



Ringer's Roundup

A Ringer's Year - May 2025

Well, our unusual nesting Goldeneye ducks, in the Breamish Valley, are progressing well with the earliest date I have so far for a large brood of 15 being out on the water, at Branton, being the 13th May. This is a bit later than last year so if anyone spotted an earlier brood then it would be good to hear about it. Also has anyone spotted a larger creche of ducklings with more than one female and a few male outriders? The ducks suffer from competition (and outright interference) from the local jackdaws but some start late and manage to use boxes that are not completely filled up with jackdaw sticks. One of these did not start incubating her clutch of 9 until around the start of the month; three weeks after her fellow females. We also gained access to a new pool on the 28th April and quickly put a box up as there were several pairs of ducks paddling around close by. Checking this box on the 21/5/25 Alison & I got the nice surprise of 5 brand new goldeneye eggs! There were also two broods of goldeneye out on the water (one quite large), which is the first time we have seen evidence of birds having found their own nesting holes (*that is not using our boxes*). So, we are now aware of 15 nests (in boxes); which is the same as last year. Please see [pictures](#) of an adult and eggs.



Meanwhile south of Rothbury my colleague Hilary has been encountering another beautiful duck (*using boxes originally put up for Tawny Owls*). These are Mandarins whose population is very slowly moving north (from the Tyne Valley). Like the goldeneye they lay a lot of eggs. See [picture](#) below of an adult female.

Checking on Tawny Owls has been a big part of this month, especially for Hilary, with a total of 16 pairs attempting to nest. Eleven of these have hatched eggs and most look like they will fledge in early June. From ringing we can tell that we have nesting females who are respectively at least 8, 11 & 15 yrs old. However, the populations of tawny owls does seem to be 'stuck' (not increasing) so as the individual owls get older it may start to decline.





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I reported on the artificial Sand Martin Bank built near Longhorsley in March. Well at the start of the month some Sand Martins actually discovered it and started digging out some sand to make their nest holes. Another local Naturalist Chris D. first spotted this and then Alison got some close-up pictures using a long lens ([see picture](#)). Hilary and I will not check for actual nesting until the middle of June so as to make sure the birds are fully settled in.



This month is also the busy time for nesting small passerines like tits and we encountered a female Marsh Tit on the 15th that we originally ringed in a nest box in 2024 (as an adult) on a farm near Longhorsley. On 15/5/25 she was in another box (on the same farm) with 7 young which were all ringed by a new trainee. Returning to check another box on an adjacent property, that I originally thought contained a nesting Coal Tit, we were assailed by a loud 'pichay' call. This was another Marsh Tit and I was able to ring 6 well developed young tits ([see picture](#)) on the 24th. Ringing with Hilary on the 16th near Brinkburn brought another welcome surprise of a large nest of Nuthatches.



We ringed 8 ([see picture](#)) and also observed some fascinating modifications that the adults had made to the box. Using 'mud' they had modified the entrance hole to create a descending 'tunnel' into the box.

We have started to monitor our nesting Barn Owls but with 100 plus sites we have not finished yet and I will save news of these until next month. However, news of one female owl that nested near Bamburgh last year has been fascinating but sad. Barn Owl [GY85067] was found dead on the Forties Bravo Oil Platform on the 4/4/25 (288km's from home)! So, we will have to see if another owl has filled her slot.

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