

TWITTER

1997/1 - Number 11

March 1997

Ringling: By permission of NWT

Project leader: John McMeeking

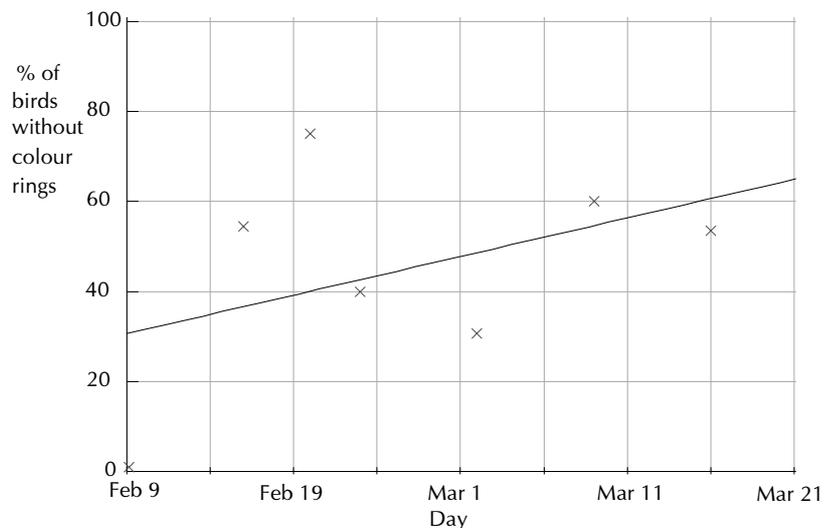
Editors: Richard & Chris du Feu



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Ring

The early part of 1997 will be remembered for the strong winds which lasted for most of February. Unusually, we had four consecutive weekends when our operations were disrupted. Main Ride South was unworkable from the time of its planned visit on 9th February until 9th March, with not much time in hand before the end of the 10 week interval on 17th March. In spite of the unusual weather, the pattern of bird activity continued more-or-less as normal with the influx of Great Tits occurring from mid-February. The figure illustrates the proportion of 'potential new residents' in our Great Tit captures since we began the 1997 colour ringing operation. (A 'potential new resident' is a Great Tit not already wearing a colour ring.) Although there are no Nuthatch recaptures noted below, our visits to the feeders have been blessed with captures of our handful of regulars. Will they manage to use boxes in 1997?

The Spring Great Tit Influx. Newly colour-ringed birds 1997.



Our 5-hour visits gave us the lowest January-March total ever, beating the previous low years of 1982, 1991 and 1992 by a whisker (see the table on page 6). Unlike these earlier years, this year's low seems to be a result of a poor preceding breeding season rather than of a hard winter.

From Margaret Price - Common Bird Census 1996

The BTO has estimated that 67 pairs of Wrens bred in the wood in 1996, (my estimate of 47 in Twitter 10 was grossly over-cautious); this compares with 91 pairs in 95 and 79 in 1994. There was a total of 385 territories in 1996 compared with 449 in 1995 - so this confirms the shortage of birds experienced by the ringers and my feeling that I completed the maps more quickly in 1996 than in 1995.

Andy Wilson of the BTO CBC team noted that:

"... Following the cold winter, we were expecting some of the susceptible small passerines to show a decrease this year. This has certainly been the case for Wren with drops of between 20% and 50% on most CBC plots, but other species have fared surprisingly well. Several species showed decreases at Treswell last year, in line with national changes. Wren and Robin were both down by 26%, although the decrease for Wren was not as large as that following the 1990/91 winter. Perhaps more worrying was the 67% decrease in Song Thrush to just 3 territories - a record low for the plot and especially disappointing following the more encouraging totals in 1994 and 1995. Chaffinch was down but there is little evidence of a long-term population change. The warblers had a mixed season, sylvias increasing slightly while Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler were both down. Chiffchaff had the lowest total since 1988 while Willow Warbler matched the record low of 8 territories set in 1976. All five species of tit showed remarkable stability in numbers between 1995 and 1996, although the two extra Blue Tit territories last year brought its population to within 1 of 1989's total of 84. The net result of last year's changes was a substantial drop in the total number of territories from 449 in 1995 to 385 in 1996."

CBC territories 1976 to 1996

Species	Mean 76 to 79	Mean 1980's	Mean 90 to 94	1995	1996
Sparrowhawk	0.0	0.4	1.0	0	1
Woodcock	2.0	1.5	1.0	0	0
Stock Dove	0.5	0.2	0.0	0	0
Turtle Dove	8.0	1.4	1.0	0	1
Cuckoo	5.2	2.3	1.0	1	0
Tawny Owl	1.2	2.3	1.4	0	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1.5	2.9	2.2	4	3
Wren	59.2	58.7	73.0	91	67
Dunnock	30.2	22.7	13.2	19	14
Robin	57.5	55.8	44.4	57	42
Blackbird	33.2	29.9	21.6	23	25
Song Thrush	31.2	21.2	8.0	9	3
Whitethroat	4.2	2.6	2.0	0	0
Garden Warbler	12.7	14.0	25.2	4	6
Blackcap	17.2	15.0	21.4	18	19
Chiffchaff	14.7	8.3	15.6	17	10
Willow Warbler	21.0	39.8	21.8	15	8
Spotted Flycatcher	1.7	2.5	1.0	0	0
Long-tailed Tit	3.5	3.2	4.2	7	8
Marsh Tit	2.0	0.6	1.4	5	5
Willow Tit	2.5	2.4	2.4	4	4
Coal Tit	2.2	2.1	5.4	7	7
Blue Tit	31.2	60.8	56.6	81	83
Great Tit	11.7	30.5	31.6	34	35
Nuthatch	0.0	0.4	1.0	1	1
Treecreeper	2.3	2.6	3.6	3	2
Jay	3.0	3.2	2.0	1	1
Tree Sparrow	16.2	9.4	0.0	0	0
Chaffinch	31.5	39.1	37.8	43	36
Greenfinch	1.75	0.5	1.0	0	1
Redpoll	4.0	0.4	0.0	0	0
Bullfinch	6.0	3.2	1.6	1	0
Yellowhammer	2.0	0.8	1.5	1	0

It is interesting to compare these comments from the CBC operation with our own constant effort results from 1996. Both CBC and our Standard Site data agree that the numbers of birds/territories during the breeding season was not as large as in 1995, but certainly far from disastrous. One difference between the surveys is that CBC on its own could not detect the magnitude of the breeding failure which was apparent from constant effort netting and nest recording. Concerns by some CBC devotees that CES would make CBC redundant have proved unfounded. CBC, CES and nest recording are three complementary prongs of the study of our bird population. Three cheers for integrated population monitoring!

Noteworthy Captures and Sight Records

Species	Ring	Date	Grid
Kestrel	ES03291	16/3/97	Q02 Feeders
The sixth Kestrel to be captured in Treswell Wood. This one was a young male, still with a good deal of immature plumage. Previous captures of Kestrels were on 13/5/79, 31/1/82, 4/12/83, 4/2/90 and 3/9/95.			
Wren	0Y5918	1/2/97	C03 Roosting
This is only the second of our 1996 nestling-ringed Wrens to be recaptured. It was ringed on 26/6/96 in N99.			

- Robin** **J033659** **2/1/97** **Q02 Feeders**
A bird becoming respectably old. Ringed as a juvenile near the car park (P01) in October 1993 and retrapped once or twice each winter at the feeders or near the car park. Is it a resident or a winter visitor with a regular winter territory?
- Robin** **K463208** **26/1/97** **O04**
A bird with a clear contrast between outer greater coverts with 'juvenile' tips and the inner untipped greater coverts. An obvious '5' which was ringed on 17/9/95. Take care when ageing!
- Song Thrush** **RX57610** **26/1/97** **O06**
A new bird, and rather earlier than the normal spring trickle of these apparent summer visitors. On the same day there was also an influx of unringed Blue Tits at the feeders. Is spring in the air already?
- Chiffchaff** **8Y3134** **16/3/97** **N01**
Ulli heard the first Chiffchaff singing on 11/3/97 and on the following day there were several pairs in the north of the wood. This is quite different from normal when we may hear the odd bird singing, but the main arrival does not happen for another week or so. Richard Johnson (CBC) noted that the arrival was similar this year in other nearby woods. This bird was our first capture of the year. Naturally it was in the standard nets rather than in the nets we had set in the back ride (P01) where we normally catch the first of the year. This is the 4th earliest Chiffchaff capture for us (see Twitter 1 for more information).
- Blue Tit** **J118103** **2/2/96** **F06 Roosting**
A 1993 nestling ringed bird, now reaching a respectable old age. It has been recaptured roosting in three different winters and mist netted three times in autumn and winter, always in the south eastern part of the wood - a long way from its natal area near the car park.
- Blue Tit** **J033770** **26/1/97** **Q02 Feeders**
Ringed at the feeders on 13/3/94 and not seen again until spring 1996, again at the feeders. AWOL again until today, yet again at the feeders. Where does it breed?
- Blue Tit** **J639079** **20/2/97** **Q02 Feeders**
Another bird with a long gap between captures. Ringed as a nestling in 1994 in N05, it was not recaptured until June 1996 on a nest in a dormouse box in E06. Possibly she has spent her time in the deep south of the wood, but out of range of our normal mist-netting operations. Has she only just discovered these feeders nearly 1km away from her presumed home range?
- Blue Tit** **J639087** **1/2/97** **C03 Roosting**
A 1994 nestling ringed bird, recaptured twice in B03 and once more nesting in a box in E04. He (unusual for a male to be captured on the nest) has not been trapped between that capture on 9/6/96 and tonight. Possibly he ranges around block H, an area where we rarely net.
- Blue Tit** **K181646** **9/2/97** **E03 Feeder**
This was one of a handful of birds caught at a pheasant feeding station near Piccadilly Circus, processed and released (at Piccadilly Circus) a little after 10:30. By 12:00 it was caught again in the nets at the normal feeders in the north of the wood. A rapid internal movement! Does this bird have a daily circuit of good feeding spots throughout the wood?
- Great Tit** **H229329** **March 1997** **Windy Ride (Sight Record)**
Ringed as a 5♂ in 1992. As last year it is now often seen at the old pheasant release pen.
- Great Tit** **J033046** **March 1997** **Treswell End (Sight Record)**
Ringed as a 3♂ in 1992, this is a "rare" bird, not caught 1993, 1995 or 1996 but is regularly seen at Treswell End - as it was last year.
- Great Tit** **J033088** **March 1997** **Q02 Feeders (Sight Record)**
Ringed as a 4♂ in 1993, rarely caught, never seen in the field until now when it was seen once at the feeders.
- Great Tit** **J033177** **March 1997** **Compartment D (Sight Record)**
Ringed as a 6♀ in 1993, rarely caught. This year it is the hen of J033352.
- Great Tit** **J033260** **26/1/97** **Q02 Feeders (Sight Record)**
An infrequent visitor to the feeders - this is only its sixth record since ringing on 23/1/94. Neither has she been sighted during the breeding season. Where does she live?
- Great Tit** **J033352** **March 1997** **Compartment D (Sight Record)**
Ringed as a 3J in 1993, a regular and successful breeding bird,

Biometric Data Entry - it is for real now!

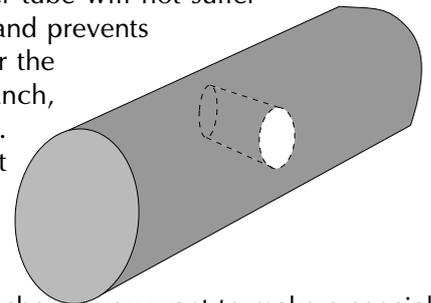
After a long gestation period, the program for entry of historic biometric data is written, tested and working. We hope to complete the back data entry well before the end of the year and that it can be made a whole group effort. All you need is a PC. Those of you who are not very confident in your computer skills will be encouraged to know that even John (never touched a computer) McM has agreed to have a go, using an old twin floppy drive machine.

Marsh/Coal/Willow Tit Boxes. Any makers?

A new design of nestbox for Marsh or Coal Tits was entered in the BTO Nestbox Challenge competition. We have made 5 so far. Construction involves boring and chiselling into a log of hazel. We could do with several more being made. Any volunteers?

Great Tit roosting tubes.

We have never captured many Great Tits during our nocturnal expeditions to the nest boxes in winter. They seem to prefer to roost in very small cavities rather than in the large boxes they like to nest in. Ulli mentioned that the captive Great Tits in her Munich laboratory aviaries like to roost in toilet roll tubes. (Why there were any such tubes in the aviaries, we are not told.) A Great Tit roosting in a small diameter tube will not suffer wind chill because, even if there is a head-on wind, the bird blocks the tube and prevents wind blowing through it. Obviously cardboard tubes would not be suitable for the open air so we have devised artificial toilet roll tubes. These are sections of branch, around 12cm in diameter with a 32mm diameter hole bored across the centre. We have placed several of these in forks in trees and will wait see if the Great Tits do use them for roosting.



Visit 1300

The visit number has absolutely no ornithological significance whatsoever, but should you want to make a special effort for that day it is likely to be on April 13th.

Message from 'Fred'

As conservationists we encourage recycling, but more important than recycling is re-use. In keeping with this philosophy we use A4 envelopes time and time again for sending photocopies of the field sheets from Beckingham to 'The Whimbrels'. One envelope now has a particularly large number of stamps on it. We noticed that several of the postmarks had the name FRED printed in hand on them. Obviously Postman FRED is a regular handler of our envelopes (does he make retrap cards for them?). On the last transmission we placed a message for FRED and he has responded with the additional writing in the postmark 'I do my best.' Thank you FRED.

Hammer Drill lures Great Spotted Woodpeckers

Tony Kennedy may have discovered a novel way of attracting these woodpeckers. Operate a hammer drill in suitable woodland in the early spring. In no time at all you may have answering calls from (in his case 3) local Great Spotted Woodpeckers. If your hammer drill sounds like an aggressive male, you should be even more careful to wear your safety helmet!

CES 1997

The CES season will start on May 1st. A new system for recording weather is to be tested. At each visit the CES analysts wish to know about rain, wind and its affect (if any) on the catch. They ask us to record weather twice during each CES session - once in the first half, once in the second. For each recording, enter two numbers one for rain and one for wind. Both codes are on a scale 0 - 3. For rain we have 0-None, 1-Drizzle, 2-Showers, 3-Heavy and for wind we have 0-Calm, 1-Light, 2-Breezy, 4-Strong. In addition, at the end of the morning, note if the catch was seriously affected by the weather.

We have always recorded weather on our field sheets, and the CES instructions have always been to record three times (early, mid and late session!) so this recording is no great burden. We have added a few notes to the cover sheets with boxes to hold these codes and a reminder of their meaning. Thanks in advance.

Have you read?

John & Chris have copies of the latest **Bird Study, Vol 44, Part 1, March 1997**. If you are interested to see these (or any other) papers in the issue please ask to have a look.

The effect of observers visiting nests of passerines: an experimental study (Mayer-Gross, Crick, Greenwood)

The timing of early morning feeding by tits (Fitzpatrick)

Tree species selection to perform singing and foraging behaviour by Great and Blue Tits: a trade-off between food

gathering and territorial behaviour? (Atienza and Illera)

There are also relevant papers in **IBIS Vol 139 N1, January 1997**

Dawn chorus and female behaviour in Willow Tits (Welling, Koivula, Orell)

and in **Ringing & Migration Vol 17 Part 4 November 1996**

Ageing yellowhammers (Svensson).

10 Week Summary - January to March 1997

1997 Interval 1 - Visits 1290, 1291, 1287, 1288, 1295, 1289, 1296

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	.	3	.	1	.	.	4
Dunnock	1	2	.	2	1	.	6
Robin	1	2	.	1	2	.	6
Blackbird	.	4	.	2	1	.	7
Song Thrush	1	1	.	.	.	.	2
Chiffchaff	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Goldcrest	1	.	.	.	1	.	2
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	5	.	.	5
Marsh Tit	.	1	.	2	.	.	3
Blue Tit	.	1	.	4	5	.	10
Great Tit	.	3	.	1	3	.	7
Treecreeper	.	1	.	2	.	.	3
Chaffinch	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Bullfinch	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Totals	6	18	.	22	13	.	59

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1978	101	131	243	223	131	829
1979	97	115	180	91	123	606
1980	86	102	211	147	170	716
1981	102	110	288	188	177	865
1982	66	113	142	89	110	520
1983	82	140	143	185	128	678
1984	91	114	110	82	106	503
1985	103	88	135	118	88	532
1986	77	104	153	68	141	543
1987	95	112	196	209	124	736
1988	92	143	180	137	119	671
1989	124	137	282	145	103	791
1990	99	145	204	130	175	753
1991	65	57	99	74	127	422
1992	64	64	115	223	159	625
1993	81	70	112	158	126	547
1994	88	109	209	155	157	718
1995	91	124	240	253	104	812
1996	95	121	128	116	97	557
1997	59	---	---	---	---	59
Max	124	145	288	253	177	865
Min	59	57	99	68	88	422
Mean	88	110	177	147	130	654