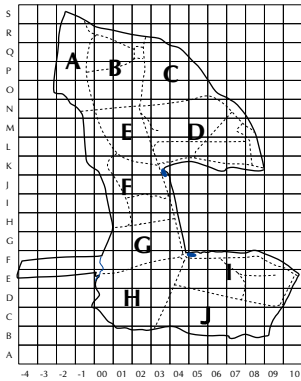


# TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

**May 2012 Treswell Wood IPM Group**  
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

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**Project leaders:**

**CBC** Pat Quinn-Catling

**Nest Records** Chris du Feu

**Ringling** John Clark & John McMeeking

**2012/2**  
**Number**  
**87**



This spring has been unusual in many ways. The warm, dry weather of March encouraged many residents to start breeding activity early. The cold, wet month of April brought much needed rain but also caused an almost complete halt to nesting. Indeed, many tit nests which were part-built in March were abandoned and never restarted. It would appear that some of these birds have abandoned nesting this year and, for many, this will mean never having any chance of breeding at all. Captures in standard sites have been rather higher than average although not outstandingly high. Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs have featured in good numbers and, surprisingly, Wrens have also been relatively common in spite of the very cold spell of winter weather. Robins, too, which were rarely seen earlier in the year, have made a comeback although of the 19 birds captured since mid-March, only two have been adults and only one of those had a previous history within the wood (see Controls & Recoveries). Of the 17 first-breeding season birds, all but two were new birds. It appears that the woodland Robin population suffered a near extinction during the winter. Surprisingly Willow Warblers are heard frequently in the central part of the wood but we have not yet trapped any. The first record of a Spotted Flycatcher - typically the last of the summer visitors to arrive - was on 21<sup>st</sup> May, heard on a CBC round in the south of the wood.

## The Treswell Wood Photograph collection

Over the years we have amassed a big collection of photographs. Some of these date back to the early days and are in black-and-white. In recent years the collection has increased much more rapidly thanks to digital technology. Photographs have not been organised systematically. Indeed, many are still in the hands of the people who took them.

At the February conference the value of a photographic record of the habitat, the birds and the people was noted. We have decided to take fixed point photographs systematically. Our standard netting sites provide the ideal points in both space and time from which to take such photographs. John Clark has already begun this operation which will give, in time, a record of habitat succession between seasons and between years.

What is the purpose of the whole collection? There are many. The fixed point photographs give another way of recording habitat succession and coppicing activity. Images of birds in the hand can be useful in explaining ageing and sexing techniques. Images of other species provide support for records of species, birds or otherwise - such as the Magpie ink-cap. They can also be interesting (or frightening) when comparing the appearance of individual workers in their youth and in later years and do provide a historical record of the efforts that have been made over many years. Pictures are vital when giving presentations or creating displays.

Perhaps this use is the one which most easily shows the importance of systematising the collection. Suppose we required a picture of, say, a speckled bush-cricket nymph. How would we find it? Even with digitised images, it might take a long time to search through computer disk contents. The file name might not be helpful either - why would DSC0034287.JPG indicate that this was the image required?

So, here we have an opportunity for a volunteer (or, more probably, a team of volunteers).

What needs to be done? First, thought must go into planning exactly how to catalogue, store and make available the eventual digital collection. Rules need to be devised to determine which images should be discarded. This is not a trivial task. The solution is most unlikely to involve readily-available and widely-used domestic photograph handling packages such as Picasa. These, if anything, take control of the collection from the user, allow it to become very disorganised and difficult to handle in any way other than the default - which would often be quite inappropriate for our type of operation.

Images - digital, slides and printed - need to be gathered together. Pictures must be selected for retention or rejection. Retained pictures must be identified as precisely as possible - dates, places, subject etc. Non-digital images must be scanned and all (now digital) images stored in appropriately named and organised directories. Each

picture must be catalogued in some readily searchable file using appropriate key words. At that stage everything will be accessible to all.

Any volunteers?

## Ageing and sexing

From time to time we do manage to mis-age or mis-sex a bird in the hand. In difficult cases, the 'bible' which holds capture histories of recently captured birds is invaluable. It is best, of course, to be used as a check on a bird after it has been examined but before it is released.

Two species have given particular problems recently. Great Tits should be easy to age but some can be very tricky. Often the ringer with the bird in the hand may ask for a second opinion. Ringers standing around can sometimes answer very definitely and in contradiction to the original suggestion. Why? These other ringers are looking at the bird from a different angle and light is reflected from the wing feathers in a different way - making a contrast, or lack of contrast, between primary coverts and other coverts very obvious indeed. The solution is, then, for the ringer with the bird in the hand to look at the bird from several angles. This may seem blindingly obvious but it is surprising how often the age of the bird is really obvious only from one particular angle. Also, perhaps not so surprising, is that some individuals are particularly tricky.

Blackcaps present a different problem. We find only a very few with clearly contrasting primary and greater coverts, or retained old greater coverts. Svensson recommends the pointedness of the tail or the presence of brown in the crown feathers as an aid to ageing. Be very careful with these. We have seen, in the hand at the same time, a bird with very broad tail feathers and one with narrow, pointed and abraded feathers. Both were ringed the previous year - the former ringed as a juvenile and the other as a breeding adult. These two are by no means isolated, aberrant individuals. Again, we have seen known full adults with a few brown-tipped feathers at the front of the crown. Some male birds do have obvious brown feathers at the front of the crown, a very obvious bleached large alula feather and duller primary coverts contrasting with glossier greater coverts. Their primary coverts tend to be pointed rather than broad and rounded. These can be safely aged as 5. So beware. Do not rely on tail shape or abrasion. If in doubt, birds must be recorded as of unknown age, 4.

## Moult & biometrics

The moult season is nearly upon us. Tits which have finished breeding, or failed to breed, may begin moult at any time now. For a thorough record of progress of moult it is vital to record the state of moult on all birds, including those which are not yet moulting. It is also important to begin to record moult codes before the season begins. It is worth examining all birds from now on to check for moult. If the bird is not yet moulting, do record the appropriate code (O for adults and J for juveniles) rather than just leaving the moult column on the field sheet blank. There is a big difference a lack of moult data and data indicating a lack of moult.

We have been measuring maximum tarsus length on Nuthatches for some time. This measurement has proved rather tricky for the species because of the long claws which are able to grip the ruler end stop and move the whole tarsus a millisecond or so before you were to read the scale. John Clark has modified a ruler which makes the job of tarsus measurement easier. It is not absolutely proof against the most determined Nuthatch but much easier than an ordinary rule for making a reliable measurement. We also now have two tail rules. One is the BTO official see-through plastic type. The other is a plain thin-metal rule for use by the non-conformists amongst us. Both work equally well.

## Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	<b>4F</b>	<b>CT84440</b>	<b>20/5/2012</b>	<b>P00</b>

One of only six of this species we have captured so far this year. It was ringed last year as an adult. In earlier days we would have been tempted to age it as a 5 - it had some primary coverts clearly older than the black greater, median and lesser coverts. Thanks to the recaptures of the species, we now know that primary feathers and coverts must be ignored when ageing the species. Only a break within the greater/median/lesser coverts can be used to indicate a age code 5 (or 3 in autumn). Every other bird must be recorded as 4 (or 2 in autumn).

<b>Jay</b>	<b>DA51898</b>	<b>6M</b>	<b>6/5/2012</b>	<b>B03</b>
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A retrap from almost exactly a year previously and in the same place. We have often remarked on retraps which happen almost exactly a year after ringing. In fact, these events are not at all remarkable. With our standard site netting we have the same pattern of activity from year to year so, weather permitting, we will be netting at the same site almost exactly a year later. Birds, too, often have an annual cycle of activity, giving us a good chance of retrapping them in the same place at the same time the next year. In fact, the time interval is often 364 days rather than 365, the former number being divisible by seven.

**Chiffchaff 6 CXN206 25/3/2012 R00**

The first Chiffchaff caught this year - just a week after the first ones were seen or heard in the wood - and an excellent recapture too. It was ringed in May 2010 as a breeding adult and recaptured in 2011 (another 364 day recapture interval). Both these earlier captures were in the south of the wood. Today's capture was in the far north. A change of breeding territory is unexpected - it could be that it had just arrived and is yet to make its way back to the south of the wood. Will we catch it there later? Three more were trapped later in the day - more like a mass arrival than a single early bird.

**Blackcap 6M L731147 1/4/2012 J03**

The second Blackcap of the year, a week after the first (unringed) which appeared, unusually on the same day as first Chiffchaff. This one was ringed last June, and returned to within 50m of the same place. As with Chiffchaffs, it seems to be a good year for them. The table below gives the numbers of each species trapped so far this year, by year in which they were first ringed.

	2010	2011	2012
<b>Chiffchaff</b>	2	3	19
<b>Blackcap</b>	2	8	19

**Blue Tit 6F X649801 9/5/2012 M01 On nest**

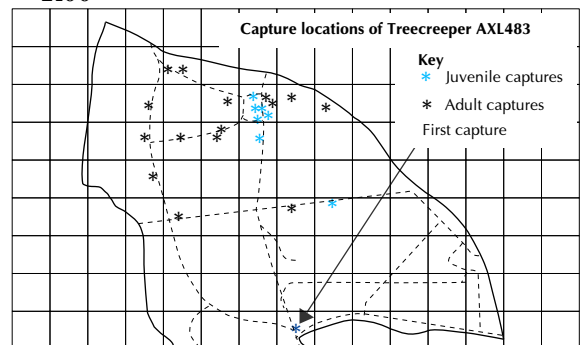
One of the small number of Blue Tits caught on the nest this year, using the same nestbox for the second successive year. It has certainly been worth recording the identity of the sitting females. Unlike Great Tits, Blue Tits tolerate being lifted from the nest (provided it is during the second half of the incubation period). Charles Deeming at Lincoln University has just completed an analysis, which we hope to submit for publication shortly. In this the timing of laying eggs is analysed to see if individual birds tend to be consistently early or late in their egg laying. For this we need to know the identity of the birds, to have records of the same birds nesting in successive years and to know the date of laying the eggs. In addition, Charles has been able to look at the timing of laying by offspring of known females to examine whether laying time is heritable. The results suggest that temperature, in the few days before laying commences, is the main driver of laying date with negligible inherited variation.

**Willow Tit 5 L731551 25/3/2012 R-2**

The first Willow Tit we have trapped since October 2009. We hope it heralds a return of the species to breed in the wood. We did take a very close look at the plumage to ensure it really was a Willow Tit rather than a Marsh Tit. Naturally, Murphy's Law applied and its tail feather pattern was of the rare intermediate type - could be of either species. However, all other features were clearly those of the Willow Tit. We did notice its nasal hairs formed an obvious chocolate brown tuft. We had noticed these tufts in the early 1980s and recorded whether Willow Tits had 'chocolate' or not. They all did and we abandoned recording this feature after two or three years. What about Marsh Tits? Murphy's Law again - this earlier recording happened during the years when Marsh Tits were absent from the wood. When they returned in the mid 1980s, we had forgotten about the 'chocolate' and thought no more of it. However, in recent years we have been looking closely at the nasal hairs of Marsh Tits - all have been jet black. This, of course, coincided with the absence of Willow Tits from the wood. We hope to visit the Natural History Museum skin collection soon to check on a wider sample of the species' plumages. However, it does seem that the nasal hairs could be very useful feature in separating the two species. It is curious it is not mentioned in Svensson, BWP or British Tits. Once you have seen it, it is obvious.

**Treecreeper 6M AXL483 25/3/2012 R00**

Not quite as old as our now presumed dead 5Z1452 but still, at 5 years 8 months since ringing as a juvenile, this is quite a respectably aged bird. It is our fourth oldest recorded Treecreeper and, if we retrap it again it will rise to third place. Typically, it roves over a moderately large area for a small bird, but stays rigidly within that range, illustrated in the map.

**Goldfinch 5M L731663 20/05/2012 Q01**

The arrivals continue - we have trapped 26 this year compared to a total of only 72 in all previous years combined. Part of this must be that they are generally more abundant. Another major factor may be that we are providing niger seed for them at the feeder - although it is only very recently that the species has been coming to feed on it. Previously Marsh Tits were the main customer for niger. This bird, however, was a first. Unlike all the others it was captured in a standard site net and not at the niger feeder. Let us hope it marks the beginning of secure colonisation of the wood.

The CBC record is of presence without confirmed territories during the 1970s and early 1980s, usually occurring only in the far south of the wood. Over the last few years there have been up to two territories recorded, always on the north edge of the wood, mostly opposite Wood House centred around the Q03 area.

**Chaffinch                      6M              R353859              25/3/2012              R00**

The older of two old retraps on the day, 7 years, 7 days since ringing and last retrapped in 2008. Unusually it was not at the feeder. The other, also male, and also not at feeder was ringed a mere 5 years 3 months before and has been seen every year since then.

## Controls and Recoveries

We have enjoyed an unprecedented number of records of birds moving between the wood and Hillcrest Farm in Treswell village. These are summarised in the table and some of the more notable ones listed below.

Species	Wood to Village	Village to Wood	Wood to Village to Wood
Blue Tit	3	5	.
Great Tit	5	2	.
Chaffinch	1	1	1
Greenfinch	.	1	.
Goldfinch	.	1	.

**Species                      Age/sex              Ring              Date              Grid**

**Barn Owl                      2              GR24207              8/2/2012              Gamston Wood**

One of the very late, second brood of Barn Owls at Forwood Farm in 2011 which dispersed as far as Gamston Wood and survived the first very demanding immediate post-fledging period. The cause of death was unknown but appeared natural. This is the first recovery of a Barn Owl from our ringing.

**Robin                      6M              X649255              23/5/2012              Q-1 Ring in Tawny Owl nest**

This was the only adult Robin captured this spring with a previous history in the wood - a history now terminated. We ringed it in 2009 as a juvenile and retrapped it later that year, in 2010, and this year - always in N-1 which is about 150 metres from the owl nest. Its last capture by us was on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, and its terminal capture by the Tawny Owl was within three weeks of that date.

**Blackcap                      6M              X649067              28/3/2012              South Leverton, Road casualty**

We ringed this bird in May 2010 as a breeding male and retrapped it in June 2010. We did not see it in 2011. The British breeding population is thought to be migratory, and a separate population from the wintering Blackcaps travelling west from central and eastern Europe. So, it seems probably this individual had already made at least four successful return trips to, perhaps, Morocco before meeting its end in an unequal collision with a motor car. Of particular interest is the date of finding - this is a very early arrival back. However, we did catch our first Blackcap in the wood a few days earlier than this report, so it would suggest it was on its way back from migration rather than being an odd British breeding bird that had opted to winter in Britain.

**Blue Tit                      6F              X649773              9/5/2012              O03 Dead on nest**

One of just two birds found dead on a nestbox so far this season. This one was killed by a weasel. It had nested last year in a nearby box, hatching 9 of its 11 eggs but all the nestlings died before fledging in last year's mediocre breeding season. Another individual not managing to pass on its genes. Nesting is a very hazardous time for birds. They have the workload of nest building, producing eggs, territory guarding, incubation and feeding chicks. In addition they have to be more alert to predators than at other times - a bird on a nest is, literally, a sitting target. It might be thought that cavity nesters have an advantage over open nesting birds - their nest sites are well hidden. This is true, but if the nest is found and a slimline predator enters the nest cavity, there is a high chance that the sitting bird will not be able to escape and be killed. This contrasts with open-nesters which are more likely to be found but are also far more likely to be able to escape from the nest when the predator strikes. Another of nature's compromises. Perhaps Treecreepers have a better answer - cavity nesting with more than one exit route.

**Great Tit                      5F              L731168              14/5/2012              D03 Dead on nest**

Another nestbox death - probably the victim of a wood mouse which usurped the nestbox. We had ringed this bird as a juvenile in June 2011 and it had been retrapped regularly since then.

**Great Tit                      6F              Y485684              8/3/2012              Q02 Feeder**

Peter Cobb ringed this bird at Darlton on March 6<sup>th</sup> - the time of year when many Great Tits are moving around

looking for territories. We have not retrapped it again so it could well have continued its travels elsewhere. Most of the new birds in early spring are first-breeding season birds - this was a full adult

**Chaffinch**                      **5M**            **L731303**            **23/5/2012**            **Q02 Feeder**

This is the commuting Chaffinch noted in the table above. It was ringed in the wood in October 2011, caught at Hillcrest Farm in the village in March and then returned to the wood to be retrapped.

**Goldfinch**                      **5M**            **L803048**            **20/5/2012**            **Q02 Feeder**

Goldfinches continue to be caught in larger numbers than in previous years. This one is a recapture of a bird ringed at Hillcrest Farm in April - only the second from there to be retrapped in the wood.

**Greenfinch**                      **5M**            **TL92421**            **20/5/2012**            **Q02 Feeder**

It four years since we last trapped a Greenfinch in the wood. We could speculate on why the species which used to breed in the wood and visited the Pheasant feeding stations in good numbers in former times, is now such a rarity. That this one already wore a ring made it even more special - although the distance from its ringing place was, admittedly, rather shorter than other movements of the species we have recorded previously. It was ringed at Hillcrest Farm in September 2011 and retrapped there in March 2012. On the same day we also trapped a second Greenfinch - this one unringed. Another species behaving like the proverbial London buses?

### 10 Week Summary 2012 Interval 1, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	1	9	.	2	3	.	15
Dunnock	1	3	.	4	1	.	9
Robin	1	8	.	1	1	.	11
Blackbird	2	2	.	4	1	.	9
Blackcap	7	6	.	4	.	.	17
Chiffchaff	15	1	.	3	.	.	19
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Willow Tit	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Coal Tit	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Blue Tit	1	1	.	3	.	.	5
Great Tit	1	.	.	6	11	.	18
Nuthatch	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Treecreeper	.	.	.	3	4	.	7
Jay	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Chaffinch	.	1	.	4	.	.	5
Bullfinch	2	.	.	2	.	.	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>.</b>	<b>125</b>

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

**Recent years:**

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2008	125	130	151	86	100	592
2009	57	130	156	85	80	508
2010	94	100	144	119	143	600
2011	96	112	120	105	101	438
2012	69	<b>125</b>				<b>194</b>

**Summary Data** since standard site netting began in 1978:

<b>Maximum</b>	128	145	288	253	177	864
<b>Minimum</b>	57	33	94	68	59	364
<b>Mean</b>	90	108	162	133	125	613

**10-year Averages** since standard site netting began in 1978:

<b>1978 - 1987</b>	90	113	182	140	130	655
<b>1988 - 1997</b>	86	107	170	149	127	637
<b>1998 - 2007</b>	95	100	134	120	125	574