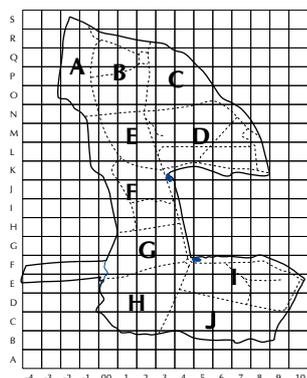


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

May 2009 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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2009/2

Number 72



Yet again we have enjoyed, or suffered, an unusual beginning to the nesting season. A long, dry spell encouraged rather earlier nesting of tits. There has been some predation - particularly by Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Such predation is very localised but the woodpeckers can be very thorough in attacking nestboxes near their own nest site. There has also been some weather-related mortality. Much of the middle of May was cool with rain. In fact, Treswell Wood suffered a period of 24 hours continuous rain from the afternoon of May 14th to 15th. Miraculously, most of the partly grown tits managed to survive this downpour. Although we have recorded many natural events in the wood, one thing we have not done is to record dates on which trees come into leaf. This is a pity (but no chance to travel back 36 years to make the required observations). However, this year the ash trees have been very much later than the oak to come into leaf - many oaks were in full leaf before ash buds had even begun to open. It may be that early-leafing oak has allowed the peak caterpillar crop to coincide with peak caterpillar demands from the tits. Remember the old adage about oak before ash predicts a hot and dry summer.

Captures early in the year were lower than usual. During the second interval of the year, captures were up again to somewhat above average. Within the overall figure there is some surprising variation - two visits provided very good numbers of birds, the other five only moderate or small catches in the standard site nets. Very few birds have been coming to the feeding station indicating either very few birds being in the wood or else abundant supplies of natural food (or both)). Captures of thrush species have been higher than usual with, it appears, a small but welcome increase in the Song Thrushes and also unprecedented numbers of Mistle Thrushes. During the 10-week interval, nearly 20% of our total standardised catch has been of *Turdus* birds; in the 1990s, typically they would constitute under 10% of the standardised captures.

Amongst our other observations we have noted a smaller number of early purple orchids than usual, many more yellow archangel clumps and one clump of water avens (which Rob Atkinson tells us has been there for several years).

Common Bird Census 2008

In the last Twitter we gave a table of the numbers of breeding territories calculated by Richard Thewliss at the BTO using the observations of our CBC team. Steve Wain has now computerised these maps and added them to the collection stretching back to 1973. The whole collection fits on a single CD and can be operated by any web browser such as Firefox or Explorer. If you wish to have a copy, please contact Chris.

BTO Atlas Project

The Atlas project is now in its second breeding season out of four. For the latest national results, look at www.bto.org/birdatlas. You will recall that we have sponsored the Treecreeper for which we promised to raise £2,000. Donations can be made directly to the BTO at www.justgiving.com/bto_atlasweb. If you look at this web site you will see we are only 10% of the way there. All contributions (electronically or by cheque to the BTO) will be very welcome. If you send a cheque to the BTO please state it is for the Treecreeper sponsorship and mark it for the attention of Graham Appleton. Many thanks, in advance.

Robin colour ringing

We have been colour ringing Robins for some years in the hope of resighting them either in the wood or nearby. The aim was to increase the size of our 'recapture' data set as part of the BTO's *Retrapping Adults for Survival* project. Unfortunately our sightings have been very few in number, and most of those sighted have been retrapped anyway, so the sight records have added very little to our record of Robin survival. We have, therefore, decided to stop the colour ringing. We will still contribute our Robin data to the BTO RAS project - it is a comprehensive data set with more than enough adults captured annually to satisfy the requirements of the project. Of course, there will be some Robins which are wearing colour rings and may be seen from time to time - we will welcome details of any such sightings.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Red-legged Partridge	4	Unringed	24/5/2009	N-1

We have only ever ringed one Red-legged Partridge - that was in April 1978 and we recaptured it a month later.

Since that time, ringing of the species has been banned nationally because it was found that a ring can interfere with the growth of the spur on the leg. Details of any we have trapped since the ban will be buried in the files of field sheets which have not yet been computerised (volunteers always welcome) but this is certainly the first we have captured this century.

Tawny Owl 8F GM61012 17/5/2009 F04 Nesting

Last year we failed to trap the nesting Tawny Owls - never at home when we called. This year we managed to trap both females as they brooded their part-grown young. One owl was unringed; this one is an old friend. She was ringed, nesting in a box, in 2004 and retrapped in both 2006 and 2007, again on the nest. Tawny Owls are very territorial (because of their mode of hunting, or, perhaps, vice-versa). This bird's nests have always been in the central part of the wood, although not always in the same box.

Great Spotted Woodpecker 4M CT84206 20/5/2005 Q02 Feeder

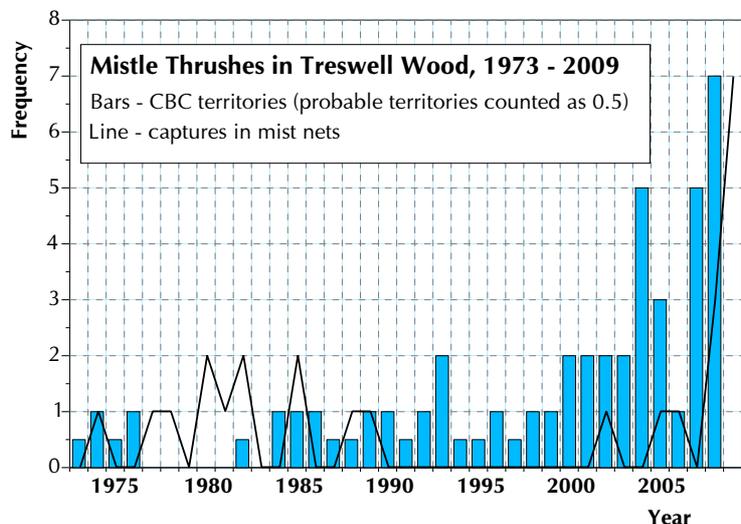
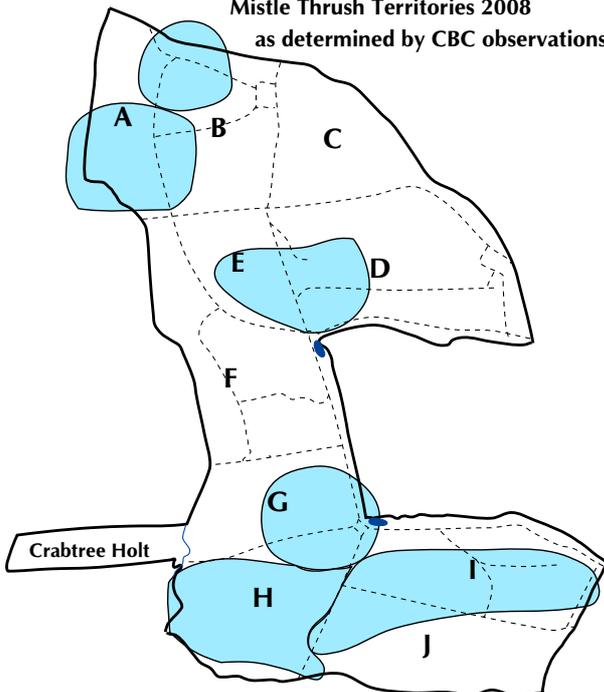
One of four woodpeckers retrapped at the feeder on this day - in fact, these were the only birds to be trapped there on the day. We had noticed that peanuts were suddenly being eaten very rapidly. At this time of year, the adult woodpeckers seem to turn to them as a quick, easy source of food. The nestlings, meanwhile, will be fed on their usual diet of various invertebrates and young tit nestlings. Fortunately their nestbox predation seems limited to boxes very near to their own nesting site.

We have noted previously the impossibility of ageing many woodpeckers after their post-juvenile moult and have contributed our information to the BTO for the forthcoming revision of the ageing and sexing guide. Another clue has been suggested to us - eye colour. As the birds age, their irises will change from a dull brown juvenile colour to the deep ruby-red of the full adult. Easy? Leave aside, for the moment, the problem of being consistent in judging colour in varying light conditions. If you catch four birds in very quick succession that should not be a problem. Even better if you have capture histories of the birds to know, at least, their minimum possible ages. So here, in order of time since first capture are the eye colours: CT84335 1y 314d, ruby; CT84336 1y 314d brown; CT84287, 2y 141d ruby; CT84206 3y 304d brownish. A week later we retrapped CT84287 and CT84020 at the same time. With both in the hand it was clear that their eye colours were different - one ruby, the other with a brownish tinge. Both were at least three years old, with the younger bird having the brighter eye. Ageing these by eye colour? Back to the drawing board.

Mistle Thrush 3J CT84172 10/5/2009 B03

Part of a very special catch - the maximum number of Mistle Thrushes ever caught by us on one day had been two and the largest annual total was three in 2008. This was one of a trio of birds - presumably a family party with the male and two juveniles. It was also our first capture of any juvenile of any species for the year. It was followed by another Mistle Thrush - a retrap from 2007 - the next week. That brings the year's total, so far, to 7. The CBC team have also noted good numbers of the species in the wood. Surprisingly, for such a large and obvious bird, its increase within the wood seems to have largely escaped our notice until this year. Happily, the ringing and CBC data are in agreement about the rise of the species, as demonstrated in the graph. The map, showing CBC territories in 2008, is taken from the collection assembled by Steve.

Mistle Thrush Territories 2008
as determined by CBC observations



Willow Tit 6 T663083 24/3/2009 Q02 Feeder

We are not aware of any birds of this species nesting in the wood this year, but with lower predation and less weather-related nest mortality, any breeding pairs would have a better chance of success than in recent years.

Adults are often long lived - this one was ringed as a juvenile in 2005. Our Willow Tits and Marsh Tits are still colour-ringed so do keep an eye open for them. To separate them, remember that all Marsh Tits carry at least one red ring and no black rings. All Willow Tits carry at least one black ring but no red ones. All sightings of any of these birds (or of Robins) welcomed.

Marsh Tit **V475898** **6M** **0-1** **12/4/2009**

We do know of two Marsh Tit nests. Unfortunately, one fell victim to predation. Seven young fledged from the second nest. This bird was ringed December 2008 and may be the owner of the failed nest.

Blue Tit **6F** **T663158** **29/04/2009** **J01 Nesting**

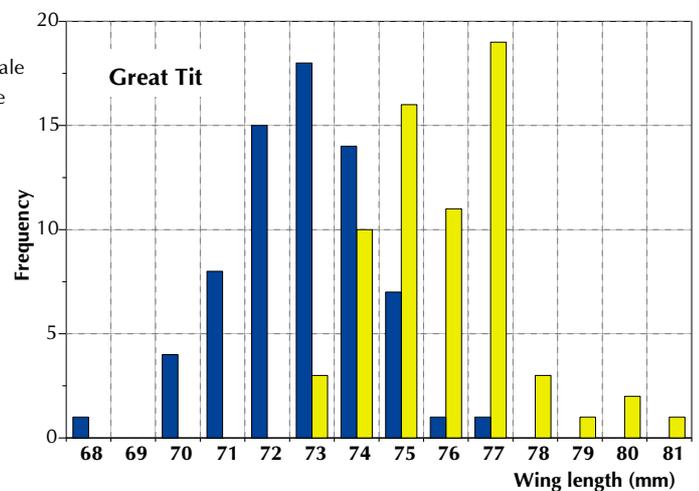
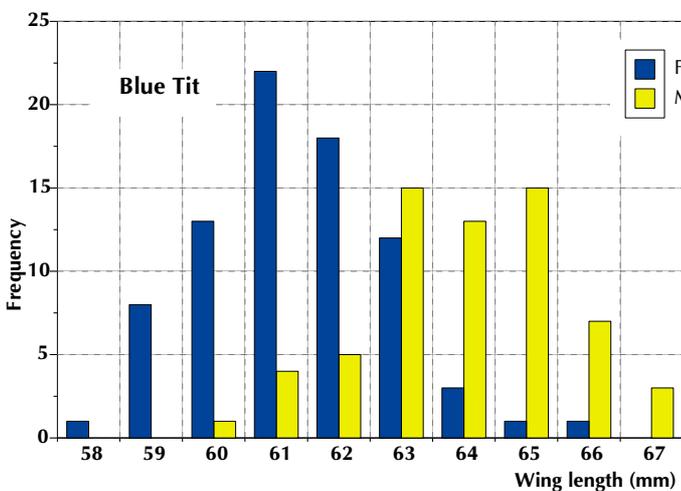
This bird is now in its fourth breeding season and the fourth in which she has used one of our boxes - always a different box but always in the west-central part of the wood. Of her 9 offspring fledged in 2006, we retrapped two throughout 2007 and two more up to the end of 2008. We have not recaptured any of the 9 young which she fledged in 2007 and in 2008 all her 12 young fell victim to a weasel. This year, five of her 12 offspring survived the rains to fledge successfully.

Blue Tit **5F** **V666806** **6/5/2009** **M01 Nesting**

Last year was a terrible breeding season for Blue Tits and we have retrapped only 3 of the niggardly 38 known to have fledged. Of these few this one, at least, has survived in the wood and is known to be nesting. Her post-natal dispersal distance is all of 300 metres.

Great Tit **5M** **V475981** **3/5/2009** **O06**

If Great Tits were not sexually dimorphic in plumage we could sex them, as reliably as Blue Tits, on wing length. A rule could be, perhaps, male above 74 mm and female below. But with sexual plumage dimorphism we can check on the reliability of this. This bird will clearly be wrongly sexed - a male with a wing of only 73 mm. The moral of the story is quite clear - beware of sexing birds on size alone. The charts below show the wing lengths of birds in the breeding season which have been sexed independently of wing length (BP/CP on Blue Tits, plumage on Great Tits). Blue Tits, and almost all other species, are likely to have many individuals which will be wrongly sexed by using wing length alone. Further, data from those that are sexed will form very biased samples from the population.



Treecreeper **6M** **5Z1452** **26/4/2009** **L05**

Our old friend, now in breeding condition. It has to last just three months more (and be retrapped of course) to become our oldest Treecreeper and also the second oldest in the BTO ringing scheme.

Chiffchaff **4** **BYP668** **29/3/2009** **E00**

We heard the first singing Chiffchaff on 22nd March this year and this was the earliest capture. It is a male ringed by us last July as a breeding adult.

Willow Warbler **4** **CXN013** **19/4/2009** **H04**

Quite a surprise - in recent years the species has been almost absent from our capture lists. In 2008, for instance, we only trapped a single bird, late in the season and probably just passing through on its southward journey. This year, not only have we caught two individuals at the start of the season, they have been heard singing frequently in various places in the wood.

Blackcap **4M** **T663424** **10/5/2009** **C03**

Our earliest Blackcap for the year was caught on 12th April and our first retrap from a previous year on 19th April -

a recapture from 2008. This bird is our oldest for the year, so far. It was ringed in 2006 as a first-breeding season bird and retrapped three times in 2008. The first time was on May 11th in the net adjacent to the net where it was caught today - one year and a day later.

Spotted Flycatcher 4M X649050 D08

A very welcome capture of this declining species which used to be a much more common visitor and nestbox user in the wood. Whereas it could be just passing through the wood, it seems more likely it will attempt to breed - it already had a well developed cloaca. We must hope that at least one female has arrived in the wood also.

Chaffinch 6F P400853 R03

Not our oldest Chaffinch by any means, but at nearly 7 years since being ringed she is certainly a veteran. Unlike many Chaffinches which may remain unretrapped for two or three years, this bird has made a point of being caught at least once every year since being ringed in 2002. We look forward to her visit in 2010. Also trapped recently was R502532, just over 6 years since being ringed.

Controls and recoveries

Species Age/sex Ring Date Notes

Song Thrush 4 RX57845 20/5/2009 L02 Ring in Tawny owl nest

Our first Tawny Owl victim whose remains have been found in a nest. It had been ringed at the beginning of March - one of our first early 'migrants' to arrive.

Blue Tit 6F V475558 22/4/2009 O03 Killed in nestbox by weasel

This bird was ringed in March 2008 during the spring influx and retrapped again, twice during the past winter. We know of only one other weasel victim in a nest box but the weasel removed both its legs, with or without rings.

Blue Tit 6F T100513 20/5/2009 N06 Nesting

Another escapee from Hillcrest Farm. Unlike most of the birds that have been ringed at the farm then found in the wood, this one, ringed in February 2006, has waited years rather than months, weeks or days before being first retrapped in the wood.

Blue Tit 5M X497533 10/5/2009 D05

Ringed at Hillcrest Farm on 4/2/2009.

Great Tit 5M X497513 24/3/2009 Q02 Feeder

Ringed at Hillcrest Farm on 14/1/2009.

10 Week Summary 2009 Interval 2, Captures in Standard Sites

Visits: 1972 1971 1960 1961 1966 1969 1974

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult			Adult			
Great Spotted Woodpecker	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Wren	2	6	.	2	2	.	12
Dunnock	1	6	.	3	1	.	11
Robin	1	9	.	2	3	.	15
Blackbird	5	4	2	10	2	.	23
Song Thrush	1	2	.	.	.	.	3
Mistle Thrush	.	.	3	3	.	.	6
Blackcap	1	8	.	4	.	.	13
Chiffchaff	3	2	.	.	.	.	5
Willow Warbler	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Spotted Flycatcher	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	3	.	.	3
Coal Tit	.	.	.	1	1	.	2
Blue Tit	.	.	.	2	4	.	6
Great Tit	1	.	.	4	6	.	11
Treecreeper	.	.	.	.	2	.	2
Chaffinch	.	2	.	4	1	.	7
Bullfinch	3	1	.	.	2	.	6
Totals	20	40	5	41	24	.	130