

A Ringer's Year June 2017

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Siskins ringed near Lemmington Hall featured in several new returns 'controls' from the BTO. Siskin S649331 was ringed near Lemmington Hall in April and then controlled by another ringer on the 19th June near Inverness. Similarly S649446 was controlled near Aberdeen on the 27th May. Another Siskin Z987363 was ringed back in April 2016 and was controlled east of Inveraray, Argyll on both the 1st and 7th May this year (rather suggesting it's taken up residence to breed in that area).

Most small passerine birds that use nest boxes have finished breeding so I have calculated rough occupancy and productivity figures from several of my regular monitoring sites (*I have this going back to 2010*). At the former Ingram National Park Visitor Centre there was 38% occupancy of boxes with an average of 5 pulli per nest (mostly Tits); at the Breamish Caravan Site there was 44% occupancy with an average of 6 pulli per nest (mostly Tits and Tree Sparrows); and at a farm near Longhorsley there was 43% occupancy (including Tits, Tree Sparrows, Redstart, and Nuthatch. All these occupancy and productivity rates are good (although not as good as 2014). The attached photographs show the eight (*an exceptional number in my experience*) beautiful blue eggs in a Redstart nest (from which 7 pulli were successfully raised). While the other picture shows a nest of Nuthatch pulli; in this you can see how it's made-up of cornflake sized pieces of wood; also the projection at the bottom of the picture is the plastered mud that the adults have used to reduce the entrance hole to their preferred size and keep the light and draft out! Seven pulli were raised from this nest.



Not all small birds seem to have been successful this year with several regular Dipper nest sites proving to be unoccupied although Grey Wagtails in similar locations did better. I also ringed a couple of young Oystercatchers – *crossing the road* – in the Breamish Valley early in June; this was just before the river flooded – and washed away some second broods of birds that nest near the river.

I mentioned in last month's article how successful Barn Owls were being after the mild winter and good spring and we are well on course to over 30% occupancy of sites and larger broods than average. However, I fear the recent deterioration in the weather may curtail the size of some broods and stop some adults starting second broods.

Finally I have been able to return to the newly re-instated Sand Martin Colony near Roddam. I originally ringed at this site (once part of a large sand and gravel quarry) 10 yrs ago with my son and we recorded two Sand x House Martin hybrids. Unfortunately the site was undermined by Rabbits and generally neglected but with a change of land ownership it has been restored and in the first ringing session we did nearly 50 birds. In the second session the *annoying wind* meant we only captured around 25 but including as the very first bird a control from another site; I will await with interest the return from the BTO on its origins. There were already a small proportion of fledged juveniles amongst these birds indicating that they have already produced their first brood.

Anyone interesting in ringing is invited to get in touch. Weather permitting I hope to start ringing at Howick on most Friday and Saturday mornings from the 14th of July; and will continue into the Autumn.

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