

A SUMMARY OF BIRD RINGING AT BAINTON, CAMBS

2016



By Chris Hughes

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Cover photo: Leucistic juvenile Wren – Bainton, 6 August 2016

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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 – nets are set in the same place year on year for 12 visits within 10 day periods between end April/early May and end of Aug/early Sept

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 previous summary I expressed the hope that 2016 would turn out to be more successful than 2015. And so it proved with 11 of the 12 CES visits completed. 936 birds of 29 species were processed and a new species for the site – Lesser Redpoll – was trapped and ringed on 30 April 2016 – the 45th species to be caught here. 15280 birds have now been processed at the site in the last 15 years.

My favourite bird – the Nightingale – had a slightly better year than 2015 (it could hardly have been worse) and the ringing of two juveniles certainly lifted spirits. It does though now seem that this wonderful songster is only just clinging on at Bainton. Long gone are the heady days when I would process 27 in a CES 'year' as in 2004, 2009 and 2010. It is only in the last two years that their totals have dipped into single figures although in 2015, a full CES was not completed.

THE 2016 SEASON

The sessions held were:

30 April 2016 – 89 ringed, 18 retraps – Total 107 birds

A very encouraging start with the highest ever total for the first CES visit of the year. There was a heavy ground frost at 0630 followed by a sunny, clear and breezy day, the breeze getting stronger from 0900. Of the birds ringed, worthy of mention was a female Nightingale, 20 adult Blackcaps (11 male, 9 female) 10 Willow Warblers, 9 Chiffchaff and, unusually for this time of year, 5 Long tailed Tits. 2 Coal Tits were only the 31st and 32nd to be ringed here and a new site species, a Lesser Redpoll was also ringed.

27 May 2016 – 57 ringed, 18 retraps – Total 75 birds

A cool, misty start to the day with a Nightingale in full flow at 0320. By 0750 a breeze had driven off the mist to reveal a bright, sunny morning. Joined by Lloyd Park from Rutland Water and birds seen on the heath included Turtle

Dove, Cuckoo, Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler, Hobby and a Kingfisher moving between lakes. The Turtle Dove came down to feed just in front of the car, something I'd never seen here before, and gave stunning views of this attractive, increasingly rare bird. The first juveniles of the year were ringed – Robin and Song Thrush – and a Garden Warbler with a crossed over beak was also caught. My notes record that Whitethroat were 'thin on the ground'. Of particular note was a retrapped Great Spotted Woodpecker, ringed as a juvenile on 24 August 2007 and caught again here for only the second time.

6 June 2016 – 36 ringed, 32 retraps – Total 68 birds

A very warm morning with the temperature at 8.5 C at 0225. A dense mist hung over the site and started to lift from 0600 in a strengthening breeze. By 0700, the morning was bright, sunny and breezy. Setting up the nets in the dark I was somewhat startled by a tremendous crashing noise in the distance which I took to be a tree coming down. A Cetti's Warbler called briefly at 0337 and a Cuckoo seemed to kick start dawn chorus. More juveniles joining the species ringed last time were Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Long tailed Tit. An adult female Green Woodpecker was also ringed and a male Nightingale, ringed here on 22 April 2013 was retrapped. Less regular species caught included Greenfinch and Reed Bunting.

18 June 2016 – 52 ringed, 19 retraps – Total 71 birds

Raining at home when I left and still raining on arrival at the site at 0210. The rain stopped at 0300 so a limited number of nets were set. A warm, windy and dull start to the morning with the threat of more rain never far away – a ringer's nightmare! Additional juvenile species ringed were Dunnock, Nightingale, Blackbird, Blue and Great Tit. Both adult Nightingales were retrapped (male ringed 2013, female ringed April 2016) and an adult male Blue Tit, already in post breeding moult was retrapped. Thankfully the rain held off until I was just leaving the site.

23 June 2016 – 71 ringed, 22 retraps – Total 93 birds

Another poor morning for weather. 15.5C on arrival at 0130 and a dull, still morning developed into one of intermittent drizzle and then rain on and off. Ringing conditions were far from ideal with nets being closed and re-opened with monotonous regularity and by mid-morning all were closed. The dawn chorus was started by a Song Thrush at 0333 and on the return to my car

around 0400, the distinctive croaking of a Nightingale was heard, followed by a quick burst of song. At the time, I was talking to Lloyd Park – ringing at one of his CES sites at Rutland Water - on my mobile so he was able to ‘share the moment’, albeit at a distance. Despite the weather, Cuckoos were calling from around 0500, at least 2 Cetti’s Warblers were singing and a Turtle Dove continued to occupy its favourite perch on the power lines just over my ringing base. Not a bad backdrop to ringing at all! New juveniles caught were Wren, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler and Treecreeper to add to the species ringed earlier in the year and an adult male Cetti’s Warbler, the first one to be caught this year, was ringed too. Also of note was a Willow Warbler in post breeding moult and the adult male Nightingale from 2013 was caught on the far side of the heath, well away from his usual haunts. A male Bullfinch and a male Chaffinch, both suffering from the papillomavirus that affects their legs were released at the nets unringed. This virus, also seen on Sedge Warblers, is more often seen in Chaffinch but I am catching increasing numbers of Bullfinch suffering from it.

3 July 2016 – 51 ringed, 22 retraps – Total 73 birds

A dull overcast start to the day with a breeze picking up from 0430. This blew away the cloud cover and the morning finally developed into blue skies, bright sun and a breeze. Dawn chorus again stirred into life by a Song Thrush, joined by a Turtle Dove from 0400. A second juvenile Nightingale for the year was ringed plus the usual species of juveniles and a very smart adult male Greenfinch. Oddest moment of the morning was a male Blackcap suddenly bursting into full song as I extracted him from a net.

14 July 2016 – 51 ringed, 17 retraps – Total 68 birds

A mild, breezy morning with new juveniles of Green Woodpecker (3), Cetti’s Warbler and Bullfinch being ringed together with 9 juvenile Chiffchaff.

25 July 2016 – 117 ringed, 29 retraps – Total 146 birds

A clear, mild and breezy start to the morning, the breeze slowly blowing dull clouds over the site. By 1110, the breeze had strengthened and it was overcast. A bumper morning for juveniles – Wren and Bullfinch (11), Blackbird, Blackcap, Chaffinch (10), Dunnock (6), Robin, Great Tit (4), Blue Tit, Willow Warbler, Treecreeper (3), Song Thrush, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest (2) Green Woodpecker and Linnet (1). A young Goldcrest ringed on

14th July and unsexed was retrapped and had developed a yellow crown stripe – a female. In all, 28 Blackbirds were trapped, 16 being ringed - 4 adult females, 2 adult males and 10 young. The 12 retraps were ringed in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016. Also, 11 Chaffinch ringed (1 adult female, 10 young) represented the highest total ever for this species in one session. In addition to the juvenile Linnet ringed, both male and female adults were also trapped.

6 August 2016 – 69 new, 23 retraps – Total 92 birds

A clear morning, sunny by 0630 with the usual strengthening breeze picking up from 0800. As a precaution, one net was taken down early as I noticed some wasps circling around it. These can sometimes, albeit rarely, attack any birds caught in a net as they presumably react to any movement and see it as a threat. On the next net round, no wasps were to be seen anywhere near the net ride! Another Green Woodpecker - an adult female – was ringed making this a bumper year for the species together with a leucistic juvenile Wren (see front cover) and another 12 juvenile Blackbirds. Earlier in the year I'd wondered where all the young Blackbirds had got to and these may have been second or subsequent broods, having perhaps lost the earlier ones. As well as the Wren, the most striking bird was 1 of 3 juvenile Willow Warblers ringed. It had vivid yellow breast and flank feathers and was in marked contrast to the other two. A Treecreeper ringed as a juvenile on 7 August 2015 was retrapped for the first time.

14 August 2016 – 64 ringed, 20 retraps – Total 84 birds

Dull, very warm and generally still morning to start with but somewhat breezy, although still dull, from 0810. The first juvenile Lesser Whitethroat of the year was ringed plus 8 juvenile Garden Warblers, another 6 Blackbirds and just 2 Long tailed Tits. A 'Lotti flock' usually consisting of many juveniles and a couple of adults was conspicuous by its absence this year, the result of a poor breeding season. I don't remember a year when a Lotti flock has not graced the nets so this was unusual. On a personal plus note, I did record that a steam locomotive was heard heading north at 1120.

28 August 2016 – 46 ringed, 13 retraps – 59 birds

A typical start to a 2016 CES session weather-wise – dull, warm and still. By 0730 the cloud started to lift, blue patches of sky emerged and a breeze sprung up. Dull again from 0830 to 0930 followed by a clear sky and strong breeze. As

in 2014 I watched a Green Woodpecker being chased around the heath by a Sparrowhawk and at 1024 had glorious views of an adult Hobby being pursued by one of its young, calling to be fed. 4 juvenile Robins each with varying amounts of emerging red breast feathers were ringed together with juvenile Wren, Dunnock, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Long tailed, Blue and Great Tit, Treecreeper and Bullfinch. Another steam loco heading north, this time at 1124 was duly noted as its regulator was opened up, instantly transporting me back to the sounds of my youth in Nottinghamshire.

BIRDS CAUGHT ON THE HEATH – 2016

Species	Ringed	Retraps	Total
Green Woodpecker	6	1	7
Grt. Sp Woodpecker	0	1	1
Wren	57	11	68
Dunnock	44	24	68
Robin	59	17	76
Nightingale	3	5	8
Blackbird	58	46	104
Song Thrush	40	18	58
Cetti's Warbler	2	0	2
Reed Warbler	3	0	3
Lesser Whitethroat	6	1	7
Whitethroat	16	3	19
Garden Warbler	39	10	49
Blackcap	80	16	96
Chiffchaff	75	21	96
Willow Warbler	43	14	57
Goldcrest	5	1	6
Long tailed Tit	9	4	13
Coal Tit	2	0	2
Blue Tit	34	7	41
Great Tit	26	8	34
Treecreeper	8	2	10
Chaffinch	20	0	20
Greenfinch	6	0	6
Goldfinch	2	0	2
Linnet	10	2	12
Lesser Redpoll	1	0	1
Bullfinch	47	20	67
Reed Bunting	2	1	3
Total	703	233	936

The year proved to be one of mixed fortunes for many species. Some – Green Woodpecker, Chaffinch, Wren, Chiffchaff and Linnet - seemed to have had a good breeding season whereas others, chiefly Long tailed Tit didn't. Comparing figures with 2014 (the previous full CES year), totals were up for 7 species, down for 20 and 5 additional species were also ringed that year – Spotted Flycatcher, Marsh Tit, Kingfisher, Grasshopper Warbler and Woodpigeon. 843 birds were ringed in 2014 compared to 703 this year. Long term trends would suggest that some species are stable here e.g. Wren, Robin, Bullfinch and Dunnock; others are declining e.g. Nightingale, and Willow Warbler whilst a few are increasing e.g. Song Thrush. There's always an ebb and flow of numbers between years but without doubt the most serious decline is in the population of Nightingales. From the evidence in 2016 it seems there was only one pair breeding on the heath, successfully rearing 2 young to the fledging stage. Just to give some idea of the decline, the following figures represent the total numbers of birds processed each year, some being multiple retraps of the same bird. That in itself provides useful information, establishing without doubt that the birds were on site, moving around and being caught: 2003 (19), 2004 (27), 2005 (15), 2006 (20), 2007 (22), 2008 (20), 2009 (27), 2010 (27), 2011 (19), 2012 (19), 2013 (15), 2014 (12), 2015 (5) and 2016 (8). Also, I often used to hear Nightingales singing elsewhere on the complex, often near the site entrance for example, but I've not heard one there for years. Many fishermen commented to me that they'd not heard the Nightingale in 2016 so its decline has been noticed by them too. Steps have been taken to reduce the deer population which should help reduce the damage to the birds' preferred habitat but whether it can recover in time to prevent their disappearance as a breeding bird is open to conjecture.

RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

Just one bird, ringed at Bainton was reported by the BTO:

Willow Warbler – Ring number CTV223. Ringed as an adult male on 30 April 2016 it was found dead at Northborough, Peterborough on 11 September 2016 having hit a glass window – 5km and 134 days after being ringed.

No birds ringed elsewhere were controlled in 2016.

RETRAP HISTORIES OF BIRDS RINGED IN 2014 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

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Ring number CW57566 – ringed as a 3 on 24 August 2007 and retrapped on 12 June 2010 and 27 May 2016 – just a few months short of 9 years of age.

Dunnock

Ring number Y207823 – ringed as a 3J on 15 July 2013 and retrapped on 20 August 2013, 13 May 2015 and 30 April 2016.

Ring number TL88895 – ringed as a 3J on 13 June 2014 and retrapped on 23 June 2014, 30 April and 23 June 2016.

Ring number TK01223 – ringed as a 3J on 21 July 2014 and retrapped on 4 and 30 May 2015, 27 May and 23 June 2016.

Robin

Ring number Y207714 – ringed as a 4M on 3 June 2013 and retrapped on 15 and 30 May 2014, 16 June 2015 and 30 April 2016.

Nightingale

Ring number Y207620 – ringed as a 4M on 22 April 2013 and retrapped on 2 May 2013, 18 and 30 April, 13 May and 23 June 2014, 6, 18 and 23 June 2016. When last retrapped he was at least 4 years old.

Blackbird

Ring number CL15357 – ringed as a 5F on 2 May 2013 and retrapped on 19 June and 10 July 2013 and 25 July 2016.

Ring number CL15367 – ringed as a 3J on 25 June 2013 and retrapped for the first time on 25 July 2016.

Ring number CL15377 – ringed as a 4F on 26 July 2013 and retrapped for the first time on 27 May 2016.

Ring number CL15368 – ringed as a 3J on 10 July 2013 and retrapped on 20 August 2013, 31 July and 5 August 2014 and 14 August 2016.

Ring number CL15391 – ringed as a 3J on 28 August 2013 and retrapped for the first time on 25 July 2016.

Ring number LA04484 – ringed as a 4F on 25 May 2014 and retrapped on 30 May and 6 June 2014, 30 May 2015, 3 and 25 July 2016.

Ring number CL15275 – ringed as a 4M on 31 July 2014 and retrapped for the first time on 25 July 2016.

Ring number CL15288 – ringed as a 3J on 5 August 2014 and retrapped on 20 August 2014 and 23 June 2016.

Ring number CL15290 – ringed as a 3J on 5 August 2014 and retrapped on 4 and 30 May 2015 and 25 July 2016.

Ring number CL15293 – ringed as a 3J on 5 August 2014 and retrapped for the first time on 28 August 2016.

Garden Warbler

Ring number X688838 – ringed as a 4M on 13 May 2010, retrapped 24 May and 5 June 2010, 26 June 2012, 30 April 2014, 30 May 2015 and 6 June 2016. He was at least 7 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, 13 May 2015, 6 June and 25 July 2016. He was at least 6 years old when last retrapped.

Ring number Y207663– ringed as a 4F on 16 May 2013 and retrapped on 30 May 2014 and 6 June 2016.

Blackcap

Ring number P985739– ringed as a 4M on 2 May 2012 and retrapped on 23 May 2012, 15 July 2014, 15 May 2014, 30 April and 18 June 2016. He was at least 5 years old when retrapped in 2016.

Ring number X777907 – ringed as a 4M on 30 April 2014 and retrapped on 25 May 2014, 4 May 2015, 30 April and 18 June 2016.

Ring number D564245 – ringed as a 3M on 5 August 2014 and retrapped on 16 June 2015 and 6 June 2016.

Chiffchaff

Ring number 5U2994 – ringed as a 4F on 4 May 2014 and retrapped on 23 June 2014 and 30 April 2016.

Willow Warbler

Ring number 5U2888 – ringed as 3J on 10 July 2013 and retrapped on 30 April and 6 June 2014, 30 May and 16 June 2015, 27 May and 25 July 2016.

Long tailed Tit

Ring number EAP066– ringed as 3J on 23 June 2014 and retrapped on 30 May 2015, 30 April and 6 June 2016.

Bullfinch

Ring number Y207785 – ringed as a 5M on 10 July 2013 and retrapped on 15 May 2014 and 6 August 2016.

Ring number D564216 – ringed as a 3J on 5 August 2014 and retrapped for the first time on 3 July 2016.

PLANS FOR 2017

The plan is to continue the CES on the heath in 2017. As always, I'm hoping for a decent breeding season with favourable weather to make that a possibility.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'm really grateful once again to The Langdyke Countryside Trust (Richard Astle) for allowing me to ring at this site and to Ian Wakeford (Bainton Fisheries) for access to the site. I'm also grateful to Lloyd Park (Rutland Water) for his visit to the site and the regular 'catch ups' on our mobiles when we're both out at some ridiculous hour of the morning striving to catch birds. I am much indebted as always to Andy and Helen Nutt for the work they put in at the site and their enduring friendship.

Last and by no means least, I have to thank my family for their support over the last 24 years of ringing at Bainton. Ringing here has been and continues to be of the few places where I can 'escape' for a few hours and recharge my batteries.

Chris Hughes, Melton Mowbray, February 2017

