

RINGING REPORT FOR HOLT ISLAND FOR 2019

This is the fifth year that we have been ringing on Holt Island. We caught 1104 birds of which 543 were re-trapped and the rest newly ringed including 37 pulli (birds still in the nest). There were two new species, Carrion Crow and Green Woodpecker. A pattern seems to be emerging, in the last three years the number of birds caught in each of the resident species have been very similar.

The species most caught were Blue Tit and Great Tit with about 120 new Blue Tits and about 80 new Great Tits each year. New birds were about 40 per cent of the overall catch of these species. The re-trap seem to show that some birds use the Island at one time of the year and others at other times. They are most abundant in the winter months as they receive supplemental feeding. During the breeding season from March they seem to disperse and fewest are caught

The finches and buntings use the Island most in the winter but there are a few that breed on it, but it depends on how cold the weather is as to the numbers. In 2019 we had more Reed Buntings re-trapped than new birds. The Island does not have the flocks of young buntings in the autumn that are found elsewhere.

The river acts as a flyway both in the spring and autumn for a number of migrant species that are caught and do not stay to breed, including Whitethroat and Willow Warbler. We have only caught these in spring and autumn and not had any re-traps whereas with Chiffchaffs which breed on the Island we have had a number of re-traps each year.

This year we targeted the warblers in the summer and autumn and caught good numbers of several species. There were 41 new Blackcaps which represented a good breeding population of about seven pairs with a number of young birds in the autumn that were moving through along the river. Similarly seven pairs of Reed Warblers and three pairs of Sedge Warblers. The later seem to increasing in number each year. There seem to be more breeding Reed Warblers by the Backwater this year.

There seem to be stable populations of resident birds such as Dunnock and Wren. Most of the new birds have been juvenile birds with many more re-trapped birds than new, particularly adults. The Blackbird populations fluctuate through the year, with some continental birds coming during the winter months (the latter are larger and heavier) and during autumn the resident birds leave the Island to the surrounding woodlands for the berries.

There have been two birds ringed elsewhere and caught on the Island. A Great Tit ringed at Wyton Bomb Dump in October 2018 and caught on the Island in January 2019 and a Blue Tit ringed at Knapwell in July this year caught in October. Three birds ringed on the Island in 2017 were found dead locally, two having hit windows.

There are a few birds which were ringed in 2014 (when we started) and are still around including a Blue Tit, Blackbird and a Blackcap which are still being caught regularly. There was also a Wren ringed in 2016.

We are intending to carry on ringing as last year with a visit each month to sample the birds present but also to do some more concentrated ringing of the birds using the river as a flyway and just passing through. The Island certainly is important locally for a number of species but it is also important for the passage migrants.

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