

# TWITTER

Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

May 2002 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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Project leaders:

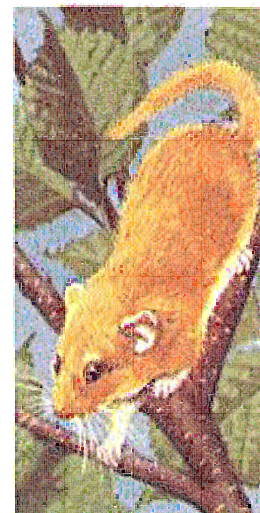
CBC Margaret Price

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringing John McMeeking

2002/2

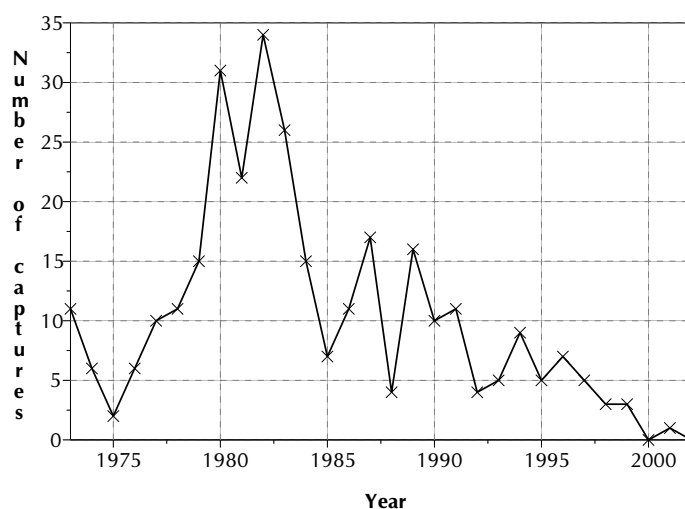
Number 37



Last year was a poor breeding season, not only in Treswell Wood, but in most other places in Britain. This spring we are seeing the results of that season with few new birds being captured and many of our re-trapped birds being friends from before last year's breeding season. Further thoughts on the breakdown of our standard site captures are given below. The numbers of birds caught are moderately low, although the individuals we have captured are not without interest. Coppicing operations continually alter the habitat within the wood and this year we are seeing more Stock Doves nesting and have caught the first Mistle Thrush for thirteen years. Both these species benefit from the open areas within the wood. The mild spring weather led to early breeding attempts although we are now suffering the May showers which have been a feature of recent years and have resulted in deaths of several broods of tits. Summer visitors are low in numbers; so far we have only caught Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps. We have heard Willow Warblers and Cuckoos only once or twice. The shortage of Willow Warblers is not confined to Treswell Wood - other ringers too are suffering to such an extent that Dawn Balmer has asked CES ringers to send in early reports to see how bad the situation is. As far as Treswell Wood is concerned, this is not an exceptionally bad year for the species. It is, sadly, what appears to be a continuation of a long-term, consistent decline. The figure documents this unhappy tale.

On the positive side, Coal Tits have had a good nestbox season with six broods fledged - the previous best was four broods in 1997 and 2001. One brood of 12 young fledged was large enough to generate an 'Are you sure?' query as the data were being entered into the computer. Marsh Tits are nesting again after missing last year. We have two successful broods of them.

Willow Warbler captures in April and May



## Captures in standard sites - March to May

It is not easy to determine exactly what is going on with our spring population. The table below gives the breakdown of adult and first-year birds over the past years (2001 data omitted because of disruption caused by foot and mouth disease).

Year	New Birds			Recaptures		
	Adult	First year	Total	Adult	First year	Total
1995	26	35	61	31	32	63
1996	20	29	49	44	28	72
1997	13	33	46	29	20	49
1998	18	27	45	26	13	39
1999	22	26	48	35	11	46
2000	14	24	38	46	22	68
2002	7	37	44	30	15	45

Two prominent features are the relatively low number of new adult birds and the correspondingly relatively low number of recaptured first-year birds. The overall proportions of new:recaptured birds and adult; first-year birds are

not very different from normal. If there was a generally poor breeding season last year we would expect low numbers of birds in total. We would also expect few of our young birds to be recaptured simply because there were fewer of them available to be recaptured. In other nearby places, with low numbers of birds, adults would tend to remain where they were because of the lower competition for territories whereas the less dominant young birds would tend to move further - some of them into Treswell Wood. That would be a convincing explanation for the proportions of birds of different classes. But what about the total number of new, first-year birds? It is the highest we have seen in the last few years. As usual, explanations should be written on a postcard and sent to John.

## Archival data

We have mentioned before that we have nearly 30 years' worth of casual observations held on ringers' field sheets waiting to be transcribed to computer. Data for a few years have already been entered by Dave Barritt and Darren Clarke, but there are many more years' observations still held only on paper. If anyone would like to volunteer, let John or Chris know. We can provide the computer and training.

We are grateful to the **Whitbread Action Earth Project** which has awarded us a grant of £50. This has been given to help with the computerisation of our records, particularly casual records of butterflies in the wood. Our thanks also go to Barry Prater, the local Butterfly Conservation representative, who alerted us to the existence of the Whitbread grants and arranged the application for us. We have used the money on various computer supplies.

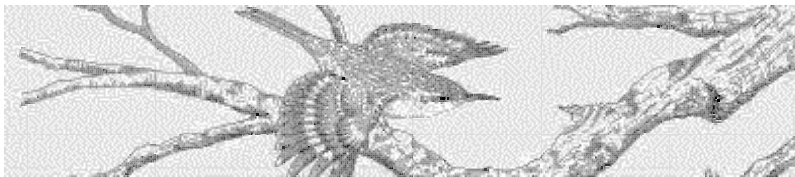
## Thirty years of ringing in Treswell Wood

Neil is organising a dinner to celebrate this event. It is likely to be on November 15<sup>th</sup> at the South Forest Hotel, Clipstone near Edwinstowe. If you would like to be there, contact Neil on 01427 612933 or email [ntaylor@netlineuk.net](mailto:ntaylor@netlineuk.net).

The event is only slightly premature - the exact 30th anniversary date is December 17<sup>th</sup>. Since that time there has been almost weekly ringing in the wood. The CBC team is now in its 30<sup>th</sup> successive season and will have completed it before the dinner. Constant effort netting is a comparative newcomer, now only in its 25<sup>th</sup> year (but still predating the national scheme by 5 years). Nestboxes are even younger with this being only the 24<sup>th</sup> successive year of operation. Junior partner is the dormouse box scheme now only in its eighth year. It does not matter which operation, if any, you are or have been involved in. You are all welcome to join our celebration, meet old friends and, perhaps, lay plans for the future.

## BTO Migration Atlas

BTO members will be aware of the long-awaited Migration Atlas which summarises the known movement patterns of British birds. All ringers, and many others who have taken part in various BTO bird recording operations will, perhaps unknowingly, have played some part in its creation. The book is now at the proof stage - authors and sponsors have seen the proofs for checking. Publication is expected in September. Treswell Wood adherents contributed towards the cost of the Treecreeper analysis which uses some of our data. The price of the book is £55 (and worth every penny) and it can be ordered from the BTO. Members who order now can buy it at the pre-publication price of £39.50



Chris Wernham of the BTO, who has been principle co-ordinator of the work for the book, has agreed that we can give Twitter readers this preview of the artwork which heads the Treecreeper chapter.

## Dormouse Death

The run of mild, wet winters and early springs since the dormouse releases in 1994 and 1995 has been bad for the species. They require cold winters so they can hibernate deeply. In warmer winters they sleep less well, their body temperature is higher and this burns their food reserves more rapidly. Mild early spring weather is also bad because the hibernating animals emerge before there is adequate food for them.

Signs of dormice in the wood have become steadily rarer over recent years and there have been no recent sightings. Eric Palmer's nut hunt, reported in the most recent NWT newsletter, failed to find any signs of dormouse-eaten hazel nuts.

Fortunately, or not, other non-human dormouse watchers have been at work. One headless dormouse corpse was found in a Tawny Owl nest in block D during May. This means that at least one of the species had survived the winter. Curiously, no dormice were released in that part of the wood and there has been no trace of them in the bird nestboxes in that area. Although it is possible that the owl hunted in the southern part of the wood where the

dormice had been released, it seems unlikely. Tawny Owls are highly territorial and there is another owl nesting in the dormouse release area.

The dormouse-hunting owl's nest was well provided at the time the victim was found there. The nest held, in addition to two young owls, about 10 rodents. All were neatly stacked with their heads to the far wall of the box, bodies horizontal at right angles to the wall. Not only had the rather house proud owl arranged the rodents so neatly, it had also sorted them by species. Bank voles on the left, wood mice on the right with dormouse in the middle. Sadly, no camera was to hand at the time of finding this spectacular cache of rodents.

## Hornet Hot Spots

The Treswell Wood hornet population seems now to be firmly established. Over the winter, two have been found hibernating in boxes. Hornets have been roosting in at least 15 nestboxes during the spring. We have seen one individual on a pile of sawdust, presumably making use of the finely chopped wood as raw material for its nest. So far, we have not found any making nests in the boxes where they have been roosting. There has been competition for one particular nestbox in G01. First, a tit started building its nest but seemed to be deterred when a hornet started roosting in the box. For a fortnight the nest remained just as a thick covering of moss on the floor. Then, with the hornet still roosting in the corner, a Wren commandeered the box and built a nest leaving just enough

room free in the corner for the hornet. Eggs were laid and incubation started but, sadly for the Wren, some mammalian predator (probably a wood mouse) attacked the nest and destroyed the eggs. By the this time the hornet seemed to have moved on, leaving the box to its many small invertebrate residents and a handful of large tree slugs.

Recent hornet events are plotted on the map. This shows that hornets are rather selective in where they live. There has been only one seen in the dormouse boxes in I and J, and few in uncoppiced areas A and C. The places where they occur most frequently are recently coppiced or open areas. In looking at the map, bear in mind that the empty blocks E, H and Crabtree Holt have no bird or mouse boxes so will not have been inspected for hornets, but that A, C, I and J do have boxes but few hornets have been found in them.

Hornets and wasps do not live happily together. Last year when only three boxes held roosting hornets, there were twelve wasp nests started in boxes. This year there has only

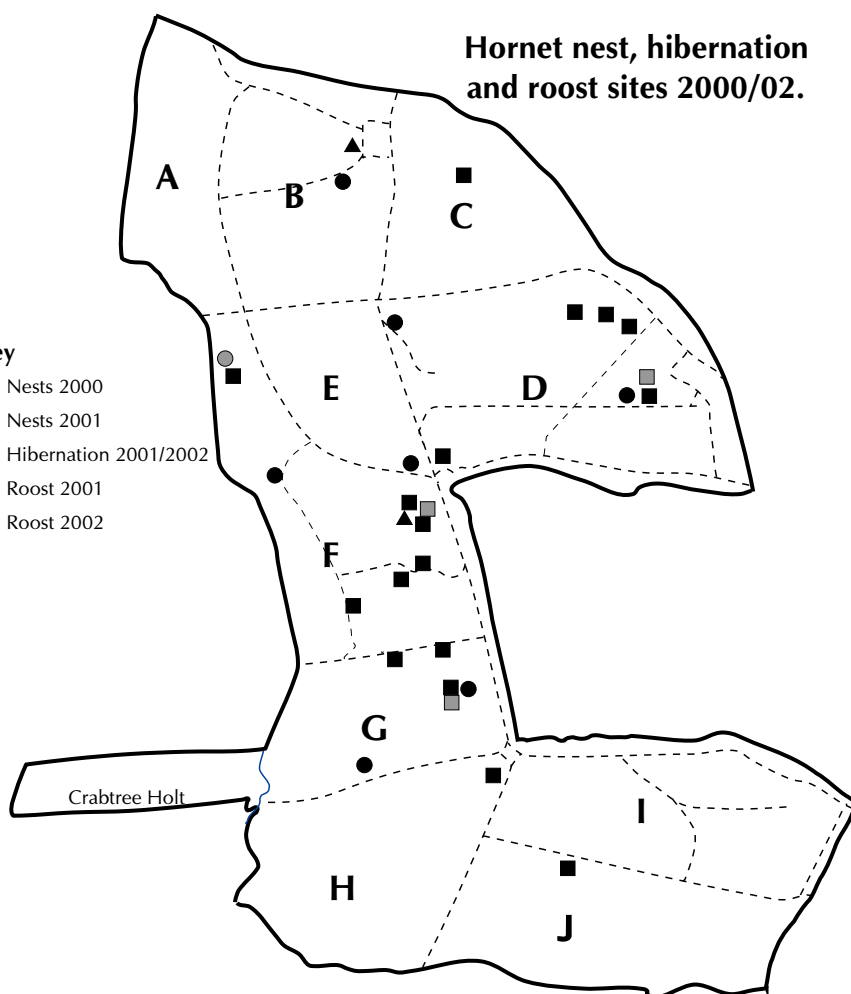
been one wasp nest started in nestboxes so far.

Hornet activity at this time of year seems to take place in the afternoon. The late morning is spent at the roost site sun-bathing until they are warm enough to fly.

## More on mammals

Further to the note in the previous Twitter about water shrews, two more contributions have been forthcoming. First, Margaret Price recalled that Eirlys Gilbert mentioned them to her. Some time in the late 1970s, Eirlys had been walking along the main ride, past the crossroads, when she heard a twittering in the right hand ditch. She went to locate the source of the noise and found it to be water shrews.

Regarding water shrews in trees, David Glue recalled that he used to trap water shrews regularly in Nursling Gravel



Pits, Hampshire. He found them, even in dry bramble and ivy covered woodland, up to a height of about 12 metres.

## Thoughts on Record Keeping

Over the past couple of years we have been devoting more effort to recording things other than birds. The CBC team are on the lookout for mammals and the ringers record casual sightings of various insects, plants and molluscs. A good 'biological record' needs at least four things - Species, Date, Place and Observer. Additional things can be most useful - activity, age, habitat, weather, time, ... However, no observations are useful unless they are recorded systematically and made available when required.

Records of casual sightings are often just notes in a field book. If you are concentrating on a particular group of species, a purpose-designed recording form is useful. Eric Palmer has produced one for mammal records and we have several for the various bird operations, including sight record forms for colour ringed Robins. Records on these forms are very easy to computerise and, once computerised, very easy to use for finding and analysing the data they contain.

Hand-written notes in field books become more accessible when computerised. All that has to be done is to enter the notes as they are written into a wordprocessor. Modern software can be used to search the wordprocessor files for occurrences of particular words from 'aardvark' to 'zebra' (not that we have had many sightings of either of these species in the wood yet). It does not matter what wordprocessor is used. The ringers' casual field notes are stored in plain text format (.TXT files to the PC user) which uses little disk space and can be read by almost any wordprocessor on any computer. All the Treswell Wood bird-related data - ringing, CBC, nestboxes, coppicing, etc. are being stored on computer file. We will be pleased to add any more to the collection. All of the data we have is available to the relevant bodies (NWT, county recorders, national recording schemes).

## Tony's Tea Parties

Tony Kennedy works with his team in the wood every Wednesday on various management jobs. He will welcome any more helpers. If you want to know more, telephone him on 01427-880436. If you just appear unannounced, you can find his work party by heading south through the wood until you find his red van. If he is working elsewhere he will have left a map showing where to find him. Alternatively, if you wish to be involved with some recording work - birds or otherwise - and are free on Wednesdays, Chris is likely to be in the wood too.

Finally, a reminder about Robins. Many adults are colour-ringed. We will welcome any sightings of these individuals at any time of year. Ask the ringers for instruction sheets.

## Noteworthy Captures

There seem to be a large number of noteworthy captures in this issue. We are not sure why because the total number of birds has been below average. Many of our field sheets record very few newly ringed birds and a high proportion of recaptures, some from a number of years ago (although none as old as the new British age record holding wild bird - a Manx Shearwater ringed in 1957 as a breeding adult and last recaptured this Spring where it was ringed on Bardsey Island).

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	<b>5M</b>	<b>DA87111</b>	<b>14/4/2002</b>	<b>D07</b>

The first of two new males caught recently. Both were unringed. Both were hunting in the wood. The second, caught on 5/5/2002, brought us the first juvenile Blackbird we have seen in the wood this year. Unfortunately the Blackbird was in oven-ready condition.

<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	<b>5M</b>	<b>RR11999</b>	<b>5/5/2002</b>	<b>L07</b>
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There are woodpeckers in the wood other than RR11975 at the feeders. This is a young, breeding male captured towards the eastern end of block D. We have not found the nest.

<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	<b>5F</b>	<b>RR11975</b>	<b>21/4/2002</b>	<b>Q02 Feeder</b>
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This bird is now a regular at the feeder. We ringed her as a juvenile in November last year. Unlike most other birds at the feeders, woodpeckers seem to prefer the peanuts to the other foods on offer (mixed grain and sunflower seed).

<b>Mistle Thrush</b>	<b>5M</b>	<b>RR11996</b>	<b>28/4/2002</b>	<b>D03</b>
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This is only our thirteenth capture of a Mistle Thrush and it is thirteen years since our last one. This bird was a male in breeding condition, captured on the edge of the newly coppiced area in block H. Richard Johnson has seen Mistle Thrushes several times on his CBC rounds in that area this year. Normally he is lucky to make even one registration of the species in a whole season. It seems as if the coppiced area is the right habitat for these fine birds.

**Coal Tit                      6F            N645301            24/3/02            Q02 Feeder**

One of our 1998 nestlings in an unusually small brood of only 3. She has been retrapped regularly in the north-west of the wood since then. Her right eye is now blind - presumably from an injury - but in spite of that she manages quite well and was, at the time of writing, feeding her brood of 10 young in a box in Q0. (*These since fledged successfully.*)

**Blue Tit                      6F            K720595            1/5/2002            F07 On nest**

Blue Tits in the wood rarely move their breeding territory much between seasons. This, now mature, bird was trapped in a nestbox as a first breeding season bird in May 1999 in J03. The following year she was found nesting in L00 which is under 200 metres distant but already a little further than is typical for a between-season move. In 2001 she nested in F06 - about 350 metres distant and in a completely different sector of the wood. This year she has appeared, again in a nestbox, within 50 metres of last year's nest site.

**Great Tit                      5F            P400741            14/4/2002            D07**

When we ringed this bird we noted that its plumage was very differently coloured from the normal female. It was as if she had been painted by someone following the instructions for Coal Tits. It would not have looked out of place amongst the *Parus major cinereus* subspecies which inhabits the Indian subcontinent. (We are not suggesting it had come from there - the furthest place from which we have ever controlled a Great Tit is in Shropshire.) We believe it is nesting in one of our boxes and hope to confirm this and trap some of its offspring eventually.

In 1979 when we first installed large numbers of nestboxes, the Retford Times printed a short report on them. The non-ornithologist reporter mis-heard the name Great Tit and her article contained references to the Grey Tits which nested in our boxes. The Grey Tit has taken 23 years to arrive, but it is here at last.

**Chiffchaff                      4            4M9899            7/4/2002            N-1**

The first warbler of the year and one with an interesting history. He was trapped as a breeding adult last June (see Twitter 33) after having first been trapped by Dave Fogg a month earlier, in breeding condition, at Cottam. This year he had only very recently arrived when we caught him because we had heard no singing Chiffchaffs earlier and he was not yet in breeding condition.

**Blackcap                      4M            K720598            7/4/2002            P01**

The first Blackcap of the year - and a retrap too! Blackcaps are very site-faithful as a rule and are frequently retrapped every year almost in the same net site in the wood. This one is unusual in that we had not trapped it until today since we ringed it as a breeding adult in 1999.

**Treecreeper                      6M            8Y3378            28/4/2002            F06**

Treecreepers in the wood have very large territories indeed, typically there are only three territories within the whole wood. This old bird (ringed as a juvenile in 1998) was trapped in breeding condition in a mist net with two young females, both in breeding condition, as if they were moving about as a threesome. BWP notes that occasionally (about 1% of the time) male Treecreepers may have two females, each with her own separate nest. It may be that this male is one such creature. What will the CBC tell us about Treecreeper territories this year?

**Greenfinch                      6F            VR78844            7/4/2002            Q02 Feeder**

We have only trapped a very few Greenfinches in the wood recently - why this should be is unclear because they seem to be abundant in gardens. Retraps are rarer and this one is really a prize one. It was ringed by Ulli, as an adult, in April 1997 and we had not seen it since. She is now rather old (the bird, not Ulli) having fledged in or before 1995.

**Chaffinch                      6F            K463332            21/4/2002            Q02 Feeder**

Our oldest-known recapture of the year. We ringed this vintage model in May 1996 and, apart from one capture in April 1999 in L07, all her other appearances have been at the feeder. Today's capture was her first since 1999.

**Yellowhammer                      6M            P400349            31/3/2002            P01**

Our only recent retrap of this species amongst the parties that have come into the wood attracted by grain for the Pheasants. We ringed her 14 months earlier, as this time coming into the wood for Pheasant food.

**Controls and recoveries**

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
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<b>Tawny Owl</b>	<b>10F</b>	<b>GF73596</b>	<b>24/3/2002</b>	<b>D04 Found dead</b>
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This was the female who nested last year unsuccessfully in a box in the south of the wood. She was found on the CBC rounds very freshly dead but with no sign of any injury. Her corpse will go to the Natural History Museum for their skin collection. The southern part of the wood where she had her territory is not devoid of Tawny Owls for there is another nest this year about 100 metres from where this bird nested.

**Robin 4 P400185 24/3/2002 R01 Dead on road**

Ringed as a young bird in October 2000, we have only retrapped this bird twice since. All its captures were in the far north-west corner of the wood, from where it met its end when flying across the road in front of an oncoming vehicle.

**Blue Tit 6F P847707 24/4/2002 F09 On nest**

Another of Peter Harrison's exports. He ringed her in Sturton-le-Steeple in November 2001. Incidentally, another of his Blue Tits, ABY305 which we trapped at the feeders earlier in the year, has also nested in the wood.

**10 Week Summary - Captures in Standard Sites - March - May 2002**

2002 Interval 2 Visits 1538, 1540, 1534, 1539, 1536, 1535, 1537

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Sparrowhawk	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Wren	1	6	.	3	1	.	11
Dunnoek	1	3	.	4	1	.	9
Robin	.	7	.	4	.	.	11
Blackbird	1	3	.	1	.	.	5
Song Thrush	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Mistle Thrush	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Blackcap	.	1	.	1	.	.	2
Chiffchaff	1	1	.	1	.	.	3
Goldcrest	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Long-tailed Tit	2	.	.	3	.	.	5
Willow Tit	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Coal Tit	.	.	.	.	2	.	2
Blue Tit	.	6	.	5	6	.	17
Great Tit	.	2	.	1	5	.	8
Treecreeper	.	1	.	4	.	.	5
Chaffinch	.	3	.	1	.	.	4
Bullfinch	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>89</b>

**Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week Periods**

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
<b>Averages</b>						
1978/9	98	123	212	157	127	718
1980/4	85	116	179	138	138	656
1985/9	98	117	189	135	115	655
<b>Annual data</b>						
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	59	(364)
2002	85	89				(174)

Note: Bracketed numbers represent incomplete data sets and are not included in summary figures below. Incomplete data sets in 2001 result from foot and mouth restrictions.

<b>Minimum</b>	59	57	94	68	59	422
<b>Mean</b>	87	107	165	140	127	634
<b>Maximum</b>	124	145	288	253	177	865