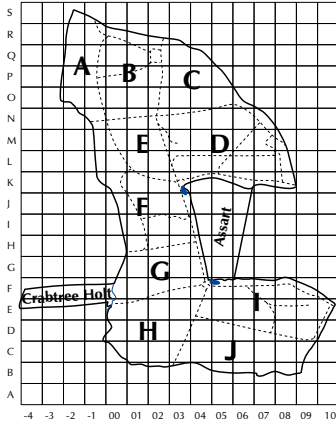
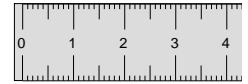


# TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

**August 2015 Treswell Wood IPM Group**  
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

**Project leaders:**

**CBC** Pat Quinn-Catling

**Nest Records** Chris du Feu

**Ringling** John Clark

**2015/3**  
**Number 103**



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## Events in Nestboxes - Treswell Wood, 2015

Species	Nests		Eggs laid	Adults caught on nests	Birds		% Success Rate	
	Recorded	Successful			Nestlings fledged	Nestlings recaptured (to Sept. 1 <sup>st</sup> )	Nests	Eggs
Stock Dove*	12	7	24	.	14	.	58	58
<i>Woodpigeon</i>	1	0	2	.	.	.	0	0
Wren	9	6	49	.	26	7	67	53
Robin	2	0	10	.	.	.	.	.
<i>Blackbird</i>	1	0	5	.	.	.	0	0
Coal Tit	1	1	8	1	1	.	100	13
Marsh Tit	2	2	18	1	18	4	100	100
Blue Tit	33	20	264	29	117	2	61	44
Great Tit	40	22	249	10	102	18	55	41
<i>Chaffinch</i>	1	1	4	.	3	2	100	75
<b>Totals</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>45</b>
2014	119	65	791	31	330	33	55	42
2013	80	51	484	26	314	76	64	65
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.

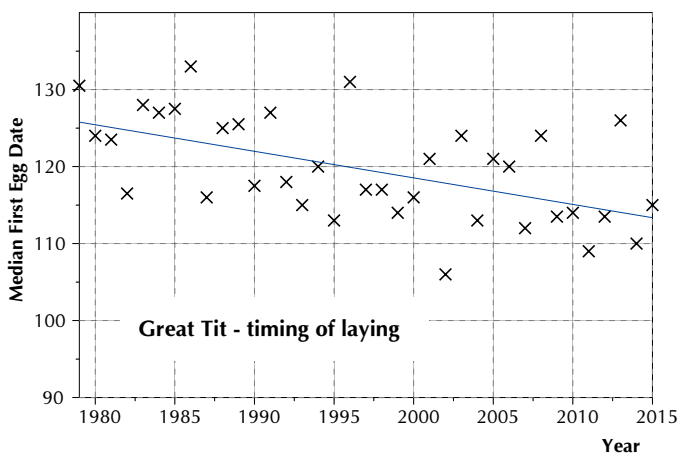
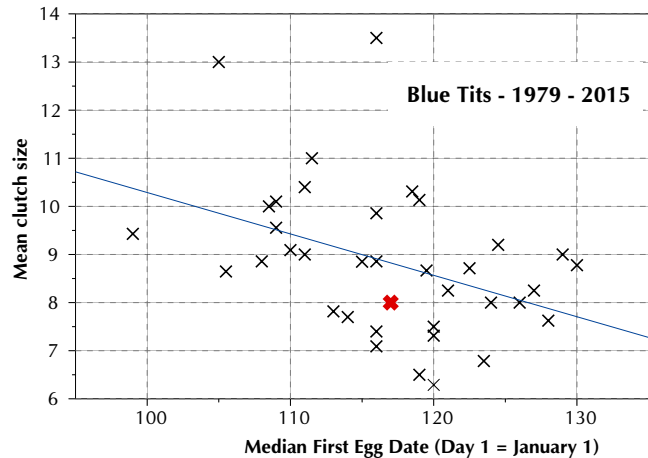
The numbers of nests recorded, for all species, exclude nests which were abandoned before any eggs were laid.

\* Some Stock Dove nests are still active.

It has been an interesting breeding season. Our Tawny Owls in the wood and Barn Owls at the adjacent Forwood Farm were present throughout the season. However, neither species laid eggs. Under normal circumstances this would have been disappointing. However Treswell Wood was not alone. Throughout the East Midlands, and beyond, many of these owls have either not nested or else laid smaller than usual clutches, later than usual. The problem seems to be a lack of small mammal food. We have, unfortunately, no direct measures of small mammal abundance (and such a measure would be very useful indeed - any volunteers?). However, anecdotal evidence is that wood mice and field voles (the owls' prime food sources) are in very short supply. No wood mouse nests have been found in any of the bird or dormouse boxes in the wood. In other nearby places, the picture is much the same. As noted in the previous issue, the one fresh pellet found in the Tawny Owl box contained no mammal remains, just hard remains of invertebrates. The only contrary evidence we have is that the Forwood Farm cats are reported to have been bringing in more voles than usual. We suspect these are bank voles rather than field voles. What is the possible cause of the lack of small mammals? During late January and much of February we suffered a

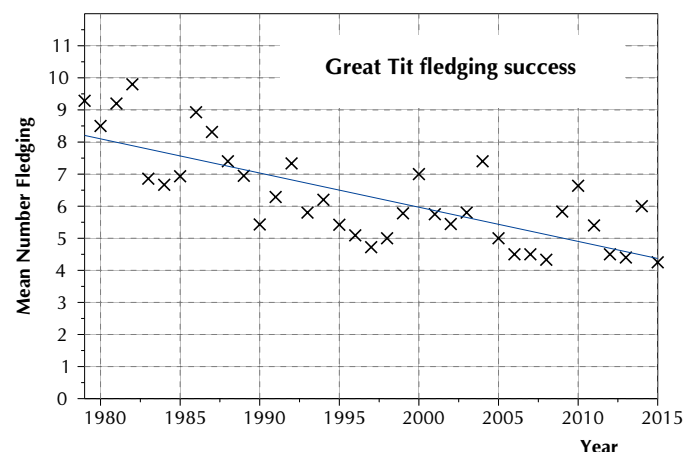
cold spell without snow cover. This is bad for small mammals - they need more food to keep warm, food is harder to find as much of it is frozen and, without snow cover, they are easy prey for owls. The cold weather was followed by a cool, late spring so plant regrowth was slow giving remaining voles lower than normal food supply. In contrast, when there is snow cover, the small rodents remain hidden under the insulating blanket of snow where their plant food, warmed by the soil below, remains unfrozen. What about the bank voles? They are creatures of bushy undergrowth where they may be more sheltered from hunting owls and conditions less harsh than in more open habitats. This would enable their higher survival than other species but, at the same time their relatively closed habitat makes them difficult species for owls to hunt (but apparently not difficult for farm cats). Thanks to Roger Cottis for his comments on the small mammals.

The consequences of low small rodent populations on nestbox birds can be beneficial or not. If weasel numbers are high, in the absence of rodent prey they will turn to birds with consequent mass destruction of nestlings. Fortunately weasel numbers also seem low as we have suffered almost no predation from them. Perhaps the hard weather also reduced the weasel population to a great extent. In the absence of weasels and wood mice, we were left with the other W of mass destruction - weather. The later the spring, the smaller tends to be clutch size and this is illustrated in the graph showing the mean annual clutch size of Blue Tits plotted against the median first egg dates (2015 point plotted as a thicker, red cross). Tits started nesting only in mid to late April. This seemed to be very

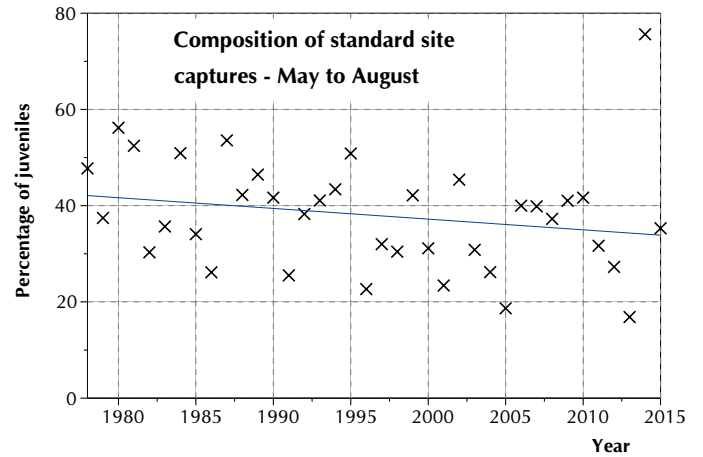


late but, after analysis of the whole season the median first egg date was almost in line with the long-term trend and some 10 days earlier than typical when we began the nestbox operation in 1979, as illustrated in the second diagram. Weather continued to be variable so the nests suffered relatively low hatching success and greater than usual post-hatching mortality. Overall this resulted in a mediocre season with the average numbers fledging per successful nest being very low. In the case of Great Tits, which is illustrated, the lowest ever mean number fledged is also influenced by a relatively large number of very late nests which may have represented replacement clutches for very early failed nesting attempts.

The agreed system in Treswell Wood for the dormouse boxes is that they be plugged over the winter to prevent birds using them for nesting. (We have, in the past, documented the problems which a gross excess of nest holes causes for the birds, not to mention the loss of potential dormouse monitoring sites if birds have commandeered the boxes.) Once we are confident that almost all tits have selected nest sites, dormouse boxes can be unblocked. We can easily tell when this - as soon as we have had a week with no new tit nests begun. This year five dormouse boxes lost their plugs over the winter and, of these, three were used by birds (one Blue Tit and two Wrens). If none of the boxes had been plugged we would not expect the same proportion (60%) to be used by tits but it is most likely that many more than these three would have been. The problem for the nest recording is that these nests might not be discovered until relatively late in the nest cycle (because dormouse box inspections take place only once a month) by which time we would have missed vital information such as first eggs dates and, where nests had been predated at an early stage, we might miss recording everything to do with the nest. And after the unplugging? Excellent - just one late nesting Blue Tit broke the rules and used a dormouse box together with just two Wrens. With Wrens there seems to be little that can be done to deter them from dormouse boxes: awkward access to nest holes is not a problem, indeed it may be advantageous to them. They may be triple brooded with the nesting continuing well into the dormouse box inspection season.



What about species which do not nest in boxes? Our ten-week cycle of standard site captures does allow year-on-year comparisons which are not influenced by variation in catch effort. The graph shows a very slow long-term decline in the percentage of juveniles captured in the May-August period. This is a measure of general breeding success. This year's percentage is almost exactly in line with the long-term trend so it seems as if other species' successes have compensated, overall, for the rather poor tit season. Looking at the detailed breakdown of this year's numbers it seems that Robins, Wrens and, to a lesser extent, Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs are the species which have done relatively better.



## Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
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<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	<b>5M</b>	<b>DK98432</b>	<b>7/6/2015</b>	<b>J03</b>
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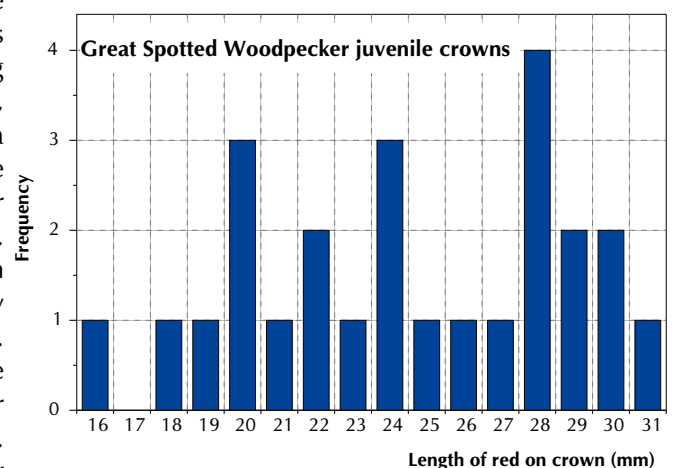
Our second recent capture of a Sparrowhawk. The previous one was a large female which, unusually, was relatively placid. This, much smaller, young male made up for its small size by its very aggressive behaviour. Like most of our Sparrowhawk captures it was an unringed male, probably still exploring the world before finding a permanent breeding territory.

<b>Woodpigeon</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>FP97236</b>	<b>19/7/2015</b>	<b>P05</b>
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Woodpigeons are potentially long-lived birds. In spite of their long nesting season, nest success is very low. These two features result in most birds being adults. Most juveniles moult some of their primary feathers during post-juvenile moult and some moult all their primaries making their plumage indistinguishable from that of adults. It is rare, therefore, to capture a bird at this time of year which still can be aged as a '5', i.e. a bird hatched in the previous year. This was one of those rare birds and, happily, was caught on a day when trainees were present to benefit from the ageing experience. Out of the 63 Woodpigeons we have captured after their post-juvenile moult, this is only the fifth which we have recorded in this condition.

<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>LE35218</b>	<b>3/7/2015</b>	<b>Q02</b>
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This is the fourth juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker we have ringed this year. We have been measuring the extent of the red cap on juveniles for the last few years in the hope of establishing whether it can be used to indicate the sex of the bird. Birds of the Western Palearctic (BWP) notes that red caps are 24-30 mm in males and 17-25 mm in females which would give an almost absolute separation of the sexes. The pattern of cap lengths measured so far is shown and, although there is a strong suggestion of bimodality, there is a cluster at 24 which, according to BWP, could be either sex. Further, there is a problem of reliability of measurements. For those birds we have retrapped and remeasured we find that our measurements are generally no more than 1 mm different. In the critical region, though, 1 mm can tip the bird from one sex assignment to the other. We are generally very sceptical anyway about sexing birds just on biometric data. Possibly there may prove to be an absolute difference between the sexes (e.g. cap extending behind the eye or not). In the meantime we continue with the measurements. Our problem is that we have retrapped very few of our juveniles after their post juvenile moult and so do not know the sex of these birds we have measured. Sexing by DNA analysis is a useful method of sexing birds but, of course, we do not have a DNA analysis set in our ringing kit although that would give reliable sexing on all the juveniles we caught. (An opportunity here for collaboration with a university?) Meanwhile we are working on a paper for Ringing & Migration about ageing (or not ageing) the species. We now have sufficient captures of adults to show that birds which have no remaining juvenile feathers on the body or inner wing could be either adults or juveniles. As a result, all birds except those with remaining juvenile feathers on the inner wing must be recorded as unageable.



**Wren**                      **3J**        **AXD414**        **12/7/2015**        **D07**

This has been a good year for nesting Wrens in nestboxes with 26 ringed and nine nests recorded. This was the first of the nestling-ringed Wrens to be retrapped but has been followed by another six. This is a good proportion - far higher than that of Blue Tits with only 2/117 so far recaptured.

**Robin**                      **3J**        **D309816**        **15/6/2015**        **F04**

Our first capture of a juvenile of any species this year. This is the latest ever first juvenile capture of the year - the previous record late years were 1991 and 2013 both of which yielded the first juvenile on 9<sup>th</sup> June - a week earlier than this year. Often it is a Long-tailed Tit which is the first juvenile of the year - not so this year with none captured so far (and no adults either since April). The Robin was closely followed (within the next hour or so) by other juveniles including a Marsh Tit, Blackcap and Chiffchaff. It is interesting that the first juveniles of summer migrant species appeared on the same day as did those of resident species. This is another sign of the late breeding of residents resulting from the protracted cold early spring weather preventing residents from breeding before migrants had arrived.

**Song Thrush**                      **4**        **RW58271**        **09/08/2015**        **Q01**

This bird was ringed a year earlier in the same part of the wood. It is one of four Song Thrushes caught on the day, all adults and the other three new birds. The last day on which we captured four of this species was in May 2014. We have captured this many only about once every three years since the early 1990s. Prior to that catches were much higher with up to 10 happening fairly frequently in the 1970s. The highest ever total in one day was 15 in June 1977. A sad insight into the decline of this formerly common resident (which we regard as a summer visitor).

**Blackcap**                      **3JM**        **D309888**        **12/7/2015**        **D07**

Most juvenile Blackcaps have a brown cap which is very similar to that of the adult female. Some males, but far from all, have rather darker caps and can be sexed on this even before their post-juvenile moult. This particular bird had the darkest cap we have ever seen on a juvenile - matt black rather than glossy black of the adult male. Curiously, shortly afterwards we trapped a juvenile Dunnock which also had an almost black crown and nape.

**Spotted Flycatcher**                      **4M**        **D309880**        **5/7/2015**        **E02**

Our second Spotted Flycatcher capture of the year, although this new bird was not quite as exciting as the earlier one which had been ringed by us six years earlier. Unlike the earlier bird which was captured in an unmanaged mature woodland part of the wood, this one was captured in typical habitat for the species - a newly coppiced open area with scattered trees for perching.

**Marsh Tit**                      **3**        **D808167**        **26/07/2015**        **Q02**

One of this year's nestling-ringed Marsh Tits. We now have retrapped four of the 18 ringed. Unusually it was moulting some secondaries. Since this moult was symmetric it could not be accidental, so was part of the bird's partial post-juvenile moult. This is the first Marsh Tit we have seen moulting any secondaries as part of the post-juvenile moult.

**Marsh Tit**                      **4**        **LE731209**        **19/7/2015**        **Q02**

A four-year old Marsh Tit is worthy of mention anyway and this one has a reasonably full recapture history. Since its first capture as a juvenile in July 2011 it has always been captured in the northern half of the wood, in keeping with the long established behaviour pattern of the species in the wood. It is the first bird we have seen this year suffering from avian pox, carrying a large lesion on its left leg. It is also the first time we have seen pox on any tit other than a Great Tit. With the species' sedentary behaviour and relative long-livedness, it is likely we will recapture it again if it survives. That will help throw more light on how the pox affects the birds.

**Willow Tit**                      **3J**        **D309868**        **5/7/2015**        **E02**

The last Willow Tit we captured was two years ago, so this is a very welcome capture. They have not been recorded this year by CBC observers so it is likely that this bird is an immigrant from outside the wood. But from where? At this early stage in its life, with post-juvenile moult still in progress, it is unlikely to have travelled far from its natal site. This suggests that we have a breeding population within 'recolonisation distance' provided conditions in the wood are suitable. It was retrapped in the same part of the wood three weeks later so, hopefully, it may remain with us.

**Great Tit**                      **6F**        **TT54638**        **10/6/2015**        **H01 On nest**

One of our later-nesting Great Tits this year, possibly on a replacement clutch for an earlier failed attempt. The bird was ringed as a nestling, not in the wood, but at Hillcrest Farm in Treswell village in 2013 and retrapped later that year and again in 2014, always in this part of the wood. This looks like natal dispersal of under 2 km followed by not very much further movement at all.

**Great Tit                      3J            TV35754            26/07/2015            Q02**

One of 18 of this year's nestling-ringed Great Tits to be retrapped so far. This was the first juvenile caught this year which had begun moulting its tail feathers. It would be very interesting to look at the dates on which individuals are first retrapped in tail moult and compare this with some measure of earliness of the nest they were hatched in.

**Jay                                      6            DK98424            5/7/2015            E02**

Jays are often heard in the wood but rarely caught. This one is a retrap from 2012 on Windy Ride (grid K00) and is the first we have caught since November 2014.

**Chaffinch                      3J            D808180            21/6/2015            M02**

We only found one successful open nest this year; a Chaffinch nest high in the roof timbers of the volunteers' work shed. Three young fledged and, within two weeks of fledging we retrapped this one and, later in the day its sibling D808182. Both were only some 50 metres from the nest site.

**Bullfinch                      5F            D309810            15/6/2015            H04**

Bullfinch adults are often seen in pairs, perhaps more often than most passerine species. This bird was ringed a week earlier at the same time as a male, D309811. Today both birds were caught in the same net at the same time about 250 m away from their previous capture point. For some reason June saw an outbreak of Bullfinch adult captures with 16 captures of which 12 were in the standard site nets. The interval extends from late-May to mid-August and in that time we had only two other captures of the species: definitely a June outbreak.

**10-Week Summary: 2015 Interval 3, Captures in Standard Sites**

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	.	5	10	3	4	2	24
Dunnock	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Robin	.	4	14	3	2	1	24
Blackbird	1	3	1	5	7	.	17
Song Thrush	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	10	4	9	4	.	.	27
Chiffchaff	3	.	5	3	.	.	11
Spotted Flycatcher	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	.	3	4
Blue Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Great Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Treecreeper	.	1	2	3	.	.	6
Chaffinch	1	1	.	2	.	.	4
Bullfinch	2	7	1	2	2	.	14
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>136</b>

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

**Summary Data** since standard site netting began in 1978:

Maximum	128	145	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	89	66	59	364
Mean	90	109	159	130	124	607

**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 - 2014)	88	118	139	98	110	550