CESnews

The newsletter of the Constant Effort Sites scheme

BTO Looking out for birds

Number 26 **Spring 2013**

Wet, wet, wet...

2012 LOWEST MIGRANT PRODUCTIVITY ON RECORD SEE PAGE 3

Despite the terrible weather conditions during the spring and summer of 2012 (Fig 1), most CES ringers managed to find a way to fit visits in between rainstorms. The results produced demonstrate the severe impact that the weather had on British & Irish bird populations. In 2012, a total of 127 sites successfully operated at least one visit, with only two unable to operate at all due to flooding; of these, 111 achieved a sufficient number of visits for the data to be used in the CES analyses at the end of the year.

This level of persistence demonstrates the dedication of CES ringers, even in adverse conditions. It is an appropriate year to recognise the value of your efforts to the Ringing Scheme and we were delighted to announce the increase in CES support payments. From 2012, we have raised the value of the refund to 19p per new bird which means that, for the average CES site, rings are now effectively free. Furthermore, the introduction of project support will also assist ringers with purchasing equipment that is vital to running a CES – read more about this at www.bto.org/ces-funding.

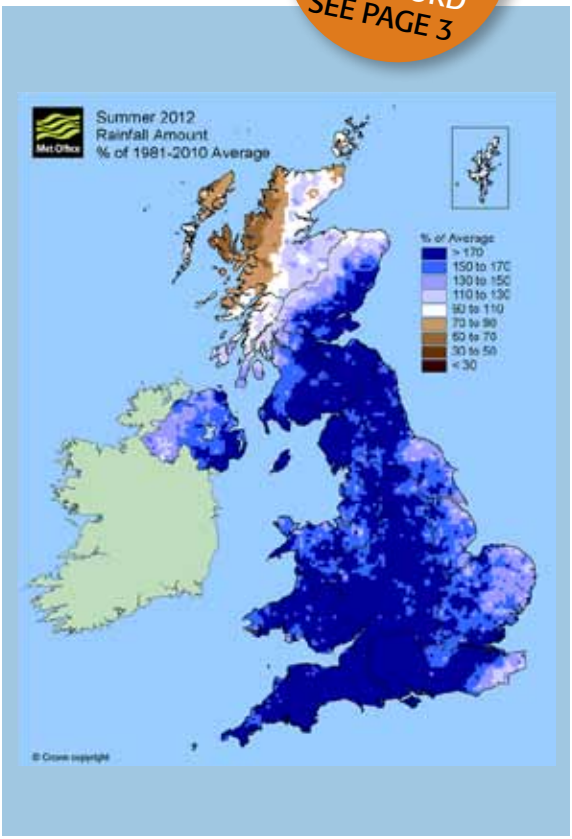


Figure 1. Summer 2012 Met Office rainfall anomaly map.

It never rains…

Even before the 2012 CES season had begun, most of England, together with eastern regions of Wales and Scotland, had received more than twice the average rainfall for April, and other parts of Wales and the southern Irish Republic had not fared much better. As a result, many CES ringers found their sites far wetter than normal from the first visit onwards, with some having to make their way through floods to operate them.

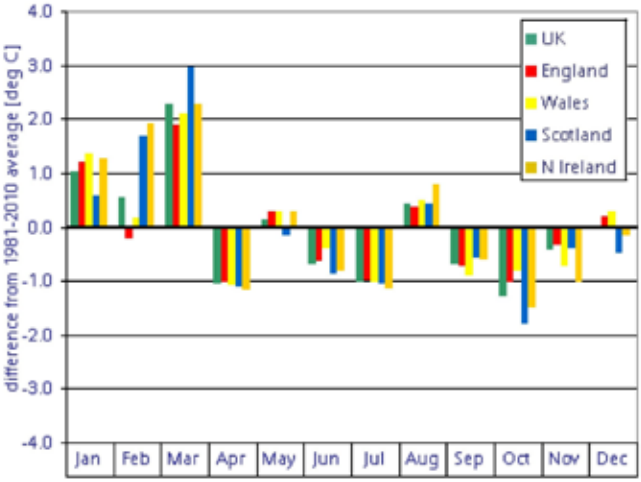


Figure 1. Mean temperature (1981–2010) anomalies for 2012. These Met Office data demonstrate just how poor the weather was for much of the CES season.

It might be difficult to recall now, but May actually offered a brief respite for much of the country (Fig 1). Then, in June, it started raining almost everywhere, with only north-west Scotland spared the deluge. By the time the CES season was over, records showed that more than twice the average volume of rain had fallen across much of Britain & Ireland (see front-page map). Among the areas worst hit was the south-west coast of England. Below, Steve Hales neatly sums up just what it was like for some sites, but also demonstrates the determination of ringers to keep CES going.

Email from Steve Hales at the Abbotsbury Swannery CES - July 2012

"I have to write to say that after a chat earlier today amongst ourselves we have now decided to give up for 2012 – not for ever, though! The weather this year has been just dreadful since the start down here in Dorset. The site is right on the coast as you know. We have tried a couple of sessions but got blown out or rained off before the session ended each time. Each week has become a relentless succession of persistent wind and rain. The reed bed is now armpit deep in water and quite unsafe to walk in and besides we could never reach any birds that we caught in the nets. Frankly it is a washout here. A great shame as this would be our 17th year. We are not withdrawing though and hope 2013 will be better. It is VERY frustrating for us. I hope other sites are having more luck!!"

High water levels made many CES net-rides difficult to operate

STEVE HALES

Win, lose or drown: results from the 2012 CES season

Allison Kew and Dave Leech report on the latest results from CES, exploring the impacts of the shifting jet stream and its influence on the breeding season

JOHN HARDING

Adult Chiffchaff numbers increased by a third in 2012

Adverse conditions in the spring and summer of 2012 were the result of a southward shift in the jet stream. Wet and windy weather prevailed across most of Britain & Ireland for much of the breeding season, with rain falling in record volumes during both April and June. It is in these extraordinary years that the benefit of standardised ringing is most clearly demonstrated; the data collected allow direct comparison of adult numbers, breeding success and survival rates with figures recorded during previous seasons. The results collected by CES ringers last year perfectly illustrate the extent to which the unseasonable weather negatively impacted on many passerine species. While populations may recover quickly from the odd bad season, the impact of a warming climate on the future trajectory of the jet stream is uncertain, making a detailed understanding of responses to extreme weather events all the more important.

A poor season for migrants

Despite fears that migrant populations would be decimated by storms encountered in North Africa and southern Europe during the northward passage, CES data suggest that this was not the case. Blackcap and Chiffchaff, short-distance migrants that winter in the Mediterranean, were both recorded in the highest numbers since the scheme began in 1983, although survival rates were not significantly higher than average (Table 1). There has been a consistent, long-term increase in the abundance of both species, in line with that identified from Common Bird Census/Breeding Bird Survey (CBC/BBS) data. CES ringers now handle double the number of Blackcaps and more than four times as many Chiffchaffs as they did in the mid-1980s.

Table 1. CES Results for migrant species in 2012. For long-term trends, '↑' indicates an increase of 1–25%, '↑↑' of 26–50% and '↑↑↑' of >50%, while '↓' indicates a decrease of 1–25%, '↓↓' of 26–50% and '↓↓↓' of >50%. Values for 2012 are also compared to five-year averages (2007–11), with significant decreases shown in red and significant increases in blue. '*' denotes a small sample size.

	Adult Abundance		Adult Survival		Productivity	
	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11
Chiffchaff	↑↑↑	**+37**	↑	-6	↓	**-41**
Willow Warbler	↓↓↓	3	↑	**-20**	↓↓	**-26**
Blackcap	↑↑↑	**+68**	↑↑	-6	↓	**-62**
Garden Warbler	↓	5	↑	10	↓↓↓	**-54**
Lesser Whitethroat*	↓↓↓	-16	↓↓	4	↓	-33
Whitethroat	↓↓	3	↓	**-33**	↓↓	**-57**
Sedge Warbler	↓↓↓	**-19**	↓	**-43**	↓↓↓	**-28**
Reed Warbler	↓↓	2	↑	**-16**	↑↑	**-35**

BirdTrack data show that arrival dates of both Chiffchaff and Blackcap were similar to the average, as were laying dates recorded by Nest Record Scheme (NRS) participants. In contrast, long-distance migrants wintering south of the Sahara arrived up to a fortnight later than might be expected in a typical year. This late arrival, coupled with the poor conditions that they were greeted with on return to the breeding grounds, led to significant delays in the mean laying dates of several species relative to the five-year average (2007–11), including Willow Warbler (four days later), Reed Warbler (11 days later) and Whitethroat (15 days later).

TOMMY HOLDEN

Willow Warbler productivity in 2012 was the lowest on record.

The majority of species arrived in average numbers, but Sedge Warbler abundance was the lowest recorded in the history of CES and the survival rate fell significantly, as it did for Willow Warbler, Whitethroat and Reed Warbler. While this may reflect the stormy conditions faced during migration, rainfall in the Sahel region of Africa was also very low in 2011, reducing the amount of vegetation and therefore insect food available to fuel northward passage across the Sahara. Long-term CES abundance trends for trans-Saharan migrants are generally negative. While the decline in Willow Warblers mirrors that recorded by BBS and is therefore suggestive of a population decline, BBS trends for Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler are positive and stable, respectively; the disparity between these survey results has yet to be explained, but it is possible that CES declines reflect changes in local habitat (*eg* scrub encroachment) which are countered by changes in distribution.

ABUNDANCE		SURVIVAL		PRODUCTIVITY	
Highest	**Lowest**	**Highest**	**Lowest**	**Highest**	**Lowest**
Chiffchaff (ever)	Sedge Warbler (ever)	None	Willow Warbler (2006, 5th)	None	Chiffchaff (ever)
Blackcap (ever)	Blackbird (1997, 3rd)		Whitethroat (1990, 3rd)		Willow Warbler (ever)
Treecreeper (ever)	Robin (2011, 12th)		Sedge Warbler (1984, 2nd)		Blackcap (ever)
	Chaffinch (1983, 2nd)		Reed Warbler (2001, 4th)		Garden Warbler (ever)
			Bullfinch (ever)		Whitethroat (ever)
					Sedge Warbler (ever)
					Reed Warbler (ever)
					Cetti's Warbler (ever)
					Treecreeper (2007, 2nd)
					Wren (2006, 5th)
					Dunnock (1996, 2nd)
					Chaffinch (2008, 10th)
					Bullfinch (2006, 10th)
					Reed Bunting (ever)
					Great Tit (2008, 2nd)
					Blue Tit (2007, 3rd)
					Long-tailed Tit (2001, 3rd)

Table 2. Significant changes in abundance, productivity and survival in 2012. Previous highest/lowest year since 1983 given in brackets, together with the ranking of the current year within the entire data run. For example, the previous lowest Willow Warbler survival rate was recorded in 2006, and survival rates in 2012 were the fifth lowest on record. Red = migrants, green = residents.

While short- and long-distance migrants may have experienced very different fortunes over the winter period, their productivity in 2012 was uniformly poor. Seven of the eight migrant warblers monitored by CES experienced significant reductions in productivity compared to the five-year average (Table 1) and all eight exhibited the lowest productivity since CES began in 1983 (Table 2).

Low temperatures and heavy rain reduced both the abundance and accessibility of many invertebrates, particularly the caterpillars and flying insects on which these species feed, thus food is likely to have been in short supply. The majority of warblers also build open-cup nests, so eggs and chicks may have become chilled during wet spells, reducing fledgling numbers.

NRS sample sizes for warblers are generally fairly small so it is difficult to detect differences between years, but Reed Warbler displayed a significant reduction in the number of fledglings produced, which fell by 36% relative to the five-year average, while Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat all showed non-significant declines in fledgling production of between 26% and 36%. The greater magnitude of productivity declines recorded by CES suggests that the survival of chicks once they had left the nest was also affected by the weather. This is perhaps unsurprising, as young birds are likely to be less effective at finding food and their plumage is also of relatively poor quality, increasing their chance of becoming waterlogged and chilled.

Despite breeding earlier than most species, Long-tailed Tit productivity was still reduced by the wet weather.

Unproductive season for tits

Long-term trends in tit abundance vary between species. While numbers of Great Tit and Long-tailed Tit have increased over time on CES sites, Blue Tit populations remain stable and Willow Tit populations have crashed (Table 3), the latter reflecting the national decline of 88% identified by BBS. Adult tit abundance in 2012 was similar to that recorded over recent years, as were survival rates over the 2011/12 winter, none of which differed significantly from the five-year mean. Like the migrants, however, tits had a disastrous breeding season, with three of the four species exhibiting significant declines in juvenile:adult ratios of between 31% and 44% (Table 3). Results for Blue and Great Tit were much lower than those recorded by NRS (13% and 18% respectively), which is again suggestive of high post-fledging mortality rates.

The relatively low temperatures experienced during late spring and early summer 2012 may have influenced hatching and fledging success, increasing the energetic demand of chicks and therefore the chances of chilling. However, while these direct weather effects may have a marked impact on productivity in open-nesting species, the dramatic fall in numbers of juvenile tits is

Table 3. CES Results for tit species in 2012. See Table 1 for key.

	ADULT ABUNDANCE		ADULT SURVIVAL		PRODUCTIVITY	
	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11
Blue Tit	↑	0	↑↑	3	↓↓↓	**-31**
Great Tit	↑↑↑	-6	↑	-21	↓	**-34**
Willow Tit*	↓↓↓	-14			↓↓	-51
Long-tailed Tit	↑↑	3	↓	25	↓	**-44**

JOHN HARDING

Results from CES and NRS both showed it was a disastrous season for Chaffinch.

more likely to have been driven by a decline in food availability.

The mismatch between peaks in invertebrate abundance and hatching dates is generally greater at higher temperatures, as insects are able to increase their developmental rate whilst birds are not, and March 2012 was warmer than average. Any reduction in food availability caused by an early caterpillar peak is likely to have been exacerbated by the impact of cold, wet weather in April while eggs were being incubated and again in June when chicks were fledging, reducing the survival rate of invertebrates and washing them from the leaves. Anecdotal evidence from moth-trapping forums certainly suggested that abundance of adults last year was well below average and Butterfly Conservation survey data showed that many diurnal Lepidoptera also fared poorly.

Mixed fortunes for other residents

Abundance of Robin and Blackbird fell in 2012 relative to the five-year average, possibly due to the recent run of cold winters. There was some evidence of a concurrent fall in adult survival rates, although values did not differ significantly from the 2007–11 mean (Table 4). However, the breeding success of species feeding on soil and leaf-litter invertebrates, a group that also includes Song Thrush, appeared to be least affected by the adverse weather conditions, with no significant productivity declines recorded across the three species. Damp conditions generally have a positive effect on both the number and the accessibility of these food items as the soft ground is easier to probe and ground-dwelling invertebrates spend more time near to the surface. Wren and Dunnock, which utilise similar habitats but are more reliant on winged invertebrates, struggled in comparison; while adult numbers were closer to the average, breeding success of both species fell significantly, by 17% and 30% respectively.

Long-term trends in finch numbers have been largely stable since CES began, although Goldfinch abundance has increased in accordance with BBS trends. Only Chaffinch displayed a significant change in abundance compared to the five-year mean, numbers dropping by 11% (Table 4). Adult

Table 4. CES results for other resident species in 2012. It is not possible to calculate survival rates if sample sizes are small or adult birds are highly mobile. See Table 1 for key.

	ADULT ABUNDANCE		ADULT SURVIVAL		PRODUCTIVITY	
	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11	1983–2012	2012 vs 2007–11
Cetti's Warbler*	↑↑↑	-7			↑	**-66**
Treecreeper*	↑↑	**+34**			↓	**-33**
Wren	↑	8	↑	21	↓	**-17**
Blackbird	↓	**-9**	↓	-8	↓	6
Song Thrush	↓↓	-11	↑	-28	↓	-3
Robin	↑↑	**-11**	↓	-15	↓	-7
Dunnock	↓	-4	↑	-1	↓	**-30**
Chaffinch	↑	**-11**	↑	-13	↑↑	**-38**
Greenfinch	↑	-2			↓↓↓	-11
Goldfinch	↑↑	20			↓↓↓	-18
Bullfinch	↓	0	↓	**-30**	↑↑	**-29**
Reed Bunting	↓↓↓	4	↓	-11	↓↓↓	**-50**

JOHN HARDING

JOHN HARDING

Neither Robin (top left) nor Blackbird (below) exhibited the drop in breeding success experienced by many other species in 2012. Reed Bunting (below left) productivity was impacted by flooding.

ROB ROBINSON

survival rates were generally similar to the 2007–11 average, which may suggest that the decline in numbers was due to reduced recruitment of first-year birds. Conversely, while Bullfinch survival rates fell to their lowest recorded level (Table 2), there was no evidence of an impact on the number of breeding birds present at CES sites. As with other woodland insectivores, productivity of both Chaffinch and Bullfinch was significantly reduced in 2012 (Table 4), presumably due to a combination of direct weather effects and the lack of invertebrate food. Chaffinch may be particularly susceptible to the wetting of chicks and eggs as the nests tend to be high and relatively exposed; NRS data indicated that the number of chicks successfully raised per nest dropped by a third, suggesting that pre-fledging mortality was largely responsible for the observed CES trend. A similar relationship might be predicted for Goldfinch, but samples are smaller and more aggregated, so significant effects are more difficult to detect.

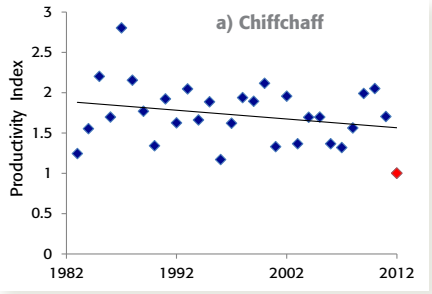
While Reed Bunting populations at CES sites have exhibited long-term declines that reflect the BBS trend, numbers in 2012 were close to the five-year average, with no significant drop in adult survival rate (Table 4). In breeding terms, however, they suffered their worst season on record, the juvenile:adult ratio falling by 50% (Table 4). As Reed Buntings nest low down in emergent vegetation at the edge of water features, they are extremely susceptible to flooding and this almost certainly led to significant nest losses in 2012.

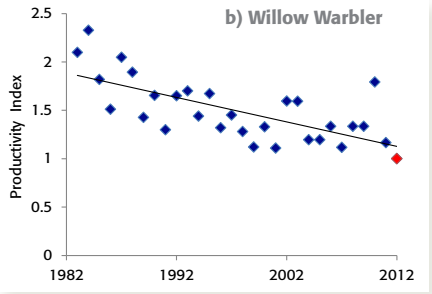
What does this all mean?

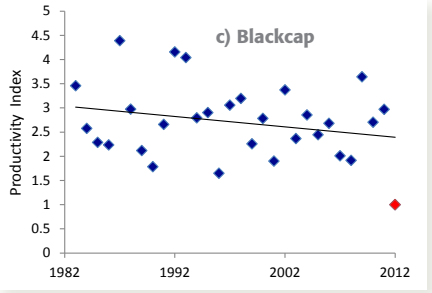
Most passerine species have the capacity to produce large numbers of offspring per season, potentially allowing them to recover rapidly from years where productivity or survival is much lower than average. Reduced competition between individuals when density is low also leads to higher survival, helping to buffer populations from decline. What is of concern, however, is the role of the jet stream in recent climatic events. Meteorologists are currently unsure what the effect of a warming climate and the melting of the polar icecaps will have on the trajectory of the jet stream in future. If the shift southwards becomes permanent then weather conditions during British summers will become more unsettled, increasing the likelihood of extreme weather events such as the heavy rainfall of 2012. How this impacts our avifauna remains to be seen but with your help we will continue to monitor any changes.

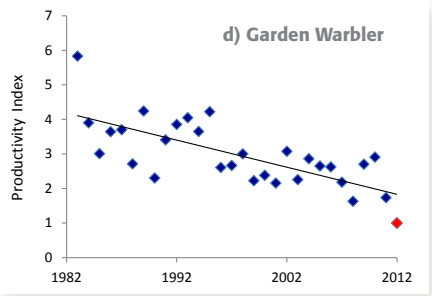
It's a washout

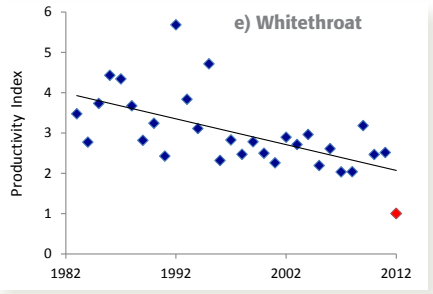
Breeding success fell far below average for most resident and migrant species in 2012 (red dot)

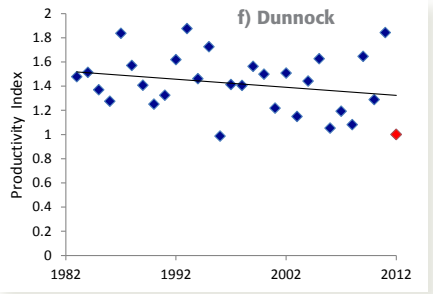


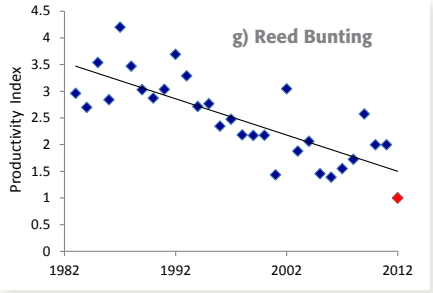


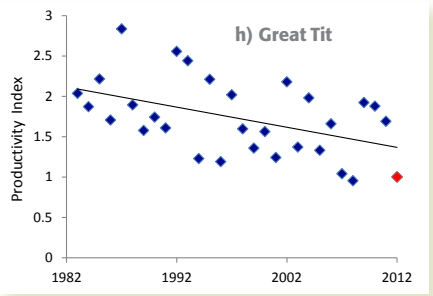












It's (less) grim up North

Dave Leech explores regional differences in weather impacts

While most parts of the UK experienced atrocious spells of wet weather during the spring and summer of 2012, some of us had it worse than others. The CES results from last year perfectly illustrate the value of attaining good regional coverage across BTO surveys, which is why the establishment of more CES sites in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is currently such a high priority for the scheme. By relating spatial variation in trends to that in environmental factors, we increase the power to detect the variables that are important in determining abundance, productivity and survival.

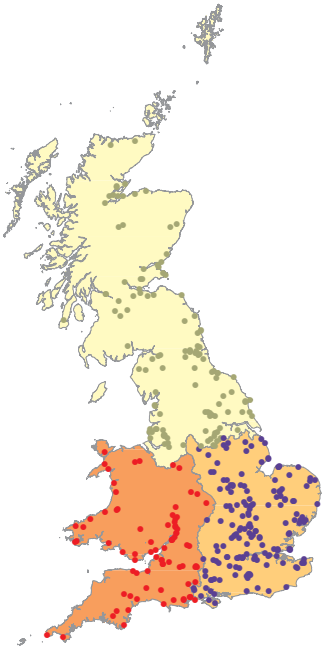


Figure 2. Distribution of CES sites past and present across three regions: North (green dots), West (red dots) and East (blue dots).

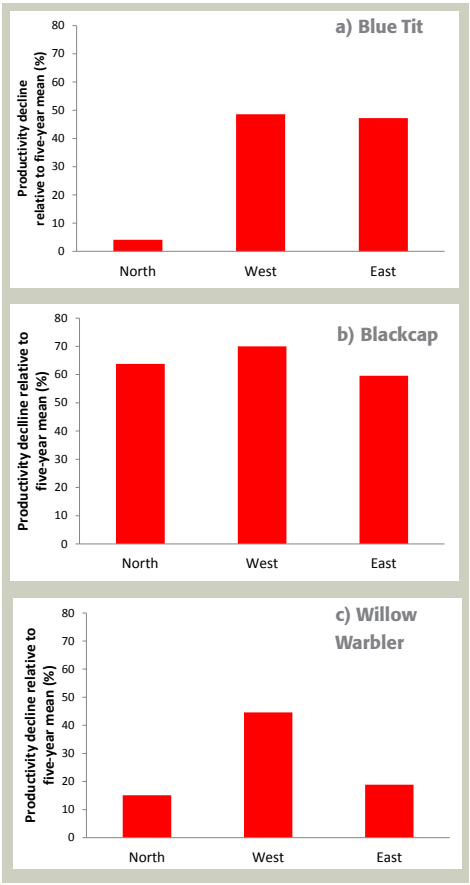


Figure 1. Regional comparison of productivity declines in 2012 with five-year average (2007-11) by region for a resident, a short- and a long-distance migrant.

While rainfall in both April and June reached record-breaking levels on a UK scale, Met Office data (www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/anomacts/) clearly show that large areas of Scotland experienced average or below-average rainfall throughout most of the spring and summer, especially on the western side of the country. This north/south split is reflected in the productivity results for Blue Tit (Fig 1a), which fell to a much lower level in the East and West regions (Fig 2) than they did in the North.

The juvenile:adult ratios of migrants such as Blackcap (Fig 1b) and Willow Warbler (Fig 1c) were also higher in the North, although the difference is much less marked for the former; as Blackcap has a more southerly distribution, it is less likely to have benefited from the drier conditions in the far north of the UK. Results for the two warbler species also indicate a longitudinal divide, with breeding success of both reduced most substantially in the West, where conditions were generally wetter during June and August.

Celebrating Constant Effort

For some, CES is just the start. For 40 years, Treswell Wood IPM Group have been collecting information about their breeding bird populations using a combination of ringing, nest recording and territory mapping

The date 16 December 2012 marked 40 years since John McMeeking and Ted Cowley first ringed in Treswell Wood in north Nottinghamshire. Happily, John was there to celebrate in person, as he has been for most of the 2,208 ringing visits to the wood since that first one. John had little idea what he was initiating in 1972. From the start, he followed Bob Spencer's example and recorded the exact locations of all the mist nets in the wood. The following spring, Common Bird Census (CBC) began in the wood and this breeding territory mapping has continued ever since, complementing the ringing. By 1978, the exploratory ringing at various sites within the wood had matured into a throughout-the-year constant-effort operation, and our experiences contributed to the creation of the national CES Scheme. In 1979, serious nest recording began, with the installation of nestboxes, after Chris du Feu's arrival on the scene. The aim was to provide additional nesting sites to compensate for loss of mature trees in the coppicing regime, which the Nottinghamshire Trust for Nature Conservation (now the NWT) had re-established. Nests have been recorded for NRS and nestlings ringed ever since. Without realising it and without the concept of Integrated Population Monitoring (IPM) having been defined, John had masterminded the initiation of a single-site IPM programme.

CHRIS DU FEU

John McMeeking (front) and team in action in the early 1980s

All the data gathered would be pretty useless without effective access to them. The arrival of desktop computers in the early 1980s allowed the first tentative steps at computerisation, even before B-RING. The whole dataset is now computerised including ringing data, nest records and CBC territory numbers and maps together with 'meta data' – details of catch effort, weather, age of coppice and various other observations. In the late 1990s, probably belatedly, we took the step of becoming a formal ringing group. After two years we renamed ourselves an IPM group to recognise that the non-ringers (nest recorders and CBC observers) are a vital part of the whole operation.

But what is the point of it all? We have managed to produce a few papers, and we have contributed data towards some European-wide studies, particularly those related to tit breeding and climate change. Increasingly we are working with academics at Lincoln and

CHRIS DU FEU

Celebrating 40 years of ringing at Treswell Wood with a birthday cake.

Nottingham Universities, which is proving very productive and also very motivational for the group members who can see the fruits of their fieldwork. Our major current work relates coppice age to bird populations using ringing capture rates. Initial results are similar to those found by Rob Fuller at BTO using territory mapping. However, with throughout-the-year ringing, the effects of coppice age on birds of different age classes, at different times of year, can be examined. Of particular note for this work is that the independently-derived CBC estimates of breeding territories have proved vital in making an allowance for variation in overall annual population sizes of different species.

The more we observe the birds, the more obvious it is that we need to look at the factors that impinge on their lives in order to understand population changes. In the past two years, with Ken Smith's encouragement and help, we have begun frass (caterpillar excrement) collection. Even results from the first year showed how nesting success was dependent on caterpillar abundance and relative timing. A second new project is fixed-point photography. Even in one season it is clear how rapidly habitat can change – when we have just a few years' data, successional change will be much more obvious.

We have undertaken various other studies, particularly with nestboxes. An analysis of tit foraging distances for nest-lining material has been published in *The Condor*. Currently we are looking at the effect of delousing tit nestboxes; initial results suggest that delousing does not affect anything to do with nest success but does influence whether a box is selected for use or not.

The group now has a number of trainee ringers to complement the old fogeys, but training is not confined to trainees. With rapid access to recapture histories we know that even the old hands have more to learn about ageing and sexing. With the current interest in reliability of ageing and sexing techniques, our experience of many long recapture histories suggests that a good many birds have not read Svensson. It is all very humbling.

What about regrets? Yes. We did not carry out fixed-point photography from day one. We did not collect frass from the first nextbox season – years of missed opportunities. And hopes for the future? We would like to make even more use of our data and hope that contacts at universities will blossom further. Above all we hope that, in another 40 years, some of the present team will be celebrating the 80th anniversary visit. We would encourage other groups to engage in similar integrated projects. We can assure you of continued hard work but you will enjoy increasing levels of interest and value as the years progress.

CHRIS DU FEU

Where there's muck there's data. Frass, the excrement of caterpillars, can be collected in trays, helping to determine when the number of prey items peaks

Welcome and farewell

Allison Kew, CES Organiser, reflects on the comings and goings in her first year

As CES continues to go from strength to strength, I have been able to welcome 15 new sites in 2012, bringing the total to 129 (Fig 1). Many of these are being run by the next generation of ringers, including Gary Clewley and Louise Greenwood, who took the time to encourage others to participate in CES by writing an article in *Ringing News* (Autumn 2012). It is really great to see so many new 'C'-permit holders looking to add value to their ringing by taking on CES, and thanks must also go to the trainers who have helped to encourage them along the way.

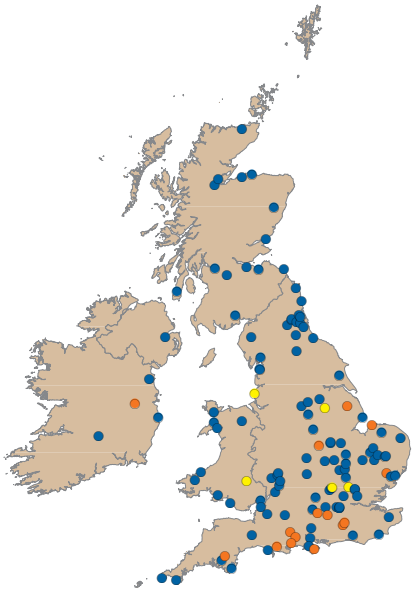


Figure 1. CES sites in 2012. Yellow = 30-year sites, orange = new for 2012.

Welcome...
Ballinafagh Lake, Prosperous, Kildare (Niall Tierney) • **Blashford Lakes**, Hants (Kevin Sayer) • **Donington on Bain**, Lincs (Andrew Chappell) • **Fleet Pond**, Hants (Louise Greenwood • **Haseley Manor Marsh**, IOW (Elaine Rice, Isle of Wight RG) • **Kings Hogsty Copse**, Pamber Forest, Hants (Paul James) • **Leicester Airfield West**, Leics (Colin Hewitt) • **Longham Lakes,** Dorset (Roger Peart) • **Martin Down**, Hants (Simon Lane) • **North River,** Sussex (Sam Bayley) • **Old Store Meadows Reserve**, Surrey (Wes Attridge). • **Titchwell Marsh RSPB Reserve**, Norfolk (Paul Eele) • **Venford Reservoir**, Devon (Roger Short) • **Wolves Wood,** Suffolk (Dennis Kell) • **Woodsford**, Dorset (Simon Lane)

and farewell!
Allerthorpe, Humberside (Phil Bone) (2005–11) • **Arklow Ponds**, Wicklow (Michael O'Donnell) (1999–2011) • **Arley Hall,** Cheshire (Mark Woodhead)(1997–2011) • **Brandon**, Norfolk (Graham Austin, Thetford Forest Ringing Group) (2005–2011)• **Chalton STW,** Beds (Graham Buss, Ivel RG) (2009–11)• **Crossness**, London (Roger Taylor, Dartford RG) (2003–11) • **Garbh Chnoc,** Highland (Donald Omand) (2008–11) • **Saltholme RSPB**, Cleveland (Derek Clayton) (2006–11) • **Snettisham Coastal Park**, Norfolk (Trevor Girling, NW Norfolk RG)(2011) • **Waterhay,** Ashton Keynes, Wilts (John Wells, Cotswold Water Park RG) (2006–11) • **West Everleigh Down**, Wilts (Simon Lane) (2008–11)

I was also very pleased to welcome back Ian Forsyth, who has been able to return to his Bog Meadow site in Belfast following an enforced absence.

Sadly, I had to say farewell to 11 CES sites which ceased to operate in 2011. Reasons for loss included habitat destruction, wetland drying out, problems with foxes, ticks being too much of a nuisance, the presence of a Schedule 1 species and problems with access. I wish all of you involved the best of luck in finding other sites and look forward to welcoming you back to CES in the future.

Happy 30th Birthday

While 2012 was a testing season, it did mark the 30th anniversary of CES. Of the 48 sites monitored during the first season in 1983, five remain active; in fact, four of these, including Treswell Wood, were initiated prior to the start of the scheme. So, special anniversary wishes and congratulations to the people involved over the many years at:

Formby, Merseyside (Dave Fletcher, SW Lancs RG);
Llangorse Lake, Powys (Jerry Lewis, Llangorse RG);
Marsworth, Hertfordshire (Stuart Downhill, Aylesbury Vale RG);
Tewinbury, Hertfordshire (Robin Cole);
Treswell Wood, Nottinghamshire (Chris du Feu, Treswell Wood IPM Group).

Sadly, a sixth site, Kimpton Mill, Hertfordshire, that made it to the 25th anniversary had to close after 2010 when CES stalwart, Tom Kittle, was no longer able to continue.

CES Birthdays

Many sites celebrated notable milestones in 2012.

25 years
Finningley Park, S Yorks (Dave Hazard, Doncaster RG); Gosforth Park, Tyne & Wear (Chris Redfern, Nat. Hist. Soc. Northumbria); Waterloo Thorns, Beds (Guy Anderson, Ivel RG).

20 years
Conon Islands, Highland (Mike Thompson & Ronnie Graham); Foxglove Covert, N Yorks (Tony Crease); Rye Meads South & North, Herts (Chris Dee, Rye Meads RG); Thatcham Marsh, Berks (Jan Legg, Newbury RG); Wraysbury Soft Rush, Berks (Andrew Kingston, Runnymede RG).

15 years
Ashleworth Ham, Glos (Mervyn Greening); Kenfig NNR, Glam (David Carrington).

10 years
Poolbrook Water Works, Herefordshire (Ray Bishop, Wychavon RG), Henbant, Gwynedd (Adrienne Stratford), Letchworth Sewage Treatment Works, Herts (Gareth Dagnell)

5 years
Birtley STW, Tyne & Wear (Richard Barnes, Northumbria RG); Brentingby, Leics (Chris Hughes); World's End, Bucks (Pete Weisner); Stanwick Lakes, Northants (Ian Wrisdale, Northants RG); Rutland Water, Rutland (Lloyd Park, Rutland Water RG); Derwent Reservoir, Northumberland (Martin Hughes); Seal Sands, Tyne & Wear (Allan Snape, Tees RG).

Special mention should go to Adrienne Stratford, who has just celebrated her second 10-year CES anniversary, the first having been at Arthog CES (1990–99) and the second at Henbant CES (2003–present).

Scrub bashing for CES

Reg Langston, one of founder members of the Little Ouse Ringing Group, outlines the work the group does to manage the habitat at their CES site

Hinderclay Fen is a small site on the Little Ouse in Suffolk, one of the remnants of tiny Poors' Fens that remain in the valley, which has been operated as a CES since 2007. There are two wet rides running through reed/sedge, one dry(ish) ride through sallow woodland and one very wet ride where we erect a purpose-made short net across the river for Kingfishers. We catch 600–800 birds a year, with high numbers of Reed Warbler, Chiffchaff and Long-tailed Tit.

Set up and management of the site

Wet rides

When we set up the CES, we wanted the wet net rides to have a firm base. At our previous site we had relied on the vegetation root mass but 12 sessions of walking up and down broke through this at various points, creating pools which some members of the group seemed especially able to find; it was certainly very tiring on legs. To start with, we used logs laid at right angles to the net but have subsequently found that the best method is to employ pallets. Each pallet is split in half by knocking out the blocks to give two thin sections which are then trodden into the ride. As the wet rides never dry out, they have already lasted over six years. Over the top of everything we laid Netlon Turfguard, available from LBS Garden Warehouse, a strong plastic grid that supports weight while allowing the vegetation to grow through. If we had used pallets throughout, we would be able to use a mower to cut the rides, but because of the logs we use a brushcutter.

REG LANGSTON

A pallet net ride showing the Netlon Turfguard in the first season after laying.

ALLISON KEW

Reg at one of the palleted net rides – shallow mud but firm underfoot.

During the winter, rogue saplings growing amongst the sedge and reeds are cut off at the base with minimal damage to reeds and painted with glyphosate (commonly available in garden centres as Roundup). The debris is then removed to prevent the area reverting to scrub.

Dry(ish) rides

Birds cross the net ride using the tops of the sallows; if these are too high, they fly over our nets. To stop this, we cut everything on one side of the ride to a height of about five feet every

five years, aiming to complete one fifth every year. To lower the sallow to five feet during the winter, narrow access rides are first cut at right angles to the nets. From these access rides and the net rides, most of the sallow can be cut with a long-handled hedge cutter and the rest with loppers. The debris is then moved behind the sallow.

River net

We have a scaffold plank across the river for the purpose-made short net for Kingfishers. These birds, as well as breeding locally, use the river as a corridor, flying low over the water. If there is a blockage along the river, the birds will fly round the net, so we clear any fallen trees or branches in the winter and cut back reeds with a scythe or spade, either by standing in the river (it is very close to its source, so isn't very deep) or on a ladder laid on the reeds.

Top tips

Top tips for effective maintenance:

- If you work on a managed site, develop your relationship with site staff so they do as much of your management as possible.
- Put effort into maintaining the surface of your paths, it definitely saves the legs.
- Never just cut scrub and saplings you do not want to grow again – use a paintbrush to daub the recently cut stump with glyphosate (Roundup).
- Get work done by having work parties – enlist help of family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and make a fun day of it.
- Invest in (or borrow or rent) the right tools and find someone who can show you how to use them properly.
- Make sure the right people have consented to your management; you do not want to fall out with a site owner/manager over this.

Caution: If you're on an SSSI you will need to ensure the landowner has consent from the relevant Country Agency for you to do the work – this may take a while to organise so allow plenty of time.

ALLISON KEW

ALLISON KEW

Above: Scrub is removed from the reed and sedge beds but a few song-posts are allowed to remain. Right: Scrub is cut down to five feet on a five year rotation.

2013 CES visit dates

Visit no	First date	Last date	No of days
1	Thursday 2 May	Saturday 11 May	10
2	Sunday 12 May	Weds 22 May	11
3	Thursday 23 May	Saturday 1 June	10
4	Sunday 2 June	Weds 12 June	11
5	Thursday 13 June	Saturday 22 June	10
6	Sunday 23 June	Weds 3 July	11
7	Thursday 4 July	Saturday 13 July	10
8	Sunday 14 July	Weds 24 July	11
9	Thursday 25 July	Saturday 3 August	10
10	Sunday 4 August	Weds 14 August	11
11	Thursday 15 August	Saturday 24 August	10
12	Sunday 25 August	Weds 4 September	11

CES reporting deadlines

Virtually all the 2012 CES data submissions were received before the end of October, a fantastic effort that is very much appreciated. Rapid submission of data allows us to process the information and produce the results and feedback promptly. This both increases the effectiveness of CES as a conservation monitoring tool and improves the chances of the results being picked up by the media, further increasing the profile of ringing and the BTO. Key submission deadlines:
Preliminary reporting – 15 October
Final reporting – 1 January (28 February for refund)**.**
Please send all CES data submissions to: ces@bto.org

CES Forum

If you do not currently subscribe, please consider joining the CES Forum. This is a great way of exchanging details of catches and getting feedback from sites throughout Britain & Ireland as the CES season progresses.
To join, please send an email (including your name and permit number) to:
btocesforum-subscribe@yahoogroups.co.uk

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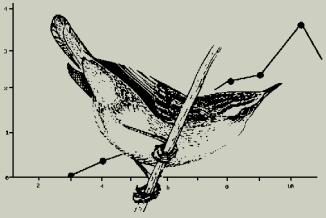

The newsletter for the British Trust for Ornithology's Constant Effort Sites scheme.

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