

## **Bird Ringing on Holt Island 2017**

We had a successful year catching birds on Holt Island. We visited 17 times catching 984 birds of which 415 were newly ringed, 550 were re-trapped and 16 were young in nest boxes. In all we caught 26 species. The most spectacular was a female Sparrow Hawk with incredibly sharp talons.

We have found that the populations on the Island vary during the year. The Blackbirds have a resident population and in the winter there is an influx of continental Blackbirds which are larger and that have a slight colour variation.

Species that have increased in number during the year include Song Thrush, Blue Tit and Great Tit.

The Great Tits had a poor year in 2016 when we ringed 64 new birds, but in 2017 we had a fifty percent increase in new birds ringed at 97. This seems to be partly due to an influx of birds from the Golf Course area which is being redeveloped and had at least temporarily pushed the birds out.

One can tell where the Blue Tits are feeding at different times of the year as in the spring the white feathers round the beak are yellow with pollen from Willow catkins where they have been searching for insects and in the autumn their feet are red from Elder berry juice.

The Warblers had a poor to average year partly because the main reed bed suffered early in the year and had very few flowers and there was an invasion of goose grass that swamped parts of the reed bed. But we did have Sedge Warblers present which is the first time for about four years, three were ringed.

Blackcap numbers were much as previous years with 27 new birds being ringed. Many must have been passing through but there were 17 re-traps including one ringed at the site in 2014.

Six new Bullfinches were caught including two juveniles suggesting they were either breeding on the site or very close. Fourteen new Chaffinches were ringed but a number of others could not be ringed as they had lesions on their legs, these infections were picked up from other finches probably due to poor hygiene conditions at other sites as we take great care to disinfect feeders and water dispensers regularly.

We caught five new Great Spotted Woodpeckers of which one was a juvenile.

The Island continues to be an important area for local bird populations and for those migrating through along the river. It has shown that the Friends and Huntingdonshire District Councils work with the Island is important to the wildlife and to its enjoyment.

Julian and Sue Limentani

