



Ringer's Roundup

A Ringer's Year - January 2024

Back in October I reported on the antics of the young swans from this year's brood hatched at Howick and how one of the cygnets had been seen flying around North Shields and Blyth and had to be rescued twice after landing in car-parks. It eventually ended up on Killingworth Lake. Meanwhile the adult male came back to Howick on the 12/11/23 but only stayed until the 21st and I surmised he had gone off to seek his mate. It seems I was right because eventually the pair



arrived back on the 7/12/24 and were still present at the end of January 2024.

You can recognise them by their large darvic rings: the male is ZJP (*at least 12 years old*) and the female A069 (*who is 5 years old*) both appreciate grain, duck pellets and a small amount of bread! It may not be Spring yet but this pair of 'resident' Mute Swans at Howick Pool are back in occupation and ready to defend the pool from other swans and geese (see pictures).

With the support of a grant from the Wingates Windfarm Fund we have been making new Tawny and Barn Owl boxes for erection in the designated Parishes south of Rothbury. We have inspected several sites although getting them put up is proving difficult as the weather continues to be unhelpful; not to mention the saturated farmland.

We have also been making some boxes for Tree Sparrows which are going to Embleton Quarry Nature Reserve; and some other small boxes for school grounds in Rothbury (both as a donation from the Coquetdale Group of NWT).

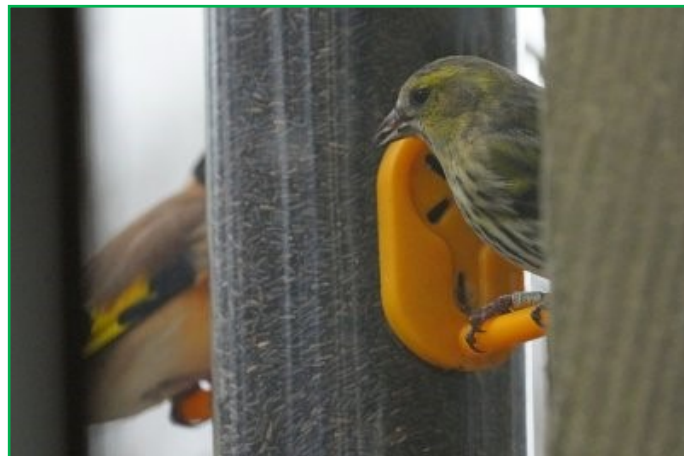
While ringing at home last month we retrapped a Goldcrest wearing a Jersey Ringing Scheme ring and I have now received details of this bird back from the BTO. It seems it was ringed as a juvenile back on the 18/10/22 at the Longis Nature Reserve on Alderney. This is a large reserve covering an eighth of the island. So, in December 2023 it was controlled as an adult male near Lemmington Hall, Alnwick; an interesting journey of over 630 km for a 5.1g bird!





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It was frustrating to observe a female Siskin on one of our bird feeders also with a ring on the 16/1/24. We could see the ring but only read the notation Z9 (see picture). I have used rings starting Z9 back in 2017 at home which would make this bird 6 years old; and the longevity record for a Siskin is eight years. However, it's quite possible this is a younger bird ringed by another ringer and unless it hangs around until the weather lets me ring at home again, we will never know!



Ringling myself, at home on the 2/1/24 I captured 36 birds (22 new and 14 retraps). The retraps included a Great Tit from 2018; so, 6 years old (the longevity record is 10 years) and two Robins, one from 2022 the other from 2021. There was also another Robin in the new birds which I aged as a last year's bird (so not yet a year old). Trying again on the 13th with two of my C Ringers we captured 60 birds (34 new and 26 retraps). The retraps included a 7-year-old Blue Tit (the longevity record is nine years). This time there were 4 retrapped Robins and 2 new ones.



Ringling again on the 30/1/24, a surprisingly bright and warm day, produced 26 birds (18 new and 8 retraps). The first bird captured was an adult female Siskin, previously ringed at Lemmington on the 8/4/23. She was probably travelling north in April; then as I next saw her on the 3/9/23 (presumably going south). It's likely she is starting to go north again (see photo).

I had two new bird ringers that I have trained receive their C Permits from the British Trust for Ornithology in the last month (meaning they can now start ringling on their own). Allan (from Selkirk) managed to control two male Siskins in his garden; one of these had been ringed just up the road at Peebles in January 2023 as a juvenile (that's hatched in 2022) while the other had been ringed as an adult at Forse (near Thurso) in the Highlands 308 km away in May 2022. Meanwhile Kevin (Rothbury) started ringling new birds including tits, Dunnock, Chaffinch and House Sparrows.

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Meanwhile a return from the BTO told me that a Barn Owl hatched just last year near Fallowdon had unfortunately died after injuring its wing at Christon Bank. A *'thank you'* is due to the vet that tried to help it.

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). The photos show two of the boxes recently attached to a house. If the weather would just *settle down* it might be possible to get more attached.



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