

# A Ringer's Year February 2018

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### Natural History Society of Northumbria Ringing Group

#### (Hancock Museum)

Ringing has been a little quiet this month with an expected influx of Siskins not having occurred. However, one caught in an un-set trap, near home, on the 11<sup>th</sup> proved to be a retrap not seen since the summer (and probably hatched locally). Three new ones were caught on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, all but the last being juveniles. However, ringing with trainees on the 22/2/18 captured only two Siskins out of 26 birds. There was a retrap male first ringed in July 2016 and a new juvenile (hatched 2017). I do have a roving flock of Tree Sparrows, two of which we captured, *but as both adults and juveniles moult entirely* in the autumn it's impossible to tell how old they are. Ringing again on the 24<sup>th</sup> captured a similar number of birds, mostly tits, a very nice adult male Goldfinch (see pic.) but only one new juvenile Siskin. However, retrapped Blue Tit 'Y626072' proved interesting for its longevity as it was ringed as a very juvenile bird back in 2012, so it's now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year. I am about to go away to The Gambia for a couple of weeks, so it will be frustrating if all the Siskins turn up in my absence!



Adult Male Goldfinch



Long-tailed Tit

I mention the expedition to The Gambia because I am going to ring at Kartong Bird Observatory (see its own Web Site for more information) with the object of catching African migrants starting to return to the UK and the rest of Europe.

We have continued to visit the site near Longhorsley where the Willow Tits and Marsh Tits reside and captured another one of each species on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February along with 10 other birds. The Marsh Tit was most definitely an adult while the Willow was a juvenile. Ringing on the 4<sup>th</sup> produced a new Willow Tit and a retrap from back on the 26<sup>th</sup> January clearly none the worse for its experience of now having a bracelet on its leg, along with another 20 birds. Ringing on the 9<sup>th</sup> netted 50 birds including some Long-

tailed Tits (see pic.) and Tree Sparrows along with lots more Blue Tits and Great Tits. The session on the 16<sup>th</sup> was very busy with another 50 birds including two new Willow Tits; some Greenfinches; a Great Spotted Woodpecker; Long-tailed Tits; and a very fancy Pigeon with feathered feet! I judged the pigeon had escaped from someone's collection, so we did not ring it.

When the weather has allowed we have continued to work on cleaning out and putting up new/replacement owl boxes (see pic.). During this procedure we captured a new male owl near Fenton – it spent most of the procedure asleep and only waved a claw at me when I finally returned it to a brand-new box (*in which we had put some of the old wood shavings and pellets from its original box*). When up the tree we also heard Skylarks singing along with the noise of 500 plus geese!

At another site near Doddington a roosting owl was found to have been ringed as an owlet just on the other side of Wooler back last spring. Lastly, we also put up a Little Owl box (made by my colleague Maurice, from Berwick upon Tweed) in the hope of encouraging these birds that are a little rare in North Northumberland.

Anyone interesting in ringing is invited to get in touch.

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