



A Ringer's Year - April 2025

Well, its now the time that our unusual nesting Goldeneye ducks start nesting in the Breamish Valley and to date we have located 14 nesting females. The males do hang around close to the nest sites for a few days but then rapidly loose interest and move off back to the local lakes to look for new females. They lay their clutch of eggs over a couple of weeks and then start incubating them. So far, we have come across clutches ranging from 8 to 13, 14, and 20! This later nest was being incubated but it's very unlikely they are all laid by one female. Much more likely the nest has been visited by another one or two females who have added their own eggs to the nest. This '*nest dumping*' behaviour is a problem because the first female does tend to desert such over-large nests before they hatch.



We have ringed three new ducks and retrapped three more. These retraps are from 2024 [FJ64661]; 2021 [FH92090]; and 2023 [FH79945] and have all successfully nested in previous years. There is still time for other females to start nesting in empty boxes, assuming they have not been taken over by Jackdaws and Tawny Owls. The owls are in fact useful because they tend to discourage jackdaws from taking over boxes and the Goldeneye seem quite content to nest alongside the owls.



Tawny Owls started nesting in March and as well as four being located in the Breamish Valley area, we have located another seven (and a Mandarin Duck) nesting. My colleague Hilary has already returned to nests near Longframlington and ringed three owlets; and two near Longhorsley, ringing two and three respectively. An interesting observation from one tawny box was the collection of prey items apparently brought in by the male owl. This consisted of several voles, a Wood Mouse and a Water Shrew! The Water Shrew is the very black small mammal in the photo. Another owl is around 10 years old and has just hatched her two chicks near Powburn (see pics).





Ringer's Roundup

Some spring ringing near Longfram (Hilary's site) saw returning migrant Chiffchaffs (Warblers) in March (in fact many of you will have heard them singing in your own gardens) but Willow Warblers were much slower to arrive and we did not ring a new one until the 21/4/25. We can now say they have 'returned back' from Africa but their numbers still seem quite low, compared to Chiffchaffs and for example Blackcap (Warblers). Ringing again near Longhorsley on the 30th produced a surprise new young bird (just out of the nest); this was a Juvenile Siskin - looking a bit like a female but with soft golden tones rather than green and yellow.



Another colleague (another Phil) who was out with two University Research Students near Wooperton came across a surprise brood of four Lapwing chicks which they were able to ring on the 27th April. This is really very early and shows that maybe the weather has helped these birds' nest early.

We will continue to monitor the Tawny Owls and Goldeneye ducks into May and look forward to starting to check small boxes for your favourite small birds after the 10th May.

Meanwhile **its really helpful to the monitoring of the Breamish Valley Goldeneye if you can send me your sitings**

(photos optional) of broods out on the water at Branton and Hedgeley *(and anywhere else; for example Caistron)*. The earliest date I have ever known of a brood being spotted was the 2/5/25 but normally it's more like the middle of the month when they appear. Later they can creche-up to be broods with more than one female and a few male outsiders.

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