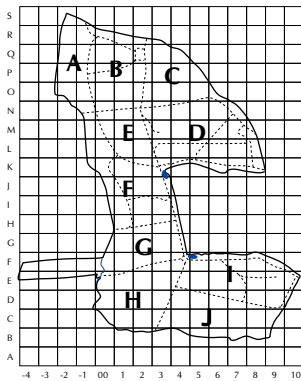


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

May 2005 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John McMeeking

2005/2
Number 52



Spring 2005

It is proving to be a very different season from normal (if any season is normal in our rapidly changing climate). It has given us our third equal highest total number of birds caught in standard site nets in this second interval of the year - only exceeded in 1988 and 1990 (even then by only 3 and 5 birds). Some summer visitors arrived as normal, although Willow and Garden Warblers have yet to be captured. Our captures have included a good variety of species. Non-passerines included Sparrowhawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker and (a new species for us), Little Owl. Passerines have included three Goldfinch and three Spotted Flycatchers, together with a larger-than-usual handful of Greenfinches at the feeders (many of these captures do not feature in the capture summary as they have been trapped in non-standard site nets). The CBC team have made some unusual observations too. George Hudson saw a Water Rail near the Piccadilly Pond. We think this is the first record for the wood although George says this patch of the wood is ideal habitat for them. John Bartley heard an unusual noise and he wondered if it came from a Ring-necked Parakeet. GH says there have been sightings of them in the midlands. Buzzards have been seen by several people recently and a new 'flyover' species was a Cormorant - individuals seen twice in a week, the first flying on a path pointing directly back to Gamston Airfield and the second apparently interacting with a microlight.

Nesting in boxes began well, with large numbers of boxes being selected and nests started. Then, the weather took a turn for the worse. Several nests were abandoned, some with eggs and some before any eggs were laid. After some delay, nesting restarted. Clutches, now rather late, tended to be smaller than usual. Next, small rodents started their own inspection rounds of the nestboxes. Predation by them has been approximately 30% so far. Curiously they do not seem to be nesting in boxes, just eating the eggs or very newly hatched young. Weasels have been almost no problem - much less than usual with, so far, only two sitting adults having been attacked. Great Spotted Woodpeckers attacked and destroyed both the Willow Tit nests which the RSPB team had found in natural sites. The weather continued to be variable, with some weather-related losses after young had hatched. Losses so far caused by weather are at least 10%. Open nests we have found have fared no better. So, in spite of good numbers of adults, productivity for the early part of the season is likely to be low. This has a greater impact on the tits which are single brooded. Multiple-brooded species still have a chance to rear some young later in the season. One species which is doing well is the Tawny Owl. With apparently low weasel and high mouse populations, there should be plenty of food for them.

If there is any consolation in this dismal history it is that we are not alone. The weather is having the same effects in many other places throughout the country. Further, even though the losses are upsetting, what we are doing is recording events as they unfold, adding to our long historical record of bird life and death in the wood.

From David Glue

2005 had all the hallmarks of another very early spring, with much unseasonal nesting in January and February. The warmer winters since 1988 look to have been driven by stronger and more frequent westerly winds, so the cold snap from mid-February to mid-March with northerly, then north-easterly winds, was an interesting feature, and it checked most of the promise so that we are now back on normal schedule. One point, for sure, is that we have a marvellous experiment unfolding outside our windows - and the BTO long-term dataset, drawing on wonderful sets of results from the likes of Treswell Wood IPM Group, will be used in ever greater detail by government and government agencies.

Supplementary feeding in woodland, as currently at Treswell Wood, illustrates the speed at which resident and incoming birds will exploit free foods. It hints at potential limitations of naturally occurring foods in UK woodland, suggests ways of boosting current populations and raises concern about the impact supplementary food sources may have on long-term studies when we dabble (even if with the best intentions). The Wytham Wood results in Oxfordshire have been affected by the potential impact of fresh housing and man's food

provided locally in recent years.

As ever, the BTO is extremely grateful to Treswell Wood IPM Group members for their kind support with the core trust activities. Keep up the good work, keep well and keep in touch.

David Glue

Nests and eggs

Through a chance sequence of events we have made contact with the Biology Department at Lincoln University in the form of Charles Deeming and Paul Eady. Charles' main interests are in egg hatching success - although we do not have any of his usual study species in the wood - domestic hens, ducks and ostriches. With appropriate licences from English Nature and permission from NWT, we are collecting unhatched eggs from nests once the young have fledged. Charles will then examine them for causes of failure. This is a largely unexplored field. Charles has also begun to examine our tit hatching data and, if all goes to plan, will be comparing it with weather data during May over the past 25 years. Meanwhile Paul Eady will be using nests, looking at their insulating properties. This will require a good number of nests in good condition for high technology, but destructive, experimentation in the laboratory. Paul has explained his work thus:

Many thanks for your hospitality and your offer of help. I will almost certainly get one of my final year project students to analyse some of the nest box data - in particular an analysis of occupation/non-occupation, success/failure etc in relation to nest box type, position, orientation, location within the wood etc.

Unfortunately, because of the academic calendar, the majority of our students will be unable to undertake field work, as their dissertation projects run from October through to April - not good timing for observational studies of nesting birds.

From your perspective, it might be beneficial if you had some ideas you'd like tested (or data analysed)- I'd very much like to see this as a two-way process, whereby we can help you.

So, ideas for students welcome - which leads nicely to the next paragraph ...

Thoughts of Chairman John

After reading the proof of the previous edition of Twitter, John made a few suggestions for people who have a little time on their hands. Here they are:

I spent longer than usual looking at the CBC figures and various points struck me as they have not done before. Why was the average for 1991-5 about 10% below any of the other averages? Can you remember or easily locate any obvious factors to account for that? 1991 was a deplorable year for ringing - lowest ever standard sites total at 422, but do you know why? Was the 1990-91 winter vicious? 1992-95 showed a steady recovery.

Looking at CBC figures, I think we need to separate the species that make up the 'core' population of the wood - the tits, Blackbird and Song Thrush, Robin, Dunnock, Wren etc. - from the ones with tiny or erratic presence - and see what sense we can make by comparing trends in CBC and ringing figures. Things like Tree Sparrow, Turtle Dove, and Whitethroat which have shown major drops would make another, but worthwhile, section to investigate.

Separating the sections this way ought to make patterns a lot easier to detect, particularly as this will clear out the species that really do not belong at all, like Pied Wagtail, Swallow, Redwing and Barn Owl. We need to be able to see the wood for the trees! But then where do we find an analyst to sort out any answers that may be lurking in there?

Another issue at the same time could be to see how the 'standard site' data really compare with the 'all-birds-ringed' figures. Do they give significantly different answers? Indeed, are the figures for 'non-standard-sites-birds' worth looking at by themselves?

Blackbird origins and stable isotope analysis

Lisette Coiffait, a student at Newcastle University, appealed for feathers from Blackbirds at the last BTO conference. She is studying the origins of wintering Blackbirds in Britain using stable isotope analysis. Naturally we volunteered to collect feathers for her from our Blackbirds. Because of the high cost of this type of analysis, she initially anticipated only small samples of 10 birds from any particular area would be able to be handled. However, she thinks that she can find further resources to handle more so we have sent her feathers from rather more than just ten birds. The fact that many of our birds have recapture histories will throw additional light on her findings. It is, of course, against the law to remove feathers from birds. Fortunately stable isotope analysis can be done with very small amounts of material. Normally, a Blackbird will leave a small covert feather or two in the catching bag where it was held before processing. By using absolutely clean bags for holding Blackbirds we have

been able to be sure the odd, small feathers shed do belong to the bird in question. Our thanks to the long-suffering Jean McMeeking who attended to the the weekly laundering of the bags, after John had removed any remaining scraps of feather, to ensure the bags were ready for reuse. We await Lisette's findings with interest.

Further cartographic developments

In the last issue of Twitter we gave a map of the wood with the OS grid overlaid. Since then we have written a routine for a spreadsheet which will convert OS grid references to McMeeking grid references. It has been written on a RISC OS computer but is easily exportable to a variety of other systems. This will be in the Maps directory of the TWIG CD-ROM. If anyone wishes to have a copy now, email Chris and say with what particular spreadsheet it is to be used.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Sparrowhawk	5M	DA51858	08/05/2005	N-1

Young male Sparrowhawks seem to be fairly mobile. This one, however, is either still around or else has returned. We first caught it at the feeder last September.

Little Owl	4	ET87926	22/05/2005	F10
-------------------	----------	----------------	-------------------	------------

Little Owls used to be seen regularly at both the Bower's and Vallance's farms. They bred in inaccessible holes in trees or buildings. The only records within the wood are from CBC in 1999 and 1993 when individuals were seen but not recorded as having a territory. It was a surprise to find this bird in a net set just inside the wood. It is the 67th species we have caught and the first new species captured since the Long-eared Owl in 1997. On the same morning John Black inspected the large, high nest boxes and, naturally, the box specially constructed for Little Owls was empty.

Tawny Owl	6F	GM61013	24/04/2005	F04 on nest
------------------	-----------	----------------	-------------------	--------------------

Our first nestbox adult for the year - the first of two caught brooding young. Also ringed on the same day were two chicks - our first nestlings of any species for the year. The chicks in both nests continued to thrive and it seems as if all 5 will fledge. We have only once before had as many Tawny Owls fledge in a single year. John Black, who looks after the large boxes, noted that Tawny Owl boxes in the south of the county seem to be less occupied than last year, but occupied boxes are more productive. He has seen two exceptional broods of four and five chicks, as well as the usual ones and twos.

Stock Dove	1	EH28393	04/05/2005	H02
-------------------	----------	----------------	-------------------	------------

Stock Doves continue to use the high boxes, although numbers seem to be somewhat reduced this year. So far we have recorded only three nests - the first was successful with this bird and its sibling fledging eventually, on May 21st. The second failed, the young being taken by a predator. A single nestling remains in the third nest at present.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	6M	CF40641	08/05/2005	Q02 feeder
---------------------------------	-----------	----------------	-------------------	-------------------

This species has been much in evidence, particularly near the car park feeders where this bird was trapped some 30 months after being ringed. The population in the wood, and nationally, has increased dramatically over recent years (Twitter 48). One suggestion about the cause is that the Starling population has fallen and newly excavated nest holes are no longer usurped by the aggressive Starlings. This allows the woodpeckers to breed earlier - previously many had been forced to excavate a second, or third, hole before laying eggs. Good news for woodpeckers but bad news for Starlings. Our woodland Starling population has vanished. The last Starling nest in a nestbox was in 1983 and the last breeding pair recorded by CBC was in 1989. Bad news, also, for Willow Tits - both our pairs which were nesting in old silver birch stumps, were attacked by these woodpeckers, with both nests failing to produce a single fledged young.

Blackbird	5M	CT84111	10/04/2005	N06
------------------	-----------	----------------	-------------------	------------

We have ringed very few Blackbird nestlings in recent years and this is our first recapture of a nestling-ringed Blackbird since 1997. It was ringed last year in L04 - about 150 metres away. Not a record-breaking post-juvenile dispersal distance.

Blackbird	3J	CT84045	22/05/2005	D09
------------------	-----------	----------------	-------------------	------------

The first fledged juvenile of any species to be captured. As with London buses, you wait a long time for one, then several come together. Later in the morning a second juvenile Blackbird and a juvenile Robin landed in our nets. (Analogies are not always complete - unlike London buses, not even the Robin was painted red.)

Chiffchaff **4** **AXL129** **27/03/2005** **K04**

The arrival of Chiffchaffs is usually sudden - this year no exception. One week there are none, the next week the wood had many singing birds, and a handful trapped too. This was the first of four ringed today. Often one of the first birds is a recapture from last year - alas not this time.

Blackcap **4M** **R353368** **17/04/2005** **H02**

A well-behaved first Blackcap capture of the year. Unlike the new Chiffchaff, this bird was wearing a ring. We ringed it as a breeding male in May 2005. Typically for returning Blackcaps its recapture position was close to its place of original ringing - a mere 50 metres distant. Quite close considering the distance it is likely to have travelled between last year's captures and this year's.

Spotted Flycatcher **4M** **R353938** **08/05/2005** **P02**

Last year we trapped a single Spotted Flycatcher on May 23rd. No more were trapped and none recorded in the CBC (see Twitter 48 for details of our Spotted Flycatcher records). We wondered whether it was merely passing through the wood. This one might have been doing the same. However, on May 21st we trapped a pair of the species in D09, both obviously in breeding condition. Are they here to breed after an absence of about 10 years?

Chaffinch **6M** **N305552** **31/03/2005** **F04 Feeder**

Only the third capture for this, our fourth-longest capture history for any Chaffinch. We ringed him at a pheasant feeding station a mere 50 metres south of today's spot in November 1997, 7 years and 123 days ago. Since then he has been captured only in July 2003 about 50 metres to the north of the spot, in full moult, in one of our constant-effort nets. The three even-longer lived birds all date back to before the days of Twitter, the record being held by KR03217 with 8 years and 168 days between ringing and last capture.

Coal Tit **6M** **R353032** **13/04/2005** **F-2F**

We rarely ring in Crabtree Holt, but did site a feeder there temporarily in the hope of catching any Marsh or Willow Tits that might be there. We caught only two new birds and four retraps, all of which had been captured at the Car Park feeder at least once. This bird had only ever been trapped at that feeder - a total 9 times from January 2003 to the end of December 2004.

Coal Tit **6F** **R558185** **20/04/2005** **I03**

Last year this bird nested in one of our boxes, nearby in J00. This year she was the earliest bird to nest, her young fledging at least 10 days before the next brood of any tit species in boxes. She was lucky as several other birds started very soon after she did but cold weather on the critical days caused these slightly later birds' nests to fail. The early bird, if not catching the worm, was able to sit through the bad weather keeping her eggs warm and dry. The second earliest Coal Tit nest, which was only 150 m north of this nest, failed probably because of bad weather. The female of that brood, R558209, is a first-year daughter of this bird.

Marsh Tit **5** **R558610** **03/04/2005** **G04**

One of a brood three ringed in the nest last year. We had given it 'cohort' colour markings - a red ring on each leg to distinguish it at a glance from any individually marked Willow Tits. With the RSPB work extended to Marsh Tits we have now given it its own unique colour combination - Left leg red over green and right leg red over BTO ring. Keep a look out for this bird, or indeed, any other colour-marked birds. Within three weeks it had been resighted, identified by its new individual colour marks. Later we found it nesting in F07 but, alas, the nest fell victim to some predator, probably a mouse. The newly hatched young were killed but this bird escaped, being retrapped in D07 on 22nd May.

Blue Tit **6F** **R123758** **18/05/2005** **N05 On nest**

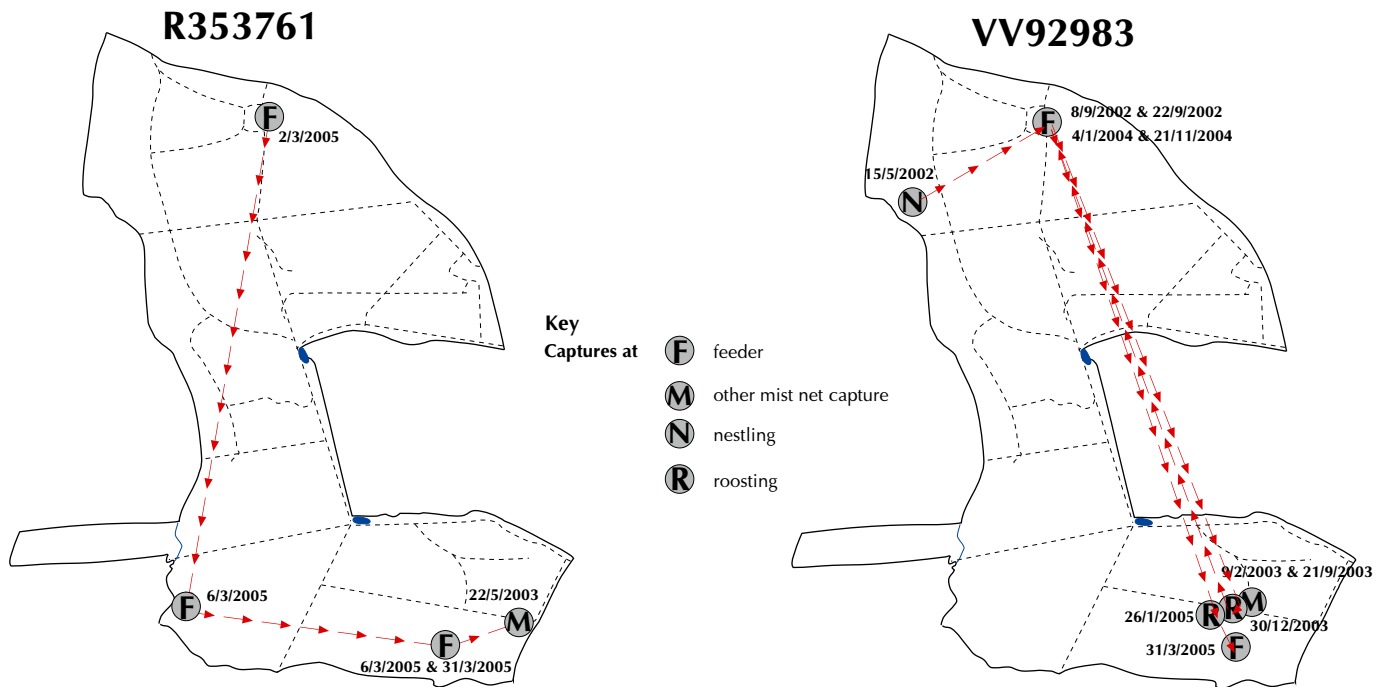
We ringed this old friend as a nestling almost exactly three years ago in 2002 (box 60 in G03). In 2003 we found her nesting in box 89; last year we mist-netted her in breeding condition in the same area but did not manage to discover where she was nesting. Today she was nesting again in box 89.

Great Tit **5F** **R353761** **22/05/2005** **D09**

We sited some sunflower seed feeders, temporarily, in various parts of the wood in the hope of catching all the Marsh and Willow Tits in the wood for the RSPB project. Naturally, other birds find the feeders too. Typically, within a week these feeders are being used as heavily as the permanent feeders in the north of the wood. Some birds seem to rove widely, this one now having being trapped at three separate feeders. We ringed her at Q02 on March 2nd, during the spring influx of Great Tits. Four days later she was trapped at another feeder, near the Dam (grid D00) and later on the same day at a second feeder in C07. She was trapped next on March 31st, again at C07. Her capture today was in a standard net, she was in breeding condition, presumably close to her nest site.

Great Tit **6F** **VV92983** **31/03/2005** **C07F**

It is always pleasing to recapture our nestling-ringed birds. Even more so when they have a varied life history. The map shows where and when we have captured this individual. Reared in the north of the wood, she probably breeds in the south but keeps her options open as far as fast-food is concerned.

Capture Histories of Great Tits**Goldfinch** **6M** **R353872** **31/03/2005** **F04 feeder**

The feeder in the south of the wood was set up primarily to attract finches, rather than tits. Food supplied is mixed grain and niger seed rather than sunflower seeds and peanuts. This is our first Goldfinch to be trapped there - although we had seen them at this feeder, and nearby feeding on thistle seeds, last autumn. It was only the 25th that we had ringed of the species, and the first since the autumn of 2001 when we trapped a handful, again feeding on thistles, near the main pond. On May 22nd we trapped two more individuals, both on the north edge of block 1 adjacent to David Bell's wildflower strip.

Greenfinch **5M** **VR78792** **03/04/2005** **D00 Feeder**

In spite of their commonness at feeding stations in gardens, Greenfinches are not abundant at feeders within the wood. This is the first since June 2004 when we trapped a few at the main feeder. Why does it appear at a new, temporary feeder rather than becoming a regular at one of the established feeders?

Controls and recoveries

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Place
Chaffinch	5M	R962986	20/3/2005	Q02 Feeder

Ringed by Mike Archer in Rampton 1/2/2005.

Blue Tit	5	T352564	20/3/2005	Q02 Feeder
----------	---	---------	-----------	------------

Ringed by Mike Archer in Rampton 10/3/2005 - only 10 days previously.

Great Tit	6F	R502560	14/05/2005	G02
-----------	----	---------	------------	-----

Although nests in holes tend to suffer lower predation than open nests, if a predator enters a nest hole, the sitting adult is more vulnerable than an adult sitting on an open nest. We normally lose some sitting tits to weasels - this is one such victim. We ringed her in April 2003 as a first-breeding season bird.

Great Tit	5F	R353822	20/05/2005	D00
-----------	----	---------	------------	-----

A second victim of weasel predation. A first breeding season bird when ringed in March 2003 as part of the spring influx of the species.

Chaffinch **6M** **R353268** **22/3/2005** **Rampton**

Retrapped by Mike Archer, ringed a year and a day earlier in Treswell Wood and not seen in between.

Chaffinch **6M** **R962971** **01/05/2005** **B03**

Ringed by Mike Archer in Rampton - a welcome addition to our first BTO CES catch of the year.

Blackbird **4** **CF40608** **17/04/2005** **Q04 Dead on road**

Another victim of Britain's car culture. We ringed this bird as a young male in December 2003 in the northern part of the wood and had not recaptured it since.

10 Week Summary 2005 Interval 2 (Standard Site captures only)

Visits 1715, 1712, 1703, 1704, 1706, 1707, 1713

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult			Adult			
Sparrowhawk	.	5	3	.	1	.	1
Wren	2	5	.	3	6	.	16
Dunnock	1	3	.	2	3	.	9
Robin	3	3	1	3	7	.	17
Blackbird	2	5	2	7	4	.	20
Song Thrush	1	.	.	1	.	.	2
Blackcap	1	4	.	1	.	.	6
Chiffchaff	2	.	.	2	.	.	4
Goldcrest	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Spotted Flycatcher	2	.	.	.	.	.	2
Long-tailed Tit	1	.	.	3	.	.	4
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	1	.	2
Willow Tit	1	.	.	1	.	.	2
Blue Tit	.	4	.	2	5	.	11
Great Tit	1	4	.	5	10	.	20
Treecreeper	.	.	.	5	2	.	7
Chaffinch	4	4	.	4	1	.	13
Bullfinch	1	2	.	.	.	.	3
Totals	22	34	3	41	40	.	140

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods**Averages**

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1978 - 1987	90	113	182	140	130	655
1988 - 1997	86	107	170	149	127	637
1998 - 2002	77	82	119	123	123	511

Annual Data

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2001	(57)	(33)	94	121	59	(364)
2002	85	89	141	176	117	608
2003	117	116	146	104	114	597
2004	103	128	126	165	132	654
2005	107	140				(247)

Summary data 1978 - 2004

Max	124	145	288	253	177	865
Mean	87	106	163	141	127	623
Min	75	57	94	68	59	422

Note: Bracketed numbers represent incomplete data sets and are not included in summary figures below. Incomplete data sets in 2001 result from foot and mouth restrictions.