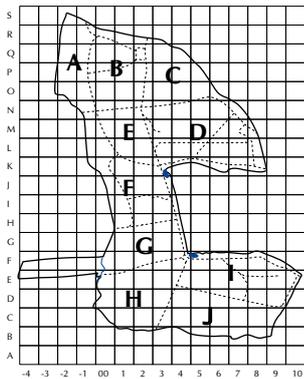


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

May 2004 Treswell Wood IPM Group

(Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

Project leaders:

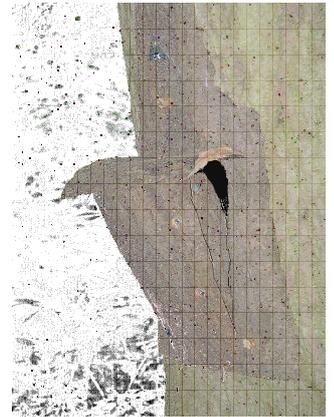
CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringing John McMeeking

2004/2

Number 47



What a difference a year makes. Last year we were enjoying only mediocre mist net captures and devastatingly poor nestbox success with weather and weasels combining to make our worst year ever. This 10-week interval's standard site captures are well above average. The nestboxes have been very successful so far and we have also ringed a number of nestlings in open nests, including our first ever nestling-ringed Bullfinches. Stock Doves are still nesting, as are a handful of Wrens and we will wait for them to finish before compiling a complete picture of the year's events. It looks as if numbers of Great and Coal Tit nests will be higher than usual, Blue Tits will probably be slightly lower (although vastly better than last year).

One feature which is apparent is the smallness of clutches coupled with relatively low hatching success - but the number of nesting attempts is compensating for that. Weather-related mortality has been low as we have had no torrential thundery rain at the time when nestling food demand was at its highest. The biggest difference in the year has been the almost complete lack of predation by mustelids. Alex Lewis saw a stoat removing young Great Tits from one box, and we feared it would be the beginning of massive, systematic nest predation. It proved to be an isolated attack - predation by grey squirrels, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and wood mice has been higher. Tawny Owls have fared better too. Last year we suggested that a shortage of small mammals was forcing weasels to prey on birds and also the caused Tawny Owl nest failures. This year, the species balance seems to be more normal.

Treecreeper Nestboxes

We have, in the past, found a grand total of 3 Treecreeper nests in natural sites and ringed the young in one of them. We have also had one Treecreeper nest in a box but that fell victim to last year's weasels of mass destruction. This year, after 25 seasons, a pair of Treecreepers has nested successfully in a box, at long last, and the five young fledged, complete with rings. We hope to capture some of them before too long.

A note about Treecreeper nestboxes is appropriate. Readers of the various editions of the BTO Nestbox Guides may have wondered why there is no mention of the well known wedge design for the species. The reason is that the design is most unlikely to attract Treecreepers. Although it is often referred to in various books and seen advertised by wild bird products suppliers, its reputation is not founded on widespread use by the species. Last year's nest was in a box of a completely different design. This year we have tried several variations. All of them appear to be like the wedge design but differ in that there is, effectively, no back to the box (picture above). The Treecreeper can enter the box without its feet having to leave the bark surface. Whether this nest is just a lucky chance or whether we have found a design which works better than the useless traditional wedge, we wait to see. Even if the birds are attracted to them, we should not expect many of our boxes to be used. In spite of their small size, Treecreepers have very large territories. The CBC team have never recorded more than 7 pairs and the average number recorded in any year is only 3. Contrast this with the similarly-sized, invertebrate-eating Wrens which have, on average, 70 territories within the wood and may, in a good year, have over 100 territories.

From Margaret Price

I am very sorry to have to stop my connection with Treswell Wood CBC but spring chickens do become old ladies who have to adapt their activities to much reduced energy - so all of those of you who have recently retired and are going with all guns blazing, make full use of your time and energy. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. John McMeeking assures me that I shall continue to receive Twitter and I hope to meet you all again - perhaps at Pat's next year? I leave the CBC team in her good hands.

East Midlands Ringers' Conference

Readers who have received their BTO Ringers' Bulletin will already know that this conference will meet in Keyworth Village Hall, just south of Nottingham, on Saturday September 18th 2004. Treswell Wood IPM Group

members are acting as hosts for the BTO, with Neil Taylor doing most of the organisation. Full details are available from Neil on 01427-612933 or John McMeeking on 01636-830389 and we would be particularly pleased if one or two non-ringers would be willing to help with administrative and domestic tasks. (Attendance is not limited to ringers - anyone involved with the work in Treswell Wood will be particularly welcome.)

National Nest Reference Collection, Glasgow University Hunterian Museum

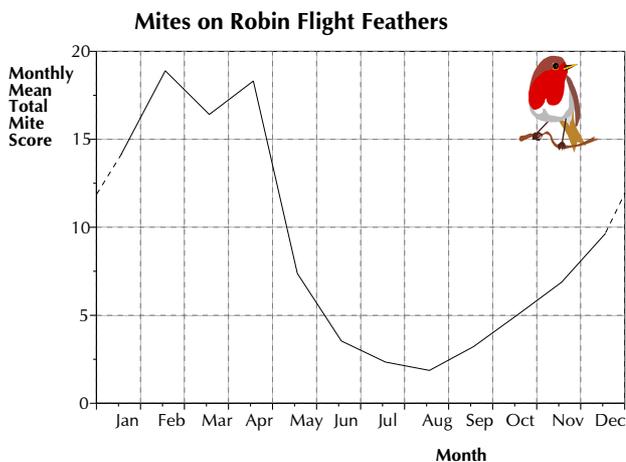
Our agent in the north, Phil May, has alerted us to an article in Scottish Bird News (the magazine of the SOC) in which the National Nest Collection is described. Mike Hansell, the mastermind behind the collection, describes the purpose and contents of the collection. It now holds 700 nests of 64 species with 100 digitised images of another 33 species (some nests are just not really possible to collect). Our contributions are mentioned twice in the article. Once is for the collection of Blue Tit nests of known individuals, which enables study of individual traits in nest building. The second mention is of the 95 nests lost when the car containing them was stolen.

Mike is keen to increase the collection. He has adequate samples of nests of some species, but is particularly keen to acquire nests of less common species, and of some common species including Tree Sparrow and Starling. He would also appreciate any Song Thrush nests which he thinks would be useful for a study of variation in the nest lining. If you have any nests which could be useful for the collection, harvest them as soon as possible after the birds have finished using them. Make a note of date, nest site, place and species. Pack the nest carefully in some rigid container (I usually use second-hand food containers) and pass them to me. I will then take them to Mike.

Robins, Mites

Selina Tape, at Nottingham University, has been examining our Robin mite data for her undergraduate project. Jerzy, her supervisor, contacted us with some good news (and encouragement to continue recording mites, of course). He said:

You will be pleased to hear that Selina's analysis of your 4 year Robin data is fantastic. I think that we have the making of a paper here, and when I have some time I will think about how to format it. The seasonal pattern is almost identical each year. This must be the longest dataset of this sort. Can we keep it going to complete a 5 year cycle do you think? When Selina's exams are over I will send you, or bring round, the thesis. All the best to you and your team, Kind regards, Jerzy



Selina has already sent us some of her findings. The diagram describes the annual pattern of mite infestation. For this diagram, on the strength of the finding that the pattern is almost identical from year to year, data from all years have been combined to give the average score for each month. It is pleasingly smooth, suggesting that we are recording some natural cycle rather than just a collection of random events. Hopefully, Selina's work will help explain what it means. (To calculate the score, the 19 flight feathers on one wing are examined and a score in the range 0 to 4 given to each. If all feathers are very heavily infested, the maximum score is $4 \times 19 = 76$. If there are no mites at all, the score is $0 \times 19 = 0$.) Thanks to all the ringers and scribes who have been involved in the data collection so far.

Thoughts of Chairman John

In the last issue, this section was revived. John McM is extremely good at posing questions (but very bad, he notes, at answering them). The last issue of Twitter set his grey cells working again and he made the following observations.

- 1 Are predators copycats or is the Long-tailed Tit breeding so well co-ordinated making all prey available at the same time? (The same question could be asked of the hole-nesting tits.)
- 2 Bullfinch productivity. The correlation between CBC trends and productivity seems non-existent. High juvenile:adult ratios with decreasing populations suggest adults dropping dead after successful breeding. Is there a more satisfactory explanation?
- 3 Is there any chance of comparing CBC fluctuations with CES site totals and all-site totals, to see how closely they match? Could be fascinating and informative. It could be particularly interesting to include figures just for non-standard sites - how closely do they move with standard sites?

There is no need to wait for someone else to attack these questions. The computerised (or paper-based) dataset is available to anyone who wishes to look at these, or other worthwhile, questions. Do not be afraid to ask.

Early Purple Orchids and Computerisation

Partly to show that our fine band of field workers does have eyes for things which do not have feathers, we give some details of the wood's Early Purple Orchids. John has, for many years, tried to count the number of flowering spikes in the large patch at the east end of Nightingale Ride. Recently we have also tried to count spikes in other patches which we come across each year. This year's crop seemed to be smaller and of lower quality than usual. Memory is not always reliable so we looked back at some past years' data. It does not take a statistical genius to detect that numbers are down on recent very good years. It is probably nothing to worry about - maybe it has been unsuitable weather for them this spring.

Patch	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Nightingale Ride	80+	196						400	165
Main Cross Roads	40		80					45	
Old Pheasant Pen			220		120	100	170	180	35

It certainly has been as bad a year as recorded near the old pheasant release pen, and the worst since 1996 at the large patch. But what about the missing years? Regrettably, sometimes patches have been missed (this year we did not look at the Main Cross Roads patch, for instance). However, the other missing data are simply buried in the paper field sheets and have not yet been computerised. Going through all sheets, page by page for each year would be a very long task and probably some notes would be missed. The years that are quoted above were easy. We have computerised some of the non-ringing information in those years and finding the information is simply a matter of using the word-processor search function. That is very rapid indeed. If you think it is a rather inadequate job, that we cannot quote the data we hold for these missing years, then please feel free to volunteer to do some data entry. Skills required are only the abilities to read and to press keys on a keyboard. Even if you do not have a computer, we can find one for you and provide training. Ideal entertainment for those long winter evenings. Let John McM or Chris dF know if you would like to assist in this activity.

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Great Spotted Woodpecker	5F	CT84020	07/04/2004	Q02 Feeder

We often capture Great Spotted Woodpeckers at the feeder, but most capture events are retraps of our birds. This spring we have had more than our fair share of new birds. This is the second new bird within a week. The other new bird CT84019, was older and a male.

Wren	6	5Z1491	21/03/2004	O06
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We have been looking at the numbers of cream-coloured spots on the fourth primaries of Wrens' wings for some years now. Robin Ward and Jacky Hay are hoping to discover whether these spots can help us age the birds reliably - we think that with successive moults they tend to increase the number of spots. This bird is behaving well. We ringed it as a juvenile in 2002 and counted 8 spots. Its original juvenile primary feathers were moulted in the late summer of 2003 and now it is a 10 spot model. It would be good if all our Wrens showed such a clear increase. Robin and Jacky have drafted a short paper using the data gathered in the wood - details of their findings will follow before long.

Blackbird	6M	RH94775	28/03/2004	H04
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Where do they go? This bird was first captured as a breeding adult in July 2000 a mere 40 metres away from this recapture position. He has not been recaptured between then and now, nearly four years later. If he is a resident (which he would seem to be as he was captured first as a breeding bird and now recaptured in the early spring) he has been very careful to evade capture. We have set nets in these places for at least 5 hours on at least 18 occasions since then.

Blackcap	6M	P400750	25/04/2004	L01
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This year's first Blackcap retrap from a previous year. Like many of our recaptures of this species, it returns to the same area of the wood, year after year. This male was captured in K00 in April 2002 as a first breeding season male. In 2003 he was captured about 20 metres away from his 2002 location and today's capture is in the same net as last year's. In the meantime, he has probably travelled to north-west Africa and back, twice.

Blackcap	6M	R353302	11/04/2004	C03
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The first Blackcap of the year followed by two more on the same day. This is about a week earlier than average, but still a week later than our earliest record.

Chiffchaff 5 AJD395 21/03/2004 O06

Our first summer visitor of the year. John Bartley reported the first singing Chiffchaff in the wood during the previous week (17th) - we had not heard any the weekend earlier. By the end of the month they could be heard singing all over the wood.

Marsh Tit 4F N459769 07/04/2004 Q02 Feeder

We had not seen this bird since May 2002 when she was nesting in one of our stump boxes (incidentally the one featured on the previous issue's cover). She was originally ringed as a nestling in May 2000, again in a stump box at the opposite edge of block C. She is also the first of our Marsh Tits to be given colour rings as part of the RSPB investigation. (Since Marsh and Willow Tits can be difficult to separate in the field, we are ringing all the Marsh Tits we catch with identical red rings on each leg. This means that when Alex Lewis sees a colour-ringed tit, once she has seen a red ring on either leg she will know instantly it is a Marsh Tit and can move on to hunt for Willow Tits. The Willow Tits will be marked with individually identifiable combinations, none of which will include a single red ring on either leg. We have also ringed this bird's rather small brood of three giving them both metal and red rings.

Willow Tit 6M N305744 20/04/2004 Q02 Feeder

Another golden oldie and one which we hope will generate more data as he is now colour ringed and one of Alex Lewis' sight record targets. He was ringed as a juvenile in August 1998 and since then has been trapped fairly regularly, always in the north-west area of the wood (one of our 'northern' birds - see P671338). We hope all observers will look out particularly for these Willow Tits to support Alex's work.

Willow Tit 4 P671338 11/04/2004 C03

We reported controlling of this bird in Twitter 42 after we had captured it in April 2003 in N03. Since then it has been captured at the feeders 4 times - the last of which was only four days before today's capture which is a real surprise. It is almost unheard of for an adult Willow Tit to cross the invisible barrier between blocks G and H. We seem to have two groups of Willow Tits, the Northern and Southern. They rove widely within the north or south of the wood but individuals, as a rule, do not cross into the other 'group territory'. (Juveniles, however, are often raised on one side of the line but disperse to live as adults on the other side.) This bird has already demonstrated very unusual behaviour by moving all of 3.5 km from Rampton - perhaps it is a natural non-conformist.

Coal Tit 6M N275381 21/03/2004 Q02 Feeder

A respectably old bird - ringed 4 years ago during its first winter. We trapped it once more in the early months of 2001, four times the next winter, only once in the winter of 2002/03 and have trapped it twice in this winter. In addition to those winter captures we trapped it just once during the breeding season in 2002. Had it not been for that one capture, it would have appeared to have been just a winter visitor to the wood.

Coal Tit 6F R123528 05/05/2004 N01 on nest

More post-juvenile dispersal - we ringed this bird as a nestling in 2002 in grid O03 and have retrapped it several times since then at the feeder and in the northern third of the wood. This year it nested successfully in one of the stump boxes, all of 120 metres from its natal site.

Blue Tit 6 K463540 14/04/2004 Q02 Feeder

A long and curious history to this bird. It was ringed by Ulli in December 1996 at the feeder and has been recaptured there 11 times altogether but nowhere else. Prior to this capture, its previous capture was in October 2000. Where has it been and why come back now? Six days later it was retrapped, yet again, at the feeders. One point that might be relevant is that on both recent visits, nets were set by John Clark in the afternoon, after he had completed his nestbox round. Has this bird been a regular at the feeder but only during the afternoons or has it been elsewhere? It is rather old, with our third longest recapture history for a Blue Tit so far (7 years, 122 days) The longest history, for F253339 is 8 years, 90 days with K463932 being second at 7 years, 164days).

Blue Tit 6 N275450 10/03/2004 M-1 Roosting

Curiously, in spite of the increased number of nestboxes available for roosting, we seem to have fewer birds roosting in total. The dormouse boxes have attracted very few, the main set of bird nestboxes attracting slightly more. Our very old friend, K463932, was not at home on this, the last visit of the winter. We hope he is doing the same as last year and will reappear after the breeding season (Twitter 44). This bird was our oldest of the night, having been ringed as a first-winter bird in February 2000. It has been captured regularly since then and is one of our most reliable roosting birds - although tonight he was roosting in a box some 50 metres from his normal site.

Blue Tit 6F N459951 05/05/2004 H02 On nest

A good recapture history developing here. We ringed this bird as a nestling in 2001 near the Main Cross Roads (O01). Thereafter we have mist-netted her, occasionally, at the feeders (Q02), and near Norman's Ride which divides Blocks G and H. In addition we have trapped her at the nest in each of her three breeding seasons. She has always been found in the same box even though the box has not been in exactly the same place each year. Perhaps she likes the design - it is one which Andy Edwardes built, tastefully making use of a large, natural knot hole for the entrance. The nest has now been collected and will join her nests from 2003 and 2002 in the National Nest Reference Collection.

Blue Tit 5F R558126 07/05/2004 F00 On nest

Birds ringed as nestlings, when found in a subsequent breeding season give high quality information about post-natal dispersal. It is particularly rewarding when we find one of our own birds nesting in one of our boxes. We ringed this bird last year in the north of the wood (Q00) and Dan Bardsley captured it nesting in one of the dormouse boxes, 700 metres to the south. For the record, she was sitting on a small clutch of only 5 eggs, all of which hatched and later fledged complete with rings.

Nuthatch 4M VS50778 02/05/2004 Q02 Feeder

Nuthatches are frequently heard in the wood and are regularly recorded by CBC workers. They are occasionally captured at the feeders - this one was ringed just over a year ago and this is its first capture this spring. We have only one record of an attempted nest in a nestbox - in 1984 when the species was even less numerous in the wood. There are plenty of nesting holes for them now - how long before we have them as a successful nestbox-using resident? Do we need to site some small hole-entrance boxes at a greater height?

Chaffinch 6M N305623 31/03/2004 Q02 Feeder

The oldest of one of a handful of Chaffinches captured at the feeder this afternoon. This one was ringed just over 6 years ago in March 1998, seeing through both the Millennium bug and the foot and mouth epidemic. It appears at the feeder just once late each winter or early spring (although it missed 2003). Compare this with the others on that day - K720608 - first captured in 1999, caught each winter at least once (except 2003) but also caught once in June (also at the feeder). P400023 was ringed in April 2000 at the feeder and has not reappeared again until today. P400562 was ringed in February 2002, recaptured a year later and again, today, a further year later. P400279 ringed 8/10/2000 was recaptured, for the first time on 20/04/2004 at the feeder. But for a report of an even older bird, look at K463360 in Controls and Recoveries.

Greenfinch VR78778 5M 02/05/2004 Q02 Feeder

We catch remarkably few Greenfinches at the feeder or elsewhere - with the other two caught today the year's total to date is only four. It is quite surprising considering how common they are in gardens, the availability of peanuts and sunflower seed and the proximity of gardens - just across the road from the feeder. This one was in breeding condition so is likely to be a fairly local bird. In recent years, some juvenile Greenfinches have been undergoing more moult than was seen previously. This one had moulted the outer six primary coverts on each wing as part of its partial post-juvenile moult and, at first glance, it appeared to be an adult. It was only the presence of juvenile inner primary coverts that gave away its age.

Jay 6 DA20238 11/04/2004 B03

Ringed only five months earlier and retrapped in exactly the same net. Our first Jay of the year.

Controls and recoveries

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
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Robin	4	P400475	12/01/2004	Gamston Wood Farm, 5km @ 211°
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A road casualty, ringed on 26/08/2001 in the wood as a juvenile. This is the second recovery of a Treswell Wood Robin elsewhere in three months (see Twitter 47 for the earlier one). Prior to that, we had not received reports of any of our Robins outside the wood since 2001.

Great Tit	5F	TA31342	29/02/2004	Q02 Feeder
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The first of a two nestling-ringed Great Tits which have arrived in the spring influx. This one was ringed by Anne Goodall at Minting Park, Lincolnshire, 40 km east of Treswell Wood in May 2003. This is only our third nestling-ringed incoming control. Twitter 43 gave details of the other two which, like these two, were females.

Great Tit 5F TA31270 21/03/2004 Q02 Feeder

The second of this year's nestling-ringed Great Tits, ringed at Great Scrubbs Wood again by Anne Goodall. We retrapped it a week later in H04, well into the southern part of the wood. This is typical of many of the Great Tits which arrive in the spring. First appearance at the feeder followed by captures elsewhere in the wood, probably making their breeding territory there. Unlike most of our spring influx, we know exactly where this bird originated.

Willow Tit P319773 04/01/2004 Q02 Feeder

A third incoming Willow Tit in 3 years. In the 27 years of ringing prior to that we had only 1 control to or from the wood. Are they moving more widely? This one's history, like the earlier ones, is curious. It was ringed by Peter Harrison at Maumhill Wood, about 3 km to the north-east of Treswell Wood, on April Fools' Day, 2001. He has not retrapped it. Our resident Willow Tits are generally captured fairly frequently. If this one came to the wood soon after being ringed, we would have expected to retrap it from time to time. On the other hand, if it is only a recent immigrant, why has it left its former range after such a long time?

Chiffchaff 5 2U4041 04/04/2004 P-1

Peter Cobb ringed this as a juvenile on 24/08/2003 in the Darlton willow plantations. Short rotation willow plantations do not generally have a good reputation as havens for birdlife, yet Peter enjoys good catches there and they have already provided us with a number of interesting controls. We retrapped it again, as a breeding male, on June 13th in K00.

Chaffinch 6F K463360 23/03/2004 Sutton Coldfield 102km @ 219°

We have enjoyed some recaptures of old Chaffinches in the past, this is our third oldest (by only six months). We ringed it on 21/04/1996, seven years and 11 months prior to it being found, victim of a window in Sutton Coldfield.

Chaffinch R427353 23/11/2003 Q02 Feeder

Another of Mike Archer's birds from Rampton. It was ringed there on 21/11/2003. Mike's operation at Rampton is generating a good deal of information on local movements of birds - this is the 11th recorded Chaffinch movement between Treswell Wood and there. Note the short interval between ringing and recapture. Could it be a Rampton roosting bird that roves widely during the day finding food?

Great Tit 4 R502860 04/03/2004 Stanhope Farm

It is some years since any of our birds have been reported from Stanhope Farm, on the south edge of the wood. This bird, ringed as a juvenile in the south of the wood on 21/9/2003, died after flying into a window at the farm.

10 Week Summary 2004 Interval 2

Visits 1648, 1642, 1640, 1645 1638, 1637, 1646

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Wren	.	4	.	6	1	.	11
Duncock	1	3	.	4	.	.	8
Robin	2	5	.	1	3	.	11
Blackbird	1	5	.	7	1	.	14
Song Thrush	2	2	.	.	.	.	4
Blackcap	5	6	.	1	1	.	13
Chiffchaff	1	2	.	2	.	.	5
Goldcrest	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Long-tailed Tit	5	.	.	7	.	.	12
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Willow Tit	1	.	.	1	1	.	3
Coal Tit	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Blue Tit	.	6	.	3	9	.	18
Great Tit	.	2	.	3	5	.	10
Treecreeper	.	2	.	.	2	.	4
Jay	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Chaffinch	4	3	.	.	.	.	7
Bullfinch	1	2	.	1	.	.	4
Totals	23	42	.	38	25	.	128