

New England Wood: nestbox report 2022

Introduction

During the nesting season of 2022 there were 25 nestboxes in New England Wood, all suitable for use by tits and nuthatches. These were all used and great tits and blue tits nested successfully. This report details the use of the nestboxes by the different species.

How many nestboxes were used and by which species?

There are 25 woodcrete boxes in the wood, all with small entrance holes making them suitable for blue tits, great tits, marsh tits and nuthatches. All 25 boxes were checked and cleaned out before the beginning of the 2022 nesting season. All the 25 nestboxes in the wood were positioned during the 2022 nesting season so as to allow safe and easy inspection without the use of a ladder. Of these 25 nestboxes, eight were used by great tits and 11 were used by blue tits. Five boxes were used by unknown tit species but were disturbed or abandoned before the tit species could be identified; one box was not used at all by birds but was used by wasps.

How many nesting attempts were successful?

The 25 nestboxes were inspected regularly throughout April, May and June. Egg-laying began in one nest on 13 April, a very similar date to that observed in the previous year. By 1 May some great tits and blue tits were sitting on clutches of up to 11 eggs. In total 16 nests successfully fledged at least some young in the first week of June, but fledging success seemed low with some nests only fledging one or two young and with no nest fledging more than six young. Eight nests were not successful for the following reasons: one entire brood of young was found dead at an early stage of development presumably due to starvation; four nests were found empty at various stages of development presumably due to predation by weasels or snakes; and three nests were built but no eggs were laid (possibly due to disturbance or one or both of the adults being predated).



Wasp nest built within one of the nestboxes; and a song thrush nest with four young.

Which other species nested in the wood in 2022?

Marsh tits were observed and heard in the wood throughout the season so this species is certainly breeding in the wood although nestbox use only occurs in some years. Early in April buzzards were observed on a nest and in the middle of May young jackdaws could be heard from a nest within a hollow tree. In the middle of May also a song thrush nest was discovered containing three eggs; this nest went on to fledge four young in the middle of June. The 12 wooden dormouse boxes that were installed in the wood in 2020 were inspected in October 2022; none were occupied by dormice although there was evidence of use by woodmice.

What are the plans for the 2023 nesting season?

All of the 25 available nestboxes have already been checked and cleaned in readiness for the 2023 nesting season; all of these can be inspected without the use of a ladder. Regular inspections of as many boxes as possible will be made throughout the nesting season. The dormouse boxes will also be inspected.

Report compiled by: Helen Crabtree, March 2023