

Treecreeper Roosts 1957

Title

Treecreeper Roosts 1957-1959

Description and Summary of Results

The Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* roosts in holes and crannies in trees. By the 1950s depressions the size of a hen's egg were being found regularly in the soft spongy bark of Wellingtonias, and it was realised that these were roosting sites of Treecreepers which had been excavated by the birds themselves. However Wellingtonias were first introduced to the UK only in 1853 and it is probable that they do not become big enough for Treecreepers until they are at least 40 years old. So, the habit of using Wellingtonias could not really have started before about the 1890s. It was also thought that this deliberate excavation was unique to the species.

Available records suggested the habit had started in Scotland by 1905 (and as there were several roosts it probably actually started a little before this), in England by 1910 and in Ireland by 1923. From 1930 to 1940 it spread rapidly and appeared in new places, probably co-incident with the maturity of the many Wellingtonias planted between 1860 and 1890. However it was not clear how widespread it was. So the BTO aided an enquiry and request for information by J M D Mackenzie who had summarised the then known information about the habit in *Bird Study* and asked for all records for 1957.

Records were received from many people. All but five counties in England and Wales were covered, many several times, and instances were found in every one or from an adjoining one. In Scotland holes were reported as far north as Banff, Moray and Ross, and in Ireland there were specific records from Counties Antrim, Down and Offaly but it was thought that hollows occurred wherever there were Wellingtonias. They were being found in nearly all trees examined. Redwoods though were not often used. Recorded heights were four to 20 feet (1-6m) up, mostly six to 12 (2-4m), but higher ones could have been missed, and found all round the tree although mostly in the NW-NE-SE sector when the position was exposed. Coal Tits *Periparus ater* and Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* were also found using the hollows, perhaps after slightly enlarging them, but by the date of the report there had been no records of Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* doing so in Europe.

Methods of Data Capture

The organiser asked for any records of Treecreepers roosting in holes in Wellingtonia bark and for notes of where the 'depressions' were found. No formal form was used or systematic survey carried out although answers to the following questions were requested: 1) Are there any Wellingtonias with hollows? 2) Are any other trees used for roosting by hollowing out depressions in the bark? 3) Are there single trees or clumps of Wellingtonias not used? 4) Are any rotten trees used? 5) Where do Treecreepers roost if Wellingtonias are not present? 6) Where do Treecreepers roost on stormy nights when Wellingtonias are often deserted?

Purpose of Data Capture

To determine how widespread was the habit of Treecreepers roosting in the bark of Wellingtonia trees.

Geographic Coverage

All of Britain and Ireland.

Temporal Coverage

Records were received for 1957-1959.

Other Interested parties

The survey was organised and run by the BTO as a Trust-aided enquiry.

Organiser(s)

J M D Mackenzie

Current Staff Contact

archives@bto.org

Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Mackenzie, J.M.D. 1959. Roosting of Treecreepers. *Bird Study* 6: 8-14.

The original suggestion for the survey and which contains more information is:

Mackenzie, J.M.D. 1957. Treecreepers roosting in Wellingtonias. *Bird Study* 4: 94-97.

The survey was also noticed in *Bird Study* volume 4, issues for June and December 1957.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 folder of letters. All have been scanned.

Notes on Access and Use

Other information

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis