

## Chippenham West 'Standards' 2016

2016 was the third 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 at least an early-season hint 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 24 May, 21 June and 28 July. The first and second aimed to focus on the number of breeding pairs, and the second and third to 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, Gareth Davies and Caroline Brighton.

### Results

The weather was kind to us for each of the three sessions. We caught 132 different individual birds (76 adults, and 56 juveniles) in 138 captures. This was fewer birds, and fewer species (just fourteen) than in 2014 and 2015.

Of the species previously captured on Standards sessions, in 2016 we didn't catch Cuckoo, Grasshopper Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, or Bullfinch, species which may or may not breed precisely within our exact study area. And of course the aggregate of the three sessions is after all only 18 hours of catching. Four other absent species, however, which had accounted for 23 captures in 2015 (and 32 in 2014), almost certainly do breed. These are Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit, Coal Tit and Treecreeper. The reason that none was caught is probably down to the fact that we encountered no tit/Chiffchaff flock on the July session, where juveniles of these species can usually be relied upon to be tagging along with young Blue and Great Tits. This is quite apparent from the Table, where the numbers of the two common tit species are also well down; evidence from elsewhere suggests they had a poor season. Taken together these reductions are quite enough to account for the overall drop in total numbers – to 132 from 177 in 2015 and 219 in 2016.

Other absent passerines – Song Thrush, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch – almost certainly do not breed anywhere nearby.

The table below summarises the three catches. 'Old Adults' are previously ringed birds.

	'Old' adults	New adults	Adults	Juvs	2016 Total	2015 Total	2014 Total	'Old' adults		
								5	2.4.6	2.4.6
								2015	2014	
<i>Cuckoo</i>							1			
Kingfisher				1	1		2			
Wren	5	8	13	9	22	25	29	2	1	2
Robin	1	2	3	8	11	6	7		1	
Blackbird		1	1		1	1	1			
<i>Grasshopper Warbler</i>						1				
Sedge Warbler	1	3	4	3	7	8	14		1	
Reed Warbler	6	19	25	4	29	31	49	3	1	2
<i>Lesser Whitethroat</i>						1				
Garden Warbler				1	1	2				
Blackcap		5	5	3	8	11	11			
Chiffchaff	2	12	14	16	30	36	27		2	
<i>Willow Warbler</i>						2				
<i>Goldcrest</i>						1	2			
<i>L T Tit</i>						18	28			
Marsh Tit				2	2		3			
<i>Coal Tit</i>						2				
Blue Tit		3	3	4	7	15	28			
Great Tit	2	3	5	4	9	7	9			2
<i>Treecreeper</i>							2			
Jay		1	1		1	1				
<i>Bullfinch</i>						1				
Reed Bunting		2	2	1	3	8	6			
<b>Total:</b>	17	59	76	56	132	177	219	5	6	6

The resident species, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Reed Bunting show very steady figures. Reed and Sedge Warblers show greater variation. There are probably not the number of Reeds suggested by these results within the Pond area as we witness again the continual churn of different adults – possibly late arrivals, unmated birds or failed breeders from elsewhere. It's

also nice to see the pattern emerging of site-faithful returners – in time this should build to birds potentially as old as eight or nine years.

Five birds ringed elsewhere were captured in 2016. A January juvenile Siskin had been ringed near Brandon in October 2015. Two Long-tailed Tits had been ringed together on the same day at Wicken Fen in September 2015. There were two adult Reed Warbler controls. A juvenile ringed at Ely Beet Pits in August 2015 was on the Fen in 2016, probably as a breeding adult. And a French-ringed juvenile from August 2009, near Lille, had most likely been a local-born bird caught on its first of seven journeys south of the Sahara.

Michael Holdsworth

17 October 2016