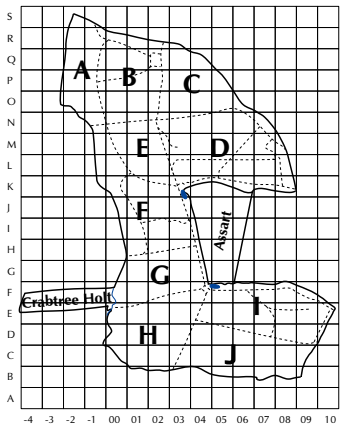


TWITTER

Treswell **W**ood - **I**nformation **T**o **T**ell **E**very **R**ecorder

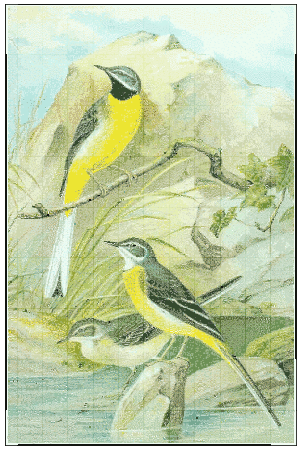
October 2016 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling
Nest Records Chris du Feu
Ringing John Clark

All projects by permission of NWT

2016/4
Number 109



Unlike at some times earlier in the year, the weather has been generally favourable for ringing and so we have completed the standard site visits with no last minute worries. Captures in the standard sites - which we aim to use as a measure of bird abundance - have been comfortably above the average for the last decade although rather lower than in 2015 and 2014. Preliminary reports from various BTO surveys suggest that the breeding season has not been particularly good, especially for single-brooded species and early broods. This is in line with our own records and supported by these autumn standard site captures.

After the sudden panic in 2014 when ash die-back was first found in the country, we are now noticing its effects in various parts of the wood with some young growth particularly affected. The disease is very different from Dutch Elm disease which killed its victims very quickly. Mature ash trees which are affected appear to survive for several years, gradually becoming weaker until they finally die. During these years, other species will have a chance to grow strongly as the canopy cover of the diseased trees reduces. Indeed we may see relative stability in overall tree cover (albeit with different species) rather than the sudden emptiness which Dutch Elm disease brought to so many woodlands and hedgerows. Looking at some places in the wood where the disease is obvious, also obvious are the young trees of other species just waiting to fill the gaps which the ash will leave. What about the birds? Our frass collections have shown that ash is very poor indeed at providing caterpillars for the breeding tits. Oak is far better but we do not know about other species such as hawthorn or field maple. These are likely to be early replacements for the dying ash. From our frass results, though, it seems that other species are most unlikely to prove worse than ash. In addition to this, any dead ash which is left standing will provide excellent habitat for various invertebrates. This, in turn, will provide food for birds. The dead trees may also provide useful nesting sites for woodpeckers - maybe even Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers. Who knows?

The other changing habitat in the reserve is the assart. Lincoln University staff and students have been at work recording various habitat measures and will continue to do so - the value of their observations will become increasingly apparent in years to come as the assart matures. Already the assart has provided a number of new bird species sight records which have been noted in previous issues of Twitter. The most recent sighting was a Grey Wagtail at one of the ponds. We have noted the species at least once before in the wood but only as a rare visitor. No doubt this bird was also just passing through - but good to see it all the same.

Visitors to the wood during October may have noticed the sad state of the door of the storage container in the car park. It was attacked with cutting equipment in order to steal machinery kept inside. Happily there was no machinery inside and, once the would-be thieves had seen this lack of machinery, they departed without even touching any of the other contents of the 'Tardis' (as we call it). The lack of any tampering at all with the ringing equipment came as a great relief to the ringers. Until the door was repaired we had to remove all our equipment, making organising ringing visits and restocking feeders more difficult. The Tardis is now repaired and back in action again. We are very grateful indeed to the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust which has repaired it so rapidly.

The Treswell ringers have recently been in action at two bioblitz events. The first was at Lincoln University where some of our ringers, including some in relatively early stages of their ringing careers, performed exceptionally well. Chris Packham was at the bioblitz and spent some time with the ringing team; he even mentioned them in his tweets. Such events away from the wood give opportunities for handling other species and, with non-ringers looking on, also make demands on the knowledge and communication skills of the ringers. We are happy to note that they were not found to be wanting. The second event was at the Idle Valley bioblitz where we were able to provide leadership. There was a great deal of interest shown there with many stimulating, probing questions from members of the public. It is, perhaps, worth reflecting on the changes over the years in ringing locally. Until recently North Nottinghamshire was well supplied with ringers, mostly members of the North Notts. RG as was the Lincoln area with Mid-Lincs. RG. Both these groups seem to have become less well staffed than in previous years and it seems that the Treswell group is now being called on more frequently for such events. It is good to be

wanted but would be even better if there were more ringers operating locally again.

Many of you may have looked at the web site. Amy continues to develop this - there is now a section describing the CBC operation. There is still a great to do but Amy must be congratulated on the progress she has made on this important part of our long-term work. The web site is now to be found at *www.treswellwoodipmg.org*

Finally, congratulations to Oliver - safely back from Fair Isle, now started at Nottingham University and has just been awarded his C permit. He is our second youngest ringer ever to have a C permit.

Identification Guide to Birds in the Hand by Laurent Demongin

This newly available guide has been translated from the author's earlier French language guide and augmented with an additional 50 species accounts, bringing the total number of species covered to the 301 most frequently caught in Western Europe. It is very comprehensive, species accounts containing much more detail, in smaller print than we have in Svensson, or in the BTO wader and non-passerine guides. All life is a compromise and this book is no exception. The wealth of detail included may make it difficult to use routinely in the field and, necessarily, it does duplicate information in the standard guides. There is a great deal of information about various sub-species which we are most unlikely to encounter here. The earlier French version received only a lukewarm review in Ringing & Migration. However, amongst the mass of information is a great deal of advice about the effectiveness of various ageing and sexing techniques. Looking at species where we often have problems the book agrees, with comments such as sexing *very difficult, often impossible* (Goldfinch) or *tail feathers narrow and pointed and huge overlap with adults: poorly usable* (Blackcap), sex *sometimes difficult to judge due to various possible causes* (Great Tit). In some cases discriminant formulae are given for separating sexes but with these there is usually an error rate (and I would suggest an error rate of over 5% makes such methods pointless to use for the purpose of assigning sex to individuals).

I have, for some time, thought that what is needed is a published list of ageing and sexing techniques which have been tested and found not to work (and we have quite a list of them now). Such a list would save other ringers thinking they had discovered a new ageing or sexing criterion, spending time testing it and eventually rediscovering that it was not useful. The book does address this problem to a good extent with comments such as *colour of periocular ring of bare skin unuseable (huge individual variations, colour variable on mood), tending to be redder in juvenile and yellower in adult but complete overlap* (Long-tailed Tit). In correspondence with the author since we have a copy of his book he has told us he is keen to document ageing and sexing techniques that have been found to be unreliable. This is excellent.

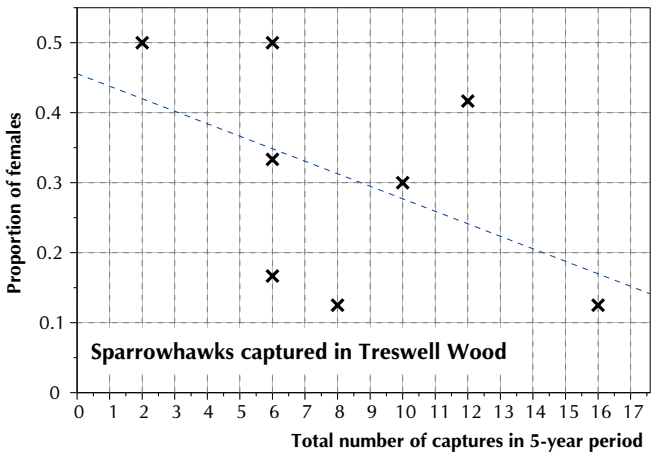
This book will be of use in the field alongside the standard guides. It will be of even greater use out of the field when you have a chance to study accounts for particular troublesome species in detail. We will have a copy of the book with the ringing kit. Overall, I strongly recommend it. No apologies for the several references to it in the Noteworthy Encounters described below.

I wonder if this guide will make as big an impact on ringers as did Jenni & Winkler's Moult and Ageing in European Passerines over 20 years ago. As with this book Jenni & Winkler had far too much detail to be very useful in the field; it was far better for background reading (and still well worth reading if you can manage to find a copy at a reasonable price). One major difference is that Jenni & Winkler tended to make ringers feel that they should be able to age every bird precisely in the hand. I suspect Demongin will have the opposite effect. If used there will be fewer birds aged precisely but also fewer birds aged precisely but wrongly. Incidentally, John McMeeking has a copy of Jenni & Winkler which he brings with him to the wood - this is the copy presented to him by the group at the first of the dinners that Neil Taylor arranged. John says that he would be happy to lend this to any members of the group who wish to study it.

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex Date	Ring Grid
Sparrowhawk	**3F** **11/9/2016**	**EL01989** **E04**

The first Sparrowhawk capture for over a year. It was a young female. Only 18 of the 66 Sparrowhawks we have captured have been females. We suspect that females, being much larger, tend to be better at escaping from mist nets before the ringer comes to extract them. Looking at the sex distribution of captures by 5-year intervals we see that there is a weak relationship between the total number trapped



and the proportion of females, with relatively fewer being caught when numbers are high. What this means, if anything, in terms of habitat selection for hunting, dispersal or nestling sex ratios is a matter for conjecture.

Great Spotted Woodpecker 3 LE35306 18/9/2016 N02

It is unusual for us to capture a Great Spotted Woodpecker in anything other than a net placed at a feeding station. These woodpeckers are reputed normally to fly above mist-net height and thus be mist-netted less often than might be expected for a bird which is as common as it is. This is our first capture of the species in a standard site for over a year. Like the previous standard site capture it was a juvenile - perhaps juveniles have not yet learned adult high flying tactics.

Demongin's guide makes mention of two features for ageing and sexing of the species which we have looked at in some detail. The iris colour is mentioned as being reliable for ageing although in Treswell Wood, at least, we know from recaptures it is not reliable beyond the post-juvenile moult (and not useful before because the juvenile plumage is unmistakable). We have informed him about this, giving him the evidence from our own recaptures of birds of known age. In his reply, he thanked us and said that he had already amended his master copy of the guide with a note to say that iris colour has been found not to be completely reliable in the UK at least. He also mentions the length of the red in the juvenile crown - this is something which we had noticed but were not aware of anything published about it. Demongin gives the length of the red patch as 24-30 mm in males and 17-25 mm in females. We do not yet have enough measurements of juveniles which we have subsequently recaptured as adults to make any definitive statements but we certainly have noticed that the red patches are either short or long and rarely anything in between. This does suggest sexual dimorphism. More measurements needed.

There are also various biometrics quoted and the bill length, which we have been measuring in recent years, is quoted as *variable according to time of year, food substrate and age.* It would be worth looking at our bill lengths and seeing if there is any discernible annual pattern or age effect.

Swallow 3 Z782499 4/9/2016 E10

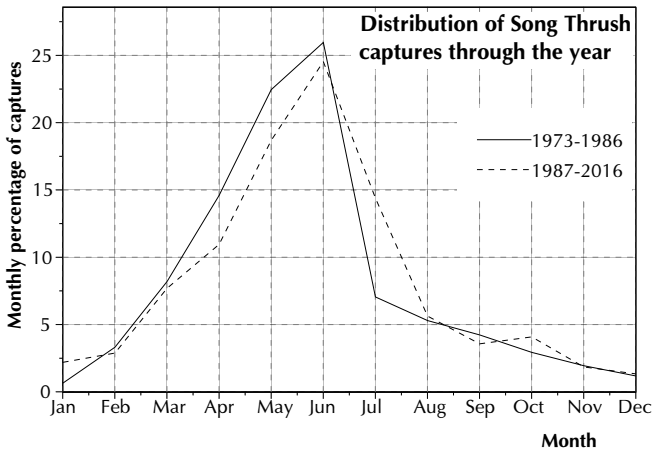
The Swallow can hardly be described as a rare species but it is certainly rarely caught in the wood. The last time we ringed one was in 1994 caught in almost exactly the same place as this one - on the green lane along the eastern edge of compartments I & J. This is only our 60th capture of a full-grown Swallow - even fewer than our 68 Sparrowhawk captures. More effort needed at that time of year in the future.

Dunnock 3 TT49268 2/10/2016 E02

It is good to see, at last, some clear diagrams and explanations of the patterns on adult and juvenile Dunnock greater coverts. Demongin has done this. What he does not mention is the black tipped primary coverts which Ellen alerted us to after attending the Isle of Wight ringing course. This individual had a particularly clear set of black tips to the coverts which make them appear as a thin wing bar when the wing is partly closed. Once seen, not forgotten. Beware of adults, though. Their primary coverts also have black tips but the blackness is not sharply demarcated from the brown further from the tip.

Song Thrush 4 RT55917 11/9/2016 C03

The impression from the early years in Treswell Wood was that Song Thrushes were summer visitors - although we suspected their migration may have taken them not very far away at all, perhaps only to nearby villages. The species used to be very common but its numbers dropped - 1986/87 seemed to be the turning point. Prior to 1987 we always had at least 50 captures per year, with a very sudden drop between those two years from 58 to 31 and from 1987 onwards we have never again had as many as 40. Numbers certainly are reduced - but what about the annual pattern of captures. A detailed study would be of interest but a coarse analysis of aggregated monthly totals for years before and years after the crash does show a small but statistically significant change. We are now seeing higher than expected captures in January and in July, with generally lower numbers than expected at other times.The higher-than-expected captures in the early part of the year suggest an earlier annual return than in former years (although still with the same movement from the wood in autumn). An analysis of the ages of birds ringed in the breeding season might reveal something about the July captures. With smaller numbers present, density dependent factors could increase individual breeding success giving rise to relatively higher juvenile captures in July.



Redwing 4 RT55919 16/10/2006 R03

The first Redwing this winter, followed the next week by two more. This was an adult, the other two juveniles. Quite a good start to the winter.

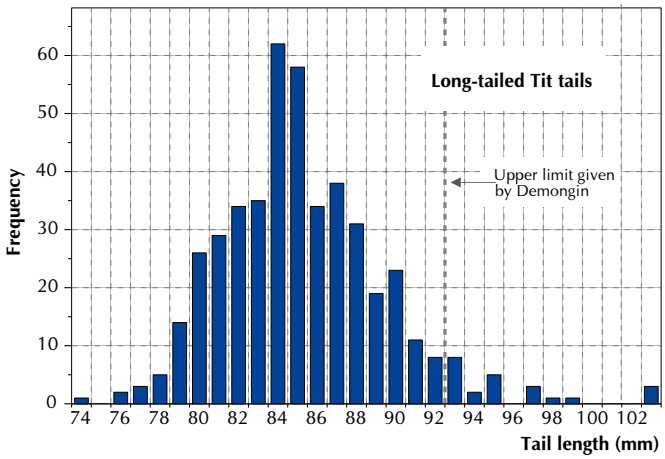
Goldcrest 3M EYD634 4/9/2016 D08

Our first record of this species for the autumn. It is early but not exceptionally so. Of the 2,235 Goldcrests we have recorded, 11 have been captured in August and another eight earlier in September than this bird. Of the August captures, though, five were still in juvenile plumage so unlikely to have been migrants from afar.

Over the years we have become more cautious about ageing Goldcrests on the pointedness of the tail. Very few birds have the rounded 'adult' feather ends and it seemed unlikely that young birds should outnumber older birds by, perhaps, 20:1. Demongin notes *if tail shape is intermediate between adult and juvenile patterns, ageing is not advised.* He also notes that *some adults may exhibit tail feathers of juvenile shape at least in S Europe'.* Our caution is well advised. If in doubt, do not age.

Long-tailed Tit 2 EYD646 2/10/2016 E02

After a long time without, suddenly two small parties appeared on one day, all birds in both parties unringed. Where are our old friends? As usual, since trapping the very-long-tailed Tits in 2011 we measured the tails. Demongin gives the range of tail length for British Long-tailed Tits as 72-92. The graph illustrates the data from Treswell Wood. The 2011 birds were clearly exceptional; the fact that this distribution of lengths is so skewed giving a Long-tailed Graph is completely irrelevant.



Willow Tit 3 Z782469 23/10/2016 Q03

This is the fifth capture of this bird since it was first caught on 7/8/2016. It is a regular visitor to the feeding station. Boxes for the species are almost ready to install in the assart and we hope that this bird may be more successful in finding a mate and a safe territory than the one we saw a couple of years ago. It might even turn out to be a founder member of a new population.

Great Tit 4M TJ49521 23/10/2016 Q03

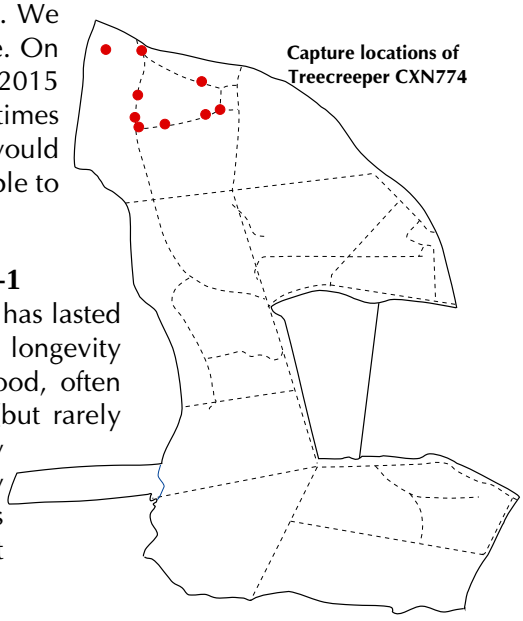
A golden oldie ringed as a nestling in 2009 and now seven and a half years old. Birds generally increase in brightness with each successive moult, making older adults much brighter than younger ones. Their wing length also tends to increase slightly with age. Not so for this one. At his previous capture, the sex was not determinable for certain (possibly because of moult) so he was certainly not an obviously bright male. Further his wing length is still only 75 mm which compares unfavourably with some of this year's juveniles which have left the nest with wings of 77 or 78 mm. But, does being small and dull matter if you can manage to survive this long?

Great Tit 2F Z782154 23/10/2016 Q01

Demongin mentions the difficulty of ageing some individual Great Tits. We quite agree. This one was misaged twice on the same day as a juvenile. On looking at its recapture history we know it was, in fact, a bird of the 2015 cohort. Critical examination of capture histories, although sometimes sobering, is a great help in better ageing and sexing. Without retraps it would be very easy to make mistakes, never know about them and so not be able to learn from them.

Treecreeper 4 CXN774 23/10/2016 Q-1

At four years and two months since ringing as a juvenile, this individual has lasted rather longer than most small birds - but is still only half way to the longevity record. Adult Treecreepers normally rove quite widely within the wood, often using the whole of the northern, or the southern parts of the wood (but rarely crossing between them). This bird is rather more sedentary, having only been found in the north west parts of the wood. Because of the many times we have netted in other northern parts of the wood during this bird's lifetime, it does seem as if it is rather more sedentary than most Treecreepers in the wood. The map shows its very small known range.



Blackcap 3J Z7825016 18/9/2016 N00

This is the latest (so far) Blackcap caught this autumn. It is the 66th latest capture out of 2,251 individuals - although at least five of those were most likely from Britain's separate wintering population of the species. It was still in partly juvenile plumage so had not yet completed its moult and so is most likely to be a fairly local bird. A casual look at the recapture histories of our Blackcaps suggests that subsequent-year recapture rates of autumn-ringed birds are much lower than those of spring birds. This could be looked at in greater detail but it does suggest that our autumn captures are largely birds on passage.

House Sparrow 3M TT49273 16/10/2016 Q04

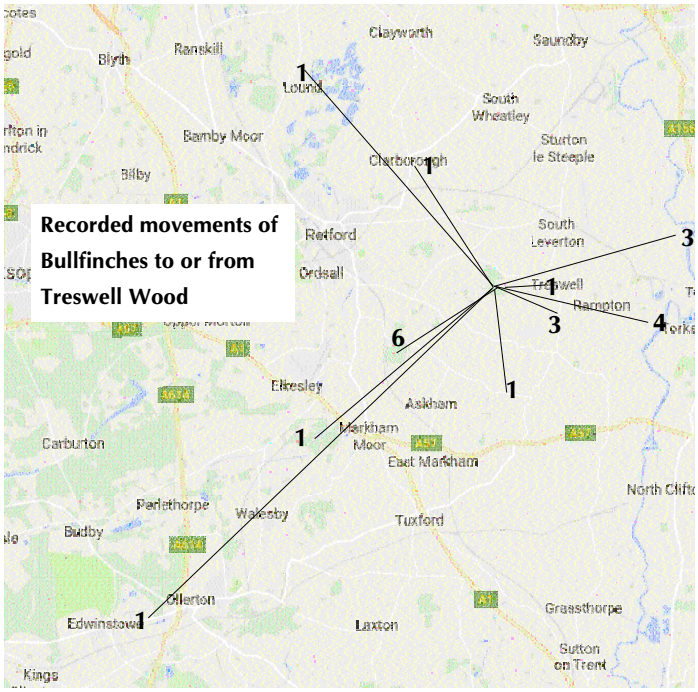
It has been a very good year for this much under-rated species. We have captured 22 individuals of which two were recaptures from 2015. This bird was still in its post-juvenile moult so could be aged as a juvenile and, because of the new growth on the crown, sexed as a male. The House Sparrow captures have all been in the north of the wood - either on the edge opposite the houses or else at the feeding station. No sign of them within the wood - as they used to be until the mid 1980s, even using open-fronted boxes for nesting.

Bullfinch 4M D309420 3/9/2016 Bevercotes Mine, 8km SW

This is the 22nd Bullfinch movement reported to or from the wood. It was ringed as a first year male in breeding condition on 1st June 2014 and retrapped two and three weeks later in two different parts of the wood. The fact that it was obviously in breeding condition but still roving widely in the wood suggests it was a young male on the lookout for a breeding territory or a mate. That we did not retrap it after June 2014 suggests that it may have moved elsewhere in its search.

Bullfinches are sedentary with a few having relatively short-distance movements at any time of year and in any direction. A movement of 8km is somewhere in the highest 20% of movements nationally but nowhere near the exceptional 178 km recorded in the BTO ringing scheme.

The other recorded movements have all been fairly local - Edwinstowe being the furthest recorded. The map illustrates these movements. The number at the end of each line indicates the number of movements to or from that place.



10-Week Summary: 2016 Interval 4, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Sparrowhawk	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Wren	2	1	14	3	.	3	23
Dunnock	.	.	3	1	.	.	4
Robin	3	.	21	6	.	2	32
Blackbird	1	.	6	1	1	1	10
Song Thrush	2	.	.	.	.	.	2
Blackcap	1	.	4	.	.	.	5
Chiffchaff	.	.	1	1	.	.	2
Goldcrest	1	.	4	.	.	.	5
Long-tailed Tit	2	.	.	.	.	.	2
Marsh Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Blue Tit	.	.	1	1	.	.	2
Great Tit	.	.	1	1	.	1	3
Nuthatch	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Treecreeper	1	.	2	1	.	.	4
Bullfinch	.	1	7	.	1	1	10
Totals	**13**	**2**	**67**	**17**	**2**	**8**	**109**

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods

In Twitter's first years, we always used the last page to give a full table of Standard Site capture totals. It is some time since we have done this, mainly because with each year it takes yet another line and now more-or-less fills a whole page. Presumably most readers will not be printing their copy of Twitter so this extra full page will not make great demands on the Earth's resources.

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

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1978	101	130	243	223	131	828
1979	97	115	211	109	123	655
1980	86	102	210	147	170	715
1981	102	110	288	187	177	864
1982	66	113	165	89	110	543
1983	82	139	143	185	128	677
1984	91	114	110	82	106	503
1985	103	88	135	118	88	532
1986	77	104	153	68	141	543
1987	95	112	196	209	124	736
1988	92	143	180	137	119	671
1989	124	137	282	145	103	791
1990	99	145	204	130	175	753
1991	65	57	98	74	127	421
1992	64	64	115	224	159	626
1993	81	70	112	158	126	547
1994	88	110	212	155	157	722
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	141	176	117	608
2003	117	116	146	104	114	597
2004	103	128	126	165	132	654
2005	107	140	150	88	133	618
2006	128	98	185	125	166	702
2007	107	110	138	73	92	520
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	534
2012	69	125	132	66	72	464
2013	76	90	89	100	157	512
2014	83	132	181	123	120	639
2015	105	123	136	137	158	659
2016	102	185	193	109		

Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978:

Interval	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Maximum	128	185	288	253	177	864
Minimum	57	33	89	66	59	364
Mean	90	111	159	130	124	609

10-year Averages since 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 - 2015)	90	119	144	103	116	561