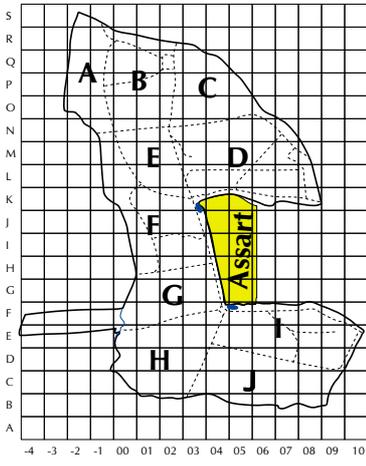
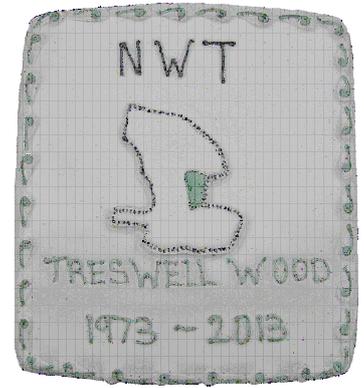


TWITTER



Treswell Wood - Information To Tell Every Recorder

October 2013 Treswell Wood IPM Group (Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

Project leaders:

CBC Pat Quinn-Catling

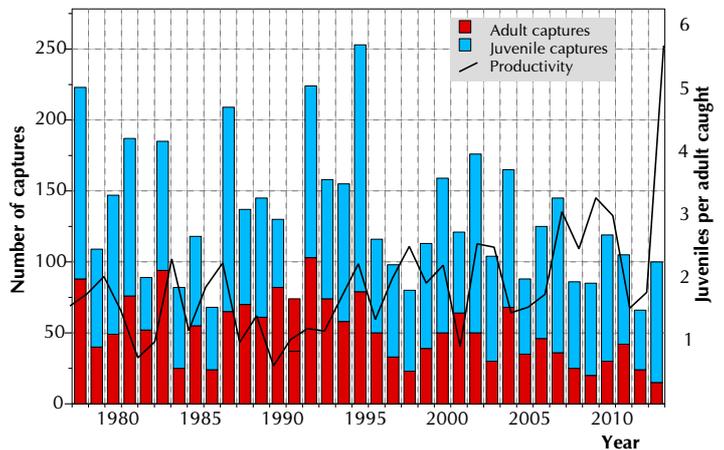
Nest Records Chris du Feu

Ringing John Clark

2013/4 Number 94

The 2013 breeding season will be remembered for the wet, late and dismal start with 'summer' only really happening after the bulk of the breeding was over. Bird populations had been depleted by the cold winter. Overall a pretty bleak picture. What do the standardised capture totals tell us? First, they confirm that adult numbers have been very low - the graph shows clearly that this late summer/autumn period has been the worst we have ever recorded. However, the absolute number of juveniles is, in fact, slightly above average in spite of the low number of adults. This means that the small surviving population has had a very good breeding season - as was reflected in the outcomes of the tits using the nestboxes. The graph illustrates this. Also plotted is a line showing a measure of productivity - juveniles per adult capture. This is nearly twice as high as ever before. All other things being equal, we should expect high productivity in years of low adult populations. With fewer adults competing for resources, each breeding pair will be able to rear more young. In addition there is a mathematical artefact in the productivity calculation - a very small denominator tends to give proportionally higher quotients. Even so, we can be pretty confident that it has been a good breeding season for the few. So, whether it is good news or bad news overall, it is certainly interesting.

Constant effort captures in August - October



The Assart

The celebration of the Assart Appeal took place in the wood in October. The NWT press release is quoted verbatim. We also took the opportunity to unveil the interpretive boards, which have been produced for us by NWT and which will shortly be fixed permanently to the Tardis to explain the group's work to the public.

Role of volunteers put centre stage as we highlight success of 'Lost Woodland' Appeal.

Back in September we were delighted to announce the success of our *Lost Woodland Appeal* thanks to the support of local members and volunteers. The Appeal was established to raise funds for us to purchase land adjacent to Treswell Wood in order to undertake an exciting woodland regeneration project.

Thanks to some great fund raising by members and volunteers, including members of our Retford Local Members' Group, and public donations, we raised more than £15,000 in double quick time. These donations then helped us to secure grants of more than £65,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and over £33,000 from Biffaward.

To mark the success of the Appeal a celebration event was held in the wood on 5th September with special guests including the Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council, District Councillors including Cllr. Ian Campbell, a key supporter of the Appeal, plus representatives of the HLF and Biffaward.

Whilst the event was focussed upon celebrating the funding success and outlining the exciting plans for the future of Treswell Wood, it was also chosen as a fitting opportunity to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of our purchase of the wood back in 1973 with a special cake (see above).

We also celebrated the efforts of the volunteer bird ringers who have built up a unique record of the reserve's wildlife over the past four decades. As part of the overall project to re-generate woodland on the adjacent land, we have been able purchase a range of new equipment and guide-books for the ringing group - officially known as the

Treswell Wood Integrated Population Monitoring Group - or TWIG for short. The new equipment was presented to group members John McMeeking and John Clark by our Chief Executive, John Everitt and Geoff Nickolds of the HLF.

Glossary: The word *assart* may be unfamiliar. It is an old English term which means a plot of land converted from woodland to arable land. (It is not clear why most of Britain's arable land is not referred to as assarts.) Assart can also be used as a verb - the process of making an assart. So, now we all know. And the opposite of 'assart'? What about 'restoration'? The management plan is to allow nature to do this restoration so that we see a gradual return to woodland.

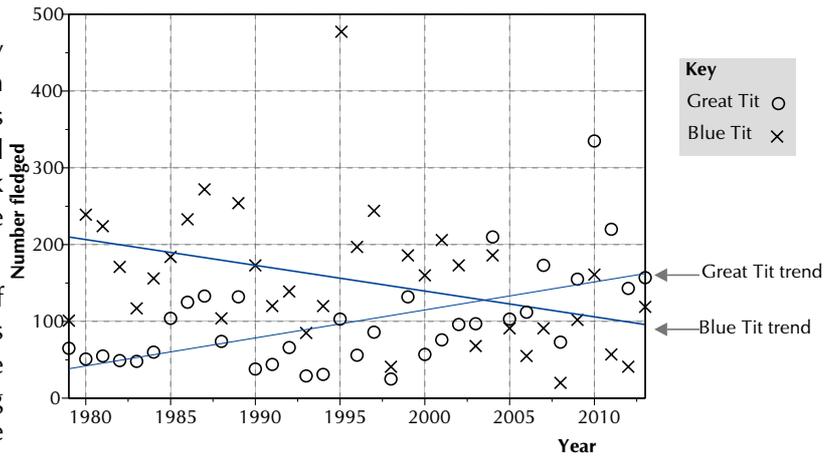
Another part of the management plan is to make low ridges in the land, providing microhabitats for a wider variety of species - the sunny side and shady sides together with the damper valley between the ridges. These features are now called swales. Is this another word whose roots are lost in the mists of time but perhaps derived from some Yorkshire dialect in the Swaledale area? Apparently not - it seems to be a term recently imported from the United States.

2013 Nesting Season

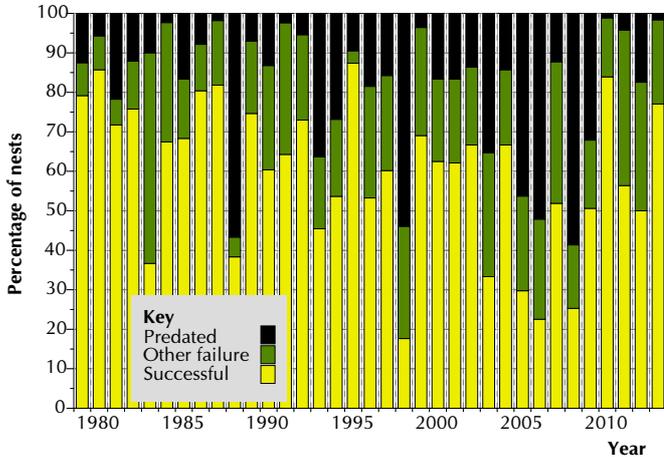
Twitter 92 gave the first look at something very different about the 2013 tit nesting season showing a mean first egg date over three weeks later than last year, and going against the trend of the last thirty years. What follows is a look at the rest of the data from the season to see some of the other trends.

First, the overall numbers. With the timing of the broods of both Blue and Great Tits matching the peak of the caterpillar abundance (see Twitter 93) there were more tits fledging this year. In terms of the long term trend, the Great Tits were on their increasing trend line, and the Blue tits slightly above their declining line.

Blue and Great Tit fledgelings - 1979 - 2013



Outcomes of all tit nests - 1979 - 2013



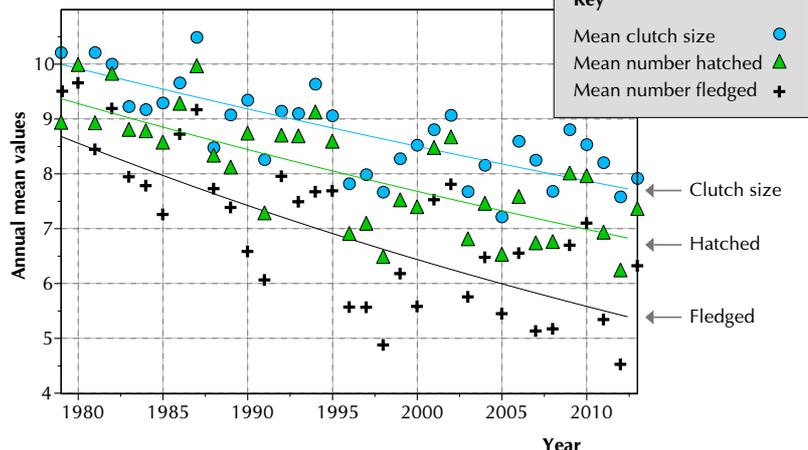
Looking at the recorded nests across the years, 2013 shows a very low predation rate, probably the result of two hard winters reducing the number of predators. These low predation rates are particularly welcome after the dimly high rates in the first years of this century. There was also a low rate of total nest failure, again leading to a good success rate - making nestbox rounds more enjoyable for us this year. The data for nest outcomes are illustrated here.

The long term trend for the size of clutch is still down, leading to numbers of birds hatching and numbers fledging per nest reducing. There is some evidence that the rate of reduction was greatest in the early years of recording, and these numbers are stabilising. Whether all this results from internal density-dependent

mechanisms or from changes in habitat or climate is a matter of conjecture.

It is to be expected that there is a negative correlation between the number of territories within the wood and the mean clutch size. This would help to explain the previous graph as there were relatively few tit territories recorded in the wood for the first few years of the nestbox era. The graph below shows the relationship between numbers of nests of Blue and Great Tits and the total number of tit territories in the wood recorded by the CBC. As expected it does show the negative correlation - a density dependent effect.

Nest statistics - all tits in nestboxes - 1979 - 2013



In terms of nest box usage, it was pleasing to have one of the two boxes built for Little Owls used this year for the first time. The disappointment was that it was used by a Great Tit, presumably a very energetic one as the volume of nesting material used looked to be about four times the amount used in one of the ordinary tit boxes. The birds continue to make their own decisions, oblivious to the best advice in the nestbox literature.

In preparation for next year we have refurbished three of the larger boxes used by Tawny Owls and Stock Doves and we will be adding a Kestrel box to the edge of the assart (which is excellent Kestrel hunting territory). We await next season with interest.

Standardising bird biometrics

It is important to ensure that the measurements we make on birds are as accurate and consistent as possible. For the most part our standard wing measurements are fairly consistent. It is always worth looking at the capture histories which we produce after each ringing session to see how your own wing measurements compare with others for that bird. (Before thinking how dreadful your measurements are, remember that bird wing lengths generally increase a little from the juvenile wing to the first adult wing. Thereafter, the wing length may continue to creep up marginally with each moult. Further, after the moult, the wing gradually wears and may be a millimetre shorter before the moult than when the feather was new.) Other measurements - such as tail length or tarsus - can be more problematic as they are made less frequently. Lack of practice at these does lead to higher variation in measurements. But it is important to be able to make these measurements reliably in cases, such as with the Great Spotted Woodpecker, where other ringers or the BTO make an appeal for such biometric data for analysis. This is one reason why we do measure some biometrics, other than just wing length, on selected species including total head length on Wrens and tail on Long-tailed Tits - it maintains our familiarity with the technique.

In the past we have not routinely done a full processing of same-day retrapped birds. Some ringers do not even record same-day events, let alone process the birds. We have usually just weighed same-day retraps which have been recaptured more than a couple of hours after the earlier event. Is it useful? Yes, it can be. Some years ago Prof. John Krebs made an appeal for same-day retrap weights of Coal, Marsh and Willow Tits in order to determine whether the winter feeding strategy of birds in the wild was the same as he had observed in his research birds in an aviary. We had just the data required and they were sufficient to show that laboratory studies did not reflect behaviour in the wild. Pleasing for us but back to the drawing board for John Krebs.

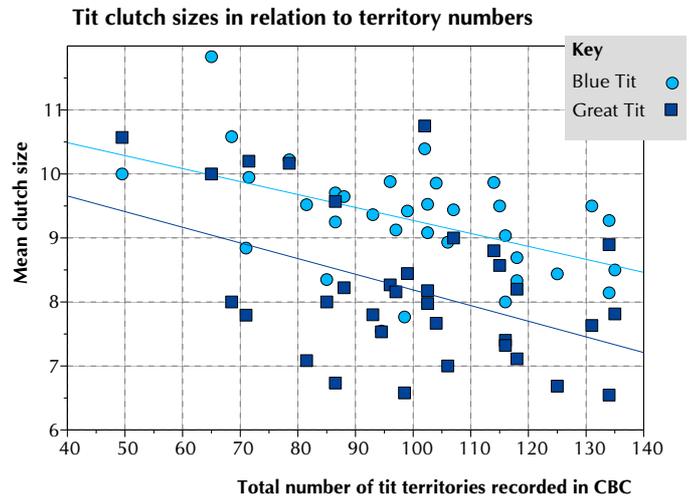
Given that a bird is already in the hand when it is found to be a same-day retrap, there is opportunity to make a second measure of wing length to compare with the earlier one - instant feedback on consistency of measurements between members of the group. Our practice has been, in the past, only to process same-day retraps if there was a particular reason to do so. We think we should now change that to processing retraps unless there is a reason not to. Such reasons will include bird welfare, numbers of birds to be processed, weather etc.

Dormouse release

Back in 1996 a dormouse introduction took place at Treswell. This was only the second dormouse reintroduction carried out by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and it failed for a number of reasons, although dormice hung on in the wood, reappearing more than once after a run of years with no sign of them. The last sighting was a nest with young, found in the 'pig area', although we did get terribly excited when Rob and Ray found a nest-like object in what became the condom tree (No, you will have to ask Rob about it). We put out a grid of 25 nest boxes close to the site, even though the 'nest' turned out to be a ball of frass, plus a bit of moss. Despite monthly checks, over 4 years, dormice failed to appear in nestboxes.

Following on from that, PTES suggested a second introduction but Rob and I decided to put it off for a couple of years whilst the management plan was tweaked. The wood is now a very different, and much better habitat, than it was 17 years ago. Thus, in early June this year, we put up 18 dormouse cages at various sites throughout the wood, each with a nimbus of up to 10 nest boxes more or less surrounding it. Shortly after, a whole circus of people, camera persons and media stars appeared to watch and assist in transferring 17 pairs of dormice into the cages - then I had to go and take down the spare cage.

Food was taken to the cages several times a week by a dedicated group of volunteers; this continued after the cages were opened and on into October, to a pair of cages where the first box check found a female with a litter of two young and a second, very pregnant, female. These were not the only young reared as litters were observed even before the cages were opened.



On September 17th a group of volunteers and Ian White turned up at Treswell to carry out the first box check. We found four dormice, one, as mentioned above, with a litter of two young, one pregnant and two others. We also found a lot of nests in boxes. That might not seem much but there were only 34 dormice introduced into the wood so finding any was a bonus, especially those showing signs of reproduction.

Some of the nestboxes used were modified in order to see if they could be made less attractive to birds. Data on bird use of the dormouse boxes will be gathered next year and, if the modified boxes are effective in reducing bird use, then all the boxes will be modified to suit.

Chris Holliland

Miscellaneous notes

Ice cream containers

At the end of each breeding season we collect used nests for various studies at Lincoln University and elsewhere. Each year, towards the end of the nest collection operation we face the same crisis - lack of suitable containers. We have found that 1 litre rectangular ice cream containers are ideal (and I can recommend Kelly's Cornish ice cream, not just because Mr Kelly's daughter was in the same primary school class as me and he gave everyone in the school a free ice cream at the end of term). These rectangular containers have tightly fitting lids (which keep all the nest material secure) and stack well when empty or full. We now have adequate storage space in the 'Tardis' and will welcome empty containers at any time in readiness for the 2014 season. Enjoy the ice cream.

BTO Atlas

The long-awaited BTO Atlas is published, complete with the Treecreeper page sponsored by our group. The BTO sends its thanks to all who have sponsored the work or contributed to the Atlas surveys (and that includes all our sponsors, ringers, nest recorders and CBC observers).

Old mist nets

Over the years we had amassed a large number of mist nets which needed a great deal of repair work to make them usable. Whereas we have repaired a good number it was obvious that some would be beyond economic repair as far as we were concerned - two days' hard work to restore a net when a new one costs £100 is time not well spent. The situation has also changed with the grant from Heritage Lottery Fund which has provided 10 new nets. We have, therefore, kept the nets which require only an hour or two of work and found places where the other nets can be used. European ringing schemes are generally not well funded, particularly in these times of economic crises. In some countries the balance between time and money is rather different from here. Through various contacts we have given 12 full size mist nets to the Bulgarian ringing scheme. More will be sent to Portugal in the near future. That leaves us with about 20 nets which need some small repair work and we hope to find opportunity for more mist net mending parties soon. In addition we have another 10 nets which have just a few holes to be repaired. A net with just holes provides something which can fill, very productively, the long winter evenings. We have instruction books and mending equipment. Ringers, do not be afraid to volunteer for this vital part of the ringing operation.

Ringing equipment and books

Over the past year we have received donations of ringing equipment from Neil Taylor's estate, from the Heritage Lottery Fund grant and from the estate of Peter Goodlad (my first trainer, who died in June). Heritage Lottery funded items are for the continuation of the constant effort work and also to be used for trainees. Neil's equipment was sold to our ringers and proceeds went to our group funds. Peter's equipment was sold to our ringers and proceeds donated to the ringing scheme. Peter's widow, Sue, now wishes to sell his complete set of Birds of the Western Palearctic (BWP to the cognoscenti). If you are interested in this 9-volume set for £180, please contact me.

Species records

Josh King at Brackenhurst has computerised our species records for the years 1972 - 1989, 1995 - 1997 and 2008 - 2011. This leaves a few years to be completed. Happily, Richard Bilton, a sixth form student at Queen Elizabeth's High School, Gainsborough, has volunteered to continue the job and is most of the way through the 1990 records. When the whole job is done it will give something like 15,000 species records for the Notts. Wildlife Trust species record database. This compares very favourably with the existing 3,100 records for Treswell Wood in the NWT database. Thanks to Richard for continuing this work. Some additional records from Treswell Wood and what is now the Idle Valley reserve are also being computerised by Georgina Hubble-Simpson, also a student of QEHS.

BTO News 1974 - 2013

I have an almost-complete set of issues of BTO News from 1974 to the present date. They are free to anyone who wants them. Please ask if you want them.

RSPB Treecreeper badge

I have suggested to various RSPB staff over recent years, that their range of fund-raising enamel badges is sadly lacking in the Treecreeper department. Why the range was extended to non-bird species and non-British species before the charismatic Treecreeper was included is a mystery. However, it appears that this grievous wrong has been corrected and Treecreeper badges will be appearing soon. A donation of £1 to the RSPB is suggested - well worth it.

British Birds - November 2013

Two years ago I was invited to address the Oxford Ornithological Society, describing the Treswell Wood project. A little before the event I was told it was their annual Bernard Tucker memorial lecture and the lecture would appear as a paper in British Birds. Too late to withdraw. The November issue of BB is now released and includes the TWIG story. Thanks to all who have helped in any way to its creation. Perhaps we should note another OOS connection - John McMeeking, also a Tucker medallist, was once treasurer and then chairman of this eminent county ornithological society.

Fraxinus - Ash Dieback Game

The Sainsbury Laboratory in Cambridge University is trying to discover which genes in ash trees give resistance to die-back. To do this they need to compare many thousands of genetic patterns from genes of resistant and non-resistant trees. They have developed an on-line game - called Fraxinus - in which users match patterns of 'leaves' (which represent the genetic sequences). Human brains are good at spotting such patterns, even when they are only partial. If enough people play the game often enough, the vital genes may be identified. It is free and can be found on Facebook at <http://apps.facebook.com/fraxinusgame> (I have not tried this game myself because users need to have a Facebook account.) This type of data analysis is known as crowd-sourcing.

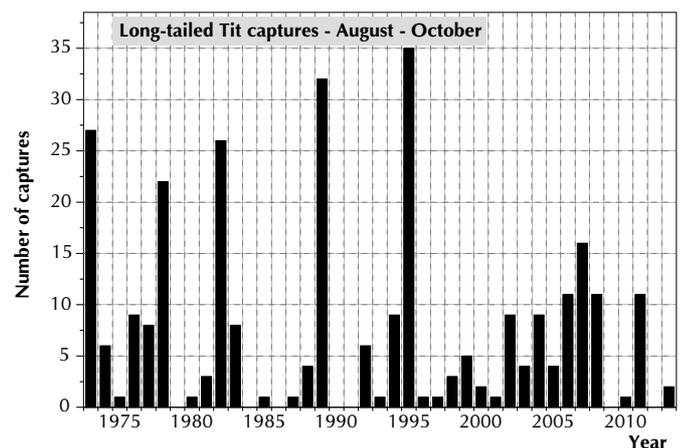
Treswell Wood collection of digital images

Our collection of digital images, including older scanned images continues to increase, particularly with the fixed-point images now taken at each standard site visit. They do need to be systematically organised and catalogued. This is a big job, but an important one. It does not necessarily require ornithological knowledge but it does, obviously, require a good deal of computer skills. If anyone would like to volunteer for this, please let us know.

Noteworthy Encounters

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Long-tailed Tit	2	EYD062	6/10/2013	H01

One of only two of this species we have captured during this 10 week interval. Until we looked at the comparable historic captures, we thought this reflected a terrible year for the species. They breed early and this year the early spring weather was most unfavourable and that would explain the lack of captures. The truth seems more complicated. Looking at the records it is, in fact, quite common to have very few, or even, no captures of this species at this time of year. In some years we have very large captures. Rather than just the absolute abundance of this species determining captures, there is also a chance element. The species almost invariably moves in parties of, perhaps, a dozen or so individuals. This means that many of our large captures are, in fact, captures of one or two family parties rather than captures of many, independently moving individuals. Perhaps a better measure of abundance might be number of days on which individuals were caught.



Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Meadow Pipit	3	D309170	22/9/2013	G05 Assart

We have attempted to catch this species again this year with playback calls to attract passing birds down to the assart. This is our only bird this year - unfavourable weather and other circumstances have reduced opportunities to attempt to catch them.

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Blackcap	4F	X649606	8/9/2013	N00

This bird was ringed as a breeding female in 2010 and not seen again until this year. Curiously she was back in the same part of the wood as when originally trapped. Blackcaps are normally very site faithful (to within a few metres) so it is surprising that we had not trapped her in the intervening years - particularly so as her captures have been in a regularly netted standard site.

Blackcap **6M** **X542442** **26/5/2013** **Q01**

Another Blackcap with a 'missing' year - this one just as unusual. Peter Harrison ringed it at Sturton-le-Steeple in April 2011 and it has not been seen since. It would be unusual for it to have moved breeding territory so far from one year to another but equally odd for it to have landed at Sturton-le-Steeple before moving to breed in Treswell Wood. From some captures in earlier years, we have thought that the normal practice for the species is to fly directly to the wood, coming to land somewhere in the centre, before moving through the wood to the chosen breeding site. Perhaps it was a first breeding season bird in 2011 just arrived in the area and scouting around for a suitable breeding territory.

Chiffchaff **4** **CXN877** **15/9/2013** **P01**

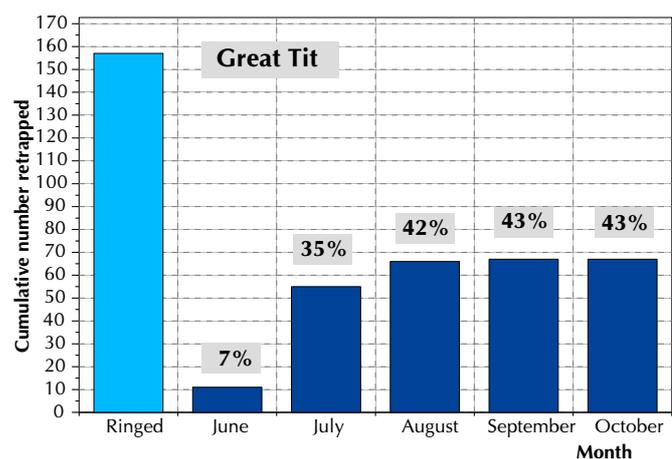
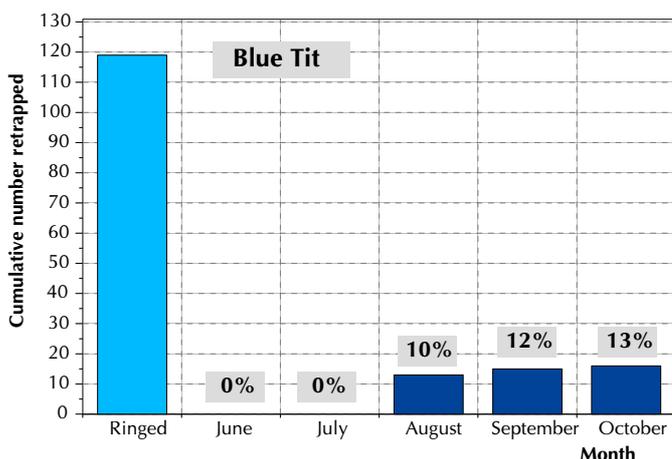
First arrival dates are easy to notice but you can never be sure of last departure dates until well after the event. With species where some individuals now over-winter (or, like Blackcaps, migrate to Britain from the continent for the winter) it is even harder to know if a late date is, in fact, an early winter arrival or an over-wintering bird. This bird which was ringed as a breeding male in July, may be 'the last'. It is not a particularly late last date, though, with, on average, one bird per year being caught later than this.

Goldcrest **2F** **CXN871** **15/9/2013** **P01**

This is the bird which we ringed in June as a juvenile, opposite Wood House on the north edge of the wood (see Twitter 93). We suggested it was locally reared, possibly from a nest in a conifer at Wood House. If so, it has not yet travelled far. We believe that many of our wintering Goldcrests, which are just starting to arrive, are from further north in the UK or Scandinavia.

Blue Tit **3J** **L327863** **8/9/2013** **Q02**

Juvenile Great Tits seem to be attracted to the feeding station very soon after fledging. Blue Tits, on the other hand, do not appear there until much later. This particular bird is typical - ringed as a nestling in May but not recaptured until September. By this time we had already captured over 40% of the Great Tits we had ringed in the nest. The two charts below show the cumulative numbers of individuals recaptured for both species. It is likely that we will retrap a few more individuals over the next months and years but, typically, we will have already recaptured by far the greatest number of those which will ever be seen again. The overall proportion of Blue Tits retrapped is much lower than that of Great Tits. One possible reason is that immediate post-fledging mortality can be very high - predators do take advantage of inexperienced, newly fledged birds. If few Blue Tits are trapped at the feeder in the first weeks after fledging, the population will have been much reduced during this period of high mortality, so the final recapture rate will be much lower than for the Great Tits which start to use the feeders very soon after fledging.

**Great Tit** **3** **TT54638** **6/10/2013** **H01**

Great Tit juveniles begin to disperse locally some weeks after fledging. Normally the first report of a nestling-ringed Great Tit will be of one of the woodland birds found elsewhere locally - perhaps killed on a road or trapped by a local ringer. This year it is the other way round. This bird is a locally ringed nestling which has moved into the wood. John Clark ringed it in Treswell village in May and this is the first of that brood to be retrapped anywhere.

Jay **3** **DK98428** **6/10/2013** **H02**

The first Jay caught since May 2012 when we caught two individuals on separate days. Today we caught a second Jay in a nearby net at the same time. In October 2010 (note the same month as this) we also caught two Jays at the same time. Both today's individuals were juveniles.

10-Week Summary: 2013 Interval 4, Captures in Standard Sites

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Sparrowhawk	1	.	1
Wren	.	1	31	1	1	1	35
Dunnock	.	.	4	1	.	.	5
Robin	.	1	7	2	.	3	13
Blackbird	.	.	6	.	1	.	7
Song Thrush	.	1	1
Blackcap	.	.	4	2	.	.	6
Chiffchaff	.	.	5	.	.	.	5
Long-tailed Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Coal Tit	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Blue Tit	.	.	2	.	.	2	4
Great Tit	.	.	1	1	.	1	3
Treecreeper	.	.	3	.	.	.	3
Chaffinch	.	.	1	.	.	.	1
Bullfinch	.	.	11	1	.	1	13
Totals	.	3	77	9	3	8	100

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		