

A SUMMARY OF BIRD RINGING AT BAINTON, CAMBS

2015



By Chris Hughes

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Cover photo: Early morning at Bainton

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TERMINOLOGY

Readers may appreciate an explanation of the abbreviations used in this report

BTO

The British Trust for Ornithology

CES

Constant Effort Site

PROCESSED

The processing of a bird for ringing, retrap or control

RINGED

The application of a ring to a bird's leg. Data such as age, sex, wing length, weight etc are also obtained

RETRAP

A bird caught by a ringer at the same site where it was originally ringed or, if sites are close together, a bird caught within 5km of where it was first ringed

CONTROL

A bird caught by a ringer more than 5km away from the site where it was originally ringed

RECOVERY

A bird caught as in control above or a bird found by a third party e.g. reported by a member of the public

RINGING BASE

Birds are brought back to my car for processing

INTRODUCTION

In the plans for 2015, indicated in the 2014 summary, I expressed the hope that both CES sites – the heath and the damp scrub – would be fully operational this year given ‘good health and a fair wind’. Sadly, neither happened and this year goes down as the least active at the site for almost 3 decades. The reasons are simple enough. In late 2014 Michelle Househam was diagnosed with a serious illness which meant no ringing at all was undertaken in the damp scrub in 2015. Similarly, my wife too was diagnosed with a serious illness which severely restricted my ability to ring very often. That I managed any at all is mainly down to my daughter returning home to live with us and to allow me ‘space’ for some R & R. The few sessions I did manage certainly provided a welcome relief from nursing and domestic duties.

THE 2015 SEASON

Only 5 ringing sessions were possible on the heath – 3 in May, 1 in June and 1 in August. The first session on 4th May resulted in a promising total of 66 birds (36 ringed and 30 retraps) and included 3 retrapped Nightingales and a really old Long - tailed Tit. Ringing on 13th May produced a more modest total of 39 birds but included the first two juveniles of the year (both Robins) and a male Cetti’s Warbler, who only announced his presence vocally just after being ringed. A female Nightingale caught at the beginning of the month but now with a much more developed brood patch, confirming that she was a local breeding bird, was also caught. The final session of the month on the 30th produced a good total of 90 birds and included juvenile Blue and Long- tailed Tits together with the first juvenile warblers of the summer in the shape of 6 Chiffchaffs. A very handsome adult male Green Woodpecker was also ringed.

The only session in June on the 16th produced 84 birds (62 ringed and 22 retraps) including juvenile Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blue Tit, Treecreeper and, unusually for this site, Greenfinch. Like the last session in May, another Green Woodpecker was ringed, an adult female this time.

What turned out to be the final session of the year was on 7th August when 71 birds were processed. Wren, Goldcrest, Great Tit and Bullfinch were added to the species of juveniles ringed together with a stunning juvenile Grasshopper

Warbler. The surprise of the morning was a juvenile Woodpigeon, causing the net to sag alarmingly.

BIRDS CAUGHT ON THE HEATH – 2015

Species	Ringed	Retrap/control	Total
Woodpigeon	1		1
Green W'pecker	2		2
Wren	15	5	20
Dunnock	13	19	32
Robin	24	9	33
Nightingale		5	5
Blackbird	15	14	29
Song Thrush	14	10	24
Cetti's Warbler	1		1
G'hopper Wbler	1		1
Lesser W'throat	4	1	5
Whitethroat	9		9
Garden Warbler	5	5	10
Blackcap	31	5	36
Chiffchaff	27	6	33
Willow Warbler	12	12	24
Goldcrest	4	2	6
Long tailed Tit	11	9	20
Blue Tit	12	4	16
Great Tit	5	1	6
Treecreeper	2		2
Chaffinch	1	1	2
Greenfinch	3		3
Goldfinch	3		3
Linnet	1		1
Bullfinch	13	11	24
Reed Bunting	2		2
Total	231	119	350

It is difficult to draw any conclusions from these figures. Certainly, some of the resident species seemed to be on track for a 'good' year whilst many warbler species nationally had a relatively poor breeding season. I did remark early in the year that Whitethroat numbers appeared to be down and, even allowing for the low number of sessions, it was disappointing not to ring even a single Nightingale.

RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

The following birds, ringed at Bainton were reported by the BTO:

Chiffchaff – Ring number EAP098. Ringed as a juvenile on 2 July 2014 it was controlled at Wick, near Christchurch, Hampshire on 14 April 2015, 286 days after being ringed and a distance of 234km from the ringing site. One of the earliest warbler species to return to the UK, this bird may well have been heading north when controlled on the south coast. Or did it overwinter down there?

Blackcap – Ring number Y115172. Ringed as a juvenile on 31 July 2014 she died having hit a window in high winds at Parsonage Farm Cottage, Binbrook, Lincs on 5 May 2015, 278 days after being ringed and 87km from the ringing site. The finder sexed the bird as female.

Dunnoek – Ring number TK01238. Ringed as a juvenile on 20 August 2014 it was controlled at Tallington, Lincs on 31 January 2015, 164 days after being ringed and just 4km from the ringing site.

No birds ringed elsewhere were controlled in 2015.

RETRAP HISTORIES OF BIRDS RINGED IN 2013 OR EARLIER

The following age codes are used:

3 – definitely hatched during the current calendar year

3J – definitely hatched during the current calendar year and still partly or completely in juvenile body plumage

4 - hatched before current calendar year – exact year unknown

5 – definitely hatched during previous calendar year

6 – hatched before last calendar year – exact year unknown

M or F – male or female

Wren

Ring number 5U2948 – ringed as a 3J on 20 August 2013 and retrapped on 30 April and 25 May 2014 and on 4 and 13 May 2015.

Dunnock

Ring number L296762 – ringed as a 3J on 9 June 2011 and retrapped on 19 June 2012, 19 June 2013, 30 May 2014 and 16 June 2015.

Ring number Y207823 – ringed as a 3J on 15 July 2013, retrapped on 20 August 2013 and on 13 May 2015.

Ring number Y207943 – ringed as a 3J on 28 August 2013, retrapped on 9 April and 15 May 2014 and 13 May 2015.

Robin

Ring number Y207714 – ringed as a 4M on 3 June 2013 and retrapped on 15 and 30 May 2014 and on 16 June 2015.

Ring number Y207866 – ringed as a 3 on 6 August 2013 and retrapped on 28 August 2013, and 13 May, 16 June and 7 August 2015.

Nightingale

Ring number Y207619 – ringed as a 4F on 16 May 2013, retrapped on 3 June 2013, 15 and 30 May 2014 and on 4 May 2015. She was at least 3 years old when last retrapped.

Ring number X777892 – ringed as a 4M on 30 April 2014 and retrapped on 4 and 30 May 2015.

Ring number TK01234 – ringed as a 4 on 5 August 2014 and retrapped on 4 and 13 May 2015. She was sexed as a female in 2015.

(Nightingales ringed in 2014 and retrapped are shown for interest)

Blackbird

Ring number CL49275 – ringed as a 3JM on 8 September 2012 and retrapped on 2 May 2013 and 7 August 2015.

Ring number CL15359 – ringed as a 5M on 16 May 2013 and retrapped on 11 June 2013, 31 July 2014 and 4 May 2015.

Ring number CL15370 – ringed as a 3J on 15 July 2013 and retrapped for the first time (as an adult female) on 4 May 2015.

Ring number CL15380 – ringed as a 3J on 6 August 2013 and retrapped for the first time (as an adult female) on 7 August 2015.

Song Thrush

Ring number RT03635 – ringed as a 4M on 22 May 2013 and retrapped in 2013 on 11 June, 25 June and 26 July. He was retrapped in 2014 on 30 April, 30 May and 5 August and then in 2015 on 4 May.

Ring number RL64401 – ringed as a 5M at the damp scrub site on 5 May 2014 and retrapped on the heath on 2 July 2014 and 13 May 2015.

Ring number RL64404 – ringed as a 3J at the damp scrub site on 12 July 2014 and retrapped on the heath on 7 August 2015.

Garden Warbler

Ring number X688838 – ringed as a 4M on 13 May 2010, retrapped the same year on 24 May and 5 June and then not until 26 June 2012. He was not caught in 2013 but was retrapped on 30 April 2014 and 30 May 2015. He was at least 6 years old when last retrapped.

Ring number L296832 – ringed as a 4 on 15 June 2011 and retrapped on 29 May 2012, 2 May 2013 and 13 May 2015. Having eventually been sexed as a male, he was at least 5 years old when last retrapped.

Ring number Y207662 – ringed as a 4M on 16 May 2013 and retrapped on 30 May 2014 and 16 June 2015.

Blackcap

Ring number Y207647 – ringed as a 4M on 2 May 2013 and retrapped on 21 July 2014 and 4 May 2015.

Ring number Y207686 – ringed as a 4M on 22 May 2013 and retrapped on 3 June 2013, 15 May 2014 and 4 May 2015.

Both birds were at least 3 years old when last retrapped.

Willow Warbler

Ring number 5U2688 – ringed as a 4F on 2 May 2012 and retrapped on 29 May 2012, 19 June 2013, 30 May 2014 and 30 May 2015. She was at least 4 years old when last retrapped.

Ring number 5U2888 – ringed as 3J on 10 July 2013 and retrapped on 30 April and 6 June 2014 and 30 May and 16 June 2015.

Long tailed Tit

Ring number BHX803 – ringed as 3J on 18 May 2007 and retrapped on 21 October 2007 and 4 May 2015 when he was sexed as a male bird. At almost 8 years old when last retrapped, this is a fascinating recovery and one can only wonder where he was between 2007 and 2015. The national longevity record for the species is 8 years 11 months.

Blue Tit

Ring number Y207911 – ringed as a 3J on 20 August 2013 and retrapped on 2 September 2014 and 30 May 2015.

PLANS FOR 2016

The only certainty at the time of writing (Feb 2016) is that Michelle Househam will not be able to continue to ring at the damp scrub site. Having just got into her stride, this is a great shame, so that site will not be operated as a CES.

The heath is a different matter and *my intention* is to carry on and hopefully, run a full CES in 2016. Obviously, family health matters will take priority but if at all possible, I would like to carry on – for many reasons. Firstly, my wife is keen that I do so (and it is good to get her ‘blessing’), the site is one of longest running and important CES sites in the country and lastly, it would probably take dynamite to remove me from the place anyway. Who could turn up the prospect of Nightingales, Cuckoos and Turtle Doves singing, calling and purring and, frankly, there can’t be many sites where these three species can all be seen and heard. Add to that, the wonderful richness of the bread and butter species and it is not difficult to see the attraction of the place.

So, 2016 *may* turn out to be better than 2015. We’ll see.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As ever I’m really grateful to The Langdyke Countryside Trust (Richard Astle) for allowing me to ring at this site and their cooperation on a raft of conservation issues and also to Ian Wakeford (Bainton Fisheries) for access to the site and his advice on a range of issues. I am much indebted – and have been for many years now – to Andy and Helen Nutt, not only for their great work on the site but also for their friendship and support during a particularly difficult time. Last and by no means least, I have to thank my family for their support over the last 20+ years of ringing at Bainton.

Chris Hughes, Melton Mowbray, February 2016

