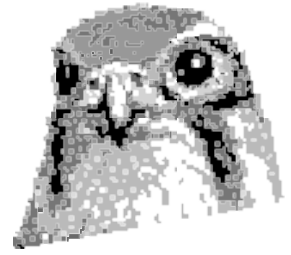


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

October 1999 **Treswell Wood IPM Group**
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

Project leaders:

CBC Margaret Price

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringling John McMeeking

1999/4 - Number 24

Numbers of birds caught in the wood have been just below average again, but still a welcome increase on the past two or three years. There have been some tit flocks in the last few weeks and we have captured some small parties. Goldcrests arrived earlier than usual and in good numbers, the summer-visiting warblers remained until a little later, although we have to wait a little longer to see if we have any spectacularly late individuals. Juvenile Great Tits, which were caught in large numbers at the feeders, are now seen there less frequently and the young Blue Tits are taking their place. As usual in autumn, we have caught a handful of Woodpigeons and one Nuthatch has appeared yet again at the feeders. Bullfinches seem to be present in larger numbers than usual and are our fifth most numerous species on the constant effort sites.

David Thompson who used to work at the BTO, now works in the Netherlands and is engaged in a fully-funded study of laying dates of Blue and Great Tits in Europe. He has data sets from various studies across the continent including two from Britain - Wytham Wood and (Yes, at last!) Treswell Wood.

The leaves will have fallen from the trees by the time you read this. This will make it very much easier to see all those Robins with their coloured rings! All sightings will be welcome. We need to know date, position in the wood and colour combinations of the rings on both legs. Ask John or Chris for more detailed instructions and recording forms - but do not wait for a recording form before you start looking for the birds!

The CES season has come to its end and we will give a full account of it in the next Twitter.

The 1999 Nesting Season

The past three years have been very poor for breeding birds in the wood, as measured by nest recording. This year appeared to be wonderful at first. In fact, it is just average. It just seems like a good year compared to the last three! We put the same lack of effort into recording open nests - that is we only record those we notice on the nestbox rounds with no active searching. Our open-nest record is the worst ever with only one Blackcap (spotted beside a mist-net pole) and one (failed) Blackbird nest found. Is it increasing age of the observers or is it a continuing real decline in nesting activity? The four Swallow nests were all at Stanhope Farm.

On the positive side, our Tawny Owls produced two young - the first time since 1987 that we have had this many fledging. Our Stock Doves have also done better than ever before (and delayed this report on the nestbox season with a late brood). Both broods were successful, fledging the statutory 2 young each. Prior to this year, Stock Doves only used our boxes in 1979 (2 fledged), 1980 (nest usurped by Tawny Owl) and 1983 (only one fledged). It is possible that there were not just the two broods we recorded, but one or two more nearby in a natural site. Stock Doves are multiple-brooded and may lay the next eggs before the present brood have fledged. They do this by laying the next clutch in a different nest from the previous. This process continues through the season, alternating between two nest holes. This procedure also gives the deep layer of guano a chance to dry between clutches. With our pair, there was sufficient time between the broods to allow them to have nested elsewhere. Before the 2000 season we will provide them with a second box near the first. The used nest, complete with guano, has been saved for the National Nest Reference Collection in Glasgow University Museum.

Coal Tits and Marsh Tits have continued to use boxes in small numbers. Coal Tits seem to be more successful in the dormouse boxes in the southern part of the wood. Marsh Tits do better in the north where two pairs have used the stump boxes again this year.

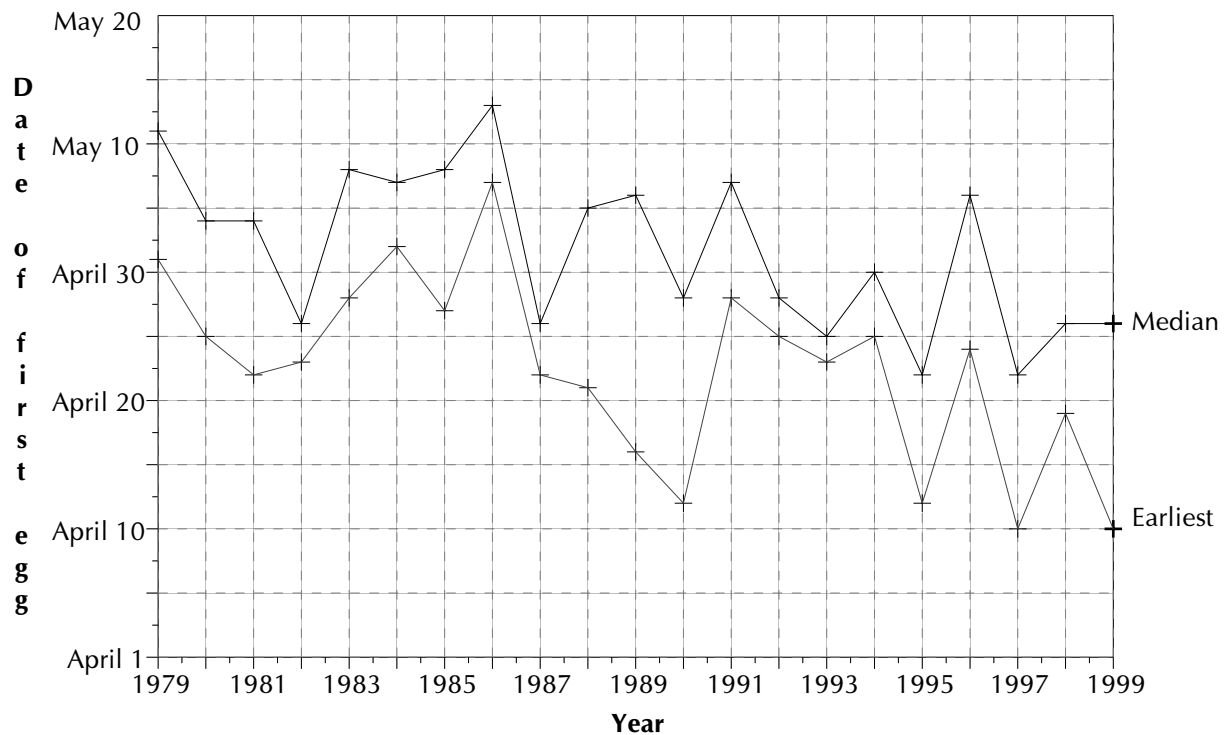
Our Blue Tits have had varied success - the south has not been particularly good with 60% of broods failing mainly through predation or weather. In the north, success was better with 75% of nests succeeding. Few nestling-ringed Blue Tits were recaptured in the first weeks after fledging, but numbers have increased somewhat since then. Great Tits, on the other hand, have fared better with 90% success in the south and 75% in the north. We recaptured large numbers of juvenile Great Tits, many at the feeding station, and it is a puzzle why the juvenile Blue Tits do not take advantage of the free peanuts in the same enthusiastic way as do the Great Tits.

We have another Nottingham University student, Kate Maddison, who has been collecting DNA samples from the

nestlings. Unlike in 1998 when all things conspired to make the work difficult for Dave Barritt and Koon Wah, all has gone well this year with low predation, higher numbers fledging and more being recaptured. Kate begins her laboratory work shortly.

The trend towards earlier nesting continues. This is in line with national findings for some species and it has been suggested that it is linked to global warming. Our Great Tit nesting times are illustrated below for all years from 1979. The two lines show the date of the earliest egg to be laid in any nest and the date of the first egg in the median nest. This latter date represents typical nesting dates for the years - the earliest first-egg date can be an unreliable measure because a single bird a week earlier than the next can cause an apparent very early season. The data are only for the nests in the north of the wood - there have been too few Great Tits in the south, for too few years, to be able to examine them in detail yet. It would be unwise to lump the two data sets together as it is quite possible that the northerly and southerly birds breed at slightly different times - the two habitats are rather different.

First Egg Dates of Great Tits



Nest records 1999

Species	Nests started	Clutches laid	Successful broods	Adults on nest	Nestlings ringed	Success rate %	Nestlings retrapped
Tawny Owl	1	1	1	-	2	100	-
Stock Dove	2	2	2	-	4	100	-
*Swallow	4	4	3	-	12	75	-
Wren	19	13	10	-	62	53	3
*Blackbird	1	1	0	-	0	0	-
*Blackcap	1	1	1	-	3	100	-
Marsh Tit	3	3	3	2	26	100	7
Coal Tit	3	3	2	1	18	67	5
Blue Tit	58	45	28	31	228	48	13
Great Tit	37	32	25	6	122	68	30

* Nests not in nestboxes. Swallows all at Stanhope Farm.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Kestrel	3F	ES02396	12/9/99	K00

This is only the seventh Kestrel we have captured and the second to be retrapped - it was caught again in M02 on 3/10/99. Our previous recaptured bird on 31/1/82 had been ringed nearly four years earlier on 13/5/78. The other five birds were captured in September 1975, December 1983, February 1990, September 1995 and March 1997. There seems to be little pattern other than lack of captures in the breeding season.

Wren 3 1M5563 19/9/99 F03

Adult Wrens, on the whole, move very little. Juveniles are more mobile but this bird has travelled much further than most juveniles we record. It was ringed, still in juvenile plumage at R99 on 1/8/99. Although the distance between the two capture positions is only 800m, it is still a major move for a Wren.

Robin 4 K463454 26/9/99 G04

Robins are sedentary. This individual has a long recapture history demonstrating this clearly. First captured as a breeding female in June 1996, she has been retrapped seven times with recapture locations at F04, F03, H04, F04, F03, F04 and G04. All these are within a circle of radius well under 100 m.

Goldcrest 4F 5Z1011 19/9/99 F02

Numbers of Goldcrests are well above average this year but so far we have only had one bird retrapped within the wood. If they are staying within the wood we could expect more retraps - it looks as if they are still passing through. This bird was, like rather more individuals than usual this year, a clear adult with very broad and rounded tail feathers. It was also a very heavy bird with weight of 5.8 gm, much greater than the 5.2 gm predicted by McMeeking's Rule from its wing of 52 mm.

Marsh Tit 3 N645173 4/7/99 F04

This bird was ringed in a stump nestbox in O05 6 weeks earlier. By this time it had become independent of its parents and dispersed to the southern half of the wood. It was recaptured again in F02 on 19/9/99 and it may be that it has already carried out its post-natal dispersal and settled into the south of the wood.

Coal Tit 3J N645235 5/9/99 Q02 Feeder

Tits are more mobile than Wrens. This bird, for example, was ringed in the south of the wood (D05) as a nestling in May. By September it had discovered the feeders at the far north of the wood, but where will it settle?

Blue Tit 4 K720213 19/9/99 F02

This bird was ringed as a nestling in 1996 in E07 and has not been recaptured since. Where has it been?

Great Tit 4F J522386 3/10/99 Q02 Feeder

Few small birds live many years. This veteran of José and Ulli's colour-ringing operation was ringed as a juvenile in September 1994 and is now entering its sixth year of life. She is a regular at the feeders but has also held breeding territories in the north-west part of the wood. Is her length of life related to the proximity of abundant food?

Great Tit 3M VS51052 26/9/99 H04

More post-natal movement. After being ringed as a nestling in D06 in June, this bird rapidly discovered the feeders (Q02) and was trapped there in July and August. This capture was back in the centre of the wood. Another bird using the feeders as a fast-food outlet but really living elsewhere in the wood?

Chaffinch 4M K463361 3/10/99 Q02 Feeder

Like many Chaffinches, this male has a record of long gaps between captures. He was first captured, in his first breeding season, on 21/4/96, again on 10/11/96 then on 1/2/98. If the bird knows about the feeders, why is he not caught more often? Or is he good at avoiding the mist nets? Or does he tend to feed elsewhere on a Sunday? (This is a possibility. Householders tend to put out more scraps for the birds at the weekend - this can encourage some birds to feed in gardens rather than in their normal habitat. A study on gulls on Manchester rubbish tips showed a weekly pattern of activity with fewer old birds arriving at the tip at the weekend when they knew there would be no dustcarts being emptied.)

Controls and recoveries**Sparrowhawk 6M ES98891 28/8/99 Chainbridge Lane, Lound. 8 km, NE**

Phil captured this at the Chainbridge Lane nature reserve on his last CES visit of the year. He had ringed it in Treswell Wood on 31/3/96 and we had not recaptured it since. When ringed it was a young male and we presume it was, at that time, still wandering around looking for a territory.

Blue Tit 5F N408400 5/6/99 F03

Ringed by Dave Fogg at Cottam on 30/8/98. Shortly after being retrapped she was found again nesting in a Dormouse box in F04. The nest was started late in the season and failed to produce any fledged young. Late nesting birds are often less successful than earlier birds - caterpillar crops are past their peak and, in recent summers, we seem to have had more very wet days than formerly.

Willow Warbler 4F 9G2976 5/6/99 R99

Controlled as a breeding female in R99. This is one of our very few Willow Warbler controls, and also one of the very few between-year captures.

10 Week Summary 1999 Interval 4 Visits 1420, 1425, 1423, 1424, 1426, 1422, 1427 (Standard Sites only)

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Kestrel	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Woodpigeon	2	1	.	.	.	.	3
Wren	.	.	3	1	.	.	4
Dunnock	1	.	8	2	.	1	12
Robin	2	.	10	1	.	3	16
Blackbird	.	.	2	.	1	.	3
Blackcap	.	.	2	.	.	.	2
Chiffchaff	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Willow Warbler	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Goldcrest	4	.	10	.	.	1	15
Long-tailed Tit	13	.	.	2	.	.	15
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	.	2	3
Coal Tit	.	.	2	.	.	1	3
Blue Tit	.	.	3	1	.	5	9
Great Tit	.	.	4	1	.	4	9
Treecreeper	1	.	.	2	.	2	5
Chaffinch	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Bullfinch	.	1	7	.	1	1	10
Totals	24	2	54	11	2	20	113

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1997	59	99	126	98	98	480
1998	78	84	116	80	106	464
1999	88	96	140	113	---	(437)
Max	124	145	288	253	177	865
Min	59	57	99	68	88	422
Mean	87	108	171	140	127	637

Old nests and bits of birds

It is not uncommon to find dead birds (often car victims, for example) which are in really good condition and it seems a pity not to use them for something. Here is what can be done with them.

For analysis of toxic residues in body tissues, **MAFF** are keen to carry out autopsies on predatory birds which, being at the top of the food chain, are most exposed to accumulations of these residues. **Wollaton Hall** - the county museum - welcomes specimens for mounting and display (often as part of their educational service). The **Natural History Museum**, (Department of Ornithology at Tring) houses Britain's foremost collection of bird skins which are used for research. (We have called upon them when trying to separate Marsh and Willow Tits). They are happy to have any birds in good condition to add to the collection, the bulk of which dates back to Victorian naturalist-collectors. Recent specimens are in short supply - for instance, when we visited two years ago there was a grand total of only 2 British Collared Doves! **Jerzy (Mr Mite) Benhke** can make use of specimens which have mites on the wing feathers. For these, the condition of the rest of the bird is not important, but it is important to freeze the specimen quickly so that the mites remain in situ on the wing feathers.

The main problems in making use of them are those of keeping the body in good condition and transporting it to a suitable place. Chris now has a freezer dedicated to storing bird bodies for eventual transport and he is happy to add any more to the collection.

Last year the **National Nest Reference Collection** was founded at Glasgow University Museum. It received about 125 nests from all over the country. Like many national biological collections, it depends for its success on specimens collected by amateurs. TWIG members have collected nearly 40 nests this year, of which 30 have been delivered. If you find any nests which are still in good condition after the birds have finished with them, they would be welcomed by Mike Hansell at Glasgow. Keep the nest in an airtight container and give it to Chris who will arrange to send it north. Note that not all used nests are suitable - after a brood of a dozen Blue Tits have done their worst, there is only a squashed and messy layer of decaying plant material left!

If you have any such birdy material for the museums, telephone Chris at 01427 848400 or John at 01636 830389