

A bird in the hand

Bird ringing in Britain & Ireland



Actual size of a
Greenfinch ring!

So what is bird ringing?

Bird ringing involves fitting a lightweight, uniquely numbered ring around the leg of a bird to identify it as an individual. The London address on the ring doesn't mean that these birds are ringed in London; it is just an easily recognised address.

Why do you ring birds?

We ring birds to understand more about their lives. For example:

SURVIVAL How many birds survived the trials of life each year?

PRODUCTIVITY How well did the breeding season go and how many young were produced?

DISPERSAL How did young birds spread out after the breeding season and colonise new areas?

MIGRATION When, and to where, are birds moving?

These are all key factors that control bird numbers. Understanding these can help us to see why species may be increasing or declining. This is vital information for the conservation of birds and their habitats.



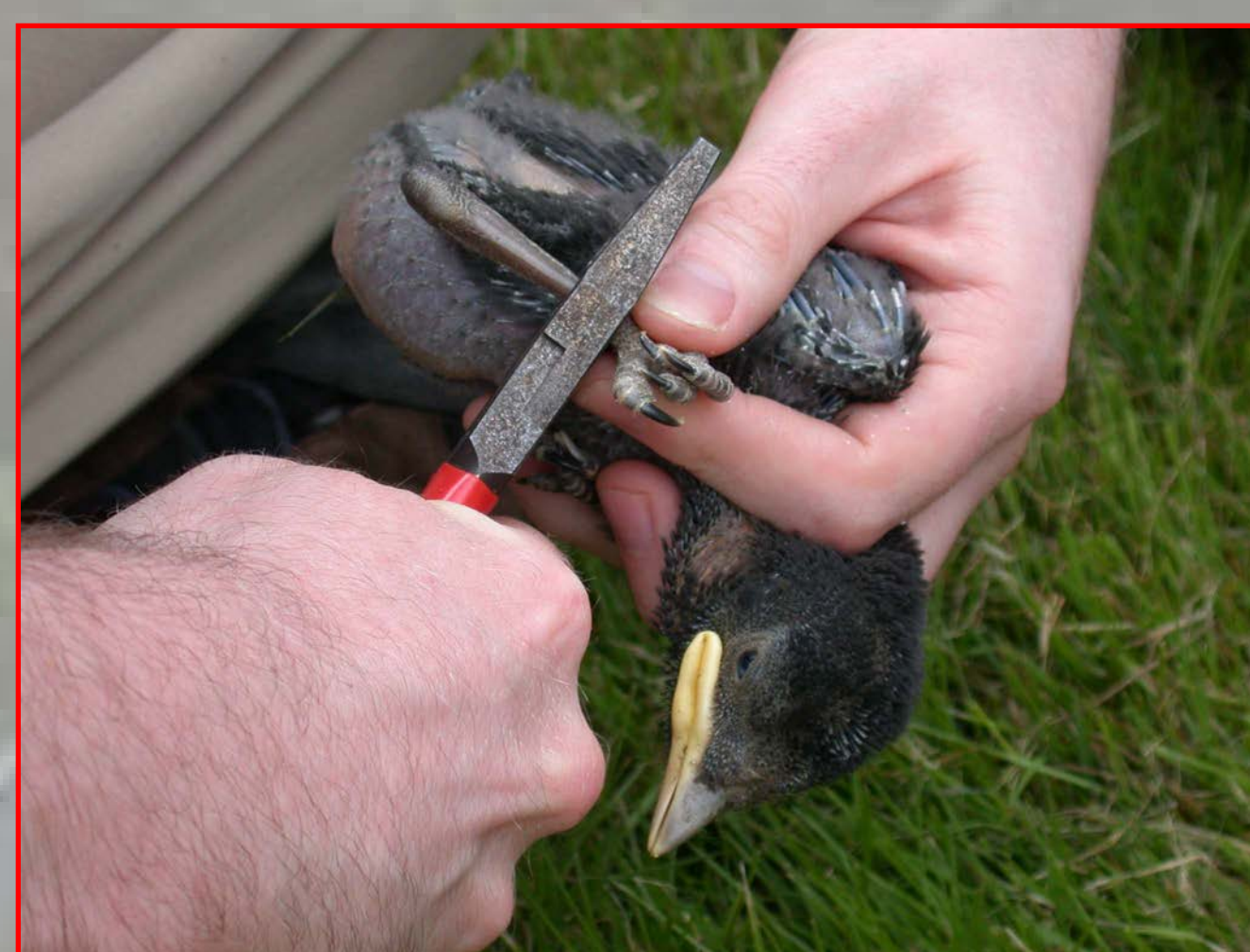
Male and female Blackcap

Dawn Balmer

How do you catch birds?

Every year, over 750,000 birds are ringed in Britain & Ireland. 20% are ringed as chicks, so we know exactly how old they are and where they are from.

Once out of the nest, most birds are caught in *mist nets*. This fine netting is erected between poles in areas where birds are passing, catching them in flight. Only highly-trained, licensed ringers are allowed to catch birds.



Ringling a nestling Jackdaw

Dawn Balmer



Taking a male Bullfinch out of a mist net

Mark Grantham

Does it affect the birds?

No!

All studies using ringing data rely on ringed birds behaving normally.

The rings are very light and don't hamper the bird at all. Birds regularly have large weight changes over short periods of time. For example, a Goldcrest can gain or lose nearly 30% of its body weight when migrating! Manx Shearwaters can carry their rings around for nearly 50 years (whilst travelling to Brazil and back every year!)

What happens if I find a ringed bird?

Ringing is only half of the story. Your help in reporting ringed birds to us is vital.


If you find a ringed bird, please tell us the following and we will tell you when and where it was ringed:

- The ring **number** and the address on the ring
- The **location** you found it (nearest town/village) and grid reference if you know it
- The **date** you found it
- Also tell us a bit about **how** you found the bird or ring. Was it alive, sick or dead. Was it hit by a car, caught by a cat, hit a window etc...
- What **sort** of bird it was (if you know)
- Don't forget your **name and postal address** so we can send you details

HOW TO CONTACT US?

 www.bto.org or ringing@bto.org

 Ringing Unit, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

 01842 750050