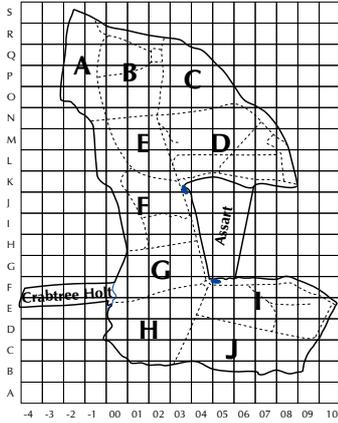


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

December 2015 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

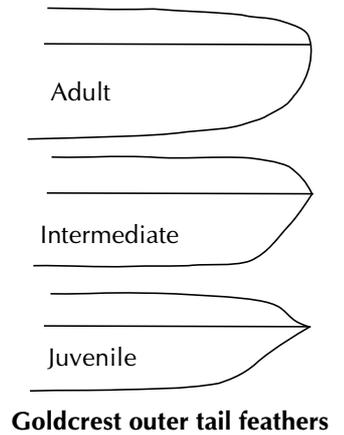
CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringing John Clark

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2015/5
Number
105



After a mediocre breeding season, the last months of the year have brought some large catches in the standard sites. These have raised the standard site total for the year - which is probably our best measure of bird abundance - to pleasingly above average. On the negative side it seems that breeding success has been low in the wood and the larger number of captures later in the year results from incoming birds. The last two months of the year were very difficult to manage with ringing impossible during three successive weekends because of the high winds and/or rain. We just managed to complete the full programme of standard site visits on the very last visit of the year.

At the start of a new year it is appropriate to look back and to look forward too. As ever, birds continue to surprise us - a young Willow Tit being caught in the autumn, a 10-year old Great Spotted Woodpecker, and a Cetti's Warbler (a new species for the wood) seen in the assart. What awaits us in 2016? The group's operations include much more than just ringing birds. An important aspect is the Common Birds Census operation which complements the ringing data - providing additional information about species which we ring and also information about some species which we rarely, or never, ring. Thanks are due to all the CBC team - in the wood and in the 'office'. Our data set continues to be a source for various studies - Oliver Beacock has related Treecreeper territories to coppice data for his A level extended project and Jess Farnsworth is looking at tit breeding success in relation to coppice for her third-year dissertation at York University. For both these projects the CBC data are being used together with ringing data, nest record data and the coppice age data.

We have always contributed our constant effort data to the BTO CES scheme - indeed Treswell Wood was one of the trial sites in the early 1980s. However, our throughout-the-year multi-site regime has never entirely matched the BTO regime. We were very pleased that Ruth Walker from the BTO visited us to review the best way to work in future to make best use of our data for the BTO with minimum disruption to our own very-long term standardised operation (which pre-dates the BTO CES scheme). We were unable to ring during Ruth's visit because of the weather - perhaps this was for the best as it allowed a long, wide-ranging discussion of the situation in the warmth and dryness of a house. We look forward, now, to more years when we can continue to play a full part in the BTO scheme, to maintain our own internal system and to continue the RAS Robin project.

During the autumn the assart has been marked with a grid of sampling points for the long-term monitoring operation by Lincoln University. One aim of this is to record the natural colonisation of the area by flora and fauna over the years. A second aim is to use the area for shorter term projects for students at Lincoln. It seems likely that we will have two fourth year students studying the assart this year.

The group has a strong team of long-standing members together with a number of younger recruits who, naturally but sadly for us, move away with their transition from education to work. We have said goodbye to Adam after completing his degree at Brackenhurst. He is now back in France where we understand he has joined a ringing group there. We ended the year, though, with at least as many new young recruits as we started with. Welcome to you all.

We should mention a few administrative matters. First of all, thanks are due to Keith Stedman who has been our treasurer since we put the group structure on a more formal footing a few years ago. Keith will tell us that our healthy financial position is nothing to do with his oversight, but most of us will disagree with that view. Keith would like to remind members that the subscriptions for 2016 are now due - £20 from wage and/or pension recipients; £10 from students. The money goes towards a variety of expenses including rings, food, training materials and other equipment. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the anonymous donor who matched the sales of NWT raffle tickets by group members resulting in £125 to the group's funds.

Thanks are also due to Andy Goold who organises the visit rota so that we know who to expect on any day and can therefore take steps to fill difficult weeks. Neil Taylor pioneered this work and Andy kindly agreed to take it on after Neil's death. Andy has considerably expanded the scope of this vital working planning document.

Annual Summary - All ringing records 2015

	Ctrl.	New Birds			Retraps		Sight	Recvs.	Othr.	Total
		Adult	Juvnl	Pulli	Rt	SDR				
Sparrowhawk	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
Kestrel	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Stock Dove	.	.	.	16	1	.	.	2	19	
Woodpigeon	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
Tawny Owl	.	1	.	.	1	1	.	.	3	
Gt. Spotted Woodpeck	.	1	5	.	17	.	.	.	23	
Wren	.	33	64	26	71	19	.	.	213	
Dunnock	.	22	22	.	44	2	.	.	90	
Robin	.	29	67	.	66	33	.	.	195	
Blackbird	.	33	14	.	46	2	.	.	95	
Song Thrush	.	9	6	.	5	1	.	.	21	
Mistle Thrush	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	.	41	19	.	7	5	.	.	72	
Chiffchaff	.	20	9	.	8	8	.	.	45	
Goldcrest	.	9	45	.	16	5	.	.	75	
Spotted Flycatcher	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	2	
Long-tailed Tit	.	33	.	.	38	8	.	.	79	
Marsh Tit	.	1	4	18	65	8	.	.	96	
Willow Tit	.	.	1	.	4	1	.	.	6	
Coal Tit	.	2	22	3	64	4	.	3	98	
Blue Tit	5	64	39	118	280	29	.	3	565	
Great Tit	7	63	39	102	329	83	.	1	638	
Nuthatch	2	4	6	.	14	3	.	1	30	
Treecreeper	.	9	12	.	24	3	.	.	48	
Jay	1	.	.	.	1	
House Sparrow	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	4
Tree Sparrow	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Chaffinch	.	35	15	3	16	5	.	.	74	
Goldfinch	1	2	3	.	.	.	.	.	6
Bullfinch	.	19	33	.	25	4	.	.	81	
Totals	15	443	425	286	1143	224	.	5	46	2587

Key:

Ctrl - Birds ringed elsewhere and caught in Treswell Wood including all birds from Hillcrest Farm. **Juvnl** - juveniles. **Pulli** - birds ringed as nestlings. **Rt** - ordinary recaptures. **SDR** - same day recaptures. **Sight** - observations of ringed birds. **Recvs.** - recoveries, i.e. our own ringed birds found dead in Treswell Wood. **Othr.** - all in this table are pulli which were ringed but died before fledging; they are not included in the Pulli column.

Pat Quinn-Catling has, again, compiled the CBC species maps from observers' visit maps and these will be analysed at the BTO shortly. Results should appear before the 2016 CBC season. Would observers please let Pat know that you will be able to continue for the 2016 season. Pat was recently hospitalised after a fall. We wish her a speedy recovery.

Finally, the two big holes in the system - the web site and the digital image collection which now includes almost four years of fixed-point images documenting the habitat around the standard sites each time they are netted. We really should give serious consideration to creating a web site for the group. We have plenty of material which could usefully be held there - all issues of Twitter, for instance. A volunteer would be very welcome indeed. We also have an increasing number of digital and pre-digital pictures which need to be 'weeded' and what is left catalogued and stored systematically so that they are easily found and available when required. Any volunteer with experience of this sort of thing would be very welcome indeed.

Boxes for Tawny Owls and Stock Doves

As the age of nestbox inspectors increased and their load-carrying capacity decreased, we had been wondering about the heights of large nestboxes. Was it essential to have them so high that we needed the extension ladder to inspect them? We realised that some - which have been used by both species - were only at single-ladder top height and decided, therefore, to lower them all to this height to save carrying two ladder sections around the wood instead of one. Coincidentally, John Bartley contacted us saying that he had lowered the high box in his garden so it was only around 2 metres above ground level. It held two successive nests this year. He has now

lowered the box again to around 1 metre and is awaiting the outcome. He also noted that birds often land on top of the box before flapping down to the entrance and suggests a clear flight path to the entrance hole may not be vital. Certainly conventional wisdom is that a perch near the entrance is useful (though far from vital) and John's observations of landing on the box roof first are in line with this.

We also spoke with a ringer at the BTO conference and he said his Tawny Owls and Stock Doves were using boxes under 2 metres above ground level.

In Treswell Wood, which is open to the public, we think it would be unwise to lower boxes so that they did not need a ladder at all, so we plan to reduce heights just to the one-section ladder height for the 2016 season.

Frass

Ken Smith has, again, painstakingly worked on our frass collection, amongst others, from 2015. Two studies are being carried out using frass data from the various sites, including our own contributions from Treswell Wood. Ally Phillimore at the University of Edinburgh is looking at the timing of frass fall in relation to leafing times using data from the Woodland Trust. He hopes to submit his work to an academic journal shortly. The other study is by Malcolm Burgess, a conservation scientist at the RSPB. He is examining the timing of frass in relation to the timing of nesting and to productivity. This has required our nest record data in addition to frass data. We will be able to provide a summary of the results of both these studies once they are published. Preliminary results confirm that (as has been found elsewhere) the timing of frass matches the timing of oak leafing very closely - the peak fall being 26 days after the first leafing. However timing of peak food demand by Blue and Great Tits is shifting less than that of the caterpillars, so peak demand is becoming less well matched to supply.

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Sparrowhawk	2	DK98432	9/12/2015	Nether Headon; Dead under power line

This was ringed as a first year male in June 2015, probably prospecting for a future breeding territory. We did not retrap it in the wood so it was probably only a brief visit to us. Its body was found by a member of the public and reported to the BTO. A sad end to the bird but the ring has done its job - another item to add to the national, and international, picture of bird life and death. Perhaps the most pleasing point here is to note how times have changed with the advent of modern communications technology. In the past, the finder would have reported the ring to the BTO by post. It would then have been placed in the pile for attention. Depending on pressures at the Ringing Unit, this might be a few days or (in times of major problems) several weeks. Once the record had been processed, the ringers would have to wait to hear about it until the next batch of recoveries was mailed (it was too costly to send a letter to the ringer every time a recovery was reported). We might, therefore, have to wait for some months before hearing about a recovery like this. In this case, the bird was reported on-line and within six days it had been entered, checked for inconsistencies (by human and computer) and emailed to us. A wonderful improvement in the flow rate of information.

Great Spotted Woodpecker 2M	CT84206	20/12/2015	Q02 Feeder
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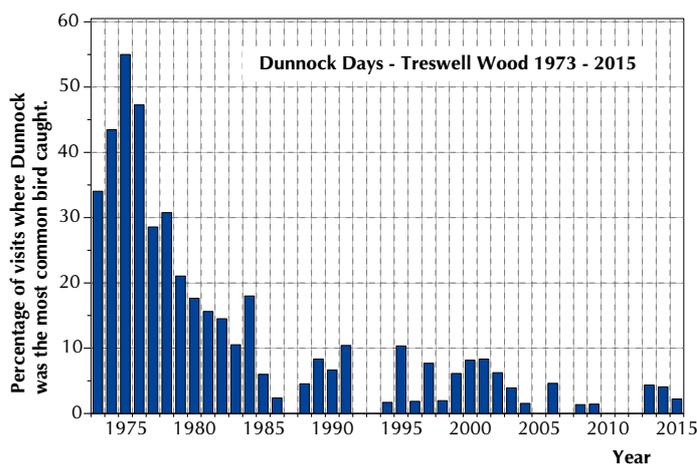
What a fine bird: this is its 22nd capture, always at a feeding station. It was first ringed as a juvenile 10 years and 5 months ago in July 2005 and has been recaptured at least once in every year since then except for 2010 and 2012. It has the longest history of any of our woodpeckers, two years ahead of its nearest rival (which might well still be alive). As with all birds which moult their plumage each year, there was no clue at all to its great age in the plumage. Indeed, if anything, its outer greater coverts were a shade paler than the rest of the wing coverts - pale enough to demand a closer look but not the distinctly greyer colour that is seen in some first winter birds which have not moulted all their coverts.

This bird has shown very little movement during its recorded capture history. The species is reputed to be very sedentary - we have records of only 6 movements to or from the wood. All but one of these have been fairly local and the sixth was 40km away in north-eastern Lincolnshire - far enough away to qualify for a mention in the BTO annual ringing report. Years ago when we looked in detail at movements of birds within the wood we had so few Great Spotted Woodpecker records that no meaningful analysis was possible. Now with 513 captures of 141 individuals such an analysis could be attempted.

The current BTO longevity record stands at just over a year longer than this bird's record. What this means in terms of life length we cannot be exactly sure because the BTO record holder was ringed as a first breeding season bird in April - we now know that an age of '5' in April cannot be regarded as reliable so the record holder could have been at least a year older than the apparent 12 years which were deducible from its ringing history. Our bird was ringed when it still had the juvenile red cap so we do know exactly how many years old it is.

Dunnock 4 **TT49169** 8/11/2015 **Q04**

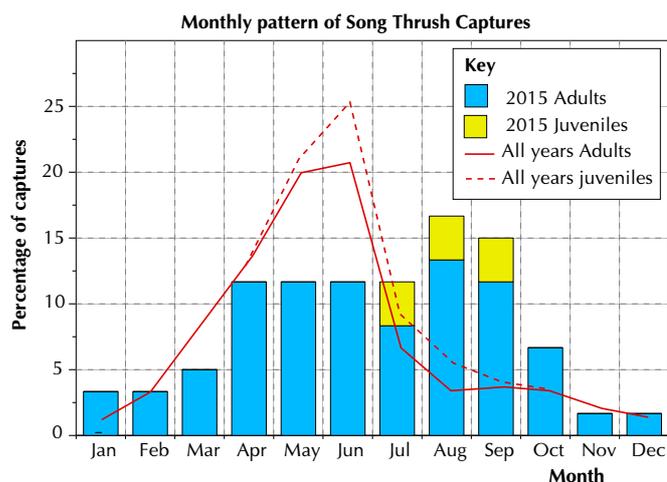
On its own this bird appears not very special at all - ringed in May as a breeding male under 200 metres from this capture position. It is many years since Treswell Wood was referred to by visiting ringers as 'Dunnock City' with retrap Dunnocks being very common birds indeed. On this day Dunnock was the most abundant species and that is something that is now very rare - it last happened 18 months ago and in some recent years we have enjoyed none of these 'Dunnock Days'. However, the long term picture is clear - Dunnock Days used to be very common but now are not. The reasons for the decline are likely to be complex and include change in agricultural practice around the wood, loss of winter feeding stations in the wood with the end of Pheasant shooting, more open woodland habitat resulting from coppicing, and a national decline in numbers.

**Robin** 2 **D904029** 13/12/2015 **B03**

This is one of only 19 Robins with an out-of-the wood history. It was ringed in Treswell village in April 2014 as a first breeding season bird and appeared in the wood in June that year. We do not know if it breeds in the wood as we have not caught it in breeding condition (even when first captured in the wood in June). It could be that this small part of Treswell Wood (always grid square B03) is its regular wintering territory. Who knows?

Song Thrush 3 **RW58299** 20/12/2015 **N02**

It is well worth looking at data before making assertions. The Song Thrush is now so much less common than it was that any capture seems of interest. We always regarded it as a summer visitor with very few winter captures, so this capture in winter seems even more unexpected. The data tell a different story. It is true that winter captures are far less common than breeding season captures but the pattern of captures we have seen this year is more or less in line with the aggregated captures from all previous years in both spread through the year and in the ratio of juveniles (plumage code 3J) to all other birds (as a rough measure of productivity). Perhaps captures are a little later on average although the small numbers make it hard to be sure. Although Song Thrushes now seem to be at least holding their own, their absolute numbers are far, far lower than in former times. Mike Hansell who curates the National Nest Reference Collection in Glasgow, after reading the last Twitter, noted that *the decline of the Song Thrush is indeed a sad business. Your long-term record is invaluable in illustrating that. This year I think is the first time in about 20 years that I have stood in the garden in the evening and not heard a Song Thrush singing.*

**Song Thrush** 4 **RS78283** 22/11/2015 **D08**

The four years and seven months since ringing this bird does not break our internal age record of five years and 11 months. However it is unusual in that it has not been captured in between these two events - its capture positions were under 20 metres apart in one of our standard sites which we have visited 22 times since it was ringed. Our record holder (set in 1979) also had no intermediate captures but was caught in different parts of the wood on the two occasions. The other three older birds all had rather fuller capture histories. The other point to note is that these other long-lived birds were all caught well over 30 years ago.

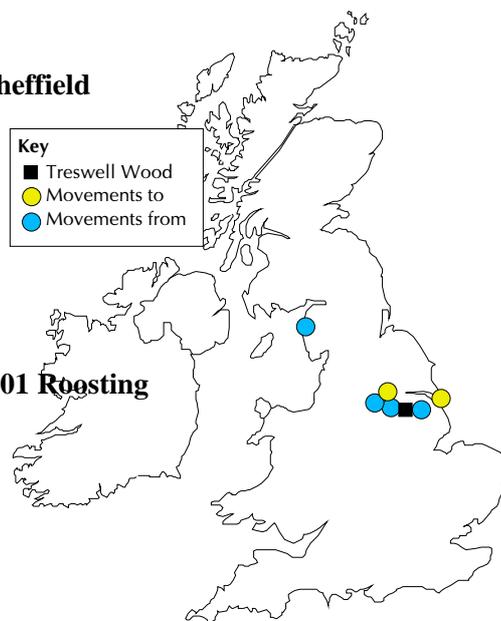
Goldcrest 2F **EYD338** 16/11/2015 **O02**

Goldcrests are not easy to age. Most seem to have pointed tail feathers; the ones with broad, clearly rounded feathers are rarities indeed. This bird had the pointed tail feathers, although not as narrow as some and could easily have been recorded as a young bird. Narrow pointed tails can be safely aged as juveniles but broader, pointed tails should be aged as 2 unless there is other evidence (such as a fault bar across the tail). Diagrams for adult and juvenile outer tail feathers, taken from Svensson, are shown on page 1 together with a representation of this bird's feather. Svensson notes **Do not age intermediates between these two.** This broad-feathered bird had a slight, but

clear point at the feather tip without a convex curve to the inner web. Take Svensson's advice and do not be afraid to record a bird's age as 'unknown'.

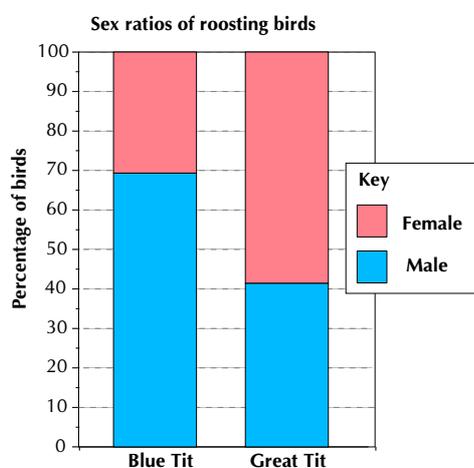
Goldcrest **2F** **EYD274** **18/10/2015** **Sheffield**

One of only six Goldcrests we have caught which have been recorded elsewhere. The map shows where they have come from (yellow) or travelled to (blue). Of reassuring interest is that it was aged by the finders as '3' - a bird of the year. We know from ringing it during the previous winter that this assessment of age was incorrect. We are not the only ringers who have difficulty with ageing this species (see EYD338 above).



Blue Tit **4** **L327780** **15/12/2015** **N01 Roosting**

It is always good to recapture one of 'our own' nestling-ringed birds. This one was ringed in 2013. It has been recaptured six times since then including one capture as a breeding male in 2015 and two captures as a roosting bird - once in 2014 and this capture. According to British Tits (New Naturalist) male Great Tits



tend to roost in smaller cavities than they will nest in whereas females will often roost in holes which they later nest in.

What about Blue Tits? It is not possible to sex Blue Tits reliably except in the breeding season, so most of the birds we have found roosting are of unknown sex; very few of the roosting birds have been later retrapped in breeding condition. We do know, though, that males have, on average, longer wings than females so we have compared long-winged (average recorded wing length >63 mm) and short-winged (wing length < 63 mm) Blue Tits (and birds of 63 mm excluded from the analysis). This is not an absolutely reliable separation of males from females but will give some good indication of differences in roosting behaviour between the sexes. The pattern for Blue Tits is opposite to that for Great Tits

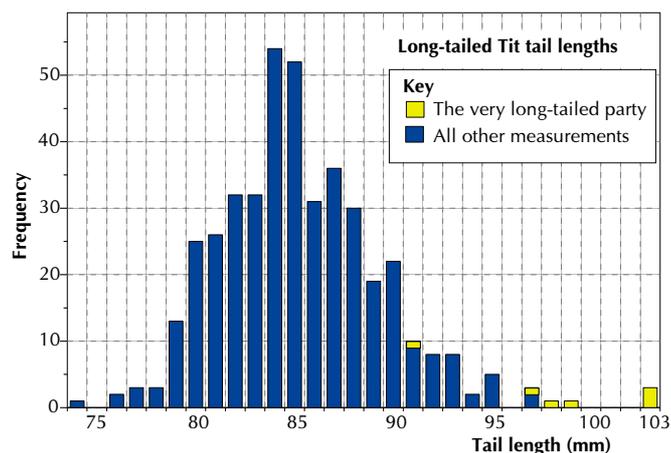
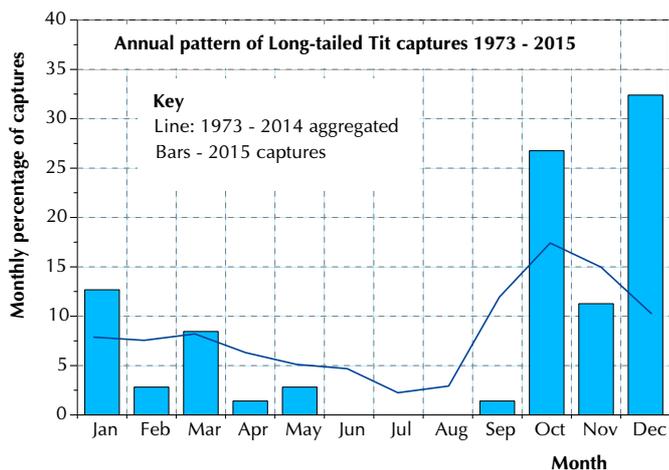
Blue Tit **4** **V666961** **20/12/2015** **Q02 Feeder**

This was captured five years and eight months after ringing as a nestling in J01. It had not been seen after March 2013 and, after summer captures as a juvenile in 2010, has only been captured during winter months always in the northern part of the wood (where it was reared) and most often not at a feeding station. It looks like a winter visitor to the wood with breeding territory elsewhere - perhaps very local, perhaps further away. Nice to see it back 'home' though.

Long-tailed Tit **2** **CXN994** **20/12/2015** **Q02**

After an absence of Long-tailed Tits during the summer, when we wondered if there had been an extinction of the woodland population, the species has returned in higher than average numbers. These have included a good number of retraps from some time ago. This bird, for instance, was ringed in March 2013. The first graph below shows the long-term monthly pattern of captures - this year's captures do not look quite the same.

A few years ago we caught a family party in which the tails looked very long indeed. We measured these and,



indeed, they were very long. Since then we have continued to measure tails of the species. The second graph shows the distribution of all tail lengths we have measured. The family party lengths are shown in yellow, all other measurements in blue. It is clear that this party did have exceptionally long tails (and we did check we had measured correctly). Of note, though, is that we retrapped some of these birds after they had undergone moult. In all cases, the new tails were shorter than their juvenile tails - the considerable drops in lengths were 103 → 89, 103 → 88 and 98 → 89.

Treecreeper **4** **CXN675** **20/12/2015** **N00**

This is the oldest Treecreeper we have caught recently - but still another three years to go before it breaks our record - and a welcome survivor of four winters including some hard ones. During these winters when there has been cold weather, it has remained dry. Even with snow cover on the ground, tree trunks were only covered in the direction of the wind at the time of the snow fall and the rest of the trunks were bare and unglazed (because it was dry snow rather than rain frozen on the trunks). This allowed Treecreepers to access their normal food of invertebrates in cracks in the bark.

Goldfinch **3M** **Z782055** **25/10/2015** **K02**

Goldfinch numbers are increasing nationally - possibly in part because of increased provision of suitable food in gardens (niger and sunflower hearts). We have also seen a welcome increase in captures in the wood of this most attractive little bird.

Bullfinch **4M** **D309171** **25/10/2015** **K00**

This year we have systematically recorded the state of moult (or lack of moult) on almost every bird we have caught from before the moulting season began in June until the end of September. By this time the data entry software queries moult codes indicating active moult. Finches in general tend to be later moulters and Bullfinches in particular can be very late indeed. This was one of two birds still in primary moult caught on this day. We have only three records of Bullfinches moulting later than this - one on 26/10/1993 and two on 23/11/1980 - nearly a month later in the year.

10-Week Summary: 2015 Interval 4, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	1	.	3	5	.	6	15
Dunnock	.	.	2	.	.	1	3
Robin	.	.	6	2	.	4	12
Blackbird	.	.	2	4	.	.	6
Song Thrush	.	.	1	1	.	.	2
Blackcap	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Goldcrest	5	.	12	1	.	2	20
Long-tailed Tit	21	.	.	18	.	.	39
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	4	.	3	7
Coal Tit	.	.	.	1	.	3	4
Blue Tit	.	.	2	7	.	4	13
Great Tit	.	.	.	8	.	.	8
Nuthatch	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Treecreeper	1	.	4	5	.	1	11
Chaffinch	1	.	.	1	.	.	2
Goldfinch	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Bullfinch	1	.	8	1	.	3	13
Totals	31	.	42	58	.	27	158

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods

2015	105	123	136	137	158	659
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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	158	130	124	607