

A SUMMARY OF BIRD RINGING AT BAINTON, CAMBS

2013



By Chris Hughes

SUMMARY OF RINGING AT BAINTON - 2013

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Cover photo:

Spotted Flycatcher – Bainton – 16 May 2013 (Photo: 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 e.g. reported by a member of the public

RINGING BASE

Birds are brought back to my car for processing

INTRODUCTION

Bainton is one of around 125 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. Visits 1 - 6 (between April/May and June/July) generally give an indication of how many adult birds are around and visits 7 - 12, (between June/July and August/September) when the majority of young birds are on the wing, give an indication of breeding success. 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 31 years and 2013 was the 23rd year of CES ringing at this site.

THE 2013 SEASON

The year was characterised by the coldest spring since 1962 followed by the warmest summer since 2006. The summer was also drier than average with rainfall 50% lower than in recent years. Nationally, numbers of all eight species of returning migrants (adults) monitored by CES fell significantly below the five year average. Worst hit were Willow and Garden Warbler together with Lesser Whitethroat, all recording their lowest figures since CES began in 1983. The picture at Bainton was interesting in that numbers of seven of the eight species were lower than the Bainton five year average but the drop in numbers was nowhere near as severe as the picture nationally. Only three of the eight species fared worse than the national picture - Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge and Reed Warbler. The latter species has to be seen in the context of the limited ringing carried out in their preferred habitat - the reedbed - due to a variety of factors, not least accessibility. Whitethroat bucked the national trend completely with an increase in the number of returning adults being recorded.

Contributory factors to these numbers must be the relatively low numbers of recruits to the adult populations following the very poor breeding season in 2012 together with strong headwinds hampering spring migration and low temperatures greeting the birds on their arrival in the UK.

Numbers of resident adults caught showed a slightly different picture in that many species recorded reductions in excess of the national picture, which itself reflected a reduction in numbers against a five year average. Only Wren, Song Thrush and Goldfinch numbers nationally showed an increase but not at Bainton. Numbers for adult Wren and Song Thrush fell, as they did for many species but, on a positive note, Blackbird, Robin and Dunnock adult numbers showed an increase, again bucking the national trend. The poor breeding season in 2012 must have affected the numbers of resident adults too.

Nationally, the warm dry summer produced more chicks per nest for migrant species. Chiffchaff, Willow and Garden Warbler, Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat all significantly improved productivity over the five year average. The picture at Bainton

was somewhat different with only Whitethroat being above – and well above – the Bainton five year average and Chiffchaff marginally below. Other migrant species were well below average. Resident species fared better with Dunnock, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Treecreeper and Bullfinch all doing well. They all produced more young than the Bainton average and significantly better than the national figures. Productivity for other species, such as Blue and Great Tit, was low both nationally and locally.

This rather variable picture does illustrate how local conditions can affect breeding success. Logic would perhaps explain why more adult Blackbirds and Whitethroats produced an increase in young whereas increases were still recorded for species such as Treecreeper and Song Thrush, despite fewer adults being caught. It was hoped that with fewer adults around – especially migrant species – there would be less competition for nesting places and food but other factors clearly came into play. I did remark in last year's summary that I thought it would be a few years before the overall picture improved and it will be very interesting to see what the summer of 2014 brings – assuming the weather is 'normal' - whatever that is!

14 ringing sessions were held with a total of 781 birds processed during the year. This is only marginally more than the total for 2012 (778). Early in the spring it was clear that the reedbed area was poorly populated by Reed Warblers and despite checking on several occasions for singing males, few birds were recorded. The plan had been to net the area later in the summer to sample the breeding success – or otherwise – but this didn't happen for a variety of reasons including accessibility. Unless the net rides are regularly used or maintained, they quickly become overgrown and to disturb the reedbed by cutting out rides was considered inimical to the birds' welfare. They were clearly having a tough enough time so I decided to leave well alone for this year. As a result, the overall numbers of Reed Warblers caught were massively reduced with numbers for other species slightly reduced too.

The 'ringing year' started off well in late April. Six Nightingales plus Grasshopper Warbler, Whitethroat and Blackcap were all in good voice on the heath. A Sedge Warbler was ringed, a species that has become quite a rarity at Bainton. In the heady days some ten years ago, it was not unusual to trap double figures of these birds at each visit. How times change! As we moved into May, Cuckoo, Turtle Dove and Garden Warbler added to the vocal chorus with female Nightingales being caught that were clearly breeding, as evidenced by their well-developed brood patches. On 16 May, ice had to be removed from some ringing poles before I could get the nets erected and, much to my surprise, the first ever spring Spotted Flycatcher was caught. Little did I know then that this was to be an amazing year for this increasingly threatened species. By the year's end, six had been ringed with only two having been caught in the previous two decades or more. Also, in May another new species for me was the sight of two Common Crane wafting over the reedbed early on the 22nd. June saw the appearance of the first juveniles of the year including Lesser Whitethroat- the first since 2011- together with Nightingale, Blackcap and Willow Warbler. Young of resident species – Dunnock, Wren, Blackbird, Great Tit and Treecreeper - also appeared. A second juvenile Nightingale was ringed on 25 June, doubling the total young ringed in 2012. July produced good numbers of juvenile Whitethroat, juvenile

Grasshopper and Cetti's Warbler and the first young Bullfinch of the year. It also produced another site first, a Tawny Owl. These are heard just about every time I visit the site yet none had been caught before, despite literally hundreds of ringing sessions here. Amazingly, August produced yet another Tawny Owl - a juvenile this time – plus the first juvenile Kingfisher for three years and the final Spotted Flycatcher of the year.

A table of birds caught in 2013 is shown below.

BIRDS CAUGHT IN 2013

Species	Ringed	Retraps/Controls	Total
Tawny Owl	2	0	2
Kingfisher	1	0	1
Green W'pecker	2	2	4
Wren	29	4	33
Dunnock	33	30	63
Robin	51	17	68
Nightingale	6	9	15
Blackbird	35	35	70
Song Thrush	25	23	48
Cetti's Warbler	3	2	5
Grasshopper Wbler	4	2	6
Sedge Warbler	1	0	1
Reed Warbler	5	2	7
Lesser Whitethroat	4	0	4
Whitethroat	36	10	46
Garden Warbler	24	14	38
Blackcap	76	16	92
Chiffchaff	61	29	90
Willow Warbler	28	9	37
Goldcrest	1	0	1
Spotted Flycatcher	6	1	7
Long-tailed Tit	12	5	17
Marsh Tit	2	0	2
Coal Tit	1	0	1
Blue Tit	30	9	39
Great Tit	13	0	13
Treecreeper	11	3	14
Chaffinch	3	2	5
Greenfinch	3	0	3
Goldfinch	2	0	2
Bullfinch	33	12	45
Reed Bunting	2	0	2
Totals	545	236	781

RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

The following are controls of birds either originally ringed at Bainton or ringed elsewhere and caught by me here. These were either ringed or controlled in 2013 or reported by the BTO in that year.

Blackcap

Ring number L296171 – ringed as a juvenile at Bainton on 17 July 2010 and controlled as an adult male at Daws Hall, Lamarsh, Essex on 21 July 2013 - 104km and 1100 days after being ringed.

Garden Warbler

Ring number Y207638 – ringed as an adult at Bainton on 2 May 2013 and controlled at Grafham Water Nature Reserve, Cambs on 14 May 2013 – 39km and 12 days after being ringed. Presumably this bird ‘overshot’, was ringed at Bainton and then headed south again to Grafham Water.

Cetti’s Warbler

Ring number Y207826 – ringed as a juvenile at Bainton on 15 July 2013 and controlled at Grimston, East Riding of Yorkshire on 25 September 2013 – 132 km and 72 days after being ringed. This is the second juvenile, of only four ever ringed at Bainton, to be controlled. The previous bird, ringed in June 2010 was controlled (twice) by ringers at Kilpaison Marsh, Rhoscrowther, Pembs in November of that year. It had headed in a west-south-west direction whereas the latest bird headed north. This species’ range expansion since it was first recorded breeding in Kent in 1973 has been impressive. Rapid expansion has enabled it to spread along the south and east coasts and into Wales, the Midlands and Yorkshire so these movements of presumably overwintering birds is not untypical.

Long tailed Tit

Ring number CLL482 – ringed as a juvenile at Bainton on 31 May 2011 and controlled at Bourne Wood, Lincs on 30 December 2012 – 15km and 579 days after being ringed. (Reported Feb 2013 and included in 2012 summary)

Grasshopper Warbler

Ring number D047149 – ringed at Walberswick, Suffolk as a juvenile on 18 August 2012 and controlled as an adult male at Bainton on 22 May 2013 – 141km and 277 days since first being ringed. This is the first recovery of a ‘Gropper’ at Bainton.

Reed Warbler Addendum to 2012 summary

Ring number Y077972– ringed as a juvenile on 1 August 2011 at Rutland Water, Rutland and controlled at Bainton on 23 May 2012 – 23km and 296 days after being ringed. Information was received in 2013 that this bird actually re-orientated back to Rutland Water where it was retrapped on 3 July 2012.

Chiffchaff

Ring number FX2329 (ICONA, MADRID) - ringed at El Sablon, Muros de Nalon, Asturias, **Spain** as an adult on 13 March 2011. It was controlled at Bainton, as an adult male, at 08.20 hours on 4 May 2011. This bird, with a wing length of 59mm and weighing 7.4g when controlled, had travelled 1095km since being ringed 52 days earlier.

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. Some of the more interesting retrap histories are:-

Dunnoek

Ring number E969967 – ringed on 27 September 2008. He was retrapped on 26 April and 10 May 2009, 24 May and 5 June 2010, 29 July 2011, 12 and 23 May 2012 and 16 May 2013.

Ring number L296356 – ringed as a juvenile on 1 September 2010. He was retrapped on 13 April, 9 and 15 June 2011 and 28 April 2012. In 2013 he was retrapped on 2 May and 3 June.

Nightingale

Ring number V586996 - ringed as an adult female on 22 May 2008, retrapped for the first time almost 3 years later on 12 May 2011 and again on 13 June 2012. She was retrapped on the heath again on 19 and 26 June 2013.

Ring number X348622– ringed as a juvenile on 9 August 2009 and retrapped as an adult male on 15 June 2011 and 22 May 2013.

Ring number L296248 – ringed as a juvenile on 11 August 2010 and retrapped as an adult male on 28 April and 15 May 2012 and again on 2 May 2013.

The latter two once again indicate that Bainton juvenile males, although site faithful, are not retrapped until two years after ringing. Evidence nationally indicates that juvenile males in particular are site faithful but that they return to the same site the year after ringing. There is no evidence of that happening at Bainton.

Blackbird

Ring number CW57562 – ringed as a juvenile on 24 August 2007 and retrapped on 3 November that year. He was then retrapped on 29 May and 12 July 2008, 29 May 2009, 22 April and 1 May 2010, 12, 21 and 31 May 2011 and on 10 July 2013. In the 2012 summary, Blackbird CW57560, ringed as a juvenile on the same day was also retrapped on 3 November that year. She was then retrapped on 19 June 2008 and, after an absence of almost 4 years, on 29 May 2012 but not in 2013. Both birds are certainly long lived.

Ring number CW57645 – ringed as a male on 12 July 2008 and retrapped on 26 April and 10 May 2009, 15 June 2011 and 12 May 2012. He was retrapped again on 13 June and 15 July 2013.

Song Thrush

Ring number RX63725 – ringed as an adult male on 12 May 2011 and retrapped the same year on 9 August. He then reappeared in 2013, being retrapped on 16 May, 19 and 25 June.

Garden Warbler

Ring number E969532 – ringed as an adult female on 29 May 2008, retrapped on 5 and 19 June and 12 July that year then again, two years later, on 30 July 2010. After missing a year once more she was retrapped on 23 May and 13 June 2012. She returned to Bainton again, being retrapped on 22 May 2013 and being at least 6 years old by then.

Blackcap

Ring number L296087 – ringed as a juvenile on 27 June 2010 and retrapped as an adult female on 2 and 22 May 2013.

Ring number L296990 – ringed as a juvenile on 22 July 2011 and retrapped as an adult male on 22 May 2013.

Two examples of Bainton juveniles returning to their natal site, albeit after an absence of two or three years.

Reed Warbler

Ring number X348575 – ringed as a juvenile at Bainton on 31 July 2009 and retrapped (unsexed) for the first time nearly four years later on 22 May 2013.

Whitethroat

Ring number L296732 – ringed as an adult male on 9 June 2011 and retrapped on 12 and 23 May 2012 and on 2 May 2013.

Green Woodpecker

Ring number DE11731 – ringed as a juvenile male on 21 July 2012, retrapped on 27 July that year and again on 10 July 2013.

PLANS FOR 2014

A full CES programme is planned for 2014.

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

My thanks also to Lloyd Park and Michelle Househam from Rutland Water for their help with some modest ‘gardening’ early in the year and to Michelle for her help processing the birds during the CES season.

*Chris Hughes
Melton Mowbray, Leics
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