

TWITTER

1997/3 - Number 13

August 1997 Treswell Wood Ringing Group

Ringing: By permission of NWT

Project leader: John McMeeking

Editors: Richard & Chris du Feu



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Ringer.

The 1997 breeding season weather has been very variable - short spells of high temperatures and intervals of cold or wet weather. Our early tit nests failed to do well, apparently because of lack of food - were there only few and small caterpillars in the heat? Later nests were struck by rain, if not by weasel predation as well. Warbler nests must have suffered in the wet undergrowth, although we have not recorded any directly this year. In spite of all that, the season has not been as bad as that of 1996!

The table of constant effort captures makes for interesting comparisons with that for 1996 (Twitter 96/3), which was a very poor breeding season locally and nationally. First, note that the totals for all species were very close - the biggest difference was 4 birds. Numbers for any particular species are really too small to allow any reliable conclusion to be drawn, but the combined results for all species in the standard sites gave a significantly higher proportion of juveniles this year. Since the total number of birds (adult + juvenile) was almost the same, this implies that the 1997 breeding season has had higher productivity than did 1996. Our figures were 0.24 juveniles per adult capture for 1996 and 0.48 for 1997 which may represent a doubling of productivity. The lower numbers of adults caught during intervals 1 and 2 of this year support the idea of higher productivity.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Ring	Date	Grid
Long-eared Owl	GF37961	29/6/97	D09

A new species for our records, the first since the Green Woodpecker of 1995. Long-eared Owls are not recorded by the CBC although Norman Lewis saw one roosting at the edge of the wood at Grove End some years ago. Today's bird was caught very near the edge of the wood. Long-eared Owls lose out to Tawny Owls so the wood edge may be the only part of the wood where they are at all likely to be. This bird was an adult but we were unable to determine its sex.

Sparrowhawk	ES03293	29/6/97	D09
--------------------	----------------	----------------	------------

Another new bird - we have had few retraps of these lately. It was caught only a matter of seconds before the Long-eared Owl in the adjacent net. It seems unlikely that they were interacting in any way and that the fact that they were caught so close in space and time was mere coincidence.

Woodpigeon	FV89993,4	29/6/97	M07
-------------------	------------------	----------------	------------

Although Woodpigeons are common and nest frequently in the wood, most of the nests we find are depredated. This is the first nest from which we have ringed young since 1988. It is quite remarkable how successful these birds are with such a high nest failure rate. Typically we record about 3 nests a year which makes a failure rate (amongst nests found) of about 95%.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	RH94571	25/5/97	Q01
---------------------------------	----------------	----------------	------------

Our old friend, ringed 11/12/94 and noted in Twitters 1 and 5. This is its first capture since 26/5/96. It is still causing problems with ageing as its primaries and greater coverts are not as black as its median coverts. As in the 1996 breeding season, these woodpeckers are coming to the feeders regularly - three were caught today. The other two were RH94533 (Twitter 5,12) and XE21661 (Twitter 7, 10).

Great Spotted Woodpecker	RR11873	15/6/97	Q02F
---------------------------------	----------------	----------------	-------------

Although we have enjoyed many captures of woodpeckers over the last two years, this is the first we have ringed for a year. It was recaptured, again at the feeders, the following week but has not been seen since. On 4/7/97 there were some juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker feathers on the ground at the feeders in a circle characteristic of Sparrowhawk strike. There was no leg nor ring but it is possible that it was this individual that had already developed an attachment to the feeders.

Wren	0Y5954	29/6/97	F04
The first of our 1997 nestling-ringed Wrens to be recaptured, already some 250m away from its natal box from where it fledged only 3 weeks earlier.			
Dunnoek	H324913	15/6/97	N07
A respectably aged Dunnoek - ringed as a 3 on 31/12/92, a veteran of Twitter No2 and 5. This bird still lives at Treswell End making forays as far away as the feeders.			
Blackbird	XE21636	1/6/97	J01
A bird ringed in 1993 as a 5♂ but not recaptured since Spring 1994. It was caught to the south of Windy Ride in an area where we net only infrequently. Its other capture positions have been in I04, H01 and H03 so it seems that its long 'absence' could be merely a result of us not netting much in the lower part of block F.			
Blackbird	RR11372	1/6/97	K02
Our first 1997 nestling-ringed recapture of the year. Post juvenile dispersal has not yet happened. Although the bird was independent of its parents, it was caught only about 10m from the nest site.			
Blackcap	K463412	25/5/97	R99
Another site-faithful Blackcap. Captured on 26/5/96 in an adjacent net.			
Marsh Tit	J033353	1/6/97	K02
Although we have recaptured this bird 10 times since ringing as a 3J in 1993, this is the first time we have been able to sex it by examination of cloaca/brood patch. Although it is a big bird (wing always around 65mm) and should be a male by its wing length, it was clearly a female. If you catch her again, please double-check.			
Willow Tit	H229395	1/6/97	K02
An old friend, ringed as a 3J on 12/7/92 and still going strong. Details of its roving youth were given in Twitter 7.			
Blue Tit	K720057	1/6/97	K00
Twitter 12 gave the distances between natal boxes and first nesting sites for the four female 1996 Blue Tits we found nesting in boxes. Contrast these dispersal movements (250m, 320m, 350m, 600m) with that of this male. He has nested in an adjacent box. Indeed, his natal box has been resited so perhaps box 37 was next best?			
Great Tit	VV34087	15/6/97	N01
Today was the first day on which we captured any of our 1997 nestling-ringed Great Tits - about three weeks after the first fledged. An exceptional number - 15 individuals - was caught, all except this one at the feeders, and most with very long wings. All of the juveniles caught had been ringed as nestlings. Ulli hopes to investigate the wing length data further. Since then we have captured several more, mostly at the feeders. Unusually, the number of Great Tits recaptured which were ringed as nestlings (29) exceeds the number of Blue Tits (5) to date.			
Great Tit	VV34166	13/7/97	B03
This bird fledged from a late brood. I had doubts it would even survive to fledging - so few nests which have only one nestling ever succeed. However, here it is, a month after fledging with a big wing (76mm), in good condition (17.5g) and already 800m away from its nestbox.			
Nuthatch	VR78858	20/7/97	Q02 Feeders
We have continued to hear Nuthatches in the wood for most of the season but have caught none for some time. This is a welcome capture. It was an unringed young bird in post-juvenile moult. It seems too early for great post-juvenile dispersal to have taken place so this capture may show successful breeding within the wood.			
Jay	DA20214	13/7/97	B03
A new adult, probably a male and well into moult - our first Jay of the year.			
Bullfinch	K463698	25/5/97	Q01
We recapture very few Bullfinches first ringed as juveniles. This one was ringed on 20/10/96 nearby in R98.			

Controls & Recoveries

This list is rather longer than usual and some records look a little old. Some of the delay results from the backlog in the Ringing Unit but for the most part it is simply a failure in Chris's record keeping system. Sorry!

Sparrowhawk	DA51826	10/11/96	Rickall, N Yorks 59km @ 347°
Our longest distance Sparrowhawk recovery or control - the other three recorded have been to Retford, West Burton and Cottam. This bird was ringed in the wood as a 3♀ on 22/10/95. It was found dead.			
Chiffchaff	5F5468	7/4/96	Misson, 19km @ 347°
Ringed as a juvenile in Treswell Wood in July 1994.			

Blackcap	K463623	6/10/96	Icklesham, 286km @ 159°
Ringed as a juvenile female in Treswell Wood on 1/9/96, presumably on its way south when caught at Icklesham.			
Long-tailed Tit	5W9961	9/4/96	Lound 11km @ 314°
Another juvenile-ringed bird showing moderate post juvenile dispersal. Ringed as a 3J in Treswell Wood 24/9/95.			
Blue Tit	K181548	30/5/97	E05 on nest
Yet another female killed by a predator - probably a weasel - at the nest. She was a 1995 nestling-ringed bird who nested successfully in 1996 but only has one offspring known to have survived to Spring of 1997.			
Great Tit	J522413	8/6/97	F05 on nest
An old friend in her third breeding season, killed by a weasel on the nest. Predation at the nest seems to strike all ages of birds and a long life for a female Great Tit must depend very much on chance rather than on good health.			
Great Tit	K463387	10/6/97	F03 on nest
Another victim of weasel predation whilst she was on her nest. Ringed 5/5/96.			
Great Tit	K463776	22/6/97	L05 on nest
Ringed two months earlier during the spring influx and, unusually, was aged as a 6. She fell victim to a weasel.			
Greenfinch	VJ35080	30/3/97	Q02 Feeder
Ringed 23/6/96 at North Leverton by Peter Cobb.			
Greenfinch	VV49459	20/4/97	Q02 Feeder
Ringed by Phil May in Retford on 5/1/97.			

Cock-up department/quality of data

The Treswell Wood operation is unusual in that we recapture a good number of our birds, some of them many times. There are obvious benefits from this but one potentially embarrassing feature is that we sometimes discover inconsistent aging, sexing or measuring. The other side of the coin is that we can use discovered inconsistencies to improve our techniques and the following notes are written with this in mind. First, a note of consolation. It is often particular individuals which cause problems time after time. Great Spotted Woodpecker RH94571 is a case in point (see above). Likewise Chaffinch K463401 has been inconsistently aged by John, Chris and Richard but has had a few extra notes on the field sheets explaining why it was aged as it was. Similarly, Dunnock K463019, ringed as a 3 in 1995 was aged as a 5 on 20/7/97 on the basis of the eye colour which was almost as grey as that of a juvenile. Its plumage was too battered to be of use although its eye colour was so clearly that of a very retarded 5 that Chris used it to show the others an extreme case of 5ness! Oops!

Two points can be made. First, if the bird is difficult, add supporting notes on the field sheet. Second, it is better to record correct inexactitude than incorrect precision. To quote Stuart Britton (Trainer, Ringing Committee member, raconteur etc.) "There is no shame in calling it a 4." If you are not sure, call it a 4(5), (M) or similar.

Ulli has carried out a preliminary analysis of Great Tit wing length measurements, with a view to examining patterns in wing length through the birds' lives. Some results are given below, but sadly the variation in recorded measurement is obscuring temporal patterns of change in actual lengths. All is not bad news. A talk delivered at R&M 18 months ago gave details of consistency of measuring between ringers who had been 'Standardised' for some particular study.

Their results were:

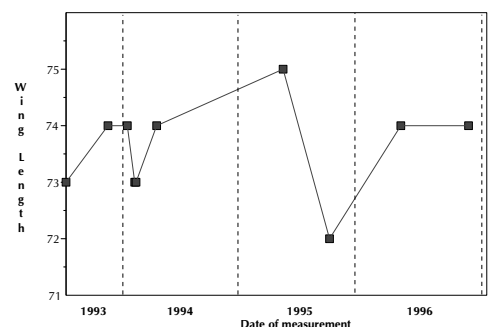
Difference between wing length measurements (mm)	0	1	2	3
Percentage of measurements	62.3%	34.1%	3.5%	0.1%

Ours are:

- For birds with wings measured at least 8 times, 90% of our measurements are within 1.1mm of the average of measurements.
- Within-year observations differ by up to 3mm (n=65) (excluding very abraded wings).

On the face of it, our measurements are not quite as reliable as this. However, their repeat measurements were taken on the bird at the same capture event - one person then the next measuring before releasing the bird. Our measurements have been taken at different times. This will introduce more variation because birds' wings do change length with wear and regrowth after moult. Ulli suggests that we take (and record) repeat measurements on some birds (recording them without the other person knowing what they are). We do this, of course, as part of the training process, but this will tell us old hands how we are doing. It would also allow a direct comparison between

Measured Wing lengths of J033352 (Pink/White Left)



our consistency and the respectable figures quoted at R&M. John and Richard have, independently, wondered about trying to measure wings to the nearest 0.5mm.

Treswell Wood Ringing - The First 25 Years Celebration.

Neil is arranging a Dinner at the The Lord Nelson, Winthorpe in the late autumn or early in 1998. The date depends on commitments of some BTO staff. The price will be £13.50 per head which includes wine/orange juice. Spouses/partners of ringers are invited. Neil will be sending invitations but feel free to book your places now.

10 Week Summary 1997 Interval 3 Visits 1311 1314 1307 1308 1313 1309 1315

	Adult	New Birds		Recaptures			Total	1996 data	
		5	3	Adult	5	3		Total	Change
Sparrowhawk	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	0	+1
Woodpigeon	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	0	+1
Long-eared Owl	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	0	+1
Gt. Spotted Woodpecker	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	0	+1
Wren	5	2	3	4	.	1	15	14	+1
Dunnock	.	4	3	4	3	.	14	11	+3
Robin	1	1	6	1	1	1	11	12	-1
Blackbird	2	3	6	7	1	.	19	23	-4
Song Thrush	1	1	.	.	1	.	3	7	-4
Garden Warbler	1	.	2	.	.	.	3	4	-1
Blackcap	6	3	4	1	.	.	14	18	-4
Chiffchaff	4	.	3	1	.	.	8	5	+3
Willow Warbler	3	.	1	.	.	.	4	1	+3
Marsh Tit	.	.	2	1	.	.	3	4	-1
Coal Tit	.	.	2	.	.	.	2	0	+2
Blue Tit	.	.	.	.	6	2	8	4	+4
Great Tit	.	.	1	3	1	1	6	5	+1
Treecreeper	.	.	2	.	1	.	3	6	-3
Jay	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	0
Chaffinch	1	.	.	2	.	.	3	4	-1
Bullfinch	.	1	.	2	2	.	5	5	0
Totals	27	16	35	27	16	5	126		

Treswell Wood

Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1978	101	131	243	223	131	829
1979	97	115	180	91	123	606
1980	86	102	211	147	170	716
1981	102	110	288	188	177	865
1982	66	113	142	89	110	520
1983	82	140	143	185	128	678
1984	91	114	110	82	106	503
1985	103	88	135	118	88	532
1986	77	104	153	68	141	543
1987	95	112	196	209	124	736
1988	92	143	180	137	119	671
1989	124	137	282	145	103	791
1990	99	145	204	130	175	753
1991	65	57	99	74	127	422
1992	64	64	115	223	159	625
1993	81	70	112	158	126	547
1994	88	109	209	155	157	718
1995	91	124	240	253	104	812
1996	95	121	128	116	97	557
1997	59	99	126	---	---	284
Max	124	145	288	253	177	865
Min	59	57	99	68	88	422
Mean	88	110	175	147	130	654