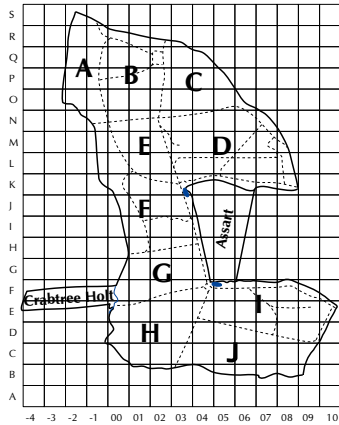


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

October 2020 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

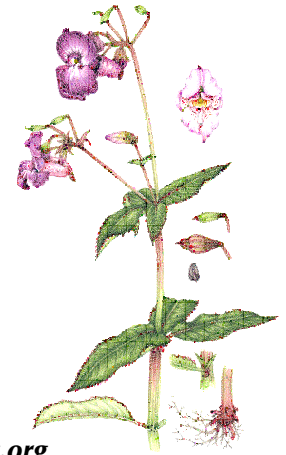
Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John Clark

2020/4

Number 129

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Despite the Covid19 restrictions we have managed the full round of standard site visits. Unlike the first interval of the year where we overran by one week because of weather, we have managed this cycle with some spare weeks. We are managing to follow the Covid rules and guidelines (rather better, it seems, than the people who impose them). However, we are fully aware that we will need to continue to exercise care and caution for many months to come. Fortunately we have a good pool of experienced ringers with whom working is productive and easy. Our main frustration and long-term problem is that of trainees. With social distancing it is not possible to train ringers who need close contact when handling birds. We do express our sympathy to those trainees and would-be trainees whose ambitions must be put on hold - temporarily only we hope.

Captures in our standard sites have been lower than typical - in the bottom quartile. With the poor breeding season for tits and the spell of wet weather in the late summer this comes as no surprise. Only on one occasion have we intercepted an autumn flock of, mostly, juvenile tits and warblers. That flock contributed about half of the total catch in all our standard site visits. We await to see what winter visitors arrive - so far Goldcrests are trickling in although we do not know whether they are fairly local or migrants from Scotland or Scandinavia. Blackbirds do not seem to be here yet and our own resident numbers seem very low.

Up to the end of September, the wood was still very dry in spite of wet weather of a few weeks earlier. Our last standard site visit of the interval was to Nightingale Ride. It was a rare occasion when we did not need wellington boots to operate on this site. The rain of the first few days of October has brought back a little mud to some parts but it will need a great deal more water to soften the ground to its usual state.

The assart vegetation continues to develop and we will carry out the annual survey of woody plants this month. We had placed a box for Kestrels overlooking the assart but such has been the encroachment of tall, thorny hedgerow plants that the flightpath to the box had become very difficult and it was not being used. Hedgerow vegetation which blocked the flightpath also made accessing the box difficult and, sometimes, painful. We have moved the box elsewhere in the assart where the Kestrels, should they decide to use it, will have a clear view and flightpath.

John McMeeking's Archives

Chris has been doing a lot of work going through John McMeeking's 'archived' paperwork, and came across the draft for a report written in January 1978 about the ringing done in the wood and plans for the future. *The Treswell Wood Ringing Programme - Interim Report and Plans for Future Work*. It appears not to have been finalised and published, which is a great pity as it gives a fascinating insight into the setting up of the ringing and recording schemes in the wood. This was around the time when the BTO Constant Effort Scheme was being developed, and John's work at Treswell fed into this development, and went further in making the Treswell scheme a year-round operation.

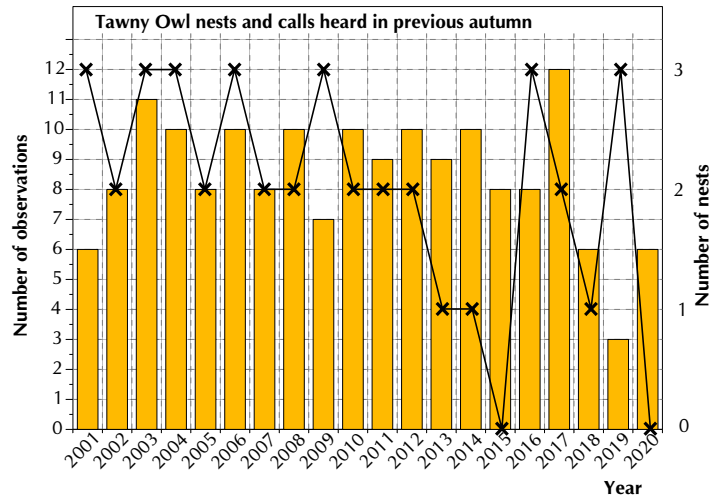
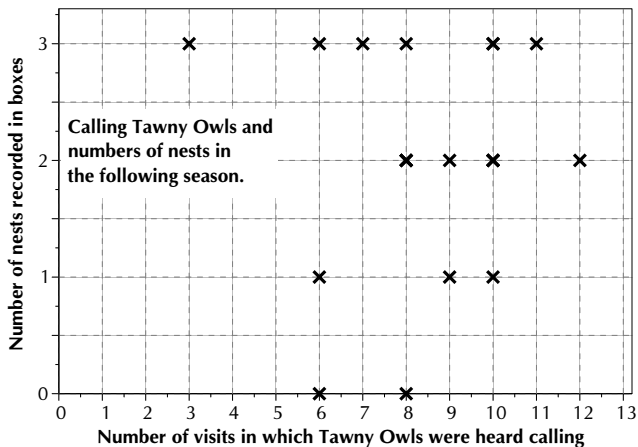
In the report John details the sort of analyses that can be done when you have regular standard ringing - proportions of juveniles caught to give a measure of breeding success, effects of woodland management on bird populations, and recaptures giving an indication of individual survival. The grid of one acre squares that John devised gave us the chance to map the movements of the resident birds within the wood. All these data have since been used many times in research about birds.

Chris has filled in one or two gaps where missing data was sought by John, updated the units to metric where appropriate, and the paper is now on the website at www.treswellwoodipmg.org It is well worth spending a few minutes to read it and understand a bit more about the origins of the scheme at Treswell.

John Clark

Tawny Owls

In the previous issue of TWITTER we noted the absence of Tawny Owls nesting in boxes this year. Tawny Owls are particularly voluble towards the end of the year when they are establishing their territories for the breeding season in the following spring. The obvious thing to look for, which we had completely overlooked, was Tawny Owl activity at the end of 2019. We do make casual notes about species heard or seen so it was easy to see on how many visits we had recorded them. These visits include ordinary mist netting visits when we hear them calling in the early morning and also when we are on the winter monthly night-time round of tit boxes.



Clearly, the more nests records we have in the autumn, the more breeding activity we expect the next season. The first graph was enough to put us to rights. The bars show the number of records of calling owls in November and December of the previous year (thus the last bar labelled 2020 represents the last part of 2019). The line with plotted points gives the numbers of nests in boxes and its scale is on the right side of the graph. There does not seem to be much connection. The second graph presents the data as a scatter graph. Scatter it the right word. The correlation coefficient is zero. As far as predicting the abundance of breeding birds in the following spring is concerned, a random number generator would do as good a job as our records of calling owls.

Other Species

Ticks. Recently we have seen more birds than usual carrying ticks, with Bullfinches being most affected. One exceptionally badly infested bird carried about 30 ticks. We have heard from other sources that it is a good year for ticks. It seems that milder winters are benefiting the ticks with numbers generally on the increase in recent years. Some ticks may carry Lyme disease. This has been recorded in the county although we are not aware of it being present in the wood. The presence of deer also seems to be associated with the disease. It is worth checking that you have not picked up any ticks after being in the wood.

Turnip Sawfly, *Athalia rosae*. We had not seen a beast quite like this in the wood before so photographed it with the hope of being able to identify it. Many species need experts to identify them or to confirm identity. This one, though, is distinctive and our conclusion was the Turnip Sawfly. We submitted the record with the picture to the Biological Record Centre's iRecord system www.brc.ac.uk/irecord. It was, very shortly, confirmed by an expert.

This is a native species and apparently widespread. However records of it (as for many species) probably grossly under-represent its real distribution in time and space. The record is now lodged in the Biological Records Centre and can be seen on the National Biodiversity Network Atlas www.nbnatlas.org If you look at this you will see the new blob on Treswell Wood - one of not very many at all in the county.

Daddy Long Legs Spider, *Phlocus phalangoides*. This is not a native species but the earliest UK records date back to the 1950s at least. It is primarily a spider of indoors - winters are often too cold for it to survive outside. It is now very common in houses. Again, looking at the NBN Atlas you will see how widespread it now is but also see that its apparent distribution must be largely dependent on the distribution of spider recorders. It seems to be outcompeting the much larger native House Spider *Tegenaria sp.* Its hunting technique is to hang from its web and drop onto unsuspecting prey as they pass below. With this surprise attack technique it is able to overcome the much more robust native. It is another new species for the wood. It was found in the storage container in the car park. It is easy to see how it arrived - there is a fairly frequent flow of equipment between houses and the container. It seems most likely the species arrived perhaps a newly mended mist net, or a pile of newly washed bird bags and found the container warm and sheltered enough to survive.

Himalayan Balsam, *Impatiens glandulifera*. This is the third, and most unwelcome, new species we have recorded recently. It is a pity that a plant with such attractive flowers is such a danger to native flora. A patch was found in

the south of the wood (Grid F03). This invasive species, if left, will smother the native ground flora. It spreads its seeds explosively with a range of up to seven metres. A single plant can thus generate a circle of plants several metres in radius the following year. All the plants we have found have been destroyed (fortunately it is an annual) but it is likely there will be seeds in the ground which will germinate next year. How did it arrive? A seed carried by a bird seems most likely although we cannot rule out unintended human transmission. We need to continue to look at this patch and destroy any new growth of the plant. This vigilance will have to continue for the next few years to ensure no seeds are left to germinate. Thanks to Lizzie Harper for her painting of this plant. Look at www.lizzieharper.co.uk to see more of her work.

So - three new species. One was almost certainly brought by human activity, one probably transported by birds and the third flew in on its own. It is always worth recording species. People often do not bother to record such common species as Rabbit but will record the much rarer observations of Otters. The result is that the rare creatures can appear from the records to be commoner than the common ones. For instance, there were more records of Red Deer than of House Mice in the first edition of the Nottinghamshire Mammal Atlas www.nottsmammals.org.uk (Happily this has shamed some people into better ways and the situation is improved.) Without continued recording of species we will have no idea of how potentially invasive species are spreading, nor how formerly common species are declining. Documentation of species in space and time is even more important now when there are such rapid changes in climatic and environmental conditions. John McMeeking gave two pieces of relevant advice: *Record what is there, not what is rare* and *What is recorded is history; what is not is mystery*.

Harvest Mite, *Neotrombicula autumnalis*

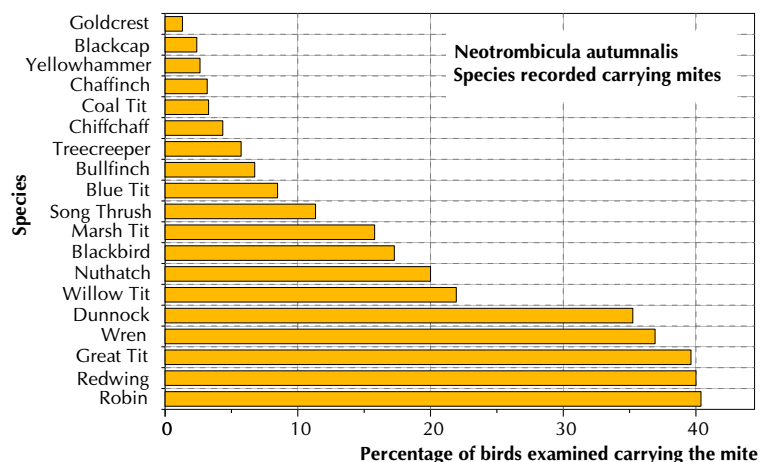
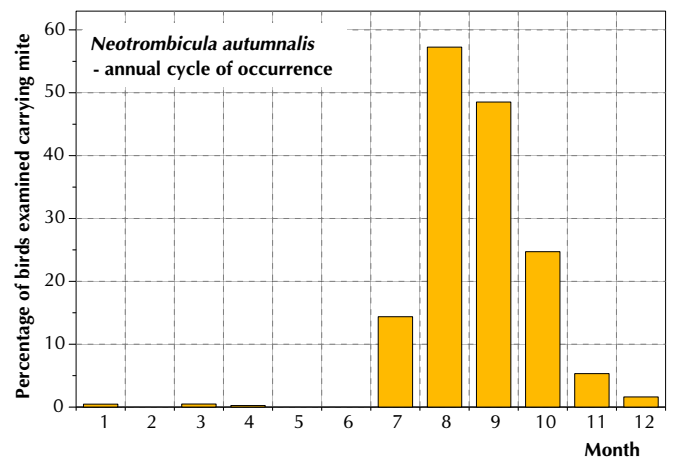
This species has featured recently in various media in association with dogs which have been in woodland. At best it is a minor irritant to them. At worst it seems to be associated with Seasonal Canine Illness which will almost certainly be fatal if not treated quickly. We have not looked for the mite on birds recently although some years ago we did record their presence or absence and have records of abundance (or absence) of mites for 6,979 bird captures. The first graph illustrates their annual cycle of appearance. The mite is appropriately named for it is most abundant in the autumn. The frosts in winter are supposed to end its appearance but it has remained present in December with the odd record in the New Year. The second graph shows the species on which they have been recorded in the wood in order of infestation. Some of these samples are small but some species with large samples have not yielded any carrying mites - Long-tailed Tit (240), Willow Warbler (134) and Tree Sparrow (120). It will be worth looking more deeply into the data to see what seasonal patterns there are and whether these patterns vary between species.

Fortunately these mites do not seem to be attracted to our ringers, although they are attracted to some people. A great deal of mystery surrounds Seasonal Canine Illness. It was first diagnosed about a decade ago and appears to have been a new disease rather than a long-standing disease which had not been identified before. The cause is unknown although the evidence points to the Harvest Mite. It seems that dogs with the condition are always infested with mites but many more dogs are infested with the mites without suffering the disease. It seems to be contracted only in woodland, with some woodlands worse than others. It is not known if

the disease has reached some woods by chance or if the type of woodland has a bearing on its occurrence. Perhaps it could be related to soil type or tree species assemblage.

There is research going on at various veterinary institutions into the disease. If our historic records of mites could be useful they are there to be used.

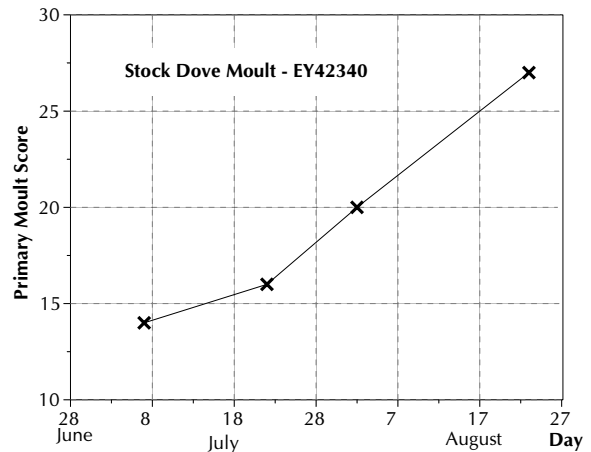
Many thanks to Raoul Dowding of Raoul Dowding Vets for his help with these notes.



Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Stock Dove	4	EY42340	23/8/2020	F04 on nest

We noted this species in the previous issue in connection with moult. This individual has improved the picture even further. We have moult records on four successive captures, always at the same nestbox on successive broods. The graph shows the progress of its moult through the season. After starting moult some time before July, it is only just over half way through to the final moult score of 50 by the end of August. At this rate primary moult should be completed by the end of October but that leaves secondary and tail feathers together with many wing and body coverts still to moult. Many species divide their time fairly strictly between the periods of peak demands - breeding, moulting, overwintering or migrating. Stock Doves with several successive clutches of just two eggs and a long moulting season, manage to satisfy the demands of both breeding and moulting by doing both at the same time but at a fairly slow rate.



At the time of writing there is this one bird still incubating eggs - a long season. Stock Doves have always had a protracted nesting season, we have frequently ringed nestlings in September. We have only ringed nestlings in October in 2018 and 2019. Their long breeding season may be reaching even further into the autumn. Another sign of climate change?

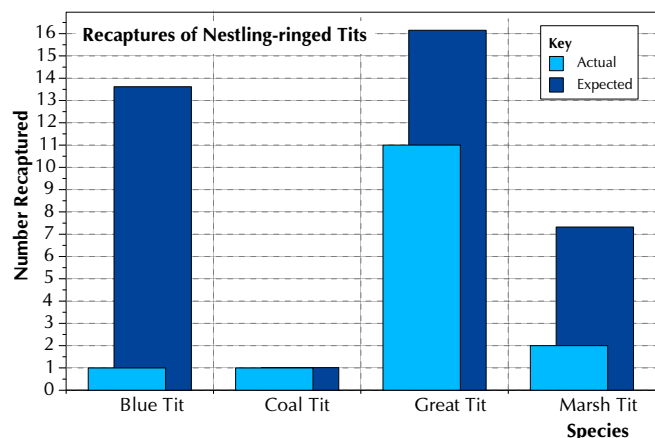
Jay	3J	DS75978	6/9/2020	Q03
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Jays do breed in the wood - territories are recorded almost every year by the CBC observers. We have never been aware of any nest - surprising as they are rather bulky and far from the quietest of species. This is the seventh Jay we have ever caught still in its obvious juvenile plumage. The previous one we ringed at this stage was as long ago as 1988. This is the only Jay caught so far this year.

Great Tit	3F	NZ53190	6/9/2020	Q03
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Ringed in south of wood as a nestling this year, this is its first recapture. Unlike most years, very few have been caught at the feeding station. Usually juvenile Great Tits arrive at the feeders in large numbers soon after fledging whilst still in full juvenile plumage. This bird has waited nearly four months after fledging and so undergone complete post-juvenile moult before being retrapped.

The number of nestling-ringed Great Tits retrapped so far this year is lower than usual and, worse, lower than we would expect even given the small total number of Great Tits fledged. The graph illustrates this, together with the same information for the other three tit species nesting in boxes. The darker blue bars show the expected number of recaptures based on all data from 1979 onwards. Only the Coal Tit has performed as expected (although with a small sample not much can be deduced from this). Marsh Tits have not done as well as expected. This is curious because the number of unringed juveniles we have caught made it appear there had been high post-fledging survival (or a relatively large number of nests in natural sites in the wood). Blue Tits have fared very badly indeed - just one recapture so far from 155 nestlings ringed. The weather immediately after fledging included several wet and cold days which could well have caused high mortality with consequently few recaptures.



Blue Tit	3J	ADN9586	2/8/2020	Q03
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This bird was ringed by Peter Cobb in Darlton on July 9th. It is the fifth exchange we have had with him of a Blue Tit. Of the other four, one came from Darlton to the wood, the other three were Treswell Wood exports. Two of these were caught the following spring, the other two were a year longer before being recaptured. This bird is unusual as it was recaptured so rapidly after ringing. It had started its post juvenile moult when Peter ringed it and had not completed it when we recaptured it. This is rather earlier dispersal than we would normally expect.

Blue Tit 4 S078537 4/10/2020 M03

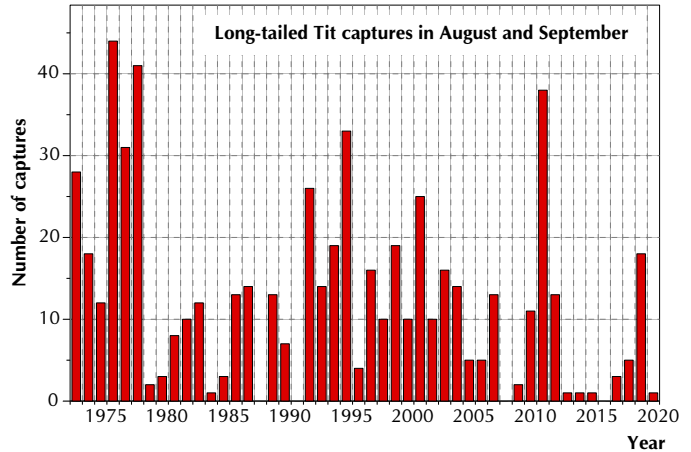
Now over four years old, this bird was ringed as a nestling in 2016. We retrapped it several times over the next 18 months including captures at the main feeders. Since then three years with no captures in spite of many mist netting sessions at the feeders. Today's capture was not there but in the middle of the wood. Where has it been?

Marsh Tit 3 AXD9839 20/9/2020 E07

Only the second of this year's nestling ringed Marsh Tits to be recaptured so far. It had completed its post-juvenile moult and had, as so often, dispersed from the north of the wood to join the 'southern' Marsh Tits. Meanwhile AXD9787, the first of the cohort to be retrapped had now moved from its natal area in the south of the wood to join the 'northern' Marsh Tits.

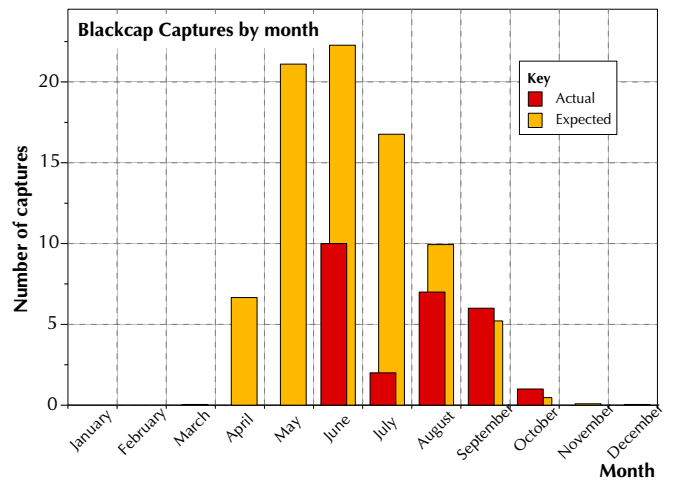
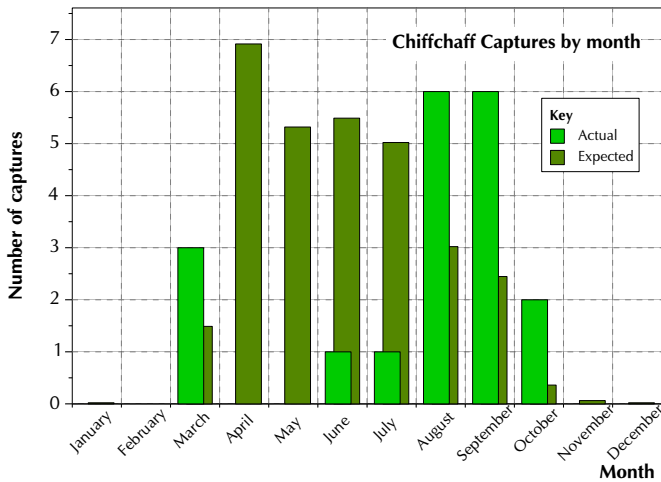
Long-tailed Tit 2 JTE643 30/8/2020 D03

We have remarked on the lack of Long-tailed Tits this year - although obviously we were not able to do any ringing during the lockdown when they were (probably) breeding. Are they really very scarce? Because we have only been able to start our normal operations in August, the best we can do is look at numbers caught in August and September over the years. What can we see? First is that this year, with only one capture is low but not unprecedentedly so. The second thing is that numbers over the past few years have been generally lower than earlier. The third thing is to note the volatility of the numbers. The species often travel in parties and if such a party is intercepted by a mist net then it will usually be several caught rather than a singleton. That can help explain the volatility in the graph. It also suggests that in these lean years breeding has not been very successful in the wood with only lone individuals rather than family parties moving around.



Chiffchaff 3J JTE633 9/8/2020 K02

One of 14 Chiffchaffs caught in the last three months, all have been new birds and included both adults and juveniles. The chart illustrates all our captures this year against a background of the average number caught per month in all previous years. The numbers in March were higher than average followed by two months with no captures because of the lockdown. In June and July we were not yet able to restart ringing operations fully and numbers are consequently low. With the restart of standard site ringing in August the situation looks very promising with rather higher captures than our historic average. Already with just one visit in October we have caught two birds - it would seem that, with lengthening autumns, the species is remaining here later.



Blackcap 4F ANE3264 2/8/2020 R00

The graph presents monthly capture data in a similar way to the Chiffchaff data. Blackcaps arrive a little later than Chiffchaffs and we did not catch any before the lockdown was imposed. As with Chiffchaffs June and July numbers were down on usual. August was a little lower than average but we see the same pattern as for Chiffchaffs (though not quite as strongly) for September and October. Earlier captures were mostly of adults (none retraps) with later captures mostly juveniles some, no doubt, just passing through the wood on their southward journey.

Goldcrest**3J JTE637****9/8/2020 K02**

The number of Goldcrests we capture in the early autumn depends largely on breeding success elsewhere and the timing of the autumn movement. Numbers this year are about average though with such variation average is a debatable concept. A measure of general breeding success is the ratio of juveniles to adults. Some Goldcrests are not easy to age and here those of unknown age are lumped with the adults. Even so, it seems this year has enjoyed a good breeding season - better than most since the 1980s.

Blackbird**4M LK39072****30/9/2020 O06**

What a pity when these birds fall victim to road traffic - or any other man-made causes such as windows or cats. However, the purposes of ringing include recording the causes of mortality, longevity and movement. There is a great deal we do not know about the bird. When we ringed it in late November of 2019, was it a migrant from Scandinavia or elsewhere? Was it a resident which bred in the wood this year? Has it left any offspring? On the other hand, we do know something about movement (found the subsequent autumn within 200m of where it had been ringed); cause of death (road traffic); age (age at least 2 years). The ring on this bird has done its work. If you see a dead bird on the road, or below a window, or anywhere else please report it (web address www.ring.ac).

Robin**4 ANE3020 20/9/2020 D08**

Some Robins are very tricky to age. Juvenile greater coverts have larger pointed blobs at the tips. These blobs may not be uniform in size on one bird and vary in size between birds. Adults have less sharply defined blobs or no blobs at all. Those with blobs tend to have blobs which decrease gradually in size from outer to inner coverts. During post juvenile moult Robins may moult none, some, or all their greater coverts. We look for a sudden change in tip pattern somewhere within the greater coverts. Easy! Unfortunately some juveniles moult all coverts and all will be the adult type. Worse a few adults have large blobs and it is very difficult to detect if there is a sudden break or a more gradual change. That is not all. The coloration and pattern of coverts varies between years according to conditions during moult. Some years are worse than others. This year seems likely to be a bad one for the ringer. This Robin was looked at closely by several of us and we agreed it was of juvenile appearance. We were wrong - it was an adult. Be extra careful this year with this species.

Bullfinch**4F ANA7956 23/8/2020 Darlton**

This is an exchange for the Blue Tit ADN9586. We ringed it as a juvenile in September 2019 and retrapped it later that month. Peter Cobb retrapped it in Darlton. It is the first movement recorded of a Bullfinch between the wood and Darlton (though we did have one controlled in nearby East Drayton in 1979). Overall now, we have records of 23 movements between the wood and Darlton. These involve 11 species including three rather unexpected captures of sedentary species - Great Spotted Woodpecker, fledgeling Green Woodpecker and Willow Tit.

10-Week Summary: 2020 Interval 4, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult			Adult			
Marsh Tit	.	.	2	2	.	.	4
Blue Tit	.	.	.	3	.	1	4
Great Tit	.	.	2	.	.	.	2
Long-tailed Tit	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Chiffchaff	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	3	.	3	1	.	.	7
Goldcrest	2	.	1	.	.	.	3
Wren	.	.	9	1	1	1	12
Treecreeper	1	.	4	1	.	.	6
Blackbird	1	1	4	.	.	.	6
Song Thrush	3	.	.	1	.	.	4
Robin	.	.	14	3	1	1	19
Dunnock	1	.	1	1	.	1	4
Chaffinch	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Bullfinch	3	2	12	1	.	1	19
Totals	17	3	52	14	2	5	93

