

Paxton Pits Nature Reserve

Bird Ringing Report 2019

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Introduction

In 2019, we conducted 15 bird ringing sessions at “The Sanctuary” at Paxton Pits Nature Reserve. The first session was in early January and our standard CES monitoring began in May and continued until late August. 2019 proved to be another improvement on the previous two CES seasons. Post CES we managed to successfully target late summer migrants on three visits in September. The final session of the year was a demonstration event where visitors from the Friends of Paxton group were invited join us during the ringing session. Sadly, the poor weather in autumn prevented any further visits. The following report details our findings over the past year.

CES 2019 Review

Background and Methods

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.

Mild winter conditions were replaced with cold and wet weather in late spring. We were fortunate that conditions had improved by the time the start of the 2019 CES ringing season was due. Fine and dry weather in May enabled resident species to raise broods with Blue Tits, Long-tailed Tits and Robins making up the most of the early season catches.

June however was quite wet which seemed to affect breeding warbler numbers especially Blackcaps which were surprisingly absent. The record warmth of July seemed to suit *Phylloscopus* warblers with a record combined catch of Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff on 21st July.

Late summer saw an increase in thunderstorms in August numbers of birds ringed were steady rather than spectacular, the highlight was the numbers of fledged Bullfinches.

We succeeded in conducting ringing sessions on eleven of the twelve allocated time periods. A total of 346 new birds were ringed of 23 different species (Table 1). This was a further improvement on 2018 as bird populations at Paxton seem to be recovering after the poor year in 2017. An average of 34 new birds ringed per visit is just above the 10 year mean.

Table 1. Yearly totals for the number of new birds ringed at Paxton CES (2007-2019)

Year	No. Visits	Total New Birds Ringed	Number of Species	Year	No. Visits	Total New Birds Ringed	Number of Species
2007	12	306	22	2014	12	378	27
2008	12	355	25	2015	12	513	27
2009	11	363	24	2016	12	339	26
2010	12	341	27	2017	12	259	19
2011	12	394	25	2018	11	316	24
2012	12	364	27	2019	11	346	23
2013	12	267	25				
				Total		4541	36

The diversity of our catches was again one of the great joys of ringing at Paxton. For the second successive year we managed to catch Jay as well as both Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers. An adult female House Sparrow was a surprise in the sanctuary, showing how far these birds will travel to forage to feed their nestlings. The fourth ever CES Kingfisher was the most popular and photogenic bird of the season. Unfortunately, no Nightingales were trapped for a third successive season. Appendix 1 gives the individual session totals for new birds and Appendix 2 some photographs.

Upon the completion of the CES ringing sessions we visited “The Sanctuary” on three further occasions. Here we were not constrained to standardised hours or net opening times. As this was post breeding season, we were also able to use audio lures to attract birds, this proved very effective and over the three sessions we ringed a further 157 birds with Blackcap and Chiffchaff making up 60% of the total. Two Coal Tits were only the second and third for the site (Appendix 3 with full details and total number of birds ringed for 2019).

Recapture Information

We re-encountered 71 different birds during 2019, 39 of these were from previous CES years. 25 of these were ringed in 2018, suggesting that there was excellent over winter survival between the two years (Table 2). The oldest recaptured bird from a CES season was a Blackbird that was ringed in May 2014, which had not been re-trapped in the almost 5 years since it was first ringed. Returning Reed Warbler and Garden Warbler that were both ringed in 2015 were also notable. Table 3 (below) lists the ten longest duration/lived birds caught during CES 2019.

Table 2. Species and year breakdown of re-trapped birds caught in 2019 CES season

	CES Year				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Dunnock					2
Robin				1	5
Blackbird	1		1	1	
Song Thrush					1
Reed Warbler		1			
Garden Warbler		1			1
Blackcap			1	1	
Chiffchaff					2
Long-tailed Tit		1		1	4
Blue Tit				3	3
Great Tit					6
Treecreeper				1	1
TOTAL	1	3	2	8	25

Since the 2018 bird ringing report we have had news of several birds ringed at Paxton which have been caught elsewhere in the UK. Appendix 4. maps the locations of these birds.

Table 3. Ten longest lived birds derived from bird recaptured during the 2019 CES season.

Species	Number of Re-captures	First Capture	Latest Capture	Duration
Blackbird	1	17/05/2014	05/05/2019	4 years 353 days
Reed Warbler	1	11/07/2015	21/07/2019	4 years 10 days
Garden Warbler	1	10/05/2015	05/05/2019	3 years 360 days
Long-tailed Tit	3	27/06/2015	12/05/2019	3 years 316 days
Blackbird	2	27/05/2016	05/05/2019	2 years 343 days
Blackcap	4	03/09/2016	27/05/2019	2 years 266 days
Robin	2	17/07/2017	26/08/2019	2 years 70 days
Long-tailed Tit	3	27/05/2017	12/05/2019	1 year 350 days
Blackcap	1	09/07/2017	22/06/2019	1 year 348 days
Blackbird	1	02/06/2017	12/05/2019	1 year 344 days

During the first two CES sessions we caught two birds that had been ringed away from Paxton. The first was a Blackcap with a French ring, this bird was originally ringed at Dunes de la Slack, Pas-de-Calais on 03/09/2011 (yellow bird on map), the second a Reed Warbler (blue bird on map) ringed at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory in Kent on 18/08/2015.



Comparison to National Trends

The big winners nationally in 2019 were Blue, Great and Long Tailed Tit as well as Treecreeper. This mirrors the findings at Paxton as all four species had productive seasons. Good overwinter survival following productive breeding seasons in 2018 are cited as potential reasons for these increases.

For migrant species both Chiffchaff and Blackcap were recorded in particularly high numbers nationally. This was again true for Chiffchaff at Paxton. However, Blackcap had a poor year after being recorded at record levels in 2018, the wet weather in June was likely to have reduced nesting success of first broods. Post CES ringing saw excellent numbers of Blackcaps ringed, suggesting productivity in later season broods was high.

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, Jim Stevenson 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 their continued generous financial support.

Maureen Reeves as ever has been invaluable in providing liaison with FPP and Andy Stanbury and Viv Ward were stalwarts of most ringing sessions. 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 2019.

	05/05	12/05	27/05	02/06	22/06	30/06	07/07	21/07	01/08	17/08	26/08	Total
Visit number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	11	12	11
Woodpigeon	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kingfisher	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Green Woodpecker	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Wren	1	1	1	0	3	2	4	2	8	2	0	24
Dunnock	2	2	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	4	0	12
Robin	3	4	11	4	5	3	3	4	4	0	0	41
Blackbird	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
Song Thrush	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Reed Warbler	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	9
Lesser Whitethroat	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	8
Whitethroat	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
Garden Warbler	3	1	1	0	5	0	2	0	6	1	0	19
Blackcap	4	1	4	1	0	2	2	1	4	3	12	34
Chiffchaff	0	1	4	1	4	2	5	12	9	2	1	41
Willow Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	9	5	0	0	20
Long Tailed Tit	1	3	13	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
Blue Tit	1	0	0	10	2	7	12	0	11	4	1	48
Great Tit	3	0	6	1	3	3	2	0	1	3	1	23
Treecreeper	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	7
Jay	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
House Sparrow	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bullfinch	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	7	7	20
	20	18	46	25	32	23	41	30	59	27	25	346

Appendix 2: Photos of some species ringed in 2019:

House Sparrow, Bullfinch, Reed Warbler and Kingfisher.



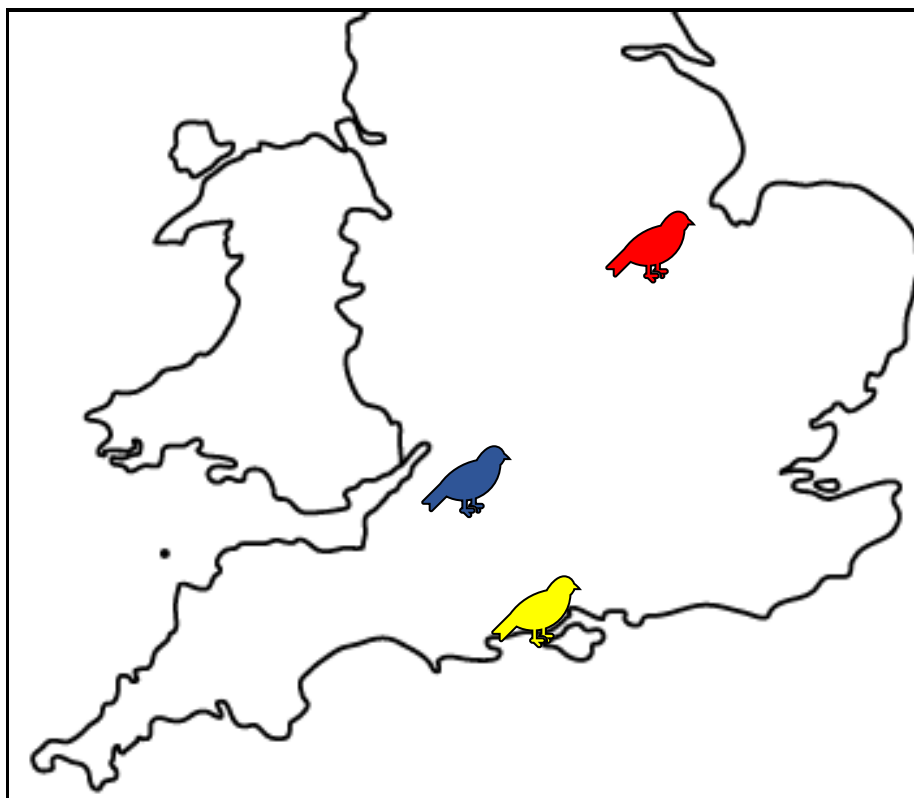
Appendix 3: Non-CES Ringing session totals


Species	4 th Jan		14 th Sept (PM)		15 th Sept (AM)		20 th Sept		New Total	Retrap Total
	New	Retrap	New	Retrap	New	Retrap	New	Retrap		
Green Woodpecker	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wren	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	4	1
Dunnock	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Robin	1	2	4	0	1	0	1	1	7	3
Blackbird	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	0
Song Thrush	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Reed Warbler	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Garden Warbler	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Blackcap	0	0	29	0	27	1	19	0	75	1
Chiffchaff	0	0	7	0	7	0	7	0	21	0
Goldcrest	3	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	6	3
Long-tailed Tit	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	1	2	5
Coal Tit	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
Blue Tit	1	3	7	1	6	0	3	0	17	4
Great Tit	3	0	3	2	3	1	1	0	10	3
Treecreeper	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	2
Bullfinch	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	14	9	57	7	50	4	36	5	157	25


Total number of birds ringed at Paxton Pits in 2019.


Woodpigeon	1	Blackcap	109
Kingfisher	1	Chiffchaff	62
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	Willow Warbler	20
Green Woodpecker	2	Goldcrest	6
Wren	28	Long Tailed Tit	23
Dunnock	13	Coal Tit	2
Robin	48	Blue Tit	65
Blackbird	12	Great Tit	33
Song Thrush	4	Treecreeper	10
Reed Warbler	10	Jay	1
Lesser Whitethroat	8	House Sparrow	1
Whitethroat	3	Bullfinch	21
Garden Warbler	20		
			503

Appendix 4: Recent UK recoveries of birds ringed at Paxton Pits (all caught by ringers).



	Species	Reed Warbler
	Ringing Location	Paxton Pits
	Ringing Date	5/8/18
	Finding Location	Lax Hill, Rutland
	Finding Date	5/6/2019
	Distance/Duration	304 days 53 km NW

	Species	Blackcap
	Ringing Location	Paxton Pits
	Ringing Date	27/08/2018
	Finding Location	Westdown Plantation, Wiltshire
	Finding Date	29/09/18
	Distance/Duration	33 days 163 km SW

	Species	Blackcap
	Ringing Location	Paxton Pits
	Ringing Date	26/08/2019
	Finding Location	Fawley, Hampshire
	Finding Date	10/09/2019
	Distance/Duration	15 days 177 km SSW

Appendix 5. Recent European Recoveries of birds ringed at Paxton.



A Juvenile Male Blackcap ringed by Mo Reeves at Paxton on 3rd October 2015.

Was re-trapped at the Jew's Gate Bird Observatory, Gibraltar 1838km away on 4th Observatory 2018.

This was three weeks before the Paxton ringers were based in Gibraltar. So, it almost met Mo again!