

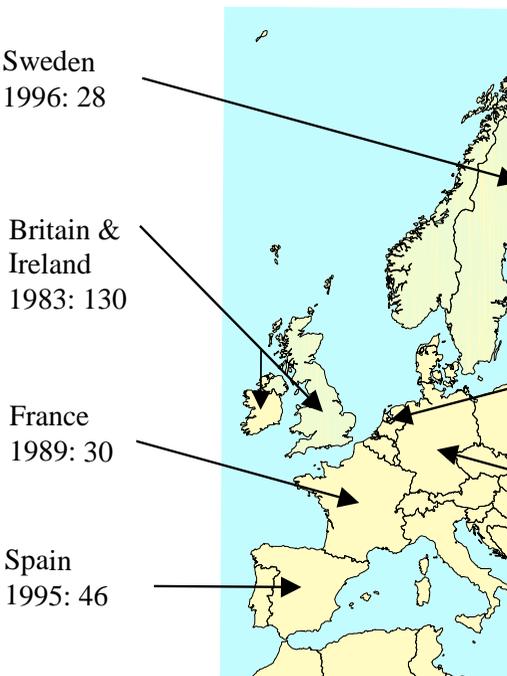
CES News



NUMBER FOURTEEN

MARCH 2001

CES IN EUROPE



In the last issue of *CES News* (Number Thirteen) we announced that the BTO was taking the lead in developing CES at the European scale. Work on this exciting new project has now begun and we have been in contact with our European counterparts. The map above shows the countries currently operating CES-style ringing, the year the scheme started and the number of sites operated in 2000. Responses to the questionnaire sent out have been really informative, and we are impressed by the number and range of species monitored by the schemes across Europe. As a next step, we will be obtaining some sample datasets. This will enable us to investigate ways of comparing species trends between countries. We will also be producing guidelines for CES ringing across Europe in the hope that we can encourage those countries not already taking part to do so.

This is the fourteenth edition of CES News, the newsletter for the British Trust for Ornithology's Constant Effort Sites Scheme. If you require further copies, then please contact Dawn Balmer at The Nunnery.

The Constant Effort Sites (CES) Scheme has now been running for 20 years (since the pilot project was initiated in 1981 - see pages 10-11). Licensed ringers at over 130 sites throughout Britain and Ireland erect mist-nets in the same positions and for the same length of time, during twelve visits spread evenly between early May and late August each year. Because of the standardised approach, we are able to use catches to monitor changes in the abundance and productivity of common breeding songbirds. Changes in the total number of adults caught enable us to measure changes in population size, while changes in the ratios of young birds to adults are used to monitor changes in breeding success. Retraps of adult birds ringed in previous years allow us to measure annual survival rates.

CES RINGING IN 2000

We have been busy over the winter months completely updating and automating the process of producing results from CES data, so that we are now easily able to calculate long-term trends in numbers and breeding success. Most CES ringers now send in their data promptly each year in computerised form. This allows us to produce timely results, identify any worrying changes in abundance and breeding success, and highlight these to other conservation bodies. Up-to-date trend graphs from the CES Scheme for most species are now available in the Wider Countryside Report on the BTO web site (see page 12).

New high in 1999

The number of sites operated in 1999 reached a new high of 138. This is a tremendous achievement by all concerned - thank you! We are on target to achieve a similarly high number for 2000. Seventeen sites were operated for the first time in 2000 (Stefan Bodnar - Warks, Hugh Brazier - Co. Kildare, Graham Buss - Bucks, Chris Donald - Highland, Stuart Downhill - Herts, Bryan Galloway - Northumberland, Anthony Harbott - Essex, Keith Herber - Norfolk, John Martin - Leics, North Down RG - Co. Down, Bob Proctor - Grampian, Dave Riley - Cheshire, Mike Rogers - Oxon, Brian Shaw - Oxon, Roger Taylor - Kent, John Webber - Somerset and Arfon Williams - Dyfed). In addition, Alan Lauder, our Head of BTO Scotland, set an example by registering a new site in Tayside after a successful pilot year in 1999. Many thanks to all ringers concerned. As always, we are keen to hear from ringers interested in operating a site, and

particularly to recruit new sites in Scotland, Ireland, Wales and south-west England.

Ringers have made superb progress computerising their data in recent years. In 2000, over 90% of the CES data was received in an electronic format, having been processed in B-RING or IPMR. This saves considerable staff time and special thanks are due to all who computerise their data. We are grateful to Angela Rickard for inputting the rest of the CES data. Free computers are still available to CES ringers; for further information please contact Robin Cole (Tel: 01438 813403).

This year, the results presented come from 121 CES sites: 99 in England, 14 in Scotland, 5 in Ireland and 3 in Wales. The habitats covered are similar to previous years, with the majority of sites located in reedbed, wet scrub or dry scrub and a smaller number of sites in deciduous woodland.



Artist TheInna Sykes

CES RESULTS

Changes in numbers: Long-tailed Tits up

The 1999/2000 winter was generally relatively mild, which probably helped many of our resident species to survive through to the following breeding season. Long-tailed Tit was the only resident species to increase significantly in numbers on CES sites (Table 1), with an increase of 23% in the catches of adult birds between 1999 and 2000. There were also significant increases in the numbers of adult Sedge Warblers, Reed Warblers and Whitethroats between 1999 and 2000. This may suggest more favourable conditions in their wintering grounds. Interestingly, all three species winter in a similar geographical area (West Africa). Sedge Warbler and Whitethroat populations have remained fairly stable over time while Reed Warbler numbers have shown a long-term decline. So the increase seen this year for Reed Warbler may just be a short-term blip.

Numbers of adult Garden Warblers, Blackcaps and Willow Warblers declined significantly between 1999 and 2000, perhaps suggesting less favourable conditions on their wintering grounds. Many Blackcaps from Britain and Ireland probably winter in Iberia and North Africa, with smaller numbers reaching West Africa. Ringing recoveries show that both Garden Warblers and Willow Warblers winter mainly around the Ivory Coast and Ghana, and observations show that both species occupy wooded habitats. Those species using more wooded habitats may not be affected by drought to the same extent as those species wintering in, often ephemeral freshwater habitats. In the long-term, the Blackcap population has increased whereas the Garden Warbler population has remained approximately stable.

Linnets was the only resident species to decrease significantly in numbers between 1999 and 2000, a continuation of the long-term decline of this species in CES habitats. Please note that Redpoll has been omitted from the list of species regularly reported on by CES ringing. The number of sites catching Redpolls dropped to an all time low in 2000, so that we can no longer confidently report on the fortunes of this species. We have added Willow Tit to the list of species because the number of sites reporting on this species is now at the lower end of that which is acceptable for monitoring purposes.

Changes in productivity: mixed breeding success

Early breeders seemed able to take advantage of the favourable conditions during a largely dry, settled and sunny March 2000. Then, for the third successive April, inclement weather upset early nesting attempts. Localised heavy downpours led to difficult conditions for some species. The weather picked up in late-April and early-May, only to become unsettled again in mid-May. Overall, breeding success in 2000 was mixed. Despite heavy losses in some areas, Blue Tits had a successful breeding season overall, and this was one of only three species to show a statistically significant increase; the two others were Blackcap and Willow Warbler. In the long-term, Blue Tit productivity has declined, while the breeding population has remained stable. The long-term trend in Willow Warbler productivity is also downward, despite an increase in 2000 (see page 5). Following a successful breeding season in 1999, Reed Warbler productivity fell in 2000. It is possible that early clutches were lost during the poor weather but that sunnier, warmer weather in late July allowed late broods to be reared. Two finches, Chaffinch (small increase in adult numbers and small decrease in juvenile numbers) and Bullfinch (small decline in adults but large decline in juveniles) also showed significantly lower breeding success in 2000.



Artist Anon

Table 1. Changes in captures on CES sites from 1999 to 2000.

Species	Adults		Juveniles		Adult Abundance		Productivity (juvs per adult)	
	Sites	Total	Sites	Total	%		%	
	2000	birds	2000	birds	Change	Trend	Change	Trend
Wren	101	779	98	1716	-2	→	-5	↑
Dunnock	102	652	99	1025	-6	→	-1	→
Robin	99	576	98	1839	+1	↑	-6	↓
Blackbird	103	983	91	717	+1	↓	-3	→
Song Thrush	84	317	72	200	+3	↓	-20	→
Sedge Warbler	71	1194	69	1655	+11*	→	+10	→
Reed Warbler	61	2272	59	2225	+18*	↓	-15*	↑
Lesser Whitethroat	31	95	47	199	+11	↓	+48	→
Whitethroat	58	377	65	618	+21*	→	-1	→
Garden Warbler	59	336	62	327	-14*	→	+3	↓
Blackcap	90	895	95	1880	-16*	↑	+23*	→
Chiffchaff	72	313	84	1196	+12	↑	+7	→
Willow Warbler	89	1342	90	1843	-16*	↓	+15*	↓
Long-tailed Tit	86	534	86	1209	+23*	→	-8	→
Willow Tit	13	20	19	63	-32	→	+7	→
Blue Tit	95	597	97	1979	-7	→	+47*	↓
Great Tit	92	464	96	1146	-1	→	+14	→
Treecreeper	42	77	64	178	-18	→	-7	→
Chaffinch	78	578	59	343	+10	→	-22*	↑
Greenfinch	38	211	25	135	-4	↑	+19	→
Goldfinch	37	109	23	56	-13	→	-10	→
Linnet	14	52	14	34	-46*	↓	+11	→
Bullfinch	82	460	59	313	-9	↓	-23*	→
Reed Bunting	65	342	39	210	-5	↓	-12	→

Explanatory notes

2000 sites = number of sites operated in 2000 at which the species was captured

Total birds = total number of individuals captured on sites in 2000 (for adults and juveniles separately)

% Change = percentage change in numbers of birds caught between 1999 and 2000

* = significant change at the 5% level

Trend = long-term trend during the period of CES ringing. See Wider Countryside Report on the BTO website for further details

↑ = long-term trend shows an increase

↓ = long-term trend shows a decline

→ = long-term trend shows stability

WILLOW WARBLERS CONTINUE TO DECLINE

“Only 12 juvenile Willow Warblers [in 2000] is by far the lowest total I have recorded since starting ringing in 1977”

Richard Ward-Smith, West Yorkshire

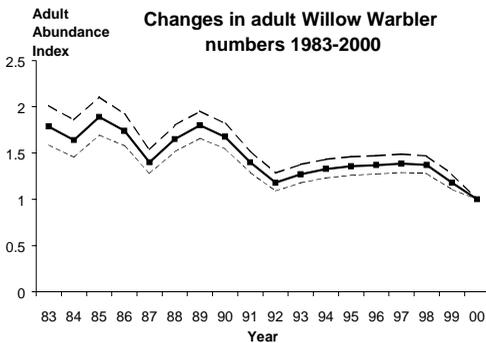
Many CES ringers contacted us during the 2000 breeding season and described below average catches of Willow Warblers. This prompted us to look more closely at the long-term trend. Long-term trends are far more important in conservation terms than annual fluctuations, which may be linked to particular short-term weather events. The long-term trend in adult numbers for each species gives us an indication of the general ‘health’ of the population (at least in the habitats included in the CES Scheme).



Artist Anon

was probably caused by a large reduction in the survival rates of adult birds (Peach *et al* 1995). This suggested that factors away from the breeding grounds may have been responsible for the change in breeding numbers. Interestingly, the adult survival rates of Willow Warblers ringed in northern Britain varied little whereas those of southern birds declined from 45% during 1987-1988 to 24% during 1991-1992. The reason for the decline in survival rate was unclear but habitat loss or deterioration on the wintering grounds is possible. Willow Warblers from the north and south of Britain may winter in slightly different regions of Africa and have therefore been subjected to different environmental pressures. Following the sharp decline, the Willow Warbler population remained fairly stable until 1998, and then began to decline again.

Using information from CES and the Nest Record Scheme we issued an alert to JNCC in March 2000, expressing high conservation concern for Willow Warbler. Information from Nest Record Cards has shown a significant increase in nest failure rates at the nestling stage. It would be extremely interesting to look again, in detail, at the population changes of Willow Warblers, given that we now have a longer run of information on survival rates and productivity from CES ringing.



Catches of adult Willow Warblers have declined by 32% during the period of CES ringing. Note that the Index is set to a reference point of 1 in 1999. The graph shows that between 1983 and 1989 the index fluctuated but showed no clear trend. Numbers then fell sharply from 1989 to 1992 and have shown little recovery since. The population decline during this period was also well documented by the Common Birds Census, and further investigation using information from CES sites revealed that the decline

Peach, W.J., Crick, H. Q.P. & Marchant, J.H. (1995) The demography of the decline in the British Willow Warbler population. *Journal of Applied Statistics* Vol. 22: Nos 5 & 6, 905-922.

LOCAL HABITAT CHANGE ON CONSTANT EFFORT SITES

An interesting paper by Nancy Harrison *et al* was published in *Ringling & Migration* in 2000. Nancy and her companion ringers have been operating a CES at Cow Lane Gravel Pits near Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire since 1989. In the paper, they look at how local habitat changes have affected their catches. At Cow Lane, aggregate was extracted from the centre of an osier stand between 1984-1986 and the gravel company left a perimeter belt of osiers around the site. Following the excavation, the company carried out extensive restoration work

The CES standard nets were placed in the relatively stable osier scrub. A total of nine (120m) standard nets were used, and the nets were operated from dawn to midday (following the usual CES guidelines). The surrounding area (termed the 'inner scrub') was subject to rapid changes resulting from the restoration of the gravel pit. Additional nets were used in this habitat. The position of these nets changed through the years but was consistent within any one year. Few additional nets were used between 1989 and 1993 but more were used between 1994 and 1996 in order to sample the 'inner scrub' area. The study looks at whether the local habitat changes resulted in fluctuations in the CES catches causing them to deviate from the national trends. The catches from 1989 to 1996 were compared with the national results from CES, published in *CES News* and *BTO News*.

To establish which trends at Cow Lane were consistent with the BTO trends, the authors considered those year-to-year comparisons in which the BTO found significant increases or decreases. The results were extremely encouraging. Most of the fluctuations in the abundance of the ten most commonly captured species at Cow Lane CES closely followed the national changes. There was clear agreement with the BTO's national results for extremely good, or bad, breeding seasons. The authors showed that catches of Blue Tits and Wrens at Cow Lane shadowed the national patterns with few exceptions. The fluctuations in the catches of Reed and Sedge Warblers deviated more from the national trends, probably due to their use of the 'inner scrub' adjacent to the CES site. By looking at the catch of birds in the additional nets, the authors showed that after habitat management work in the



Artist Leslie Baker

inner scrub, which opened up the area and created a mosaic of wetland vegetation, some Reed and Sedge Warblers moved into this area from the osier scrub.

The authors conclude that most species were relatively insensitive to the local habitat changes that took place at Cow Lane. The year-to-year variation in abundance that results from good or bad weather during the breeding season appeared to explain the observed patterns more than the habitat changes. Only for Reed and Sedge Warbler did the small scale habitat changes have an affect on the effectiveness of the CES standard nets for monitoring changes in abundance. The authors stress that even this is unlikely to be a problem for the CES Scheme given the large number of sites contributing data each year.

Finally, the authors urge CES ringers to record the details of the habitat surrounding CES sites according to the BTO's CES instructions, after showing it's value in their study.

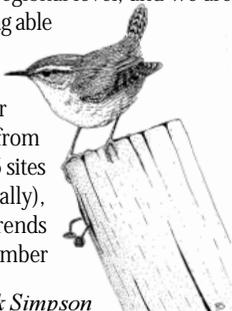
Harrison, N.M., Whitehouse, M.J., Prince, P.A. & Huin, N. (2000). What problems do local habitat changes represent for the Constant Effort Sites Scheme? *Ringling & Migration* **20**: 1-8.

LOCAL CES RESULTS

CES ringers occasionally contact us to ask about producing CES summaries or trends for their local area. Reporting on CES ringing in local bird reports, magazines and newspapers is a great way to promote the CES Scheme, and ringing in general, and we would encourage you to do so. Summaries of CES results can also provide important support for local conservation initiatives, by providing up-to-date information on the species breeding on a site.

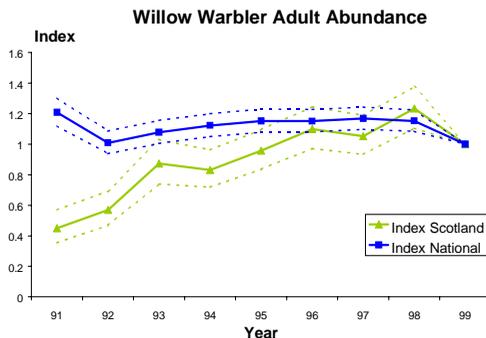
In theory, reporting on local CES results is a brilliant idea and should be simple. However, in practice, it has to be done with care, particularly as the number of individual sites contributing data is often very small. There is no problem with producing tables with the capture totals for each species and describing, qualitatively, the changing fortunes of the birds each year. It is more difficult, and potentially erroneous, to formally calculate between-year changes or longer-term trends without understanding how these are produced. For example, in producing long-term indices of abundance and productivity at the BTO, we have to carry out some complex data manipulations to take account of missed visits. The analyses also take into account 'site effects', so that a small number of sites with unusual patterns of change do not unduly affect the overall result. The study reported on page 6 gives a good example of why this is necessary, and why the overall changes reported from CES should be based on a satisfactory number of sites. In reality, habitat changes will occur at some CE sites each year but the more sites we have, the less these changes will influence the overall pattern of change observed in our bird populations.

We would like the number of CES sites to be sufficient to produce indices of abundance and productivity at country or regional level, and we are now some way towards being able to achieve this. We have recently produced some preliminary trends for Scotland. Using CES data from 1991 onwards (when 10-15 sites have been operated annually), we were able to produce trends in abundance for a small number



Artist Rik Simpson

of species. The best (in terms of precision) was for Willow Warbler because this is an abundant species in Scotland and large numbers are caught. For other species, such as Blue Tit, Blackcap and Wren, the confidence limits were large in the early 1990s but there was some improvement (confidence limits getting narrower) towards the end of the 1990s as more CE sites joined the scheme.



In many areas, the number of CES sites is still low, for example south-west England, Wales and Ireland. New CES sites in these areas, and in Scotland, will be of particular value in moving towards country and regional indices. If we find differences in the fortunes of the bird populations in different areas (as suggested in the graph for Willow Warbler above), this may provide clues as to the reasons for any adverse changes.

Scotland

Jim Cobb is kindly acting as co-ordinator for the CE sites in Scotland and produces an annual news sheet and summary tables. If you are thinking of starting a site in Scotland, or already operate a site but have not been in contact with Jim, please drop him a line at 3 Station Road, Kings Barns, Fife, KY16 8TB. If you didn't get a summary of the 2000 season please get in contact with him.

UNUSUAL CATCHES IN 2000

Aquatic Warbler – Dorset
 Melodious Warbler – Warwickshire
 Redwing (2) – Humberside
 Stock Dove – South Yorkshire



Artist D.A. Thewell

Nightjar – Dorset
 Rook – Hertfordshire
 Teal – Highland
 Mute Swan – Berkshire

SELECTED RETRAPS/CONTROLS

N851891 Willow Warbler	3	23.08.1999	Much Marcle CES, Heref & Worcs
	3	28.08.1999	Grouville Marsh, Jersey

An example of a rapid movement south-east.

7D7681 Chiffchaff	3J	20.08.1998	Barton Turf CES, Norfolk
	4	14.11.1999	El Alamillo, Sevilla, Spain

Perhaps this bird was wintering in Spain.

7W0909 Willow Warbler	4M	03.05.1995	Ferry Meadows CES, Cambs
	4	28.04.1996	"
	4	15.06.1997	"
	4	03.05.1998	"
	4	16.05.1999	"
	4	06.05.2000	"

A good age for a Willow Warbler.

K854479 Sedge Warbler	3	31.07.1999	Little Crosthwaite CES, Cumbria
	4	21.04.2000	Portland Bill, Dorset

An example of a bird caught on return migration – where did it go to?

P219152 Sedge Warbler	4	13.07.2000	Loch Spynie CES, Grampian
	4	01.08.2000	Oicklesham, Sussex

An example of an adult leaving the country on a fairly early date.

P341912 Sedge Warbler	3	19.07.2000	Rutland Water CES, Leics
	3	21.07.2000	Shotley, Suffolk

A rapid movement south-east, 153km in just 2 days.

N555225 Reed Warbler	3J	23.07.1999	Fen Drayton GP, Cambs
	3	28.08.1999	Icklesham, Sussex
	4	25.06.2000	Cow Lane CES, Cambs

An example of natal dispersal (short distance- 8km)

P340221 Sedge Warbler	3J	03.07.2000	Oxford Island CES, Armagh
	3	17.07.2000	Pollardstown Fen CES, Kildare

A movement of 147km in 14 days from one CES to another.

JK80517 Dunnock	3J	04.06.1993	RAF Woodvale CES, Merseyside
	4M	12.05.1996	"
	4M	18.05.1997	"
	4M	19.06.1998	"
	4M	08.06.2000	"

Not caught in 1994, 1995 or 1999 but remains a CES regular.

NEWS ITEMS

Swanwick

CES ringing featured strongly at the Ringing & Migration Conference last January, with a main session devoted to CES. Chris Wernham talked about the benefits of CES ringing to conservation and also delved in to the impacts of CES ringing on the social life and general well-being of its human participants! Maurice McNeely and Bill Taylor gave excellent presentations about their CE sites and hopefully persuaded the audience that you can operate a site by yourself and it can be enjoyable! At the next BTO Annual Ringers and Members' Conference (Swanwick, December 7-9th 2001) the first to bring ringers and members together, we will be having the usual CES Meeting and sup! So, this will be an excellent opportunity to show the excitement and value of CES ringing to interested BTO members that aren't (yet) ringers. Hope to see you all there!

Please send your data by the end of November!

Given that the next BTO Annual Conference will be in December, and we will be having the all important CES Meeting, we would like to receive as much data as possible by the end of November so that provisional results can be prepared for the meeting. Already a very large proportion of the data is received by this time, so it shouldn't involve too much extra work for most. Thanks again for the prompt submission of data – we pride ourselves in being the first scheme to report on the breeding season each year.

Artist Thelma Sykes

Mute Swan in mist net by Jan Legg

Our site is across a deep stream about 12ft wide. We access the ride via two permanent 1ft wide jetties with a portable plank spanning between. Our ringing station is off the reedbed and the 660ft-long mist-net ride is screened from view by willow scrub. My colleague Duncan Long went to check on his own and found two adult swans walking along the ride. When Duncan appeared one swan had its escape impeded by the mist-net and he was able to catch it. We were surprised to see Duncan emerge from the ride with a swan under his arm rather than the usual bird bags. I was particularly concerned as I had for the first time put up five brand new Ronaldsay super-fines in replacement of my old ones. As you can imagine I left immediately to check the damage. Fortunately there wasn't any damage and the other swan had disappeared.



Brood Patches

The systematic recording of the presence and absence of brood patches and their stage of development (B-RING Instruction Manual) might give us important information on the timing of breeding, and the length of the breeding season for multi-brooded species. Such information would be of great value to the BTO for checking on the seasonal coverage of some of our schemes (like nest recording) and for investigating applied questions (such as the potential effects of global climate change). During the 2001 breeding season, we will be asking all CES ringers to try recording this (simple) brood patch information in a standard way. Please give it a try!

MILESTONES

In 2000, four sites reached the milestone of contributing to CES for 20 years. Congratulations to all the ringers concerned and many thanks for all the hard work that they have put in. Here's to the next twenty years!??? The ringers from the four sites kindly agreed to tell us more. We hope it will inspire others to continue CES ringing or think about starting.

Llangorse Lake, Powys

Luckily my 'expression of interest' in the CES was well received from other group members, so began a regular commitment. Our site is small – a corner of an extensive garden (3 nets) and an area of willow scrub encroaching into grassland (4 nets). None are more than 150m from our ringing hut and visits can be easily operated by one person. Because of other interests among the group (*eg* nesting and pulling/ringing/family/work *etc*) visits have to be shared out to ensure full coverage. A good selection of garden/scrub species are caught with the occasional Reed or Sedge Warbler straying into our catching area. Over the years only one change has had to be made, when the farmer decided the scrub encroachment was too much, and we relocated the net lane. He has since allowed us to fence off the scrub area to prevent stock entry. We coppice a portion of the scrub annually (probably involving 5-6 person days) to maintain the vegetation structure as near constant as possible. If enthusiasm overcomes any member they can venture into nearby reed beds for more intensive ringing; in this way the integrity of the CES site is maintained, because we realise that the CES is probably some of the most important ringing that we do.

Jerry Lewis, Llangorse Ringing Group

Treswell Wood, Nottinghamshire - Ageing Dunnocks and ageing ringers

Ringing began in Treswell Wood in late 1972. Inspired by Bob Spencer's activities at Marsworth Reservoir, the location of every bird capture has been recorded since that time. By 1978, ringing had become established as a throughout-the-year constant effort operation with seven sites within the 47 ha of coppiced woodland, each being visited five times a year. In 1981 we joined the new BTO CES scheme.

The length of time for which the operation has been continued, coupled with the all-year work, means that we have created a tremendous bank of data on survival and local movements. Many of the fascinating life histories of individuals are known very well. After ringing 2314 Dunnocks and coping with 3024 recapture events over the years, practice should make perfect, but we still find problem individuals that have apparently read neither Svensson nor Jenni & Winkler. Some Robins are no better either, maintaining throughout their adult lives a rather obvious sudden contrast between large 'juvenile' rose thorn tips to the outer greater coverts and the small 'adult' tips to the inner coverts. Handling a high proportion of retraps and routinely examining retrap histories is good for the humility, if not for self-confidence. In addition to the mist-netting operation, we have about 120 nestboxes – all nests are recorded on nest record cards and all nestlings ringed. Other members of the Treswell Wood IPM group continue the CBC, which has been in operation since 1973. Sadly, the average age of our group members increases with time, and we would welcome help from ringers or non-ringers who have still not completed their first half century.

Chris du Feu & John McMeeking, TWIG

Kimpton Mill Disused Cress Beds, Hertfordshire

Once the River Kyme flowed through Kimpton to join the River Mimram at Kimpton Mill. All that remain now are the disused 19th century watercress beds – disused except in the sense that they have become Kimpton Mill Constant Effort Site. The site lays among arable farmland except for an adjacent field on which young heifers are put out each spring; there is a dairy farm a short distance away. Among the surrounding fields are a number of small, mainly deciduous woodlands used as game cover and, more recently, for timber production.

Ringling at the site started in the 1969 winter to catch Snipe as they flew in to feed in the evening. Soon birds of the autumn, a Pied Wagtail roost (sadly no longer extant) and Little Owls decoyed from trees in nearby hedgerows became other target species. At the end of 1977 a major ringling site elsewhere was lost, creating an opportunity to start regular Saturday morning ringling in 1978. Then, at the Ringers' Conference in 1981, plans to start a Ringling Index Pilot Scheme were put forward and Kimpton Mill seemed a good site from which to participate.

My site, number 17, started operation the following May. The first problems were encountered in 1982, when development started on part of site for the grazing of Hebridean sheep (nowadays there are North Ronaldsay too). This necessitated some reorganisation and the response from Mike Boddy, who was running the scheme at that time, was "You still seem to be catching as many birds, carry on". Not so from Will Peach when, towards the end of the 1990/92 drought, after a machine had been hired to clear the encroachment of the last fifteen years, a response of "Site 17 - How do you fancy site 317?" was obtained; such it remains today. The opportunity to make minor modifications to net sites was taken. One net ride was extended by 60' across the newly acquired open water only to have a Canada Goose fly through it; however it has subsequently accounted for 40% of Kingfisher handlings.

The site is quite small, currently using a total length of 300' of mist netting. Since 1985, the year from which data are stored in B-RING files and so are easily accessible, an annual mean of 59 adult 'New for Year' birds have been handled (range 32-91). For juvenile birds, the corresponding figures are 113 (44-213). Comparing numbers handled in 1992 and before with later years some similarities to national trends can be seen. For instance, catches of Willow Warbler adults have reduced to 30% (adults n=34) and 63% (juveniles n=75), Reed Bunting to about a third (with around 20 birds handled for both ages). Sedge Warblers have suffered an order more. They used to breed but now are rarely seen; in pre/early CES years they followed the curve for 'special habitats' presented in *Population Trends in British Breeding Birds* (Marchant *et al* 1990) quite closely. On the positive side, Blackcap and Whitethroat adult totals are up by over 200% (n=37 and 52) and juveniles over 100% (n=98 and 107).

As well as interest from birds trapped, the site has also produced some notable sightings; some of the first Hobbies to breed (4 young) in Hertfordshire during the recent expansion, a Glossy Ibis (subsequently demoted to Puna Ibis but a nice bird all the same), a singing Wryneck that did not descend low enough to get trapped, two Red Kite (50' above my head) and a Buzzard. But perhaps pride of place must be given to the 21st British record of Solitary Sandpiper.

Tom Kittle

Marsworth, Hertfordshire

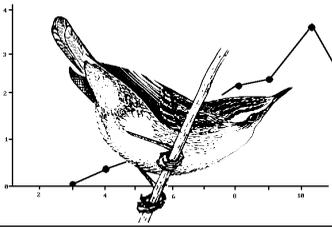
To most of the world, Marsworth is a village or a reservoir depending on whether you live there or visit it as birdwatcher or fisherman. However, to the select few, Marsworth is a reed bed where the late Bob Spencer developed CES methods and where now we try not to offend his ghost.

As with all ringling, our sessions swing from the mediocre to the great. Early sessions in May can see us drinking coffee between rounds whilst late July can see us struggling to keep to our 20 minute net round timing. But however busy we are, the reed bed and woodland are magical places in the early hours after dawn. The squeal of a Water Rail is almost always to be heard, whilst, in 1999, we could listen to the booming of a Bittern as it moved about the reed bed. Was it closer to the nets that last time? Well, not close enough. But then we consoled ourselves with the thought that we probably didn't have a ring size big enough for it anyway! The unexpected always gives a lift to events. I couldn't understand why someone was shaking the net before I had even tied it off - but the expletives were choked back when it was seen to be, not a clumsy trainee at fault, but a Tawny Owl swinging in the net!

The year 2000 ended somewhat lacking in good controls or unusual birds and, whilst we no doubt contributed 'good science' again last year, we all hope for that little bit of gilt on the ginger bread this year.

Stuart Downhill, Aylesbury Vale RG.

2000 also saw four sites reach 10 years of being operated as CE sites. Congratulations to Alan Hilton, Neil & Josie Murray, Wilf Simcox and Richard Wakeling. Let me know if I have missed anyone else please!



WIDER COUNTRYSIDE REPORT 2000

Information from CES ringing has been incorporated into the BTO's new *Breeding Birds in the Wider Countryside: their conservation status 2000* report produced under the BTO/JNCC Partnership. This is available on the BTO web site (<http://www.bto.org/birdtrends>) and is full of fascinating information. Up-to-date information from other BTO surveys, such as the Common Birds Census,

Breeding Bird Survey and Nest Record Scheme, is all brought together in this 'one-stop-shop' for information about the population status of our widespread breeding birds. With one page per species, it is easy to find all the key information about trends in population size and breeding performance as measured by BTO monitoring schemes (example of Treecreeper graph below). The report provides an overview of trends for the period 1966-1999. For each of the species monitored by CES, the report shows new 'smoothed' indices for numbers and productivity, our best summary yet of long-term changes in the bird populations monitored by the CES Scheme.



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CES News

Newsletter No. 14

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CES adult abundance 1983–1999 Treecreeper

