

RAF Wyton Bomb Dump



Corn Bunting

Bird Ringing Report2019

Ringling Activities at the Bomb Dump.

Weather permitting; ringing will generally take place mainly on either Saturday or Sunday each week, with occasional weekday visits through the breeding season. Activities are carried out by qualified BTO, (British Trust for Ornithology), licenced bird ringers. The licence covers the holder to trap & handle wild birds under the WILDLIFE & COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 as amended by the ENVIROMENTAL PROTECTION ACT 1990 & the WILDLIFE (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985. These licences are always available to see should you wish to confirm. The lead ringer for the site is Mr David Culham, (who also holds a MOD ringing permit), with occasional help from Mrs Margaret Phillips-Jones. The main method of capture used is mist nets; they vary in length from 30ft to 60ft. Fine mesh polyester netting erected between two poles & standing @9ft high. These nets are checked every 15-20 minutes, (depending on the weather), any birds are safely extracted, bagged & processed before release.

To date; `standard` ringing activities have consisted of a total of 420ft of net being erected. These are broken down into 6 net lanes, (2x60ft, 1x100ft, 1x120ft & 2x40ft). Additional occasional nets are used if required. Nets are erected @1 hour before dawn & taken down at noon. Out of the breeding season several mp3 players are used, playing various calls to encourage various species on to the site. A selection of feeders is used from November-April as the natural food diminishes. 3mixed seed & 2Niger seed feeders, plus loose feed scattered for ground feeding species, covers the needs of most species on site.



1st year Male Stonechat, only the 3rd caught at Wyton.

Ringling Totals for 2019

SPECIES	RINGED	RETRAPS/CONTROLS	TOTAL
Magpie	1		1
Green Woodpecker	1		1
Great Spot Woodpkr	1		1
Blue Tit	64	50	114
Great Tit	38	30	68
Long Tailed Tit	18	11	29
Goldcrest	4	1	5
Swallow	8		8
Willow Warbler	88	62	150
Chiffchaff	43	2	45
Reed Warbler	3		3
Sedge Warbler	1		1
Grasshopper Warbler	4	4	8
Blackcap	135	12	147
Garden Warbler	8		8
Lesser Whitethroat	78	17	95
Whitethroat	118	9	127
Wren	16	3	19
Starling	2		2
Blackbird	28	6	34
Redwing	46		46
Song Thrush	16	1	17
Fieldfare	12		12
Robin	40	13	53
Stonechat	1		1
Dunnock	36	25	61
Pied Wagtail	1		1
Meadow Pipit	133		133
Chaffinch	21	1	22
Brambling	1		1
Bullfinch	5	1	6
Greenfinch	136	1	137
Linnet	90	6	96
Lesser Redpoll	3		3
Goldfinch	164	26	190
Yellowhammer	120	5	125
Reed Bunting	188	5	193
Corn Bunting	1		1
Tree Sparrow	2		2
TOTAL	1664	291	1955

The Ringing Year in 2019.

Another successful year on the `Bomb Dump`, with a total of 1955 captures. A total of 29 visits were made, averaging 67 captures per visit. A total of 39 species were caught, with 6 new species for the site: Sedge Warbler, Pied Wagtail, Tree Sparrow, Magpie, Brambling & Corn Bunting. Lifting the grand total to 42.

The beginning of the year was, as usual, quiet. Especially once the Hawthorn berry crop was depleted. The weather in February & March allowed only 2 visits. The constant wind & rain, along with three named storms, (Erik, Freya & Gareth), causing postponement after postponement! April started to see the arrival of Summer migrants & the resident birds starting to breed. The mild conditions of April & May bringing renewed hope for a successful breeding season ahead.

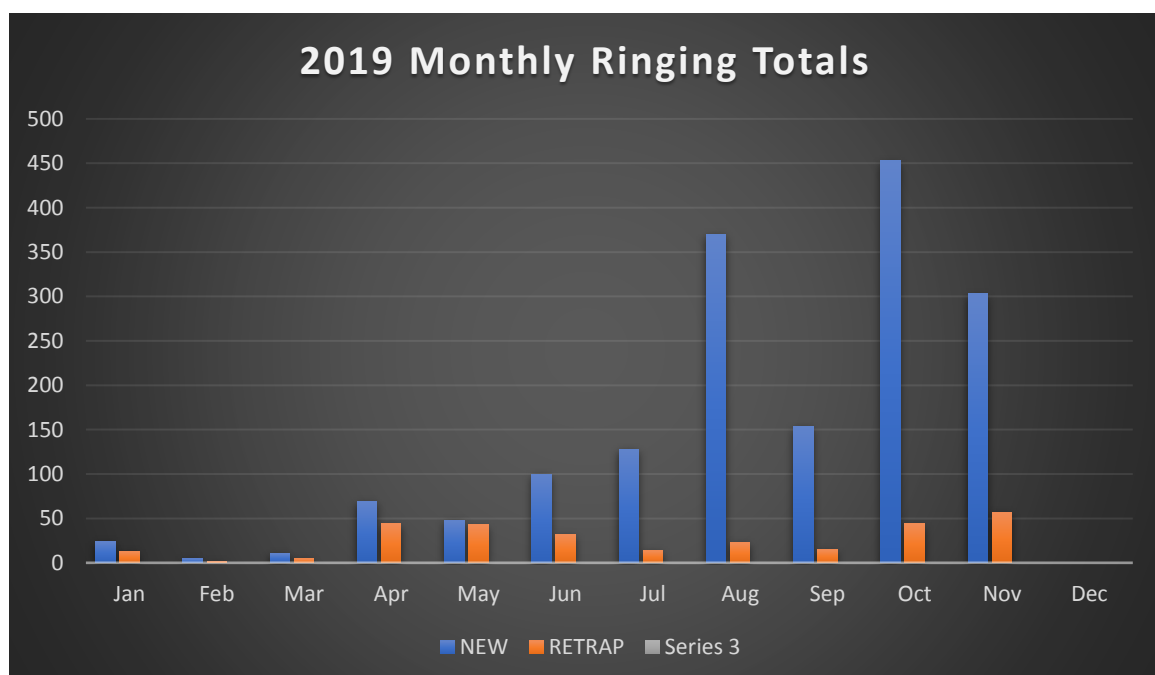
The first week of June saw the arrival of storm Miguel, bringing wind, rain & cold conditions. Linnets suffered from this hiatus in the weather, with many first broods failing at this point. However, not all was doom & gloom though, Warblers seemed to emerge from the biblical weather unscathed, with 43 juveniles caught on 18th June & 35 caught on the 24th including a few resident species such as Chaffinch, Wren, Long Tailed Tit & a few surviving Linnet.

July & August continued to produce excellent numbers of juvenile birds, especially Willow Warblers, which had a very productive year for a change. A few adult Willow Warblers were caught in full moult from 21st July. Suggesting many early broods were successful.

September is the usual `jewel in the crown` at Wyton, with many birds passing through on migration. Unfortunately, poor weather washed out the last 2 weeks! (the most productive!), with strong winds & persistent rain.

October saw the main Meadow Pipit/Reed Bunting migration across the Fens, with large numbers passing through, along with added extras such as Tree Sparrows, Stonechats & excellent numbers of Yellowhammers. The end of the month saw good numbers of Finches moving through, including an early Brambling & a few Lesser Redpoll.

November continued to produce good numbers of Finches & Buntings, especially Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Yellowhammer & Reed Bunting. A Female Corn Bunting a well overdue addition to records on 16th. Yet again the weather won again during December. Then just as it calmed down, I went off to Canada for the holidays!! All in all, another excellent year, with numbers mainly up on 2018, especially Warblers, Finches & Buntings.



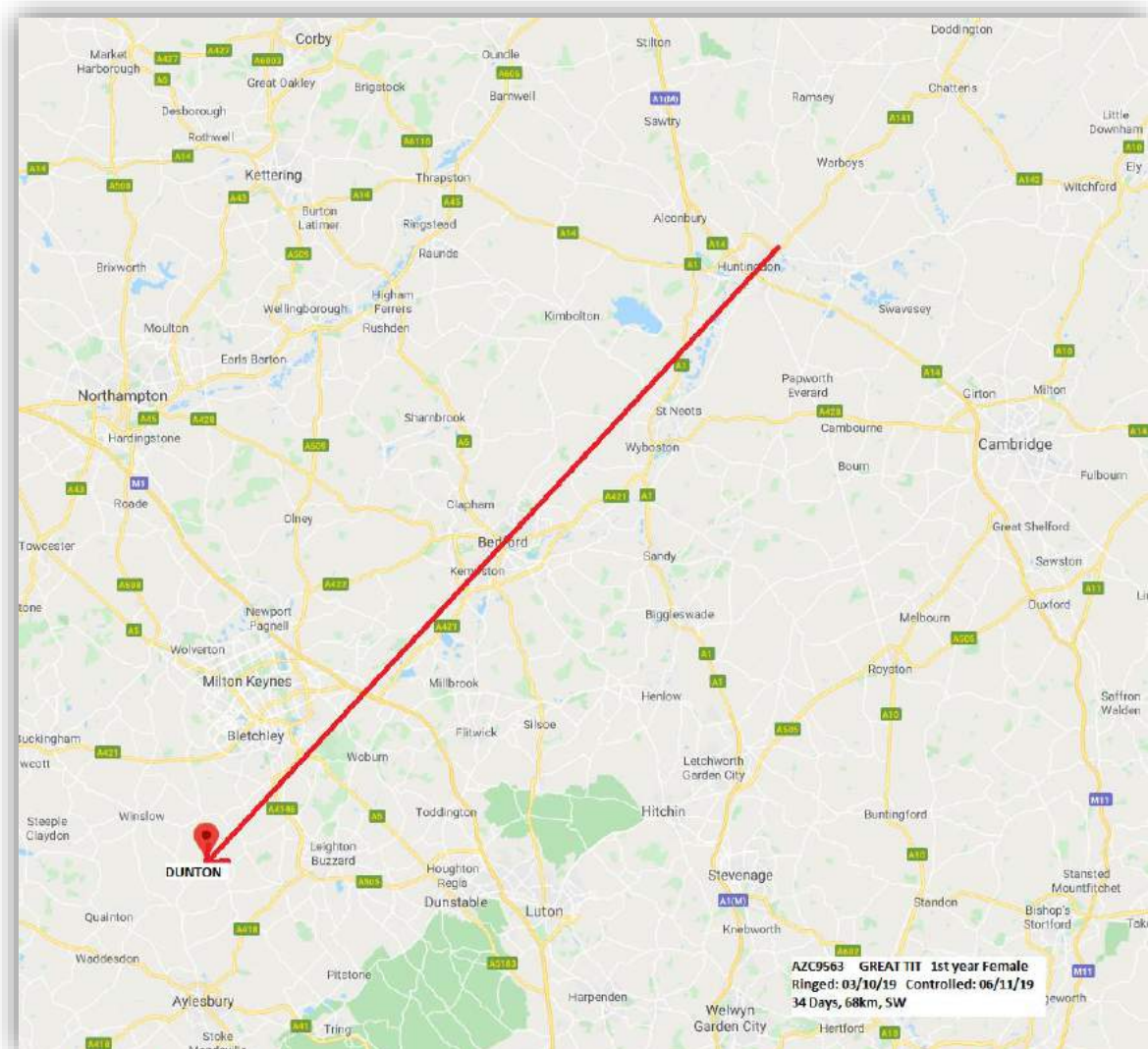
Controls, Recoveries & Returning Migrants

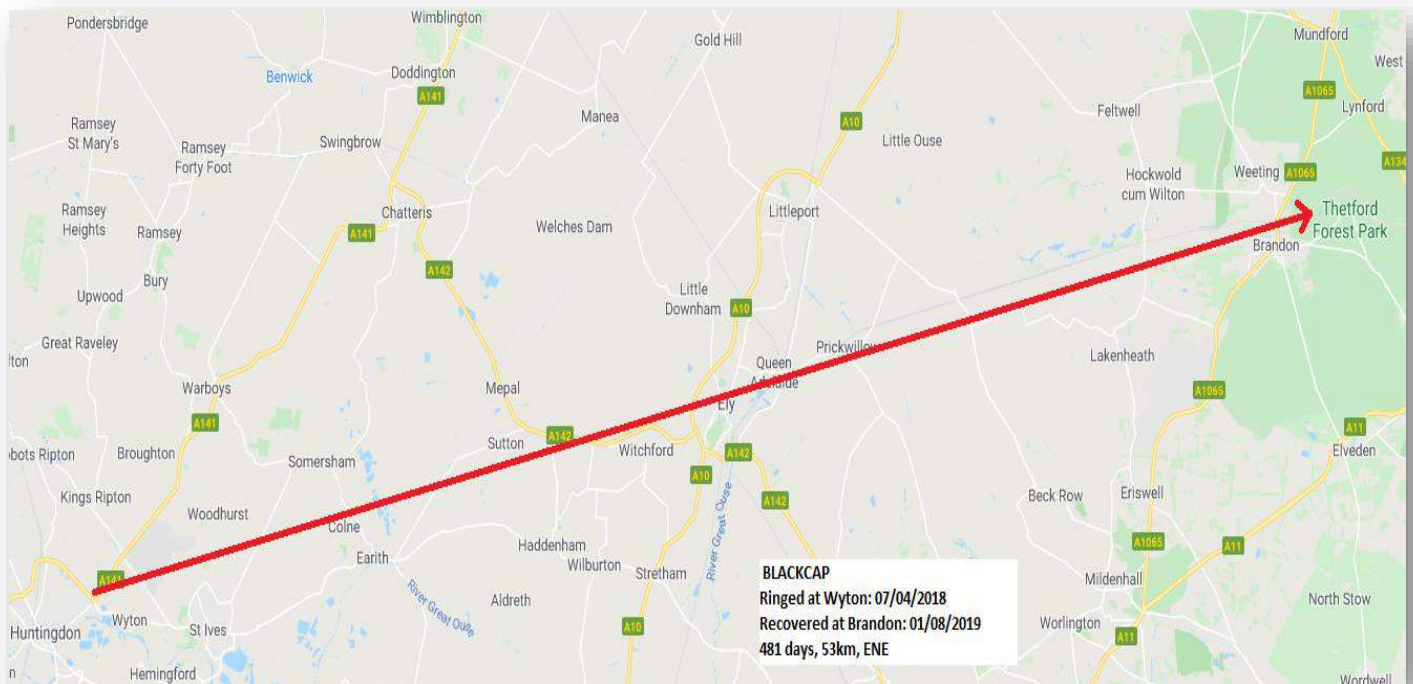
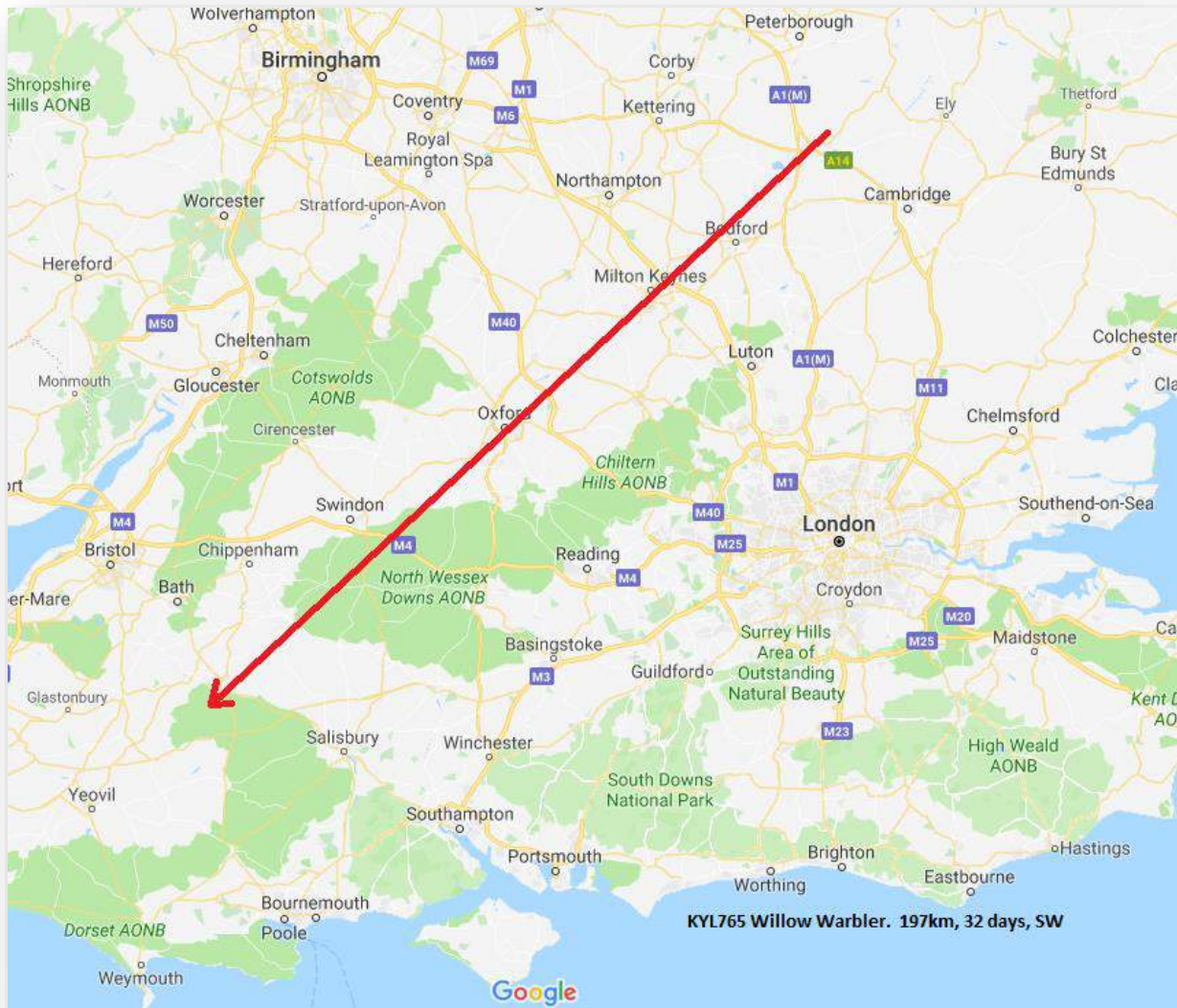
2019 was a good year, with 2 controls, (birds ringed elsewhere), 8 recoveries, (birds ringed at Wyton & found elsewhere). 4 'local' recoveries, (under 20km), 3 UK recoveries & 1 foreign. Both controls being UK ringed birds. Without doubt, the highlight involved a Redwing ringed at Wyton on 2nd Dec 2017 which was unfortunately shot by hunters on the 5th Dec 2019 at Esposende, Braga in Portugal! 1369km from Wyton, not taking into account the miles flown between Scandinavia & it's wintering grounds in previous years. Mostly the recoveries & controls show examples of juvenile dispersal. Most notably a Willow Warbler ringed on 7th July moving 197km to Monkton Deverill, Wiltshire in 32 days & a Blue Tit ringed in Bedford moving 34km to Wyton in 20 days. Finally, a young Blackcap travelling 11km to Woodwalton in a mere 4 days!

Local Recoveries:

Species	Age	Ringed	Location	Recovery	Dir	Dist	Duration
Fieldfare	2cyM	03/01/19	Aldreth, Cambs	15/05/19	E	19km	132days
Greenfinch	1cyM	20/10/18	Willingham, Cambs	27/08/19	ESE	15km	311days
Blackcap	1cyM	24/08/19	Woodwalton, Cambs	28/08/19	NW	11km	4days
Greenfinch	1cyF	20/10/18	Over, Cambs	23/03/19	ESE	11km	154days

UK Recoveries:



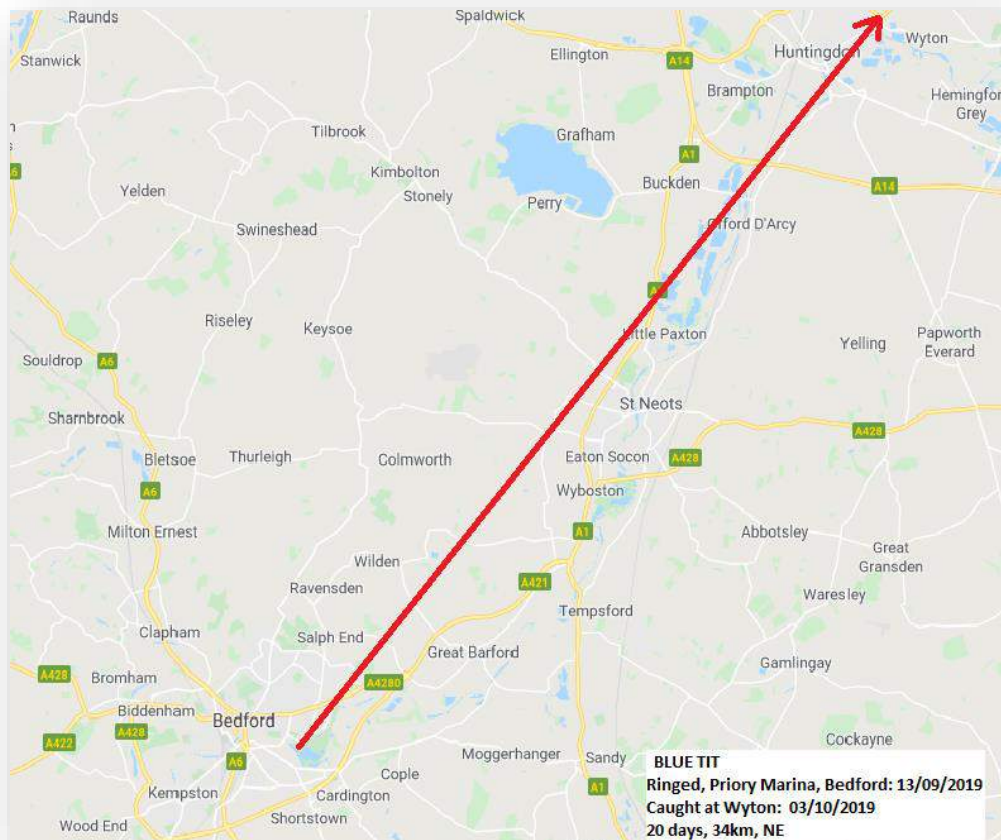
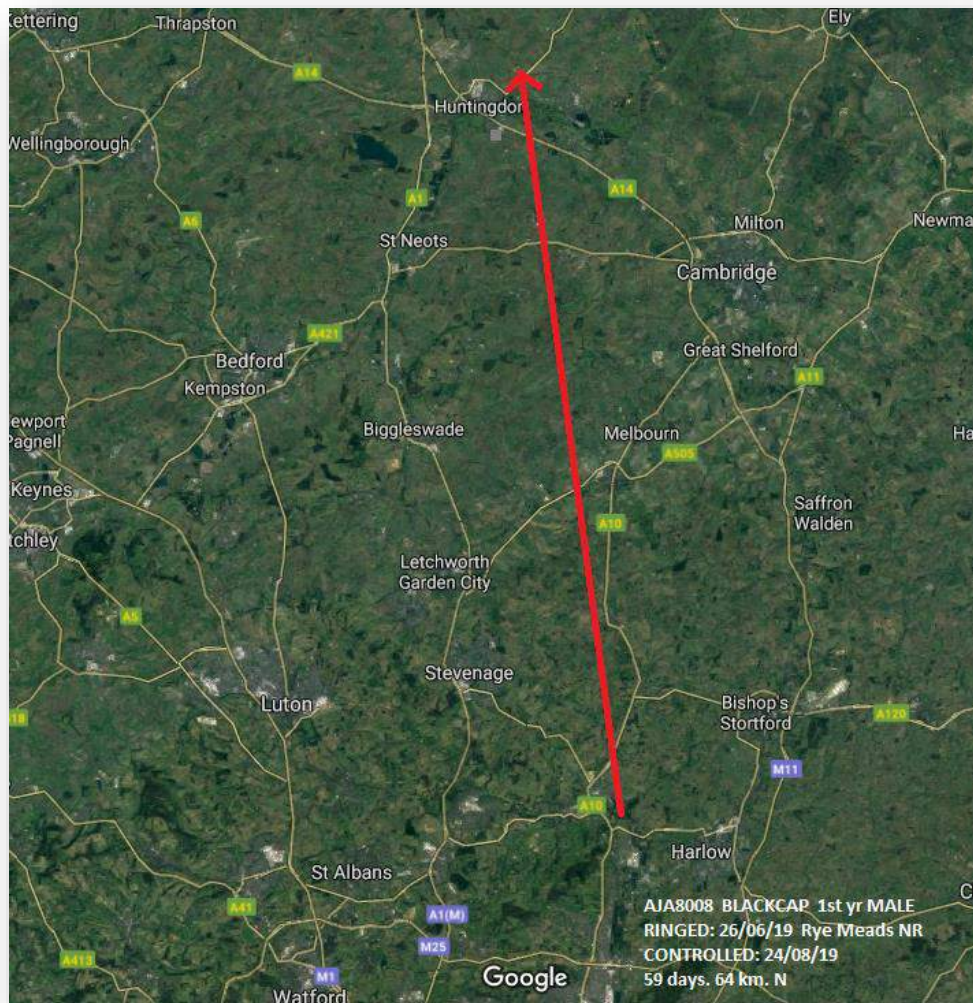


Foreign Recoveries:



Juvenile Sedge Warbler note the juv spots on the chest.

Controls:



Returning Migrants:

A total of 28 returning migrants were caught. In particular, an excellent result of 16 Willow Warblers, suggesting an improved survival rate while wintering in Africa.

Species	
Whitethroat	1 ringed in 2017 as a juv returned 2018 & 2019 & bred
	1 ringed in 2018 as a juv returned in 2019 & bred
	2 ringed in 2018 as adults returned in 2019 & bred
Willow Warbler	10 ringed as adults in 2018 returned in 2019 & bred
	6 ringed as juv in 2018 returned in 2019 & bred
Grasshopper Warbler	1 ringed as an adult in 2018 returned in 2019 & bred
Lesser Whitethroat	3 ringed as adults in 2018 returned in 2019 & bred
	3 ringed as juv in 2018 returned in 2019 & bred
Blackcap	1 ringed as a juv in 2018 returned in 2019 & bred



Lesser Whitethroat

Constant Effort 2019.

**PREVIOUS
YEARS VISIT
TOTAL**

**CES totals from
2018 onwards**

	Ringed R/T		upto & inc	CES 12 2018	Ringed R/T		upto & inc	CES 12 2019	Caught both years		% Diff	increase	Decrease
Dunnock	16	9	25		19	10	29		4	16%			
Blackbird	10	1	11		3	4	7		-4	-36%			
Garden Warbler	9		9		8		8		-1	-11%			
Lesser Whitethroat	53	19	72		65	13	78		6	8%			
Whitethroat	117	12	129		113	8	121		-8	-6%			
Willow Warbler	54	25	79		81	43	124		45	57%			
Goldfinch	61	5	66		50	4	54		-12	-18%			
Robin	7	4	11		28	6	34		23	209%			
Song Thrush	2		2		5	1	6		4	200%			
Grasshopper Warbler	5	5	10		3	3	6		-4	-40%			
Blackcap	40	1	41		92	9	101		60	146%			
Chaffinch	6	2	8		2	1	3		-5	-63%			
Greenfinch	3		3		4	1	5		2	67%			
Reed Bunting	4	1	5		35	2	37		32	640%			
Blue Tit	16	3	19		25	5	30		11	58%			
Linnet	124	6	130		81	7	88		-42	-32%			
Bullfinch	4		4		1	1	2		-2	-50%			
Great Tit	10		10		11	2	13		3	30%			
Yellowhammer	2		2		30		30		28	1400%			
Swallow	5		5		8		8		3	60%			
Reed Warbler	8		8		2		2		-6	-75%			
Chiffchaff	2		2		17		17		15	750%			
Wren	11		11		6	1	7		-4	-36%			
Starling	4		4		2		2		-2	-50%			
Stock Dove	1		1						-				
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1		1						-				
Pied Wagtail					1		1		-				
Green Woodpecker					1		1		-				
Magpie					1		1		-				
Sedge Warbler					1		1		-				
Long Tailed Tit					7		7		-				
total	575	93	668		702	121	823		127	28	155		
	11 visits	ave.	60.72 birds		12 visits	ave.	68.58 birds		22%	30%	23%		

(The following are excerpts from the `BTO 2019 CES Preliminary Report, edited to relate to Wyton)

What was the weather like in 2019?

Winter 2018/19 was milder than average, with unsettled weather in December, periods of frost and snowfall in late January and early February followed by record-breaking daytime temperatures in the last week of February. Spring started with two named storms bringing wet, windy and unsettled weather in March, particularly in western and northern areas. By mid-April, the nation was experiencing 20-degree temperatures, followed by another named storm, this time in the south. Despite the varied conditions, overall, spring was slightly warmer than the mean for this period.

The start of the CES season was cooler, particularly at night, but the rest of the season was generally warmer than average. June proved to be a wet month, whereas July was more settled, despite numerous thundery outbreaks later in the month. New UK maximum temperature records were set on 29 June and 25 July. The weather in August was more unsettled and showery, with high temperatures later in the month, particularly in the south-east. The summer was classified as the 12th warmest and 7th wettest since 1910.

Mixed bag for migratory species

Nationally, CES results show that it was a mixed year for migratory warblers. Short-distance migrants Chiffchaff and Blackcap, and the long-distance migrant Whitethroat, were encountered in particularly high numbers relative to the five-year mean. The number of adult Blackcaps encountered was the highest since CES monitoring began in 1983, and survival rates were also the highest on record, suggesting that conditions were good on their wintering grounds over the 2018/19 winter. Wyton too, mirrored the trends nationally, with significant increases in both Chiffchaff & Blackcap. Willow Warbler also had a very good year with an increase of 57%. With 16 returning individuals from 2018. It is particularly pleasing to see an increase for Whitethroat following significant declines in every year since 2013; this increase was predominantly driven by results in the east of the country. Whitethroat was down very slightly from 2018, 6% difference reflecting a mere 8 birds' difference. Lesser Whitethroat were up very slightly, with a 6% difference reflecting just 6 birds. Garden Warbler numbers remained stable compared to previous years.

Swallow numbers appeared to be up slightly on site & was reflected by a small increase in birds caught. Reed Warbler is a migratory bird at Wyton, as are Sedge Warbler, there no conclusions can be made.

...and residents

Nationally, the biggest winners in 2019 were the tits (Blue, Great and Long-tailed) as well as Goldfinch, each of which recorded a significant increase in abundance compared to the five-year mean. Goldfinch numbers continue to rise, with the highest ever number of adults recorded on CES in 2019; the four most-abundant years have all occurred in the last five seasons. Wyton however produced a slight decline, recording a 18% difference compared to 2018. Nationally, Blue Tit was the only species to record a statistically significant decline in adult survival, suggesting that significant increase in abundance recorded during 2019 was likely to have resulted from high juvenile recruitment following a successful breeding season in 2018. Reflected at Wyton with an increase of 58% over 2018. Great Tit productivity was also high in 2018, which is likely to have contributed to the above average numbers captured on CES this year, again up 30% at Wyton. Long-tailed Tit productivity decreased in 2018, so the mechanism underpinning the increased abundance recorded in 2019 is likely to have been an increase in overwinter survival of juvenile birds, given survival was not significantly higher than average. A new species for the Wyton CES in 2019.

Nationally, the main losers in 2019 were species that tend to feed on the ground, with statistically significant declines in abundance, relative to the five-year mean, recorded for Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Reed Bunting. Fewer Blackbirds, Dunnocks, Chaffinches and Greenfinches were recorded than in any previous year since CES began. For Chaffinch and Greenfinch, the 41% and 40% decreases

respectively compound previous poor results and the long-term trends for both species show steep declines. Nine of the lowest abundance years on record have occurred in the past 10 years for Chaffinch, while for Greenfinch, the lowest eight years have occurred in the past 10 seasons.

The long-term trends for Blackbird, Dunnock and Reed Bunting also exhibit declines, with that for Reed Bunting being the steepest, numbers having fallen to the second-lowest on record in 2019; only Robin demonstrates a positive long-term trend in abundance. Wyton also experienced a decline in Blackbird, (-36%), Chaffinch, (-63%). Although it was good news for Dunnock, (+16%), Robins had an excellent year at Wyton (+206% difference from 2018), virtually all being first year birds suggesting a very productive breeding season. Although Reed Bunting showed a massive increase during the CES period, I would suggest this was down to an early passage of birds rather than increased breeding success. The adult survival rates for Blackbird were the highest on record, and those for Robin, Dunnock and Reed Bunting were also reasonably high, suggesting the decline in abundance was caused by poor recruitment. Robin was the only one of these species to record a statistically significant increase in productivity in 2018, suggesting that juveniles of this species fared particularly badly over the 2018/19 winter. The decline in Reed Buntings was particularly driven by results in the east of the country, whereas for the other species, the declines were more widespread.



Long-Tailed Tit

Average breeding season for most, but excellent for some

For many species, 2019 was an average breeding season, with significant changes generally suggestive of increased success. CES results indicate that for seven species, productivity was significantly higher than average in 2019, while NRS, (nest record scheme), data reveal that six species produced above-average numbers of fledglings per breeding attempt (FPBA)

Chiffchaff was the only migrant species monitored through CES for which productivity was above average across all regions. None of the parameters monitored through NRS (e.g. egg- or chick-stage survival, FPBA) demonstrated significant increases, suggesting that either the mean number of broods produced per pair increased or that juvenile survival immediately after fledging was higher than average.

Resident passerines Robin, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Reed Bunting, Blue Tit and Long-tailed Tit all exhibited increased productivity on CE Sites; for Chaffinch this represented the highest productivity rate since CES began. The first four species, all of which were present in lower numbers during 2019, are likely to have benefited from reduced competition for resources, allowing remaining pairs to successfully fledge more young. NRS data show that Blue and Great Tits had a particularly successful year, recording statistically significant increases in clutch and brood size, young-stage survival and therefore in total fledgling production. The only other species to produce an above-average number of fledglings were Tree Pipit and Linnet, although it is unclear what the mechanisms underpinning their success were.

The only species to exhibit a decrease in productivity on CE Sites was Garden Warbler; the cause of this decline is unclear but it unlikely to be due to density dependence as no significant increase in abundance was recorded. CES data indicate that, across all species, productivity was lowest in the west, with fewer species exhibiting statistically significant increases in productivity in that region.



Adult Blue Tit



Juvenile Robin

Noteworthy sightings

Date	Species	Details
16/01	Waxwing	4 N over the base
21/01	Black Redstart	1 male on base
28/03	Long Eared Owl	1 roosting in the netting area
21/04	Shelduck	2 W over the Bomb Dump
29/04	Grey Heron	1 W over the Bomb Dump
11/07	Buzzard	7 individuals soaring over the Bomb Dump
14/05	Lapwing	Adult `alarming` with chicks on the airfield
19/05	Cuckoo	1 male calling on the Bomb Dump
16/07	Hobby	1 N over the base
03/08	Redshank	2 S over the Bomb Dump
24/08	Cettis Warbler	1 male singing from Bomb Dump boundary
02/09	Sedge Warbler	1 juv Trapped & ringed
03/10	Stonechat	1 juv male trapped & ringed
03/10	Tree Sparrow	2 trapped & ringed
12/10	Lesser Redpoll	1 E over the Bomb Dump
20/10	Brambling	1 st year female trapped & ringed
20/10	Lesser Redpoll	2 trapped & ringed
23/10	Whooper Swan	6 SE over the Bomb Dump
25/10	Black Tailed Godwit	300+ on fields close to the Bomb Dump
25/10	Lapwing	120+ on fields close to the Bomb Dump
25/10	Golden Plover	50+ on fields close to the Bomb Dump
29/10	Whooper Swan	10 SSE over the Bomb Dump
30/10	Common Crane	3 ESE over the Bomb Dump
09/11	Woodcock	1 flushed from the ringing area
16/11	Corn Bunting	1 female trapped & ringed
24/11	Jack Snipe	1 flushed from the ringing area

Tree Sparrow





1st Year Female Brambling

Migrant arrival/departure dates.

Species	Arrival	Departure
Chiffchaff	21/03	01/11
Willow Warbler	13/04	08/09
Swallow	13/04	12/10
Lesser Whitethroat	21/04	14/09
Whitethroat	19/04	16/09
House Martin	21/04	12/10
Grasshopper Warbler	29/04	07/07
Reed Warbler	29/04	14/09
Blackcap	13/04	20/10

Other Sightings

Other wildlife observed during 2019:

Mammals:

Roe Deer, Muntjac Deer, Fox, Badger, Weasel, Brown Rat, Field Vole, Field Mouse, Pipistrelle Bat, Bat Sp. (poss. Long Eared).

Butterflies:

Marbled White, Peacock, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone, Comma, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Large White, Cabbage White, Green Veined White, Common Blue, Orange-tip.

Dragonflies/Damselflies:

Southern Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Hawker Sp. (poss. Brown), 4 Spotted Chaser, Ruddy Darter, Common Darter. Large Red Damselfly, Azure Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly, Blue Tailed Damselfly. Plus, many unidentified!!



Marbled White

Acknowledgements:

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Juvenile Goldfinch