

TWITTER

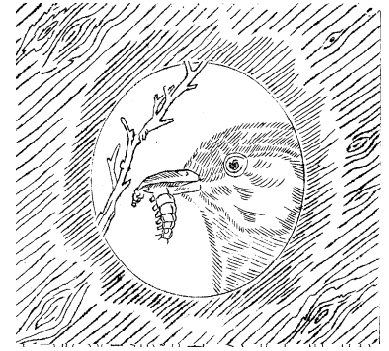
Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

August 2000 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

Project leaders:

CBC Margaret Price
Nest Records Chris du Feu
Ringling John McMeeking



2000/3 Number 28

The 2000 breeding season has been memorable for its lack of captures. The standard site total of 106 is the second lowest ever, being beaten only by the 99 captures of 1991. Several features contribute to the low total, although the causes of these features are not always clear. First, the weather has been difficult for many breeding birds. The mild winter and early spring led to early nesting attempts. Many of these were doomed as the weather became colder and wetter. Several tit nests were abandoned half way through building. Although our memories of the year are likely to be of record-breaking wetness, there were periods of very hot and dry weather. What proved difficult for birds was the length, and sometimes the timing, of the intervals of wet weather. In wet weather, birds in the nest need to be brooded for longer to keep them warm, the parents need more food to keep themselves warm and active, and food is more difficult to find because of the problem of keeping dry. If one, or more, of the chicks die because of wetness or lack of food, the nest hole becomes fouled and this may reduce chances for other birds. The time for which nestlings are in any one nest is fairly short - just over two weeks. It is possible that, by chance, some nests may be started at such a time that the young in the nest miss particularly difficult weather, whereas other nests which are started just a few days later or earlier may be badly affected by weather. This could explain why young Blue Tits are scarce in the wood whereas they are abundant in, for example, Peter Harrison's garden in Sturton-le-Steeple. Garden birds tend to lay eggs slightly earlier than do woodland birds and this difference of a few days may have allowed the difference between success and failure. Great Tits, on the other hand, are much more abundant in the wood. Although their earlier nests were a disaster, later nests did much better. Of the 9 earlier nests, only one succeeded whereas of the later 9, six succeeded.

A further effect of the weather has been to reduce flexibility in the mist-netting operation. Normally we have two or three 'spare weeks' so that we can defer a standard site visit if the weather is bad, or re-visit a site if the initial visit is cut short by unexpected rain or wind. This year the wet weather has removed all choice about which site was best to visit on any particular day.

Predators also took their toll. All early Wren nests in boxes were destroyed, as were several tit nests. Presumably open nests will have suffered at least as badly.

The next factor involved in low numbers of birds is the lack of warblers, or other summer visitors, coming to the wood. Not only will this lower the numbers of adults caught, it also reduces the numbers of young fledging. It will not be until the late summer, when juveniles begin to disperse, that the wood may see good numbers of juveniles again. Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs have been present in slightly reduced numbers, other summer migrants almost absent. On the bright side, Peter Cobb heard a Wood Warbler on 30th July near our nets at Grove End (R-1) but we failed to catch it. (One was trapped two days later at the West Burton Ringing Course).

Species which appear to have fared better are Song Thrushes, Robins, Chaffinches and Bullfinches. The number of Chaffinches caught in standard nets is not high, but there have been good numbers at the feeders. Blue Tits have fared particularly badly. This is the first 10-week interval since we began standard site-netting in 1978 when we have captured no Blue Tits in the standard nets.

Poisonous Peanuts

CJ Wildbird Foods, founder of the Safe Nuts logo, has stopped selling peanuts for the time being. Growing conditions in the past season have allowed higher levels of aflatoxins to develop in the peanuts than usual. CJ has been unable to secure aflatoxin-free supplies. They recommend not buying any more peanuts after the current aflatoxin-free stock is exhausted. Instead they suggest that feeding should continue with sunflower seeds in place of peanuts. The RSPB, to whom CJ supply peanuts, is also trying to find supplies elsewhere, and will not sell any more until the aflatoxin peril has subsided. Aflatoxin is produced by a mould which grows on peanuts which are stored in over-damp conditions and it is highly toxic to birds. CJ recommends caution and notes that there are about 40,000 tonnes of contaminated peanuts at Rotterdam and in UK docks, all destined for the UK market. Beware!

The National Nest Reference Collection

Mike Hansell at Glasgow University continues to expand the collection which has now been allocated more storage space. He hopes that it can be formally incorporated into the university zoological museum's collection after the end of this season. He sends his thanks to all contributors in the past two years. He will welcome any well preserved nests of known species from known locations. If you have found some during the season, pass them on to Chris who will arrange delivery to Glasgow. The collection received 132 nests in 1999, of which 19 were from Treswell Wood and another 17 from various TWIG members. Nottinghamshire is well represented in the collection! This year Mike will receive from us all the tit and Wren nests from the bird nestboxes in the wood. The aim of this is for him to have one very well documented set, from one site, for one year. He hopes he will be able to find a student to do some analysis of the nests - perhaps looking at materials used in different parts of the wood, or success rates in relation to materials used, or parasite infestation in relation to the outcome of the nest. The collection for him this year from the wood and TWIG members amounts to nearly 100 nests.

Mike is keen to have nests from species which are poorly represented in the collection. The well represented species (i.e. 10 nests or more) are Wren, Blackbird, Robin, Spotted Flycatcher, Reed Warbler, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Chaffinch. However, if you find a good quality nest of one of those species it will not be turned down.

Foraging for nest building materials

Foraging ranges of birds for food are comparatively well studied: ranges for gathering nest material are not. Mike Hansell suggested an experiment to examine the range over which tits foraged for nest building material. This year we have conducted a trial. We placed nest lining material in four hanging dispensers in the wood. One dispenser was at the feeders where many tits from all over the wood would see it. The other three, in clearly identifiable colours, were hung in other parts of the wood. Several things emerged. First was that few birds used the artificially provided lining material. Second was that the range over which the material was gathered was very limited indeed. The maximum distance from nest to dispenser was 100 m and the average only 50 m. These distances are of the same order of size as the diameter of a typical tit territory. The fact that only a few birds used the material is consistent with them only foraging over a short range. We did not put out the lining material until tits had started building nests. It is possible, therefore, that the birds had already determined good sources of lining materials within their territories before the abundant artificial supplies were available. Birds did not seem to be put off by the bright colours. In fact, Treswell tits are no strangers to exotic nest building materials. I have noted wire wool, canary feathers and sofa stuffing used in the past. Surprisingly the green and yellow lining materials gave very good camouflage to the sitting birds. Of the 8 birds which did use the materials, two used it only for less than half the lining in the nest; the others used it either exclusively, or nearly so, for the lining.

Juvenile Great Tits moulting tail feathers

Since describing the work on recording this unusual type of moult in juvenile Great Tits in the last Twitter, we have done some preliminary analysis. Juveniles generally moult only body, head and some wing covert feathers in their first autumn moult. Over the years we have noted an increasing proportion of our Great Tits which moult some tail feathers or tertials (innermost flight feathers on the wing). Humphrey Crick at the BTO wondered whether those which indulged in such moult would have higher survival (or retention within the wood) than those that did not. The reason for this would be that those which can afford to undergo the more costly moult must be fitter birds than the others and they would not do it unless it gave them greater chances of survival. Not all juvenile birds will go through the process because they will not have time before the end of the summer. Recent examination of moulting birds has shown that the moulting of tail or tertials feathers is not merely an afterthought by the birds, only taking place if body moult has gone well and weather and food supplies are still good. Birds which moult the tail feathers begin to moult them at an early stage in post-juvenile moult, so the strategy is fixed at an early stage in the moult cycle. Saswata Kar, a sixth form student at QEHS Gainsborough, agreed to look at our data for his A level Statistics project. He found that the survival rate (i.e. captured in or after the following breeding season) of those juveniles which did moult tail or tertials feathers was higher than that for those which did not. The difference (37% to 33%) was not statistically significantly different, but certainly was enough to make us want to pursue this further.

Noteworthy captures May - August 2000

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Kestrel	6M	ES03298	18/6/00	K00

Our 10th ever Kestrel capture. Like the previous bird (Twitter 27), this bird was captured in an open, recently coppiced area.

Stock Dove	1	ET87281	13/6/00	F03
-------------------	----------	----------------	----------------	------------

After last year's excitement with two successive Stock Dove nests in the same box, I erected a second box near the first. This has proved successful. This bird was the single chick from the first clutch laid in the new box. A second

clutch was laid in the older box (see Twitters 23 and 24 for more details of Stock Dove nesting habits). Two young hatched in the second nest, but both were removed by predators. Meanwhile a third clutch was begun, back in the first box and, as this is written (August 2nd), the hen is sitting.

Great Spotted Woodpecker **4F** **RH94761** **16/7/00** **Q02 Feeder**

We ringed this bird on 9/4/00 at the feeders. It was recaptured on 11/6/00 with brown-stained plumage and again on 16/7/00. We also ringed a juvenile (RH94777) on 16/7/00 and this had similarly stained plumage. Was it the wet weather during the breeding season which made the nest hole damp and plumage-staining?

Dunnock **4F** **K463382** **2/7/00** **H04**

A characteristically site-faithful Dunnock. We have caught it a total of eight times, in every breeding season from 1996 onwards, almost always in H04. It has, twice, strayed as far as the adjacent squares H03 and H02.

Song Thrush **5M** **RX57646** **9/7/00** **D09**

This bird was ringed in October 1999. We have handled more Song Thrushes this season (19) than for some years. These have included adults, fledged young and nestlings. We have found two Song Thrush nests. One was destroyed by predators; the second produced five young. These were the first nestling Song Thrushes to be ringed in the wood since 1996. Are Song Thrushes beginning to recover?

Blackcap **6M** **N305665** **4/6/00** **F02**

We have caught very few warblers this year, Blackcaps being our most numerous. This is one of a handful of recaptures from previous years. It was caught in H03 in both 1998 and 1999, near to this year's capture location.

Chiffchaff **4M** **9G4064** **23/7/00** **H02**

We ringed this bird as a breeding male in 1998 and he was our earliest Chiffchaff to be caught in 1999 (Twitter 22). In 1998 he was caught twice in Norman's Ride (H01, H03) but in 1999 we caught him twice on the West Ride (N00, P01). This year he seems to have returned to his former area of the wood.

Blue Tit **3J** **N459756** **30/7/00** **Q02 Feeder**

This is the first of this year's niggardly total of 121 Blue Tits fledged from boxes to be recaptured. It was ringed in box 15, (I02) and only two more of the fledged birds have been retrapped to date.

Great Tit **6F** **K729381** **16/7/00** **Q02 Feeder**

A respectably old bird, a veteran of the colour-ringing campaign, ringed by Peter Harrison in Sturton-le-Steeple in December 1996 (Twitter 11) and trapped regularly within the wood since then. Her three non-feeder captures have been near the pond (K03) and it is likely that she breeds in that area. We do not handle many female Great Tits on the nest, because they seem to be more disturbable than the smaller tits, so we have no record of this bird's breeding performance.

Jay **6** **DA51822** **18/6/00** **Q02 Feeder**

This bird is going for the record for references in consecutive issues of Twitter. See Twitter 27 for earlier details and add two captures (11/6/00 and 18/6/00), both at the feeders. Why evade capture for 4 years and then enjoy three captures within 5 weeks?

Controls and Recoveries

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
---------	---------	------	------	------

Wren	5M	5Z1073	18/6/00	K00
-------------	-----------	---------------	----------------	------------

Ringed as a juvenile in November 1999, a mere 50 m away this bird met its end at the talons of a Kestrel. Perhaps the good news is that we have had more Kestrel captures recently than ever before.

Garden Warbler	4M	N768511	7/5/00	H01
-----------------------	-----------	----------------	---------------	------------

This bird was ringed as a juvenile in September 1998 at Wanlip Gravel Pits, Leics., SK6011. It would be nice to be able to describe its movement as post-juvenile dispersal but, with the lateness of its ringing date, it may already have dispersed from its natal site by this time. Indeed, it might even have been reared in Treswell Wood.

Blackcap	4M	N884151	2/7/00	H03
-----------------	-----------	----------------	---------------	------------

We rarely control an adult Blackcap in the same season as it was ringed. Dave Fogg ringed this bird at Cottam Power Station in April. If it had not been for the lack of similar Blackcap controls over previous years, we might have concluded that Cottam was en route to Treswell Wood for migrating Blackcaps.

Goldcrest**6F****5Z1000****23/3/00****Mary Port, Cumbria NY0233**

This is only our third Goldcrest movement reported to or from the wood. The first was a bird ringed at Gibraltar Point on 18/10/81 and retrapped by us on 8/11/81. The second, ringed in November 1985 was found dead in May 1988, in Retford. (A good age for a Goldcrest.) This, the third, was ringed on 14/11/99. It has given us by far the longest movement, 231 km. We wonder about the origins and destination of the bird. Was it on its return journey to breeding grounds? We find Goldcrests difficult to age with confidence because so few of them have the broad, rounded tail feathers which, according to the books, characterise the adult. It is pleasing that we aged this bird as an adult and this ageing was supported by the Cumbria ringer.

Great Tit**6F****K720655****21/5/00****O05**

Female hole-nesting birds are vulnerable to nest predators. They may creep to the hole undetected and kill the sitting female who has no chance to escape through the predator-blocked entrance hole. This bird, ringed in January 1999 and retrapped regularly since then, is one such victim. She was found dead on her depredated nest in the same box that she had used successfully in 1999.

10 Week Summary**2000 Interval 3, Visits 1463, 1458, 1459, 1460, 1462, 1464, 1461**

	New birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Kestrel	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Wren	2	3	5	1	2	.	13
Dunnock	.	.	2	6	2	.	10
Robin	.	4	11	3	5	.	23
Blackbird	1	3	1	1	.	.	6
Song Thrush	2	3	2	1	1	.	9
Garden Warbler	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	7	3	2	5	.	.	17
Chiffchaff	1	1	.	.	.	.	2
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	2	1	.	.	3
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Willow Tit	.	.	2	.	.	.	2
Coal Tit	.	.	1	.	.	1	2
Great Tit	.	.	1	1	1	.	3
Treecreeper	1	.	3	1	.	.	5
Chaffinch	.	1	.	1	.	.	2
Bullfinch	.	3	.	1	1	.	5
Totals	16	21	32	24	12	1	106

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Averages						
1978/79	98	123	212	157	127	718
1980/84	85	116	179	138	138	656
1985/89	98	117	189	135	115	655
1990/94	79	89	148	148	149	613
1995/99	82	105	150	132	114	583
2000	75	106	106	---	---	(287)
Max	124	145	288	253	177	865
Min	59	57	99	68	88	422
Mean	87	108	168	140	129	635

The front-page picture is a scanned reproduction of the cover illustration of the 1984 Treswell Wood Nestbox Report. The original was drawn by David Dixon.

This issue of Twitter was originally produced on the Acorn computer using Techwriter which exported copies for electronic distribution in MSWord format. For consistency with other issues, it has been transferred to Impression and exported as a PDF file using RiScript on the Acorn.