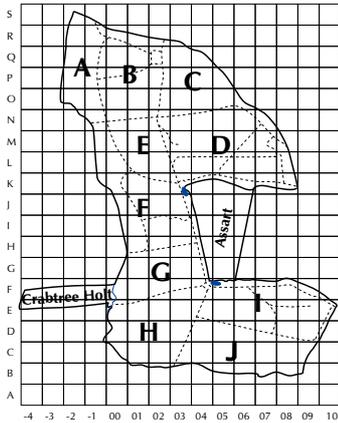


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

March 2018 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

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2018/1 Number 116

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Spring is on the way - our first record of a flowering plant in bloom this year was, as so often, Primrose. The first bloom was noted on 1st February, this being the second earliest we have recorded. Dog's Mercury came next, in full bloom on 18th February (although its tiny flowers often go unnoticed). Again, this was our second earliest record of it in bloom. Most interesting was the Coltsfoot, also earlier than average. On March 11th at 11:30 we noted some buds in the usual place on the heap of black ride-surfacing material in the car park. By 12:00 we were confronted by a display of about 20 flowers in full bloom - it is amazing how rapidly they responded to the sun breaking through the cloud. Also on March 11th we were treated to at least 30 variously-coloured frogs croaking and spawning in the ditches alongside the northern part of the main ride. Whether the tadpoles will hatch and mature before the ditches dry out later in the year, as they so often do, we will have to wait and see.

Weather early in the year was reasonably kind, allowing us to make good progress through the first cycle of standard site visits. Just as well we were up-to-date because of the arrival of the 'Beast from the East' (the short period of intensive, Siberian cold and snow) which disrupted activity considerably. No Chiffchaffs had been heard by the last visit of the cycle - no doubt the early March weather did little to encourage them. By the time you read this, though, we hope they will be here in full song.

What of our captures? Our overall capture numbers have not been as high as we might have expected after last year's relatively high catches. However, the numbers caught do not only depend on the bird abundance but also capture effort. With the weather preventing us from ringing on some days our total captures would be unlikely to be high. However, because we have covered all the standard sites, we do have the numbers from there to be able to make comparisons with other years. And, yes, we have done just a little better than average.

The Common Birds Census team will start their annual surveys this month. The nestbox team has repaired or replaced tit boxes where needed and will be doing the first inspection rounds in the next couple of weeks. We have already done one round of the high boxes. Five boxes had grey squirrel dreys, which were cleared and another had the remains of a hornet nest which is now on display at the Idle Valley visitor centre. That left four boxes available for Tawny Owls. Although we know Tawny Owls are already on eggs elsewhere locally, none were nesting in these boxes. No bird rings were found in the remains of last year's owl nests but, curiously, a broken lower jawbone of a fox was in a grey squirrel drey.

Ash dieback is now very widespread in the wood and seems likely to become increasingly obvious when leaves fail to emerge. Seedlings and saplings can die very quickly; mature trees seem to take several years as the disease gradually works its way down the trunk. It will be interesting to observe the effect on old coppiced stools which have no old trunk, just a number of young shoots. Will the disease work down the young shoots and into the base rapidly? Advice from the government is to remove ash trees which are adjacent to paths where people walk in case of dead or dying trees falling. Whether this approach is over-cautious or not, its affect is striking with a great deal of clearing having been done along parts of the main ride and nature trail. How quickly will nature fill the vacuum?

Museum collections

Mike Hansell, who curates the National Nest Reference Collection at Glasgow University, has his list of priority species for nests. It is most unlikely we will find any of these in the wood. However if you do happen to find any elsewhere, Mike would be delighted to add them to his collection. *Black Redstart, Cetti's Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Firecrest, Grasshopper Warbler, Jay, Lesser Redpoll, Nightingale, Redwing, Savi's Warbler, Siskin, Snow Bunting, Turtle Dove*. You can contact him at Mike.Hansell@glasgow.ac.uk

Over the years several people have given me bird corpses - typically road or window victims. These have now been delivered to the Natural History Museum in Tring for the national bird skin collection. Hein van Grouw, the curator, is very grateful for these and sends his thanks to all of you who have contributed. My freezer is now empty and ready for contributions to the next batch.

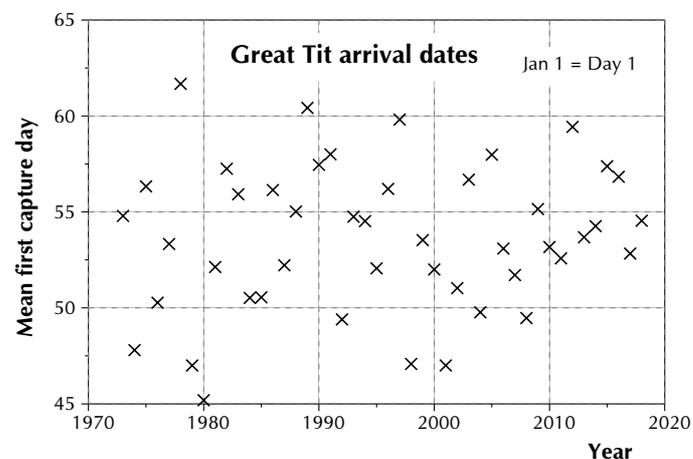
The Spring Great Tit Influx

Mid-February usually brings an influx of Great Tits, many of them in their first year and many unringed. Our general impression has been that most of the birds which are new to the wood (i.e unringed or ringed elsewhere) are young birds with very few older birds finding the wood for the first time. We wondered whether males and females may arrive at different times and whether the influx is shifting, probably earlier, in line with many other spring events. We have not previously looked at this in any great detail. These preliminary results suggest that birds with a previous history (including nestbox-ringed birds) may arrive about 4 days earlier than new birds. Surprisingly, there is no evidence of any change in timing - as illustrated in the graph.

The only big, clear difference is in the ringing histories of birds of different ages. This comes as little surprise as older birds are much more likely to have a previous capture record in the wood than younger ones and older birds tend to return to a previously used territory. Nearly 60% of first winter birds are new to the wood, under 20% of older birds are. Typically we will ring only two new older birds each year during this influx.

For these analyses, records have been used of the first capture of each individual during the period February 1st to March 16th. Subsequent captures of any bird within that period in that year have been ignored.

Using February 1st as the date of the start of the influx is not completely arbitrary - we had always felt the numbers rose around mid-February rather than much earlier. However, if the influx begins earlier then an analysis which included January captures might just show some long-term temporal trend. Perhaps we should examine the proportion of incoming birds from the start of the year and see if there is some point at which there is a sudden



increase in new birds. Of course, January 1st is also an arbitrary date. Why not start examining the pattern of incomers from December 21st onwards? The winter solstice is, after all, something which nature imposes on us and not at all arbitrary like calendar dates.

Origins of influx Great Tits by age class and capture history

Age	5	6	Total
New to wood	683	84	767
Previous history	485	389	874
Total	1168	473	1641

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
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Sparrowhawk	7M	DK98435	18/2/2018	Q03
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Ageing of birds in the hand can be tricky, particularly when it is a species which we rarely handle and which has a moult sequence most unlike that of the generally well-behaved passerine species. We ringed this bird just over a year ago. Examination of the original ringing field sheet suggested some debate over its age and it had been finally recorded as in its second winter. Fortunately we took a photograph of it. On this occasion it was also recorded as being in the second winter and another picture taken. Subsequent examination of the photographs and study of the latest ageing and sexing guides, showed that we were right this time and wrong last time. We are all a little wiser now. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

In addition to this bird we have also caught two more Sparrowhawks this year, both females. We have caught, on average 1.7 Sparrowhawks per year; to have three so far this year is well above average - and still 9 months of the year to go.

Mean arrival day by age class, sex and capture history

Sample size given below mean

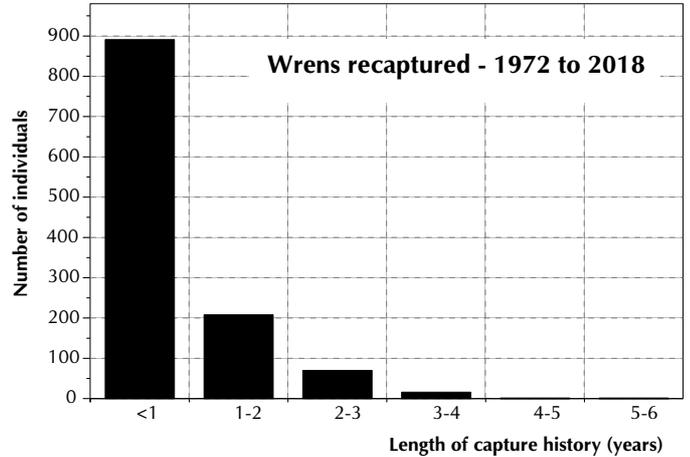
Sex	Male	Male	Female	Female
Age	5	6	5	6
Nestbox-ringed	50.8 101	53.6 43	51.7 79	57.8 29
New to Wood	57.2 276	57.5 48	55.1 407	58.4 36
Previous history	53.3 144	52.0 133	51.8 161	53.0 184

Tawny Owl **4** **GF37963** **8/2/2018** **R02 Road casualty**

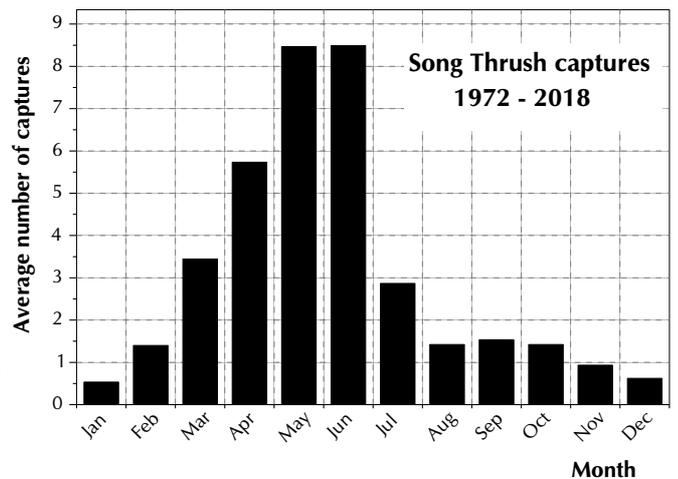
It is always worth examining bird corpses on the roadside for a ring on the leg, particularly near places where birds are ringed. This is a sad end to a female we have found nesting in our boxes over recent years. It was ringed in 2009 as a first-breeding season bird, so is likely to have nested in the wood in nine successive seasons. Thanks to David Bower for reporting this find.

Wren **6** **EYD002** **7/1/2018** **O02**

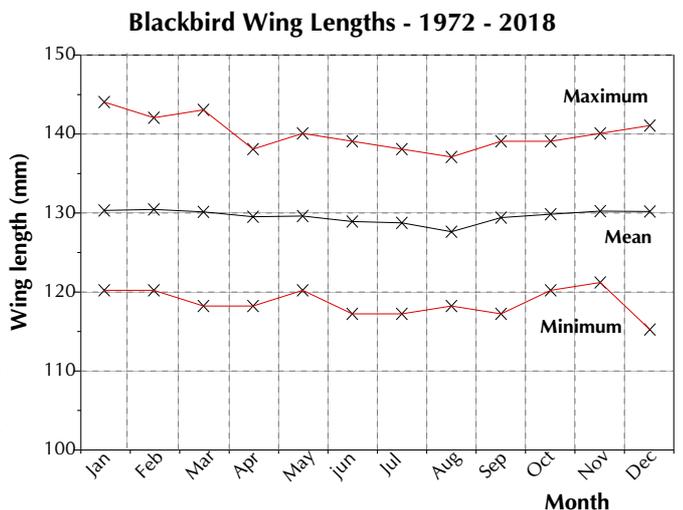
At 4years 5months since ringing, this is our second longest-lived Wren. The internal record, from 1985, is 5years 4months. The national record is 7years 3months (although for a time the wood did hold the national Wren age record). The typically very short life length of this species can be judged from the lengths of recapture histories - of nearly 1,200 Wrens with a recapture history, only this one and the record holder have been recorded more than four years after ringing. The number of three-year-olds is 16. Only 1.5% reach three years. The species is sedentary so, generally speaking, we will catch them frequently if their range includes a standard site and infrequently (or not at all) otherwise. After ringing as a juvenile in the centre of the wood in 2013, this bird was not seen again until the 2017 breeding season, only 200 metres from the first capture position. This is a typical natal dispersal distance for the species. Its two subsequent captures were on the edge of block B. It seems likely that it settled in block B but, with a typically small range, rarely ventured as far as the edge of the block where we often set nets.

**Song Thrush** **6** **RS78300** **4/2/2018** **B03**

We used to regard Song Thrushes as summer visitors, arriving back in the wood (probably from nearby villages) a little before the first longer-distance migrants arrived from Iberia or North Africa. This long-term pattern has continued, even though the absolute numbers we catch are much lower than in the early years. The chart, which excludes captures before birds have completed post-juvenile moult, shows the build up to the breeding season followed by a rapid decline, continuing slowly downwards to the end of the year. We ringed this bird in mid-February 2013 and retrapped it as a breeding male in 2014 and 2016. This year's capture, at the beginning of February, is early but not unprecedentedly so. On the same day we also retrapped another Song Thrush, a returning breeder from 2017.

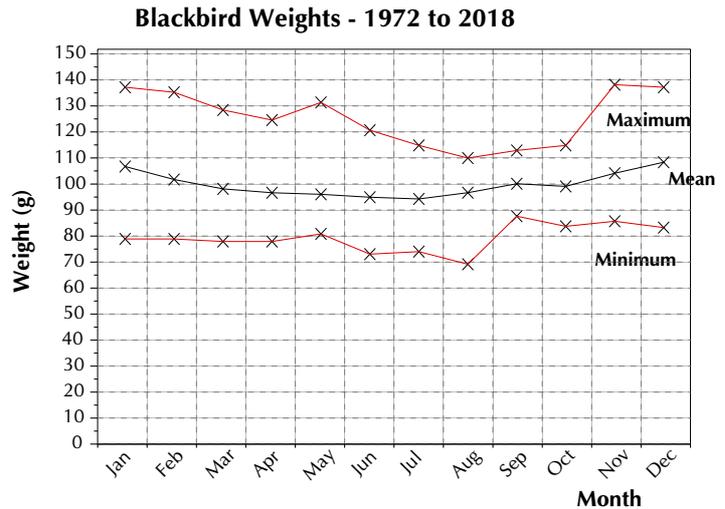
**Blackbird** **6M** **LE35181** **28/1/2018** **Q02**

Winter migrant Blackbirds from Scandinavia tend to be larger than the natives. With a wing of 139mm this is one of the largest we have captured; our largest recorded had a wing of 144mm although only 11 of the 4,717 (0.2%) exceeded this bird's length of 139mm. This bird does appear to be such a winter visitor, not only because of the long wing but also because its captures have only been in late December, January and February and at least once in each winter since December 2014. Contrast its wing length and weight of 130g with those of LE35331. The graph illustrates the changes in wing lengths through the year. Perhaps the slight dip in mean from May to October could be caused partly by abrasion of wings prior to the moult of late summer. The most striking feature is that of the maximum length recorded in each month with the very largest birds recorded in December - March.



Blackbird 6F LE35331 14/1/2018 L01

Blackbirds at this time of year typically weigh around 100g. When this bird weighed in at only 80g it made us repeat the measurement on a different set of scales. It was correct. Subsequently, looking at its recapture history we see it is just a very light bird - with its lowest recorded weight of 76g towards the end of the 2017 breeding season (when weights are usually at their lowest). With a wing length of only 125mm it is a small bird, rather smaller than our largest Song Thrushes. As with the wing lengths of Blackbirds, their weights vary too throughout the year. The difference between winter and the breeding season is clear. The breeding season is a time of great demands on adults. These demands are at the expense of their own body reserves and their weight falls. In the autumn, after the further demands of moult, the weight can recover and in winter extra fat may be put on as an insurance against cold nights or difficulty of finding food. Add to this the arrival of larger birds from the continent which will rapidly put on weight after their migration across the North Sea, and it is easy to see why winter weights tend to be higher than those in the summer.

**Redwing 6 RT55957 28/1/2018 N03**

The second capture of the species this winter, the previous one (which later became our first retrapped Redwing) was ringed in November 2017. Redwings are really very attractive birds - in the hand or in the bush - a pity we have seen so few in the wood this winter.

Marsh Tit 6 D309470 12/2/2018 Q03

We have noted before the movement pattern of Marsh Tits. Adults generally will move widely within either the southern or northern part of the wood, almost never crossing some invisible dividing line which seems to run from the assart gate westwards along the ride dividing blocks F & G. Juveniles, on the other hand, spend some time exploring the wood before settling in either the northern or southern part (assuming they remain in the wood). Once they have chosen their area, they stick to it very rigidly. But there is also an occasional non-conformist: this 'Southern Marsh Tit' is one of them. All its captures have been in the south of the wood, not even reaching as far north as block G, except for this capture and one in 2015 when it was also found at the permanent feeding station in the far north of the wood.

Marsh Tit 6 X649251 28/1/2018 N06

Normally a Marsh Tit aged 6y 7m would merit a paragraph of its own, but L731190 was eclipsed by this individual caught on the same day. It is our longest capture history, 8y 5m since ringing, beating the previous record by 1y 2m and consigning L731190 to third place only. It is, unlike D309470, very well behaved, never having been caught in the south of the wood, indeed never even in the narrow central section. It has to survive nearly three more years (and be retrapped thereafter) in order to exceed the national record for the species of 11y 3m.

Willow Tit 6 Z782469 11/3/2018 P03

The only Willow Tit we have captured since 2015, first captured by us as a juvenile in August 2016. It attempted nesting in 2017 but failed. We are not sure if this was because of lack of a mate. It is clearly well settled in the wood and can but hope that a mate appears in the wood for her this year.

Blue Tit 6 Z782131 1/2/2018 E01 Roosting

Where do they hide? We ringed this bird in February 2016 at a temporary feeding station - a station we have used from time to time since. It was not retrapped until this evening roosting capture within a few metres of that station. Three days later it was caught again at the same feeding station. Blue Tits tend to roost in their breeding territories. Why do we not see it more often at the adjacent feeding station? Where was it lurking in the two years between first capture and first recapture?

Great Tit 5M TV35811 7/1/2018 P02

This is one of our 2017 cohort of nestbox birds. We retrapped it in the wood in September 2017 and again in October. At this point it was infected with avian pox and we took a photograph. We retrapped it again at the end of October and did not note any pox although, at the time, had not realised it was a previously infected bird. On this occasion we were prepared with a list of such birds. After a very thorough check with particular attention to

places where the lesions had been present previously, we found it had no signs of pox. This is another bird that shows the pox is not, in itself, fatal. It also shows that symptoms can come and go very rapidly. In this case it was just six weeks between its last pre-pox capture and first capture when pox, if present, was not obvious.

Great Tit

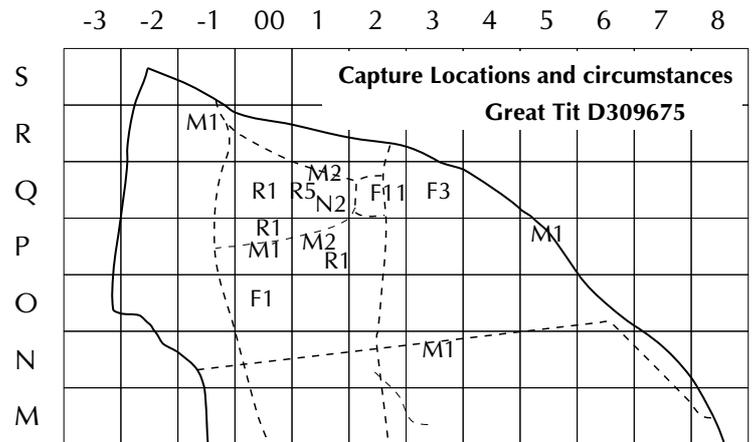
6F

D309675

7/1/2018

Q01

This is the 32nd capture of this bird, first ringed during the spring influx of the species in 2015. Since then we have trapped it in a variety of situations, always in the north of the wood. Eight captures have been when it was roosting (R), and two when brooding its nestlings (N). Several captures have been at the feeding stations (F) and the remainder in ordinary mist netting situations (M). The number after each letter indicates how many times it has been trapped in that situation and place. We have captured it throughout the year each year. Its presence as a nesting bird and roosting in winter confirms it is, unlike so many of the spring influx, now a resident bird with no need to migrate to nearby villages for the winter.



Chaffinch

4M

D309768

28/1/2018

Q03

As so often with this species, there is a long gap between ringing and any subsequent recapture. This bird was ringed in April 2015 at the feeding station and not seen since. Its recently dead body was found, again at the feeder. We have no idea where they go between captures. This bird was obviously familiar with the feeding station where we set nets frequently. If it had come here often we would have been very likely to trap it in the nearly three years between ringing and recovery.

10-Week Summary: 2018 Interval 1, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Sparrowhawk	1	.	.	1	.	.	2
Wren	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Duncock	.	1	.	1	.	.	2
Robin	.	3	.	10	4	.	17
Blackbird	1	4	.	9	1	.	15
Song Thrush	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Goldcrest	2	1	.	.	2	.	5
Long-tailed Tit	2	.	.	9	.	.	11
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	3	4	.	7
Blue Tit	.	4	.	5	5	.	14
Great Tit	.	2	.	3	7	.	12
Treecreeper	.	.	.	4	2	.	6
Chaffinch	1	1
Bullfinch	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Totals	7	15	.	48	25	.	95

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods - Summary table

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Maximum	128	185	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	89	66	59	364
Mean	90	113	159	130	124	609

10-year Averages since standard site netting began in 1978:

1978 - 1987	90	113	182	140	130	655
1988 - 1997	86	107	170	149	127	637
1998 - 2007	95	100	134	120	125	574
2008 - 2017	93	133	150	109	120	605