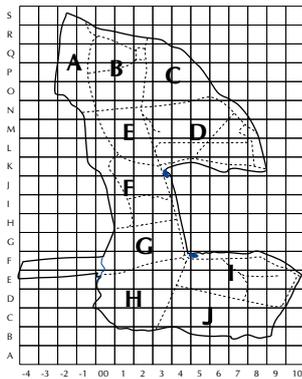


# TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

**May 2007 Treswell Wood IPM Group**  
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

**2007/2**  
**Number 62**

All projects by permission of NWT

**Project leaders:**

**CBC**

**Nest Records**

**Ringing**

Pat Quinn-Catling

Chris du Feu

John McMeeking



Our standard site total captures for this interval are just a little above average; however the individuals we have captured seem to have more noteworthy features than normal. Hence the reduced comment here and increased space given to reporting them.

## Nestboxes

The height of the nestbox breeding season is already past - rather earlier than in distant past years. After the recent dismal years, breeding in nestboxes has been much more successful this year. Even the three days of almost continuous rain at the end of May did not result in any great nest mortality. The insides of the boxes remained dry. It is not clear why they remained so dry. Often, in wet weather, the insides of boxes become damp and cold. Water is brought in on the plumage of the adult birds and this gradually wettens the box interior. First indications are that broods are relatively small this year and this will have reduced food demands on the adults. This, in turn, will allow adults to spend less time foraging in the rain and more time brooding the young. One thing we had not noted before, but have observed recently on many nestboxes, was a wet ring around the entrance on an otherwise sheltered, dry front to the box. It appeared that birds were squeezing the water from their plumage as they entered the box - a good reason for having an entrance hole which is only just large enough. Predation has been very low with only a handful of boxes attacked by weasels, woodpeckers, grey squirrels or wood mice. And, at least one pair of birds has exacted revenge on these predators. One owl nest held the skull of a grey squirrel and also a recently killed, oven ready weasel. It has been suggested that rabbit numbers are high this year and this has allowed weasels to concentrate on their young - far better food value than small nestlings. Sadly we do not have any direct data on any of the nestbox predators or their other prey so it is not easy to tell whether this year's low predation results from fewer predators, abundant other food sources, the reduction in nestbox numbers or the relocation of nestboxes within the wood. Whatever the reason, long may the low predation continue.

## Data recording - moult codes

By the time you read this, the breeding season will be nearly over and the moulting season started. Remember to record moult codes whenever possible. A single letter for moult is the most important (and most rapidly collected) piece of information required. Remember, though, that once you start recording codes for birds in moult, you should also code those not in moult (code O for adults or J for juveniles). Without this definite statement, it is not possible for us (or the national database) to know what proportion of birds are moulting at any time. Tits have already started moulting. The full list of codes, together with descriptions, is with the paperwork in the ringing kit.

For birds in primary moult it is also useful to record the 10 primary moult scores. Although we have, at some times in the past, just written the sum of these scores (out of a total of 50), it is far more use to write down all the 10 separate scores (you have to determine these anyway to find the total). In fact, there is then no need to do the addition yourself as the data processing software will do the job anyway.

If you have time, it is worth completing a full moult record for any moulting birds. This can be done on a traditional moult card and it will later be committed to computer for submission to the BTO database. Full moult recording is a new facility available in IPMR and will, for the first time, allow the BTO to have access to computerised full moult records.

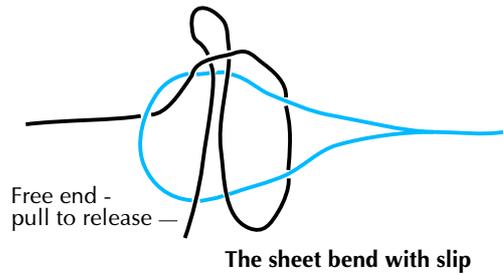
## Knots

As all Scouts and Guides will know, a good knot has three vital qualities - easy to tie, holds fast when required, easy to undo.

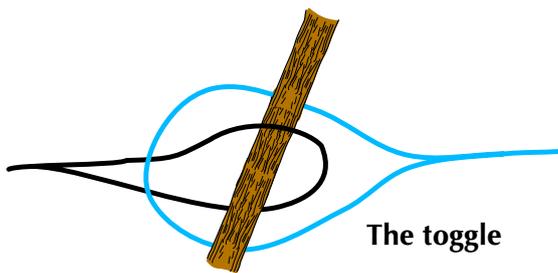
Sometimes, because trees do not grow in all the right places, we need to join two guys to make a superlong guy. All our guy cords have a loop at each end so one technique is to thread one cord through the loop of the other. This method of joining guys does, certainly, have the desirable property of holding fast. Unfortunately it can be

very difficult to undo, particularly if the tension on it has been very great. Indeed, it can take longer to undo than the time taken to dismantle and pack the mist-net it was holding and so the double-length guy is left as it is. This, eventually, results in a bag full of not-very-many far-too-long guys.

One alternative is the sheet bend with slip. It is very rapid to tie, holds fast and falls apart with a pull on the loose end. A further advantage is that the guy can be tightened, if required, by undoing the slip, pulling the free end as far as required and re-tying the knot. This is done at the middle of the double guy, so does not require reaching up the mist net pole nor another journey through the brambles to the tree.



For ease and speed, however, the toggle is the knot of the future. It is such an obvious device that it is irritating not to have realised this before. To quote Cyrus L Day in his little masterpiece, *Knots and Splices*, of 1953, *The toggle is a convenient way to join the ends of two lines which may have to be cast off at a moment's notice*.



Slip one loop just through the other and pass the toggle (i.e. any piece of twig) through this loop. There is never a shortage of toggle material in the wood and the toggles are, of course, biodegradable with a carbon-neutral footprint. An additional advantage of this device is that it would take a real idiot to wind the guys, after use, without separating them by removing the toggle. In fact, I think you would have to work hard to ensure the toggle stayed in place once the tension on the guy had been released. Overall then, a knot that Scouts, Guides and ringers should endorse without reservation.

## Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
<b>Tawny Owl</b>	<b>8F</b>	<b>GM61012</b>	<b>27/4/2007</b>	<b>H01 on nest</b>

John Black's supervision of the large nestboxes continues to produce good recapture records. He ringed this bird in 2004 when it was nesting in the same box. In 2006 it was found nesting in a nearby box. Tawny Owls are very sedentary once they reach adulthood. This bird, clearly, owns a territory in the western side of the wood. Also retrapped on a nest was GM61014. This was ringed on a nest in 2005 and owns an area in the north-west of the wood.

<b>Wren</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>AVL312</b>	<b>11/3/2007</b>	<b>E01</b>
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We only ringed 7 Wrens in last year's dismal nestbox season. This bird is one of our nestlings, ringed in a late nest which avoided the mass predation at the height of the season.

<b>Blackbird</b>	<b>6M</b>	<b>CT84111</b>	<b>18/3/2007</b>	<b>O06</b>
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We have ringed very few Blackbirds in nests in recent years - opportunities seem to be fewer than in past years. Predation rates in open nests are even higher than those in nestboxes. This is the first recapture of any nestling-ringed Blackbird since we last retrapped it in its first breeding season in 2005. Prior to that our previous recapture of a nestling-ringed Blackbird was in 1997.

<b>Song Thrush</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>RX57662</b>	<b>11/3/2007</b>	<b>E01</b>
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Song Thrush populations seem to have stabilised or, possibly, be recovering a little. The critical time, nationally, for the birds seems to be in their first winter. This one had already survived that when we ringed it as a first breeding season bird in 2004. We retrapped it three times later in that year and had not seen it again until today, nearly three years since ringing.

<b>Blackcap</b>	<b>4M</b>	<b>R502702</b>	<b>22/4/2007</b>	<b>D01</b>
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Ringed in July 2003 as an adult in F03 and recaptured, only once since, in June 2006. This is our oldest known Blackcap of the year but still another two seasons needed to equal the oldest ever known in the wood. Like Chiffchaffs, our first Blackcap of the year was earlier than average but only just. The table (below AXL223) gives a comparison of the lengths of ringing histories of some of our species. It is interesting to compare both the lengths of capture histories and the proportion of first-time birds this spring amongst migrant and resident species.

<b>Chiffchaff</b>	<b>4F</b>	<b>AXL223</b>	<b>6/5/2007</b>	<b>C03</b>
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It is always pleasing to retrap migrants which were ringed in a previous year. This bird is even more pleasing, having been ringed as an adult in 2005 and also retrapped in 2006. It is also the bird on which we recorded the

moult twice in 2005 and once more in 2006 (Twitter 59). In addition to this recapture from previous years we have also retrapped another 5 ringed in 2006, including one ringed as a juvenile. Out of 521 individual Chiffchaffs we have ever trapped, this is the 8<sup>th</sup> oldest. Our first Chiffchaff, and first summer visitor, of the year was trapped on April Fool's Day - although we had heard them singing in the wood two weeks earlier.

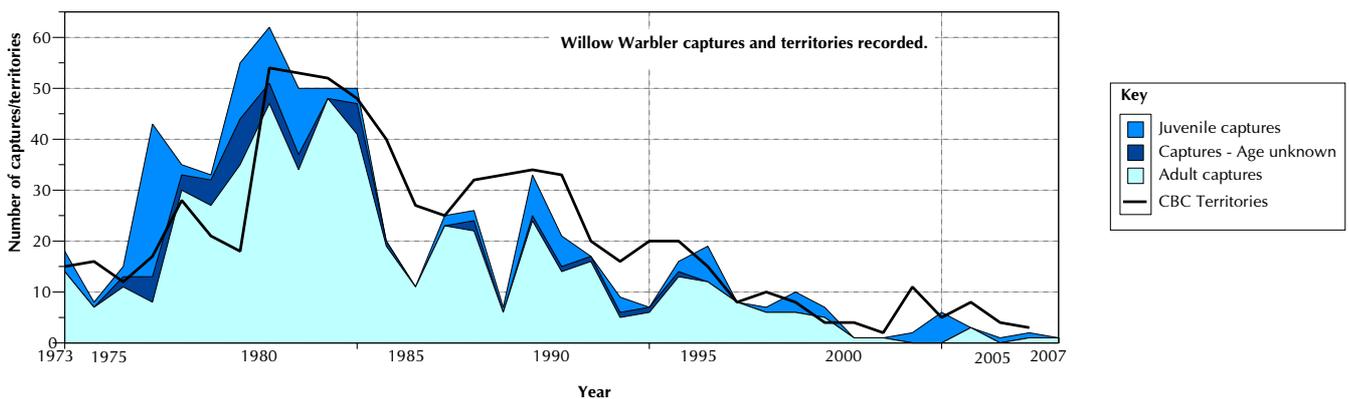
### Capture history lengths - adults captured during spring 2007, selected species only

Year of first capture	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Robin	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	3 (9%)	10 (30%)	16 (49%)
Blackcap	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	3 (10%)	24 (80%)
Chiffchaff	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	5 (20%)	19 (76%)
Long-tailed Tit	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	8 (38%)	8 (38%)	1 (5%)
Blue Tit	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	2 (3%)	8 (6%)	23 (26%)	52 (59%)
Great Tit	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	3 (4%)	8 (10%)	36 (44%)	32 (39%)
Nuthatch	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	1 (25%)
Treecreeper	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)	3 (19%)	3 (19%)	6 (36%)
Chaffinch	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	6 (11%)	9 (17%)	27 (50%)

Note: Numbers are frequencies and, bracketed, percentage of individuals of that species from that year.

### Willow Warbler **4F** **BYP634** **13/5/2007** **E10**

The first for the year, and only one so far. From 1973 until 1999, our earliest capture of a Willow Warbler had never been later than May 13<sup>th</sup>, with the earliest on 10<sup>th</sup> April and average first capture date of 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Suddenly, from 2000 onwards, earliest captures became later or, in the case of 2001, never. In all these recent years, apart from 2000, and 2004, all the very few Willow Warblers we have captured have been juveniles caught in July or August with no breeding adults at all. Whether you examine the CBC record or the ringing record, the picture is very much the same. Although the numbers in the first three years may under-represent the real situation (some parts of the wood were not surveyed and there were fewer ringing visits) there certainly seem to have been increasing numbers until the early 1980s with numbers remaining high and fairly stable for another few years.



### Goldcrest **5M** **BYP576** **11/3/2007** **G02**

We have noted McMeeking's Rule before - insert a decimal point in the wing length of the Goldcrest and you will have its weight. This bird was different. Wing 54mm but weight 6.7g (Yes, the spring balance had been zeroed.) Examination of the underside revealed a large fat deposit, ready for its northern spring migration. It is not the heaviest Goldcrest ever recorded here, but certainly the heaviest we have seen for many years. Our Goldcrest population is almost exclusively wintering migrants. Why we catch so few in the spring with this amount of pre-migratory fattening is not clear. Perhaps most of them move off northwards and fatten nearer the coast before crossing the North Sea. Or, perhaps, most of them are birds of British origin which do not make long-distance non-stop flights but move northwards towards their breeding place in small daily hops. Or, perhaps, both.

### Spotted Flycatcher **4** **V475133** **13/5/2007** **D09**

Our first, and so far only, individual of the species for the year. It is likely it had just arrived as it was not yet in breeding condition.

### Long-tailed Tit **3J** **BYP612** **29/4/2007** **L01**

Like the capture of the first summer visitor for the year, the first capture of a juvenile for the season is a significant event. This was one of a party of a dozen of the species, including seven very recently fledged juveniles. It was, most likely, a family party consisting of the fledged young, parents and near relations which were assisting in rearing the brood after their own nesting attempts had failed. This is our earliest ever capture of juvenile Long-tailed Tits, being twelve days earlier than our previous earliest date of May 11<sup>th</sup> in 1997. This emphasises the advantages that resident species can have over migrants. They can take advantage of good conditions early in the

spring (possibly caused by climate change) whereas migrants are only managing to arrive slightly earlier than typical, by which time residents may already have fledged their first brood.

**Marsh Tit**                      **4F**                      **R353617**                      **21/5/2007**                      **O-1 at nest**

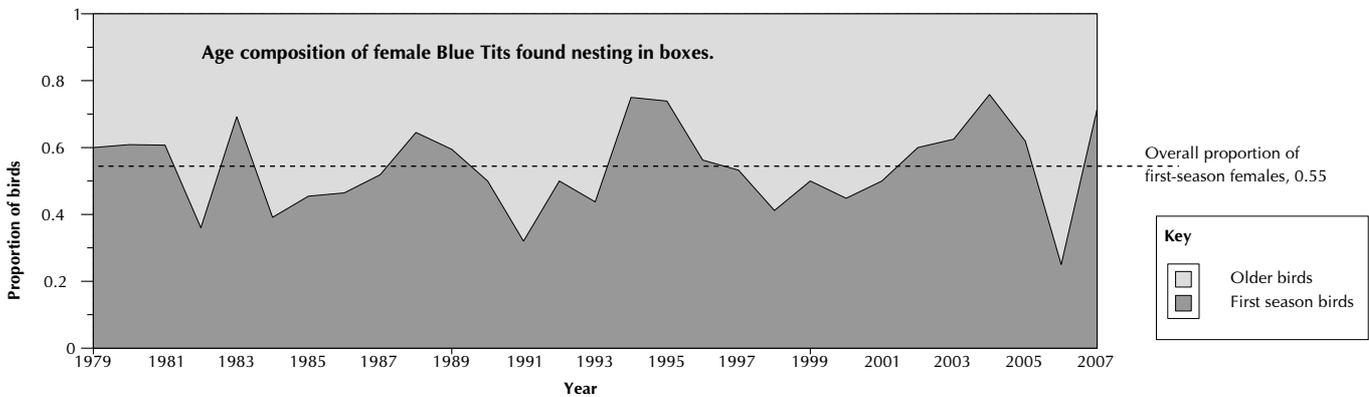
The female parent from our only nestbox brood of Marsh Tits for the year. Like our other Marsh Tits it is identifiable by its unique combination of colour rings. On this occasion it was seen taking food to its well-grown brood.

**Coal Tit**                      **6M**                      **R123550**                      **20/5/2007**                      **Q02 Feeder**

One of our oldest recorded Coal Tits, having been ringed as a nestling in May 2002 and retrapped at least once each year since then. It was ringed in the south of the wood and recaptured at the feeder in the north of the wood and also in the central western edge of the wood. All its captures, apart from this one, have been well outside of the breeding season.

**Blue Tit**                      **6F**                      **P400668**                      **9/5/2007**                      **N00 On nest**

At 5 years and 3 months since ringing, this is the oldest nesting bird found in a box this year. It is a regular nestbox user, having been found nesting in nearby boxes in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The age structure of birds found nesting in boxes is illustrated below, with birds categorised as 'first breeding season' (i.e. age code 5) or older birds (age code 6). It would be interesting to compare these proportions with the proportions amongst birds captured during the spring influx, or with the productivity the previous year, or the total Blue Tit breeding population for the year, or the winter weather or many other things. Any offers?



**Great Tit**                      **5F**                      **V475001**                      **13/5/2007**                      **R01 in nestbox**

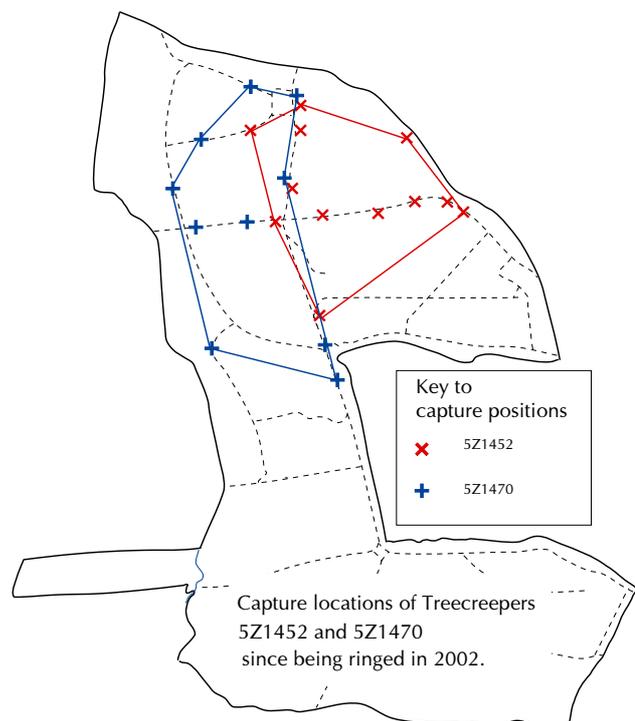
We have sometimes noted the 'Grey Tits' which we catch occasionally (e.g. Twitter 37) - birds, like this one, with very little yellow in their plumage. This results from a dietary deficiency. We might expect such birds to perform less well than normally coloured birds which have not suffered the deficiency. To add to the oddity of this bird's plumage, it was also found in a nestbox. Not a box with a nest, nor with eggs. Just an empty nestbox, but sitting in it as if it did have a nest with eggs.

**Nuthatch**                      **4F**                      **VR78790**  
**11/3/2007**                      **E02**

We continue to catch a trickle of the species - although we hear them on almost every visit to the wood. Few have very long capture histories. This one, at just over 2 years, is one the oldest of this year's birds. This seems surprising for such a robust, sedentary passerine, particularly when compared with the much smaller, but equally sedentary, Treecreeper.

**Treecreeper**                      **6M**                      **5Z1452**  
**20/5/2007**                      **Q02**

Still a good way to go to the world age record of 8 years for Treecreepers, but at nearly five years since ringing as a juvenile, this bird is certainly well above average. Curiously, on the same day we also retrapped a second old individual, 5Z1470, also a male in breeding condition. Treecreepers do have very large home ranges but it seems these may not be discrete. The map shows the capture positions of these two birds since ringing in 2002.



**Jay**                                **6M**        **EL87423**        **20/5/2007**        **P00**

Our first Jay capture since April 2006. They are frequently heard in the wood, far less often captured.

**Chaffinch**                                **6M**        **P400321**        **20/5/2007**        **P-1**

This was one of 17 Chaffinches captured on this day. It was a rather greater number, and proportion of the total captures, than normal. Twenty percent of the birds caught on the day were Chaffinches. This compares to the all-time proportion of Chaffinch captures in the wood of only 4.6%, which rises to 5.7% during May. Further, the birds included a number of old birds with very varied capture histories. Unlike the Long-tailed Tit family party trapped the week before, these Chaffinches were not in a dense flock and only included a single juvenile. Some, like this one, had been captured fairly regularly. This bird was the one with the longest ringing history, having been ringed in 2000 - 6 years and 176 days previously - and been captured in 2002, 2005 and 2006. Others, like P400354, had not been recaptured since ringing (also in 2000).

**Chaffinch**                                **4F**        **R353345**        **13/5/2007**        **D07**

Ringers know that juvenile Chaffinches do not have black markings at the end of the central tail feathers and adults do. Further, with each successive annual moult these black markings become larger and more intense. No problem, then, with deciding that this bird with no black at all on the tail feathers was still wearing its juvenile tail. A pity it had been ringed three years previously. This is not the only individual that has been wearing unofficial markings on its tail this year (and at least one has been seen elsewhere). This further complicates ageing - some juveniles now moult their tails and do have the adult black markings in their first winter, whereas some adult moult their tails but do not develop the black markings. If you have what seems to be an obvious juvenile retrap in the hand, it is worth checking in the bible for its recapture history. Beware of unringed birds.

**Goldfinch**                                **5M**        **V475079**        **11/3/2007**        **F04 Feeder**

We see this species, occasionally, at the niger feeder placed especially for them. Only this species and Siskins are supposed to be able to access the niger in these feeders. From our observations and the rate at which the niger disappears it is clear that some other birds can access the food. Marsh Tits seem to manage quite well. This is the first Goldfinch we have trapped since we enjoyed a flurry of captures in 2005.

**Bullfinch**                                **5F**        **unringed**        **20/5/2007**        **P00**

The first bird for some time we have seen with bad infestation of scaly leg mite - its legs were too badly infested to allow ringing. Its plumage was of interest, however. Examination of the greater coverts and carpal covert clearly indicated an adult. However, on one wing it had retained a single, brownish juvenile feather. Another bird which had moulted its carpal covert in its partial post-juvenile moult.

## Controls and recoveries

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Place
Great Spotted Woodpecker	3	CT84274	29/11/2006	Swallow, near Grimsby

Great Spotter Woodpeckers are very sedentary indeed. Only 5% of recoveries of this species, nationally, are over 40 km. This bird, ringed as a juvenile in 2006 was found dead 49 km distant, having flown into a window.

**Blackbird**                                **2**        **CT84112**        **29/5/2007**        **Q-1 Ring in Tawny Owl nest**

This bird, together with its two siblings, had been ringed one month earlier in a nest near the main cross roads. Its ring, together with those of its two siblings, was in the remains of a Tawny Owl nest. The whole purpose of ringing is to track bird life histories so, although these three lives were very short, we do know a great deal about them. The rings have done their job. It is not certain whether the owl took all three birds from the nest (possible, but difficult as the nest was protected from above by the roof of a hut) or whether it took them very soon after fledging.

**Goldcrest**                                **3F**        **2U4127**        **29/10/2006**        **Cottam Power Station**

We have little idea of the origins of our wintering Goldcrests. We do know that some remain in the wood for much of the winter, but not this one. We ringed it on 8/10/2006 and did not retrap it again in the wood.

**Great Tit**                                **4F**        **T663176**        **21/5/2007**        **D08 Dead in nestbox**

Compare this very-short-indeed list of 'deaths by predator at the nest' with that of other recent years. So far, this is the only adult known to have been killed on the nest by (probably) a weasel. It had been ringed as part of the spring influx in 2006.

**Greenfinch**                                **2**        **BE88944**        **29/5/2007**        **Q-1 Ring in Tawny Owl nest**

Another victim of the Tawny Owl. We ringed this bird at the feeder in June 2005 and had not retrapped it since.

The two owl nests this year have yielded very little other than this and the three Blackbird rings. The only mammal remains have been a few short-tailed voles (in both nests) and, pleasingly, one grey squirrel skull in the nest in H01.

## Footnote

You may sometimes have wondered about your editor's amazing recall of facts. He seems able to quote snippets from all past issues of Twitter and many other facts about bird demography. In fact, his memory is very limited. Things from Twitter all come from the computerised collection of past issues. *Acrobat Reader* has a search facility which will find all appropriate references very rapidly indeed. Other gems generally come from the *BTO Migration Atlas* or from the *Bird Facts* area of the BTO web site [www.bto.org/birdfacts](http://www.bto.org/birdfacts) (All the past issues of Twitter fit easily on a CD. Feel free to request a complete collection, together with nestbox reports from pre-Twitter days).

## 10 Week Summary 2007 Interval 2, Captures in Standard Sites

Visits 1834, 1833, 1827, 1828, 1829, 1826, 1832

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	2	5	.	4	1	.	12
Robin	.	3	.	3	1	.	7
Blackbird	3	6	.	6	1	.	16
Song Thrush	3	2	.	1	.	.	6
Blackcap	2	5	.	3	.	.	10
Chiffchaff	4	3	.	2	.	.	9
Goldcrest	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Spotted Flycatcher	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	9	.	.	9
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Willow Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Coal Tit	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Blue Tit	.	2	.	2	8	.	12
Great Tit	.	1	.	4	4	.	9
Treecreeper	1	.	.	4	2	.	7
Chaffinch	.	.	.	3	.	.	3
Bullfinch	.	4	.	.	.	.	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>110</b>

## Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
<b>Averages</b>						
<b>1978 - 1987</b>	90	113	182	140	130	655
<b>1988 - 1997</b>	86	107	170	149	127	637
<b>1998 - 2005</b>	89	99	127	126	128	568
<b>Recent Annual Totals</b>						
2000	75	106	106	159	170	616
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	150	88	133	618
2006	128	98	185	125	166	702
2007	107	<b>110</b>	---	---	---	(217)
<b>Summary Data</b>						
Mean	128	145	288	253	177	865
Min	57	33	94	68	59	364
Mean	90	107	164	139	128	627