

A SUMMARY OF BIRD RINGING AT BAINTON, CAMBS

2011



Chris Hughes

SUMMARY OF RINGING AT BAINTON - 2011

TERMINOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

THE 2011 SEASON

BIRDS CAUGHT IN 2011

RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

A FEW SELECTED RETRAPS

PLANS FOR 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cover photo:

Grasshopper Warbler – Bainton – Photo by Chris Hughes

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 eg reported by a member of the public

RINGING BASE

Birds are brought back to my car for processing

INTRODUCTION

Bainton is one of around 120 sites in the UK primarily ringed as part of the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Constant Effort Site study (CES). Mist nets are sited in the same positions year on year and 12 visits made at roughly 10 day intervals between late April/early May and late August/early September each year to measure survival rates, breeding success and population levels of 25 of our more common bird species. A limited number of additional visits are also permitted but within strict guidelines. The data from Bainton, together with that from the other CES sites across the country, provides an excellent picture of how birds are faring. The CES scheme has been running for 28 years and 2011 was the 21st year of CES ringing at this site. Bainton is amongst the top 5 most productive sites in the CES scheme.

Occasional ringing sessions are held outside the CES period.

THE 2011 SEASON

18 ringing sessions were held and 1329 birds were processed during the year, a marked increase on the totals of recent years and indicative of a more successful breeding season than of late. Details of birds caught are shown in the table below.

Some highlights include:

24 February – 3 Robins caught - a sign of things to come.

13 April – 39 birds caught including a retrap Song Thrush ringed in May 2009 and a Sedge Warbler, an uncommon bird for the site nowadays. Also 7 male and 4 female Blackcaps, some still carrying fat and doubtless moving through. Retrap Chiffchaff, ringed as a juvenile in 09 caught plus 8 Willow Warblers.

20 April – First Nightingale of the year, ringed in 2009, and retrapped each year since. Major arrival of Blackcap, 21 ringed and first retrap of an adult ringed in May 2009. Another first retrap, a Chiffchaff, ringed as a juvenile in July 2009 and another juvenile from last year. Good catch of 7 Reed Buntings.

4 May – 2 controls, a British ringed Reed Warbler and Spanish ringed Chiffchaff. Also, 2 juvenile Song Thrush, a retrap Lesser Whitethroat from 2010 and 3 Garden Warbler retraps, the oldest from 2007. A handsome male Chaffinch, ringed as a juvenile in July 2009 retrapped.

12 May – first retraps of an adult female Nightingale ringed in May 2008 and a Bullfinch, ringed as a juvenile in 2006. 8 juvenile Long tailed Tits ringed.

21 May – more juveniles caught – Dunnock, Robin, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Long tailed Tit and an incredibly early Garden Warbler. 2 female Linnets ringed both with well developed brood patches.

31 May – 8 juvenile Robins ringed and 2 female Nightingales, both with good brood patches ringed too. Juvenile Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Treecreeper, Chaffinch, Blue and Great Tit caught for the first time this year. Another Reed Warbler controlled.

9 June – first juvenile Nightingale, Whitethroat, Goldcrest and Reed Bunting ringed plus another 14 young Robins. A juvenile Woodpigeon ringed and a site first! Also,

2 controlled Reed Warblers and a controlled Blackcap. Male and female consecutively ringed Bullfinches, ringed in 2010 retrapped together

15 June – 2 female Green Woodpeckers ringed plus another 8 young Robins, 10 young Blackcaps, 3 young Nightingales and a juvenile Coal Tit. 2 Greenfinches ringed including a juvenile and an unusual species for this site. Still waiting for the first young Willow Warblers of the year to appear.

24 June – still no juvenile Reed or Willow Warblers but first juvenile Linnet of the year ringed.

1 July – juvenile Wren and first juvenile Reed Warbler and Bullfinch of the year ringed. Still no juvenile Willow Warbler? And yet more young Robins. Retrap of a Song Thrush ringed in 2007.

11 July – juvenile male Green Woodpecker ringed together with the 5th juvenile Nightingale of the year. And, at last, juvenile Willow Warblers ringed.

22 July – 57th juvenile Robin of the year ringed and 2 juvenile Treecreeper – another species having a good year. First Marsh Tit to be ringed since August 2009 was caught (a juvenile) and a juvenile Cetti's Warbler was a big surprise as no adults had been heard, seen nor caught. 2 adult Lesser Whitethroats ringed, a species having a poor year on site.

29 July – another Woodpigeon ringed, an adult this time plus the first Magpie since 1997 – a juvenile. 3 male and 1 female Green Woodpeckers ringed plus a retrap male, ringed as a juvenile in 2009 – four at the same time and all extremely noisy! Juvenile Nightingale, Sedge Warbler (very scarce), Lesser Whitethroat (thin on the ground in 2011) ringed plus 8 juvenile Willow Warblers, now appearing in greater numbers.

9 August – retrap female Blackbird from 2005 and Reed Warblers now starting to accumulate fat deposits.

15 August – another juvenile Green Woodpecker ringed plus the 7th juvenile Nightingale of the year and another juvenile Marsh Tit. Reed Warbler from 2006 retrapped.

30 August – adult female Nightingale, first ringed in 2006, retrapped that year but not since, caught again. At least 6 years old now. Grasshopper Warbler ringed plus yet another juvenile Marsh Tit and another Magpie too.

14 October – 2 more young male Green Woodpeckers ringed and the 81st Robin, both species having had a fantastic year. First Redwing to be ringed since 2007 caught plus some continental Blackbirds judging by the scalloping/greyish caste to some feathers. A really hefty Blackcap ringed, well stocked up for the journey south. Also, incredibly, 9 Bullfinches all in the same net together were caught.

BIRDS CAUGHT IN 2011

Species	Ringed	Retraps/Controls	Total
Woodpigeon	2	0	2
Green Woodpecker	8	4	12
Wren	40	9	49
Dunnock	49	40	89
Robin	81	21	102
Nightingale	9	10	19
Blackbird	30	28	58
Song Thrush	21	24	45
Redwing	1	0	1
Cetti's Warbler	1	0	1
Grasshopper W'ler	1	0	1
Sedge Warbler	7	0	7
Reed Warbler	76	39	115
Lesser Whitethroat	6	2	8
Whitethroat	49	6	55
Garden Warbler	62	27	89
Blackcap	136	21	157
Chiffchaff	71	19	90
Willow Warbler	49	30	79
Goldcrest	6	0	6
Long tailed Tit	30	29	59
Marsh Tit	4	0	4
Coal Tit	2	0	2
Blue Tit	68	12	80
Great Tit	35	14	49
Treecreeper	13	5	18
Jay	1	0	1
Magpie	2	0	2
Chaffinch	22	3	25
Greenfinch	2	0	2
Goldfinch	2	0	2
Linnet	11	1	12
Bullfinch	43	20	63
Reed Bunting	18	7	25
Totals	958	371	1329

Overall 2011 proved to be a successful year for the majority of species monitored by CES ringing. Some species had spectacular years with record catches of Green Woodpecker, Dunnock, Robin and Garden Warbler with Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Long tailed Tit and Reed Bunting producing the highest totals for many years. Rather surprisingly, given the severe winter weather during 2010/11, Wren also did well with the highest total ringed for over 5 years. Also 'doing OK' were Blackcap and Willow Warbler although young of the latter species was rather late in putting in an appearance. Nightingale clearly had a good year too with 7 juveniles and 2 adults ringed and 9 other adult individuals retrapped. Looking at the retrap histories of some of these birds suggests that certain individuals may be caught on migration e.g. V586996, ringed on 22 May 2008 and retrapped on 24 May 2010 and 12 May 2011 or T678933, ringed on 27 April 2006, breeding on site in 2006 (retrapped on 6 May and 15 June that year) and retrapped again at the late date of 30 August 2011. The other retraps were generally only retrapped once during the year which might suggest they are breeding just outside the netting area. Certainly, males are heard singing across the heath and elsewhere across the gravel pits so it will be most interesting to see the results of the national Nightingale survey due to take place in 2012.

At my invitation, Professor Rob Fuller, Dr Chris Hewson and Chas Holt from the BTO visited the site this year to get an understanding of just why the site is so good for Nightingale and to suggest what, if any, work needs to be carried out for their future. To say they were amazed at the habitat is an understatement as it is unlike any other they've seen. Its uniqueness makes it a very special place indeed, especially as it is located towards the northern edge of the species' range. Given the catastrophic decline in the species nationally, Bainton is an extremely important site for them. The 'natural' management of the site by grazing deer and rabbits has created a habitat almost by accident that would make most reserve wardens, gamely battling to create the right conditions for the species, extremely envious. The general consensus of opinion was that little if any management works needs to be done to the heath vegetation save perhaps fencing off some potential new breeding territories with deer proof fencing to allow the under storey to develop to a sustainable level.

Perhaps the most intriguing bird of the year was the Spanish ringed Chiffchaff, controlled on 4 May with undoubtedly the noisiest being the four Green Woodpeckers caught together on 29 July. If one thinks how the yaffle call carries across distance, imagine being on top of four of them – all together! The only species to have a poor year was Lesser Whitethroat with the lowest ever total catch. Over the last few years the numbers ringed each year had settled in the middle teens but with just 6 ringed in 2011 – compared with 31 in 2006 – the decline is a little alarming.

Equally alarming was the sight of the rear end of a deer crashing through a brand new £80 net on the heath. Fortunately, no birds were in the net and it is an occupational hazard of ringing on this site, although this is only the second time it's happened.

During the year I was able to assess the ringing standard of a ringer from Mid-Lincs Ringing Group who was seeking advancement in his permit status. Apart from having a fantastic days ringing, he was able to demonstrate to me that he had reached an excellent level of competence and, following scrutiny of mine and his trainer's recommendations, he was duly awarded his A permit in autumn 2011. As a trainer and assessor of others' ringing abilities, I have now assessed half a dozen ringers at

Bainton. Not all have successfully reached the required standard, two having been referred back for further consolidation and training and I think this underlines that the British ringing scheme is recognised as upholding the highest standards of any ringing scheme in the world. The bottom line is the welfare of the birds. It always comes first.

I also during the year assisted staff from The Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust who are working with The Langdyke Countryside Trust to develop a management plan.

RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

The following is a selection of recoveries or controls of birds either originally ringed at Bainton or ringed elsewhere and caught by me here. These were either ringed or controlled in 2011 or reported by the BTO in that year.

Blackbird

Ring number RP89481 – ringed as juvenile female on 12 June 2000 and found dead after hitting a window at Maxey, Peterborough on 9 November 2009 – an unfortunate end for a long lived bird.

Reed Warbler

Ring number X399792 – ringed as a juvenile at North Dunes, Winterton, Norfolk on 14 September 2008 and controlled at Bainton on 4 May 2011 – 138km and 962 days after being ringed.

Ring number V737752 – ringed as an adult on 17 May 2009 at Earls Barton, Northamptonshire and controlled at Bainton on 9 June 2011 – 51km and 753 days after being ringed.

Ring number X146504 – ringed as an adult on 8 August 2009 at Icklesham, East Sussex, controlled at Bainton on 5 June 2010 as a breeding male and again on 31 May, 9 June and 1 July 2011– 206km and 661 days after being ringed.

Ring number L296889 - ringed as an adult female on 1 July 2011 and controlled at Icklesham, East Sussex on 25 July 2011 – 206km and 24 days after being ringed at Bainton.

Nightingale

Ring number V586147 – ringed as a juvenile on 6 August 2007 and controlled at Feltwell Fens North, Norfolk on 10 May 2010 – 59km and 1008 days after being ringed. This bird was caught at the site used by BTO researchers to fix geolocators to the species. This particular bird did not have a geocator applied but, given the paucity of controls of the species, is still an interesting record. The same team visited Bainton during the year to look at the habitat here and commented that the site in Norfolk is a woodland edge with a stream and deep ditches, quite unlike the heath at Bainton.

Blackcap

Ring number E969677 – ringed as a juvenile on 27 June 2008 and controlled at Gunboro Wood, Bourne, Lincolnshire on 14 May 2011 – 19km and 1051 days after being ringed at Bainton.

Ring number L528526 – ringed as a juvenile at Rutland Water, Rutland on 21 August 2010 and controlled at Bainton on 9 June 2011 – 24km and 292 days after being ringed. This bird had been ringed on the Saturday of the British Birdwatching Fair (maybe even by me!) and details arrived from the BTO just in time to display the recovery at the 2011 Birdfair. It certainly made for an interesting topic of conversation to the many hundreds of visitors to the bird ringing demonstration.

Whitethroat

Ring number L403523 – ringed as a juvenile on 31 August 2010 at Icklesham, East Sussex and controlled at Bainton on 20 April 2011 – 206km and 232 days.

Robin

Ring number X688921 – ringed as a juvenile on 5 June 2010 and found dead on 16 April 2011 after hitting a patio door at Helpston, Peterborough – 2km and 315 days after being ringed.

Chiffchaff

Ring number FX2329 (ICONA, MADRID). Controlled as an adult at 08.20 hours on 4 May 2011 at Bainton. The bird had a wing measurement of 59mm and weighed 7.4g. *Details of when and where the bird was originally ringed are still awaited.*

Treecreeper

Ring number CLL486 – ringed as a juvenile at Bainton on 31 May 2011. The bird was found seriously injured and taken to a veterinary surgery at Werrington, Peterborough on 11 June 2011. As the vet considered the injuries to be serious the bird was unable to be saved – 6km and 11 days after being ringed.

A FEW SELECTED RETRAPS

The vast majority of birds retrapped are birds from the preceding year or two but each year I also retrap a few older birds and a selection of their retrap histories are shown below.

Dunnock

Ring number V586231 – ringed as an adult male on 6 August 2007. He was retrapped on 2 and 29 May 2008, 26 April, 10 May and 21 June 2009, 1, 13 and 24 May plus 12 June 2010 and 12 and 31 May 2011. We know each other quite well now!

Nightingale

Ring number T678933 - as mentioned above, ringed as an adult male on 6 May 2006, retrapped on 15 June that year and then not until 5 years later when he was retrapped on 30 August 2011. He was therefore at least 6 years old when last retrapped. The oldest known Nightingale was a bird in Kent aged 7 years, 1 month.

Ring number V586996 - ringed as an adult female on 22 May 2008 and retrapped for the first time almost 3 years later on 12 May 2011.

Blackbird

Ring number CF56942 – ringed as a juvenile on 23 August 2005 and retrapped on 30 August the same year. It was then retrapped again on 31 May 2006 before disappearing for several years. It reappeared in the nets on 13 and 24 May 2010 and again on 9 June and 9 August 2011 – 6 years old in the summer of 2011.

Ring number CF14966 – ringed as a juvenile male on 28 July 2006 and retrapped for the first time on 21 May 2011.

Ring number CW57562 – ringed as a juvenile on 21 August 2007 and retrapped later that year on 3 November. It was then retrapped on 29 May and 12 July 2008, 29 May 2009, 22 April and 1 May 2010 and 12, 21 and 31 May 2011.

Song Thrush

Ring number RW64409 – ringed as an adult male on 6 May 2007 and retrapped on 1 June that year. It was then retrapped on 19 June 2008 and then 3 years later on 1 July 2011.

Ring number RW64475 – ringed as an adult male on 27 June 2008 and retrapped for the first time on 12 May 2011.

Reed Warbler

Ring number R050362 – ringed as an adult female on 15 June 2006. She was retrapped some 3 years later on 20 May and 25 July 2009, then on 5 June 2010 and 31 May, 15 June and 15 August 2011 – at least 6 years old when last retrapped.

Garden Warbler

Ring number V254661 – ringed as an adult male on 6 May 2007, retrapped on 2 July that year and then on 13 May 2010 and 4 May 2011.

Chiffchaff

Ring number CDC829 – ringed as a juvenile on 23 August 2008 and retrapped on 30 June 2009, 1 May 2010 and 4 and 12 May 2011.

Bullfinch

Ring number V254150 – ringed as a juvenile female on 22 August 2006 and retrapped for the first time almost 5 years later on 12 and 21 May 2011.

PLANS FOR 2012

A full CES programme is planned for 2012.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As ever, my sincere thanks to all the land owners and agents (Lafarge Aggregates, Bainton Fisheries, National Grid and Langdyke Trust) for allowing me to ring at this very important site. In particular, my thanks to Ian Wakeford (Bainton Fisheries) and Stuart Irons and Richard Astle (Langdyke Trust).

Special thanks to Andy and Helen Nutt without whose efforts the bird populations on site would undoubtedly be the poorer.

*Chris Hughes
Melton Mowbray, Leics
March 2012*

