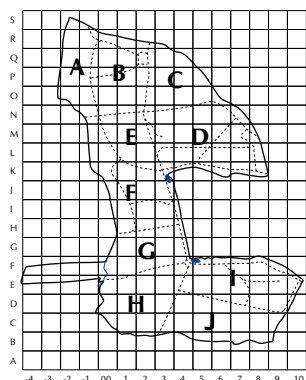


# TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

**August 2009 Treswell Wood IPM Group**

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

**Project leaders:**

**CBC** Pat Quinn-Catling

**Nest Records** Chris du Feu

**Ringling** John McMeeking

**2009/3**

**Number 73**

## The 2009 Breeding Season

This year's breeding season is all but over - in the wood only some Stock Doves are still busy. Most adult birds are in moult (indeed some have already completed moult) and our juveniles are beginning their post-natal dispersal.

High spots of the year include two Marsh Tit nests in boxes and our first Barn Owl nest. One Marsh Tit nest was successful but the other taken by predators. However, our captures of juvenile Marsh Tits have been good this summer. Two from our one successful nest have been retrapped and several unringed, newly fledged birds trapped too. These indicate that at least one other pair has bred within the wood, in a natural site. The situation does not seem as good for Willow Tits - juvenile captures have been zero and we have caught no adults since March. Numbers of Coal Tit and Wren nests are down too. Predation has been, overall, lower than in recent years although nests near Great Spotted Woodpecker nests have suffered very badly. There is no doubt that these woodpeckers are interesting and attractive birds - but sometimes their exploits do frustrate even the most tolerant of nestbox inspectors.

## Events in Nestboxes - Treswell Wood, 2009

Species	Nests		Eggs laid	Birds			% Success rate	
	Recorded	Successful		Adults caught on nests	Nestlings fledged	Nestlings recaptured (to Sept. 1)	Nests	Eggs
Stock Dove*	13	8	21	.	11	.	62	85
Tawny Owl	3	2	7	2	4	.	67	57
Barn Owl	1	1	5	.	3	.	100	60
Wren	5	1	11	.	2	.	20	18
<i>Dunnock</i>	1	0	4	.	0	.	0	0
<i>Song Thrush</i>	1	0	1	.	0	.	0	0
<i>Blackbird</i>	2	1	7	.	4	.	50	57
Marsh Tit	2	1	15	.	7	2	50	47
Coal Tit	2	1	21	.	11	.	50	52
Blue Tit	31	12	210	14	102	6	39	49
Great Tit	57	27	346	10	156	30	47	45
<b>Totals (2009)</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>46</b>
Totals (2008)	108	29	589	22	139	17	27	24
Totals (2007)	129	64	922	52	313	35	50	34
Totals (2006)	175	37	885	31	225	33	21	25
Totals (2005)	153	49	852	47	245	22	32	29
Totals (2004)	141	94	917	41	538	41	67	59
Totals (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. Numbers of eggs laid is a minimum figure; some eggs were, almost certainly, taken by predators before being counted. \* Some Stock Dove nests still active.

Our gut-feeling this year was that it had been a very good breeding season. However, our feelings do not always match the facts and may be unduly influenced by our most recent experiences. Looking at the table of recent year's totals we can see that this year has, indeed, been better than average for recent years whether you judge by numbers of birds fledged, nests recorded or percentage success rates. Feelings correct so far. An analysis of all our nest records, running from 1979 to the present, though, reveals averages of 100 nests per year with 54 being successful and 328 nestlings fledging. This gives long-term percentage success rates of 54% for nests and 49% for eggs. Remember, also, that in the

years from 1979 to 1994 there were rather fewer boxes in the wood. So, overall, this year has been not quite up to average rather than very good.

As usual, we have collected nests which have been built by known individuals and these have been donated to the National Nest Reference Collection in Glasgow. One of our Blue Tits, T663158, now has four of her nests in the collection, one each from the past four seasons. Some eggs in nests do not hatch - for whatever reason. We collect these (under licence) for Charles Deeming in Lincoln to continue his research into egg hatching (or not hatching in these cases). Thanks to all of you who have helped with nestbox manufacture, nest recording, ringing nestlings or in any other ways.

## Barn Owl Nest and Contents

The Barn Owls nested in a box erected at Forwood Farm, adjacent to the wood, in 1979 and ignored by the owls until 2008 - when the nest was discovered too late to do any recording. Thanks to David and Stephanie Bell for giving us access to the nest (and, of course, for providing such a fine hunting ground for the birds). Of five eggs laid, four hatched and three juveniles fledged. Not only is this a new species for our nest records, it is a new species for our ringing records too. A good number of pellets have been collected and dissected - a fine end-of-term activity for young students at QEHS Gainsborough. The owls spend much of their hunting time on the short sward of the private runway at Forwood Farm and the pellet contents reflect this. There have been no bird remains found in their pellets and, pleasingly for the farm, no rat remains. The species composition is very different indeed from that of the Tawny Owls in the wood adjacent to the Barn Owls' patch. The difference reflects clearly on the different prey species composition inside and outside the wood and, of course, the different hunting techniques of the two species.

### Prey items recorded in owl nests and pellets

#### Tawny Owl

##### Species found in nest and pellets

##### Treswell Wood, 1978 - 2009

##### Mammals

Mole  
Common Shrew  
Pygmy Shrew  
Grey Squirrel  
Dormouse  
Bank Vole  
Short-tailed Vole  
Brown Rat  
Wood Mouse  
House Mouse

##### Birds

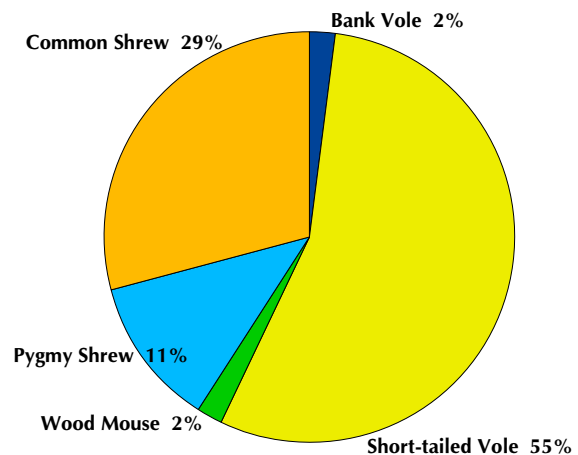
Cuckoo  
Dunnock  
Robin  
Blackbird  
Song Thrush  
Blackcap  
Coal Tit  
Blue Tit

Great Tit  
Treetreeper  
Wren  
Jay  
House Sparrow  
Chaffinch  
Greenfinch  
Bullfinch

Note that, although there are more bird than mammal species recorded, mammals form the much greater part of the diet.

#### Barn Owl

##### Contents of Barn Owl pellets Forwood Farm, Treswell, 2009



The diagram and table illustrate what we have found in pellets and nests of the two species. Barn Owls are very well behaved with regard to pellets - they leave large numbers in the nest and at their fairly constant roosting sites. Tawny Owls are most unreliable, apparently dropping pellets willy-nilly and leaving fewer in their nest sites. The contents of more than 50 Barn Owl pellets taken from near the nestbox this season are illustrated in the diagram. For Tawny Owls, we only have a list of prey species found over the years rather than a list with numbers of individuals recorded. For the few mammal species where we do have some idea of abundance in pellets, we find that Bank Voles and Pygmy Shrews are relatively more abundant than Short-tailed Voles and Common Shrews respectively in Tawny Owl pellets when compared to Barn Owl pellets.

## Common Bird Census

The CBC season has drawn to an end and Pat is now collating all the results before sending the composite observation maps to the BTO at Thetford for analysis. The CBC survey is very different in many ways from ringing or nest recording - and we have remarked on some differences from time to time. One major difference is the time taken for results to become available. Ringing data are available almost the same day, nest records are available at the end of the season. However, with CBC the process is longer and requires a good deal of work before results are known. Pat will finish her map making by mid-Autumn and the BTO analysis will be done by the spring. We have to wait until then to know how many territories have been recorded. Steve Wain will then do his computer magic on the maps so we can distribute them electronically to CBC team members and we will also have the territory map data for analyses. The paper maps are then returned to the BTO archives in Thetford. The time scale is such that, this year, I returned the 2008 maps to the BTO at

the same time as the CBC team were giving Pat their own visit maps for 2009. It is a time-consuming operation but well worth continuing, particularly in the light of some potential research we hope will be carried out relating bird populations to management practices. We are very grateful to all the CBC team for their continued effective work both in the field and at the desk.

John Bartley has been a stalwart of the CBC team for many years and has also looked after one set of nestboxes. He has indicated that increasing age is making his survey work too demanding. This leaves a vacancy in both the nestbox and CBC teams. We are very grateful to John for his work (not to mention his never-failing supply of irreverent humour). A volunteer (or volunteers) to replace John will be welcome and full training will be given. Note that Treswell Wood is now one of the few remaining places where territory mapping is carried out each year, so we are guardians of a surveying technique which should not be lost.

## Sexton Beetles

We have referred to these striking creatures, *Nicrophorus vespilloides*, from time to time - we often see them trying to bury nestling tit corpses in nestboxes (not a very productive thing to do as the bottom of the box is a major obstacle to their burrowing). Recently we observed a group of them apparently not working at burying the dead. They were working at the heap of niger seed and husks which accumulate round the bottom of niger feeders. At first it seemed as if they were feeding on the debris. However, some burrowed in to the heap and remained there, head partly visible at the surface of the heap. What were they doing? It seemed as if they were feeding on something in the heap but it now seems more likely that they were attracted to the heap because the heap is likely to attract other insects which they can prey on. They will lurk, hidden in the heap and wait for passing prey items. They are reputed to be strictly carnivorous at all life stages. Has anyone else ever seen them at work other than on their burying duties?

## BTO Atlas Project

The Atlas project will soon enter its third winter season out of four. For the latest national results, look at [www.bto.org/birdatlas](http://www.bto.org/birdatlas). You will recall that we are sponsoring the Treecreeper for which we have promised to raise £2,000. Donations can be made directly to the BTO at [www.justgiving.com/bto\\_atlasweb](http://www.justgiving.com/bto_atlasweb). If you look at this web site you will see we are 15% of the way there - still a long way to go. We hope that many more old and current members of the team will contribute to make it a real team effort and not leave a few of us to make up the remaining balance. All contributions (electronically or by cheque to the BTO) will be very welcome. If you send a cheque to the BTO please state it is for the Treecreeper sponsorship and mark it for the attention of Graham Appleton. Many thanks, in advance.

## Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Woodpigeon	4	FP97231	9/8/2009	L05

In spite of the much increased presence of this species in gardens - they are now comfortably in the top ten most recorded by the BTO Garden BirdWatch survey - the numbers captured in the wood are not noticeably greater than in the past. This is our first capture since June 2008.

Barn Owl	Nestling	GC65281	28/6/2009	Forwood Farm
----------	----------	---------	-----------	--------------

The first Barn Owl - adult or juvenile - to be ringed by the group ever. Fortunately not all nestboxes remain unoccupied by the target species for as long as this one has done.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	4F	CT84060	9/8/2009	Q02 Feeder
--------------------------	----	---------	----------	------------

A frequently-captured bird - this is its 34<sup>th</sup> capture, the first being in December 2004. This particular bird has also been instrumental in helping confirm that neither spots on the primary tips nor redness of the iris are to be relied upon when trying to age a bird of the species. Also of particular note is that we now have detailed, computerised, moult records for it in 5 successive summers and, in two of these, records on two separate occasions. The BTO Moulting Guide, published in 1983, gave the hand-tabulated results of the national moult enquiry. In it, moult records for 123 adult and 91 juvenile Great Spotted Woodpeckers are displayed. These include only 2 repeated observations on any bird in one season. Our own total is now over 50 moult records with about a dozen within-year repeated observations - and all available for computerised analysis in our national ringing database. What a great difference computers can make.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	3	CT84185	10/6/2009	Q02 Feeder
--------------------------	---	---------	-----------	------------

One of a handful of this species we have trapped recently (what a change from the early days of Twitter when captures were so infrequent that every one was included in this section of the newsletter). This was one of our first juvenile captures of the year and we trapped it again a week later.

**Blackbird**                      **6F**            **CF40687**            **14/6/2009**            **K00**

Our oldest recent capture of this species - 5 years and 11 months since being ringed, but still another 4 years to go before becoming our oldest Blackbird known in the wood. It seems to be a resident with captures, over the years, in January, March, May, June, July, August and October. Its capture locations have always been within an area of well under 2 hectares in the wood. Rather different migratory behaviour from the many Blackbirds which winter with us, having travelled from Scandinavia.

**Wren**                                **6**                      **BYP762**            **2/8/2009**            **R-1**

We know Wrens are sedentary, and this bird demonstrates just how sedentary they can be. We ringed it in October 2007 as a juvenile in grid R-1. Since then we have retrapped it six times - always in the same grid square, mostly in the same net but, twice, in an adjacent net. Under normal circumstances it appears to live its life within an area of well under 100 metres in diameter - in spite of its ability to fly right across its 'world' in about 10 seconds.

**Blackcap**                        **4M**                      **T663015**            **16/6/2009**            **Q02**

One of three veteran Blackcaps trapped this year. It was ringed in June 2005 in the central part of the wood as a first breeding season male. In 2006 and 2008 we retrapped it in the north-west of the wood; the same area as we have found it again this year.

**Willow Warbler**                **4M**                      **CXN039**            **21/6/2009**            **H04**

One of three adult Willow Warblers caught early in the season. Over the past five years, the pattern of occurrence of this formerly common breeding species changed from catching just a few juveniles at the end of the season to catching adults early. If they do still breed successfully in the wood, the juveniles are either able to avoid the mist nets or move out of the wood soon after fledging. We have trapped no more of the species since these three early captures of adults.

**Chiffchaff**                        **6F**                      **BYP625**            **12/7/2009**            **F09**

Ringed as a breeding female in 2007 about 100 metres away from this year's capture position (but with, probably two journeys to and from west Africa between these captures). It is one of three of the 2007 cohort to be retrapped this year compared to only two of the 2008 cohort.

**Spotted Flycatcher**            **4M**                      **X649071**            **31/5/2009**            **R00**

Our second of this species for the year, followed a little later the same morning by a female. Both birds were in breeding condition although they were caught in nets 150 metres apart and did not appear to be a pair. We have, sadly, made no further captures of the species this year nor found evidence of nesting in boxes. A far cry from our peak year in 1984 when five of our boxes were used by this attractive but, sadly, declining species.

**Marsh Tit**                         **3J**                      **V666913**            **8/7/2009**            **Q02 Feeder**

The second recaptured bird from our precious brood of seven nestlings which fledged from a nestbox this year. We had found a second nest in a box but this was, sadly, victim to predation. We have also captured sibling V666916 among some other unringed juveniles - it looks as if there were at least three nests in the wood this year.

**Jay**                                    **6F**                      **DA51894**            **4/6/2009**            **Q02 Feeder**

We often hear Jays in the wood but catch them much less often. Our previous capture was in October 2008.

## Controls and Recoveries

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Notes
---------	---------	------	------	-------

<b>Blue Tit</b>	<b>3J</b>	<b>V666832</b>	<b>18/8/2009</b>	<b>Hillcrest Farm, Treswell</b>
-----------------	-----------	----------------	------------------	---------------------------------

Ringed as a nestling on 14/5/2009 and not retrapped within the wood. We usually trap a good number of nestling-ringed, juvenile Great Tits at the feeding station in the wood in the two months after fledging. With these there is usually a smaller number of Blue Tits. This year the Blue Tits have been notable by their absence though Great Tits have been captured in reasonable numbers. More surprisingly, the total number of our nestling-ringed Blue Tits trapped out of the wood is greater than the total trapped in the wood.

Species	Nestlings ringed	Retraps within wood	Retraps elsewhere
Marsh Tit	7	2	0
Coal Tit	11	0	0
Blue Tit	102	2	4
Great Tit	156	30	1

**Blue Tit**                      **3J**        **V666833**        **6/8/2009**        **Hillcrest Farm, Treswell**  
 Ringed as a nestling on 14/5/2009 and not retrapped within the wood - a sibling of V666832.

**Blue Tit**                      **3J**        **V666839**        **18/8/2009**        **Hillcrest Farm, Treswell**  
 Ringed as a nestling on 14/5/2009 and not retrapped within the wood.

**Blue Tit**                      **3J**        **V666884**        **6/8/2009**        **Hillcrest Farm, Treswell**  
 Ringed as a nestling on 14/5/2009 and not retrapped within the wood.

**Blue Tit**                      **4F**        **X649502**        **28/5/2009**        **D02 Dead in nestbox**  
 This bird was ringed at Hillcrest farm in Treswell in December 2008 and retrapped there until mid-January 2009. It appeared in the wood on 1/3/2009. Its final appearance was dead in a nestbox - a victim of some unknown predator.

**Great Tit**                      **3J**        **TJ49856**        **6/8/2009**        **Hillcrest Farm, Treswell**  
 Ringed as a nestling on 20/5/2009 and retrapped in the wood on 8/7/2009. We captured it again within the wood on 9/8/2009. Obviously there is considerable local movement at this time of the year for these juveniles.

**Great Tit**                      **3J**        **X649159**        **6/8/2009**        **Hillcrest Farm, Treswell**  
 Ringed as a juvenile in the wood on 8/7/2009, retrapped again at Hillcrest Farm on 12/8/2009

### 10 Week Summary 2009 Interval 3, Captures in Standard Sites

Visits: 1985, 1983, 1975, 1978, 1980, 1988, 1981

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	1	3	8	3	6	.	21
Dunnock	2	1	5	4	2	.	14
Robin	1	3	16	2	1	1	24
Blackbird	1	2	5	8	1	.	17
Song Thrush	1	1	1	3	1	.	7
Blackcap	5	4	5	4	.	.	18
Chiffchaff	4	.	1	3	1	.	9
Willow Warbler	2	.	.	.	.	.	2
Spotted Flycatcher	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	3	.	.	2	5
Blue Tit	.	.	5	.	.	1	6
Great Tit	.	.	2	4	2	7	15
Treecreeper	.	.	1	1	1	.	3
Chaffinch	.	.	1	2	.	.	3
Bullfinch	2	5	.	3	1	.	11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>156</b>

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

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2009	57	131	156	.	.	.

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

<b>Maximum</b>	128	145	288	253	177	865
<b>Minimum</b>	57	64	94	68	59	364
<b>Mean</b>	91	107	163	135	126	623

**10-year Averages** since standard site netting began in 1978

<b>1978 - 1987</b>	90	113	182	140	130	655
<b>1988 - 1997</b>	86	107	170	149	127	637
<b>1998 - 2007</b>	95	100	134	120	125	574

## Full List of Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2008	125	130	151	86	100	592
2009	57					

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1978	101	130	243	223	131	828
1979	97	115	211	109	123	655
1980	86	102	210	147	170	715
1981	102	110	288	187	177	864
1982	66	113	165	89	110	543
1983	82	139	143	185	128	677
1984	91	114	110	82	106	503
1985	103	88	135	118	88	532
1986	77	104	153	68	141	543
1987	95	112	196	209	124	736
1988	92	143	180	137	119	671
1989	124	137	282	145	103	791
1990	99	145	204	130	175	753
1991	65	57	98	74	127	421
1992	64	64	115	224	159	626
1993	81	70	112	158	126	547
1994	88	110	212	155	157	722
1995	91	124	240	253	104	812
1996	95	121	128	116	97	557
1997	59	99	126	98	98	480
1998	78	84	116	80	106	464
1999	88	96	140	113	163	600
2000	75	106	106	159	170	616
2001	57	33	94	121	59	364
2002	85	89	141	176	117	608
2003	117	116	146	104	114	597
2004	103	128	126	165	132	654
2005	107	140	150	88	133	618
2006	128	98	185	125	166	702
2007	107	110	138	73	92	520
2008	125	130	151	86	100	592
2009	57	131	156	.	.	.

### Mist-netting Visit 2000

Keen observers of visit numbers will realise that we have nearly reached mist-netting visit number 2000. At the present rate that particular visit should happen around the end of September. Whereas the number 2000 has no particular ornithological or mathematical significance (its apparent specialness is entirely an artefact of us counting in base 10) it is quite a large and memorable number. (Incidentally it is also numerically equal to the cost, in pounds, of sponsoring the Treecreeper in the BTO Atlas.) Why not join us for that visit?