



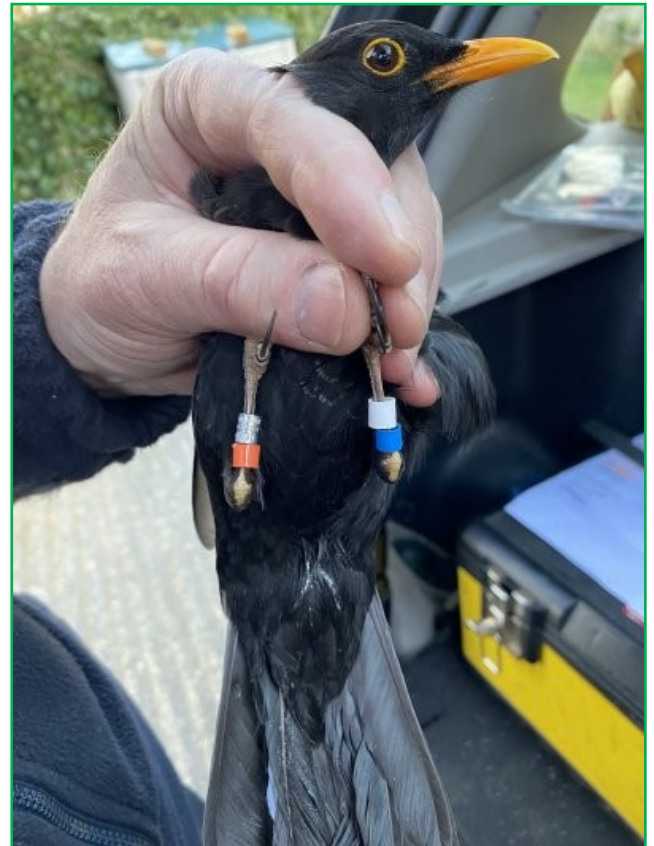
A Ringer's Year - January 2025

At the beginning of the month, it was interesting to get a return from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) about a Redpoll (AAZ9824) that I ringed at home on the 28/1/23; this bird having been 'controlled' at a colleague's ringing site on Corbridge Common on the 14/12/24. I was also copied into the movements of a Siskin (BJD0367) originally ringed by my C Ringer Allan, at Selkirk on the 29/3/24. On the 19th January this year it was at Strathyre near Stirling (that's 126 km's further north). Another colleague Phil C. has also received an update on a Redshank that he discovered regularly nests near Wooperton. This bird spends its Autumn and Winter in Langstone Harbour; where it was originally ringed in 2020; it returns to nest in Northumberland every Spring and then migrates back to Langstone in late Summer. It's been tracked since it was first ringed in September 2020 (in Langstone) and was at Wooperton again in June 2024 and is currently back in Langstone Harbour. So, if you're one of those photographers who complains about 'rings on waders' (*and I have come across one or two*) please remember that these rings are part of good scientific studies.

Regular readers of these Articles will remember that last year we colour ringed some Blackbirds at Howick to assist Wildlife Sound Recordist Geoff Sample in studying the behavior of individual resident blackbirds. It's been particularly nice to hear that most of the birds we ringed last year are still alive but with some new un-ringed birds having moved into the patch we have recently returned to ring a few more.

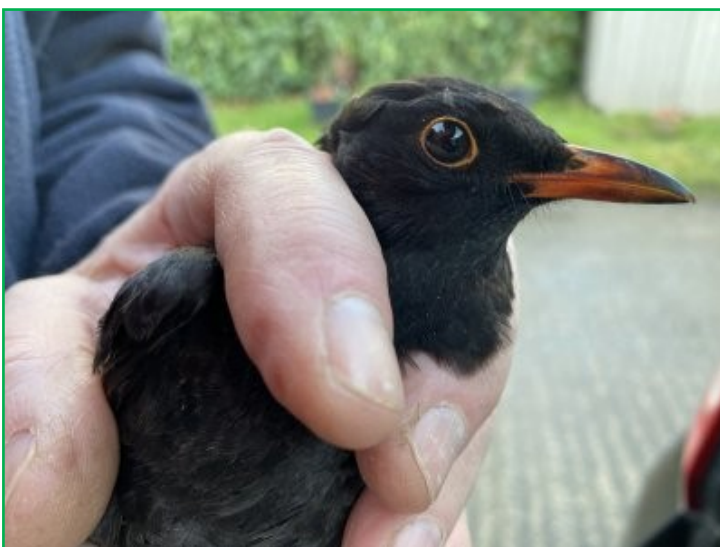
This year an Orange ring above the BTO Metal on the right tarsus indicates a 2025 bird (as distinct from White in 2024).

The attached photo shows adult Male Blackbird 'Blue above White' (on the left leg) with a very clean bright Yellow



beak. The next bird we ringed (Blue above Blue) a younger male, had a very different 'smudgy' beak (see picture). It will be interesting to see if this birds beak colour changes over time. As with last year there was a by-catch of Starlings and a Robin.

The tail of the Robin was particularly informative (see photo) being marked with a distinct 'bar' (which was also apparent in the wings). We call this 'a growth bar' and it generally indicates that the bird suffered a food shortage when it was very young but managed to survive but still shows the effects of the shortage of nutrients it suffered.





Ringer's Roundup



Continuing with the BTO's Winter Ringing Project on the 2nd January we captured 25 birds (14 new & 11 retraps). Ten of the fourteen new birds were adults (confirming yet again that *tits* in particular had a poor breeding season in 2024); including three new Robins. Interesting in the retraps was a Coal Tit and a Blackbird from 2021. There were also three adult Robins including one from 2022. At the next session we captured 22 birds (12 new & 10 retraps). In this session the preponderance of tits was less evident indicating the effects of freezing weather on these smaller birds. The retraps included the first Redpoll of the year, an adult male originally ringed as a one-year-old bird on the 5/3/24 (see photo).

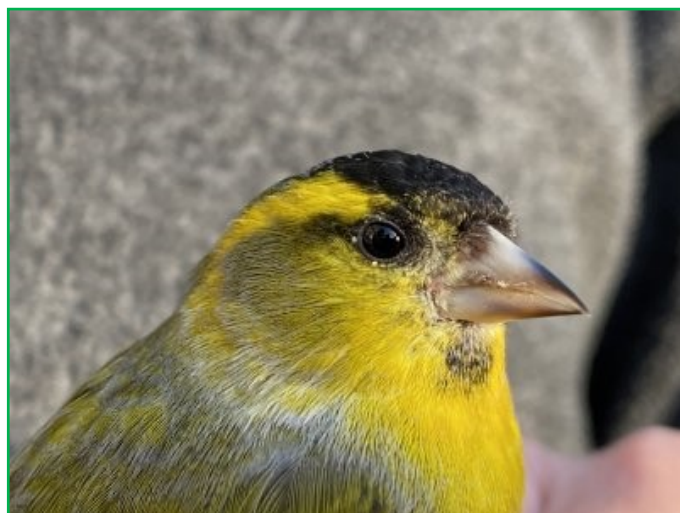


A week later we had a busy session capturing 46 birds (28 new & 18 retraps) with a small flock of Long Tailed Tits boosting the number of new birds; there were also four new Siskins; a Bullfinch and a Nuthatch. The retraps included another Siskin from 5/3/24. Another of my C Ringers (Kevin) ringed in Rothbury on the 28th and had a bumper catch of 64 birds (58 new & 6 retraps). He encountered 29 Siskins, all with significant fat, migrating north with a Redpoll in tow. There were also 9 Long Tailed Tits and our local rarity a Marsh Tit.

Finally at a ringing session at Hilary's site near Longframlington on the 31st we ringed 74 new birds of

which 45 were Siskins; confirming the big movement north that's happening.

Hilary decided it was a good idea to check over our Tawny Owl boxes during the last couple of weeks and this has proved useful; while we have not lost any boxes to high winds a large number of boxes proved to have temporary Grey Squirrel nests in them. Few of these were actually occupied but large balls of dry leaves will still prevent the owls (*and ducks like Goldeneye and Mandarin*) from nesting in the next couple of months; so, these have to be removed while a layer of fresh





Ringer's Roundup

wood shavings (horse bedding) is added to the bottom of the boxes.

I have also visited RAF Boulmer again this month to put up a Little Owl box sponsored by AWG. We were also contacted by some folks just south of Wooler to find a Barn Owl roosting in a Wood Shed. We provided this owl with a new box and within an hour a second owl was spotted; indicating that a pair just might be going to use the woodshed to nest later this year.



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