

Ringing Roundup 2001-2003

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This three-year period began badly with 2001 dominated by access restrictions as the fear of Foot & Mouth disease held the country in its grip. For ringers this meant many sites were unavailable for much of the season, and it was therefore unsurprising that the groups total for the year was 10,286. Indeed, it says a lot about the group's tenacity and its excellent relationships with local landowners that even this many birds were ringed. CES sites, decent, if reduced catches, of Hirundines, some excellent duck catches (170 birds of 4 species) all helped to keep numbers up. **Mike Martin** and others added good numbers of Mew Gull *Larus canus* pullus, whilst pullus ringers such as **Mike Steward** in forestry areas worked away steadily on owl pullus. **Henry Robb** did sterling work with his nestbox studies of Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, initially begun in 1972. **Bruce Lynch** and **Alan Barclay** were assisting the game conservancy with studies on Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella*, contributing to the high totals of that species.

In 2002 numbers bounced back with 16535 birds of 100 species ringed. Increased effort in the reedbeds as part of an SNH funded Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* monitoring project provided a significant element of this, with Bearded Tit catches at there highest ever. **Kelvin Thompson, Rob Campbell, Derek Whitton** worked hard at some of the more difficult or less productive sites to ensure good coverage of the reedbeds. Access difficulties at Seaside began to loom, and catches of Hirundines at evening roosts declined. These declines would have been even more noticeable if it wasn't for **Dave Arthur** and his team at Drum reedbeds, and the hard work of **David Oliver** at various Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* colonies in Fife.

Pete Ellis gained his C and got his Barry Mill ringing site off to a cracking start with the groups third ever Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*. At the other end of the territory, **Rob Campbell** was catching lots of Eurasian Siskins *Carduelis spinus* that proved very mobile, whilst **Derek Robertson** was organising mammoth finch trapping sessions at Craigluscar, well supported by up to 13 group members. **Neil Morrison** was 'blooded' at these sessions, when some kind soul gave him an irate Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major* to take out.

The mountain men (**Dave Arthur, Mike Nicoll, Pete Ellis, Stewart White**) continued to do great work with the Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus*, catching the highest ever total in the glens (181). In addition the team continued its work in Morocco on the wintering habits of this species, and in the process helping to forge links between local primary schools in Morocco and Barry. The group also supported **Steve and Joyce Moyes** work in attempting to establish a ringing scheme in Goa; not an easy task in the face of officialdom. Steve & Joyce, together with **Harry Bell** and a number of other group members also managed to find time to ring 15 Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* pulli, a record high for the reedbeds.

In 2003, the group recorded its highest ever total with 17968 new birds of 95 species ringed. In many ways these totals reflected the way the group has responded to changing priorities. Investment in new cannon netting equipment, generously

supported by SNH, saw increases in wildfowl catches, including a catch of 40 Greylag Goose *Anser anser* at Lintrathen. Much of the credit for the Lintrathen catches goes to **Alan Leitch** who did the reconnaissance and baiting of the site. New members such as **Garry Mortimer**, along with the likes of **Mark Cubitt**, **Clive Walton**, **Alan Lauder** and **Andy Coates** have all played a big part in the success of cannon netting by providing a dependable nucleus on which to organise a team. The other big shift in totals is farmland birds, with many group ringers putting increased effort and improved techniques into monitoring these species. Whoosh netting proved particularly effective, with **Alan Leitch** also putting this to good effect with big Brambling catches, well supported by various group members, notably **Torquil Grant** and **Rosemary Setchfield**.



Amongst our specialist projects the Morocco team had their most productive, if rather chilly and exhausting, winter visit, catching 54 Ring Ouzels in 7 days. The winter finch project involving **Derek Robertson**, **John Calladine** and **Kelvin Thompson** were fitting radio transmitters and colour dyeing birds to gain more detailed knowledge of bird movements. The groups raptor ringers (such as **Brad Yule**, **Ron Downing**, and **Mike Nicoll**) ringed slightly fewer raptors than in the past, this in part due to the increasing amount of time required to monitor populations under testing conditions over very large areas of ground. Pullus totals, generated through the years by nest finding stalwarts such as **Bruce Lynch**, **Mike Steward**, **Henry Robb**, **David Oliver** and more recently **Neil Morrison** gained further impetus when **Ben Herschell** got his pullus endorsement in time for the start of the 2003 season.

The group's efforts have been supported by a range of others, with the likes of **Jim Cobb**, **Mark Cubitt**, **Clive Walton**, **Alan Lauder** and **Andy Coates** making a huge contribution at training and cannon netting events.

As can be seen from the above it has been a busy three years with lots of contributions from all the group members and from other ringers outside the group. Much of this work could not have been achieved without the support of the many landowners who give us access to their land, and of the many people who buy bird food from the group to finance this work. Finally the group has received strong support from Scottish Natural Heritage in the past three years both financially and in terms of permissions to operate on SSSI's.