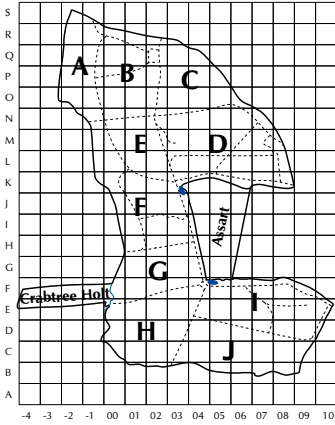


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

August 2014 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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2014/2
Number 98



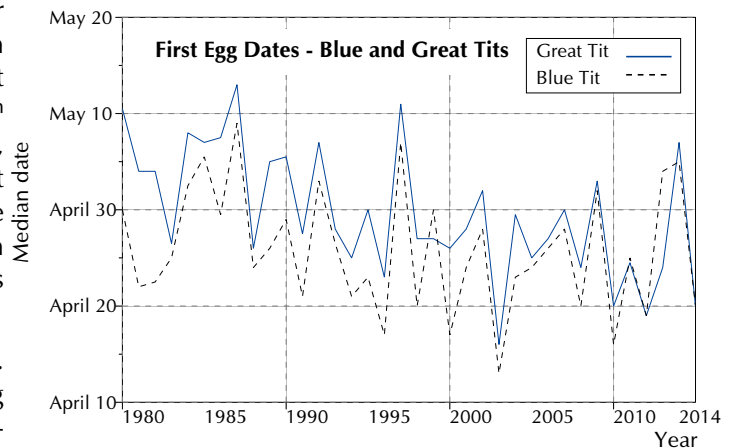
Captures in the third 10-week period last year were very low indeed during a mediocre breeding season following a second hard winter in a row. Captures during the same period this year have been the highest since 2006 and a little above the overall average. Tit numbers are low (apart from the Marsh Tit) and the species which have made major contributions are Wren, Blackbird, Robin and Blackcap. Dunnock numbers are pleasingly higher than recently, as are Song Thrush numbers (and this coincides with CBC observers' reports of 'thrushes everywhere!'). Bullfinches have been frequent too. Catches have been very variable with some very good days and others where catching has been very slow indeed. At this time of year we expect a larger proportion of new birds because of the arrival into the population of young birds. However, August 17th was most unusual - a moderately slow day with the full set of standard site nets and some extra nets too. By the end of the session there had been no recaptures at all. When did this last happen? There were six days in 1973 and 1974 when there were no recaptures - and this is not really surprising - particularly on the first ever visit to the wood. Since then there has never been a visit when a full set of nets has been employed and there have been no recaptures at all. Another notable day in this variable season was July 13th when the total catch of 33 birds included 15 Wrens. This was our greatest-equal number of Wrens caught on one day - the other day being in July 1994. However, this year wins with the proportion of Wrens 15/33 trumping 15/58 in 1994.

This is the first year during which the assart has been owned and managed by the Trust. It is not mature enough to be able to do any effective monitoring of populations by mist-netting but the area is clearly more diverse in its wildlife than in the days of arable farming. Kestrels and Buzzards are seen over the area very frequently. It also has large numbers of various hawk dragonflies hunting over it. And, best of all, on August 17th John McMeeking was delighted to record a new species for the wood - a Hobby hunting the dragonflies.

After last year's very late nesting season, this year nesting has taken place just a few days earlier than predicted by the long term trend with the median first egg dates for both Great and Blue Tits being April 20th and the earliest Blue Tit egg laid on April 6th. In 1979, the first year of the nestbox project, the earliest Blue Tit first egg date was April 22nd with the median date being May 1st. That is a shift of nearly three weeks in the 35 years and over two weeks earlier than last year's unexpectedly late season.

There have been considerably more nests than in 2013. This is, in part, a result of smaller tits and Wrens using dormouse boxes which were designed to be 'bird-proof'. In the past, it has been difficult to separate the

effects of extra boxes from other influences on the bird populations. This year we may have some insight because Great Tits were too large to enter the dormouse boxes (but not for want of trying - see Twitter 96). Looking at the Great Tit data, we have a small increase in the number of nests recorded - 44 rather than 37 last year. Nesting success has been relatively poor. The average clutch size is small - just over 7 - but not unprecedentedly so. Hatching success was low - only 64%. Worse, many nests failed when we had several cold and wet days and adults were unable to keep dry, find enough food and keep the nestlings warm. Happily, predation of nestbox-using birds has been almost zero this year. The smaller tits showed a similar pattern of poor hatching success. Coal and Marsh Tits, though, managed to fledge all but one of their hatchlings. They nest slightly earlier than the other tits and this enabled them to have better-feathered nestlings by the time the cold spell struck. A week may be a long time in politics, but even less than a week can make the difference between life and death for tit nestlings.



There were nearly twice as many Blue Tit nests as last year of which nearly a third were in dormouse boxes. Whether there would have been as many without the dormouse boxes, we cannot tell. Certainly there were unused tit boxes within a few seconds flying time of all Blue Tit nests in dormouse boxes. The success rates of Blue Tits were marginally lower than those of Great Tits (but nowhere approaching statistically significantly).

Wrens nested in large, but not unprecedented, numbers. Over half the nests were in dormouse boxes. In addition to those recorded in the table below, many more nests were built (in bird and dormouse boxes) by the male Wrens but not eventually selected for nesting by the female (as is usual with this species). It has clearly been a good year for Wrens - the standard site captures are very high indeed with one bird in five caught being a Wren. However, looking at past records, it is clear that there are more Wren nests in boxes in years when there are extra dormouse boxes, irrespective of the populations in those years. It seems that Wrens are attracted to relative small cavities with awkward entrances. Perhaps we should adapt some of the normal tit boxes specifically for Wrens? This might provide better rain proofing than natural sites, increase the number of nests recorded but would it have any negative impact on predation rates?

Events in Nestboxes - Treswell Wood, 2014

Species	Nests		Eggs laid	Adults caught on nests	Birds		% Success Rate	
	Recorded	Successful			Nestlings fledged	Nestlings recaptured (to Aug. 18 th)	Nests	Eggs
Stock Dove*	14	6	28	.	10	0	42	36
<i>Woodpigeon</i>	4	1	6	.	2	0	25	33
Barn Owl	1	1	5	.	4	0	100	80
Tawny Owl	1	0	3	.	.	.	0	0
<i>Song Thrush</i>	2	0	9	.	0	.	0	0
Wren	11	8	61	.	41	2	72	67
Coal Tit	3	3	29	2	16	2	100	55
Marsh Tit	3	3	27	1	17	2	100	63
Blue Tit	36	18	308	25	113	2	50	37
Great Tit	44	25	315	3	127	25	57	40
Totals	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.

Avian Pox

Sadly we have caught some birds this summer with avian pox. All have been Great Tits and the growths have been typically above the eyes or on the upper legs. The first bird, a nesting female, was seen on a nest in May. We do not know her identity. Curiously on the next visit to the box, the nest was empty but undamaged - as if the parent birds had removed the eggs themselves and abandoned the nest. The failure of the nest did, of course, have the beneficial result there were no nestlings to infect which would have increased the number of carriers of the pox. From retrap histories of the affected birds, it seems that the pox can strike very rapidly - D309462 and TV35704 were caught on 25 June and neither showed any signs of the pox. They were badly infected three weeks later when next caught. TV35744, on its first recapture about six weeks after fledging, had the pox. Finally, TT49075 was previously caught in March and appeared in September with the infection. There appear to be no family relationships between any of the birds so far seen infected. Because we retrap birds so often it is likely that we will be able to tell how rapidly the pox will kill the birds (if it does) or how soon they recover.

What to do with a bird with the pox? If it is ringed, note the ring number and release it. If it has been placed in a

bird bag, then that bag must be taken out of circulation immediately and taken to be washed. If the bird is unringed, then release it unringed but make a record on the field sheet of the circumstances (species, net number and location of lesions). Clean your own hands immediately after handling any infected birds using the gel in the ringing kit.

Separating Marsh and Willow Tits

Earlier in the year we published a note in the BTO Ringing News asking ringers to look for chocolate-brown nasal hairs in Willow Tits. We believe that this could be another feature separating Marsh and Willow Tits. Past records from the wood showed that Willow Tits almost invariably sported these brown hairs whereas Marsh Tits had jet-black nasal hairs. Initial results from ringers who responded were disappointing with both nestling and juvenile Willow Tits they ringed having black nasal hairs. However, by the time of post-juvenile moult it appeared that the adult plumage did have the brown nasal hairs. We await more confirmation, but it does seem that brown nasal hairs will indicate not only a Willow Tit but also a Willow Tit which has undergone post-juvenile moult. We are grateful to Ashley Banwell who ringed and photographed some nestling Willow Tits and retrapped some later and to Michael Miles who ringed and photographed some juveniles and retrapped some late in post-juvenile moult and with brown nasal hairs growing below the juvenile black.

Publications

Published analyses using our data seem to be like the proverbial London buses. We are pleased to note that two papers appeared recently. First is the very-long-in-preparation work completed by Andrew MacColl on the impact of coppicing on bird populations. This has appeared in *Ibis* - Britain's foremost ornithological journal. (*Significant effects of season and bird age on use of coppice woodland by songbirds*. MacColl, du Feu & Wain, *Ibis* Vol. 156 No. 3) It uses data from all our mist netting to examine relative abundance of birds in relation to age of coppice. It supports existing studies of breeding birds' responses to coppicing but, because we net throughout the year, has been able to look at birds in autumn and winter and also to examine juvenile's responses to coppicing. Thanks to Andrew for his persistent work at this. Also thanks to all those who have helped gather the data and, in particular, to CBC observers over the years - the numbers of CBC territories proved to be critical in the analysis.

The second paper appeared in *Ringing & Migration*, the ringing scheme's in-house journal. (*No sex please, we're biased: some comments on sexing Marsh Tits*. du Feu & du Feu, *Ringing & Migration* 2014. Vol. 29, Part 1). It demonstrates, for Marsh Tits, the potential hazards of attempting to assign the sex to a bird based on its wing length. We know the same will apply to other species - such as Blue Tits, Coal Tits and Robins - and hope to carry our similar analyses on these in future.

Net mending

There is always a collection of mist nets which need some maintenance. Any re-rigging work has to be done on a calm day, outside. However, hole mending is probably best done indoors, under a good light, at a table covered in a white cloth. It is ideal work for the long winter evenings. We hope to have another mist-net mending party during the autumn where we will re-rig as many nets as we can (the easy ones take about two hours). We also have some re-rigged nets that now need holes to be mended. Volunteers for this indoor, winter work will be welcome. Training and instruction manuals freely available.

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Woodpigeon	1	FP97233	3/8/2014	F03

Like them or loathe them, Woodpigeons are quite remarkable in the way they have increased in numbers locally, nationally and, indeed, Europe-wide. Their nesting success in the wood is dreadfully (or happily) low with their flimsy, obvious nests an easy target for predators and prone to wind damage. This bird, and its sibling, were the first two we have ringed as nestlings in the wood since 1997. In spite of finding several nests each year since then whilst on our nest box rounds, this is the first which we have seen which has been successful. The low nest success and small clutch size (almost invariably 2 eggs) are compensated for by multiple attempts and a very long breeding season. Further, those birds that escape pest control measures and Peregrine predation can be long-lived. These compensatory factors allow its population to increase now that autumn sowing of crops gives them better winter food supply.

Stock Dove	4	EL87470	17/8/2014	D03 On Nest
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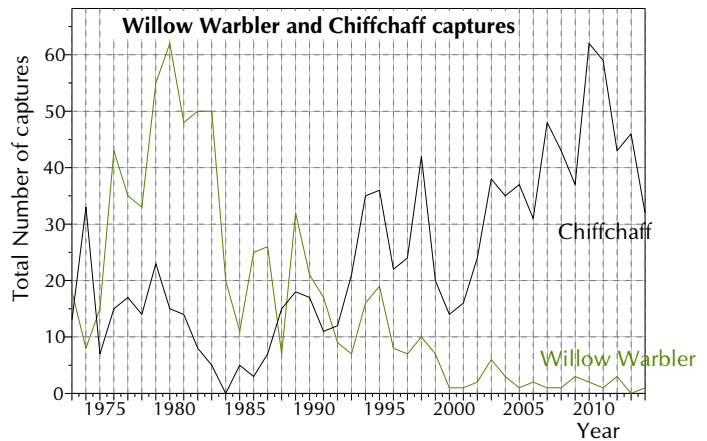
This is the first adult Stock Dove we have ever captured in the wood. Unlike most of its kind it remained firmly on the nest when we opened the box to inspect it. Most Stock Dove adults leave the nest even before the ladder is placed against the tree. Pleasingly it was already wearing a ring - it had been ringed as a nestling in 2011. This gives a natal dispersal distance of about 150 m.

Great Spotted Woodpecker CT84472 17/7/2014 Hillcrest Farm, Treswell village.

A second capture of this bird at Hillcrest Farm in Treswell after its earlier capture in March. We ringed it in the wood in April 2012 (by which time of year we would have expected it to be in its breeding territory). There was no further sign of it until its appearance in the village where it now appears to be resident.

**Willow Warbler 3J EYD217
27/7/2014 N02**

This is the only Willow Warbler we have caught this year - a far cry from the 1970s when the species was commoner in the wood than the Chiffchaff. As in several recent years, our token Willow Warbler is a juvenile, probably on its leisurely journey to the south coast prior to the much faster journey even further south. The graph shows the total numbers of captures of these two closely-related warbler species since ringing began in the wood.

**Robin 4 D904029 29/6/2014 B02**

This seems like an exchange for the woodpecker. It was ringed at Hillcrest Farm on 30/4/2014 and it did not appear to be a breeding bird - presumably a vagrant which had not yet managed to secure a territory. Whether it is still such a vagrant or whether it has bred in the wood we do not know - at this time of year when birds are in moult, it is too late to detect signs of breeding.

Nuthatch 3J TR47598 15/06/2014 I04

This species has been heard much less frequently recently than in previous years. Happily, it seems they have not deserted the wood completely - a recently-fledged juvenile is very likely to have been reared within the wood. It was followed by a second juvenile a month later and, oddly, an unringed adult in August.

Blue Tit 3J D808136 22/7/2014 Q02

The first of the year's cohort of nestling-ringed juveniles to be recaptured. Normally they appear at the feeding station rather later in the season than Great Tits. So far this season, their appearance is notable by its absence.

Marsh Tit 3J L3278000 9/8/2014 Q02

One of two of this year's nestling-ringed birds to be retrapped so far - and this is its third recapture. The proportion of recaptures, 2/17, is rather higher than the derisory 2/113 Blue Tits and about the same as the 2/16 Coal Tits.

Great Tit 6F L803345 15/6/2014 G04

Another escapee from Hillcrest Farm - ringed there on 14/3/2013 and last retrapped there on 27/11/13. As with the Hillcrest Robin, it is unclear if this bird has bred in the wood or is a non-breeding vagrant.

10-Week Summary: 2014 Interval 3, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	5	5	16	4	8	1	39
Dunnock	.	5	8	1	2	.	16
Robin	1	5	15	2	1	1	25
Blackbird	5	8	9	5	3	.	30
Song Thrush	1	1	4	2	.	.	8
Blackcap	5	5	11	4	.	.	25
Chiffchaff	3	.	.	.	.	.	3
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	1	2	1	2	6
Coal Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Blue Tit	.	.	.	.	2	.	2
Great Tit	.	.	.	2	.	1	3
Nuthatch	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Treecreeper	.	.	2	.	1	.	3
Chaffinch	1	.	3	1	1	.	6
Bullfinch	2	3	.	3	4	.	12
Totals	23	32	70	28	23	5	181