



Ringer's Roundup

A Ringer's Year - November 2023

Continuing the theme of last month, I can report on the Mute Swans of Howick and tell you that RW(ZLJ) has been spotted feeding in Budle Bay; this is a 2019 Cygnet ringed at Howick. Meanwhile ZKC, the sole remaining swan, a cygnet, still at Howick left on or around the 6th November. However, the 'resident' male 'Peter' swan (XJP) arrived back on the Howick pool on the 12th. You can go and feed him with proprietary 'duck & goose food', barley or wheat grain, or a small amount of bread.

An interesting control by a fellow ringer near Amble reached me from the BTO; this was of a Barn Owl FH69456 a bird originally ringed near Warkworth back in 2014. So, at nine years old it's surviving well.

We did manage a final ringing session of the year at Howick on the 4th when we captured and processed 78 birds (52 new and 26 retraps). The morning was notable for catching 15 new Blackbirds, six of which had above average wing lengths - indicating they were almost certainly migrants coming to feed on the berry supply in the Arboretum. There was also Redwing and Mistle Thrush. Interestingly we also captured three 'late' Blackcaps, which may be *late* on their migration south to southern Europe/North Africa or possibly birds from the near continent coming here for the winter. As well as the usual resident tits there were also Chaffinches, Wren, Goldcrests, Robin, Nuthatch and Dunnock.

On the 8th & 9th November I met with a number of Coast Care Volunteers at Seahouses and guided them through making nine new Barn Owl boxes; these are to be erected in the Coast AONB area. So far these have been put up near Fenham, Budle Bay, Beadnell and Warkworth. Similarly, with the help of the Coquetdale Group of NWT we have been making some *Tawny-duck boxes*: three of us put six up in the Breamish Valley on the 20th. These may be used by Goldeneye ducks or Tawny Owls (hence the name). Three were replacements after normal wear & tear while another three were replacing boxes destroyed by Storm Arwen, which it had been impossible to replace any sooner.



Returning to ringing, my colleague Hilary set-up at her East Linden site on the 26th November and we captured and processed 100 birds (89 new and 11 retraps). The oldest was a retrap originally ringed at the same site in 2021. Most notable were our local rarities, which are always difficult to tell apart: three Willow Tits and two Marsh Tits; all juveniles of the year indicating that they are continuing to breed locally to the site (see photos above: Willow Tit on left)



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There was also a male Greenfinch (see pic) unfortunately a bird that is becoming quite rare, Chaffinches, Goldfinches (see pic), Tree Sparrows, four Robins, a pair of Nuthatches, and other assorted tits.

Ringling myself, at home, with one of my C Ringers and a Trainee on the 17th we captured 52 birds (45 new and 7 retraps), including a surprising nine Robins. Four of the Robins were retrapped adults including one from 2021 while the other three were new (and quite possibly migrants). There were also a couple of House Sparrows

(a little rare around Lemmington Hall always outnumbered by the local Tree Sparrows), Goldfinches, a single Goldcrest, Coal, Great and Blue Tits, Wren and Dunnock.



Meanwhile I have also been making some Swift boxes in support of the Longhorsley Swift Project that's being promoted by the Coquetdale Group of the NWT and supported by the Wingates Windfarm Fund, administered by Community Action Northumberland (CAN).

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