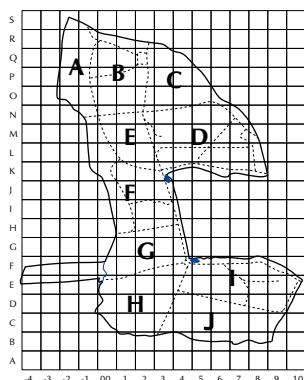


# TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

**March 2003 Treswell Wood IPM Group**  
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

**Project leaders:**

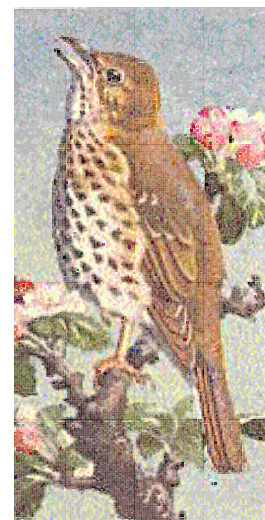
**CBC** Margaret Price

**Nest Records** Chris du Feu

**Ringling** John McMeeking

**2003/1**

**Number 41**



Although the Treswell Wood mud remains very wet and sticky after the difficult autumn weather of 2002, this year has treated us much more kindly. Our first ten-week cycle of visits was completed with time to spare. We have used these spare weeks to net in places where we do not net very often. Such sites tend to generate recaptures of birds not seen for some months or years - since we last netted in that particular area. These days remind us how little some birds move, remaining perhaps within an area of diameter 200 metres or so almost all the time.

Signs of spring included the first bumble bee in flight on 9<sup>th</sup> March, brimstone butterfly 16<sup>th</sup> March, and a remaining sign of winter with Eric Palmer's brief sighting of a stoat in ermine on 8<sup>th</sup> March. Colt's Foot and Dog's Mercury were the first flowers seen in bloom on 28<sup>th</sup> February apart from Hazel catkins which were noted in full bloom on 28<sup>th</sup> January.

A good number of birds are proclaiming their territories in song or drumming. By March 16<sup>th</sup> no Chiffchaffs had yet been heard, seen or trapped in the wood, although Dave Fogg did trap two at Cottam on that day. Goldcrests were still present in the wood.

## Retrap Cards - the End of an Era

In spite of the power of the computer, we have maintained our hand-written retrap cards until this year. They served as an initial check for any inconsistent ageing of birds and writing them made us look at the capture and movement patterns of birds. We are now using the Win-Ring software to perform the checking functions once the ringing data have been entered into the computer. With any change to a system, there are likely to be benefits and drawbacks. One drawback is that capture histories of birds are no longer available unless the computer is operating. However, benefits far outweigh this. Win-Ring produces capture histories of all birds trapped on any day. These histories are not only printed but also available as a text file which can be e-mailed to ringers very rapidly. This is a most useful method of sharing the results of the day's work with all those involved. Those ringers already on the e-mail list have said how valuable this feedback is to them. If you wish to be added to the list of recipients, let Chris know. One consequence of this spreading of information will be that the list of interesting captures in Twitter is likely to be rather shorter than it has been to date.

## Mammal Recording Using Weasel Power

The weasel's favourite nestbox continues to provide mammal records for the wood. On the last of the winter visits to inspect boxes for roosting birds, we found a dead bat in the box. We can only presume that the weasel was, again, the culprit. Eric Palmer has confirmed the identity as a noctule. We know the bat was placed in the box during the winter, between January 15<sup>th</sup> and February 17<sup>th</sup> when noctules are hibernating. This means there must be a noctule roost in the wood and that the weasel took this bat when asleep. Male weasels hunt over an area of up to 15 ha and females cover up to only 4 ha. That gives some idea of where the hibernaculum might be, although searching all the trees in the weasel's possible hunting area might be a long task! Large bats have been seen in the wood before, but this is the first confirmation of the noctule species within the wood.

Compared with the reluctance of some humans to pass on their biological records to the county recorder, this weasel has contributed most generously to the Treswell Wood species list - after the Water Shrew, this is the second new mammal species provided for us.

Phil May tells us that he too found at least one dead mammal in a nest box - at Chainbridge Lane reserve - a few years ago. He attributed the dead baby rabbit to weasels

## Constant Effort - 2002

from Dawn Balmer and Linda Milne

Feedback from CES ringers suggests that 2002 was a much better breeding season than 2001, not only for resident species such as Wren and Robin, but also for migrants such as Blackcap and Chiffchaff. This was certainly true at Treswell Wood, where Great Tit, Blue Tit and Coal Tit also had a good year. Results for CES so far indicate that Blue Tit productivity is up 118% compared to 2001.

Please pass on our thanks to the other members of the the Treswell Wood IPM Group for their help in 2002. Again very many thanks for all your combined hard work this year. Your joint efforts are very much appreciated

## Robins

Recently David Harper published an article about Robins in Bird Watching. He stated that, although sexing of Robins outside of the breeding season is tricky, trained ringers can sex about three-quarters of Robins by wing measurement alone. Neil began to examine our own Robin dataset to see if this is true for Treswell Wood Robins. It does not seem to be. We have sexed a good number of birds during the breeding season (which is reliable because of the female brood patch or male cloacal protuberance) and Neil was able to look at the wing lengths of

these birds of known sex. There is massive overlap in wing lengths between the sexes. The graph illustrates this. For our Robins, at least, it would be most unwise to determine the sex of almost any Robin on wing length alone. A subsequent analysis of wing lengths of Robins in different age classes still showed an unworkable degree of overlap between the sexes.

David Harper's article went on to note, as has been documented beforehand in various other studies which he cited, that female Robins seem to move away from their breeding quarters during winter. Curiously, wherever wintering Robins have been sexed in Britain, the story seems to be the same - lack of females. Where do they go? Neil is examining recapture histories of our Robins, looking at birds of known sex (from breeding season captures) which we also trap or observe in the winter. Neil's preliminary work seems to be indicating that we do have a number of females remaining in the wood during the winter, though rather a lower number than males.

When we began colour ringing Robins it was to add to our records of birds in the breeding season as part of the BTO Retrapping Adults for Survival (RAS) project. The question of where females go in winter will make this colour ringing even more worthwhile if we can generate more sight records at any time of year, not just in the breeding season. It is possible that some of our Robins do 'migrate' to nearby villages for the winter (see the notes on the Song Thrush in Noteworthy Captures). It is hoped that we will be able to enlist the help of local villagers in looking for our colour-ringed Robins in their gardens during the winter.

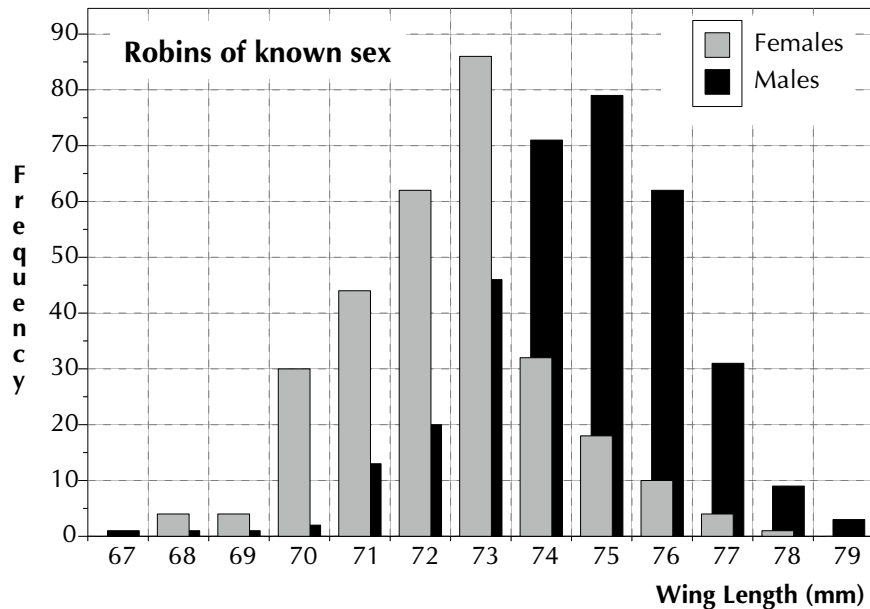
## Noteworthy Captures

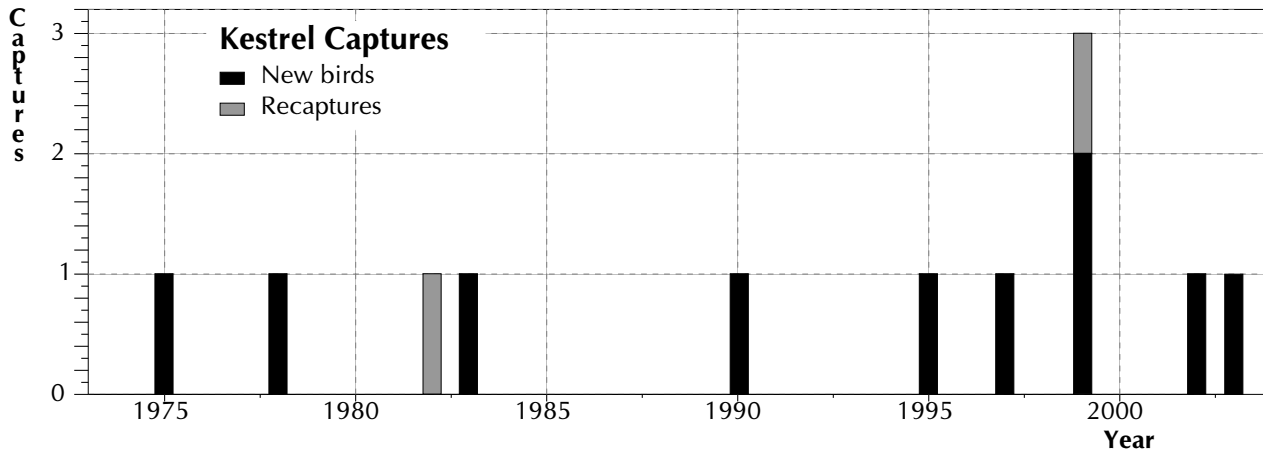
Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Yellowhammer	6F	R123864	05/01/2003	F04

Our first bird of the new year and one of our very few recaptured Yellowhammers. It was ringed in November 2002 in the same area - one of the very early batch of the species noted in the previous Twitter.

Kestrel	5M	ET87290	16/02/2003	N00
---------	----	---------	------------	-----

Our twelfth ever Kestrel ringed and, with two birds recaptured once each, our fourteenth handling of this species. Kestrel captures have been rather less infrequent in recent years even though the national population trend is downwards. The increase in captures may be related to the coppicing work which gives more open areas where these birds can hunt. The chart shows our rather sporadic Kestrel capture pattern.





**Song Thrush**

5

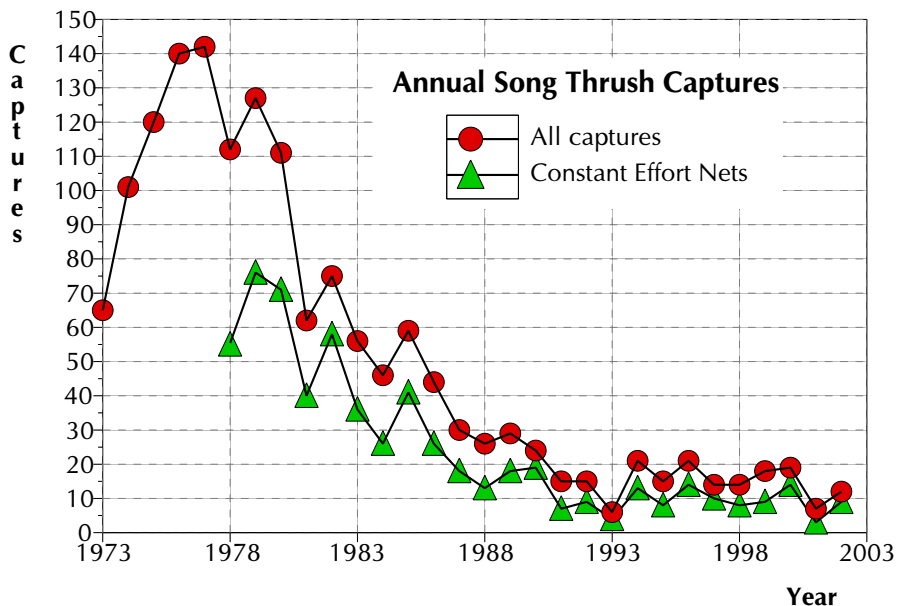
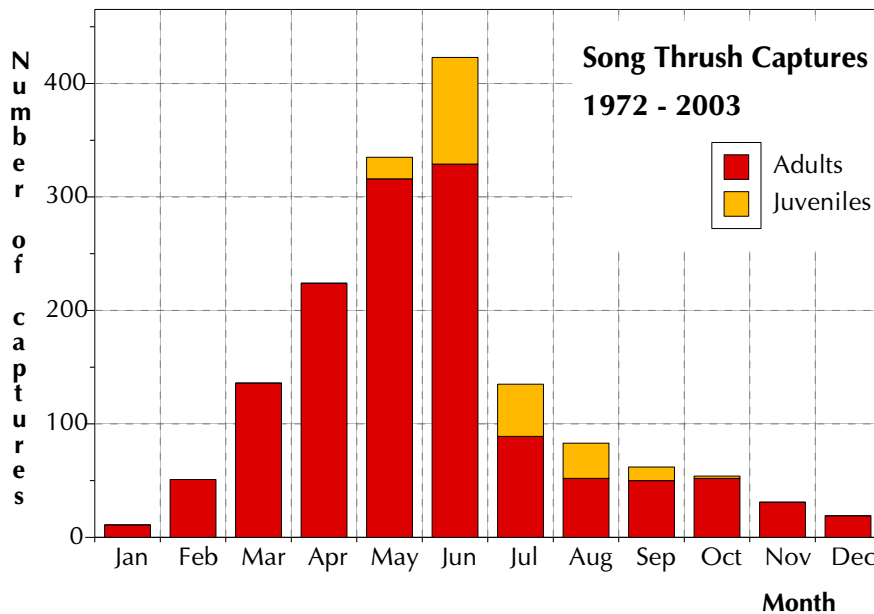
RS78227

9/3/2003

E01

Song Thrushes behave like summer visitors to the wood, almost disappearing after their early breeding season, then reappearing shortly before the more distant migrants. We think their migration may be only as far as nearby villages, (although this is based on only one or two sightings of birds with rings at bird tables in Treswell village some years ago). This was our first Song Thrush of the year, with two more trapped on the same day. All were in the south-westerly sloping area near the dam where there is young coppice. The chart shows the annual pattern of our Song Thrush captures. In it, the two age classes are juveniles (birds still with fluffy juvenile plumage) and birds in adult plumage (after completion of their post-juvenile moult). It is clear that our three captures of the day give us a typical full quota for March, even though in former years Song Thrushes were far more common than they are today. A good season in prospect?

The severity of the decline in our Song Thrushes is illustrated by the picture of our annual total captures and by the annual captures in our throughout-the-year constant effort nets from 1978 onwards. The increase from 1973 to 1975 may partly reflect increasing ringing effort. The drought of 1976 brought in many birds to drink at ponds and this boosted the total number of captures. The increase from 1978 to 1979 is curious because Song Thrushes are known to suffer during hard winters. After the severe drop from 1980 to 1981, the decline has been fairly steady. Although the constant effort captures should give a more reliable index of populations, it is pleasing to see how closely the overall totals are related to the constant effort totals



Although the constant effort captures should give a more reliable index of populations, it is pleasing to see how closely the overall totals are related to the constant effort totals

**Robin 4 N305843 09/2/2003 F04 Sight record**

Although we have only a few sight records for Robins, and more are always welcome, this bird was one of three sighted on the same day. It was seen observing a pair of Robins on the opposite side of Bower's Ride but, apparently, keeping well clear of their territory. We ringed this bird as a juvenile in H01 during October 1998 and retrapped it only once at the Pheasant feeding point in F04 in February 2000. It is possible that it has been within a stone's throw of where we have ringed many times over the last two years, perhaps lurking around square E05, but never venturing into locations close by where we set nets.

**Robin 4 P400607 12/1/2003 N02 Sight record**

This individual, which we have recorded as a breeding female in the wood, is often to be seen around the main cross roads. Today she spent most of the morning near the ringers, obviously hoping for more crumbs from John's sandwiches. Robins are sedentary - this one has only been found here apart from two captures at the feeders - all of 150 m to the north. Any more sight records of any Robins would be most welcome. Although we are colour ringing them in the hope of identifying more individuals in the breeding season, winter records too are most welcome. Winter records can be easier to make because the lack of leaves on trees makes the Robins' legs easier to see.

**Nuthatch 4 VR78770 2/3/2003 Q02 Feeder**

A bird ringed as a juvenile in 2002. This is its third capture at the feeder. We frequently hear Nuthatches calling elsewhere in the wood but very rarely catch them anywhere but at the feeder. We have only once had an attempt to nest in a box (1984, in a large box intended for Tawny Owls) although in recent years there has usually been at least one Nuthatch territory recorded by the CBC team in the far south of the wood.

**Controls and Recoveries****Species Age/sex Ring Date Grid****Coal Tit 5 R123535 27/2/2003 Rampton SK7978**

This is the sixth of our grand total of 292 nestling-ringed Coal Tits which have ever been trapped elsewhere. It is the third trapped by Mike Archer at his orchard ringing site at Rampton. The other three were in Retford (1996), Gamston (1986) and Beckingham (1985).

**Great Tit 6M VS51156 1/1/2003 Darlton SK7773**

We have enjoyed fewer fairly local controls of our nestling-ringed tits in recent years. This bird was trapped by Peter Cobb. Several of the retraps of our nestling ringed birds in the past have been of birds in their first autumn and a few of them have returned to us in the following spring. This bird was different. It was ringed as a nestling on 27/05/2001 and eluded capture until its second winter.

**10 Week Summary - Captures in Standard Sites**

2003, Interval 1. Visits 1576, 1578, 1573, 1575, 1572, 1574, 1577

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Kestrel	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Wren	.	1	.	.	2	.	3
Dunnock	2	2	.	2	.	.	6
Robin	.	2	.	4	3	.	9
Blackbird	5	2	.	.	3	.	10
Goldcrest	1	4	.	1	8	.	14
Long-tailed Tit	1	.	.	8	.	.	9
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	2	2	.	4
Willow Tit	.	.	.	5	2	.	7
Coal Tit	.	1	.	4	1	.	6
Blue Tit	.	8	.	1	5	.	14
Great Tit	.	4	.	9	10	.	23
Treecreeper	.	.	.	3	1	.	4
Bullfinch	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Yellowhammer	1	4	.	1	.	.	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>117</b>

## 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	165	89	110	543
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	99	126	98	98	480
1998	78	84	116	80	106	464
1999	88	96	140	113	163	600
2000	75	106	106	159	170	616
2001	(57)	(33)	94	121	59	(364)
2002	85	89	141	176	117	608
2003	117	.	.	.	.	(117)

### Summary data 1978 - 2002

<b>Minimum</b>	59	57	94	68	59	422
<b>Mean</b>	87	107	165	142	127	623
<b>Maximum</b>	124	145	288	253	177	865

Note: Bracketed numbers represent incomplete data sets and are not included in summary figures below. Incomplete data sets in 2001 result from foot and mouth restrictions.