

TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

November 2001 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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We have suffered a few delays in the production of this issue of Twitter and the time for the next issue is fast approaching. Our intention was to have some analysis of the capture patterns for interval four over the last few years and to compare it with this year's standard site captures which have been far from typical. This analysis will now appear in issue 35. If you are a recipient of a paper copy of Twitter you will have issue 35 at the same time as this one. Readers of electronic copies will receive the two separately. Apologies for this delay - it is in keeping with a thoroughly disrupted year.

CBC 2001 - from Margaret Price

I completed the species maps much more quickly than usual in spite of the fact that Richard and the Bartleys made 10 visits each. Stuart only managed four visits because of the demands of the farm at that time and a family bereavement.

The Wren map is well covered as usual but with a reduced density. Three male Song Thrushes had a singing match in G and H and I think the BTO estimate will be eight pairs, the same as last year. The nest record team found 4 boxes occupied by Stock Doves compared with an estimated 1 breeding pair in 2000. There were two records of purring Turtle Doves at the north end of the wood; whether the BTO will consider that constitutes a breeding pair we wait to see. There were only two records of singing Willow Warblers in A, and 3 in F of which one had crossed the ride from G.

There were no records of Grey Partridge, Woodcock, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, House Sparrow, Linnet or Redwing, all these having been recorded as present in 2000, and none of Goldcrest (one breeding pair in 2000), Nuthatch (one pair) or Carrion Crow (two pairs).

John McMeeking adds: *Missing the early weeks meant a smaller total number of registrations, and it will be interesting to see what the BTO analysts are able to make of the data. Congratulations to our census team for giving them so much to analyse.*

CBC 2000 - Teals and Tawny Owls, Redwings and Red Faces.

Diligent readers will have noticed three new species recorded in the CBC during 2000 - Teal, Green Woodpecker and Redwing. The Green Woodpecker is not a surprise as they have been heard, seen and caught at other times of the year recently. Teal was a surprise, particularly as none of Margaret Price's team would admit to recording it. Margaret enquired about it at the BTO, where the maps are prepared, and they found the record eventually. It was not a Teal, but a Tawny Owl whose record had been mis-read. Sorry to have raised false hopes about a new breeding species. Steve Wain queried the newness of the Redwings. As he has been painstakingly computerising the CBC maps he has found records of the species in some previous years. It seems that, in those years, such records of Redwings were regarded as birds which had not yet begun their return journey and were not included as breeding season records. The 2000 map-makers, on the other hand, did include Redwings in the CBC record for the year. As with sightings in earlier years, it is most probable that these birds were also late departers.

News from the Netherlands

David Thompson recently sent a preview of some of the work of the European Parus Project in the Netherlands where they are studying laying dates of Blue Tits and Great Tits across Europe. He has been given all the relevant Treswell Wood data to add to the collection from a dozen or so other sites across the continent. All the sites have long-term data sets and David has done the analysis for the 20 years 1979 - 1998. There are not many places in Europe which can boast such a consistent long-term set of observations. His graphs show variations across the

continent with some places showing clear temporal trends (Treswell Wood and Wytham Wood show significant movement of the laying season of about half a day earlier per year, for example). Some other places show no temporal trend. Most European sites have far greater proportion of second broods of tits than we have (total number of second broods of Blue Tits here is about 2, of Great Tits fewer than 1 per year). Chris has printed a set of these graphs if you would like to have a preview of them.

Fire in Glasgow

You may have noticed a news report about a fire at Glasgow University Biology Department in late October - although it was a relatively low profile item because it coincided with the beginning of the IRA weapons decommissioning process. I only saw the tail end of the television news bulletin but the building on fire looked very like the home of the National Nest Reference Collection. In fact it was the next building to it. Mike Hansell reassured me that our nests were safe although the losses in the building next door were tragically great. His reply read: *Dear Chris*

All is well with the nests. It was not our building, it was the Botany building. You may be able to picture it as the 'Scottish baronial' style stone building on the left hand side of the gate as you come in to visit the Zoology building. It is virtually a total loss although about half the ground floor offices are still physically there. The roof is totally gone and most of the first floor burned out. Linneaus first editions and other rare books destroyed, plus research data. It has had the effect of giving greater urgency to the moving of the remainder of the nests out of 'temporary' roof store and into our new room. Hope all is well with you. Mike

Hornets and wasps

Hornets have been more noticeable this year than last. There were queens present in three boxes on the first two nestbox visits in May but thereafter none was seen in or near boxes. Instead there was a record number of wasp nests in boxes - 12 had been in use by the time of the last nestbox inspection at the end of June - but still no hornets. Thereafter we noticed them quite often flying around the wood. We have now located five nests and it is possible there may be more. By the time you read this, of course, the nests will have finished, all the workers will be dead and the queens beginning their hibernation. The first nest discovered was in a nestbox in Windy Ride. It is not a good idea to discover such a nest after you have set a mist-net outside it. The second was near the car park. Again this was discovered when the insects were seen near the mist net. This nest is just above mist net height and the insects continued flying in and out of their nest all morning without being disturbed by the net or ringers. Some hornets were seen landing on the roof of the hut in the car park and apparently chewing the laths which secure the roofing felt. Presumably this was for pulp for nest making. Tony Kennedy found a third nest in a hole in a dead birch trunk in block G in the area where the pigs are located. The fourth nest is in a large nest box near the pond and the fifth in a tit box in G03. Hornets were still active during the first week of November.

We have been very impressed by the hornet behaviour. They seem to be intent on their work and are not bothered by us provided we keep clear of their flight paths. These flight paths seem to be very well demarcated. It is possible, for instance, to observe them safely from as little as three metres away. However, stand in their flight path, on the other side of the nest, even several more metres away and they will warn you to move away. From experience, the sting comes only when you do not heed the warning. The timing of the nest building is interesting - the Windy Ride nest cannot have been started until the last week of June at the very earliest. Where is the queen earlier in the year? Wasps do not seem to be faring so well. The eight nests were, in effect, all failures. None of them went behind the golf-ball sized stage. That means the founding queen failed to produce workers so the nest ended with just the queen's initial structure. Hornets and wasps are not supposed to live happily near each other - the smaller wasps suffering competition and predation from the much larger hornets.

During the winter, when the nest boxes are checked and replaced or repaired if needed, we will move any which face directly onto a ride, just in case 2002 also turns out to be a good year for hornets.

Last year, Tom Ings of the Bee, Wasp and Ant recording Society was kind enough to explain what our hornets were up to. I was intrigued by the number of wasp nests in boxes earlier this year and sent another cry for help to Tom . He has again thrown some light on what is going on. My question to him was this. *I have had boxes in Treswell Wood for nearly 25 years. In this time I have had many wasp nests the size of a golf ball. In fact, this year I have a record 12 such nests. Mike Hansell tells me that all of these are, in effect, failures because they have been built by the queen but have not reached the second stage where the workers add to the nest filling the box and rearing many more wasps in the next generation. Can you tell me if it unusual to have such a high proportion of nest failures (100% in 25 years) or is there some other explanation?*

From Tom Ings

Your records of hornet nests would certainly be of interest to BWARS. As for the wasp nests it is not unusual to have such a high mortality rate as the wasps reproductive strategy is to produce large numbers of offspring so that

some will survive. If I remember correctly Robin Edwards in his book on wasps suggested that of all the new (unmated) queens emerging from a colony up to 99% would not survive long enough to find a suitable hibernation spot. A similar proportion will then perish during hibernation (predation, fungal attack etc.) and then of those that emerge in the spring a similar proportion will not successfully establish a nest. Those golf ball sized nests, which are in fact abandoned queen nests as you were informed, are only part of the picture as many queens die before they start building the nests. Some will also die due to other queens trying to steal their nests, and you can sometimes observe a number of dead queens in the vicinity of a nest.

John McMeeking has also made enquires at NWT and Wollaton Hall about hornets in the county.

After finding this unprecedented number of hornet nests, we felt we must look at earlier records in Treswell Wood and in the county as a whole. We have searched our field notes and the first record was of a single hornet on 5 July 1987. It was warming itself in the early morning on the top of a nest box in block F. Since then we have seen occasional individuals. On 23 May 1992, we saw a hornet in M07 which seemed to be prospecting in a hole in a dead branch high in an oak tree. We saw it again on a later visit but it did not, apparently result in an active nest.

John has talked to Norman Lewis and to Sheila Wright, who keeps the insect records at the Biological Records Centre at Wollaton Hall. She tells us that only occasional individuals occurred in Nottinghamshire until the 1980s, but that they have been spreading northwards through Britain for about 20 years. The first colony in Sherwood Country Park was found in 1986 and they have been regular there since that time, in Wollaton Park since 1989 and at Budby since 1992. They have gradually spread during the past 15 years with records scattered throughout the county and they are now found in South Yorkshire.

Sheila has also told us that nests have an average of 20 workers in July, increasing to an average of 190 in mid-September, and then declining rapidly. This seems to fit in with them not having started using our boxes up to the end of June. By comparison, many common wasp nests involve around 2000 individuals - no wonder they can be so dramatic. One UK study of hornets showed that 6% of nests were underground and 94% in 'covered aerial structures' - especially hollow trees. Bat-boxes are favourite sites in Budby.

One extra word of warning - the median wasp, *Dolichovespula media*, has also been spreading north from the continent during the last five or six years and is now widespread in the county. Their queens look very much like small hornets. Sheila wonders whether Chris' record of 'one queen hornet and two smaller ones' in Kirton Wood on New Year's Day 1999 might really have been one hornet queen and two median wasp queens because all the workers would have been dead, not hibernating. Thanks to Sheila for these insights.

Hunting through old field sheets to find notes about hornets in the wood has, once again, shown the value of having field notes computerised. It took a matter of seconds to find all references to hornets in 1996 - Dave Barritt has computerised these notes. For other years it took far, far longer to leaf through the files by hand. Even then, it is far from certain that all notes have been found. If anyone has time to spend entering field notes into a computer we would be most grateful to know.

People and Places

Congratulations to Kyle Campbell (C4941) on his gaining of the C ringing permit and also on his recent marriage to Wendy. Both these momentous events took place in September. Lincoln House Sparrows are not longer safe.

Dave Barritt has returned from Spain and has secured a winter post with the RSPB as a field assistant working with Reed Buntings around Attenborough.

Jerzy Benhke from Nottingham University has visited us again to bring two students, Claire and Clare, who will be examining our mite data for Robins in particular as part of their zoology degree project work. Welcome to all three. Incidentally, now that the leaves have dropped from the trees, any Robins sporting colour rings will be more visible again. Any sightings of these birds will be welcomed and will be particularly useful for the Claire and Clare's mite studies. (Date, time, place in the wood, colours of rings and positions of rings on each leg.)

Dan Bardsley is still away with the Foot and Mouth work. Thankfully the outbreak seems to be over and it is hoped that he will be back with us before long.

John McM has nearly returned to full strength. October 28th was a momentous day when John arrived to report for duty at the very start of the session, for the first time since his pneumonia. Welcome back and many thanks again to all who have assisted with the work through a very difficult season.

Nestboxes in 2001

The season finally closed with a visit on September 30th to check that the last Stock Doves had fledged. The previous Twitter described the bulk of the events and a complete summary is given below. Only the Stock Doves require more comment. The total of 5 broods is one greater than the previous record in 2000. In 1999 there were also four birds fledged in total from only two broods. This year there has been higher predation than in 1999. For the record, our complete Treswell Wood Stock Dove nestbox history is given below.

Stock Dove nests in Treswell Wood nestboxes, 1979 - 2001

Year	Nests		Eggs		Birds fledged
	started	successful	laid	hatched	
1979	1	1	2	2	2
1980	1	0	2	0	0
1983	1	1	2	1	1
1999	2	2	4	4	4
2000	4	2	6	5	2
2001	5	3	9	4	4

Summary of events in nestboxes 2001

Species	Nests		Eggs laid	Birds			% Success rate	
	Recorded	Successful		Adults on nests	Nestlings fledged	Nestlings retrapped	Nests	Eggs
Stock Dove	5	3	9	1	4	0	60	44
Tawny Owl	3	0	8	1	0	.	0	0
Wren	6	2	32	0	13	0	33	41
Blackbird	1	1	4	0	4	0	100	100
Coal Tit	6	4	57	4	27	5	67	47
Blue Tit	38	30	279	38	202	16	79	72
Great Tit	30	12	191	16	78	8	40	41
Woodpigeon	2	1	4	0	2	0	50	50
Robin	1	0	3	0	0	.	0	0
Totals	92	53	587	60	330	29	58	56

Interesting Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Redstart	3J	P400466	19/8/2001	E01

We do not catch many Redstarts - this is only our third. All three have been juveniles in August. The first was in the hot summer of 1976 and caught at the pond, the second in 1979 caught near the dam (E-1) and today's, also caught in that area. They are clearly engaged in post-natal dispersal - will they ever find Treswell so attractive that they come back to breed?

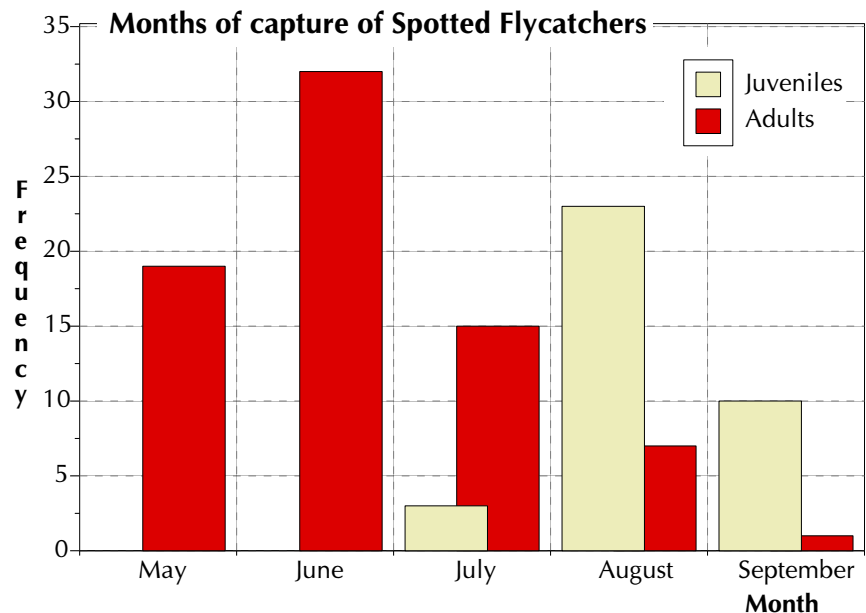
Goldcrest	3M	9Z3020	23/9/2001	P00
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Our first Goldcrest of the autumn and also, a week later in nearby N01, our first retrapped Goldcrest of the autumn. Twitter 14 (October 1997) listed monthly captures of Goldcrests since 1972. Perusal of that will show that, so far, timing and numbers arriving are about average.

Spotted Flycatcher	3	P400492	9/9/2001	L01
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Our second of this species for the year. In addition to these two captures, we have seen the species during the season both in the far north and far south of the wood. The Spotted Flycatcher's main departure from Nottinghamshire is in late August and early September according to Birds of Nottinghamshire. This then was a late juvenile, although not exceptionally late. We have had 10 other September captures, this is our fourth latest. Of these 10, five were on the same day (4/9/1976) during the great drought when many birds were caught coming to drink at the pond.

The distribution of captures within the years is interesting. The chart shows that, not surprisingly, the early captures are of adults, but also that later captures tend to be of juveniles. It seems that the adults may have already departed leaving the juveniles to follow later, when they are ready.



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	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		(305)
Maximum	124	145	288	253	177	865
Minimum	59	57	94	68	88	422
Mean	87	108	168	141	131	634