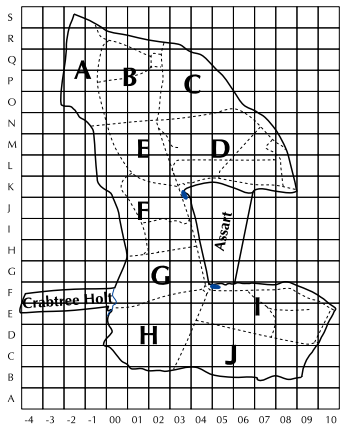

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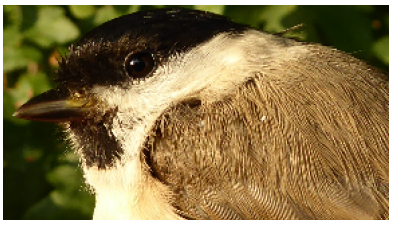


Treswell **W**ood - **I**nformation **T**o **T**ell **E**very **R**ecorder

December 2025 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Ellen Marshall

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringing John Clark

2025/5 Number 155

www.treswellwoodipmg.org

Ringing at Main Ride South on a misty December the 21st enabled us to complete the cycle of standard site visits for the year, and to start year 54 of ringing in the wood. Standard site captures for the period were 107, below the mean of 126. The annual total (see page 2) reached 619, above the mean of 587 thanks to larger catches in periods 2 - 4 this year. The weather has now turned wetter, the ponds are filling up again, and the wood is getting back to its usual damp winter state.

Weather has again disrupted the ringing activity with two unworkable weekends and two shorter visits because of forecast rain which precludes operating a full standard site - even when the morning begins fine and dry. It is only rarely that we are able to do a weekday catch-up visit because so many group members are at work.

The first cold session of the season was on 30th November. Surprisingly very few birds were caught at the feeder, some on the standard site, but a good number on the ride which led from where the work sheds used to be. The catch on the day included four Greenfinches, a Jay, two Nuthatches and the first Redwing of the winter. Excellent variety for trainees (and experienced) ringers.

We now have the totals of bird encounters for the year. It is rather lower than typical. This is simply a result of fewer visits being made, often because of unworkable weather. Even when weather has been workable there have not always been opportunities to erect as many additional mist nets as sometimes. However the total number of encounters is not a good measure of bird abundance, more a measure of human activity. What does measure abundance is the captures in the standard sites - where our effort is made as constant as possible. It is worth noting the very few captures of finches of any species - 18 captures in total of three species. This is the lowest number of finch captures ever. Of the three finches which we have caught in the past but not this year, the last Goldfinch was in 2023, Redpoll in 1986 and Linnet in 1979.

Unusually we have not had any reports of any of our birds being found dead or alive elsewhere. We have caught two birds which had been ringed elsewhere (Dunnock from Retford, Bullfinch from Bevercotes, both places under 10km from the wood). There is now probably less ringing being done in the surrounding areas than in earlier years.

We have been pleased to gain three new young trainees in the last few months, a welcome addition to the Treswell group after a long period without new faces.

Frass (caterpillar droppings)

Each year we set up collecting trays with liners which we collect and change weekly during the tit breeding season. These are sent to Ken Smith who separates the frass from other debris and weighs the frass. The mass of frass is a proxy measure for caterpillar abundance. Ken has worked through the breeding season's frass, as usual, and added our data to his long-term, multi-site study. He said:

Here are the 2025 frass results. It was one of the earliest years since we started in 2011 and the amount of frass was the third highest. I think this all means that your Blue and Great Tits should have done well this year.

The settled weather through the spring meant down here, at least, all the frass collections were done in the dry. Yes, it was quite windy which would not be good in a wood with lots of dying ash.

Thanks again for all your help. I'm hoping we will have something to circulate on the analyses in a month or so.

Sure enough, a short while later Ken communicated again.

I am pleased that Jamie Weir, the post-doc. who has been working on our frass/breeding success data, has been making great progress and is presenting a poster at the British Ecological Society Conference in Edinburgh this week. Attached is a pdf of the poster.

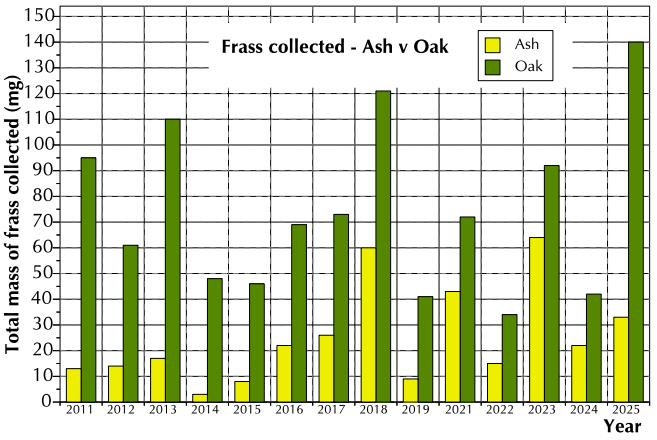
Both Blue and Great Tits have their highest nesting success and productivity when they time their nesting to match the timing of the caterpillar peak. Pied Flycatchers usually arrive too late and miss the caterpillar peak. The main novel result is that high caterpillar abundance buffers the birds against the mismatch in timing. In most years there

are enough caterpillars around for the birds to compensate for mismatch. In years when the caterpillar numbers are low they are unable to compensate.

This all seems obvious but it is great that the data (from so many different sites and years) show it. Our line is that this could account for the limited evidence of overall population consequences of mismatch even though mismatch has been increasing for decades. The birds only have problems when the caterpillar numbers are low.

Lots of the great and good of ornithology will be at the Edinburgh meeting so it will be useful to get their feedback on the poster. The paper is already in draft and the plan is to complete it after Christmas.

Most of Ken's sites are in Oak woodland, Treswell Wood is mixed Ash and Oak. Our collection trays are arranged in pairs in each pair one is under Ash and the other under Oak. In the first year of collecting frass we saw that there was less frass caught under Ash than under Oak, indicating that Ash did not provide as abundant food resources for the tits as does Oak. The pattern has continued and the graph illustrates the systematic disparity between the frass crop under the two species. We also wonder whether the crop under Ash is reduced further because many trees are now infected with dieback with very obvious symptoms. We have no idea whether infected trees are less good for caterpillars or not.



Annual Summary - All bird encounters 2025

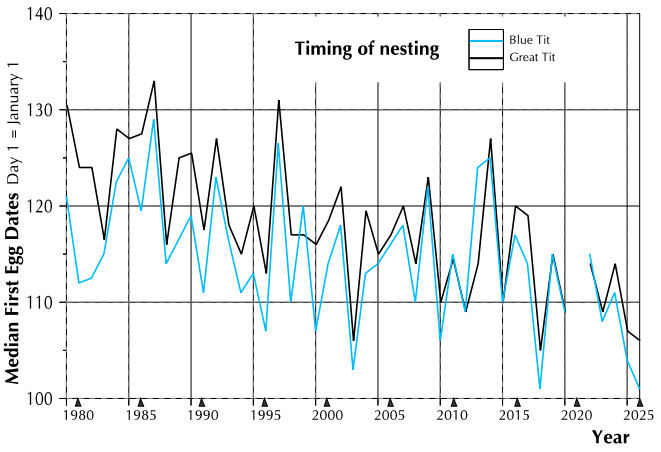
Species	Ctrl.	New Birds			Re-encounters				Other	Total
		Adult	Juvnl	Pulli	Rt	SDR	PIT	Recvs.		
Sparrowhawk	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
Woodcock	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Stock Dove	.	3	.	17	3	.	.	.	.	23
Woodpigeon	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	.	.	1	.	2	.	.	.	.	3
Jay	.	2	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	3
Coal Tit	.	.	9	.	25	2	.	.	.	36
Marsh Tit	.	.	6	.	14	.	.	.	.	20
Blue Tit	.	41	90	308	211	7	.	.	5	662
Great Tit	.	25	66	127	179	19	.	.	7	423
Long-tailed Tit	.	25	.	.	18	2	.	.	.	45
WillowWarbler	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Chiffchaff	.	24	18	.	6	3	.	.	.	51
Blackcap	.	28	20	.	4	6	.	.	.	58
Goldcrest	.	25	20	.	7	3	.	.	.	55
Wren	.	22	58	4	31	7	.	.	.	122
Nuthatch	.	1	3	.	9	.	.	.	.	13
Treecreeper	.	5	10	.	24	4	.	.	.	43
Blackbird	.	30	8	.	29	3	.	.	.	70
Redwing	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
Song Thrush	.	14	1	.	6	2	.	.	.	23
Mistle Thrush	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
Robin	.	25	45	.	39	14	.	.	.	123
Dunnock	1	18	33	.	27	4	.	.	.	83
Chaffinch	.	3	3	.	.	1	.	.	.	7
Bullfinch	1	5	1	.	1	2	.	.	.	10
Greenfinch	.	1	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	4
Totals	**2**	**306**	**396**	**457**	**636**	**79**	**.**	**.**	**12**	**1888**

Key: **Ctrl** - Birds ringed elsewhere and caught in Treswell Wood. **Juvnl** - juveniles. **Pulli** - birds ringed as nestlings. **Rt** - ordinary recaptures. **SDR** - same day recaptures. **PIT** - records imported from PIT tag reader. **Recvs.** - recoveries, i.e. our own ringed birds found dead in Treswell Wood. **Othr.** - most in this table are pulli which were ringed but died before fledging; they are not included in the Pulli column.

Nestboxes 2025

Normally we give a summary of the nestbox activity in the year's fourth issue of TWITTER. For 2025 we were not able to do final checks on some boxes until after the deadline for that issue. Apologies, particularly as it makes this issue rather full of tables. We have not been able to record events in some boxes because of a shortage of 'nestbox inspectors'. We had expected to have an adequate team but family pressures intervened and we are at least one person short. Volunteers would be welcome. It is not necessary to be a bird ringer to record events in boxes. It requires weekly inspections through the breeding season from early April until June but, be warned, it is addictive.

We recorded fewer species in boxes than usual - no Coal or Marsh Tits - and we found only one open nest. (Note that the NWT does not allow cold-searching for bird nests but, where we come across an active open nest during our normal course of ringing or nest recording, then we can continue to record events in that nest.)



In spite of the lower number of nests recorded than usual the total number of fledged birds was well above average. Further, the success rate of nests (76% of nests fledging at least one bird) was a very close second to 1987 which managed 78% success rate. As far as eggs are concerned 78% of the eggs laid resulted in a fledged bird and this is the highest success rate we have ever recorded. Predation was infrequent and the food supply (as Ken Smith noted) was abundant giving well fed, healthy broods.

Ken noted that the season seemed to have been an early one and our nest records agree. The graph gives the median first egg date. (This is a more reliable measure than the earliest first egg date which depends on just one, probably atypical, individual. It is better than the mean because it is not affected by late replacement clutches or second clutches.) Blue Tits almost always begin just before Great Tits. The rapid change in the time of the nesting season is clear with 2025 being the earliest for Great Tits and only one day later than the earliest for Blue Tits.

Events in Nestboxes - Treswell Wood 2025

Species	Nests		Eggs	Birds			Success rate	
	Recorded	Successful	Laid	Adults	Fledged	Recaps	Nests	Eggs
Tawny Owl	1	0	1	.	0	.	0	0
Stock Dove	23	12	44	5	19	0	52	43
Blue Tit	42	37	392	27	314	30	88	80
Great Tit	21	18	157	2	135	19	86	86
Wren	2	1	11	.	4	0	50	36
Blackbird	1	0	3	.	0	.	0	0

Richard Johnson

Richard was one of our CBC surveyors for about 15 years until 2017. We just knew him as someone who appeared at about the same time as the Chiffchaffs, was seen frequently until the adult birds which he surveyed had finished their main breeding activities and then he disappeared until next spring. As predictable, and as welcome, as the feathered summer visitors. When we saw him after his Sunday morning surveys we would discuss with him the differences and similarities in his observations and our bird encounters. After he stopped surveying in 2017 we saw him in the wood no more. Indeed we heard nothing from him although we kept him on the TWITTER mailing list. In December we heard from his son, Marcus, to say that Richard had died at the age of 92. Richard had moved to Scotland after his wife, Micha, had been diagnosed with dementia. The choice of place was driven by family connections and (of course) the countryside. Alas for us, that was the end of Richard's part in the bird survey. However, Marcus told us that Richard has continued to take an active interest in the Treswell Wood monitoring project and they felt it meant so much to him that the proceeds of the retiring collection at his funeral should be donated to the project. We were very moved by this gesture. When we found out more about *Doctor* Richard Johnson's career with the British Geological Survey including periods in Canada, Southern Rhodesia (as it was then), Zambia and Malawi we felt humbled that such a widely travelled and experienced field scientist should think so much of our amateur work.

Our sympathy goes to his offspring Marcus, Chris and Fiona and we thank them for their generosity. The retiring collection proceeds will make up for one year's wear and tear on our mist nets and provide suitable wood for new, replacement owl nestboxes.

CBC - observers needed

The breeding territory mapping operation has been carried out in the wood every year since 1973 (except during the covid lockdown of 2020). Initially it was part of the BTO Common Bird Census which was used to give an annual national index of breeding bird populations. That survey has been succeeded by the BBS (Breeding Bird Survey). We have continued with the CBC methodology in the wood partly for long-term consistency but also because it gives us the territory maps and numbers of breeding pairs. BBS, which is far more effective than CBC for national monitoring, does not give the same detailed territory information about a particular site.

The observers have to visit the wood 10 times during the breeding season following the same path each time and recording, in a standardised way, bird activity - song, territorial behaviour, adults with food etc. At the end of the season these observations are compiled into species maps by Chris Bennett then analysed by Ellen Marshall to give a set of territory maps and territory numbers. It is important to be able to identify birds by sight and sound - but just a basic knowledge of these things is enough to start with. Training will be given and practice makes things much more effective..

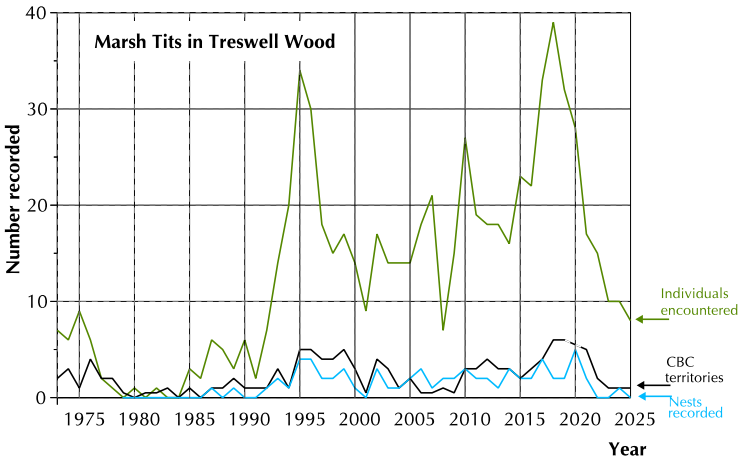
We are looking for new recruits - one of our very long-standing observers is finding it is becoming too demanding as age increases. If you are interested please contact John, Ellen, Chris or anyone else in the group.

Bullfinches, yet again

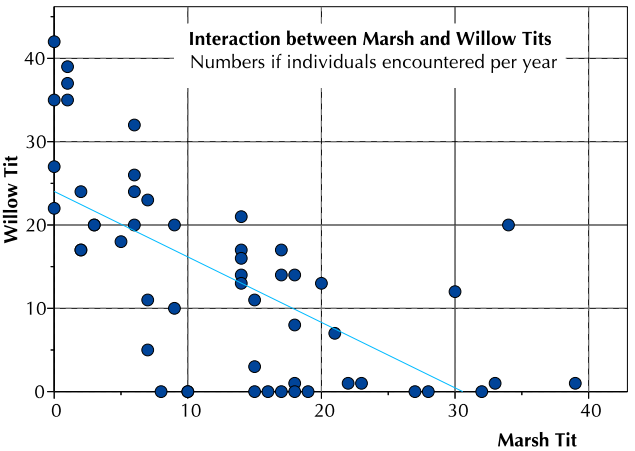
Ian Newton, as reported in previous issues, is working on a book about Bullfinches. For this he has used detailed data from three sites - Monks Wood, Wytham Wood and Treswell Wood. He has also visited the wood twice in the hope of being able to photograph Bullfinches during the ringing operations. (The Bullfinches did not oblige, alas.) The book will cover Bullfinches in general. Ian suggested that we have sufficient data to produce a paper about Bullfinches in Treswell Wood. We were very happy to agree with this suggestion. Ian has sketched out things he has looked at for the book - these have been mentioned in recent issues of TWITTER. However, with the detailed records we have, we should be able to add various other aspects to the study. For example we can easily look at movements within the wood (we have not done that since the mid 1980s), timing of moult, use of different parts of the wood and probably many more things. Opportunities are here for volunteers with ideas to do some work with the data.

Marsh Tits

It is only five years since we had a thriving Marsh Tit population, in contrast to many other places where Marsh Tits were becoming very rare or absent. We thought that there was something special about Treswell Wood which allowed it to maintain its population and we hoped to understand what this special feature was. Alas it now looks as if the wood is the last refuge of a seriously declining local population and the future for the species in the wood looks bleak. This year we have recorded only eight individuals in the wood - two adults and six juveniles. We found no nests in boxes and the CBC produced just one territory The graph shows the full history of breeding territories, numbers of individuals recorded by ringers and numbers of nests found in boxes. The rapid, steep decline in the last five years is very clear.

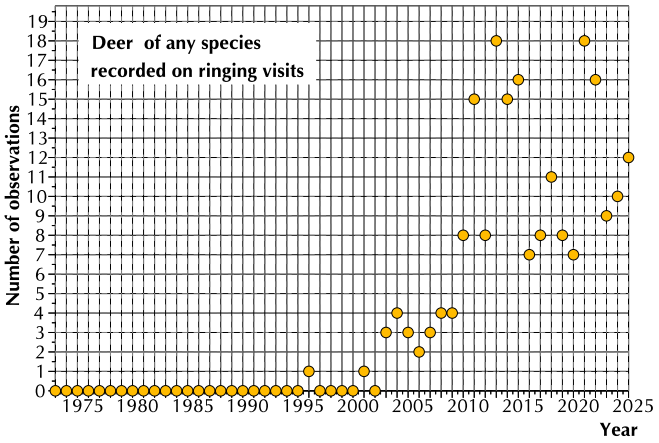


Marsh and WIllow Tits have had in interesting history in the wood. Marsh Tits became extinct in the hard winter of 1978/79 but managed to recolonise four years later. Some Willow Tits managed to survive the winter in the wood. Until these last five years there seemed to be interaction between the two species - higher numbers of one species corresponding with lower numbers of the other. It was as if they were in competition for resources. The graph shows the relationship between the numbers of individuals of each species caught per annum and there is the clear negative correlation. Willow Tits suffered a great deal in 2005 and 2006 through Great Spotted



Woodpecker nest predation leading to loss of all nests. The woodpecker numbers remained high and the Willow Tits became extinct in the wood by 2010. Marsh Tits then increased in number as might be predicted from the lack of Willow Tit competition. These high numbers remained until 2021 since when they have fallen very seriously.

Assuming that the decline results from conditions within the wood, we might ask what has changed. There are two obvious things - ash dieback and increasing deer numbers. We have no real idea about the consequences of Ash dieback although it seems likely that, if anything, it will increase the density of new tree and shrub growth below the canopy with more light coming in and less competition from the reducing numbers of Ash. At first glance an increase in deer numbers might not seem to have any consequences for these two tit species. It is clear, though, that deer are doing serious damage to the lower vegetation. It becomes obvious when one sees the vigorous regrowth in newly coppiced areas which the Notts. Trust has enclosed in deer fencing. We have also noted deer damage in the assart. Although tits are primarily arboreal they all do spend a good deal of time foraging at herb or shrub height where the deer impact is greatest. Why are not Blue and Great Tits also declining? Marsh Tits are highly sedentary whereas Blue and Great TIts frequently move away to nearby villages in winter so can avoid the poorer woodland conditions. Each spring there is an influx of Blue and Great Tits, many unringed, some our birds returning and sometimes birds ringed elsewhere. There is never a Marsh Tit influx in the same way.



The only data we have for deer is a record of our casual sightings of them. The graph shows the increase that has happened in the last decade. This is far from a perfect record of the increase in deer numbers but it is consistent with the idea that deer are damaging the habitat sufficiently to have negative impact on bird (Marsh Tit in particular) populations.

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/Sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Jay	**4**	**DT21922**	**16/11/2025**	**C03**

This was a retrap we ringed in July. It was followed by a another Jay two weeks later. Is it a good autumn generally for Jays? It is certainly a good acorn crop for them this year.

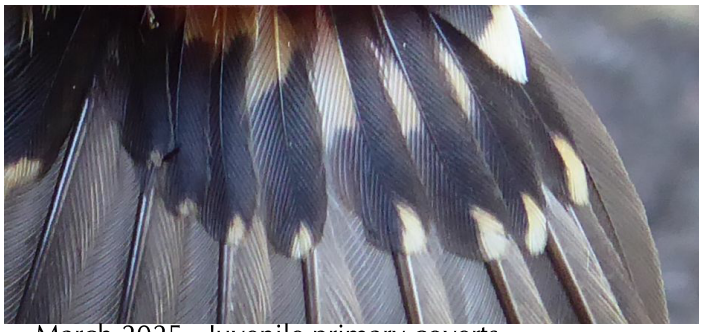
Great Tit	**3F**	**BVD0001**	**30/11/2025**	**M03**

This is the first bird we have fitted with a PIT tag for well over a year. Various things have hampered the PIT tag project. The feeders on which the tag readers are placed have suffered at the teeth of Grey Squirrels. It is a constant battle with the creatures always seeming to find a way to overcome any defences we put to deter them. Originally we had just tagged Marsh Tits in the hope of discovering more about their use of the feeders. However, sadly, we know Marsh Tits are now declining in the wood and we have decided not to tag any more of them in case that might be the last straw leading to their extinction in the wood. Instead we will be tagging some Great and Blue Tits. The aim is to discover whether individuals become net-aware and avoid using the feeders when nets are set nearby. We have made a list of candidates for tagging - tits with a history of using the feeders. This was the first on the list to be caught.

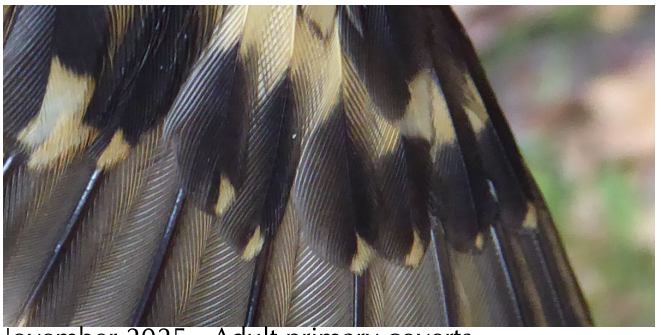
Treecreeper	**4**	**RCA535**	**09/11/2025**	**O06**

We adopted the Treecreeper for our emblem because of a paper we published in 1995. Even in the early 1990s we had sufficient numbers of captures to demonstrate, for the first time, that Treecreeper survival varied between winters. Everyone knew that - of course small birds do suffer more in cold winters - but our data confirmed it. The data went further: we were able to show that it was not cold alone that was the problem. High mortality was associated with the combination of cold and wet. This conclusion was strengthened by some field observations and by concurrent work by Andy Gosler. Since that paper every Treecreeper encounter in the wood is a special event.

In the early days of ringing in the wood it was not known how to age Treecreepers after they had undergone post-juvenile moult. The suggestion was made that the key lay in the buff tips of the outer primary coverts. This can only be confirmed by catching a bird in juvenile plumage and taking pictures of the primary coverts, then hoping to catch it again after its first full moult by which time juvenile primary coverts will have been replaced. Where better to investigate this than in the wood where we do catch and recatch birds sometimes over several years? We now have over 350 photographs including many which show the same individuals before and after post-juvenile moult. It is our intention to make a definitive analysis soon.



March 2025 - Juvenile primary coverts



November 2025 - Adult primary coverts

As with all things in the natural world there is considerable individual variation and, sometimes, individuals that break the rules. This bird, though, is one of the best. It was caught in April 2025 still wearing its juvenile primary coverts and again in November after the full adult autumn moult. The difference is quite clear. The outer four tips are large on the first, juvenile plumage. On the second, adult plumage the inner tips are much the same but the outer tips, at best, no bigger than the small inner tips. Would that all Treecreepers had read the ageing guide and followed it as diligently as this fine individual.

Redwing 3 RW74353 30/11/2025 M03

The first Redwing of the winter. Typically we catch four over the winter with most captures being in January or February rather than November and December.

Robin 4 AEZ3380 21/12/2025 G04

Robins are fierce defenders of their territories and, in consequence tend to be sedentary in the breeding season. After breeding the pairs separate and both sexes then set up winter territories. These may be in the same place or some distance from their breeding territories. Females apparently move a little further than males, on average. We think our Robins usually do not move further than neighbouring villages in winter. There are just two records of much longer movements - one from Gibraltar Point and one to Worthing. The bird from Gibraltar Point seems likely to have been a Scandinavian migrant. The bird which went to Worthing was ringed in the wood as a juvenile with an exceptionally long juvenile dispersal movement. The table shows all the other distances from (or to) the wood that Robins have been recorded. The 1722 birds represent all ringed and recaptured in the wood but never elsewhere.

Distance moved (km)	Number of birds
0	1722
2	3
3	3
4	4
5	1
6	2
7	1
8	2
17	1

What about AEZ3380? This female does not seem to go anywhere at all. All her encounters with us, in both winter and summer, have been within a circle of diameter about 100 metres.

Greenfinch 3F TY35157 30/11/2025 M03

Our last capture of this formerly common species was in the summer of 2024. It was one of four birds caught on the day. These four included both old and young, male and female birds. An excellent catch allowing us to refresh our memories and to show new ringers ageing and sexing techniques for this often tricky species.

10-Week Summary: 2025 Interval 5, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Jay	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Blue Tit	.	.	12	2	.	3	17
Great Tit	.	.	5	5	.	6	16
Long-tailed Tit	4	.	.	8	.	.	12
Goldcrest	8	.	5	2	.	1	16
Wren	1	.	12	3	.	5	21
Nuthatch	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Treecreeper	1	.	2	3	.	1	7
Blackbird	1	.	1	3	.	.	5
Robin	.	.	3	3	.	3	9
Bullfinch	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Totals	**15**	**.**	**42**	**31**	**.**	**19**	**107**

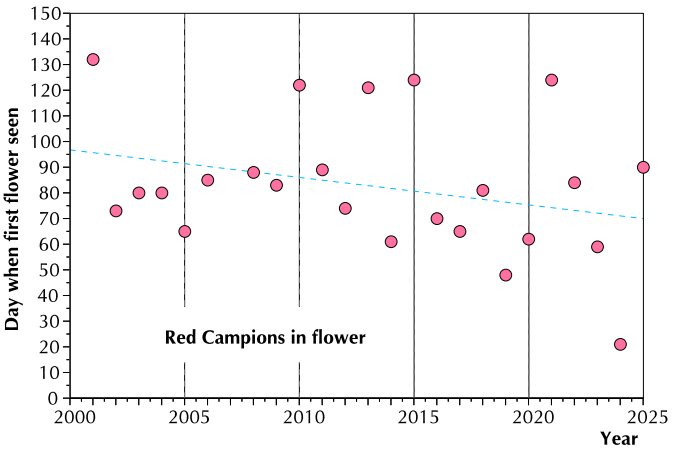
Species records and iRecord Activity

Half a century ago when John McMeeking began the operation in the wood he wanted to *record what was there*. His initial concern was recording the bird life but as time has gone on we have recorded very much more than just birds. In those days, which were before we became aware of how much was changing in the natural world, the aim of national species recording was just to map distributions. The first BTO breeding bird atlas was published in 1976 soon after the Treswell Wood operation began. The second BTO atlas, 20 years later was aimed at recording species distributions at a finer spatial level than had been possible earlier. In the introduction it states explicitly that when the second atlas was planned consideration of changes in distribution were not regarded as important. Indeed, some people thought it was too soon to begin another major project which would only replicate what had been done earlier. It was only when data analysis began that the scale of the changes in national bird distributions became apparent. The same has been found with atlases for other taxa - changes had been very great, unexpected and unnoticed.

Atlases of all taxa had first been primarily about distributions, then also about changing distributions. Another major recent change is that of the timing of natural events. When the Biological Records Centre began co-ordinating a national programme of species recording in the 1960s observers were provided with record cards each listing the species in a given taxon - flowering plants, dragonflies etc. It was quite permissible, indeed encouraged, to complete a card for a single 10km square (which was the basic unit of recording in those pre-computer days) for a single year. The species records derived from that card might represent many observations of some species in many habitats in that 10km square. From today's point of view this seems wilfully negligent - but it has to be remembered that computer power was not available then to mere species recording groups. In a paper-based system it was the best that could be done (but thankfully some of those recorders have since submitted more detailed records which had, until then, rested in their field notebooks).

With today's technology it is possible to deal with almost unlimited numbers of species records. Such records can include an exact date, a precise location and many other features including habitat, abundance, state of growth/ maturity etc.

This brings us back to our own species records. They all have the vital date and they are all computerised. It would be pointless to record some species every time we visit the wood - Ash and Oak trees for instance. They were there when John McMeeking began the project, they are still there and will (we hope) continue to be there for a very long time. What has changed is the time of year when things happen. We do not record, say, Red Campions every time we see one in bloom. However we do tend to record them when we first see them in bloom in spring or late in the autumn. These records do not add anything to the distribution data but do add to the phenological data - that concerned with the timing of natural events. Our data show the flowering season becoming slightly earlier.



Of course on their own the Treswell Wood records only provide a tiny part of the total national picture. They need to be combined with other records and made available for phenological (and distributional) research. To this end we intend to submit all our records from 1972 onwards to the National Biodiversity Network which holds the national species records data set. We will submit the records through a portal called iRecord. This is a system which anyone can use to submit species records (for anywhere in Britain). In order to use it you need to register with iRecord *www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/* It is free. Some people use other systems - iNaturalist is very commonly used. iRecord has the advantage that records are verified by an appointed taxon expert before they are uploaded into the national data set. iRecord, it is often said, is harder to use than other platforms. However we will create an Activity in iRecord. This is a restricted area of iRecord which allows records only for a given area (in our case it will be the wood). Entering records is easier through such an activity - it is a matter of pointing to the map of the wood which will be presented to users. This is somewhat simpler than seeing the map of all Britain and zooming in to the required spot each time. A further advantage of creating a TWIG Activity is that it will give us instant access to all records of the site - not just those we have made ourselves but any records in the national data set made by anyone else at any time.

The Activity is not yet set up but it is hoped to be in action by the time the next issue of TWITTER is produced. Details of how to take part will be given then.