
CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD RINGING REPORT 2019*Michael Holdsworth*

Cambridgeshire ringing returned to form in 2019 after the dip in numbers the previous year. The total of 19,670 was close to the six-year average of 19,802, suggesting that nothing dramatic had happened either to the amount of ringing activity, or to the number of birds available to ring. Our record year continues to be 2016, characterised by an exceptional breeding season, when 24,184* birds were ringed in the County.

2018 had been (un)distinguished by the lowest number of different species ringed annually this century – just 82. The record (both 2011 and 2012) remains 98 species and most years easily top 90. Higher totals in previous years had been helped along by wildfowl, wader and gull ringing, which feature less these days. No large gulls have been ringed in the County since the brief resurrection of cannon-net ringing at Milton in 2013–14; if the EU Landfill Directive survives that won't ever happen again.

The 2019 species total was 93, providing the best range since 2015. Five fairly regular species from 2018 didn't show this year: Mallard, Shelduck, Teal, Marsh Harrier and Moorhen. 2018 had had no County 'firsts' and these self-evidently get harder to come by as the years pass. Nevertheless the County Ringing List still gained two unglamorous new species in 2019, to take the all-time total to 159. Both newbies were feral wildfowl: five Barnacle Geese and a Mandarin.

Unusually, the increase from 2018 wasn't down to the number of 'scarce regulars' (e.g. Water Rail, Redstart, Stonechat, Firecrest) which make the difference in most years, but to a somewhat surprising showing by some genuine ringing rarities. Of these 2019 highlight species, several, sadly, are indicators of loss and decline: the fifth-ever Grey Partridge (Red-legs cannot be ringed because of their spur); the first Turtle Doves (2) since 2014 and the first Woodcock (2) since 2012 – both now hard to find in the County, let alone catch! A Wicken Fen Wheatear was Cambridgeshire's sixth; and a Dunkirk Barred Warbler was Tony Martin's second and a County third. A Yellow-browed Warbler at Hope Farm was the seventh. The prize, however, for pure luck, must go to Robin Ward's Great Stukeley SSSI site, with a Long-eared Owl in January (14th ever) and a passage Wood Warbler (fourth ever) in late summer, the first since the 1990s. My personal 2019 moments were a lucky 13 Corn Buntings as a much larger flock bounced into and out of a single net at Hinxton in January – amounting to 11% of the annual GB&I total; and a stonking adult male Hobby (25th ever) going after early Swallows in April – most of those we generally catch are naïve dull September juveniles.

Cambridgeshire's top four species ringed in any year has previously tended to feature at least one of those two fenland favourites – Reed Warbler and Reed Bunting – but for the second year our most-ringed species aligned themselves to the 'easiest-caught' national pattern for Britain and Ireland – see the table below which shows the tallies and rankings of our top twenty species. As usual, the typical garden feeder species are highlighted in bold. Like most counties we recorded twice as many Blue Tits as second-place Great Tit and third place Blackcap; and roughly three times as many Blue Tits as Goldfinches. The Cambridgeshire proportion of Blackcaps this year increased by a point or so, and this was also the case nationally where Blackcap edged ahead of Great Tit into second place for the first time. An astonishing 150,284 Blue Tits were ringed in GB&I in 2019, contributing over £40,000 to funding the Ringing Scheme. Blue Tit tops the table in almost every English county, with the striking exceptions of Avon (Reed Warbler, Chew?), East Yorkshire (Tree Sparrow, Spurn?) and

* The BTO's online Ringing and Nest Recording Report is subject to revision after first publication. Some of the totals for previous years published in CBR Ringing Reports do not now match those shown online. Where this is the case, and where earlier Ringing Reports had a different number, the revised total has been shown here in italics.

	<i>Species</i>	2019	2018*
1	Blue Tit	3,488	2,671
2	Great Tit	1,691	1,523
3	Blackcap	1,210	1,000
4	Goldfinch	986	1,658
5	Reed Bunting	915	865
6	Reed Warbler	765	898
7	Barn Owl	716	283
8	Blackbird	661	558
9	Chiffchaff	647	366
10	Greenfinch	590	583
11	Robin	566	429
12	Sand Martin	550	447
13	Whitethroat	533	269
14	Dunnock	522	448
15	Wren	449	396
16	Long-tailed Tit	417	543
17	Swallow	411	329
18	Starling	409	508
19	Chaffinch	328	450
20	Yellowhammer	313	230

six of the least urban/suburban ringing counties – Cornwall, Dorset, East and West Sussex, Kent and Wiltshire – where Blackcaps have taken over first place.

These top four species accounted for very precisely one in three (33.34%...) of the overall total of 1,047,521 birds ringed in GB&I in 2019. In Cambridgeshire the top-four proportion seems to have settled closer to 40% (greater/worse?) of our annual total. Their numbers are holding up much better than those of the other migrant warblers, of woodland and farmland species or of any species of serious conservation concern.

Nest-recording and pullus ringing held up well at 2,931, an increase on 2018's 2,314, and a higher proportion – 15% – continuing an upward trend. With the exception of the half-dozen focussed projects listed out below, nest recording in the County is largely opportunistic. Nestbox Blue Tits were right on average at 722 (702 in 2018), but Great Tit pulli numbers, for some reason, still remain depressed – 358 against earlier years (for example, 608 in 2016, 835 in 2015). Madingley tits accounted for the lion's share of these. All the pulli in the Wood, in 57 boxes, were ringed and PIT-tagged: 203 Blue Tits and 174 Great Tits. In addition, 101/114 of their parents were identified from face-plate aerials on the boxes. Eleven of these adults were Madingley-born, and all but one had been present in the Wood during the previous winter. The big-box species had a much better year of it: 699 Barn Owl chicks (272 in 2018) and 121 Kestrels (64). Stock Dove by-catch was 16. Our two Sand Martin projects, at Dunkirk and at Ferry Meadows also had a better year overall: 441 (352) despite second-brood calamity at Tony Martin's Dunkirk bunker (see later) which reduced his total to 156 from 199 in 2018. Other focussed breeding studies and projects continue to deliver. Twenty-nine Black-tailed Godwits, associated with the RSPB/MWT's head-starting Project Godwit, represent over half of the national total. My 104 pulli Spotted Flycatchers were a continuing by-product of the geolocator project (451 nationally, mainly in the North and West). Simon Evans accounted for most of the 150 nestling Swifts

ringed in the County in addition to most of the 138 ringed next-door in Suffolk. The two counties combined represent nearly half the national total.

The national ringing total in 2019 for Britain and Ireland rose slightly to 1,047,521 to which Cambridgeshire's totals (19,670) made a disproportionate contribution both in numbers and in the variety of species processed. Cambridgeshire holds just over 1% of the GB&I human population, but we ringed over 2% of the national ringing total (excluding 'largely unavailable' species – seabirds, waders, wildfowl and widely-ringed Western specialities, such as Pied Flycatcher). Some nationally significant numbers, where Cambridgeshire came in within the top five counties, are shown below.

	Cambs 2019	Britain and Ireland	County ranking and percentage of national total	Top county and total
<i>Barnacle Goose</i>	5	293	Fourth – 2%	Argyll (181)
<i>Bewick's Swan</i>	9	16	First – 56%	
Corncrake	2	52	Third – 4%	Argyll (48)
Black-tailed Godwit	31	432	Second – 7%	Norfolk (314)
Turtle Dove	2	11	Third – 18%	Norfolk, Suffolk (3)
Cuckoo	6	83	Fourth – 7%	Norfolk (12)
Barn Owl	716	10,896	Third – 7%	Lincolnshire (1,147)
<i>Swift</i>	157	869	First – 18%	
<i>Kestrel</i>	122	2,814	Fifth – 4%	Lincolnshire (334)
Sand Martin	550	9,635	Fourth – 6%	Leicestershire (1,886)
Spotted Flycatcher	134	1,043	Second – 13%	Devon (151)
Yellow Wagtail	155	810	Third – 19%	Wiltshire (196)
<i>Pied Wagtail</i>	192	1,964	Second – 10%	NE Scotland (234)
Corn Bunting	17	114	Third – 18%	Wiltshire (42)
Yellowhammer	313	6,448	Fifth – 5%	Suffolk (1,358)
<i>Reed Bunting</i>	915	15,625	Fourth – 6%	Suffolk (1,567)

This county totals comparison summary shows 16 species in the national top five, twice as many as in 2018. Continuing institutional research studies – Bewick's Swan (WWT), Corncrake and Black-tailed Godwit (RSPB) only account for three of these. Despite our 5000+ Blue and Great Tits, it is gratifying to see so many valuable targeted projects reflected here. Almost all these highlight species are 2015 Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC4) – either Red-listed (bold), or Amber-listed (italic). Only three: Barn Owl, Sand Martin and Pied Wagtail are of Least Concern (Green). And for how long? Ringing totals are rarely used as a demographic index, and national ringing activity increases steadily each year overall, but national Sand Martin ringing totals were 15-20,000 throughout the 1990s and the species is clearly in trouble. 2019 was also the first year ever that the GB&I Pied Wagtail total has dropped below 2,000; the Cambridgeshire birds, as usual, were mainly from BP/McDonalds at Whittlesford and Wicken Fen, where both winter roosts held many fewer birds than usual. It would be no surprise to see these two species change BoCC status in due course. The good Barn Owl and Kestrel numbers reflected a recovery from 2018's very poor season; some of the same box-monitoring team are of course also responsible for top county Lincolnshire. My six full-grown Cuckoos, including two fledged juveniles, were all at Wicken, as were Neil Lamer's 153 Yellow Wagtails – the latter at a late-summer roost.

With Dick Newell's Action for Swifts based here it's good to see this excellent result, mainly from nestbox initiatives. Neighbouring Suffolk came in a close second with 147 ringed. The two Turtle Doves are the first here since RSPB research in 2013–14. That national total of 11 is tragic, though better than eight in 2018; it hasn't been above 100 this century. Given Cambridgeshire's intensive arable landscapes it is also good to see good focussed totals for our three beleaguered farmland buntings, mainly from Wicken, Wyton and Hinxton. This is the first year above 100 Corn Buntings nationally since 2013, mainly due to the special efforts of the North Wiltshire RG on Salisbury Plain. All but one of the Spotted Flycatchers were ringed as part of the final retrieval year of my BTO geolocator project, of which 101 were pulli and 32 were new adults: a further 20 adults returning from previous years (via Angola/Namibia) were resighted or retrapped. Winner Devon was the RSPB 'western' component of the same project. In addition, two of seven GB&I Shovelers were ringed in Cambridgeshire – too small a national total to make the BTO's table. For the first time in many years Cambridgeshire's ten Green Woodpeckers failed to make the table, being just pipped by Wiltshire who took fifth place with 11! 220 random Green Woodpeckers were ringed nationally in 2019, exactly the same number as targeted Yellow-browed Warblers...

129 ringing sessions for the Wicken Fen Group took place at several different sites in 2019. The year's ringing total was 3,373 new birds of 56 different species, with an additional 489 retrapped from previous years, to make a grand total of 3,862 individuals handled. This is close to the pattern of the last few years. Blue Tits again topped the list for numbers ringed (416), followed by Blackcap (338), then Reed Warbler (258). Tawny Owl, Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher and Wheatear (only the Group's second) were among the less usual species to register just one capture each. It was another poor year for Bearded Tits, with just 17 – most of the County total as usual, but a far cry from Wicken's 94 in 2016. After a year off, September ringing resumed on Burwell Fen, which helped Meadow Pipits to 123 (none in 2018) and Reed Buntings to 258 (177), while adding nine Pied Wagtails, two Stonechats, a very late Grasshopper Warbler, the Wheatear and the year's only Linnet to the mix. As has been noted in the main CBR it was a quiet year for facultative-migrant Northern finches. Wicken had just 11 Redpolls (County-wide 16) and a single Siskin (5) to the feeders across both winter periods. Unsurprisingly no new species was added to the Group's overall list, which thus remains at 106. Both the large nestboxes and the tit boxes had reasonable years and an additional 84 open nests were monitored for the BTO Nest Record Scheme, mainly by Ann Beeby. 27 of these nests were Chiffchaffs, in the fourth year of Ann's colour-ringing study. 23 new adults were colour-marked, with two males returning for their third and fourth seasons on the Fen.

Apart from Wicken I have received individual 2019 totals for a handful of additional Cambridgeshire ringing sites (with new bird ringing totals >200):

Dave Culham's relatively new site at the RAF Wyton 'Bomb Dump' had an excellent year, totalling 1,664 (2019: 1,440), with excellent warbler passage: 118 Whitethroats, 78 Lesser Whitethroats and 88 Willow Warblers. 120 Yellowhammers were also notable. Dave's Ely Beet Pits, mainly CES, recorded 436.

Tony Fulford directed another year of intensive study of Blue and Great Tits in Cambridge University's Madingley Wood. This research depends on the individual PIT-tagging of as many as possible of the tits visiting, breeding or being born in the wood. The study supports a wide range of heavy-duty academic projects on behaviour, cognition, predator-prey relationships, networks, social learning and the microbiome, currently involving Liisa Hämäläinen and Gabrielle Davidson of the Department of Zoology. 409 different individual Blue Tits and 226 Great Tits 'participated'; by-catch woodland species included an astounding 21 different Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 19 Coal Tits, 16 Treecreepers, and 13 Nuthatches. Only two Marsh Tits were recorded; the fear is that the species sadly may soon be lost to the Wood. The dynamics of the Blue/Great Tit populations proved quite different from the last

couple of years. Where previously it had been difficult to keep the percentage of untagged bird below 20%, in winter 2019/20 this was achieved – by dint of a lot of hard work – by mid-November; the obvious explanation being that the population was more stable.

Tony Martin at Dunkirk totalled 529, including 27 Redmere Tree Sparrow pulli in East Cambridgeshire. Tony writes 'My highlights were catching four new species for the site – Barnacle Goose and at long last Bullfinch, Coal Tit and Siskin. It had been an irony that, until 2019, I'd caught more Yellow-browed Warblers than these three passerines put together. Feral Barnacle Geese have bred for years, arriving in spring and most leaving to moult elsewhere, but those with young hang around until August and one flightless family party made the mistake of grazing where they could be rounded up... The [artificial] Sand Martin colony was doing quite well, but then two Wood Mice found a way to climb up (or down) to the burrow entrances and set about eating almost all the second broods. They ate some 100 eggs and chicks, and in two cases killed incubating females. Consequently the colony was abandoned much earlier than usual, and productivity was low. The culprits were caught, but not until after the damage was done. Subsequent fortifications should ensure that only SAS-trained mice (or rats or stoats) can gain access. A Barred Warbler was the second for the site, and two Stonechats within a few days in October were the second and third. My thermal imager found me four delightful Jack Snipes [taking the all-time County total to 15], but once again the Blackpool-esque light pollution from the Corkers Crisps factory a kilometre away allowed more wary birds to fly off long before I could get close.' Other Dunkirk highlights were two Shovelers (County total now 19) 2019's only Buzzard (20) and two Water Rails.

Elsewhere: Holt Island (Julian and Sue Limentani) 561. Great Stukeley Railway Cuttings (Robin Ward) 333, plus 167 in the garden, mainly Starlings but also a creditable trapped 8 Magpies. Chippenham Fen 312 and Lordship Farm, Hinxton 284, mainly Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings (Michael Holdsworth). Richard Dale ringed 233 at the Queen Adelaide Railway Cutting and a further 290 at home in Burwell.

Details of other Cambridgeshire ringing activity can of course only be included anywhere in this Report if the information is provided. The same goes for posting on the website <http://cambridgeshirebirdringing.org/> where fuller more detailed reports are available for Ely BP, Holt Island, Madingley, Wicken Fen and Wyton.

For the moment the website is intended as a repository of Cambridgeshire ringing data and analyses rather than an exercise in social media!

Ringing totals for 2019

There are three age categories in the following summary table. Pulli are birds either ringed in the nest or as not-fully-grown dependent juveniles where the place of ringing will definitely be the place of birth. Juveniles are birds in their first calendar year. Adults are birds in their second or any later calendar year. Unaged birds are fully-grown flying birds where plumage characters do not allow first calendar year to be excluded (for example, a November Tree Sparrow or Long-tailed Tit). Recovered are reports (captures, field sightings or birds found dead) of birds away from the site of ringing, often by another ringer (a 'control'). Recovered may include either birds ringed in Cambridgeshire and found elsewhere, or birds ringed elsewhere and found in Cambridgeshire. Retrapped are reports of birds found alive (captured or re-sighted) within 5km of their original place of ringing. Species shown in italics recorded recoveries without there being any new birds of those species being ringed (usually wildfowl and/or gulls). Description species records which have not been formally submitted to the Club do not appear in the CBR systematic list or totals.

	Pulli	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2019	Retrapped	Recovered
Mute Swan		9	14		23	189	35
Bewick's Swan			9		9		
Barnacle Goose		2	3		5		
Mandarin Duck			1		1		
Gadwall			2		2		
<i>Teal</i>							2
<i>Mallard</i>							1
Shoveler			2		2		
Grey Partridge				1	1		
Sparrowhawk		6	8		14	7	
Buzzard		1			1	1	
Water Rail		2	1		3		
Corncrake			2		2		
<i>Moorhen</i>							1
Lapwing	5				5	2	
Black-tailed Godwit	29		2		31	7	7
Jack Snipe		1		3	4		
Woodcock			2		2		
Common Tern	2				2		
Black-headed Gull	4				4		3
<i>Mediterranean Gull</i>							1
<i>Lsr Blk-backed Gull</i>							7
<i>Gt Blk-backed Gull</i>							1
Stock Dove	16	1	1		18		
Woodpigeon	4	2	19		25	10	
Collared Dove	1	1	8	1	11		
Turtle Dove		1	1		2		
Cuckoo		2	4		6		
Barn Owl	699		17		716	19	33
Little Owl	7				7		
Tawny Owl	2		1		3		
Long-eared Owl			1		1		
Swift	150		7		157	5	1
Kingfisher		13	4		17	2	
Green Woodpecker		3	7		10	3	
Gt Sp Woodpecker		32	17	8	57	56	1
Kestrel	121	1			122	1	4
Hobby			1		1		
Magpie		9	5		14		

	Pulli	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2019	Retrapped	Recovered
Jackdaw	5		6		11		1
Carrion Crow	2				2	2	
Goldcrest		155	38	8	201	50	
Blue Tit	722	2,130	632	4	3,488	1,801	14
Great Tit	358	905	425	3	1,691	1,226	8
Coal Tit	7	57	28	1	93	82	
Marsh Tit	8	48	6		62	28	77
Bearded Tit		2	6	10	18		
Skylark	2				2		
Sand Martin	441	46	63		550	51	1
Swallow	76	309	26		411	1	2
House Martin		3			3		
Cetti's Warbler		50	9	7	66	38	
Long-tailed Tit		109	109	199	417	286	
Yellow-br Warbler				1	1		
Wood Warbler		1			1		
Chiffchaff	23	435	134	55	647	102	161
Willow Warbler		169	69	3	241	76	1
Blackcap		950	245	15	1,210	125	8
Garden Warbler		40	37	3	80	22	
Barred Warbler		1			1		
Lesser Whitethroat		82	32		114	15	
Whitethroat		444	89		533	35	2
Grasshopper Warbler		9	9		18	8	
Sedge Warbler	2	103	86		191	70	3
Reed Warbler	4	506	254	1	765	199	6
Nuthatch		10	8	5	23	28	
Treecreeper		53	15	5	73	53	
Wren		340	108	1	449	202	2
Starling	61	213	133	2	409	67	7
Blackbird	26	298	331	6	661	269	5
Fieldfare		15	28		43	3	1
Song Thrush	6	63	34		103	19	1
Redwing		162	65		227		2
Mistle Thrush		1			1		
Spotted Flycatcher	101	1	32		134	30	4
Robin	6	424	135	1	566	324	3
Nightingale			2		2	2	
Redstart		3			3		
Stonechat		7			7		

	Pulli	Juvenile	Adult	Unaged	2019	Retrapped	Recovered
Wheatear			1		1		
Duncock	4	361	156	1	522	299	2
House Sparrow	4	93	60	53	210	63	2
Tree Sparrow	27		2	2	31		
Yellow Wagtail		144	4	7	155		
Grey Wagtail	3	3	3		9		1
Pied Wagtail		152	40		192	5	
Meadow Pipit		256	19	1	276	1	
Brambling		2	8		10		
Chaffinch	2	143	183		328	40	4
Bullfinch		100	67		167	94	1
Greenfinch		317	270	3	590	58	5
Linnet		72	45		117	8	
Lesser Redpoll		4	12		16		3
Goldfinch	1	496	480	9	986	185	6
Siskin		1	4		5		
Yellowhammer		212	93	8	313	16	
Reed Bunting		585	321	9	915	71	9
Corn Bunting			15	2	17		
	2,931	11,173	5,128	438	19,670	6,359	439



Wood Warbler *Richard Fowling*

Ring-recoveries

Selecting ring-recoveries to include in this Report is always a challenge. Many records, of superficial interest, are actually quite commonplace, and tell us little new. In this category I would put wildfowl shot in Eastern Europe; sub-Saharan warblers caught by ringers *en route* through France and Iberia; winter thrushes back in Scandinavia; elderly gulls, waders and other long-lived non-passerines; and garden survivors older than five or six years. Previous Ringing Reports have dozens of examples of these. The challenge is to find reports which will surprise or intrigue.

This selection emphasises life-histories rather than one-off re-encounters.

[Full details and geographical coordinates of the locations listed below can be found in the **BTO Online Ringing and Nest Recording Report.**]

Black-headed Gull

HRZ	First-year	13-01-2019	Jakusevec, Zagreb, Croatia
LS05767	Colour rings	23-10-2019	Grafham Water 1,392km NW 9m 10d

Since 1909, 421,000 Black-headed Gulls from GB&I, plus thousands more in Western Europe, have generated over 30,000 foreign records (to and from Europe) in the BTO recoveries database. Nearly all of these are in a broad NE/SW arc. This is one of only 26 BHG exchanges with Croatia. Elsewhere towards SE Europe there are just five movements to Italy, two to Serbia, and one to Israel; none elsewhere in the Balkans or to Cyprus, Greece or Turkey. Out of that 30,000. One wonders where this bird was hatched?

Mediterranean Gull

EY66225	Nestling	07-06-2014	Dunkirk, Little Downham
	Colour rings	30-03-2015	Oued Souss Morocco 2,584km SSW 9m 23d
	Colour rings	26-05-2015	Lasné, Brittany France 584km SSW 11m 19d
	Colour rings	13-08-2015	Camel Estuary (Cornwall) 416km WSW 1y 2m 6d
	Colour rings	14-01-2016	Trevoise Head (Cornwall) 422km WSW 1y 7m 7d
	Colour rings	17-07-2016	Camel Estuary (Cornwall) 416km WSW 2y 1m 10d
	Colour rings	02-10-2019	Constantine Bay (Cornwall) 422km WSW 5y 3m 25d

One of just two Med Gulls ever reared in Cambridgeshire, this bird has featured in this Report before. While one other UK bird has also spent part of its first winter in North Africa, this one went further south. It has now clearly settled for Cornish autumns, maybe to moult, but where is it breeding? Possibly the Marais de Lasné à Saint Armel, where there is a breeding colony, or was it more likely just prospecting there in its first summer? Our knowledge of where such birds go is nowadays only limited by the distribution of ring-reading digiscope enthusiasts prepared to wrap up warm and put in the necessary time.

Caspian Gull

PLG	Nestling	01-06-2018	Zalew Mietkowsk Poland
DN36336	Colour rings	10-05-2019	Berry Fen 1,151km WNW 11m 9d

The BTO Online Ringing Report first recognised Caspian Gulls in 2007; since then twelve have been ringed in GB&I, mainly at landfill sites. Many more birds of European origin have been identified through colour ring sightings. Of 442 such records (sightings, not different individual birds) 281 have been to/from Poland as nestlings or in the breeding season.

Sand Martin

D053710	Nestling male	18-06-2013	Dunkirk, Little Downham
	Caught by ringer	30-06-2014	Dunkirk, Little Downham 1y 12d
	Caught by ringer	08-08-2014	Hiers-Brouage France 740km S 1y 1m 21d
	Caught by ringer	23-07-2016	Dunkirk, Little Downham 3y 1m 5d
	Caught by ringer	17-05-2017	Dunkirk, Little Downham 3y 10m 29d
	Caught by ringer	31-05-2018	Dunkirk, Little Downham 4y 11m 13d
	Caught by ringer	20-05-2019	Dunkirk, Little Downham 5y 11m 2d

This is a good example of the sort of near-complete life history which is only available through PIT technology or via a nestbox scheme for a species tolerant of being processed at the nest. The chances of this natal philopatric male being intercepted on migration were minimal and it's only a pity that continuity was broken in 2015. Did he breed somewhere else that year after his brush with the French?

Long-tailed Tit

DDA188	Full-grown male	20-09-2011	Wicken Fen
	Caught by ringer	24-04-2013	Wicken Fen 1y 7m 4d
	Caught by ringer	29-11-2013	Wicken Fen 2y 2m 9d
	Caught by ringer	09-04-2014	Wicken Fen 2y 6m 20d
	Caught by ringer	05-11-2014	Wicken Fen 3y 1m 16d
	Caught by ringer	14-04-2015	Wicken Fen 3y 6m 25d
	Caught by ringer	28-02-2016	Wicken Fen 4y 5m 8d
	Caught by ringer	03-02-2017	Wicken Fen 5y 4m 14d
	Caught by ringer	08-12-2017	Wicken Fen 6y 2m 18d
	Caught by ringer	18-05-2018	Wicken Fen 6y 7m 28
	Caught by ringer	19-12-2018	Wicken Fen 7y 2m 29
	Caught by ringer	18-02-2019	Wicken Fen 7y 4m 29d

Though impossible to age after a complete moult, this male was most likely a first-year bird when first ringed. This is a complete list of its twelve captures over seven years, which is quite a good innings for a Long-tailed Tit (the UK longevity record is 8y 11m). During that time it has stayed within a tiny sector of the Fen where ringing takes place almost weekly throughout the year and where feeders are deployed from September to April. There is just the one breeding season record, in May, the rest are captures within flocks. It is striking that the bird seems to allow us just one or two captures a year – almost as if it was checking in.

Willow Warbler

KYL765	First-year	07-07-2019	Bomb Dump, RAF Wyton
	Caught by ringer	08-08-2019	Pertwood Farm (Wiltshire) 196km SW 1m 1d

Warblers often don't immediately head due south. This is a very typical dispersal movement over one month, often to the West.

Reed Warbler

S868384	Adult female	09-06-2018	Ely Beet Pits
	Caught by ringer	10-08-2019	Paul do Taipal Portugal 1,523km SSW 1y 2m 1d
Z436802	Juvenile	31-07-2015	Ely Beet Pits
	Caught by ringer	12-05-2019	Laguna de las Canas, Spain 1,122km SSW 3y 9m 11d
S762593	Adult male	14-05-2017	Milton Country Park, Milton
	Caught by ringer	21-08-2019	Hondarribia Spain 997km S 2y 3m 7d
FRP	First-year	05-08-2018	Noyant, Soulaire-et-Bourg France
8453611	Hit glass	22-05-2019	near Whittlesey 555km N 9m 17d

Nothing unusual about these short-hop south-western movements, but nonetheless a nice little cluster for a single year.

Blackcap

CZP	Juvenile male	17-08-2019	Štchovice, Praha Czech Republic
TT92548	Caught by ringer	29-10-2019	Dunkirk, Little Downham 1,025km WNW 2m 12d

Out of 2,350 foreign recoveries at the BTO, this is only the fifteenth to/from the Czech Republic, and the first for Cambridgeshire. Was this fast-moving youngster joining the recent trend set by German Blackcaps – as a fatball winter tourist to GB&I gardens?

Whitethroat

S868265	First-year	22-08-2017	Ely Beet Pits
	Caught by ringer	15-09-2019	Saint-Seurin-d'Uzet France 769km S 2y 24d

This is only the third Cambridgeshire exchange with France, where most ringing takes place in the southwestern reedbeds, like this one on the Gironde.

Goldcrest

KCR554	First-year male	29-09-2019	Gibraltar Point, Skegness (Lincolnshire)
	Caught by ringer	07-12-2019	Wicken Fen 89km S 2m 8d

A typical Scandinavian or East European autumn arrival. Most direct sea crossings seem to be by males.

Spotted Flycatcher

C437706	Adult female	17-06-2016	Near Cambridge
	Caught by ringer	16-06-2017	Near Cambridge 11m 29d
	Colour rings	20-05-2019	Near Cambridge 2y 11m 5d
	Colour rings	15-05-2020	Near Cambridge 3y 10m 29d

Based on behaviour and choice of nest-site, it's just possible that this project female had held this site since 2013 before being ringed for the first time and geolocator-tagged in 2016. She returned in 2017 with a new partner and the tag was removed, providing a good track to and from Angola. Despite extensive searching, she proved absent in 2018, when a new pair took over the territory, but she then returned with her 2017 mate in the following year. In 2020 she was back, again to breed with a different partner, although her 2017 male was still around early on in the season.

Blackbird

DKC	Full-grown female	14-03-2018	Omø Denmark
8A36438	Hit glass	15-01-2019	Cambridge 797km WSW 10m 1d
SFH	First-year male	25-09-2018	Ypaja Finland
A779913	Caught by ringer	03-01-2019	Old Weston 1,711km WSW 3m 9d
NOS	Adult female	27-03-2018	Sore Merkeskog Norway
7624489	Caught by ringer	05-02-2019	Meldreth 857km SSW 10m 9d
NLA	Adult female	04-11-2017	Castricum The Netherlands
L483619	Caught by ringer	19-01-2019	Old Weston 339km W 1y 2m 15d
NLA	First-year female	20-10-2015	Bloemendaal The Netherlands
L445845	Caught by ringer	02-12-2019	Old Weston 336km W 4y 1m 12d

See Reed Warbler above. With 116 foreign ring-recoveries to date there's not much left to learn about the origins and routes taken by our winter immigrant Blackbirds, but again this is a fine little group for 2019. All five were originally ringed abroad.

Redwing

RZ76763	First-year	02-12-2017	Bomb Dump, RAF Wyton
	Shot	05-12-2019	Esposende Portugal 1,369km SSW 2y 3d

Redwing is a legal November–February quarry species in Portugal. This is Cambridgeshire's third there.

Grey Wagtail

AKB7561	First-year	15-10-2018	St Mary's (Isles of Scilly)
	Freshly dead	22-02-2019	Dunkirk, Little Downham 535km ENE 4m 7d

Courtesy of Tony Martin's neighbour's cat. Otherwise a total mystery. There is something of a facultative south-westerly movement of Grey Wagtails in winter. Was this a returning Cambridgeshire breeder?

Meadow Pipit

S512615	First-year	07-10-2016	Dunkirk, Little Downham
	Caught by ringer	22-12-2019	Dunkirk, Little Downham 3y 2m 15d

This retrap is only remarkable for defying the statistics, particularly since it was most likely a northern migrant. Meadow Pipits have now joined the ranks of the most sound-lured species but most are never seen again; GB&I ringers ringed 17,302 in 2019 for a grand total of nine ring-recoveries.

Chaffinch

ABD8192	First-year male	27-12-2018	Cambridge
	Hit glass	03-03-2019	Bomlitz Germany 647km E 2m 4d

This returning migrant is Cambridgeshire's first to Germany.

Lesser Redpoll

S674643	First-year	26-01-2018	Wicken Fen
	Caught by ringer	20-05-2019	Uigen, Lewis (Western Isles) 798km NNW 1y 3m 24d
Z592581	First-year Male	10-03-2018	Merton Grange
	Caught by ringer	10-05-2019	Shebster (Highland) 746km NNW 1y 2m

These are not unusual movements back to their breeding sites, but it's really hard to travel 750km from Cambridgeshire and still stay within the UK. Similar mileages would have taken them to Zurich or Copenhagen.