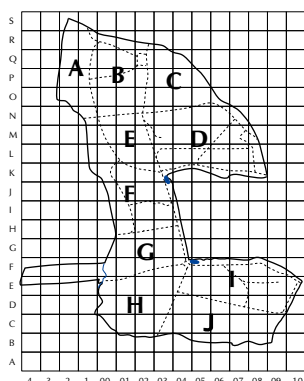


TWITTER

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Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

October 2010 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John Clark & John McMeeking



Our standard site captures for the fourth ten-week interval of the year have been a little down on average. This is to be expected because, even after the generally good breeding season, we still began the year with low populations. Our captures in non-standard sites, however, have included some very large catches, particularly of Great Tits at the feeders and some tit flocks elsewhere. As in other recent years, we have been able to follow the progress of moult within individuals through their time from fledging to completing post-juvenile moult. Goldcrests have arrived - we have already caught far more than we did in the whole of last winter.

Dave Leech, Nest Records Officer at the BTO, is beginning to look at the extent of post-juvenile moult in relation to over-winter survival. His plan is very simple: record the amount of moult in Blue and Great Tits during the late autumn after post-juvenile moult is over and then record again in the spring after the bulk of winter mortality is over. Then compare the proportions of birds with various amounts of moult. If what he thinks is true, we will find that there is higher survival amongst those that have moulted more of their greater coverts, alula and tail. Because of Murphy's Law, once he began his data recording, the Blue Tits in Thetford seemed to become hard to catch. To add to his sample size, we are recording data from some of our birds for him. Happily, it seems that the amount of post-juvenile moult is similar in the Thetford birds and in the Treswell birds.

In the current issue of the Bird Table, the newsletter of the BTO Garden Bird Watch, there is a picture of a Blue Tit with an overlong bill. The accompanying caption asks readers for any further observations of such birds. The Treswell Wood archive, naturally, has some information and that has been sent to Mike Toms to add to the article about it in the next issue of the Bird Table. Over the 38 years of ringing, we have noted one Coal Tit, one Blue Tit and two Great Tits with such overgrown mandibles. We clipped the mandibles of both the Great Tits down to the normal size and both were subsequently retrapped, over a long period of time and retained the normal bill length. The Blue and Coal Tits, of which we did not clip the bills, were never seen again. Of particular note is that one Great Tit developed the long bill over a period of no more than 3 weeks. The condition does not seem to be common - we have only noted it in these four birds out of 657 Coal Tits, 2979 Great Tits and 4481 Blue Tits captured in the wood. It also seems to be a condition rather than a disease. Once the bill grows beyond a certain point, it becomes impossible for the bird to shorten it by the normal abrasion through use. If, by circumstances (such as encountering a bird ringer with clippers), the bill is shortened, then it is no more likely to grow long again than on any other bird of the species. We wait and see what other offerings Mike receives. It is certainly well worth recording these things - and computerising them too. Who knows when we might need to delve into the archives for such other obscure pieces of information?

In October 2006 we were lucky enough to find a magpie ink cap *Coprinopsis picacea* in the wood. Lucky because this attractive fungus is rarely seen - one was seen in 1999 in Gamston Wood and one, 'many years ago', in Whitwell Wood. Records in Nottinghamshire are very sparse indeed. Lucky also because, like other ink caps, the fungus auto-digests after dropping its spores and is gone within three or four days. On 17th October, we found one fruiting body which we photographed very carefully. It was just past its most photogenic and beginning to curl at the edges. By 20th October, all that was left was a stalk (already part eaten by some animal) with just a small black blob of nearly digested material on the top of the stalk. Like the first one we found in 2006, it was in the north of the wood, adjacent to the nature trail but about 50 metres nearer the car park. Erin McDaid issued a press release which resulted in at least one published article, including colour photograph, in the local papers.

We are delighted to welcome Abi Hearn, a third-year student from Nottingham University, to the team. She will be using our Marsh, Willow and Coal Tit data to try and match ringed individuals to the CBC territories. Congratulations to Richard du Feu, one of our long-standing ringers, who has been awarded his cannon-netting licence. We do not expect him to exercise it in the wood but, should rising sea levels bring the Trent shores as far as the wood, we will be prepared. Congratulations also to Richard for being put on the Ringing Standards Select Committee.

Nottingham University - Masters study of mites on Robins

Haydn Griffiths-Jones has been studying the mites on Robins for his MRes degree course at Nottingham. He and others are writing a paper with the findings. Haydn has summarised the work here for us.

Our study set out to identify any pattern in feather mite infestations across the population of Robins in Treswell Wood. Overall 725 individual birds were caught across an 11 year period. Specific identification of the mites is not yet complete but the most likely species is *Troussartia rubecula*. An annual cycle in feather mite infestation was shown to be occurring at an individual level. The mean weekly score for all years combined is shown in the diagram - the maximum mite score (all 19 flight feathers heavily infested) is 76, so an average score near 25 indicates a great deal of infestation.)

This pattern was observed in every year. Time series analysis highlighted seasonality but no trend in the data. Interestingly, and discussed later, further analysis highlighted potential competition between the mites.

To try and explain this observed pattern an attempt was made to see whether sex and age caused any variation in feather mite infestations. Sex had no effect but age did. Older birds tended to have higher infestation levels than younger birds. This may be for two reasons. Firstly, it could result from different behaviours of adult and juvenile birds. Secondly, it could result from adult birds having greater exposure to the feather mites because of their age. But this did not explain the seasonal pattern.

Extrinsic factors were then used to try and explain the variation. Average monthly temperature, sunlight hours and rainfall as well as a one-to-five month lag of each were used as environmental factors. Population density, in the form of annual CBC breeding territories in a year, was also used in analyses to uncover any effect. An unexpected relationship was found between rainfall five months before the month of capture and average feather mite infestation level. High levels of rain in one month resulted in low feather mite infestations five months later. It is not clear whether this is a real relationship or a chance result.

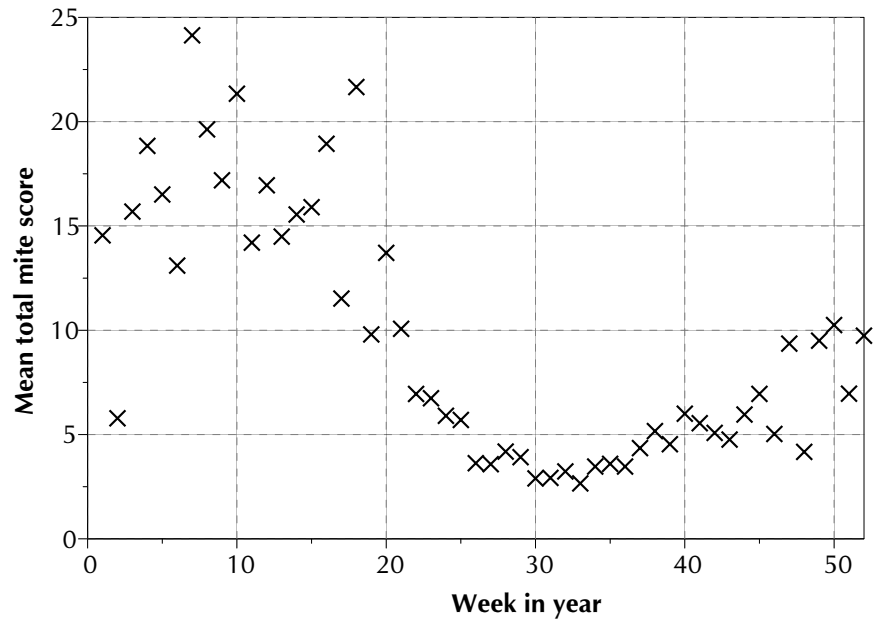
The observed cyclical pattern remains predominantly unexplained. It seems an ideal study for further work. One possible cause of the fluctuation may be related to the uropygial oil secreted by the bird. It is believed that the mites live off this oil and the composition and amount of oil produced may vary throughout the year. Another important piece to the puzzle is the life cycle of the mites. As yet undocumented, the fluctuation may result from reproduction or competition between the mites. The only substantial way of studying this would be to study the birds in a controlled environment. As we know, regulations on keeping birds are rightly protective and furthermore it may be difficult to keep the birds in a controlled but natural environment. It would be heavily work intensive as the birds and their mites would have to be observed daily.

If this could be achieved it would not be a wasted or fruitless effort. The readily accepted theory of competition is incredibly difficult to prove with real examples. Papers which refer to the subject are few and far between. This may be an opportunity to confirm what we expect. By understanding this relationship we could further our knowledge of the fine balance of intra and inter-specific interactions. In a country where bird populations are dropping it would be difficult to reverse the decline without fully understanding the whole picture. The unknown nature of the impact of feather mites on their hosts may be a hidden stumbling point in avian biology. Until we understand the relationship we will never know the impact - good or bad, great or small - they have on our feathered friends.

Treecreeper sponsorship for the BTO Atlas Project 2007 - 2011

The Atlas project is now beginning its last winter of fieldwork. For the latest national results, look at www.bto.org/birdatlas. You will recall that we are sponsoring the Treecreeper for which we have promised to raise £2,000. Donations can be made directly to the BTO at www.justgiving.com/bto_atlas. The web site total is not completely up-to-date at the time of writing this, but we still have not reached half way. All contributions (electronically or by cheque to the BTO) will be very welcome. If you send a cheque to the BTO please state it is for the Treecreeper

Annual cycle of mite infestation, Robins in Treswell Wood 1998 - 2010.



sponsorship and mark it for the attention of Graham Appleton.

We are not worried about not eventually meeting the required £2,000 but we would hope that all our members, past and present, will make a contribution. Please do not treat this like an eBay auction where many bidders leave it until the last few seconds. Time wasted is time lost. Do it now, please. Many thanks, in advance.

Incidentally, we have not recaptured our very old Treecreeper, 5Z1452, since the spring. We have yet given up hope of catching it again and, in doing so, raising the age record for the species. Maybe it is waiting for us to reach the £2,000 target?

Bullfinches and wing strain

There has been a good deal of correspondence on the Ringers' Forum about wing strain in Bullfinches and some other species. In its mildest form, it can lead to temporary loss of flying power. In the most severe form - where a bone snaps and punctures the lung - it can lead to very rapid death. Interestingly, advice offered and species believed to be most susceptible vary a great deal from ringer to ringer. Our experience is that Bullfinches are most susceptible. Some ringers, surprisingly, put this species as far less a problem than House Sparrows which we tend to regard as almost indestructible. Some ringers recommend extracting Bullfinches by the legs first, leaving wings to flap freely; others insist that it has to be a ringers'-grip only extraction.

The truth is probably that there is no universally applicable best way for all species for all ringers. Ringers' hands vary a great deal in size, shape, dexterity and handedness. Birds also vary between and within species. What works for one ringer may be bad for another. When I was a trainee my trainer advised me to ring Greenfinches on the left leg (whilst still held in the left hand). This makes me hold them slightly more on their back and the wings are less able to flap wildly - particularly the right wing which can sometimes flap in the gap between thumb and first finger. If I have a flappy bird (of any species, but finches are most frequent) I still ring them on the left leg, even after all this time. It was excellent advice to me (thanks to Pete Goodlad, all those years ago). If this works for you, then ring on the left leg for the problem species.

The time of year and age of the bird seems to make a difference. Greenfinches in winter, when carrying a great deal of weight, seem to be more susceptible than they are at other times of year. Bullfinch juveniles during post-juvenile moult also seem to be particularly at risk. But the condition is far from fatal. We have caught birds this autumn that did not fly off freely - perhaps hopping or just able to flutter. Over the years we have retrapped several of these birds months or years later. One such bird was X649814 which did not fly after being trapped on October 4th. It was, as normal practice, left perching in a sheltered place to recover. It was retrapped on October 17th appearing as healthy as any other and flew off freely, showing no signs at all of wing strain. It would be very worthwhile and instructive to do an analysis of all age classes of Bullfinch to look at relevant recapture rates. Of course, our records include details about the condition of the birds on release. Any volunteers?

What should we do? We must always be aware of the potential problem with Bullfinches and ensure our handling is as firm but but gentle as possible. Extract any Bullfinches in nets as soon as possible. Ring them as soon as possible and minimise time for which they are in the hand. To release them, hold your other hand below the bird to let it fly off itself rather than being catapulted into the air. To minimise further the risk we have decided that Bullfinches should not routinely be weighed or measured. Note that it is not worth weighing them in the bag because the weight is a useless piece of information unless standardised according to wing length. But do record moult and activity codes - these you will assess almost automatically when you examine the bird for ageing and sexing. In the event that the bird does not fly off well, then it should be taken to a dry, sheltered bush and left, well off the ground, to recover. In all cases where there are problems it is important to review the sequence of events to try to identify contributory factors and to learn from them.

Sometimes all that birds need to recover is warmth. A useful technique is to fill a small bottle, or even 35 mm film container, with hot water. Wrap the bottle in a protective cover (such as a small bird bag) and put it in the bird bag with the bird. It works like magic.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Tawny Owl	5	GC65287	22/08/2010	K00

We do not often catch adult Tawny Owls in mist nets but this is our second in six months. We were not able to determine its sex reliably but, with the species' very territorial behaviour, it seems likely that it was the mate of the female which nested unsuccessfully nearby this year.

Redwing	3	RS78272	17/10/2010	Q01
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It is nearly three years since we last trapped a Redwing. Today's first bird was followed closely by two more bringing our total number ringed to 113. Of these birds, one has been recovered locally in the same winter but no

others retrapped, controlled or recovered elsewhere. By chance the second and third of today's birds were an adult and a juvenile, the contrast in plumages making it clear how to age them. They also provided a new species for two of our C and T permit holders. Really attractive birds in the hand and excellent value for training too.

Blackcap **4F** **X649833** **10/10/2010** **H01**

Our late dates for Blackcaps have included 4 birds later in October than this, four in November and one in December out of a total of 2138 Blackcaps recorded. Some of these later birds were certainly winter visitors because even at this time of year we would expect our resident Blackcaps to be somewhere well to the south of us. This bird - unringed when we caught it - was carrying a considerable fat load (score 5). This is far greater than we normally see, even on the late summer birds before they depart. It does look as if it was a bird preparing for imminent migration.

Chiffchaff **2** **CXN341** **10/10/2010** **H01**

This is a late date for a summer migrant, so this bird could be a wintering one (but see the note about Blackcap X649833). It was not particularly heavy, so did not appear to be about to set off on a long migration. We have only ever trapped three Chiffchaffs later in the year than this - two in October and one, obviously overwintering, in mid-December.

Willow Warbler **3J** **CXN288** **15/08/2010** **O00**

Quite a rarity within the wood nowadays. Our total score this year is just two, both of which have been juveniles. It seems likely that this was a bird on its late summer explorations, gradually moving south before its longer, faster journey to Africa, rather than being a bird reared in the wood.

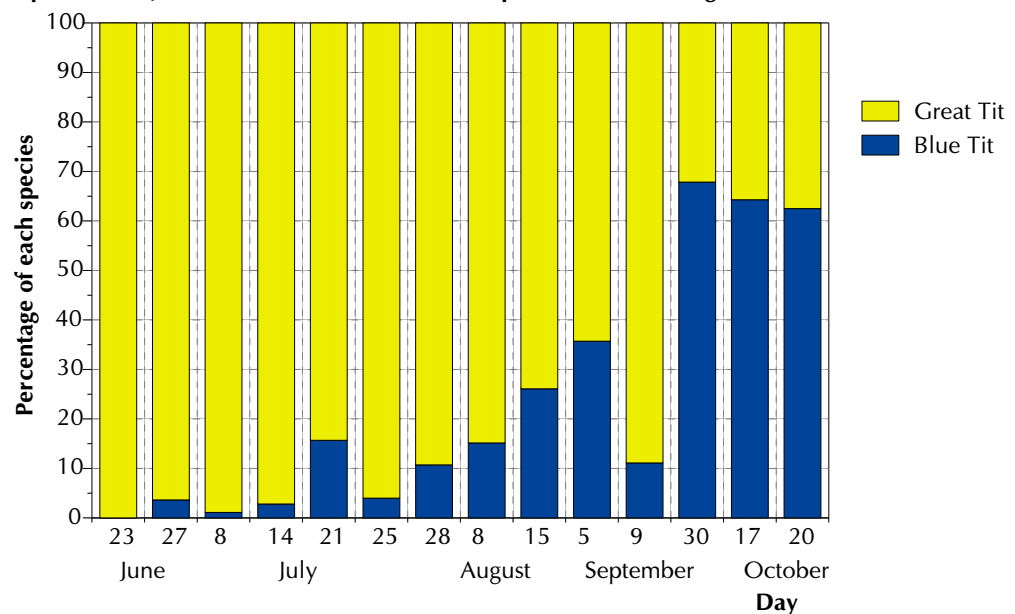
Goldcrest **2M** **CXN323** **26/09/2010** **D03**

Our first Goldcrest of the winter. Last year was generally a poor breeding season for them and, with the long, hard winter the number surviving to breed was feared to be very low. However, the breeding season of 2010 seems to have been very good. They are already back in greater numbers than last winter - not difficult as we only trapped six during the whole winter. Up to the end of October we have ringed 38 individuals. For small birds with high annual reproductive potential, a good breeding season can more than compensate for a bad winter.

Blue Tit **3J** **L327532** **15/08/2010** **O00**

The first recapture of this 2010 nestling ringed bird. The pattern of captures of nestling-ringed Blue Tits and Great Tits are very different. Great Tits flock in vast numbers to the feeding station soon after fledging. Blue Tits are much less common. However, by October, the Blue Tits are appearing more frequently than before and Great Tits less so. By mid-October the number of Blue Tits captured at the feeder had increased to the point that there were more nestling-ringed Blue Tits than Great Tits in our catches. The

Proportions of juvenile Great and Blue Tits in captures at the feeding station.



graph shows the proportions of the two species in captures at the feeder. Note that the horizontal scale is not linear with time, but has one bar for each trapping occasion, however long or short the time between one event and the next.

Marsh Tit **3** **V666934** **30/09/2010** **Q02 Feeder**

One of our 23 nestling ringed Marsh Tits of the 2010 season. The recapture rate of this year's nestling-ringed Marsh Tits is very high at 39% so far, equalling the exceptionally high recapture rate for Great Tits and vastly higher than the niggardly 14% for Blue Tits. There is evidence of breeding in natural sites in the wood, or in nearby woodland, as we have trapped 7 unringed juveniles so far this year.

been the centre of attention. A Great Spotted Woodpecker in the hand is something that visitors will remember for a long time. Perhaps it was just a good sort of bird, doing its best for the ringing scheme or perhaps it just enjoyed the taste of human blood. Sad that we will see it no more, but at just over six years old it had made best use of a relatively long life.

Blackcap 4M X978817 30/5/2010 & 27/6 L00 and N00

How much more we could learn if all our birds had been ringed as nestlings. This Blackcap was ringed as a juvenile in Worplesdon, Surrey on 22 September 2009. It was clearly a breeding bird in Treswell Wood during the 2010 season. Where did it come from? It could have been a Worplesdon reared bird, or it might be a local north Nottinghamshire bird, ringed as it moved south on its first autumn migration or it could have been reared somewhere else. We will never know.

Chiffchaff 4F BKE760 18/7/2010 J03

This bird was ringed as a juvenile at Cottam Power Station in July 2009 by Dave Fogg. Unlike the Blackcap X978817, we can be more confident of this one's origins. It was ringed when still in full juvenile plumage - usually an indication that it has not travelled far from its natal place. So, it would appear to be a local bird that has returned to breed in its natal area.

10 Week Summary 2010 Interval 3, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Tawny Owl	.	1	1
Wren	1	.	16	.	1	3	21
Dunnock	.	.	4	1	.	.	5
Robin	.	.	10	2	.	2	14
Blackbird	1	.	2	2	.	2	7
Song Thrush	.	.	2	.	.	.	2
Blackcap	2	1	8	2	.	1	14
Chiffchaff	1	.	9	.	.	.	10
Goldcrest	2	.	1	.	.	.	3
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	1	1	.	.	2
Marsh Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Coal Tit	.	.	5	.	.	.	5
Blue Tit	.	.	10	2	.	4	16
Great Tit	.	.	.	5	1	5	11
Treecreeper	.	.	1	2	.	1	4
Chaffinch	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Bullfinch	.	.	1	1	.	.	2
Totals	7	2	71	19	2	18	119

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

Recent years:

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2008	125	130	151	86	100	592
2009	57	130	156	85	80	508
2010	94	100	144	119		(457)

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Maximum	128	145	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	94	68	59	364
Mean	90	108	162	133	125	619

10-year Averages since standard site netting began in 1978:

1978 - 1987	90	113	182	140	130	655
1988 - 1997	86	107	170	149	127	637
1998 - 2007	95	100	134	120	125	574