

TWITTER

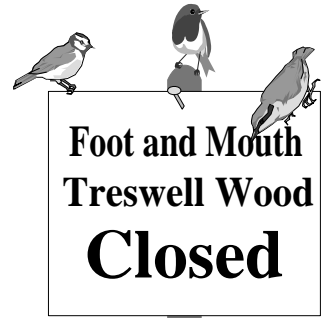
Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

March 2001 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

Project leaders:

CBC Margaret Price
Nest Records Chris du Feu
Ringing John McMeeking



2001/1 Number 31

Foot and Mouth and other disasters

This period has been fraught with problems. Our first 'ten-week' period of the year is, in fact, 11 weeks long to allow for the BTO Ringing and Migration Conference at Swanwick and the high risk of bad winter weather. This year we decided to regard December 31st as the first visit of 2001, though Chris had nightmares about the affects of this on the computerised analyses of our data. We were then ahead of schedule and enjoyed a quiet but very satisfactory day on January 7th. We had worked hard to produce a Treswell Wood IPM Group display for the last 'stand-alone' R&M conference and all seemed normal until I became unwell on January 10th. I was taken by ambulance to hospital at precisely the time when I should have been arriving at Swanwick - the first conference I have ever missed. I really was as 'sick as a parrot' about this and duly warned the doctors that a psittacosis-type infection was possible. In fact, it was a severe dose of pneumonia, which is not to be recommended. Nottingham City Hospital looked after me marvellously, but it was still three weeks before I was home and as weak as a kitten. Even now, after ten weeks, a full shift at Treswell is beyond thinking about.

*Neil promptly arranged to deliver items I normally take to the conference, collected the poles, nets, etc. from my home and organised a ringing rota through to the end of March. Then the weather intervened. Neil's team just had time to set up the nets on January 21st before being snowed off without catching a bird. Chris and co. had good weather and a moderate catch on 28th but Neil was rained off completely on February 4th. Chris had a full, but quiet, session on 10th and Neil a fuller and more productive session on 17th. Chris managed a quick week-day afternoon session at the feeders after sorting the nestboxes for the season with Kyle and Eric Palmer. Then - **Foot and Mouth! Wood Closed! Full Stop!***

Five weeks into the epidemic, we all know the gravity of the situation. MAFF asked the wildlife trusts nationally to close their reserves. NWT had no hesitation in doing so, particularly because we have our Hebridean flock to protect, so we share the farmers' concerns directly. There is now a possibility of opening some reserves, but only where there is no livestock nearby, and after appropriate consultation. However, Treswell is a special case because it is still home to David Bower's pigs which do such a splendid job demolishing brambles. We cannot do anything to endanger them and at present he is not allowed to move them and has no market for them if slaughtered.

After 28 years and 9 weeks, this is already the longest break we have ever suffered. Period one had just five out of the seven visits completed - and many thanks to everyone who helped man the nets for Chris and Neil then. At present we do not know when it will be possible to restart - and this applies to censusing, and nestbox inspection as well as ringing. But our work at Treswell will still have exceptional value because a gap of weeks or months will not invalidate our results even if it does complicate the statistics. And perhaps the birds will be enjoying a little more privacy?

Thank you all again for your past help, and for all the get well messages - we shall be in touch again, the minute it is safe to open the gate. If you know anyone who might like to join in any part of our work - in the wood or on paper - do please put them in touch with Chris, Margaret or me.

John McMeeking

Treswell Wood Common Birds Census - the future

The BTO have phased out the Common Birds Census nationally because the Breeding Bird Survey has replaced many of its functions. However, the BTO will continue to support the CBC on a few sites, including Treswell Wood. The letter below (which was received before the foot and mouth outbreak) from Dr David Noble, head of the BTO Census Unit, explains in detail.

First of all, many thanks to everyone who wrote with comments on the phasing out of the CBC. We have finally

made some difficult decisions and I am now writing to inform you of plans for this year. As you are aware, the 2000 breeding season was the last one of the official scheme, and we have been pursuing a number of different funding possibilities. Although there is no longer a requirement for broad-scale monitoring of terrestrial birds (as this is now covered by the BBS), the BTO is likely to continue to require the detailed information provided by CBC-style censuses. Studies of particular issues, for example the effects of forestry management, could require long-term studies on individual plots. Long-term territory mapping data are also well suited to investigations of some key ecological topics (such as density-dependence) and to site-based studies of population dynamics. However, much of the research involving CBC plots over the next few years is likely to be short term projects (1 - 3 years) that address very specific issues, and current CBC plots may not fit the changing criteria. Moreover, the funding situation is likely to remain precarious. Broad-scale monitoring of birds in the wider countryside will continue under the BBS and over the last year we have started important work linking the two sets of data.

From 2001, some funding is available from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) for operating lowland farmland CBC plots. Those of you involved in this project, which looks at how the relationship between bird abundance and habitat varies across regions, will have already heard from us. Additionally we have obtained some further funds, some of which will be directed towards woodland CBC work, from a number of trusts. We are extremely grateful to the Ellerman Trust, the J S Lewis Trust, the Sandra Charitable Trust and the Frognall Trust for their donations.

Besides these projects we have decided to continue to support, as normal, a core of about 50 high-priority CBC sites. This selection of sites, which has been based on criteria for which we feel we could obtain sufficient funding on a regular basis, is independent of the projects mentioned above. All current plots (those done in 1999 or 2000) were evaluated with respect to four criteria.

Plots which have been given high priority are:

- within protected or specially designated areas (SSSIs, SPAs, SACs, NPs, NNRs)
- on sites where avian demographic data are also being collected (i.e. potential IPM plots)
- particularly suitable for study on the effects of habitat management
- some particularly long-running plots

Ranking the highest-priority sites was a difficult and time-consuming process because there were more sites that fit our criteria than we can currently support. Your plot, 786, has been selected for this core group that we would like to continue to support, in the same way as before, for as long as funding permits. We are therefore asking whether you would be willing to continue to survey your plot for the next few years.

We would like to thank you for all your support to date. The BTO, and anyone interested in the welfare of the UK's birds, is very grateful for the incredible efforts of CBC observers over the years. CBC data will continue to be an important part of bird conservation in the UK, through the linkage with current surveys such as BBS, and through detailed analyses of associations between bird abundance and habitats.

Once again, many thanks. We look forward to continuing to receive your CBC maps.

Margaret Price has, as usual, provided her overview of the 2000 CBC in Treswell Wood.

The Wren map is well covered, with the exception of the centre of D (north of Horse Guards Parade) and the extreme SE corner of G (NW of Piccadilly Circus). Whoever does the census at the north end of the wood, there are always fewer birds in the centre of D and, to a lesser extent, the centre of C (north of the main cross roads). Is that because there is less undergrowth there? The clearance of undergrowth by the pigs may have been responsible for the lack of Wrens in the SE corner of G. We hope there will be a good display of flowers in the spring.

There were plenty of Robin and Chaffinch records over the whole wood except in the centres of C and D (and I for Chaffinches). Blue Tits were well scattered over the whole wood, particularly in the centre of F (north of Norman's Ride) and in J (south of Nightingale Ride) but there are not as many registrations as there used to be.

There was a good collection of Song Thrush records in the north end of the wood (A, B, C), a blank in the middle (D, E, F), an obvious breeding pair in G and a few records in the south (H, I, J). In 1999, the BTO estimated 5 breeding pairs. I feel sure they will say 5 pairs in 2000, possibly 6 or 7, depending on how many registrations they think necessary for a breeding pair.

Blackcaps were scattered through the wood (except in the centres of the larger compartments) but missing from I and J (north and south of Nightingale Ride) except for a clutch of records in the south-east corner of J. There was frequent Willow Warbler song on either side of Norman's Ride (F and G) and round Piccadilly Circus, but there was no song anywhere else in the wood. The map is pathetic compared to what it used to be. Chiffchaff records were fairly well scattered over the wood but they avoided I and J except for a cluster of registrations round the eastern end of Nightingale Ride, and they kept well away from the area where the pigs had been, whereas Garden Warblers liked this area. What is it in the south-east end of Nightingale Ride area which Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs

like although they avoid the rest of those two compartments and Garden Warblers avoid them altogether?

The only Tawny Owl nest was near the first pond but hooting was heard mainly in G (between Norman's Ride and ride G/H which we refer to as 'the motorway'). There seem to be more Bullfinch records than in 1999, nearly all in the northern end of the wood. In 1999 the BTO estimated only one breeding pair. There was one record each of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (March 22nd on the NW edge of the wood), Cuckoo and Woodcock and two of Whitethroat (June 14th and 17th). The Stock Dove nests found by ringers held a total of four broods and were close to Piccadilly Circus but the only record made by Census workers was of a sighting on May 16th near the north edge of the wood.

Ageing and sexing Dunnocks

From time to time we find birds which are difficult to age reliably. Some species are generally more difficult than others and some individuals particularly difficult, causing problems every time they are captured. The Dunnock is one of the problem species. It is useful to compare individuals in the hand when the opportunity is there. On 18th February we were lucky enough to process three birds together, two of which were problem birds and all of which were recaptures with a known history. There are four features to examine - tail, greater coverts, eyes and bill. The tail of the adult in winter is broad and fairly fresh and that of the juvenile narrower, pointed and abraded - unless the bird is one of the increasing number of juveniles which has moulted its tail feathers during the post-juvenile moult. The greater coverts of the juvenile are tipped with a black centre and yellowish blobs on either side of the black. The adult has a less-than-black tip with a dull yellow outer edge only. In juveniles which obey the rules of moult there may be a clear demarcation line between the inner adult coverts and outer, unmoulted coverts. Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether a covert is a well marked adult type or an indistinctly marked juvenile type. The eye of the juvenile is almost grey and, through the autumn and spring, becomes deep reddish brown. Sadly, the rate of deepening of the eye colour varies between individuals. Finally, the bill of the juvenile is pale and there are the characteristic fleshy juvenile gapes. As time goes on the bill darkens and the fleshiness disappears. The bill becomes the darker adult colour at some time between the end of post-juvenile moult and the breeding season - again the bill darkening rate varies greatly between individuals. For the record, here are villains of the tale:-

Ring	Actual age	Eye	Tail	Greater coverts	Bill	Recorded age	Notes
N275331	6	reddish	broad and rounded	adult type	dark	6	Its 10th capture - never any problems with ageing.
N275415	6	lightest of the three	intermediate in shape and width	intermediate	dark	5	Our nightmare bird - copious notes made on every capture so far. Aged as 5 on its first capture in January 2000 because of its light eyes.
P400341	5	reddish	broad and rounded	intermediate	dark	4	NT, RD and CD could not agree on the age so it was recorded as the 'unknown' age 4.

Noteworthy captures January - March 2001

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Song Thrush	6	RX57636	10/2/2001	I04

We ringed this bird as a breeding adult in K02 during April 1999 and have not recaptured it since May 1999. Has it been a resident in the wood all that time? Does the small number of Song Thrushes which we now have in the wood allow individuals such large areas in which to move that they can stay away from areas where we are operating, thereby avoiding capture?

Chaffinch **6M** **N305623** **28/1/2001** **Q02 Feeders**

An infrequent, if regular, visitor to the feeders. This is its fourth capture, the other three being early in the three previous years 1/3/1998, 4/4/1999 and 2/1/2000. Next capture early 2002?

Yellowhammer **6M** **P400349** **7/1/2001** **F04 Feeders**

Our first Yellowhammer of the year, caught at a Pheasant feeding station. Several have been seen near Main Ride South although only two have been captured.

Controls and Recoveries

Species **Age/sex** **Ring** **Date** **Grid**

Blue Tit **6M** **N275411** **16/2/2001** **Babworth Wood**

Our first and, with the Foot and Mouth outbreak, last bird of the winter to be controlled at Babworth. We seem to have had fewer birds moving between Treswell Wood and the Retford area in recent winters - is this a consequence of milder winters? We ringed it at our feeders on 30/1/2000.

Chaffinch **6F** **N275015** **6/3/2001** **Rampton Village**

This is the third Treswell Wood Chaffinch to be caught at the Rampton roost this winter by Mike Archer. He has ringed just over 100 Chaffinches there and controlled three of ours. In Treswell Wood we have ringed 65 and controlled one ringed at Rampton. Mike's ringing at Rampton, which is in a large garden, has been able to continue through the Foot and Mouth outbreak. We ringed this bird as a breeding female in F07 in May 1999 and recaptured her the following December in I04.

Chaffinch **6M** **N884117** **18/2/2001** **Q02 Feeders**

Another fairly local movement of a Chaffinch to add to the movements between Treswell Wood and Rampton. In spite of the numbers of birds ringed at Cottam and its proximity to Treswell Wood, we exchange very few birds (although we recently caught one of the Cottam Bullfinches - Twitter 30). This Chaffinch was ringed at Cottam by Dave Fogg on 9/1/2000.

10 Week Summary - Captures in Standard Sites - January to March 2001

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Duncock	.	1	.	1	.	.	2
Robin	1	1	.	2	1	.	5
Song Thrush	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Blackbird	2	4	.	1	.	.	7
Goldcrest	.	1	.	1	2	.	4
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Willow Tit	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Coal Tit	1	.	.	5	2	.	8
Blue Tit	.	.	.	6	2	.	8
Great Tit	.	2	.	9	4	.	15
Bullfinch	.	1	1
Totals	4	10	.	32	11	.	57

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
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	177	170	616
2001	57	-	-	-	.	(57)
(five visits only)						
Max	124	145	288	253	177	865
Min	59	57	99	68	88	422
Mean	87	108	168	141	131	634

This issue was originally produced on the Acorn computer using Techwriter which exported copies in MSWord format. For consistency it has been transferred to Impression and exported as a PDF file.