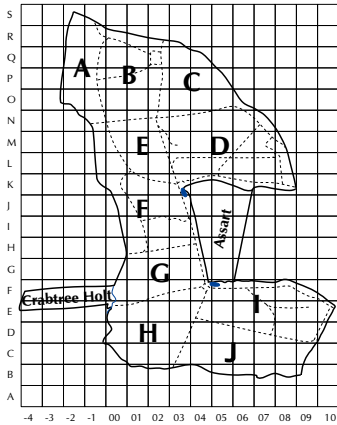
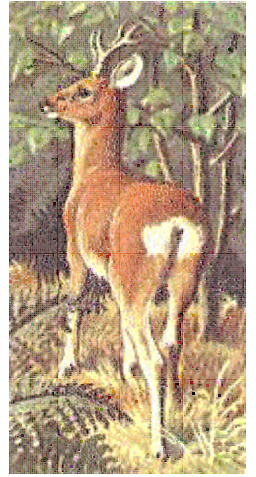


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

March 2015 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringing John Clark

2015/1
Number 101

All projects by permission of NWT

This year began extremely well with a large, varied catch on our first visit which included one of our rarely-caught species - a House Sparrow. Adverse weather played a big disruptive part subsequently with visits impossible on three weekends and having to be moved from the Sunday to Saturday on two more weekends. The problems have included rain and high winds, both making mist-netting dangerous for birds and not too good for humans either. However, the complete cycle of standard site visits has been completed. Thanks to the stalwarts who have ensured continuation of the system over a very difficult period. After the first, so promising, visit catches were very variable indeed with some very quiet days. Overall, though, the number of birds caught in the constant effort nets is well above average. Birds captured in the non-standard nets have revealed some interesting histories and added variety to the total catch. Curiously, in spite of some hard weather, the feeding station has not proved very productive. Our most productive non-standard place has been opposite the cottages on the north edge of the wood. Captures there have included several birds which we had ringed some time ago but not retrapped for some months or years.

We also observed, for the first time, an interaction between a roe deer and a mist net. Fortunately the net was a very robust 'Spidertech' net and the deer's antlers were still not fully grown and in velvet. As the deer struck the net, it stretched and arrested the deer's progress. The deer was not impressed, turned round and headed back where it had come from. Neither deer nor net were damaged.

At the time of writing, spring seems to be with us. The first primrose was noted on 8th March and the first frog spawn on 10th March. Both these dates are about average for the wood. Various bird species are singing but by 10th March there was no evidence of any tits starting to nest and no Chiffchaffs heard by March 15th.

Spring brings with it the CBC operation. Thanks to the team of observers for their continued work at this very long term project. The 2014 figures are not yet with us as John Marchant at the BTO has been a little more pressured than usual and has not yet managed to complete the territory analysis. We expect a full report in the next Twitter and, of course, the observers will have the results as soon as they arrive.

Charles Deeming's team of biologists at Lincoln University has completed an analysis of the structures of Blackbird nests and this has been published in the latest Bird Study 'Morphology and biomechanics of the nests of the Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Biddle, Deeming and Goodman'. This study has used nests from various places including a notable contribution from Treswell Wood (for which the authors express their thanks). Charles has expressed his gratitude for these, and all the other, used nests we have collected for him. There is also, of course, the National Nest Reference Collection in the Hunterian Museum of the University of Glasgow. This collection of nests of British breeding birds was established 16 years ago by Mike Hansell. Thanks to the efforts of enthusiasts, the collection has become one of the largest bird nest collections in Europe. Many nests have been sent from Treswell Wood to this national collection over the years. Charles' work involves the complete destruction of the nests in order to examine the various components in detail. Obviously this conflicts with the museum requirement for nests which are completely intact. Both Mike and Charles are keen to have more material and I have talked with both of them about relative priorities. Mike now has generally good collections of the commoner species and he encourages nest collectors to concentrate on species that are not well represented in the collection; Charles is more in need of nests where he can examine larger samples - that is the more-common species. We would encourage anyone who is able to find nests, to collect them for the more appropriate of the two operations. Mike has prepared a list of priority species for the national collection. Charles is particularly keen to have any other nests, particularly those of any thrush species. Note that, to comply with wildlife legislation, nests should not, in general, be collected before 1st August. If you do happen to have your eye on a nest this season, why not also consider contributing to the BTO Nest Records Scheme.

Species lists and contact details are given on the last page of this issue.

Avian Pox

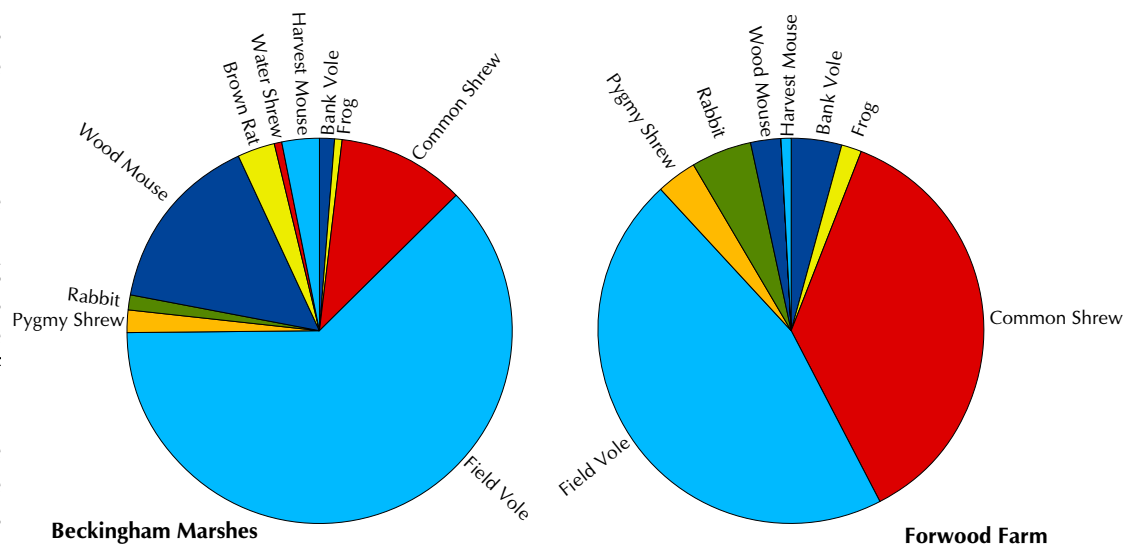
We have now recorded avian pox on 16 Great Tits. The last infected bird was caught on 5th January. Of these 16, all but two have not been retrapped since their last appearance when they were infected. The other two have apparently recovered. One, TT49075, was caught once in August 2014 with a lesion on a leg and retrapped in November apparently free of infection. The second, L327995, is remarkable. It was first trapped with pox in early December with a small lesion on the right cheek. Two weeks later the pox had enlarged considerably and was now partly inside the mouth. Although pox of itself may not be fatal, this bird, we thought, would be very likely to die simply through being unable to swallow sufficient food. Not so - it was retrapped at the end of December and again at the end of February free of the pox. It will be very interesting to observe any outbreak of avian pox next autumn. Will any birds that have survived, be immune to further infection or will they be harbouring the disease which is waiting for the autumn conditions before its symptoms become apparent again?

Contents of Barn Owl pellets

Barn Owl pellets, collected in 2014 from Forwood Farm, adjacent to the wood, have been dissected by Natasha Chapman at Lincoln University as part of her degree course. Contents of pellets can be used to study the diet of the owls but, also very importantly, provide species records of small mammals which are hard to detect by other means. Barn Owls, unlike Tawny Owls are very good at leaving pellets around the nest site and the continued supply of pellets over several years gives information about the changing small mammal populations over time. Much of the Barn Owl hunting will be over the assart and, sometimes, we have seen it hunting in more open areas within the wood, so the species records are of interest to us.

Pellet contents can be used to compare habitats. Natasha has also dissected pellets collected at the same time from a Barn Owl nest at Beckingham Marshes - the relatively new RSPB reserve some 10 miles north of Treswell Wood.

This reserve comprises wet and dry grazing meadow and the owls also hunt over adjacent arable farmland and in drainage ditch banks. The comparison between the two sites is interesting. In both cases common shrews and field voles form about three-quarters of the prey items (although not necessarily three-quarters of the mass of prey items). Perhaps surprisingly, brown rats have not been found in the Forwood Farm pellets - although they have only very recently appeared in pellets from Beckingham Marshes. Frogs and rabbits are also newly recorded species in pellets from the farm. It seems surprising that the wood mouse is relatively more common in the Beckingham pellets but no surprise that the water shrew has only been found there. Perhaps the most useful species records (for both places) are of the harvest mouse - a creature which is very hard to detect by other means. Thanks to Natasha for her work.



Contents of Barn Owl pellets collected 2014

Movements between Cottam Power Station and Treswell Wood

Dave Fogg has been ringing birds at Cottam Power Station since the late 1970s and, in the intervening years, we have had several exchanges of birds. Prompted by the report of Chiffchaff DRH931, Dave tabulated the numbers of different species recorded moving between the two sites - which are about 6 km apart. Overall we are more or less in balance - Dave said he had sent us 19 birds and we have sent him 20 in return. The table shows the totals. It would be silly even to suggest any conclusions from species with a small number of movements. Of those with more records the Chiffchaffs were all from Cottam. Of these all but one were adults that may have still been in search of a breeding territory. The other was ringed as a juvenile at Cottam and found in Treswell Wood as a breeding adult in the following year. The fact that all movements of Long-tailed Tits were from the wood to Cottam is explained when the encounter details are examined. All but two were ringed on the same day and in the same flock in September 1978. The other two had been ringed a few weeks earlier. They were all caught (and several recaptured) at Cottam in October 1978, often two or three together. The species is noted for roving parties of

individuals which may be closely related, and these parties may move considerable distances. These records give another example of that behaviour. The disparity between the Blue and Great Tits is unexpected and difficult to explain. The Blue Tits we have sent were all birds ringed as nestlings or juveniles apart from one adult which may have left the wood to winter elsewhere locally (which happens frequently). But the Great Tits? Why do none of our nestling-ringed birds head for Cottam; why such an imbalance and in the opposite direction to that of Blue Tits?

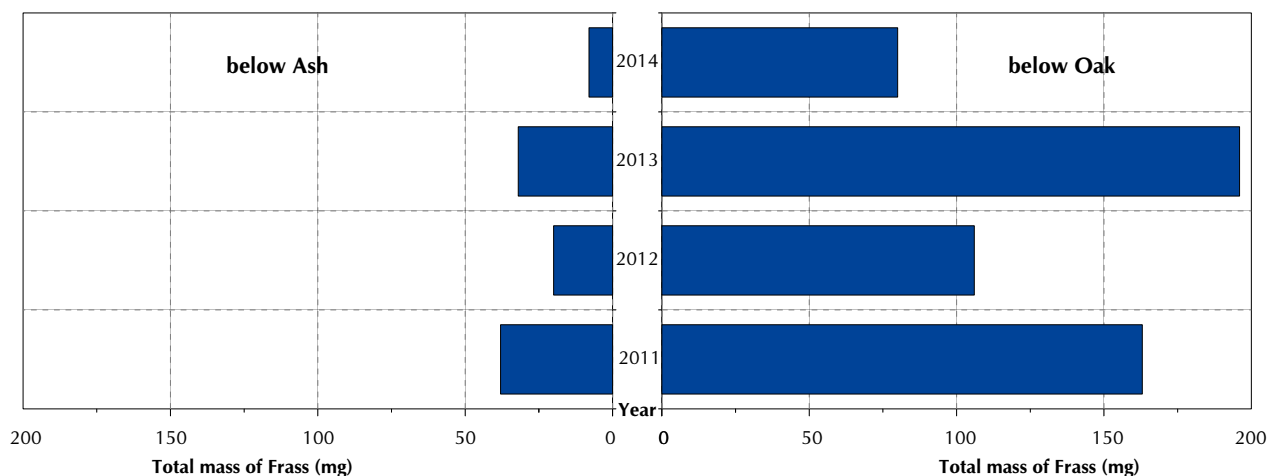
| Species | Cottam to Treswell | Treswell to Cottam |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Sparrowhawk | 0 | 1 |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | 1 | 0 |
| Duncock | 0 | 1 |
| Blackbird | 1 | 0 |
| Blackcap | 1 | 0 |
| Chiffchaff | 5 | 0 |
| Willow Warbler | 1 | 0 |
| Goldcrest | 0 | 1 |
| Long-tailed Tit | 0 | 7 |
| Blue Tit | 2 | 7 |
| Great Tit | 6 | 0 |
| Chaffinch | 1 | 0 |
| Bullfinch | 1 | 3 |

Frass

Ken Smith has, again, gone through our collection of debris collected in six trays sited below oak and ash trees at various points in the wood. He has separated the frass (caterpillar droppings) from the dross and weighed it. This is the fourth year this operation has been carried out. Thanks to Ken for this painstaking work.

The timing of the frass fall in 2014 was very similar to that in 2011 and 2012 with 2013 being much later - matching the late tit breeding season of 2013.

Ken's other sampling sites are in oak woodlands; Treswell Wood is the only one with a mixture of oak and ash. This has enabled a comparison of the frass fall beneath the two species. The diagram shows a consistent picture over the four years. Ash is known to support fewer caterpillars than oak and these results reinforce this. Interestingly the frass crop below the Treswell Wood oaks is very much lower than that below oaks in the pure oak woodlands. It is not clear why. The implications for the birds are clear - more oak needed.



Progress in the archives

Since the last edition of Twitter emerged, archival data for 1994 have been submitted to the BTO database. That leaves just 1995 data for a full submission. That was the last year before computerised data submission to the BTO was possible. Remarkably, in spite of the passage of time with various changes in coding of data and all other problems which ringing data can generate, only two out of 1,492 records from were queried by the BTO database.

We have still made no progress with organisation of our collection of digital and non-digital images. Neither have we found anyone able and willing to take on the task of masterminding a web site. Among other things, we envisage a web site would be a good medium for archiving Twitter and the various publications which have come from the project. Volunteers would be most welcome indeed.

The previous issue of Twitter was No. 100. In the covering email it was noted that there was nothing particularly special about 100 - just an accident of us having 10 fingers. Had we, more sensibly, evolved 12 fingers we would have had to wait until issue 144 for the issue numbered one-zero-zero. Even then, that would not make the event any more special. Not everyone agrees. Steve Wain noted that, as the outbreak of Foot & Mouth resulted in a single issue numbered 31 & 32, that this issue, numbered 101, is, in fact, the 100th issue. Centophiles may now engage in appropriate celebrations.

Noteworthy Encounters

| Species | Age/sex | Ring | Date | Grid |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Sparrowhawk | 5F | EL01983 | 8/3/2015 | P01 |

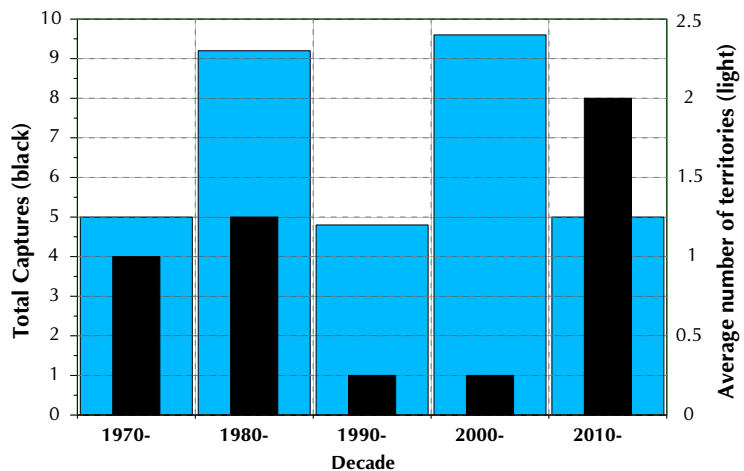
This is our first Sparrowhawk since the end of 2013; 2014 being the first year for a decade in which we caught none of this species. This was a very lucky capture. Female Sparrowhawks are very large and escape from nets easily. This one struck a net within sight of the ringing station so we were able to reach it before it could free itself - as they generally do. Males are much smaller and are held better in the mist nets hence it is not surprising that our captures for this species are dominated by males by a factor of about 3:1. Sometimes Murphy's Law is suspended, as it was in this case, and circumstances fall together favourably. It happened that we had two sets of visitors to the wood looking at the ringing at the time and they certainly appreciated seeing this bird at close quarters - views of Sparrowhawks are often distant, or brief, or both. Happily for us it was an individual which obeyed the instructions in the ageing and sexing guide and, in spite of its obvious feisty character, left us without drawing blood.

| | | | | |
|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Kestrel | 6F | EL01982 | 5/1/2015 | Q04 |
|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|------------|

The second Kestrel we have caught in quick succession - the previous one being caught only three weeks earlier. This brings our Kestrel adult total to 19. As with Sparrowhawks, there is a size difference between the sexes although it is far less marked in the Kestrel. However, again we have a noticeable imbalance between captures of the two sexes, with males outnumbering females by a factor of 2:1. This is, as might be expected with the smaller size difference, in keeping with the lower sex ratio of captures.

| | | | | |
|------------------|----------|----------------|------------------|------------|
| Tawny Owl | 7 | GR24215 | 25/1/2015 | L01 |
|------------------|----------|----------------|------------------|------------|

It is rare for a Tawny Owl to fly into our nets and even rarer for it to remain there long enough for us to extract it. Big birds do not become often caught in the fine mesh and, with a few vigorous wing flaps, can just fly out of the 'pocket' of the net. This is the 19th Tawny Owl capture in a mist-net in the wood. Captures of this species are too rare to be examined on an annual basis, but a look at captures per decade is interesting. In the graph the broad, light background bars represent the average number of Tawny Owl territories recorded in each decade by the CBC. (Decades start at the year ending in zero and end in the year ending in 9 e.g. 1980 - 1989). The narrow black bars are the number of captures in the decade. All other things being equal we should expect the black bars to match the light background bars. But clearly there is not a good match. In fact, the match is even worse than it appears because the first and last decades are still missing some capture years (1970-1972 and the coming half of the current decade). One possible explanation might be related to coppicing with recent activity making captures more likely for one reason or another (not that this would explain the relative abundance in the first decade). As usual, answers welcome on the traditional postcard or email.



| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | 4F | CT95960 | 18/1/2015 | Q02 Feeder |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|

One of three woodpeckers captured so far this year. As usual it could have been mistaken for a young bird had we relied on contrast between greater and primary coverts. It was ringed in 2010 and is has been captured at least twice each year since then.

10-Week Summary: 2015 Interval 1, Captures in Standard Sites

| | New Birds | | | Recaptures | | | Total |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| | Adult | | | Adult | | | |
| Tawny Owl | 1 | . | . | . | . | . | 1 |
| Wren | . | 2 | . | 1 | 1 | . | 4 |
| Dunnock | . | 1 | . | 2 | 1 | . | 4 |
| Robin | 1 | 3 | . | 6 | 4 | . | 14 |
| Blackbird | 6 | 11 | . | 4 | 6 | . | 27 |
| Song Thrush | . | 1 | . | . | . | . | 1 |
| Goldcrest | . | 1 | . | . | 3 | . | 4 |
| Long-tailed Tit | 1 | . | . | 5 | . | . | 6 |
| Marsh Tit | . | . | . | 2 | 2 | . | 4 |
| Coal Tit | . | . | . | 3 | 2 | . | 5 |
| Blue Tit | . | 6 | . | 7 | 2 | . | 15 |
| Great Tit | . | 9 | . | 4 | 2 | . | 15 |
| Treecreeper | . | 1 | . | . | 2 | . | 3 |
| Chaffinch | . | . | . | 1 | . | . | 1 |
| Bullfinch | . | . | . | 1 | . | . | 1 |
| Totals | 9 | 35 | . | 36 | 25 | . | 105 |

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) | 86 | 117 | 139 | 98 | 110 | 550 |

Nest collections and nest records

Charles Deeming, Lincoln University:

Target Species: Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Reed Warbler, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting.

Other species: any other passerine nests.

More details: <https://sites.google.com/site/nestconstructionfunction/home>

Mike Hansell, National Nest Reference Collection:

Target Species: Black Redstart, Cetti's Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Nightingale, Red-backed Shrike, Savi's Warbler, Turtle Dove.

Other species: Bearded Reedling, Lesser Whitethroat, Corn Bunting, Nuthatch, Grasshopper Warbler, Siskin, Hawfinch, Tree Pipit, Jay, Wheatear. Also 'good' nests of other species; in particular 'voucher' specimens or nests that have been the subject of published research programmes.

More details: <http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk/cgi-bin/foxweb/huntsearch/SearchForm.fwx?collection=zooology> (Enter species name and 'nest' for a list of nests of that species held in the national collection.)

Email: Mike.Hansell@glasgow.ac.uk

Nest records:

More details: www.bto.org Click on the Nest record Scheme link under the Current Surveys heading.