

# Paxton Pits Nature Reserve

## (Constant Effort Site) Ringing Report 2018

**Derek Gruar**

### Introduction

The British Trust for Ornithology has used Constant Effort Site (CES) bird ringing to monitor the abundance, breeding success and survival of 24 common breeding songbirds since 1986. Paxton Pits Nature Reserve is one of over 140 sites across the UK that contributes data to this programme. Monitoring is carried out by qualified volunteer bird ringers during the breeding season, with twelve visits between May and early September where the same nets are set for same standard length of time for each visit. At Paxton, we monitor the site with eight mist-nets totalling 140 metres in length that are set between 5.30-11.30am.

The results are used to measure changing population sizes (comparing the number of adult birds caught each year) whilst the ratio of juvenile to adult captures provides a measure of breeding success. In addition to ringing new birds we also record data for all birds we recapture; those of adult birds ringed in previous years are used to estimate annual survival rates.

### 2018 Overview

After the cold and wet weather in late spring we were fortunate that conditions had improved by the time the start of the 2018 CES ringing season was due. However, the cold winter seemed to affect bird survival and there were reduced numbers of common resident species caught while migrants appeared to be delayed in their arrival too. We succeeded in conducting ringing sessions on eleven of the twelve allocated time periods. A total of 316 new birds were ringed of 24 different species. This was an improvement on the poor year that was 2017 and this is around the average total for Paxton CES over the past 10 years (Table 1).

Table 1. Yearly totals for the number of new birds ringed at Paxton CES (2007-2018)

Year	No. Visits	Total New Birds Ringed	Number of Species	Year	No. Visits	Total New Birds Ringed	Number of Species
<b>2007</b>	12	306	22	<b>2013</b>	12	267	25
<b>2008</b>	12	355	25	<b>2014</b>	12	378	27
<b>2009</b>	11	363	24	<b>2015</b>	12	513	27
<b>2010</b>	12	341	27	<b>2016</b>	12	339	26
<b>2011</b>	12	394	25	<b>2017</b>	12	259	19
<b>2012</b>	12	364	27	<b>2018</b>	11	316	24
				<b>Total</b>		4195	36

The diversity of our catches was one of the marked differences between 2018 and 2017. A Jay and two Great Spotted Woodpeckers in the first couple of ringing sessions set the tone. Later in the season three Green Woodpeckers were welcome additions to our catches too. Warblers were well represented but alas no Nightingales were trapped for a second successive season.

Numbers of birds ringed in the first half of the season steadily increased as the fine weather appeared to benefit some birds. We began to catch plenty of juvenile birds towards the end of the season with Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tit all having a successful breeding season. On the final session of the season we caught an impressive 21 Blackcaps, the highest number of this species ringed on a single CES ringing session. Appendix 1 gives the individual session totals for new birds and Appendix 2 some photographs.

## Recapture Information

We re-encountered 62 different birds during 2018, 28 of these were from previous CES years. The oldest recaptured bird a Blackbird was originally ringed in a post-CES ringing session in 2013. The oldest recaptured bird from a CES season was a Willow Warbler that was ringed as an adult in July 2014 which had been recaptured in 2016 as well as 2018. The only other bird that was originally ringed in 2014 and recaptured in 2018 was a Goldfinch, this had not been re-caught in the 3 years 9 months between ringing and recapture, bizarrely this bird was also ringed on the same day as the Willow Warbler.

Table 2. Species and year breakdown of re-trapped birds caught in 2018 CES season

	CES Year			
	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Robin</b>	0	0	0	1
<b>Blackbird</b>	0	0	2	1
<b>Garden Warbler</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Blackcap</b>	0	1	1	1
<b>Willow Warbler</b>	1	1	1	0
<b>Long-tailed Tit</b>	0	0	0	1
<b>Blue Tit</b>	0	0	0	2
<b>Great Tit</b>	0	1	3	1
<b>Treecreeper</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Goldfinch</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Bullfinch</b>	0	0	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>

No birds ringed in 2018 have been reported elsewhere in the UK as of writing. One bird was caught that was ringed elsewhere in the UK. This was an adult Chiffchaff that had been previously ringed at RSPB Hope Farm, Knapwell, Cambridgeshire on 09/10/2013. The distance between ringing site and Paxton was 13km, though this bird may have migrated to Iberia and back five times. The amazing thing about this bird was that it was ringed by me!

The following Table 3 (below) lists the ten longest duration/lived birds caught during CES 2018.

Table 3. Ten longest lived birds derived from bird recaptured during the 2018 CES season.

Species	Number of Re-captures	First Capture	Latest Capture	Duration
<b>Blackbird</b>	1	08/09/13 (not CES)	23/06/18	4 years 288 days
<b>Willow Warbler</b>	2	26/07/14	12/06/18	3 years 321 days
<b>Goldfinch</b>	1	26/07/14	07/05/18	3 years 285 days
<b>Long-tailed Tit</b>	1	04/10/14 (not CES)	19/05/18	3 years 227 days
<b>Treecreeper</b>	6	10/05/15	23/06/18	3 years 44 days
<b>Garden Warbler</b>	4	10/05/15	12/06/18	3 years 33 days
<b>Willow Warbler</b>	6	10/05/15	07/05/18	2 years 362 days
<b>Blackcap</b>	2	27/06/15	19/05/18	2 years 326 days
<b>Great Tit</b>	1	10/05/15	07/05/18	2 years 362 days
<b>Robin</b>	1	03/10/15 (not CES)	12/06/18	2 years 252 days

At the time of writing the national data is still being collected, so we are unable at present to make any comparison to these trends for 2018. However, we can compare 2018 to previous years at Paxton. The one noticeable finding in 2018 was lack of adult birds being caught. Our total of 118 adult birds covering the 24 widespread species that CES is used to monitor was the lowest seen at Paxton since the CES in its current form began in 2007. The positive news was that we saw the third highest number of juvenile birds caught in the past seven years. This we hope this seemingly productive breeding season may increase the numbers we may catch in 2019.

## Acknowledgements

We would be unable to conduct out our bird ringing surveys without the help of many people.

Firstly, I'd like to thank the Mike Thomas, and all the staff and volunteers at Paxton Pits Nature Reserve for their enthusiasm to enable us to continue bird ringing at Paxton as well as arranging our access permissions. I'd also like to thank the Friends of Paxton Pits for a generous donation to fund the purchase of rings and a new net.

Maureen Reeves as ever has been invaluable in providing liaison with FPP and leading ringing sessions in my absence. Many thanks to all ringers and helpers who braved the early alarm calls and/or helped set nets the day before.

Appendix 1: Number of new birds ringed on each CES Visit 2018.

	07/05	19/05	28/05	12/06	23/06	01/07	08/07	22/07	05/08	21/08	27/08	Total
Visit number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10	11	12	
Woodpigeon	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Green Woodpecker	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
Wren	0	1	0	0	1	5	3	2	3	0	0	15
Dunnock	3	2	1	3	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	15
Robin	0	2	1	2	6	5	1	1	3	6	1	28
Blackbird	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	2	8
Song Thrush	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4
Reed Warbler	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	3	1	2	12
Lesser Whitethroat	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	6
Whitethroat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Garden Warbler	1	2	0	0	5	1	3	1	2	2	2	19
Blackcap	1	4	1	3	4	5	4	3	2	11	21	59
Chiffchaff	1	1	0	2	4	1	4	0	7	5	6	31
Willow Warbler	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	7	15
Long Tailed Tit	0	4	8	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Blue Tit	0	0	4	0	7	1	1	0	1	12	3	29
Great Tit	3	2	2	7	0	1	2	2	1	4	3	27
Treecreeper	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
Jay	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Chaffinch	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Goldfinch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bullfinch	2	1	1	2	0	0	2	1	3	1	0	12
Reed Bunting	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	17	23	21	21	39	27	25	14	28	47	54	316

Appendix 2: Photos of some species ringed in 2018:

**Lesser Whitethroat, Great-spotted Woodpecker and Long-tailed tit (below).**





Jay and Green Woodpecker