



# Ringer's Roundup

## A Ringer's Year - June 2024

The Monitoring of nesting Blue Tits, Great Tits, Coal Tits, Redstarts and Marsh Tits, who all use boxes continued into June and we located a new species this year at Ingram. This was in a very unsuccessful treecreeper box that has previously only ever held a brood of Great Tits! However, despite the box being in a dreadful condition it lived up to its name and produced a nest of Treecreepers. The eggs were spotted on the 10/5/24; they were starting to hatch on the 27/5/24 (when the female was ringed) and 6 pulli were ringed on the 2/6/24. It often surprises people when I explain that most of our local birds have finished nesting now.



It mostly happens in May and is all over by the middle of June. A notable exception is the Tree Sparrow. I have just ringed a second brood, of four, in a box on the wall of our house and the parents will probably go on and have a third brood.

We don't ring many 'open' nests because finding them is difficult and very time consuming. Local folks do tell us about nests of young birds; although usually when they are so big it would be dangerous to ring them. Finding them used to be associated with 'egg collecting' but is now something of a lost art (thankfully)!

However, when methodically checking small nest boxes near Longhorsley my compatriot Hilary found a Song Thrush nest very close-by. The photo shows the eggs hatching on 25/5/24.

The weather seems to have finally settled down and made it possible to get on with checking all our Barn Owl boxes. although at the time of writing there were still a few boxes that required access across fields that were just too wet at the start of the month.

The result of the mixed-up late winter/early spring weather is also that Barn Owl nesting is all 'strung out' with some pairs having not yet laid eggs, others incubating, some with tiny young, and some with young big enough to ring - although I don't think any have fledged yet. A Coast Care Box put up at Howick in 2022 is on schedule with its first nest. We located the female (probably three years old) with four small young on the 28/5/24, and returning on the 23/6/24 she was still in residence [GY85088] and with two healthy young. These have now been ringed as GY85095 & 96. They will still be in the box for another month at least.







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Meanwhile the owl box at Rock which had several Wood Mice in store last month continues to surprise, with the adults having brought in a half-grown rat for their owlet's tea.

Generally, Barn Owls find rats too big and leave them to Tawny Owls! I also got asked to check out some possible nesting Barn Owls at RAF Boulmer and we were able to locate a successful nest in an old ammunition box. There was so many years of accumulated owl pellets and other rubbish that the poor owlets are living in a space barely 15 cm high, so I have made a note to return when this brood have



fledged and clean their box out so that next year, they have a lot more space!

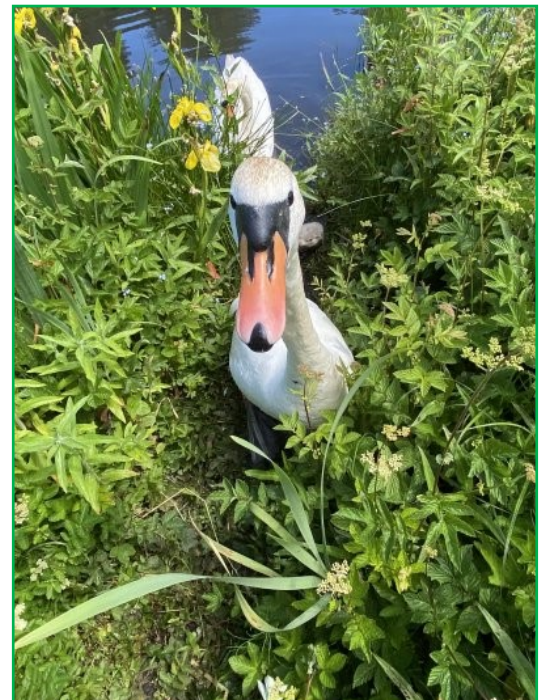
As noted above its going to be some time before we can really judge how well this year's Barn Owls have done, but it's likely we might be looking at an occupancy of around 50% which is a definite improvement on the last couple of years.

Not being able to visit Howick for several weeks, it was good to see on the 24th that the pair had hatched two cygnets and the male swan was quite

uncertain if he should come right up to me demanding food or try to hide his offspring from me! This behaviour did make it possible for me to feed him a small amount of bread by hand – while throwing duck pellets over his head for the female. Bread in particular is best kept away from cygnets until they are much bigger. Sad to report that by the 29th they were down to one cygnet; we don't know what happened to the other one.

I am currently playing a 'swift caller' outside my house by the new Swift Boxes but there have been no prospecting birds yet. Birds look for nest sites a year in advance of using them. It's hoped that some will find boxes in Longhorsley where a lot more boxes have been put up.

Anyone interested in ringing is invited to get in-touch: we start regular morning ringing at Howick provisionally on the 19th July; then most Friday and Saturday mornings into the Autumn.



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