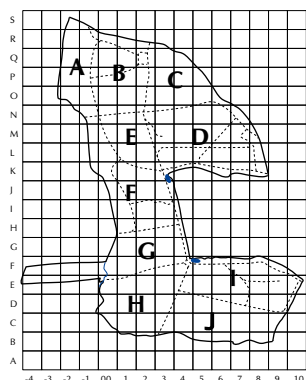


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

October 2004 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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Project leaders:

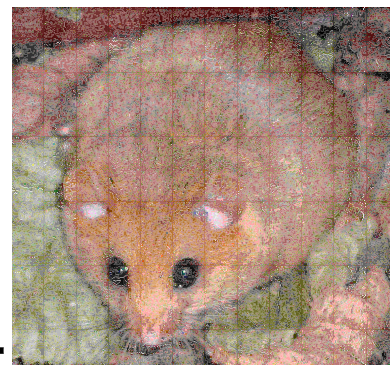
CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John McMeeking

2004/4

Number 49



The Elusive Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* of Treswell Wood

Just 10 years ago, English Nature included the dormouse in its species recovery programme. A number of counties where they had become extinct were targeted for reintroduction. Treswell Wood was chosen as the most suitable site in Nottinghamshire (although there was no clear evidence of any previous occurrence anywhere in the county). In 1994, 23 dormice, and in 1995 an additional 29 dormice, were released under controlled conditions and subsequently monitored. 200 dormouse boxes were installed around the release area.

Despite regular nestbox inspection, by 1999 there was little or no evidence of any dormouse activity. A single live animal was found in a nestbox in 2001 and in 2002 a headless one was found in a Tawny Owl nestbox (Twitter 37). By now the Treswell Wood dormouse population was classified as 'uncertain'.

In 2003 John Black embarked on a further detailed study of the apparent extinction of the dormouse population in Treswell Wood, as part of his conservation degree course. This included the construction and installation of 240 new dormouse boxes throughout the wood - the original boxes had become dilapidated and were removed. The new boxes were divided into 3 sections, John Clark, John Bartley, Gill & Dan Bardsley were each responsible for one section, carrying out checks at least monthly. At first (March 2003), the boxes were easy to find and accessible. However, by Autumn the monthly round became a fight against brambles as the boxes disappeared into the enveloping undergrowth. Although they were popular as nest boxes for the woodland birds there was still no evidence of dormice.

At the end of 2003 it was time for John (Black) to write his detailed and informative report which includes a discussion of the possible reasons for the introduction failure. In the meantime the boxes were checked regularly through 2004 by the same people. Over 5000 dormouse nestbox inspections had been made since March 2003.

On Monday October 18th (considered rather late for finding nesting dormice), five mouse nests were found in the boxes in the centre of the wood. To our surprise there were three lively dormice in one. The next day John Black returned to weigh them, one at 29g (a good weight), a second was a similar size. The third weighed 13g only - rather underweight. Winter survival depends on a number of factors including pre-hibernation body weight.

We are now wondering what shall we find in the next 5000 inspections?

Dan Bardsley

CES - feedback from the BTO

Our 22nd successive season of contributions to the national Constant Effort Sites scheme ended at the beginning of September and this year we managed to submit our season's data very rapidly indeed. The previous issue of Twitter included our capture totals and comparisons with previous years. Dawn Balmer and Mark Collier, the BTO organisers of the scheme, have thanked us for, and commented on, our data. They said:

Many thanks for all your hard work this year. These data have been entered onto the computer at the BTO. Please give our thanks to all the team who have helped with CES. As usual we are looking for short articles, exciting recoveries, controls or retrap histories involving CES birds for the next issue of CES news. If you have anything to contribute, please tell us by the end of January.

For many CES ringers, the 2004 season produced average, or above average, totals of adults and young birds. Adult Chiffchaff and Blackcaps returned in good numbers but some sites reported declines in Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler this spring. It was a mixed breeding season for tits, with some early broods of Long-tailed Tits reported and mixed success for Blue Tits and Great Tits across sites. Some CE sites in northern England and Scotland had a poor year with drought conditions in late April and May followed by cold and wet conditions later in the season. Early indications are that resident Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird and Song Thrush had a poor

breeding season, particularly in the north. Provisional results will be available at the BTO conference at Swanwick in December.

At Treswell Wood the number of juvenile Blackcaps was high, suggesting a good breeding season locally. Robin and Wren also seemed to have had a good breeding season at your site and it is good to see Great Spotted Woodpecker featuring on your CES totals.

CES, RAS, ringing and nest records forums

Many of you will be aware of the various e-mail forums which participants in various BTO surveys can join. They do provide a very fine way of keeping in touch with other engaged in similar surveys (providing your email system is not, like mine, apparently hostile to YahooGroups). Forums exist for nest recording, ringing, CES and RAS and addresses can be found in the relevant survey newsletters. (Incidentally, I have investigated whether the plural of *forum* is the rather ugly *fora*, or the apparently incorrect *forums*. Guidance from a pedantic former colleague says that although *fora* is the correct Latin plural of *forum*, the present use of the word *forum* is so far removed from a Roman *forum* that it can be regarded as a different English word with a plural derived by adding an s. Twitter editorial policy will be to use *forums*.)

Bird Corpses

During October we took another batch of dead birds to the Natural History Museum's collection in Tring. These birds were a collection of window strikes, road victims and various other birds found in good condition (apart from being dead). The museum is keen to receive such bodies for their collection of skins, skeletons or other bird parts. Specimens in the collection date back to the era of the great Victorian naturalists, and earlier. In more recent years the rate of addition to the collection has decreased simply because there are no naturalists in the wild doing their work with a shotgun rather than camera or mist net. It is important to have a continual supply, even of common species, to allow investigations which involve looking at changes with time (for instance - the levels of pollutants in the environment). Some species seem to be more easy to come by than others - juvenile blackbirds, for instance, seem particularly prone to premature death by window. Even these common species are welcomed. If the museum has surplus bodies, they are traded with other museums. For instance, some of our birds are now in Kansas State University Museum, others in the American Museum of Natural History in New York. By the time you read this, a curator from AMNH will have made another exchange, so more of our collection will be crossing the Atlantic.

Chris keeps birds in his (non-food) freezer until it is time for the next delivery. If you find fresh specimens in good condition, pass them on to him as soon as possible. It is important that the location and date of the find is reported, and any other circumstances (such as cause of death, if known).

And what is the use of the collections? They are not on public display. The collections are for the use of ornithologists, amateur or professional, who have a good reason for studying them. For instance, in 1996 we examined skins of the Marsh and Willow Tits to ascertain whether they could be reliably separated (Twitter 2) and our method is now included in the BTO Ringers' Manual. More recently we examined the pattern on Goldfinch tail feathers to see whether they could be aged or sexed by the size and shape of the white patch. The answer was a very clear negative indeed. Maybe, in 150 years from now, some ornithologist will be examining the plumages of a bird donated by you. Keep the corpses flowing.

More on mammals

Diligent Twitter readers will recall the water shrew which was found in a nestbox, courtesy (probably) of a weasel that used the nestbox as a larder. (Twitter 36). John Bartley has been involved with collection of small mammal droppings for the Mammal Society and he reports: *I have today heard from the Mammal Society. Analysis of the faecal droppings I collected some weeks ago at Treswell has confirmed the presence of water shrews there.*

Good to know they are still there although they are only very rarely seen alive in the wood.

Correction - Twitter issues 46 and 47

Large numbers are too much of a challenge for the Twitter editorial team. Two of this year's issues were incorrectly numbered. 2004/1 should have been issue 46 and 2002/ issue 47 rather than 47 and 48 respectively. Apologies.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Sparrowhawk	5M	DA51857	12/09/2004	F04

October seems to be the month for Sparrowhawks to be caught in close succession. In 2003 we mist-netted two within the space of a week. This year we have nearly done the same - two within 10 days. This was the first of the two.

Sparrowhawk 3M DA51858 22/09/2004 Q02 feeder

The second of the Sparrowhawks - a young male. This is only the second Sparrowhawk capture at the feeding station, even though small birds are abundant there. The previous Sparrowhawk capture at the feeder was in 2003, also in October.

Great Spotted Woodpecker 3 CT84046 12/09/2004 H04

The summer outbreak of captures of this species seems to have subsided - this is one of only two recent captures. It had been ringed and recaptured at the feeder in the north in July and August but today was trapped in the southern part of the wood.

Chiffchaff 4 AJD395 10/10/2004 H02

Our third latest ever Chiffchaff, which we originally ringed on 21/03/2004. The other two (16/11/1986 and 13/12/1998) seem more likely to have been over-wintering birds than late departing visitors. Of the five Chiffchaffs we have ever trapped in October, only one other was a recaptured bird. Like this one it had been ringed early in the spring but not retrapped during the breeding season. Are these birds which breed in the wood or merely pass through it on both their spring and autumn migrations? Dave Fogg trapped a Chiffchaff at Cottam three weeks later and he noted that *there have been reports in the local bird news about Chiffchaffs lingering in Lincs. and Notts., and it was still good to find one at Cottam. We have caught wintering birds in three winters and last year we trapped one on 12th October.*

Goldcrest 4M AJD283 26/09/2004 D09

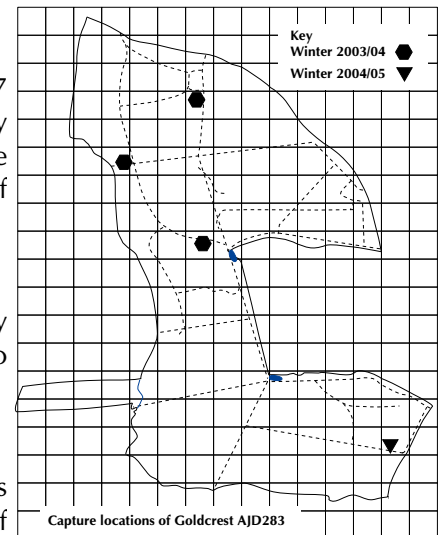
Our first between-year recaptured Goldcrest of the season and unlike AJD127 which we noted in Twitter 47, this bird has been caught previously in widely separated parts of the wood as shown in the map. It was caught in the at the same time as a juvenile male and the contrast in the visibility, amount of orange and intensity of colour in its crown was very marked.

Goldcrest 3M AXL006 19/09/2004 P00

Our first Goldcrest of the season about a week later than is typical. Many others were heard in the wood and two more caught today. Their arrival, as so often, has been sudden and apparently is in abundance.

Goldcrest 4F AXL015 26/09/2004 D07

We have never previously recorded an adult Goldcrest still in full moult. This bird still had its outer three primaries growing and inner secondaries half grown. The tail feather, although moderately broad and clearly newly moulted, still had fairly pointed tips. According to BWP they moult on or near their breeding grounds and complete moult by mid-October. Whether this was a fairly local bird still in moult, or a bird from further afield which had started its autumn movement whilst still in moult is not clear.

**Coal Tit 4 N459884 5/09/2004 D03**

A nestling-ringed bird of the 2001 cohort. This is its fourth recapture; all of them have been in the south of the wood. Unlike many of its conspecifics, it has never been trapped at the feeder. From its capture history it is a bird which breeds within the wood but we have never managed to trap it in any of our nestboxes.

Treecreeper 4 9Z3070 26/09/2004 D07

Not yet approaching the age record for Treecreepers but at three years old this one has lasted better than most. Typical of our adult resident Treecreepers, this one roves within a fairly large area of the wood, having been caught, as an adult, in blocks G, I and J.

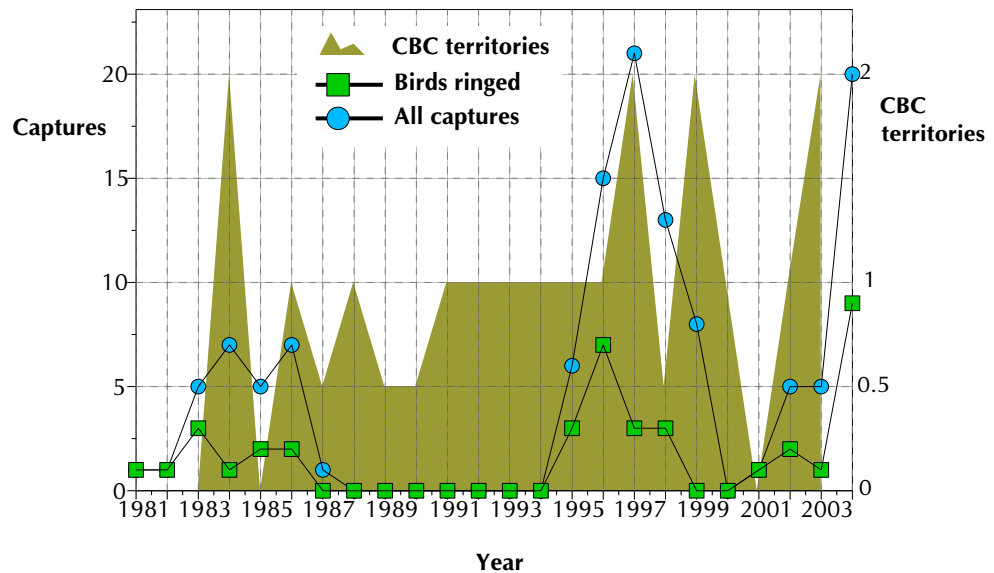
Nuthatch 3F VS50898 22/09/2004 Q02 feeder

The Nuthatch captures continue - this was the second retrap of the day at the feeder. Treswell Wood is on the edge of the Nuthatch range. Whereas there are many apparently-suitable woodlands in eastern Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, they tend to be too fragmented to allow dispersal of Nuthatches. Founding populations may be too small to be viable in the long term. The graph with our Nuthatch capture history shows three fairly distinct periods of Nuthatch activity - the mid 1980s, the late 1990s and the past two years. The CBC picture is similar with the first record in 1983 although there is almost continuous occupation throughout the period from then. (In some years Nuthatches were present but did not produce enough data for the BTO analysts to assign a breeding territory to them. In these years I have allocated a notional 1/2 territory to them. Why we captured none in the late 1980s when they were present (and we often heard them when ringing) is curious. The number of birds captured this year is already the highest in any year and there are still nearly three months to go. Several of the birds we have caught

have been juveniles, some of them fairly recently fledged. It seems as if they have enjoyed a good breeding season in the wood. If they behave as the textbooks say, they will disperse very locally - that is within the wood - and, winter weather permitting, will give us a healthy breeding population next spring.

Nuthatches have only once tried to use nestboxes - in 1984. The attempt was in a large box intended for Stock Doves. The birds abandoned their attempt at reducing the entrance hole from 15 cm x 30 cm to their preferred 3 cm diameter, but not before having transported 2 kg (dried weight) of mud to the box.

Nuthatches in Treswell Wood



No Nuthatch territories were recorded prior to 1983, and no birds were ringed until 1981.

Nuthatch **3M** **VS50900** **26/09/2004** **D07**

Yet another new bird, caught in a mixed party of tits and Goldcrests in the south of the wood.

Jay **4** **DA20230** **26/09/2004** **D08**

Our first Jay since April. We ringed it in November 2001 as a juvenile. Although it is most likely we have heard it many times since then, we have only retrapped it as a breeding female in June 2003 and, now, today. In 2003 we caught a total of five Jays - rather more than is usual, but four of them were trapped in the last three months of the year. This year's total, to the end of October is one higher than last year's at the same time.

10 Week Summary 2004 Interval 4 (Standard Site captures only)

2004 Interval 4 Visits 1673, 1669, 1666, 1667, 1670, 1668, 1674

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Sparrowhawk	.	1	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	.	.	.	1	.	1	2
Wren	2	1	9	.	.	5	17
Dunnock	.	.	3	.	.	.	3
Robin	.	.	9	4	.	4	17
Blackbird	.	.	3	2	.	1	6
Song Thrush	.	.	2	2	.	.	4
Blackcap	3	.	18	2	.	1	24
Chiffchaff	1	.	1	1	.	.	3
Goldcrest	1	.	6	1	.	.	8
Long-tailed Tit	9	.	1	7	.	.	17
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	.	2	3
Willow Tit	.	.	.	1	.	1	2
Coal Tit	.	.	2	5	.	2	9
Blue Tit	.	.	2	3	.	2	7
Great Tit	.	.	3	7	.	4	14
Nuthatch	.	.	2	.	.	.	2
Treecreeper	.	.	4	8	.	4	16
Jay	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Chaffinch	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Bullfinch	.	.	5	1	1	.	7
Totals	16	2	70	49	1	27	165