

## Chippenham West 'Standards' 2015

2015 was the second year we have run this CES-lite programme at the Fen. The methodology now seems proven, with sufficient birds caught to provide a measure of year-on-year indexation, both of adult abundance and survival; and of breeding season fledging productivity. The Standards area is on Snailwell Pools Fen, around Malcolm's Pond, the eastern part of Compartment 4.

Sessions ran on 27 May, 30 June and 30 July. The original plan had been to schedule these for mid-month, but a combination of weather and absences led to postponements. These are unlikely to have affected the results: the first and second would still focus on adult abundance, and the second and third would measure productivity, hopefully before juvenile dispersal started to confuse the picture. Nets were opened for six hours from sunrise. No sound-lures were used. The ringers involved were Michael Holdsworth, Peter Bircham, Carole Davis and Gareth Davies.

### Results

The weather was kind to us for each of the three sessions. We caught 177 different individual birds (79 adults, and 98 juveniles) in 187 captures. This was 19% fewer than in 2014.

Four species (Cuckoo, Kingfisher, Marsh Tit and Treecreeper) were caught in 2014 but not in 2015. Another seven species (Grasshopper Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Willow Warbler, Coal Tit, Jay and Bullfinch) were new to the list in 2015. Given that the aggregate is only 18 hours of ringing in total this doesn't tell us much, but it's likely that none of these eleven species breeds regularly within the exact study area. Other absent passerines, Dunnock (4), Song Thrush (2), and the finches (Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Goldfinch - all 0) are almost certainly genuinely not there. The numbers in parentheses are the totals of these species caught in our first three summers of west-side ringing.

While the numbers certainly look like a good representation of the breeding bird communities we observed on the ground, the comparative scores are less helpful. Serendipitous encounters with tit-chaff flocks on the July session will tend to randomise the numbers of Blue, Great and Long-

tailed tits, and Chiffchaffs we intercept. So far, in both years, we have bumped into some family parties, but that can't be guaranteed to happen every year.

	"Old" adults	New adults	Adults	Juvs	"Old" adults by year			
					2015 Total	2014 Total	5 2.4.6 2014	2.4.6 2013
<i>Cuckoo</i>						1		
<i>Kingfisher</i>						2		
<b>Wren</b>	5	4	9	16	25	29	2	3
<b>Robin</b>		3	3	3	6	7		
<b>Blackbird</b>		1	1		1	1		
Grasshopper Warbler				1	1			
<b>Sedge Warbler</b>		6	6	2	8	14		
<b>Reed Warbler</b>	5	8	13	18	31	49	1	4
Lesser Whitethroat		1	1		1			
Garden Warbler				2	2			
<b>Blackcap</b>	1	3	4	7	11	11		1
<b>Chiffchaff</b>	5	9	14	22	36	27	2	2
Willow Warbler				2	2			
<b>Goldcrest</b>				1	1	2		
<b>L T Tit</b>		11	11	7	18	28		
<i>Marsh Tit</i>						3		
Coal Tit				2	2			
<b>Blue Tit</b>	5		5	10	15	28	2	1
<b>Great Tit</b>		2	2	5	7	9		2
<i>Treecreeper</i>						2		
Jay		1	1		1			
Bullfinch		1	1		1			
<b>Reed Bunting</b>		8	8		8	6		
<b>Total:</b>	21	58	79	98	177	219	7	10

For the resident species, the results are nicely consistent.

	2014 Ad	2015 Ad	2014 Juv	2015 Juv
Wren	15	9	14	16
Robin	2	3	5	3
Reed Bunting	6	8	Why no juveniles?	

Which leaves us with the perennially baffling feature of *Acrocephalus* numbers.

	<i>2014 Ad</i>	<i>2015 Ad</i>	<i>2014 Juv</i>	<i>2015 Juv</i>
Sedge Warbler	9	6	5	2
Reed Warbler	33	13	16	18

Maybe I can just repeat what I said last year. The Reed Warbler numbers continue to be astonishing, and particularly the constant arrival (and presumably departure) of new-for-the-year adults. There does seem to be a continual churn – possibly of late arrivals, unmated birds and failed breeders. It also needs to be borne in mind that Reed Warblers only defend a very small territory right in close proximity to the nest, while foraging more widely and non-competitively on 'common land' – often drier scrub and bushes – some way from their actual nests; this may be where we have been intercepting them. So: fewer adults but more juveniles this year? We certainly noticed fewer Reeds at Wicken in 2015. Let's see what the national CES figures look like in due course.

Four birds ringed elsewhere were captured in 2015. The 2011 Icklesham Chiffchaff returned to breed. A Blue Tit and a Goldcrest had been ringed earlier in winter 2014/15 at Wicken Fen. A breeding Sedge Warbler carried a 2012 French ring from August passage in the Loire-Atlantique. Another breeding Sedge from 2014 was controlled in Dorset, again probably on its way out of the country, in August 2015.

Provisional dates for 2016 are Tuesdays 17 May, 21 June and 19 July.

Michael Holdsworth  
15 November 2015