

HOLT ISLAND RINGING REPORT FOR 2018

This was a successful year ringing on the Island with the main monthly visits and some additional, shorter visits in the breeding season where warblers were particularly targeted. The total number of birds caught was 1115 of which 457 were newly ringed, 48 were pulli (ringed in the nest) and the rest were re-trapped birds. This is about 12% up on last year.

Two new species were caught this year, an adult Moorhen and a juvenile female Grey Wagtail, the latter was caught in January.

Large numbers of Blue Tits and Great Tits were caught. The Great Tit numbers were almost identical to last years, the Blue Tits were a similar number newly ringed but the re-traps were up by 35% at 190, mainly juveniles. The nest boxes did well this year with 48 young being ringed in the boxes, many of these were re-trapped during the autumn.

In addition in December we caught one bird that was ringed at RAF Wyton Bomb-dump in October. One Blue Tit ringed by us in February this year was caught by another ringing group in Wenden Lofts, Essex in September, a distance of 39 km. In 2015 we caught a Blue Tit ringed in Madingley Wood. It would seem that there is some movement SE/NW by these normally sedentary birds. It will be interesting to see what further recoveries there are.

The Sedge Warblers were back this year with six new birds including some juveniles. The Reed Warblers were also caught in numbers with 44 new birds compared with 15 last year. Of these 13 were adult birds and 31 juveniles suggesting there are at least 7 pairs. The number of young produced was also good. Several of the re-traps were birds ringed in previous years including two in 2014.

No Willow Warblers were caught but there were similar numbers of Chiffchaffs to last year, Garden Warblers were disappointing at only two new ones and a re-trap from last year, Blackcaps were also similar to last year with 26 new birds and 4 re-traps one of which was ringed in 2014.

Blackbirds were much more numerous particularly in the winter months when there were a lot of continental birds which are slightly bigger and darker than the local population.

There seem to be two bands of Long-tailed Tits on the Reserve. There were few new birds ringed, mostly juveniles but a lot of them were re-trapped, suggesting a stable local population.

We are still catching Chaffinches with lesions on the feet, but not so many. Good hygiene helps, but it needs other places that they visit to have similar standards of hygiene. It was nice to catch a family of Greenfinches near the reed bed in late summer, these must have bred locally.

During the autumn and spring we caught higher numbers of Reed Buntings than last year including a good number of re-traps, one from three years ago.

After a very successful year we have proved once again what an interesting and important area this reserve is, and how essential it is to the birds that are either local or use the river to navigate by. We welcomed a number of visitors, young and old including a group from Thorndown School. We would like to thank the HDC for letting us ring on the site and the Friends of Holt Island for their support.

Julian and Sue Limentani