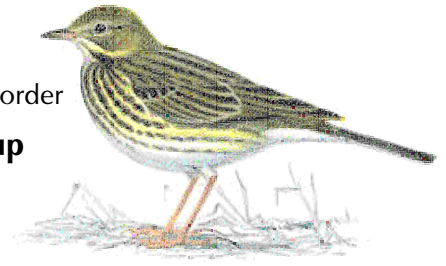
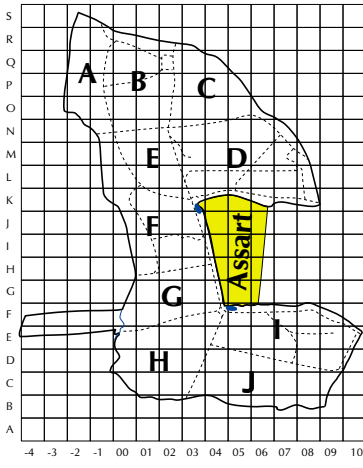


TWITTER



2012/4
Number 89



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

October 2012 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 Clark & John McMeeking

Obituary

Neil Taylor

Neil first came to Treswell as a potential Trainee on 17th May 1987. He was a Governor of Queen Elizabeth's High School in Gainsborough, where his son was one of Chris' pupils, and he was looking to broaden his interest in birds as he approached retirement. He quickly developed the mystic skills needed to work safely with mist-nets and brought his calm and systematic approach to every aspect of the work. He duly qualified as an 'A' Ringer and started garden ringing at home, a nestbox project and Heron colony ringing in Warren Wood, and visits to Sand Martin colonies in Lincolnshire, but regular fortnightly visits to Treswell were still the core of his ringing. Although he never took a formal qualification as a trainer, many of our Treswell trainees benefited from his patient guidance.

Professionally, Neil had a distinguished career as an architect, designing the Gainsborough Guildhall, and was later unhappy about its abandonment by the council. He played a major role in restoring and maintaining the historic Old Hall. He was a member of Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust's Council and undertook much design work for them, both professionally and voluntarily. He also served as a magistrate, as a leader of St. John's Ambulance work in Lincolnshire, and as a hockey player and referee for over 50 years - that explains the fitness he brought to his ringing.

A highlight of Neil's ringing career was his capture of a Red-breasted Flycatcher on 24th October 1993 when he was alone at Treswell and sadly had no-one to share the moment. He made a massive summary of the group's catches in its first twenty years relating them to the changing agricultural use of surrounding land. As the group developed he assumed the role of Social Secretary, organising a series of very successful dinners to celebrate landmark anniversaries and had done the preliminary work for our recent 40th Anniversary Dinner just before he died. Neil had also produced our manning rotas for many years, and played a key role in chairing our first Treswell Wood group conference early this year. He was a valued friend and will be sorely missed.

John McMeeking

Treswell Wood - 40 years

October 26th saw the 40th anniversary dinner attended by nearly 30 people including Ted Cowley (who, with John McMeeking, made the first ringing visit to Treswell Wood on 17th December 1972), Jackie Clark (Head of the BTO ringing scheme) and Andy Gosler (long-standing Great Tit ringer from Wytham Wood in Oxford). John was presented with a specially commissioned painting of a Treecreeper by Michael Warren. What else can we say - except to hope for another 40 years?

The nearest Sunday to the anniversary day this year is Sunday 16th December. We hope that the weather will be favourable and that we will have a good team for the day. If you intend to be there, please let John Clark know in advance. There will be cake.

Summary: August - October 2012

A great deal has happened in the last 10 week interval and, as a result, much of this issue of Twitter gives details of these events rather than things directly related to the birds we have caught. With the nesting season over, John Clark has produced a summary of the events in our nestboxes. The record low capture total in the 10-week standard site nets speak for themselves. A very poor season with few birds around. Notable absentees from the standard site captures were Blue Tits and Dunnocks. This is the first time we have caught no Blue Tits in the fourth interval of the year and the only time, except 1993, we have caught no Dunnocks in the same interval. Captures after the standard sites had all been visited, before the last cycle for the year began, included a good number of Goldcrests - perhaps the one species which seems to have done well and arrived in good numbers. Of course, big arrivals of winter migrants (of any species) may result from low food supplies further north and we are likely to see

berry crops depleted very rapidly this autumn. Jays have been seen locally and through the country in larger than usual numbers through October. Fieldfares seemed to arrive suddenly and in large numbers in the last week of October - the first seen from the wood were on 29th of the month. We are set for an interesting winter.

We have ringed a new species - a Meadow Pipit. This is our first new species since May 2005 when we mist-netted a Little Owl. Meadow Pipits migrate south through the country in autumn - although it is a protracted season with a more-or-less continuous trickle rather than large flocks. They are easily attracted to Meadow Pipit calls in suitable habitat and we have managed to attract some to nets set in the assart. With this experience we should do much better next autumn. (*Thanks to Mike Langman, RSPB Images for the Meadow Pipit vignette.*)

The next two items, from Rob Atkinson, both relate to potentially major changes in Treswell Wood. It is ironic that these two appear at the same time - one where the wood stands to reclaim a long-lost section and the other where there is danger of loss of very many of the existing mature trees.

Ash dieback

I am sure you are all aware of the *Chalara Fraxinea* threat to our ash trees. I believe with prompt action it may be possible to bring some protection to our woods and avoid felling resistant trees. By identifying infected trees as soon as they become infected from sources outside the wood we may be able to remove them before they start to pass the infection on throughout the wood. We may continue to receive new infection constantly for perhaps 15 years. However if we identify the infected trees immediately, tree-to-tree infection within the wood could be reduced.

For this to work, all visitors to the wood need to be constantly vigilant for signs, make a careful record of the location and report suspicious trees both to the Forestry Commission and to me. A Forestry Commission identification guide can be downloaded from <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara#Description> Click on 'Pictorial guide'.

Rob Atkinson

A rare opportunity to expand Treswell Wood

As many Twitters readers will be aware, the Wildlife Trust is currently fund-raising to buy 10 acres of David Bell's assart field (the shaded area on the map on page 1). This field is bounded on three sides by Treswell Wood and we now have the opportunity to return some of it to a more natural state. This part of the field has been pasture for the last nine years and has received seed from Ashton's Meadow SSSI. It is planned to create a small number of ponds, retain an area of meadow and allow the majority of the area to return to woodland through natural regeneration. This purchase would represent a unique opportunity to monitor the changes over time, as the woodland begins to reassert its influence.

I am sure many of you will be keen to support this purchase and may be able to help with the appeal. This can be done by helping organise a fund-raising activity, buying raffle tickets or making a donation of any amount on-line at www.lostwoodlandappeal.co.uk

Those contributing £50 can adopt their very own 50 sq ft of the new area, receive a certificate, a small gift and an annual e-newsletter update on the progress of Treswell Wood. If you are feeling particularly generous, a donation of £1,500 will be recognised with a legacy package. This will combine the adoption of half an acre of the new part of Treswell with a Lifetime Membership of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, your contribution will be recognised on interpretation panels in Treswell and on the NWT website, in addition to the same packages as the £50 donation.

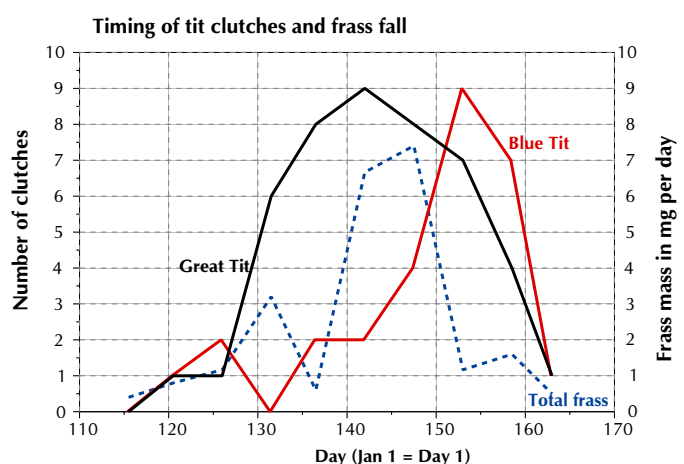
Many of you have been closely involved with the management and monitoring of Treswell Wood for many years and have already contributed greatly to the site. However becoming involved in this appeal, in whatever way, represents another opportunity for you to make a lasting impression on a site we all love.

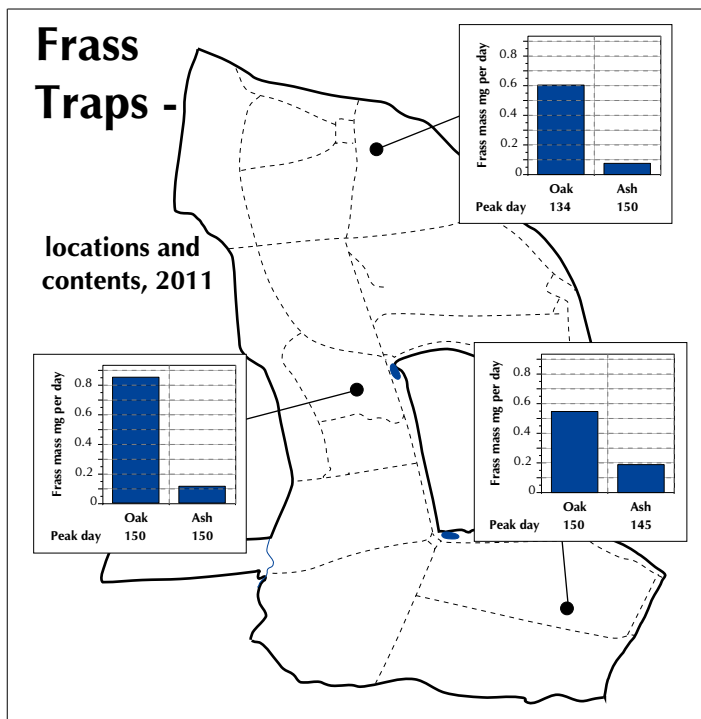
For more information please visit the web address already mentioned or contact the Wildlife Trust's Development team at askdevelopment@nottswt.co.uk Tel 0115 9588242.

Rob Atkinson

Frass

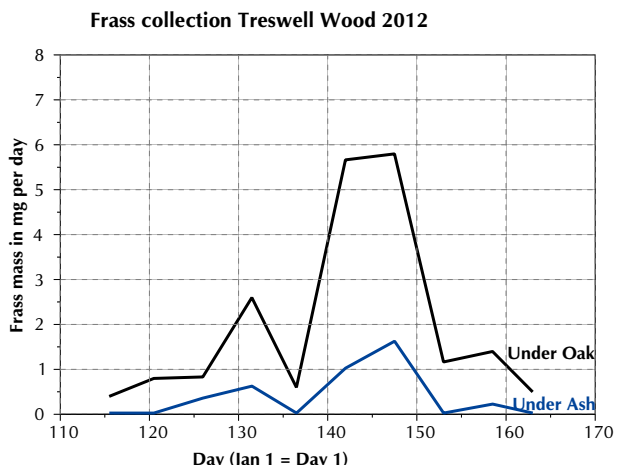
Ken Smith has, again, very kindly gone through the season's collection of frass and sent us the results. We knew it would be a bad year - the ash was not even in leaf when the tits' caterpillar food was at its (very low) peak. The good news was that the timing of this year's Great Tit food demand was well matched to the timing





A curious footnote. The Treswell Wood ash trees were extremely late in leafing - there is no doubt about that. Yet a reliable report from NWT members in Ossington says that their ash trees were as early into leaf as they could remember, certainly well before the oak there. Are the Treswell ash trees unusual or is it the Ossington ones that are out of line? Certainly it does suggest that the local ash population does have some diversity and that can only be a good thing if and when the ash die-back disease strikes the area.

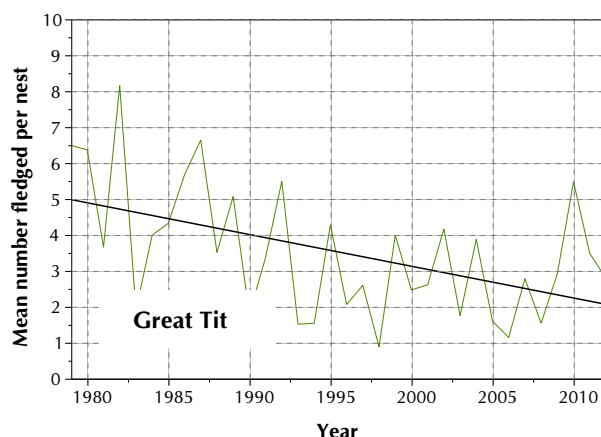
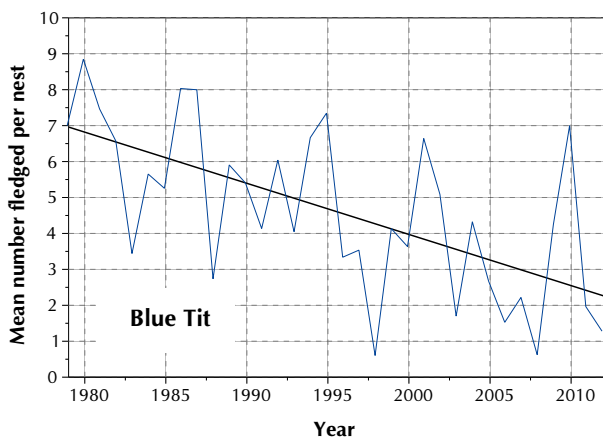
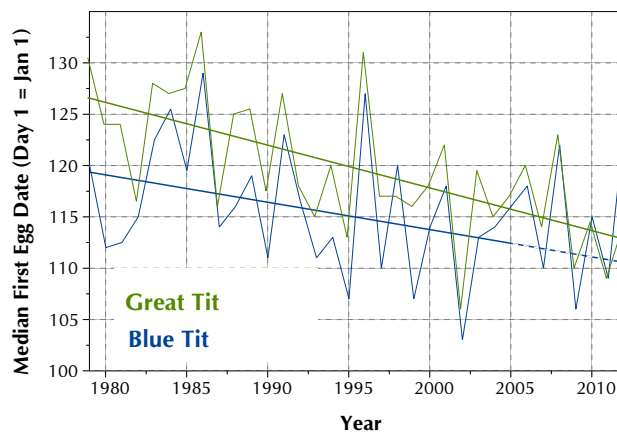
of the caterpillar crop, the Blue Tit timing was not as close although still far better matched than last year. These timings can be seen in the diagrams. (Peak demand is when nestlings are 10 days old.) The bad news is that the caterpillar crop was very low indeed - perhaps about one tenth of the typical level in the oakwoods where Ken has other frass monitoring plots and about 60% of the crop last year. One factor must be the mistiming of caterpillars and leafing; it may have also been just a bad year for caterpillars.



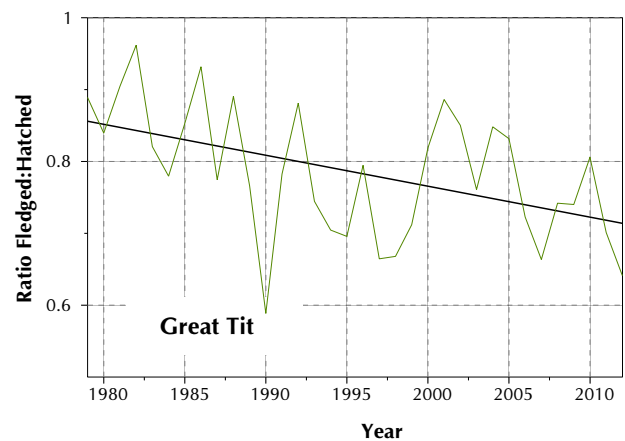
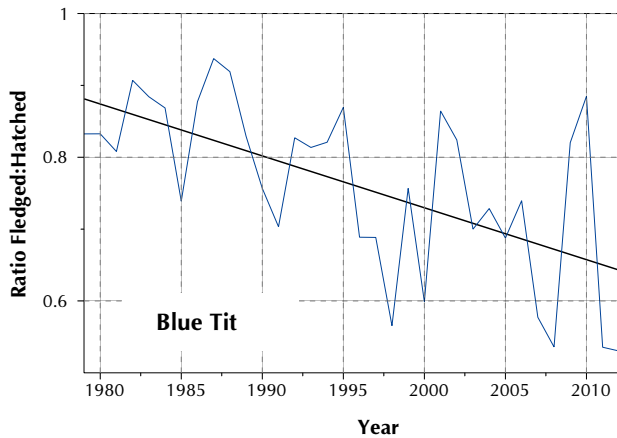
Nest performance - Blue and Great Tits, 1979 - 2012

The last issue of Twitter highlighted the poor 2012 nesting season for the nestbox-using tits. This piece looks in more detail at the 2012 events to see whether they follow the long-term trends we have recorded.

The median first egg date has become earlier over the years, with Great Tits showing consistency and statistical significance, and this year's date is firmly on the trend line. The date is now about 14 days earlier than when the nestboxes were first installed in 1979. Blue Tits show a much wider variation from year to year, with this year being 14 days later than 2011 and the fourth latest recorded. The overall trend line for Blue Tits is not statistically significant and it does appear that the previously detected trend towards earlier dates has been disrupted since 2005. This coincides with declining Blue Tit nest numbers and success in recent years. Incidentally, 2012 is only the second year in which the median Blue Tit date has been later than that of the Great Tits.

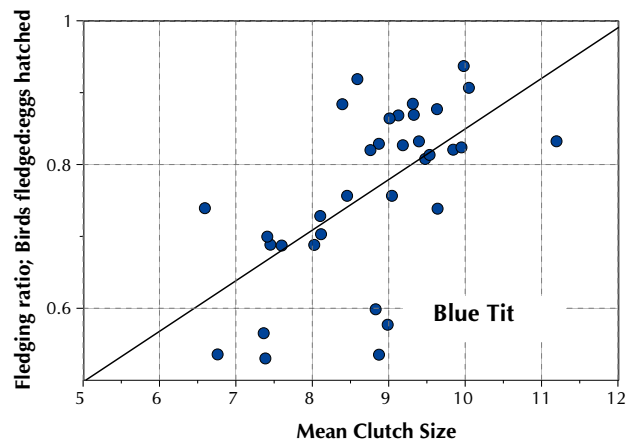


The numbers fledged per nest seemed, at the time, low this year. The analysis confirms this feeling. With a notable recent exception in 2010, the number of Blue tits fledged per nest has declined from an average of seven in 1979 to less than two this year. While not quite as marked, the pattern for Great Tits also shows a decline. Trends for both species are statistically significant.



When does the problem occur? Even taking predated and failed nests out of the analysis, the picture remains one of steady decline. In 1979, around 85% of hatched chicks would be expected to fledge, now it is only 70%. Taken in conjunction with smaller clutches this gives a large drop in numbers fledged as illustrated in the graphs above. Again, both trends are statistically significant, with Blue Tits are showing a greater decline and wider variation.

The variation in success (ratio of fledged to hatched) compared with median clutch size is interesting. The years with the largest clutches also had the largest percentage fledging. Perhaps this shows that a poor food supply early in the season leads the birds to lay smaller clutches, and is a good predictor for food availability later on? If this is so, it appears that the tits tend to over-estimate the number of chicks they can rear in a bad year but to underestimate it in a good year. The graph shown is for Blue Tits, with a statistically significant trend line. The Great Tit graph is similar, but with a weaker (but still significant) correlation.



There is a continuing steady decline in productivity for both Blue and Great Tits, with Blue Tits having particular problems this year, producing only 41 fledglings from 32 nests. Great Tits did a little better with 143 fledglings from 51 nests. It would appear that the wood is not a good place for them to nest at the moment. We await a few more years' results from the frass traps to see if they can shed more light on the problems faced by the birds.

Nest construction and function conference, Lincoln, September 2012.

Some of us attended this conference organised by Charles Deeming with delegates from as far afield as Australia. It seems to have been a world first - nest construction and function not being the most studied area in ornithology. Treswell Wood was represented by posters - the nest lining material and the delousing of boxes experiments. Mention must be made of an excellent talk by Dave Leech, from the BTO, about flea parasitism in Blue Tit nests. He opened it with a picture of a Blue Tit and of a flea. He then introduced the talk by telling us it was about nasty, little biting things and the fleas that parasitise them. Ringers will know what he meant. Curiously Dave's flea data from his PhD days in Lancaster showed a more or less normal distribution of numbers of fleas in boxes. This is quite unlike experience in Treswell Wood when we counted fleas in the 1980s. At that time our boxes held either no fleas or large numbers of fleas with very few boxes at all having just a low infestation rate (of about 1-50 individuals).

Some talks at the cutting edge of nest research have suggested projects for us which might be simple to carry out.

- i Is nest cup depth related to clutch size? This would be for a particular species and Blue Tits would be ideal as we can often record nests from the same individual in two successive years. Interesting? Yes - to support or disprove a new, controversial hypothesis by Charles Deeming himself (the final lecture of the conference which generated more sceptical discussion than all others put together).
- ii Look again at nest success in relation to the hen being caught at the feeding station or not - there is further evidence that clutch size is lower in the presence of feeders - as found by Sarah Lewis from Nottingham University about 4 years ago. Note that numbers fledged may not be as reliable a measure of 'success' as

numbers found to have survived over the first winter.

- iii Green (flowering) plant material is of interest because of potential nest delousing properties. Do we ever see any in tit nests?
- iv Marsh Tit nests in natural holes in Poland have no fleas. It is suggested it is because of thermal properties of the nests in trees. Are our 'stump' boxes infested or not? Incidentally, Tomasz Wesolowski from Poland suggests oval holes, or even lanceolate slits 20mm wide and 60mm tall for Marsh Tits. (I vaguely recall a suggestion from the distant past that Coal Tits were supposed to be attracted to oval holes too.)
- v A suggestion was made that speckling of tit eggs represents weak patches of shell. This is because the speckling is applied in the egg tract as the egg emerges just to strengthen these weaknesses. Thus the fewer speckles, the better quality the shell. By taking a photograph of each nest we could look at egg quality and relate it to hatching success. Or (and probably more useful) relate it to part of the wood in the expectation that better quality habitats (as measured, perhaps, by proportion of oak) might have less-speckled eggs.

Species records

We have always made notes of various species we see in the wood - first appearances of primroses or brimstone butterflies, counts of early purple orchids and anything we happen to notice and are able to identify. These have been entered as text files so that information is, at least, computerised. However, they have not been readily accessible and it has been a long-standing desire to cut-and-paste these records from the text file into a database for uploading into the NWT species records database. Michael Walker, the new species records officer at the NWT has examined the problem and found a volunteer, Josh King, a student from Brackenhurst. Josh is making excellent progress with the work and over half of our records are now held in a spreadsheet ready for final formatting before uploading into the NWT species database. Thanks to Michael for directing this work and to Josh for taking it on. Once the records are all in the database we will be in a far better position to make use of them - even a straightforward report of flowering dates of early purple orchids, for instance, would be of interest. (But that is not the end of work in progress - we still have to address the ever-increasing problem of systematic cataloguing and storing of digital images).

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Sparrowhawk	6M	DA51900	14/10/2012	Q02

The 60th Sparrowhawk we have caught in the wood. As most often it was male - the larger females are less easily held in nets and may also make less use of the wood for hunting - smaller males are much more manoeuvrable in often dense understorey. It was ringed in August 2011 and trapped again April of this year. At only 1 year and 48 days since ringing it is still the third longest time interval we have recorded between ringing and last recapture of a bird. Surprisingly for a bird this big, the longest span recorded by us is only 2 years and 75 days - much less than the longest intervals for small passerines which have, generally, notoriously short lives. Individuals do not seem to stay long in the wood - whether this is through mortality or movement we do not know. Of the 45 males caught, 13 have been retrapped but of the 15 females none has ever been caught again.

Sparrowhawk	5M	DK98427	29/10/2012	K03
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... and, after some months without any Sparrowhawk captures, another appears in our nets just a couple of weeks later. As usual a male.

Meadow Pipit	3	L731767	9/9/2012	G05
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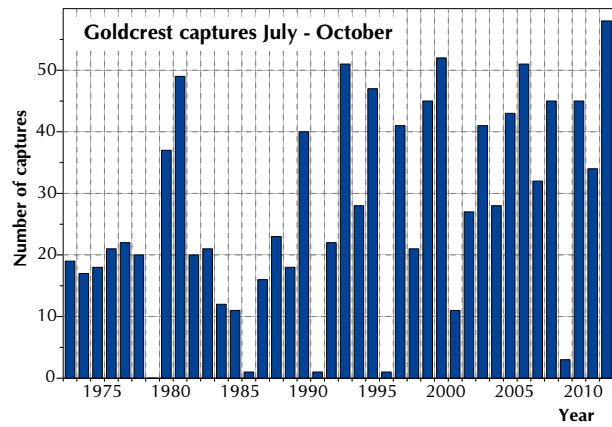
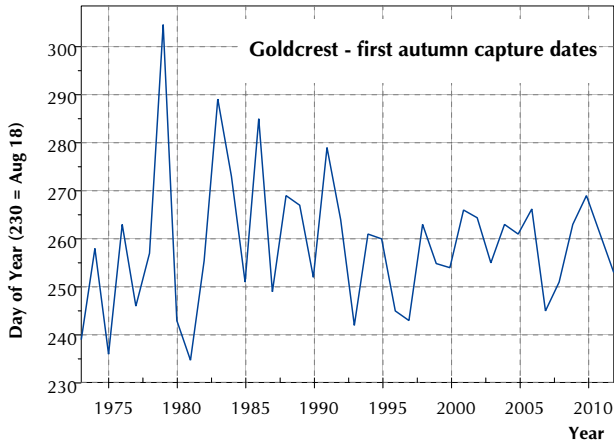
A new species for us although, admittedly, we did make extra efforts by siting nets in the assart and playing Meadow Pipit calls to attract them. It is worth noting that the assart habitat is, at present, very different from the wood and attempting to catch these birds in the same way in the wood is just a waste of effort. If all goes well and we do manage to secure the assart it will be most interesting to see what else appears, or can be attracted, there.

Willow Warbler	4	CXN784	2/9/2012	N07
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It is most unusual to catch a new adult Willow Warbler at this time of year - the last time we caught one such was in 1986. All other late captures subsequently have been of juveniles. This is a fairly late last day for the species in the wood - the very latest record is October 17th. It was not particularly heavy so we presume it was moving southwards slowly, eventually to reach the south coast where it would stop and put on weight for its journey over the Channel and beyond.

Goldcrest	3F	CXN797	9/9/2012	E04
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First of the year and heralding the largest number of individuals we have caught in any autumn by the end of October. Goldcrests are the first winter visitors to arrive. We do not know whether they are British or Scandinavian



birds. Interestingly in the same party of small birds as this Goldcrest we caught another similarly-small bird, a Chiffchaff. Unlike the Goldcrest, however, it is most likely that the Chiffchaff was soon to leave for the winter.

Dave Fogg noted that he seemed to net more male than female Goldcrests at Cottam Power Station and wondered if the same was true in Treswell Wood. Yes! We have, over the years, trapped one-and-a-half times as many males as females (1,323 males and 888 females). Interestingly the recapture rate is not very different for the sexes (39% for males and 32% for females).

Great Tit **4F** **TJ49658** **26/8/2012** **E02**

One of our 2010 nestling-ringed cohort, last seen in the wood as a juvenile in July 2010. In September 2010 it was caught at Hillcrest Farm and then not retrapped anywhere for the subsequent two years until today - back in the wood. The long absence behaviour is more typical of Chaffinches - but it has been an odd year.

Great Tit **3J** **TT49042** **14/10/2012** **M03**

All our tit broods except two had been ringed by the end of May. The penultimate brood had nestlings ringed on 10th June and the final one on June 29th - a month after the main breeding population. This bird is from that very last brood. Young from such nests have a relatively low chance of survival - the time left for gaining body weight and then moulting is much shorter than for most birds. It has been one of the frequent visitors to the feeder so we have had opportunity to follow its moult progress in detail. Surprisingly, in spite of its late start its post-juvenile moult has included the tail feathers. Of all our nestling-ringed tits this would be one of the last to be expected to have time to undergo such a full post-juvenile moult.

Blue Tit **3** **L327753** **7/10/2012** **E02**

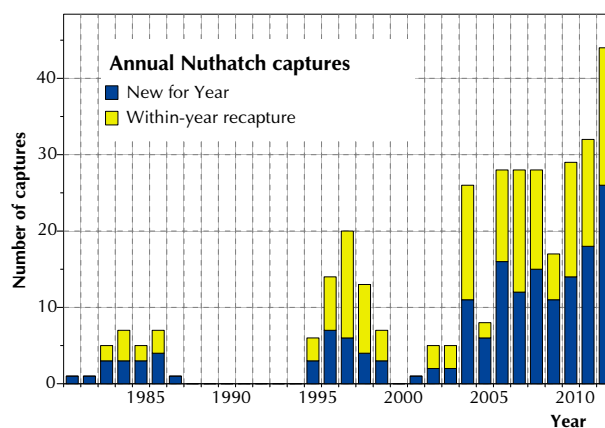
There is a good deal of local movement by tits during the late summer and autumn. Several have moved from Hillcrest Farm to the wood, or vice versa. This bird has now done the journey in both directions. It was ringed as a nestling in the wood in May, retrapped at Hillcrest Farm in late July and now is back in the wood.

Marsh Tit **4** **X649189** **21/10/2012** **Q02 feeder**

An old friend, ringed just over three years ago and one of the last to be colour-ringed as part of the RSPB project. This is its first capture since before the 2012 breeding season.

Nuthatch **4F** **TJ49875** **2/9/2012** **M03**

Although Nuthatches did not use the nestboxes again this year, they continue to be present in large numbers - even becoming a reasonably predictable species to capture during a typical mist-netting visit. The chart tells the happy story - whether you look at the number of individuals captured in any year or the total number of captures, the story is the same. This third attempt to colonise the wood - which began in 2001 - looks to be the one that is succeeding.



10 Week Summary 2012 Interval 4, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	1	.	13	1	.	4	19
Robin	.	.	11	1	.	2	14
Blackbird	.	.	2	1	.	.	3
Song Thrush	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	1	.	5	1	.	.	7
Willow Warbler	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Goldcrest	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Long-tailed Tit	8	.	.	.	.	.	8
Great Tit	.	.	.	3	.	1	4
Treecreeper	.	.	.	3	.	.	3
Bullfinch	.	.	2	1	2	.	5
Totals	11	.	35	11	2	7	66

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods - Summary table

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1978	101	130	243	223	131	828
1979	97	115	211	109	123	655
1980	86	102	210	147	170	715
1981	102	110	288	187	177	864
1982	66	113	165	89	110	543
1983	82	139	143	185	128	677
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	98	74	127	421
1992	64	64	115	224	159	626
1993	81	70	112	158	126	547
1994	88	110	212	155	157	722
1995	91	124	240	253	104	812
1996	95	121	128	116	97	557
1997	59	99	126	98	98	480
1998	78	84	116	80	106	464
1999	88	96	140	113	163	600
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	110	138	73	92	520
2008	125	130	151	86	100	592
2009	57	130	156	85	80	508
2010	94	100	144	119	143	600
2011	96	112	120	105	101	534
2012	69	125	132	66		(392)

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Maximum	128	145	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	94	66	59	364
Mean	90	108	160	131	125	613