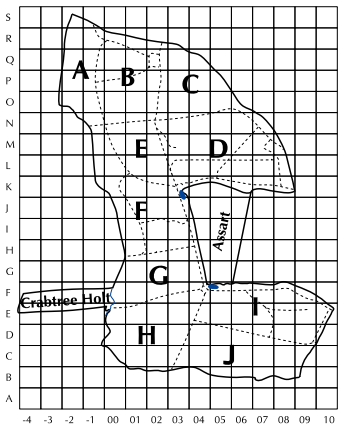


TWITTER

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

March 2025 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Ellen Marshall

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringing John Clark

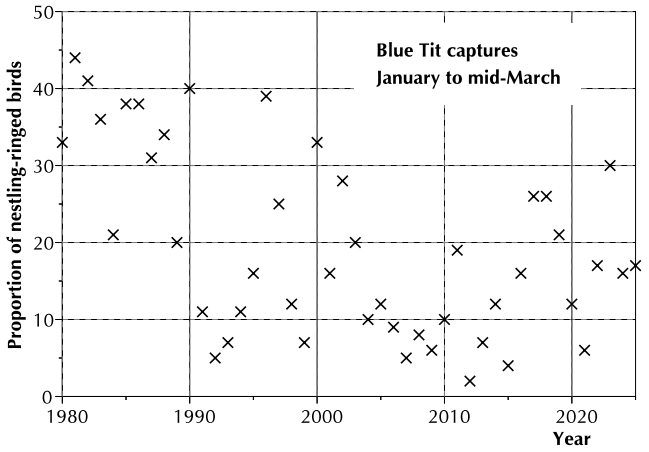
2025/1

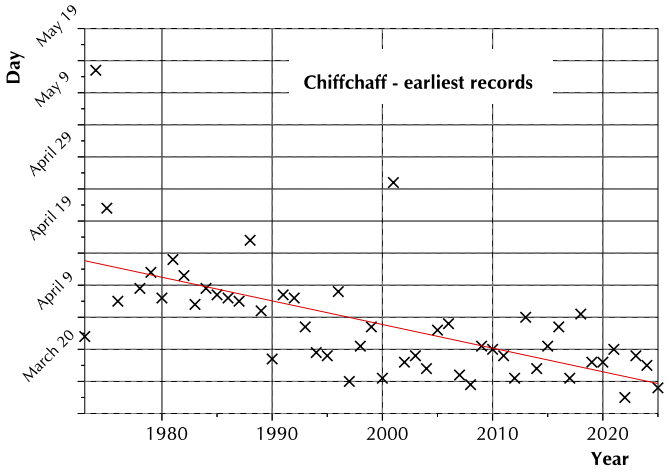
Number 151

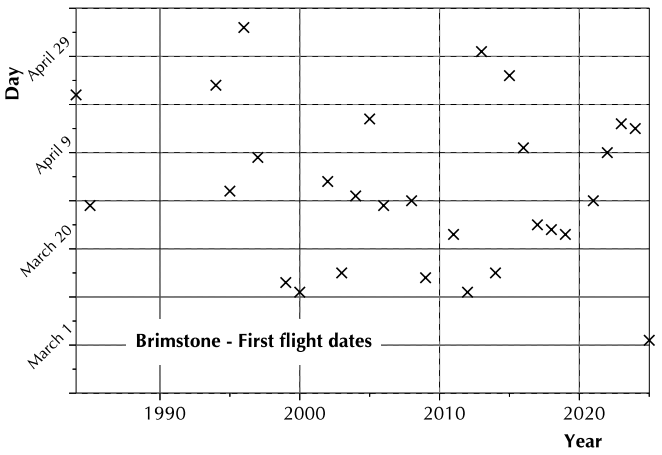
www.treswellwoodipmg.org

It has felt a difficult and quiet first period, getting off to a bad start with heavy rain and strong winds stopping what should have been our first visit of the year. Fortunately the weather improved enough for us to complete all the standard site visits, but the catches did not improve and we ended with a total of 62 birds in these seven standard sites. This is well below the mean of 92, and the fourth lowest catch ever. The lack of birds was also apparent for the winter project ringing (WCES) at the feeders, with one three-hour session netting no birds at all. At least we are now starting to hear the birds sing and the woodpeckers are drumming as they establish their territories. It will be interesting, as always, to see how the season develops.

We also felt that, after the good tit fledging from the boxes in 2024, we do not seem to have caught that many of them again. We wondered whether the apparent low number of recaptured nestling-ringed tits represented a lower proportion than usual of the all 2024 juveniles. The graph shows the proportion of nestling-ringed Blue Tits caught between January and mid-March since we began the nestbox operation in 1979. In the first years we had remarkably high proportions of 'our own' birds. That was probably because the tit population was able to increase with the provision of more nesting sites giving birds fledged in the wood more opportunity to remain. Thereafter the proportion dropped to a very low number up to 2010. Since then it has increased again albeit with very large year-on-year fluctuations. This year's 17% of the first year birds being from our boxes is more or less what we would expect. So it was just a low number of our nestbox birds, not an unduly low proportion of them. It does suggest that after the good breeding season of 2024, post juvenile survival has been low – in spite of a winter without any great amount of hard weather.







As the winter draws to an end we look for the signs of spring. Once we see, or hear, them we record them. Because of the length of our operation our records show how much the season has changed over the years. The first butterfly seen in flight was, as usual, a Brimstone. This was on 2nd March and the first Chiffchaff was heard on 9th March. The Brimstone was the earliest by 10 days and the Chiffchaff the second earliest, just three days later than the 2022 record. The consistent trend for these early Chiffchaff dates and the much more variable timing for Brimstones are shown in the graphs. The nesting season, too, has begun with Tawny Owls present at one box.

Feedback from readers

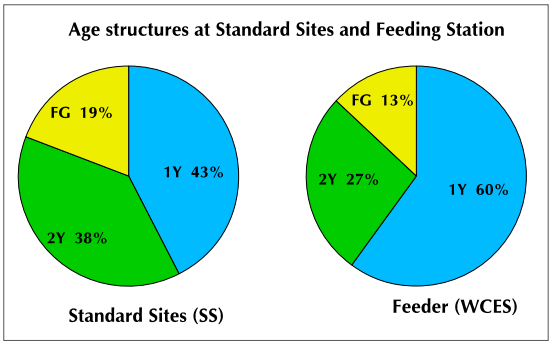
It is always rewarding to have appreciative feedback from readers. Even better if such missives contain thoughts about questions that can be asked. John Marchant, formerly of the BTO and now retired, analysed our CBC data for several years and finally trained Ellen to do the job. He contacted us with thoughts about changes in wing length after post-juvenile moult. It is well known that the first adult wings are generally longer than the juvenile wings. But what happens in subsequent moults? He also wondered about any sex differences. We have the data and it is certainly something we could easily look into – ideal material for a student project.

He also asked whether birds (particularly Blue Tits) with some retained juvenile greater coverts are commoner in gardens in winter than in autumn. If so it could indicate that less-fit birds (assuming that fitter birds replace more greater coverts) spend more time in gardens where food supply is plentiful. In our case, for 'garden' read 'feeding station'. Again we have plenty of material which can throw light on this question.

John also wondered about the effectiveness of the standardised netting protocol for the BTO Winter Project (WCES). We have wondered too and will be doing more work on it with our data. The BTO is intending to do an analysis in the spring to assess the five winters for which the project has been running. We await with interest. Three years ago, in TWITTER 136, we gave a preliminary analysis of one winter's data in which we compared Standard Site captures with feeder captures and also intermediate captures (a run of nets with a couple of temporary bird feeders). We also compared our 45 years of winter standard site data with captures (not time-standardised) at the main feeding station. The result was clear - the species breakdown at standard sites was very different from that at sites with feeders - whether nets were tightly clustered around a feeder or spread through the woodland. We now have four winters' data comparing WCES captures with Standard Site (SS) operations which do not have any artificial attractants. As expected from the initial analysis three years ago, these situations give very different results. There are two obvious differences. First is the species breakdown. The table illustrates this with species listed in broadly similar categories.

Species	SS	WCES
Buzzard	1	0
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	10
Jay	1	0
Sparrowhawk	5	0
Woodcock	1	0
Blackbird	116	11
Redwing	12	0
Song Thrush	15	1
Robin	82	29
Dunnock	30	32
Wren	48	2
Treecreeper	24	2
Goldcrest	77	2
Long-tailed Tit	63	40
Blue Tit	100	321
Coal Tit	5	63
Great Tit	78	183
Marsh Tit	12	28
Nuthatch	4	19
Brambling	0	2
Bullfinch	19	0
Chaffinch	1	27
Goldfinch	0	5
House Sparrow	0	1

The second difference, hinted at by John Marchant, is that the age structures of all birds are different at WCES and in SS. The pie charts show the breakdown of age classes for all captures in these two situations over the five winters. 1Y are birds fledged in the previous summer, 2Y are those fledged in earlier years and FG (full grown) are birds which cannot be aged (mostly Long-tailed Tits which undergo a complete post-juvenile moult). Just as John suggested, the proportion of first year birds in catches associated with feeding stations (466/778 = 60%) is much higher than the proportion in standard sites (294/695 = 43%). The difference in age class breakdown is not only statistically significant but so great that it barely registers on the statistical scale (for the statistically minded, $\chi^2 = 45.5$ with $\nu = 4$). Thus, apart from the differences in species breakdown it seems there is also a difference in age structure of birds caught in these two different situations. More investigation needed with our long, consistent data set.



The assart

We have documented in earlier issues of TWITTER how the self-seeded trees in the assart are growing well with some fruiting at a very young age. The Trust's decision to allow the woodland to regenerate naturally is giving rise to fewer trees in the short run but trees of more vigorous growth than planted saplings would be expected to enjoy. It will pay great dividends in the long run. What was noticed recently was the difference between the two oak trees which had been planted in the meadow area before the natural regeneration plan had been finalised. These were planted before any germinated naturally and were given protection from grazing deer by fencing. It is interesting to compare these two trees with the younger, self set oak trees. The self-set trees tend to be taller with thicker,

straighter trunks. The two planted specimens have rather stunted, bushy growth without the strong central trunk.

Noteworthy Encounters

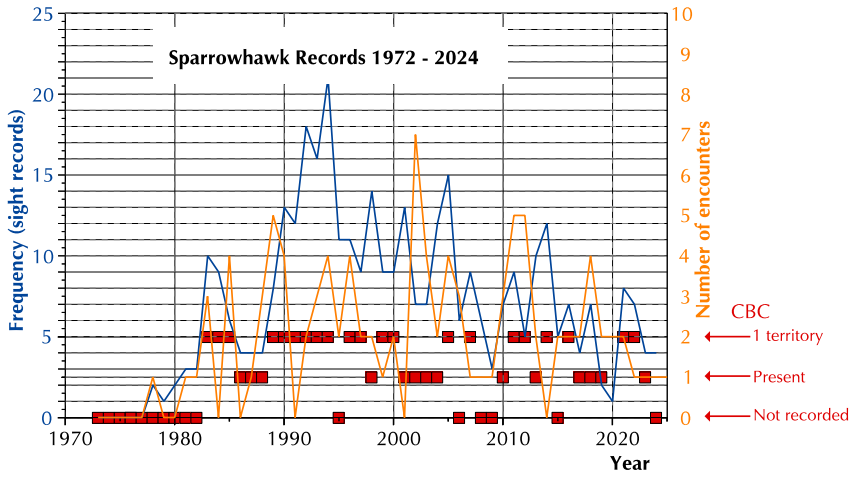
Species	Age/Sex	Ring	Date	Grid

Great Spotted Woodpecker 4M LK39254 2/2/2025 E06

This one was was ringed in June 2022 at the main feeding station (like many juveniles which seem to use the feeders for some time after fledging) and recaptured there the following month. Since then, until this capture, we have not encountered it. This capture was at the opposite end of the wood, again at a temporary feeding point. Possibly one reason why most of our captures of the species are at a feeding station is because they have to descend within range of our mist nets in order to take the food. Most of their time is spent much higher in the trees. Even so, a gap of two and a half years between captures is surprising. Because it is now in adult plumage we were able to determine the sex from the plumage. When first caught in juvenile plumage we measured the length of the red crown – 30mm. This adds to our records of lengths. It provides a little more evidence that males do indeed have longer red crowns than females. Demongin's ageing and sexing guide suggests 25mm as the dividing line between the sexes. This is consistent with our results so far. However, as with Blue Tit wing lengths, we think it would be most unwise to assign sex to an individual solely on a single measurement – particularly a measurement such as this which depends to some extent on judgement as to where the red feathers end.

Sparrowhawk 5M DT21919 16/2/2025 G04

The first Sparrowhawk we have captured for just over a year. The graph shows the history of the species' colonisation in the wood and subsequent fluctuations in numbers. Whether you look at CBC territories (red), sight records (blue) or captures in mist nets (orange) the picture is much the same. After a reasonably stable pattern of occupancy until the turn of the century, occurrence has been, on average, lower and more sporadic.



Dunnock 6M TY35058 9/3/2025 H04

Signs of spring. Dunnock males are noted for the size of their cloacal protuberance in the breeding season – examination of that, or in females the brood patch, is the standard method of sexing them. During non-breeding times they cannot be sexed in the hand. This is the first Dunnock encountered this year in breeding condition. Dunnocks are sedentary so it is no surprise that it was caught in the same part of the wood as last year when it was also in breeding condition.

Redwing 5 RF28867 2/2/2025 E04

Last winter was one of our best for Redwings with a total of 13 caught. This is only the second we have caught this winter. The numbers we catch are unlikely to reflect anything to do with wider Redwing populations. Instead they are more likely to depend on local abundance of food and where the birds opt to stay for the winter. For this species winter site faithfulness, and indeed winter country faithfulness, is not something they are noted for.

Blackbird 6M LK39250 22/2/2025 Q04

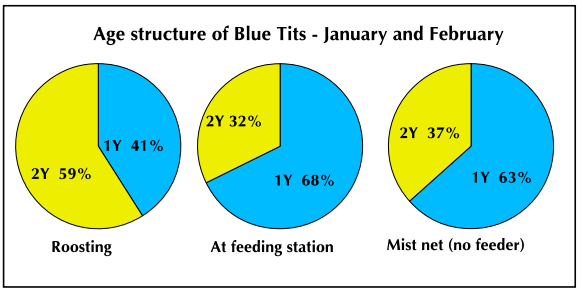
This bird had a longer-than-average wing 137mm. It would be tempting to assume it was a long-winged, wintering continental bird. But no: we had ringed it as a juvenile in 2022 which had not yet started post-juvenile moult. Definitely a local bird. Incidentally, as a juvenile its wing was 132mm. Since then it has undergone two full moults – its original shorter juvenile wing feathers replaced by rather longer ones.

Blue Tit 6 BAA9827 2/3/2025 D08

Peter Cobb ringed this bird as a first winter bird in January 2024 at Darlton, 6km south of the wood. It then settled in the wood, nesting in one of our boxes. We encountered it again roosting in the adjacent box in January. It is still with us. It seems to be happy here. Perhaps Peter will be wondering what Treswell Wood has to offer that cannot be provided by his extensive feeding operation at Cobb's Country Store.

Blue Tit 6 ANE3022 17/1/2025 E10 Roosting

This is the ninth capture of this bird roosting in the same nestbox. It was ringed four years previously in the same part of the wood as an adult meaning it must have been hatched in 2019 or earlier. Apart from these nine roosting encounters it has only been mist netted once more – within 50 metres of this roost site. We have often, but casually, noted that Blue Tits we find roosting in nestboxes seem to have a higher proportion of older birds than we catch elsewhere. The pie charts show the breakdown by age of birds caught in January and February from 1980 onwards found roosting in nestboxes, those caught at the main feeding station and those caught at any other place in the wood where there were no artificial attractants. The proportion of juveniles is highest at the feeder, just significantly higher than the proportion in 'ordinary' sites. However both have a vastly higher proportion of young birds than we find roosting. So, yes, the age structure of roosting Blue Tits is very different. Again this shows another aspect of the differences between feeder and other captures.

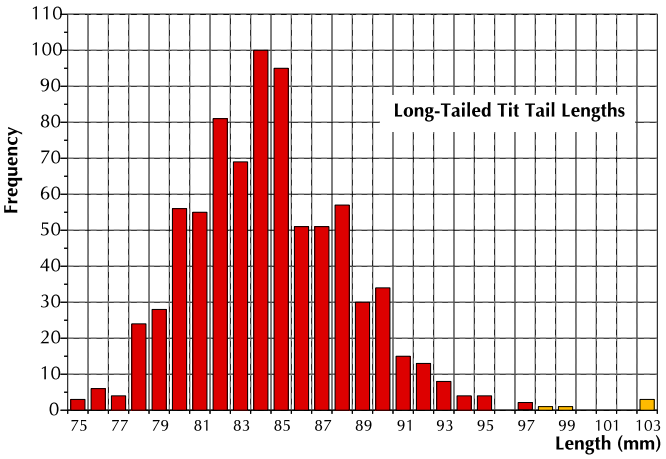


Great Tit 5F AEZ3902 9/2/2025 M03

Captures at feeding points (temporary or permanent) have been very low this year. We would normally be experiencing the spring influx with large numbers of Blue and Great Tits some returning to the wood but more unringed birds still moving around searching for a place to hold a territory. On this day 10 Great Tits were captured - this was the only unringed bird. We know the birds are there because food in feeders is being taken at the normal rate – but the birds seem to absent themselves when we are there. (This is definitely not the birds learning and then deliberately avoiding capture. Had that been the case, captures would have fallen to this winter's dismal level about 50 years ago.) It does look as if there are just not as many tits around as usual.

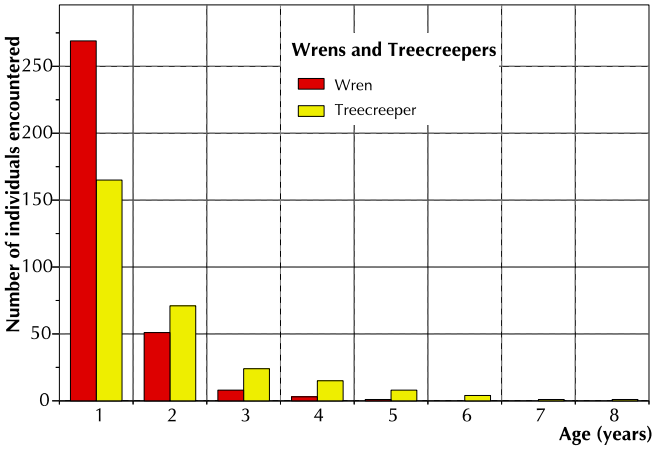
Long-tailed Tit 4 DRA250 2/3/2025 D08

The only retrap amongst a group of seven birds. We caught a family of juvenile Long-Tailed Tits in 2011 and noticed they had exceptionally long tails. Since then we have been routinely measuring tail lengths. This bird's tail was too abraded to make a meaningful measurement but the others' lengths ranged from 80 to 87mm. The chart shows the distributions of tail lengths we have measured since the 2011 party (with their exceptionally long tail lengths highlighted in orange). It can be seen how unusually long they were. John Marchant (above) noted how adult wing lengths are lengths longer than those of juveniles. Might we expect the same to be true for tail lengths? We did catch a few of these exceptional birds after their full moult and their tails were then shorter with a mean of 88mm. Alas we do not have enough records of juvenile Long-tail Tits with a subsequent measurement after moult to see if juvenile tail lengths for this species are generally longer than adult lengths but it is a question worth looking into.



Treecreeper 6 JTE162 2/2/2025 D03

We have caught several fairly old Treecreepers in the last few months. This one is now over six years old. In 1995 we published a paper 'Site tenacity and Survival in Wrens and Treecreepers' which showed the remarkable differences in survival between the two species. (It also showed, for the first time, that Treecreeper over-winter survival was governed by the combination of cold and wet weather whereas Wren survival was governed just by cold weather.) Our data set now spans more than twice the time when we published that paper and these old Treecreepers prompted a look at what we have now. Just looking at birds caught in January and February since 1973, and calculating their age in years since fledging, gave the results shown in the graph. It is clear how much longer Treecreepers can live and, on average, do live. On the face of it, this seems surprising because both



birds have very similar diets of live invertebrates and are about the same size (mean weights Wren 9.9g, Treecreeper 8.8g). The difference in life lengths is less surprising because we know that Treecreepers have huge home ranges, perhaps 50 times the area of Wren ranges. In hard winter conditions, older Treecreepers in particular, will know exactly where to find the best places for survival. This is less easy for Wrens which only have tiny familiar areas.

Bullfinch 5M ABX3425 12/1/2025 R00

Our 24th recorded movement of a Bullfinch to or from Treswell Wood. This was ringed by Glen Thomas at Bevercotes as a juvenile in September last year. Bevercotes is 8km south-west of the wood. Curiously Bullfinches seem to show very strong loyalty to the county. All these movements have been within northern Nottinghamshire even though Lincolnshire is just across the Trent and within sight of the wood.

10-Week Summary: 2025 Interval 1, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Sparrowhawk	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Blue Tit	1	3	.	3	4	.	11
Great Tit	.	1	.	.	4	.	5
Long-tailed Tit	6	.	.	1	.	.	7
Goldcrest	.	2	.	1	.	.	3
Wren	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Nuthatch	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Treecreeper	1	.	.	1	.	.	2
Blackbird	6	2	.	7	.	.	15
Redwing	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Robin	2	.	.	6	3	.	11
Dunnock	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Bullfinch	.	1	.	.	1	.	2
Totals	**17**	**12**	**.**	**19**	**14**	**.**	**62**

Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods - 10-year Averages

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 - 2017	93	133	151	109	120	606

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

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Maximum	128	198	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	89	66	59	364
Mean	92	115	159	130	126	611

Footnote

I hope you will have noticed that the quality of production of this issue of TWITTER is back to what it was before the faithful old Iyonix computer expired. I discovered that there are two companies which have continued to develop the RISC OS operating system initiated by Acorn using its (then new) ARM chips. I now have a new machine using the same (but updated) software for the desk-top publishing and, in particular, for drawing the graphs and charts. Many thanks to Andrew Rawnsley of R-Comp who has ensured that the new machine is built, and running in time for production of this issue.

Chris