

A RINGERS YEAR

March 2019: This month's report starts on a sad note with a Mute Swan being found dead near Lee Moor Farm. The male Swan hit some wires in strong winds near the start of the month. 'ZJH' was ringed in September 2014 (as an adult) at Lee Moor and has spent time around Howick, The Limery Pools and Lee Moor; he bred in 2016 and 2017 (raising 8 Cygnets (!) in 2017) and at a educated guess was perhaps 8 yrs old. Much better news came in the form of a successful recapture of a female Tawny Owl on the 29/3/19 with eggs in her regular box near Longhorsley. This was particularly gratifying because although we have seen this owl nearly every year since 2009 she was missing in 2018 (and bad snow) and I rather thought almost certainly did not breed after the she had perished in the winter (see pict.). A new trainee also got the opportunity to handle this rather well behaved tawny.



This month we have also done quite a lot of work with Barn Owls; putting up some new boxes, refurbishing others, tipping out jackdaw sticks; and recapturing and ringing some new birds. A regular pair of owls were found in residence near Fallodon; the female hatched in we think 2015, the male in 2013. We are certain they bred successfully in 2016 and 17 (but not 2018). A single female was found in a farm barn near Warkworth that bred successfully (twice) in 2014, 2016 and 2017 (also twice); she is probably entering her 7th year. A Longhoughton female was successfully captured and held in a safe place for half an hour while we completely replaced her box; not something to be done lightly but the box was so badly damaged that the idea of her laying eggs in it could not be contemplated! She was probably hatched in 2014. Four owls that were ringed as pulli (or owlets) were also captured (so we are certain of their exact age): A Boulmer female from 2012 that has travelled barely one km from home to nest most years since; while another female was hatched in Dumfries in 2011 and has also bred most years since near Craster! A male owl ringed in a box on Holy Island (by another ringer) in 2016 is now residing in her nesting box also on Holy Island which she used in 2017 and 18. Another male owl ringed in 2014 near Longhorsley has moved a few Km's north to a box he used in 2016 and 17. My new trainee also got an opportunity to ring three new owls; one of which is pictured as her brown (female) spots are particularly notable (see pict.) We will now leave all Barn Owl sites alone until the end of May when we return to check for breeding.



Much ringing near home with trainees and my new C Ringer has been curtailed by wind this month but we have managed a few good sessions including on the 1st March when we caught 10 retraps and 28 new birds; including a Goldfinch and a Dunnock first ringed in 2016. There were 11 migrating Siskins (probably moving north) in the catch. The 9th produced 16 retraps (including a Coal Tit from 2016) and 27 new birds. There were 14 Siskins and a pair of Redpoll; the male of which was a particularly well marked bird (see pict.).



Finally on the 31st we captured 12 retraps (including a siskin from February 2017) and 37 new birds. There were 27 Siskins in all; of which three were very obviously starting to breed (with eggs developing inside them); so these birds are stopping near me to nest. There was also our first African migrant back from its travels in Senegal or The Gambia; a Chiffchaff (warbler); it will probably not nest until May or June.



Anyone interesting in ringing is invited to get in touch.

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