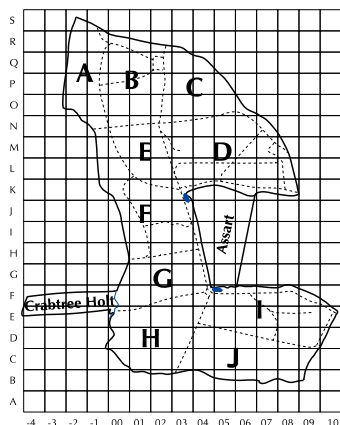




TWITTER

Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

October 2026 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Ellen Marshall

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John Clark

2026/4

Number 159

www.treswellwoodipmg.org



It has been a very varied period in terms of catches, with totals from the standard set varying between 6 and 41, and giving a total of 176 birds, well above the mean of 129. There was also more variety than usual, with the catch including 2 Sparrowhawks, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a Whitethroat. We have also been lucky with the weather, and only one visit was cancelled, owing to strong winds.

In August we were pleased to host a visit from a group called Belle's Birders, which went very well. We had a good and varied catch and they are now all experts in moult. They understand that ringing is not just about putting a ring on a bird. After their visit they posted this on their Facebook page:

We'd like to say a huge thank you to the Treswell Wood IPM Group for generously sharing their time, knowledge and passion with us during an awesome ringing demonstration on Sunday. We all had a brilliant time learning about bird ringing and the important work involved in monitoring and protecting our birds. And, of course, we absolutely loved to chance to see some of our favourite woodland birds up-close.

Missed out this time? Fear not. Amy from Treswell Wood IPM Group will be joining us for a webinar all about ringing on Friday.

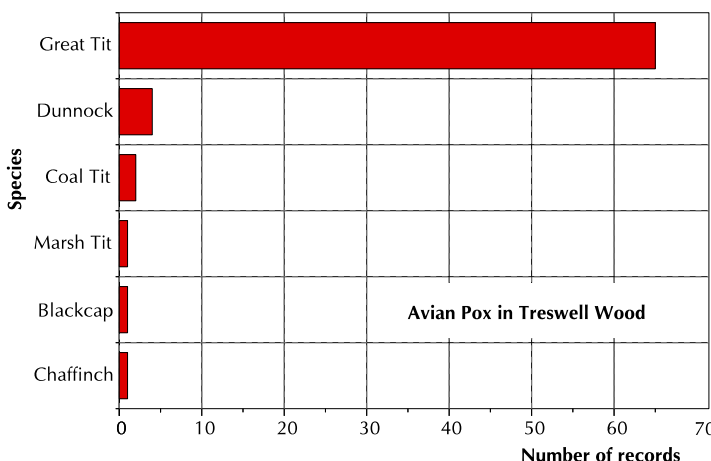
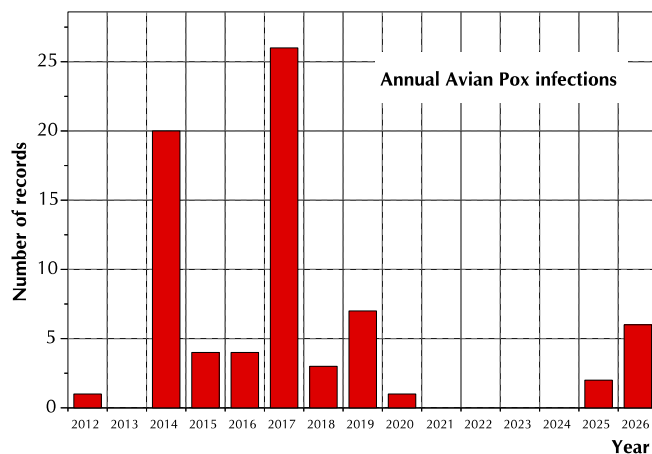
We have had on-line meetings in recent years, but this webinar is a first for us.

Avian pox

We had been apparently free of avian pox for a few years until last year we found two infested birds. This year we have seen more. At the start of the outbreak in 2012 we suggested to the BTO Ringing Unit that we should ring infected birds. Normally ringing practice is to release sick birds unringed. We pointed out that with the high recapture rate in the wood we were very well placed to discover whether birds could recover from avian pox. We did retrap some birds which had been infected and had apparently recovered. One Great Tit, for example, had a very large lesion inside its mouth and we thought it must be very difficult for the bird to feed at all. Remarkably it was one of those that we retrapped later alive and well. There is no doubt that infection can only reduce a bird's survival chances but the pox is not, of itself, fatal.

The first chart shows the rise, fall and start again of outbreaks in the wood. The second records the total number of encounters of infected birds (a bird trapped twice while infected will contribute two records in this chart). It is quite clear that Great Tits are the major victim and we have wondered whether transmission could be increased at the feeding station. If so it is very odd that we have not recorded a single infected Blue Tit - another regular species at the feeding station. Even Coal and Marsh Tits, also regulars at the feeder have very rarely been infected.

Based on past experience we can expect more cases in the near future followed by some clear years again.



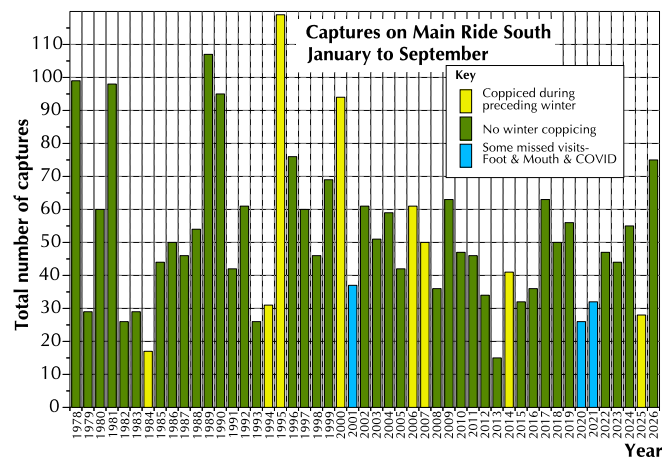
Blackcaps here and there again

Following the note in the last issue of TWITTER about Blackcaps in which we noted differences between two very different CES sites - Treswell Wood and Slimbridge, Dave Fogg made some further comments. He regrets he no longer has opportunity to ring Blackcaps in Grantown-on-Spey but did send details of Blackcap captures when he ringed at Cottam Power Station. This was adjacent to the Trent migrant flyway and visible from Treswell Wood, separated from it by 5 minutes flying time over largely arable farmland. The table below gives various details of captures at Cottam, Slimbridge and Treswell Wood. It is difficult to make exact comparisons. Cottam was not a CES site, and Dave ceased ringing there about 10 years ago. The first two columns give the total numbers of Blackcaps during the CES sampling period (May to August inclusive) in all years for which Cottam and Treswell Wood CES operated. The second two columns give just the 2026 CES data from Treswell Wood and Slimbridge. Of interest is the percentage of juveniles in the captures for the whole season. It is clear that Cottam enjoyed a higher proportion of juveniles than did Treswell Wood and we believe this is because it lies at the edge of the Trent flyway. For this year only, Slimbridge massively outdoes Treswell Wood. Indeed Cottam's 47% of juveniles looks niggardly compared to Slimbridge's 73% but note that Cottam is an average figure, Slimbridge is just for one year which seems to have been an unusually productive one. Overall it is quite clear, though, that Slimbridge and Cottam both seem to benefit from the adjacent migrant flyways. Incidentally our note on Blackcaps, comparing our data with that of Slimbridge CES was reprinted in the report to Slimbridge management and we now have the final numbers for this year's CES visits to that CES site.

	Cottam	Treswell Wood	Slimbridge	Treswell Wood
	All years	All years	2026 only	2026 only
Juveniles	524	489	124	27
Adults	581	1296	46	45
Percentage of juveniles	47%	27%	73%	38%

The effect of coppicing on capture rates

We had a feeling that catches on Main Ride South (one of our standard sites) were, on the whole, increasing as the adjacent part of the wood regrew after coppicing. Is this so? Main Ride South runs North-South near the wood edge through grid squares I04 to F04. It is potentially greatly affected by coppicing because to the east there has been, at best, just a very thin line of trees in the boundary hedgerow providing very little shelter from easterly wind. On the other hand, over the last 15 years the assart has been regenerating slowly but steadily so can provide some shelter from the easterlies. We should also note that capture numbers are influenced by many factors other than just the habitat immediately adjacent. One major factor for which Charles Deeming has done some analysis is the population in the wider area surrounding the wood. There have been three years where we were unable to carry out all the scheduled visits (2001 Foot and Mouth closed the wood, Covid and the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021). On the graph normal years are shown in dark green, years in which some or part of Main Ride South had been coppiced the previous winter are shown in yellow and the three years with some missed visits are shown in blue. Well, the question was asked and here are the numbers. Do capture numbers on this most potentially exposed of our standard sites generally fall immediately after coppicing and then, year by year, increase again? (Note that the numbers are for January to September inclusive to make a fair comparison with 2026.)



Variability in captures

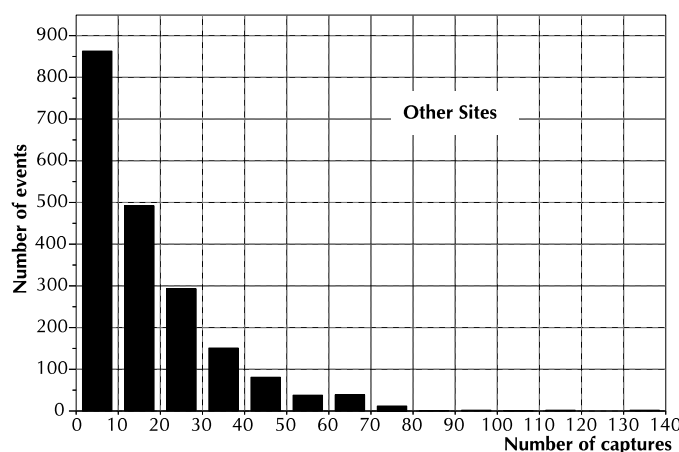
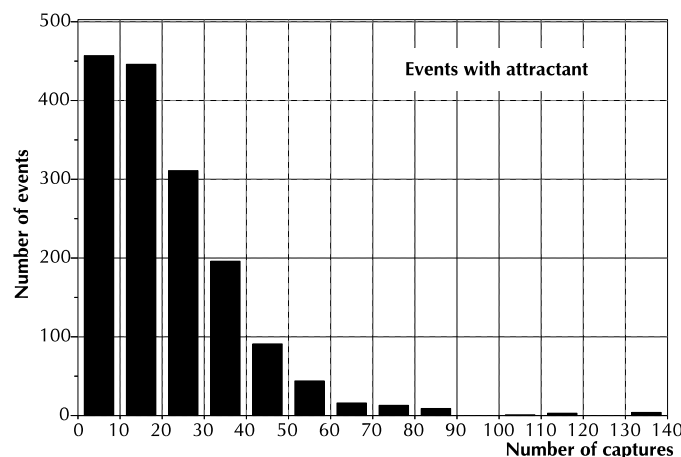
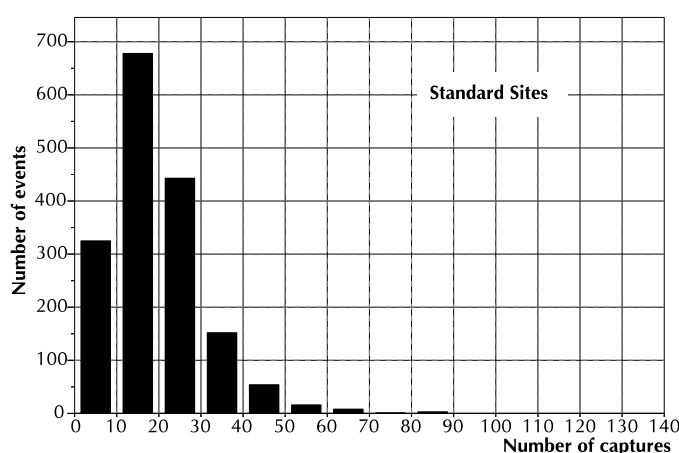
In the introductory paragraph John Clark noted how variable catches have been in standard sites. We have often remarked on this informally. The catch one week does not seem to be a good predictor of the catch next week - perhaps there should be a warning such as we see with investment policies *Past performance is no guarantee of future performance. Values can go down as well as up.* But how variable are catches and does the type of site affect such variability? John's comment was, in part, prompted by the catch of just one bird on October 27th in spite of the nets being set at a feeding station. We might take some comfort in the fact that we are not alone. By chance I was in touch with Jeremy Greenwood (former director of the BTO) who told me that on October 4th he also was part of a team of ringers and their catch equalled our catch of just one.

In Treswell wood we can break down all our captures into one of three basic categories Standard Site, Attractant and Ordinary. Standard Site is self explanatory, Attractant is where there is something we have done to attract birds

or have tried to catch birds where they have been gathering to drink (tape lures, feeding station or pond) and Other represent all mist netting without attractants and not on standards sites. There are essential differences between these categories. Standard site captures are those in the same amount netting for the same length of time. Captures with attractants tend to be in fewer nets and shorter times. Other captures are, again, usually in fewer nets and for shorter times.

The table gives data for the total number of birds caught in these situations. Thus, for example the Standard Site figure of 18.7 is the average number of birds caught in our 1591 standard site visits thus far. The coefficient of variability is the ratio of standard deviation to mean. It is reassuring to see that the variability for Standard Sites, where catch effort is constant, is much lower than for the other two where catch effort can be very variable. It is no surprise that Attractants have the highest mean.

	Standard Sites	Attractants	Ordinary
Mean number of captures	18.7	20.5	16.5
Standard deviation of captures	11.1	16.4	15.7
Coefficient of variability	0.60	0.80	0.95
Variance of captures	123	269	243



If catches are so variable that one week's catch has no value in predicting next week's catch then we should expect the numbers to form a Poisson distribution. In Poisson distributions the mean and variance are equal. It is blindingly obvious that this is very far from the case in all these three situations. Of course, blindingly obvious is not a rigorous statistical test but a quick attempt with the chi-squared test showed that the probability of there being an underlying Poisson distribution is off the statistical scale at the infinitesimal end.

There are statistical distributions which will match the data and the graphs do suggest that the underlying distributions are 'well behaved'. However the important

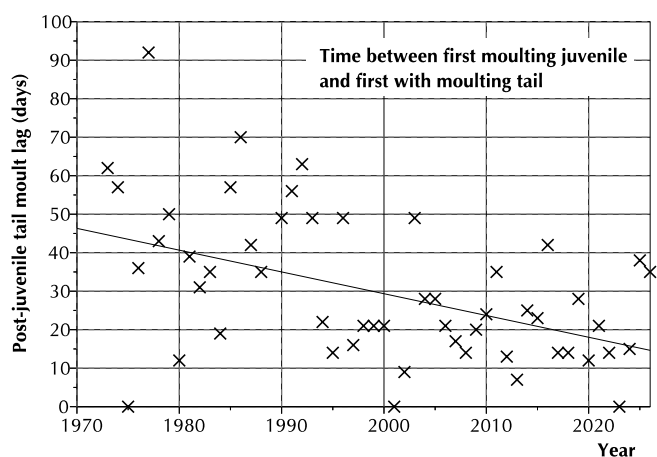
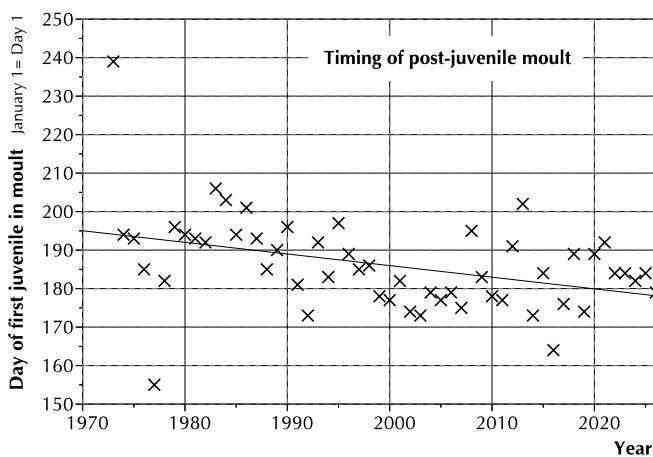
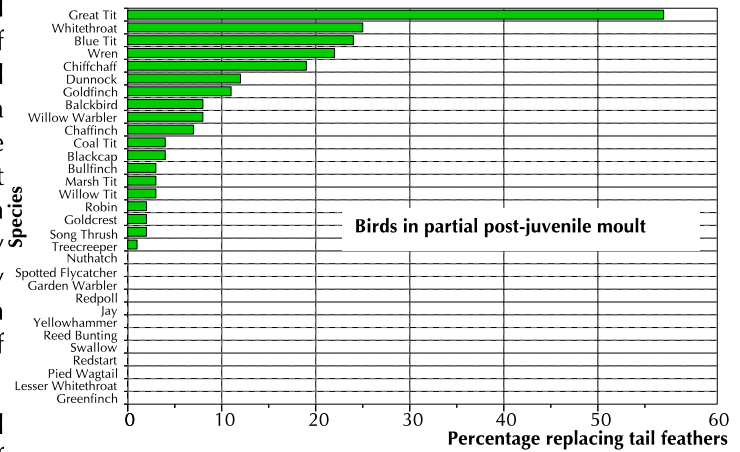
thing is to consider what processes might be driving the numbers rather just trying to find a distribution which matches the data. We have made a start - it is not random.

Partial post-juvenile moult

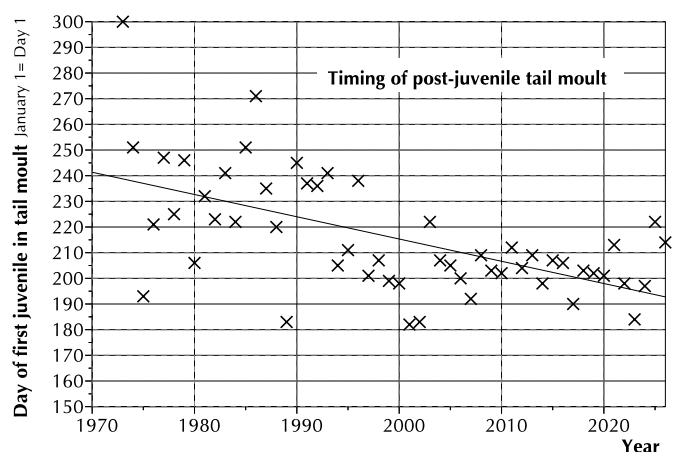
When ringing began in Treswell Wood in 1972, juveniles moulting any tail feathers as part of post-juvenile moult was very unusual in Britain. It was then regarded as normal to age many species using the shape of the tail feathers - juvenile feathers generally being more pointed rather than rounded at the tip. In those early days, John McMeeking had recorded moult in detail in his own system of coding and he encouraged ringers to record moult in this way. That was before the current BTO moult codes had been devised. Thanks to John's early encouragement we now have a record going back over half a century. It is quite clear that ageing birds on the shape of the tail feathers can, at best, be reliable only on juveniles which have not moulted tail feathers. Those which have cannot be aged on tail feather shape alone as their new feathers are of adult shape. The first record we have of a bird moulting any tail feathers as part of post-juvenile moult was a Dunnock in 1973. John's cryptic note for the bird read: **M:BT** This signifying Moulting of Body and Tail.

Until around the mid 1980s we routinely clipped samples of tail feathers (under licence of course) of birds of known age. This was a project by John and Bob Spencer (head of BTO ringing scheme) to build a reference collection for a future ageing guide. Because of the changing timing and pattern of moult (presumably a result of climate change) this collection has lost its original purpose. All John's carefully documented collection is now at the Natural History museum and can be used for other purposes which might for example, involve stable isotope analysis of environmental conditions at the time of moult.

The chart shows the species where we have recorded at least one in PJ moult and the proportions of moulting juveniles which have been found to include tail moult. This will underestimate the percentage of birds which moult some tail feathers - a bird caught in the early stages of moult will not have started to moult any tail feathers and if it is not retrapped later will not add to the proportion moulting tail feathers. It is clear that some species are now moulting tail feathers in greater numbers than others. However all those species scoring zero are based on very small samples of juveniles - apart from Nuthatch. On the other hand note that the Whitethroat 25% is based on only 4 individuals. Note also that these represent all our data so the percentages moulting in recent years may be far higher than those indicated in the graph. Great Tits now almost routinely moult tail feathers. Very many Blue Tits do but often it is only the central two or four that are replaced.



Apart from the increasing number of species which may moult tail feathers, there has been a slow shift in the timing of post-juvenile moult. The first graph shows the day on which the first moulting juvenile of any species has been recorded. This is, perhaps, not the most reliable measure of timing of moult for various reasons including that the first moult is not always of the same species. However with over 50 years' worth of data such anomalies do not affect the big picture. Post-juvenile moult now seems to be about 2 weeks earlier than when the project began - that is an average advancement of more than 1 day every three years. Interestingly this rate of change is almost exactly the same as the rate of change of first egg dates (although our first-egg dates are almost exclusively for box-nesting tits). According to Jenni & Winkler in *Moult and Ageing of European Passerines*, *the onset of moult is largely determined by hatching date*. Our very long data set is entirely in keeping with that idea. What is needed now is an examination of whether the time taken to moult has changed over the years. How to use our data to address this question will need some thought but it is something well worth looking into.



Tail moult is advancing even more rapidly - about one day per year. When tail moult occurs, it begins some time into the PJ moult. At first we thought it would only begin once the bird had nearly completed the rest of the partial moult and had sufficient resources to undergo the expensive replacement of tail feathers. Now it seems that the decision to moult tail feathers is taken at a fairly early stage of moult and the average time between onset of post

juvenile moult and tail moult is decreasing - this time lag, on average, having dropped from 45 to 15 days.

There have been a few instances of Greenfinches locally (but not in the wood) also moulting their primary feathers as part of post juvenile moult. This is not uncommon in southern Europe in a few species. With continuing climate warming it is likely that post-juvenile tail moult becomes more common and in a wider range of species.

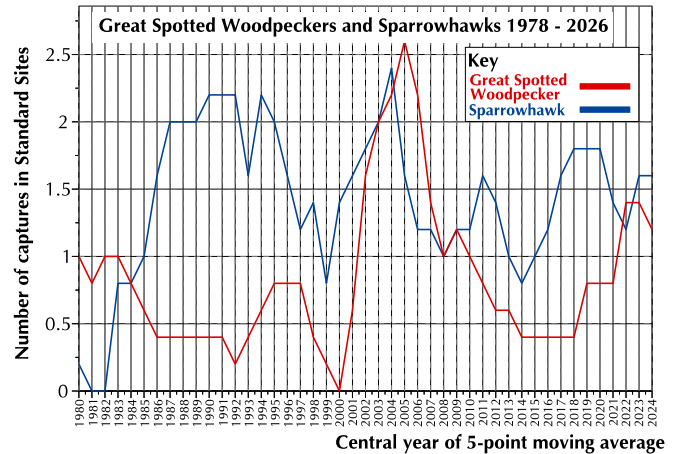
Noteworthy Encounters

Species **Age/Sex** **Ring** **Date** **Grid**

Sparrowhawk **3F** **EM32951** **02/08/2026** **M00**

The first Sparrowhawk of the year, followed by another (a juvenile male) on 13/09/2026. The graph shows the record of standard site captures using a smoothing 5-point moving average. Our first ever capture was in 1978. Years with much higher numbers of captures were heavily influenced by pairs nesting near to a standard site. Apart from those years, the capture numbers are fairly stable.

This pattern contrasts with that of Great Spotted Woodpeckers which increased considerably until about 15 years ago, then declined but now seem to be recovering.



	Standard Site	Feeder	Other
Sparrowhawk	69	12	25
Gt.Spot. Woodpecker	43	530	47

Great Spotted Woodpecker **3** **LH48907** **13/09/2026** **H04**

One of two Great Spotted Woodpeckers caught in standard site nets this interval. As seen in the table above relatively few - about 1 in 7- captures of this species are anywhere other than at a feeding station. Only half of those are in standard site nets. To have two in standard site nets in one 10-week interval is not unprecedented but is very unusual. What a contrast with the Sparrowhawk which is rarely caught at a feeding station despite the relative abundance of potential prey items.

Stock Dove **Nestling** **EM32772** **11/10/2026** **D03**

The Stock Dove nesting season is very protracted but this seems to be the end for 2026. This bird was one of a brood of two (as usual for the species). It is the second latest Stock Dove nestling which we have ever ringed. The latest was a brood of one on 27/10/2019

Blue Tit **4** **AEZ3784** **06/09/2026** **D08**

A bit of a non-conformist Blue Tit. It was ringed and re-trapped twice in 2024 as a juvenile. On its first recapture it was in a net adjacent to an adult Blue Tit, AEZ3788. Apart from this bird's first capture at a feeding station its subsequent captures have always been in the same grid square. Since its last capture in 2024 we have not seen it - not in ordinary mist nets, not at a feeder, not roosting and not sitting on a nest. Its captures, apart from the first, have all been in the same part of the same standard site which we have visited 9 times since its last capture. Where has it been? And where has AEZ3788 been all this time? It had not been seen since its capture of 2024 but it appears today caught at the same time as AEZ3784 in the same part of the standard site. It is tempting to think they could be a pair but both birds have short wings which suggests, but is far from certain, that they are both female.

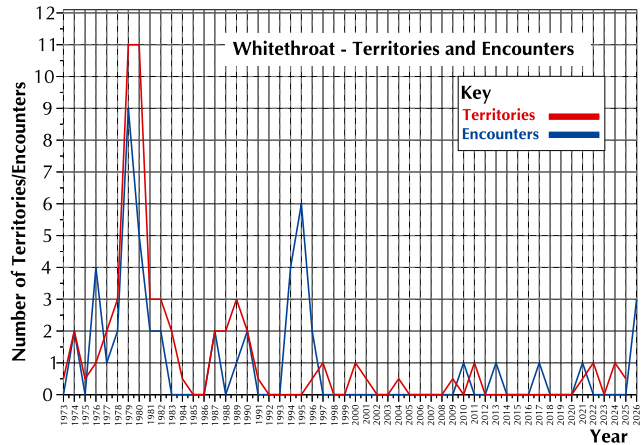
Blue Tit **5** **D220380** **25/02/2026** **Retford**

This is the first Blue Tit from the 2025 nestling-ringed cohort to be found elsewhere. We used to have more local reports but there is now much less ringing locally - Rampton, Cottam, West Burton and Treswell (village) are no longer active ringing sites. In the past we sometimes had reports of birds caught in Retford during the winter and then we found them again in the wood. Their winter 'migration' took them just as far as Retford where, presumably, the urban warmth and plentiful gardens with bird feeders seemed better for wintering than a cold ancient woodland. No sign of this bird since it appeared in Retford so it probably found somewhere else to settle.

Whitethroat**3J****BVD0940****09/08/2026****Q01**

This is the second Whitethroat we have encountered this year. Both have been late summer juveniles which are, most likely, birds gradually moving south within Britain before the longer, faster journey over the Channel, through Europe and over the Mediterranean to north Africa.

The Treswell Wood operation began three years after the Whitethroat crash of 1969 which, we now know, resulted from drought in the Sahel. After that they began a slow recovery which was arrested by another bad winter in the Sahel in 1983. Another sharp fall in the national breeding population came in 1991. Both our record of breeding territories and captures in those years reflect this national picture very well indeed. The British population has never fully recovered from the crashes. On the graph we have, as usual, given half a territory for years where Whitethroats we recorded by CBC observers but with insufficient evidence to be able to confirm a breeding territory.

**Dunnock****3J****TY35179****09/08/20216****Q03**

This Dunnock was in post-juvenile moult which included the tail - the only such Dunnock this year. At first it seemed this Dunnock was unusual and this promoted the investigation into post-juvenile tail moult described above. We now have records of 45 tail-moulting Dunnocks - so not particularly unusual. We had forgotten that our first ever record of any juvenile moulting its tail was in 1973 and was a Dunnock.

Meadow Pipit**3****BVD0542****04/10/2026****I04**

From time to time we have tried to attract Meadow Pipits flying over the assart using playback calls. Opportunities have been few - it requires us to be netting near the assart which is the only place where there is any chance of catching them, there has to be little or no wind, the birds must be passing over at the time and we must have sufficient ringers available. Success has been very limited indeed - the last one we caught was in 2014, another one was caught in 2013 and three on one day in 2012. Today the opportunity was there and we caught three, all new birds - this one, a second juvenile and one adult. A catch of three birds does not seem very exciting. More impressive, absolutely true but really misleading is to say this was our biggest equal catch on any one day and it has increased our total number ringed by 60%.

10-Week Summary: 2026 Interval 4, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult			Adult			
Sparrowhawk	.	5	3	.	5	3	2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	.	1	.	.	.	2
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	2	.	1	3
Blue Tit	1	.	27	7	.	9	44
Great Tit	.	.	5	7	.	4	16
Long-tailed Tit	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Chiffchaff	3	.	4	1	.	.	8
Blackcap	5	.	15	3	.	.	23
Whitethroat	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Wren	2	.	17	1	.	1	21
Nuthatch	.	.	2	.	.	.	2
Treecreeper	.	.	1	1	.	3	5
Blackbird	1	.	3	2	.	.	6
Song Thrush	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Robin	2	.	22	6	.	4	34
Dunnock	2	.	5	.	.	.	7
Totals	18	.	106	30	.	22	176