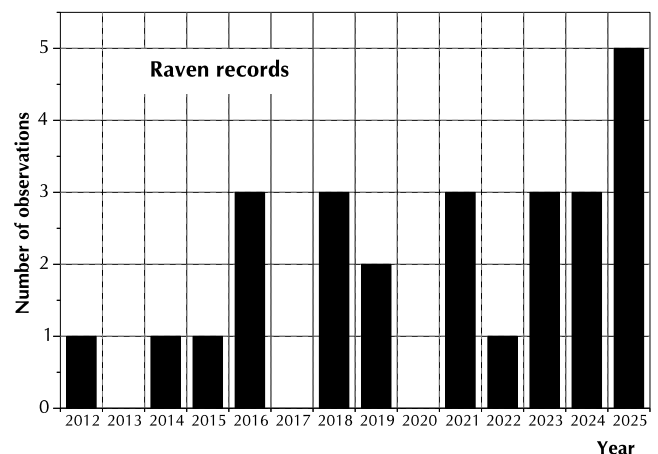
Weather yet again: wind and rain caused two missed weeks, one visit moved from Sunday to Saturday because of forecast rain, one visit with a later start than desirable. Overall it has been a very difficult year in relation to weather. The situation is worsened by increasing danger of falling branches from Ash weakened by dieback. Even with the rain which has fallen, much of the ground remains very dry. The Piccadilly pond and ponds in the assart have just small muddy patches in the bottoms with no standing water. The assart itself is very dry with numerous large cracks in the regenerating woodland floor.

In spite of these challenges, we have managed to complete all the seven standard site visits just by the deadline. Although there seems to be a lack of Blackbirds, and Chaffinches in particular, we had the impression that captures were higher than usual. For once this impression was supported by data. Captures in the standard sites, which is our best measure of bird abundance, have been the highest for this period since 2019 and the 146 captures are comfortably above the long-term average of 128. We have also enjoyed captures of large numbers of, mostly juvenile, birds moving around the wood in flocks. These captures of flocks, typically tits and warblers, were fairly frequent in autumn in the first 20 years of ringing in the wood. Now they seem very rare indeed. Taking a fairly arbitrary number of 30 birds caught at one time as indicating a flock, the last time we caught one was in 2019, with two such events in 2018 and only two others since the turn of the millennium. This year in September we have enjoyed three such events. Chance or an underlying very good year?

Ken Smith has analysed the frass (caterpillar droppings) as usual and we now have the results. A full report will appear in the next issue of TWITTER. In summary this year's abundant frass crop is consistent with the success of the tit nesting season. As usual the frass collected below Ash was far less than that collected below Oak. We wonder what effect Ash dieback has on caterpillars. Fewer leaves will be found on diseased trees but we have no idea whether the disease affects the food value of the leaves that do emerge.

Other species

We record casual sightings and 'hearings' of birds during our visits to the wood. Some time ago we showed a graph of the number of Buzzard records we had made through the years, clearly showing its increasing presence in the area. It is rare now not to hear or see one during a mist netting visit. The first CBC territory mapped was in 2008 and it now a regular breeder (and we have found active nests twice). More recently Ravens have begun to appear over the wood. The first was in 2012 with gradually increasing numbers of records since then. However only in 2016 did it appear in the CBC record as a casual passer by. Almost all our records are of birds overhead outside the breeding season, as would be expected for a sedentary species. The first non-historical records in Nottinghamshire were in the mid 1980s but it was not until 2006 that there was confirmed breeding in the western forested area of the county. It is now a firmly established breeding bird in the Dukeries and Sherwood Forest. Maybe it will not be long before it spreads further east in the county? The graph shows our records since the first in 2012.



In spite of, or because of, the season's weather Oaks have cropped exceptionally heavily with carpets of acorn below many trees. (This is not unique to the wood - I have seen the same in Jersey and Scotland.) This autumn also seems to be a good one for fungi - a pity we do not have a resident mycologist in the group. We have recorded Magpie Ink Cap and Scarlet Elf Cups. A new flowering plant species found in the assart was Hoary Ragwort *Jacobaea erucifolia*. It is not uncommon locally but not recorded in the wood. It flowers later than the common

Ragwort. The BSBI Atlas notes that it is found particularly in 'clays that are wet in winter but baked dry in summer'. That fits the description of the assart very well with its deep cracks opening after this very dry summer.

Usutu and other Mosquito-borne Viruses

Mariana Santos of ZSL visited us in June to take samples as part of the VBRADAR project www.vb-radar.com led by APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) and involving the BTO, ZSL and UKHSA.

She has worked through the samples and we were pleased to hear that she detected neither disease nor antibodies in the samples taken.

Bullfinches again

Ian Newton visited the wood again hoping to be able to photograph a Bullfinch in a mist net for his forthcoming book on the species. Bullfinches are now very uncommon where he lives in Lincolnshire and photographic opportunities there improbable. Alas, none were caught for Ian although his help with the large catch of other species was very welcome.

On his last visit he noted the quality of the understorey in the wood and said that in some places it was exactly what was needed for Bullfinches (and some other woodland species too). Looking around casually it seems that some parts of the wood now do not have a very dense understorey. That is, of course, only an impression. We now have a record of fixed point photography of our standard sites going back to 2012. Some sites (e.g. Nightingale Ride) are not coppiced. We wonder if it would be possible to examine the series of images to be able to assess whether there had been a long term deterioration of the understorey. Student project? AI application?

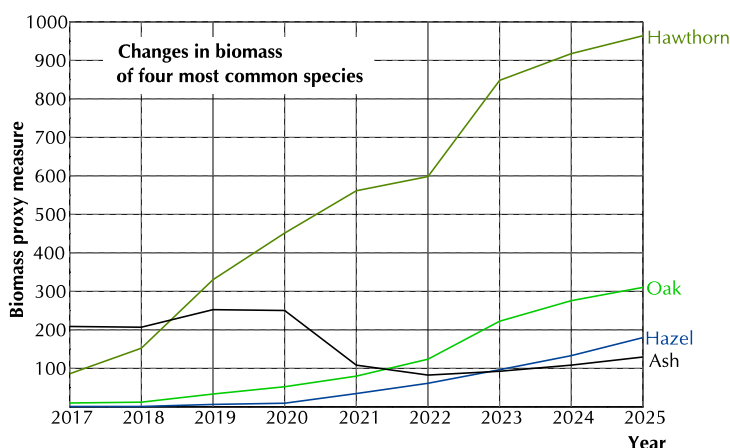
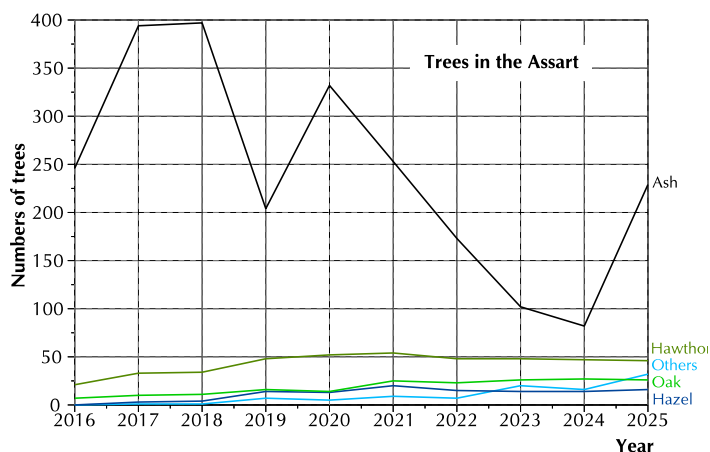
Ian has worked on two more analyses using our data in addition to the work he has done on weights described in the previous issue of TWITTER. We had often remarked that Bullfinches were frequently caught in pairs - male and female. On the assumption that these were stable pairings Ian looked at two things - the ages and sizes of any adult Bullfinches which were caught together in a mist net. Bullfinches can be aged reliably into two categories - first year and older. Their size is represented by the wing length. He took as pairs any two male-female birds that were caught together at the same time on the same day in the same net in the breeding season (April-August). He has also taken data from two other long-term projects albeit with rather smaller samples than Treswell Wood has provided. Overall there is some evidence for selective pairing by age with older birds tending to pair with older birds and younger with younger. As for size there is no evidence that the size of a bird has any connection to the size of its mate.

When John McMeeking initiated the Treswell Wood ringing operation he hoped it would result in 'a paper'. How delighted he would have been to know that the long-term data set he contributed so much to is being used in studies such as this by Ian.

The Assart regeneration

Last year there had been very little germination of trees in the assart. We had assumed this resulted from the dense herb layer smothering any seedling which dared to try to emerge, together with a gradual depletion of the soil seed bank. We were quite wrong. This year there has been noticeable germination, Ash in particular. Last year's lack of new plants now looks to be a result of either a poor Ash seed crop in 2023 or else just the wrong weather for abundant germination.

For the first time recently there has been a big increase in the total number of Ash trees recorded. In spite of that the total biomass of Ash has barely increased. The reason? Most older Ash saplings are dead or dying. The biomass of all the tiny new seedlings, together with the weak growth of older infected trees only just counteracts the loss of biomass caused by trees dying. In the 100 quadrats we sample there are no disease-free ash trees over 1 metre tall and only four over half a metre. It is likely that by next year most of this year's seedlings will be infected. In the whole assart we have only found one Ash which appears



disease free and has been growing all the time we have been recording the assart regeneration. It is not in one of our sampling plots and has, at some point, suffered deer damage and as a result has two equally-sized trunks. It stands at 3.7 metres presiding over a Blackthorn thicket growing where just a few years ago there were about 100 ash seedlings - now all dead.

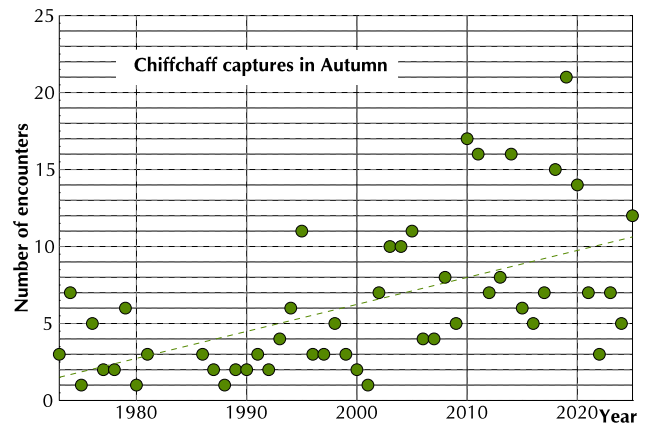
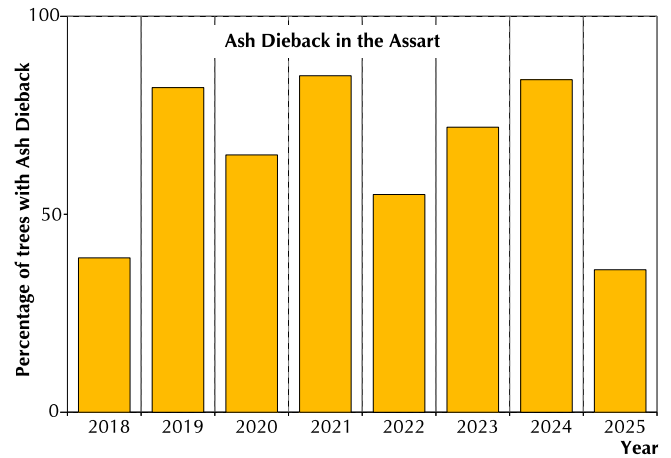
At first glance it seems surprising that the proportion of infected Ash is the lowest since the disease struck. It is unlikely to last. Most Ash seedlings do not show signs of dieback in their first year even if they have been infected. Next year it is likely that many will be infected and some dead. Ash dieback starts at the tips of shoots and works backwards to the trunk. It does not take dieback long to travel from tip to trunk on tiny seedlings.

Another interesting thing is the slight reduction in numbers of Oak in spite of us finding several new seedlings. I wonder if the slight reduction results from some Oaks still being there but not visible under the bramble layer through which they were just showing last year. There were several stunted Oaks which looked to have suffered heavily from deer grazing and is it possible that some of the smaller Oaks found last year have fallen victim to the deer.

Noteworthy Encounters

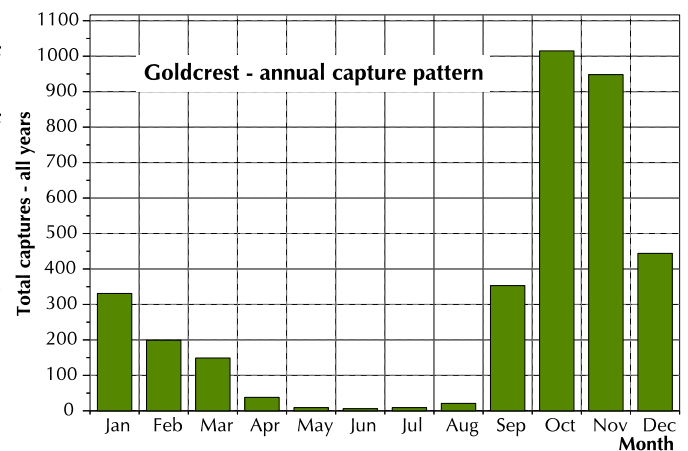
Species	Age/Sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Chiffchaff	3	RCA639	24/08/2025	O06

Chiffchaff numbers have increased over the years. The biggest catches are in the late summer and autumn when the year's new juveniles are joined by birds from elsewhere moving through the wood southward to their winter quarters. This bird, a newly-ringed juvenile, is either a locally reared bird or else one of the passers through. There is no way of knowing which. The graph illustrates the general increase in our catches at this time of year - August to September inclusive. Numbers this year are higher than in the last four years but lower several of the previous 10 years. This year they are almost exactly on the long-term trend.



Goldcrest	3F	RCA644	07/09/2025	D08
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The bird was the first of the autumn influx of the species. Numbers vary a good deal between years depending on the success of the breeding season elsewhere and the ease of the migration. What is fairly constant, though, is the annual pattern of activity as illustrated in the graph. The middle of the year is the low spot. What few breeding birds, if any, are moulting and not likely to be caught but thereafter we will start catching juveniles. September brings the start of the autumn influx and peak numbers are in October. Thereafter numbers dwindle - partly though winter mortality for these, the smallest of British birds, and partly because some will move further south in search of better conditions. By March many survivors will be leaving for their breeding grounds which we presume are further north - either in Britain or across the North Sea leaving, sometimes, just a pair or two to breed in the wood.



Marsh Tit	3	AEZ3977	14/09/2025	Q03
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A retrap from earlier in the year. It is very likely to have been reared in the wood but we have not recorded them nesting in our nestboxes. The numbers of this species in the wood have been going down over the last couple of years. Until then we had thought that Treswell Wood provided ideal habitat for them and remained a local

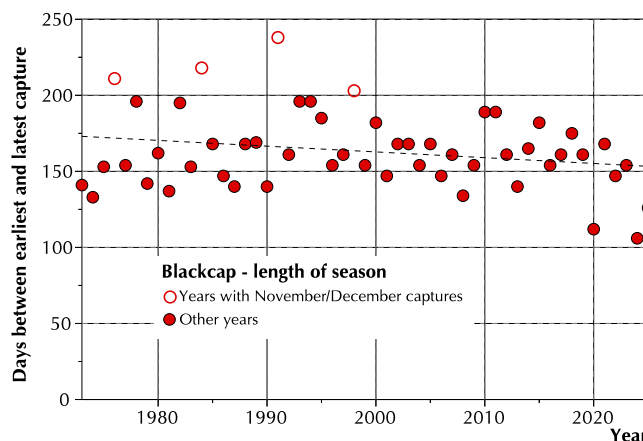
stronghold. With increased understorey damage from browsing deer we wonder now whether the wood is the last remaining local refuge for the species and we may not have it here much longer.

Blue Tit **4** **AAL8867** **28/09/2025** **O02**

A Blue Tit of respectable age, ringed as a nestling in 2022. Curiously it has not been re-encountered before - that is a lapse of 3 years and 4 months. This interval seems unusually long for a resident bird and one might wonder if it was a ring misread - except that a second Blue Tit was also recaptured at the same time after not being seen for nearly three years. More like a pattern than a mis-read.

Blackcap **3J** **BVD0078** **24/08/2025** **M03**

This could be the last Blackcap capture of the year - certainly no more were caught before the end of October. That seems remarkably early. Blackcaps seem a little less numerous than in earlier years when our CES numbers for the species were amongst the highest among all BTO CES sites. It is known that spring is arriving earlier as global warming continues although whether autumn is advancing or retreating is not so often mentioned. We would expect Blackcaps to arrive earlier than previously and stay longer giving a longer Blackcap season. The data tell a different story with a gentle trend towards shortening of the season. On the graph four years in which birds were caught in November or December have been indicated. Not surprisingly these four gave the longest seasons although it seems likely that these birds were part of the continental population which winters with us rather than the summer visitor population. It is interesting to note that all four very late events were over 25 years ago.

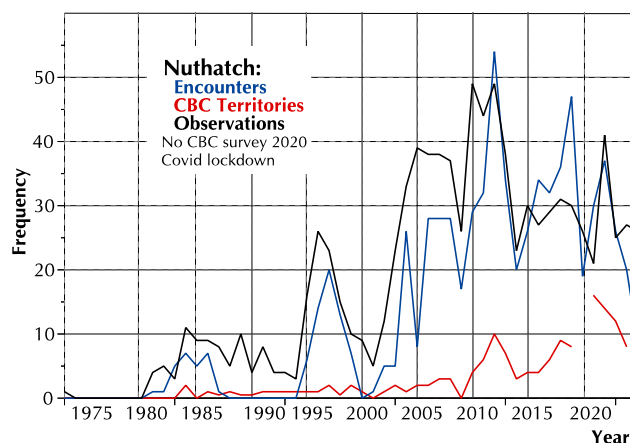


Wren **4** **DRA471** **12/10/2025** **G04**

This Wren was ringed in February 2024 and has since been recaptured five times. This is apparently nothing special except to show how sedentary Wrens can be. All the captures in or out of the breeding season have been in the same run of mist nets and within a radius of just 75 metres.

Nuthatch **4F** **NZ53379** **28/09/2025** **M03**

Nuthatches have had a chequered history in the wood. This bird is one of only four we have caught in the last three months. The graph shows three ways of documenting this history - the 'Encounter' (i.e. captures of birds, ringed or not, in mist nets), CBC breeding territories determined and the number of visits to the wood in which we have heard this rather vocal species. The picture is the same whichever way you look. There was a colonisation in the early 1980s which faded away until another apparently very successful attempt in the late 1990s. There followed a three dismal years after which the population seemed to be secure. The break in the CBC record in 2020 resulted from the Covid lockdown and the 2025 CBC results are not yet analysed. It does seem that numbers are falling again although there are still enough of them calling in the wood to make us aware of their presence.



Blackbird **4M** **LK39282** **18/10/2025** **R-2**

A welcome retrap of a species which has been exceptionally infrequent this autumn - we have only caught five during August to October. This bird is a resident and has been trapped in winter and summer since being ringed in 2022 as a juvenile. Blackbirds are rather more mobile than Wrens (see DRA471 above) but even so this one seems much less a traveller than most of its species - all its captures have been in Compartment A of the wood - an area about 300 metres by 120 metres.

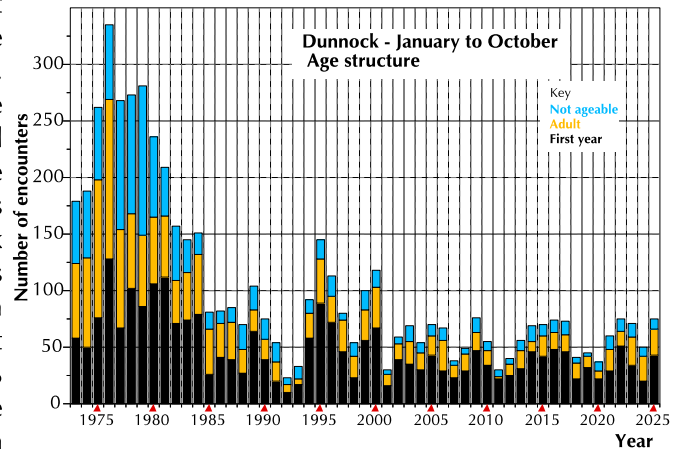
Chaffinch **3M** **BVD0113** **14/09/2025** **Q03**

One of two first year Chaffinches caught today - a welcome change from the recent lack of the species. Even better neither showed any signs of scaly leg mite which has affected so many in the wood (and elsewhere). By the end of

October we had caught just seven Chaffinches - two early in the year and the other five in the autumn. One of these five had scaly leg mite so was released unringed - that is the only infected Chaffinch bird caught recently. With the population so low the opportunities for the mites to spread between birds are reduced so the few birds we have might have some chance of remaining uninfected.

Dunnock 4 TY35107 10/08/2025 Q01

A 'Dunnock Day' with 10 birds encountered of which just this one and one other were adults. The last time we caught as many as 10 on one day was in June 2022 and, before that, it was November 2002. Larger numbers on one day were fairly common in the early years when the wood was often referred to by ringers as 'Dunnock City'. The largest catches tended to be at Pheasant feeding stations during winter. The graph shows our annual Dunnock captures up to the end of October each year which allows comparison with this year's numbers. The long-term fall in numbers is very clear indeed although it would seem that the numbers now are reasonably stable but at about 25% of what they were formerly. The graph also shows the age structure. Dunnocks can be aged as First Year (i.e. from newly fledged until their first full moult after their first breeding season, Adults which are birds older than that and Not Ageable. These are the birds where the plumage characteristics used in ageing are unclear because of feather abrasion or various other reasons.) The percentage of first year birds has varied from 25% to 75% with the average being 47% - which is exactly the same as this year's percentage.



10-Week Summary: 2025 Interval 4, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Coal Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Blue Tit	1	.	17	5	.	6	29
Great Tit	.	.	4	5	.	7	16
Long-tailed Tit	4	.	.	3	.	.	7
Chiffchaff	5	.	5	.	.	.	10
Blackcap	2	.	2	.	.	.	4
Goldcrest	5	.	6	.	.	.	11
Wren	.	.	13	1	.	3	17
Treecreeper	.	.	2	1	.	.	3
Blackbird	1	.	1	1	.	.	3
Robin	.	.	17	1	1	2	21
Dunnock	2	.	16	3	.	1	22
Chaffinch	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Totals	20	.	86	20	1	19	146

Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods - Summary table - 1978 to 2025

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Maximum	128	198	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	57	89	66	59	421
Mean	92	115	161	128	126	612

Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods - 10-year Averages since netting began in 1978

1978 - 1987	90	113	182	140	130	655
1988 - 1997	86	107	170	149	127	637
1998 - 2007	99	107	134	134	125	597
2008 - 2017	93	133	151	109	120	606
2018 - 2024	97	133	174	113	129	658