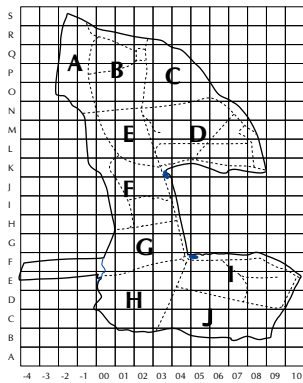


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

August 2012 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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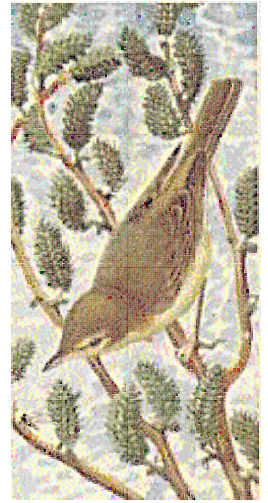
Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John Clark & John McMeeking

2012/3
Number
88



It has certainly been a season to remember. The previous issue of Twitter noted the early false start resulting from the warm March weather followed by wholesale cessation of breeding activity for much of the very wet April. Overall we have had small clutches of tits and low nesting success. Just as well that the object of our operations is to record events rather than to ring many birds. Once again we have collected the frass which is currently being analysed by Ken Smith. Last year revealed a mismatch in time between the caterpillar crop and peak food demand by breeding tits. With this year's most unconventional breeding season weather, we expect to see another year of mistimed events which will have contributed to the year's low tit nesting success.

In the previous Twitter, we also noted that Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs had arrived in good numbers and we expected high breeding success. Perusal of the standard site captures show that this promise has not been fulfilled, with low numbers of juveniles of both species. We also had hopes for Willow Warblers which we heard singing early in the season. Hopes dashed again. Our first juvenile of the year is usually a Long-tailed Tit. Not so this year, with no juveniles yet captured to date. However, Wrens and Robins seem to have done well. This is, perhaps, surprising after the cold winter and the almost complete replacement of our Robin population by new, first breeding season birds.

The Common Birds Census season has ended with a full complement of visits after a difficult start. Frank & Liz Tillotson and Richard Johnson had retired after many seasons' service and their patches had been taken over by Keith Stedman and Richard Anderton. All was well until, suddenly and unexpectedly, our two new observers' circumstances changed and they were unable to continue for the whole season. We are most grateful to Paul Eady and Andy Gould who have now served their apprenticeships under the tutelage of Keith and Richard, taken over the census plots and completed the year's survey. The maps are now with Pat Quinn-Catling who prepares them for the next stage in the analysis at the BTO. Meanwhile George Hudson and Stuart Martin continue their stalwart work on their patches. Thanks to all the team for ensuring the continuity of this 40 year-long survey.

Because of the early failures of some breeding tits, a few began their moult rather early. This prompted us to start recording the state of moult of all birds well before the start of the main moulting season. Ringers and scribes in the field have done an excellent job of ensuring that the state of moult has been recorded for almost every bird we have captured. For a complete record of the moulting season it is important to know the proportions of birds at any time that have not yet begun moult and which have completed moult. Unless we record the fact that a bird is not moulting, our sample of moult records will be somewhat biased. So, well done to the scribes - the best recorded moult season so far.

The Treswell Wood archives: the every-increasing backlog of photographs is still without a curator - volunteers welcome. Following the conference we decided to take add to the problem by taking fixed-point photographs to give a picture of how the wood changes over time. John Clark has taken on this job, taking fixed point images at each of our standard site visits. That will give 35 sets of three pictures annually - five for each of our seven standard mist-netting sites. At first we thought the fruits of this operation would only become apparent in several year's time. However, the first repeat pictures have reinforced our awareness of how much within-year variation there is in the wood. A project well worth doing.

We are also making progress with the other species records. Michael Walker, the newly-appointed Living Landscape Monitoring Officer at NWT, is charged with responsibility for species records. He has delved into our text files containing species records and is working on an efficient means of transferring them to the Recorder species

Neil Taylor

We are very sorry to have to report that Neil Taylor, who had been a stalwart of the Treswell ringing team since 1987, suffered a stroke on August 15th and died in hospital on August 17th. We understand that the funeral will be strictly for the family, followed by a memorial service in due course.

Neil will be sadly missed at Treswell and a fuller obituary will be in the next issue of Twitter

database. He expects to find Trust volunteers who will do the work once the system is established. It is a job well worth doing. It will bring a massive increase in the accessible records which document the natural history of the wood since the trust acquired it in 1972. Many thanks to Michael for his drive in making use of our records.

The main nesting season is now over with only a very few Stock Dove nests remaining active. There has been none of the excitement of last year with its Nuthatch and Kestrel nests. The table reveals it has been the second worst season in the last ten years with only 219 nestlings fledged. Of these, 15 were Wrens - the largest number since 2004. Unlike the worst year of 2008, when the main problem was predation, this year weather and food appear to have been the cause. It is worth noting the particularly sorry state of Blue Tits with only 41 fledging from 11 successful nests. In a good year just four nests could easily produce this number of fledgelings. The next issue of Twitter will have a detailed analysis of the season's results.

Events in Nestboxes - Treswell Wood, 2012

Species	Nests		Eggs laid	Birds			% Success Rate	
	Recorded	Successful		Adults caught on nests	Nestlings fledged	Nestlings recaptured (to Sept. 1)	Nests	Eggs
Stock Dove*	12	2	23	.	3	1	17	13
Tawny Owl	2	1	6	1	2	.	50	33
<i>Blackbird</i>	2	1	9	.	4	.	50	44
Wren	5	3	27	.	15	1	60	56
Coal Tit	1	0	9	1	0	.	0	0
Marsh Tit	2	2	17	1	11	1	100	65
Blue Tit	32	11	236	17	41	2	34	17
Great Tit	56	30	343	8	143	30	54	42
Totals								
2012	112	50	670	28	219	35	45	33
2011	111	62	796	32	310	29	56	39
2010	112	80	778	25	539	146	71	69
2009	118	54	648	26	300	38	46	46
2008	108	29	589	22	139	17	27	24
2007	129	64	922	52	313	35	50	34
2006	175	37	885	31	225	33	21	25
2005	153	49	852	47	245	22	32	29
2004	141	94	917	41	538	41	67	59
2003	133	41	769	29	213	17	31	28

Notes: Nests of species in italics were open nests found incidentally during the nestbox rounds.

The numbers of nests recorded, for all species, exclude nests which were abandoned before any eggs were laid.

* Some Stock Dove nests are still active.

Ever since the first issue of Twitter in 1995, we have listed interesting records under two headings - *Noteworthy Captures* and *Controls and Recoveries*. The types of records which been included have changed over the years. At first, we gave details of all non-passerine captures. With the vast increase in Great Spotted Woodpecker numbers this became unworkable. Wood pigeons and Nuthatches, too, are dropping from the noteworthy category as their numbers are increasing. On the other hand, any Willow Tit capture nowadays will deserve mention. The split between internal and external captures has also become rather blurred. In the past, most of our limited number of external reports have been from reasonably distant places. However, since John Clark began frequent ringing at Hillcrest Farm in Treswell village, we have enjoyed a large number of movements to and from the wood - too many to report them all in full even though we have regarded all external captures as 'controls'.

The term *Control* is the standard ringers' term to describe a bird caught more than a certain minimum distance from its point of ringing. That minimum distance is, for most species, 5 km. Below that distance, bird movements have not been reportable to the BTO. In the past, when all submissions were on paper, it was not possible for BTO staff to process all the short-distance movements manually. It was hard enough for us to process all our own internal movements by hand in the old days. In fact, the concept of a *Control* is quite artificial - all bird movements in time and space are of interest and contribute to the total of our knowledge and understanding of bird life processes. A movement of several kilometres over a short period of time may be of less interest than a movement of no kilometres at all over many years. A further category used has been *Recovery* - the reporting of a ringed bird found dead. Happily, with computerisation, all our records are being handled by the BTO and the concepts of *Control*, *Retrap*, *Recovery*, *New bird* are all being merged into a single category - the *Encounter*. Europhiles will be

delighted to hear that the Encounter is regarded by EURING as the basic unit of information from bird ringing. Europhobes should take comfort in the fact that EURING (the European Union of Bird Ringing Schemes, web site www.euring.org) is not a branch of the EU.

So, from this issue onwards we will be in harmony with ringers across Europe in recognising the Encounter as important, wherever it takes place. And, perhaps we should remark that all our encounters with birds are worthy, even if they are not listed under the heading of Noteworthy.

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Sparrowhawk	7M	DA51900	23/4/2012	Q02 Feeder

Strictly speaking, this is not a bird attracted to the food we have provided at the feeding station. It is most likely it was there to feed on the tits attracted to the feeder. Although the feeder area does hold a higher density of birds than other parts of the wood, it is surprising how infrequently we catch Sparrowhawks here compared to elsewhere. This bird was a retrap, having been caught (not at the feeder but in the southern part of the wood) in August 2011.

Tawny Owl	8F	GF37963	20/4/2012	Q-1	On nest
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This is the third capture of this individual on a nest. She was ringed in 2009 nesting in L02. In 2010 she nested in the same box as she has done this year. It is likely she nested here in 2011 also but we were not able to catch her. Happily, this year she has reared two young

Woodpigeon	4	FH22055	15/7/2012	D07
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Woodpigeon numbers are increasing nationally and in the wood. Today's catch was unprecedented - two birds in the same net at the same time. At first glance, the increase in numbers seems surprising. Nest success is very low - of 35 nests we have recorded over the years, only 5 have been successful. Even successful nests only produce 2 young. So, in spite of the long breeding season with up to 5 nesting attempts, a pair have no more than 70% chance of one successful nest giving an average productivity of just over one nestling reared per year. The low productivity is confirmed in our ringing data - only six of the 88 full-grown birds caught in the wood have been juveniles. Compare that with a resident species at the other end of the size scale - over half of the Treecreepers we have encountered were first captured as juveniles. The increase must, therefore, be fuelled by high adult survival. And here, we are stuck for data. Only one of our birds has ever been retrapped in the wood, four others have been reported dead; two in the wood and two elsewhere. The lack of subsequent encounters makes it difficult to make any estimate of typical life spans - the four dead birds lasted less than one year, one year, three years and four years.

Green Woodpecker	4M	DK98425	17/6/2012	G04
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What a day - only our third ever capture of a full-grown Green Woodpecker, followed half an hour later by a second - a female. They probably formed a pair gathering food in the assart (perhaps ants on the short-cut grass) and flying back into the wood to feed the young, when they were intercepted by the mist nets.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	4M	CT84287	27/5/2012	K01
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It has been a better season for this species than last year. We have captured 10 of which this is the oldest, having been ringed in December 2006. The total includes five new juveniles and five recaptured adults. Bill measurements have been taken on all the birds and the extent of red in the crown on all the juveniles. The bill measurements are for Ken Smith's study on differentiating British and continental individuals. The red crown juvenile measurements are for our own study into sexing juveniles.

Marsh Tit	3J	L803128	29/7/2012	O05
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This is the first Marsh Tit that John Clark has captured at Hillcrest Farm. He ringed it on 9th July and retrapped it there on 27th July. Two days later it appeared in the wood. The capture at the farm was a surprise - Willow Tits would seem to be more likely. Moving to the wood is another surprise for us because they are so highly sedentary.

Great Tit	6F	L700600	26/2/2012	M03
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A very rapid movement - presumably as part of the spring territory acquisition process which leads to our spring influx of the species. It was ringed at Barn Farm, Wragby, Lincolnshire 38 km to the east only 12 days earlier.

Great Tit	6F	TP88745	26/2/2012	M03
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This was ringed as a nestling, one of a brood of 9, by Peter Harrison in Sturton-le-Steeple in May 2010 and this is its first appearance since then. Note that this bird was caught on the same day as L700600 - further evidence for the spring pre-breeding movement.

Great Tit 3J TR47889 19/6/2012 Hillcrest Farm, Treswell

This bird, and two siblings ('890 & '891) made a very rapid departure from the wood. All three were caught during the same morning at Hillcrest Farm after fledging from one of the nestboxes in the wood only two weeks earlier. Normally juvenile birds remain very close to their natal site for some weeks before beginning to disperse. This individual was retrapped again at the farm towards the end of July but its two siblings have not been seen again.

Great Tit 3J TT49042 12/8/2012 P00

Great Tits will be subject of a study by Nottingham University student Steph Harris over the next year as part of her biology degree course. We know that most Great Tit juveniles are now moulting tail feathers as part of their post-juvenile moult whereas very few of them did so when the Treswell ringing began. We also feel confident that the bird's decision to moult its tail feathers is made at an early stage of post-juvenile moult rather than as an afterthought when moult is nearly over but the days still long and weather warm. We believe this is a result of the breeding season starting earlier. With a great deal of data from nestling-ringed birds, it will be possible to look at individual birds to relate their moult to the date on which they fledged. This bird will be of particular interest. It was one of a single very late brood (see X649183, below) fledging more than a month after most of the other Great Tits giving it a month less time to gain independence and prepare for its moult. We retrapped it on July 29th and it had not yet begun moult - most other tits caught then had begun. Today it had begun moult but no sign of the tail being moulted whereas most of the other juveniles were already moulting tail feathers.

Great Tit 4F X649183 20/6/2012 S-2 On nest

It is only safe to lift our Great Tits from the nest after the young have hatched. (There is some suggestion that the safety of catching birds on the nest varies between habitats and populations. Our Great Tits are intolerant of handling before the eggs are hatched.) Naturally, they spend less time in the nestbox once they are feeding young, so we catch relatively few of the nesting birds - unlike Blue Tits which can safely be lifted during the second week of incubation. This bird made a very late nest. It is likely that it was a second attempt because she was also lifted from the same box in 2010. This year, a nest was begun very early but abandoned. Just as all the other tits were completing their nesting activity, this bird made a second, very late and, surprisingly, successful attempt rearing five young to fledging. It is very rare indeed for tits to have a second nesting attempt this late in the year.

Willow Warbler 4M CXN737 17/6/2012 I04

Our first, and so far only, Willow Warbler capture of the year. In several recent years we have only caught a handful of juveniles during the post fledging dispersal period. This one was in breeding condition and remained to be retrapped in early August. So far no juveniles have been trapped.

Tree Sparrow 4 L731677 20/6/2012 Q02 Feeder

A welcome capture of a former resident species. Their numbers seem to be creeping back upwards slowly locally. We did catch one in 2006 (after a gap of 22 years) and nine in 2011. Whether they will return as a breeding species to the wood we wait to see.

Goldfinch 5F L731539 20/6/2012 Q02 Feeder

Goldfinches used to be rarities in the wood; they are now much less uncommon. In addition we now enjoy recaptures of some of our birds and have some movements to and from Hillcrest Farm. This is one of 26 birds captured this year so far of which five have a recapture history. Compare this with just 20 birds ringed before the year 2000 of which none were ever recaptured.

Chaffinch 6M R558937 10/6/2012 Q02 Feeder

An almost obligatory capture of an old Chaffinch. Ringed as a juvenile in 2006 it has appeared in every subsequent year except 2007. Captures have either been at the feeder or else in the north-west corner of the wood. Unlike many of our veteran Chaffinches, which only appear after two or three years absence, this one seems to be a bird which breeds in the wood.

Bullfinch 5F L731678 12/8/2012 R00

It is very simple to determine the age of Bullfinches - look at the small feather covering the carpal joint (elbow) of the wing. The juvenile carpal covert is brown-edged and is retained until the bird undergoes its first full moult in the summer of the year after its natal year. The replacement adult carpal covert is grey-edged. Simple! We must, of course, beware of the '1 bird in a 1,000' which moults its carpal coverts during its first summer post-juvenile moult in complete contravention of the instructions. We must also beware of birds, like this one, which has only moulted the right wing covert, cunningly leaving the brown-edged, juvenile, left carpal covert easily detectable only by left-handed ringers.

10 Week Summary 2012 Interval 3, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Woodpigeon	3	.	.	.	.	.	3
Green Woodpecker	1	1	.	.	.	.	2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Wren	1	1	10	3	4	.	19
Dunnock	.	2	.	3	.	.	5
Robin	.	3	13	4	1	1	22
Blackbird	6	.	2	7	.	.	15
Song Thrush	.	1	2	1	.	.	4
Blackcap	4	9	2	4	.	.	19
Chiffchaff	5	.	1	4	.	.	10
Willow Warbler	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Blue Tit	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Great Tit	.	.	.	2	2	.	4
Nuthatch	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Treecreeper	.	.	3	1	2	.	6
Jay	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Chaffinch	.	1	.	2	2	.	5
Goldfinch	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Bullfinch	2	4	.	4	.	.	10
Totals	23	24	35	37	12	1	132

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

Recent years:

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2008	125	130	151	86	100	592
2009	57	130	156	85	80	508
2010	94	100	144	119	143	600
2011	96	112	120	105	101	438
2012	69	125	132			(326)

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Maximum	128	145	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	94	68	59	364
Mean	90	108	160	133	125	613

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

The Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey.

Readers are reminded that we have registered the group with this hotel which advertises itself as *The Wildlife Hotel* and offers wildlife holidays throughout the year.

The hotel will make a donation to group funds for every member who books a holiday there. All you have to do is to declare your membership of TWIG when you pay (and if you receive Twitter that makes you a member).

Contact the hotel: info@grantarmshotel.com www.grantarmshotel.com 01479 872526