



Ringer's Roundup

A Ringer's Year - February 2024

First, my regular report on the Howick Swans is a bit thin this month as the last time the pair (Red coloured rings male ZJP and female A069) were seen on their pool was around about 30/1/24. So, if anyone spots them, I would be pleased to hear about this.



Staying at Howick, some readers will be familiar with the Wildlife Sound Recordist Geoff Sample. Now Geoff is very interested in the behavior and singing of these birds. So, to assist him in reliably identifying individual blackbirds we have agreed (*under license from the British Trust for Ornithology*) to colour ring the village blackbirds. Starting on the 7/2/24 (and twice more since) Hilary and I have so far been able to ring seven individual birds. A White ring above the metal BTO ring on the right leg simply indicates that these birds have

been ringed in 2024 while a unique combination of colours on the left leg identifies specific birds. The first research worthy observation came in on 22/2/24 from Stewart Sexton who was able to photograph juvenile Male (Blue/Yellow) fighting with adult male (Red/Yellow); for the attentions of female (Black/Yellow).



Another adult male (White/Yellow) just watched from the sidelines (see photo)! There has also been a small by-catch of mostly Robins and Starlings. This gives me the justification of including a photo of a Starling just to show how beautiful this often-maligned bird truly is.





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One of my C Ringers (Caroline) decided that she really needed a break from this cold and especially wet winter we have been having, and has been in The Gambia at the Kartong Bird Observatory supporting the 20 odd different research projects they are operating in collaboration with several Universities. She sent me two interesting pictures: one is of a Hooded Vulture, a bird which local people need to clean up carrion (see



photo). The other is of a Eurasian Scops Owl which migrates north into Europe to breed in the Spring (although very rarely reaching the British Isles).



Meanwhile my two brand new C Ringers have been ringing and observing birds close to home and Allan (Selkirk) has had Redpoll, Reed Bunting (not a very frequent garden bird) and a Goldcrest.

The Goldcrest was feeding on Fat Balls which seems to be only a recent behavior change for this species (see photo). Meanwhile Kevin (Rothbury) has recently ringed a Brambling, which is of course about to migrate back north to Scandinavia to breed.





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Updating on the campaign to encourage folks to put up Swift Boxes. Just to show they don't just have to go on houses but they can also be put up on farms. The adjacent photo is from the Longhorsley Swift Project and shows boxes recently put up on the gable-end of a wooden barn (see photo.).



Finally, I thought I should mention the initiative with the National Trust and Coast Care to put 'Bearded Reedling Nest Wigwams' into the reedbeds at Low Newton. We tried to do this before Christmas but the water-levels were just too high - but eventually last week we succeeded and the photo shows both a Grit Tray (these birds need to get grit to digest their food) and a new wigwam in place.

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