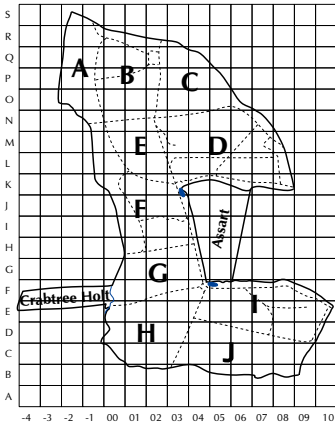


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Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

May 2024 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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2024/1 Number 147

www.treswellwoodipmg.org

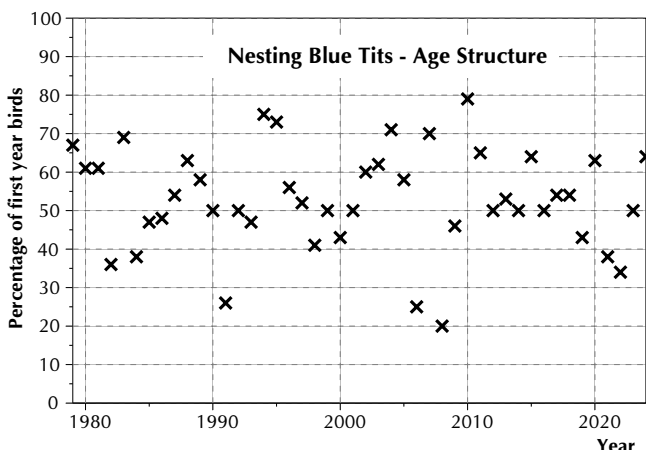
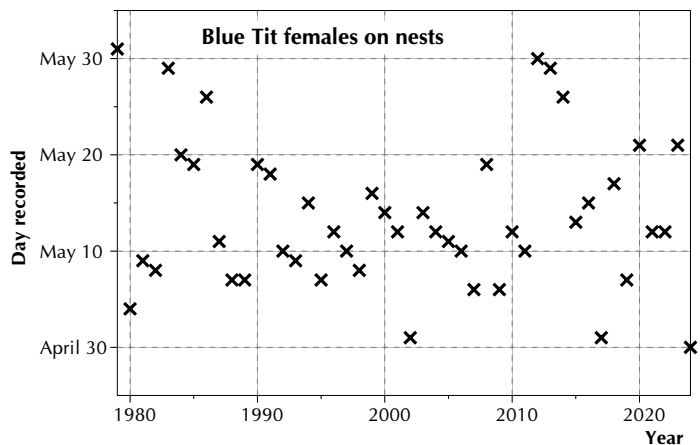


As with the first ten weeks of this year, the second ten week period has been notable for problems with rain and high winds during March and April. This led to an almost unprecedented two missed weekends in March and a change of order of visiting standard sites to be able to work on more sheltered sites. A further unworkable weekend in April forced an unusual mid-week visit to ensure all standard sites were visited. These mid-week mist netting visits are more difficult than weekend ones because ringers are often unavailable because of the curse of work. According to the Met Office, 1,695.9mm of rain fell from October 2022 to March 2024, the highest amount for any 18-month period in England since records began. The wood became very wet indeed with standing water, full ponds and very muddy rides. By May, although several of the net rides were still extremely muddy, the wood was starting to dry. We no longer had water flowing across the main ride, nor large puddles in the car park.

In spite of all the difficulties, captures in the standard sites have been well above average with the highest second interval total since 2017. Long-tailed Tits were up in numbers from recent lows, summer visitors have arrived in good numbers. Very pleasing is the number of Song Thrushes caught. We have not been able to catch birds at the feeder as frequently as usual because of constraints of weather and ringer availability. Even so, captures at the main feeder, when we have managed to mist-net there, have been disappointingly low. Whether this is a good thing or bad is debatable. Does it reflect lower numbers of birds or perhaps suggest that there is sufficient natural food in the wood for the birds not to be tempted to the feeder?

Spring seemed to be a long time in arriving - a feeling common throughout the country it seems. The return of the first summer visitors was very welcome indeed, particularly with an early capture of a Willow Warbler. Two pairs of Tawny Owls are using the high boxes compared to two last year, none in 2022, one in 2021 and none in 2020. Blue and Great Tits are nesting in good numbers and broods, so far, look healthy with relatively little predation. So far grey squirrels and wood mice are the only culprits. Great Spotted Woodpeckers have not struck yet, but with low numbers of woodpeckers caught recently maybe the tits will be spared their attention. We also have one Marsh Tit and one Coal Tit nesting.

In spite of the spring seeming to be so long delayed as far as we can tell at present the Blue Tits have not been delayed. It is too early to be able to be sure because we will not be able to calculate the first egg dates until



all the year's nest records are completed. However, a reasonable estimate is to look at the dates on which we have lifted Blue Tit females from the nest. This is done in the second week of incubation at which point they do not desert (unlike Great Tits which have a small, but still unacceptable, risk of desertion if handled.) We have found 26 Blue Tit females so far - rather more than in some full seasons. The very earliest birds may be unrepresentative of the season as a whole but if we take, say, the 15th bird we should be well towards the central part of the season. The graph shows the date of the 15th

nestbox capture (or last capture in the three years when the total lifted was lower than 15). Too soon to be sure yet, but it does look like a surprisingly early season.

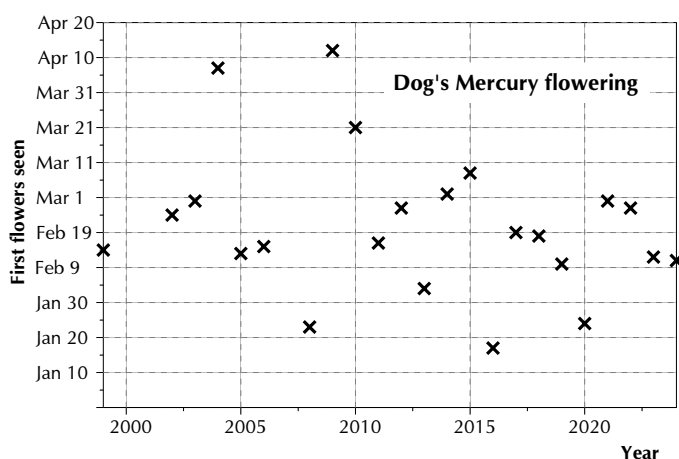
The general feeling of the nest recorders was that there were more first season Blue Tits than usual and certainly more birds (mostly first season birds) which were, as yet, unringed. Again, although it is too early to be sure as more, later birds will be lifted (and these are most likely to increase the proportion of younger birds) so far the proportion of younger birds is higher than average, although not unprecedentedly high. A simple analysis of proportion of young birds against year showed no trend which is not surprising. What would be interesting would be to look at the proportion in relation to the previous breeding season (number of territories, number fledged,..), autumn and winter weather and probably other factors too.

Recording other species

John McMeeking advised: *Record what is there, not what is rare.* We do continue to record other species where possible. March brought our first record of a March Dagger Moth, *Diurnea fagella*. This is a widespread species, common in the Midlands but, like so many species either under-recorded or under-reported. (One might speculate on how many records are made by visitors to the wood but not reported to any recording scheme.) In April we saw a Hairy Shield Bug *Dolycoris baccarum* which is nationally common and widespread. It changes colour from brown in winter to dark pink in summer. Why have we not noted it before? In 2018 we first noted a Scarlet Elf Cup *Sarcoscypha austriaca*. This is a distinctive, small, bright red, cup-shaped fungus which grows on fallen decaying wood and, if you believe the folklore, elves drink dew from it in the morning. We have seen it each year since then and it now seems to be found in various parts of the wood. The national distribution map, which can be accessed via <https://nbnatlas.org/> shows that it is nationally widespread but not at all common. Our previous records are not yet on the map. That also shows another recording problem - even when records are submitted to a recording scheme, they do not always instantly filter through to the Biological Records Centre database and the NBN Atlas.

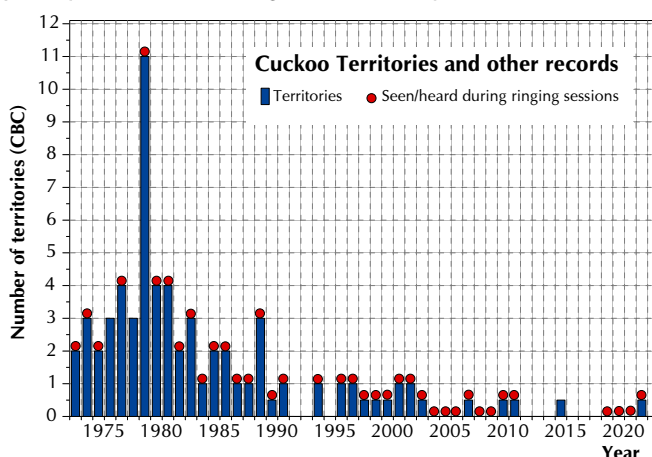
A smooth newt was recorded on 31st March, the first we have noted since 2018. Curiously, in spite of the amount of water, no frogspawn has been noted. That illustrates another recording problem. How does one record absence of species? Simply not making a record because it was not seen is very different from recording that it was not seen.

For the last 25 years we have tried to note the first flowering date of Dog's Mercury, an ancient woodland indicator species. You need to look very carefully to see if it is in flower because the flowers are so inconspicuous. Is there a trend? If so, it is not as marked as we have seen in some butterfly emergence or tit egg laying dates. The very late dates probably result from our failure to record early in the season. At least it shows it can have a very long flowering season.

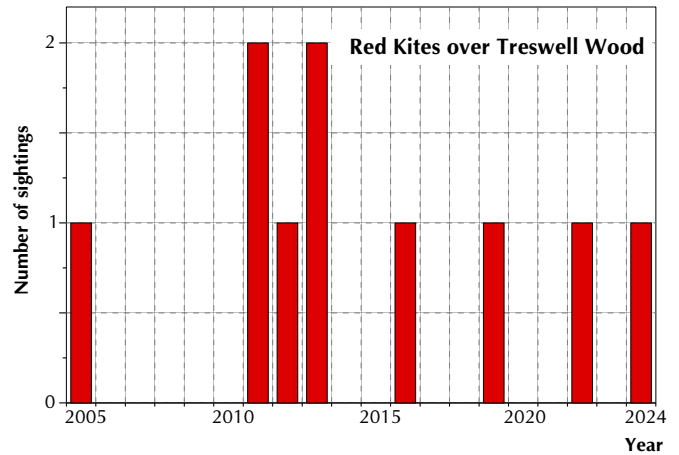


We have recorded Early Purple Orchids, counting the number of flowers in a large patch in the south of the wood and sometimes elsewhere. The large patch has had a maximum of 400 blooms. This year's count of around 50 is very low indeed. Other patches seem much reduced. At first glance this might seem bad news. However, orchids are a law unto themselves and what we seem to have is a poor year for flowering and that may lead to an abundant flowering year in 2025.

A Cuckoo was heard on 12th May - an event becoming increasingly rare. The graph shows the years in which the ringers have recorded hearing a Cuckoo in the wood at least once and the territory numbers given by the CBC. From its early annual presence as a breeding species, it is now a rarity. The last breeding territory was determined in 2002. Since then CBC records are too few and scattered to indicate any breeding territory (such years when birds were present but no territory mappable are awarded a territory score of 0.5 on the graph).



In contrast to the decline of the Cuckoo nationally there is the remarkable growth of the Red Kite population, thanks to careful introductions. In some places it is hard to avoid seeing these birds, sometimes in large numbers. Populations have spread from release areas, some which are really not far from Treswell Wood (as the kite flies). However, they do not seem to have established themselves very locally yet. One was seen over the wood in May. The graph shows the numbers of records made by ringers since the first sighting in 2005, at which point we expected, in vain, they would rapidly become increasingly common. Maybe next year?



And, finally, on other species. In 2022 the Journal of Zoology published a paper *A long-term study of temporal variation in wing feather mite (Acari: Astigmata) infestations on robins, Erithacus rubecula, in Nottinghamshire, UK* R. Peet, A. Kirk, J. M. Behnke. This used the feather mite data we had collected between 1998 and 2013. Apart from being one of the many ringers who gathered the data, Andy Kirk did a considerable amount of work on earlier drafts of the paper and that led to its final acceptance for publication. We have just heard from the journal that the paper is one of the top 10 most cited papers for that journal over the years 2022-2023. It is always good to see our efforts bearing fruit but particularly so when they receive such recognition.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/Sex	Ring	Date	Grid
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Tawny Owl	6F	GM40964	28/03/2024	Q-1 On nest
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Last year we ringed this owl sitting on a nest in the same nestbox as she is using this year. That nest held just one egg which hatched and the nestling fledged successfully. This year's clutch is of three eggs and, at the time of writing the three nestlings are alive and well on the way to fledging. Unusually we have also once caught her in a mist net - in the summer of 2023 in the same area of the wood after she had finished her nesting attempt.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	4F	LK38018	24/03/2024	D03
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Quite a surprise when we found the retrap history of this, the only Great Spotted Woodpecker caught in the last 10 weeks. Most woodpeckers generate a recapture history very quickly. This one was ringed in 2019 without a single capture between then and this capture. It is the only between capture of the species over 5 years we have recorded. The table shows the intervals between successive captures of individual woodpeckers. A gap of over 5 years is a very rare event indeed.

Years	Frequency
0	370
1	25
2	8
3	5
4	3
5	1

Jay	5	DT21918	21/04/2024	Q03
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The first Jay of the year. In the hand they are most attractive birds with some iridescent feathers. They are also excellent birds for trainees to gain experience of a woodland passerine which is much more of a handful than most. The trainee survived this interesting learning experience with no blood drawn.

Marsh Tit	6F	ANE3302	30/04/2024	Q03 On nest
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Marsh Tit numbers do not seem to be as high as they were even two or three years ago. With low numbers of breeding pairs, particularly of sedentary species such as the Marsh Tit, the danger of local extinction is high and recolonisation not easy. We saw this after the hard winter of 1978/79 when the population became extinct. It was five years before they managed to recolonise the wood. This capture is a good sign - a nesting female which was ringed as a juvenile in 2020 and caught frequently since. There is hope.

Blue Tit	6M	AJN3778	21/04/2024	Q03
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We have, from time to time, discussed the folly of sexing birds by wing length. It is as reliable as is sexing humans by height. (There is an excellent picture somewhere of Bernie Ecclestone with his wife and daughters. Who is the shortest, by a long way, of them all?) We even have published a paper on the subject *No sex please, we're biased*. Ringing & Migration, 29:1, 47-50, DOI:10.1080/03078698.2014.932612 A Blue Tit with a wing of only 61 mm would be regarded by some as a definite female. This one has been caught 10 times and the wing remains at 61 mm (+/-1mm depending on between-ringer variation, amount of abrasion etc.). Consistently a bird of 'female' wing

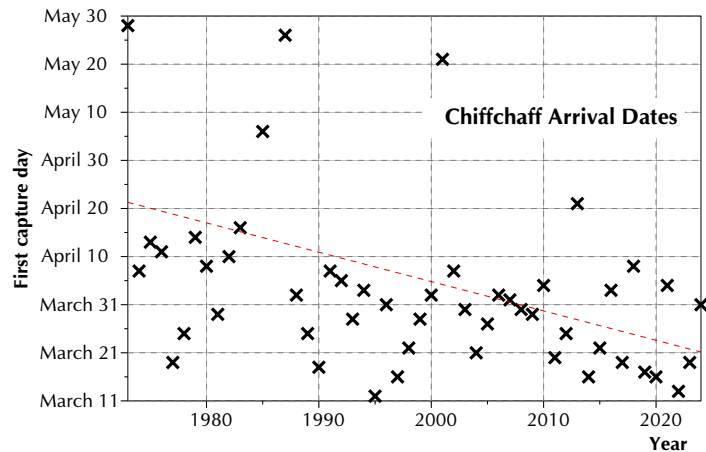
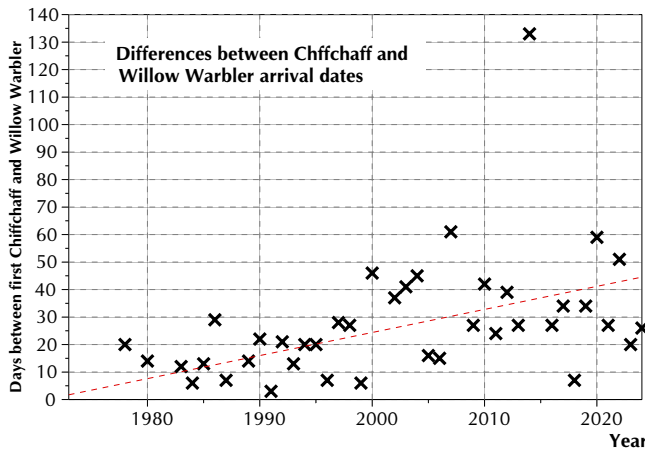
length. This is the second breeding season in which we have caught it without a brood patch but with a full-blown male cloacal protuberance.

Blue Tit **6F** **ANE3102** **30/04/2024** **Q02 On nest**

Another bird with an odd history of non-recaptures. It was ringed in 2019 at a temporary feeding station in the south of the wood. It obviously knows the value of a feeding station. After a gap of over four years it appears again nesting in a box less than 20 metres from the main feeding station. It has had plenty of opportunity to find its way into a mist net set at the feeders but, somehow, managed to avoid them.

Willow Warbler **4** **DRA486** **10/04/2024** **K00**

Our first, and hopefully not last, Willow Warbler of the year. It is the first to be caught here since 2020 although Willow Warblers have been recorded by the CBC team each year. Willow Warblers are slightly later to arrive than Chiffchaffs. The graph shows how much later they have been over the years. The missing years on the graph are ones where we caught none of one or the other species.



Chiffchaff **4** **JTE902** **31/03/2024** **R-2**

The first capture of a Chiffchaff this year and, pleasingly, one with a retrap history. It was ringed within 25 metres of the same place on 20/03/2022. That year, although it was early, it was a week later than the earliest bird that year. That early bird was just one day later than our earliest ever record of March 12th. Overall the arrival of Chiffchaffs is becoming earlier by about half a day per year? The very late year of 1986 was one where we only caught three Chiffchaffs in total and the first was a juvenile, probably not a woodland-reared bird.

Blackcap **4F** **AEZ3290** **14/04/2024** **O06**

Blackcaps are very site faithful indeed, in spite of leaving the wood for (probably) foreign parts for the winter. This one demonstrates that - ringed a year earlier within 40 metres of this capture. A second Blackcap on the same day performed in the same way. Compare these with AEZ3648, below.

Blackcap **4F** **AEZ3648** **31/03/2024** **Q03**

We expect our first Blackcaps to be males, claiming their territories before the females arrive. We often find the first is also a recapture - a bird with previous experience of the wood which knows the way to exactly where they need to be. This bird is a new female. The table shows the sex/history status of our first of the year birds since 1973. A retrap female is certainly unusual but not unprecedented.

	New	Retrap	Total
Female	9	3	12
Male	21	19	40
Total	30	22	52

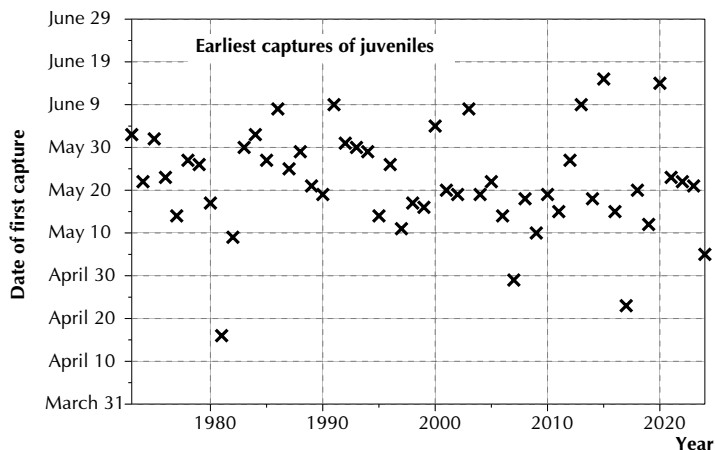
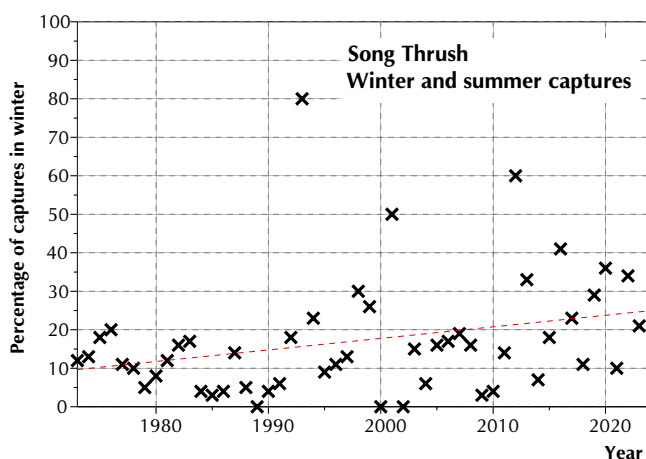
This bird then showed an interesting movement of a type we have sometimes seen in the past. It was recaptured on 14th

May, 300 metres away in a different part of the wood. Such movements are from the first, early arrival to the next capture in what we assume is their breeding territory some distance away. Thereafter they show no real movement away from their chosen spot. It seems that they recognise the wood from above and home in on a major feature - the Main Ride. From there they move within the wood navigating using their previous below-canopy experience to find their previous breeding territory.

Blackbird **3JM** **LK39371** **05/05/2024** **H04**

The first juvenile of the year - always a special capture. Blackbird is our most frequent first juvenile, only just ahead of Robin. Perhaps surprisingly Song Thrush, another early open-nesting species, is well down the list. Of more interest, and also surprising in view of the most unspringlike weather in the early part of the year, this is our fourth

earliest ever data for a capture of a juvenile. Also unexpected it that the first juvenile capture date does not show a significant trend with time. Factors other than the well documented advancement of the seasons must be coming into play.



Song Thrush

6M RF28809

21/04/2024

N02

This bird seems to be a resident, and a highly sedentary one too. It has been captured in April and July 2023 in breeding condition, wintering in November and now breeding again in May 2024. It has always been caught along the same run of nets. Traditionally we regarded Song Thrushes as summer visitors. We believed many were short distant migrants travelling not more than a handful of kilometres to nearby villages. However in the distant past we have also had winter reports of our Song Thrushes in Helgoland (1975) and Southern France (1985, 1995) showing that sometimes winter migration does take them further afield. The graph shows the proportion of Song Thrushes caught in the wood in winter over the year. Winter has been counted as October to February inclusive. Any juveniles caught before October have been excluded from the calculations. There is a trend towards higher proportions in winter (with a few outliers which result from years in which we have caught very few Song Thrushes). Winter behaviour may be changing; we might ask if this is true on a national scale too.

Earliest Juveniles

Species	Years
Blackbird	14
Robin	12
Long-tailed Tit	7
Song Thrush	6
Chaffinch	2
Dunnock	3
Blackcap	2
Treecreeper	2
Mistle Thrush	1
Coal Tit	1
Chiffchaff	1
Wren	1

Dunnock

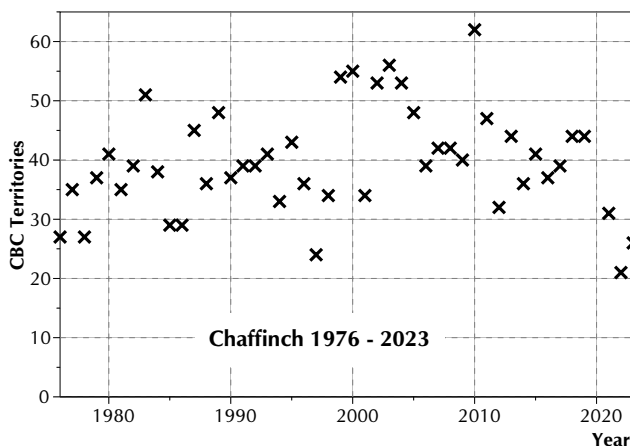
6M TY35005 04/04/2024 L01

Dunnocks are generally very sedentary residents. This one is typical with all its six other captures within 50 metres of today's. It was ringed in April 2021, recaptured later in the year, not seen in 2022, caught once in 2023 and this capture. (Would the lack of 2022 captures be a result of restrictions relating to covid or bird flu?). Contrast this with TY35006 caught at the same time in a different part of the net run but not seen again until today, again within 50 metres of its first capture position. Where has it been?

Chaffinch

6M AEZ3638 24/03/2024 E04

The first of only three Chaffinches ringed so far this year. In addition two more have been released unringed because of advanced cases of scaly leg mite. This total of only five is much, much lower than before the emergence of both scaly leg mite and trichomonosis in recent years. Chaffinches used to be one of the commonest woodland birds. The graph of breeding territories determined by the CBC shows, if anything, a slight increasing trend over the years with, of course, considerable between-year variation. However the last three years have been consistently very low (the 2020 lockdown prevented any survey). This is entirely consistent with the emergence of these two diseases which often seem to target finches.



10-Week Summary: 2024 Interval 2, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Coal Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Blue Tit	.	6	.	9	2	.	17
Great Tit	.	2	.	3	7	.	12
Long-tailed Tit	3	.	.	7	.	.	10
Willow Warbler	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Chiffchaff	11	.	.	4	.	.	15
Blackcap	13	.	.	5	.	.	18
Wren	1	18	.	6	7	.	32
Nuthatch	1	.	.	1	.	.	2
Treecreeper.	2	.	.	1	.	3	
Blackbird	3	6	2	3	1	.	15
Song Thrush	5	7	.	3	.	.	15
Robin	1	3	.	7	2	.	13
Dunnock	.	3	.	7	.	.	10
Chaffinch	2	1	.	.	.	.	3
Bullfinch	1	1	.	1	.	.	3
Totals	42	49	2	60	20	.	173

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

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Maximum	128	198	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	89	66	59	364
Mean	92	115	159	130	126	611

Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods - 10-year Averages

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
2008 - 2017	93	133	151	109	120	606

Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods -Recent years

2010	94	100	144	119	143	600
2011	96	112	120	105	101	534
2012	69	125	132	66	72	464
2014	83	132	181	123	120	639
2015	105	123	136	137	158	659
2016	102	185	193	109	109	698
2017	106	198	163	150	163	780
2018	95	108	182	184	119	695
2020	120	---	---	93	174	(387)
2021	...	163	129	90	109	(491)
2022	83	120	175	99	131	608
2023	106	118	181	91	121	617
2024	102	173				