

Ashleworth Ham CES - Thursday 03/05/2018

The weather finally broke, and the first CES visit was made on the first day of the period. The fields were still damp underfoot as we made our way across to the ringing site, but waders were no longer necessary. A lot more bird song was audible than last visit, but still not the “deafening” dawn chorus we would normally expect in May. With all the equipment in place the nets went up in the expected time, with the sun just appearing over the Cotswolds as net six went up. Some water still standing in the ditch for nets six and nine, gave some concern for net 7, but when we got there the water was just low enough for a careful wade across the ditch, so all nine nets were up and running.

Catching was steady throughout the morning, with all nets contributing, including net two which can be a bit slow!. 41 birds were caught in total, of which 42% were retraps, or adults returning to breed from previous years. This is a high proportion and bodes well for the breeding season albeit a late one. Neither Linnet nor Lesser Whitethroat are often retrapped so it was nice to get two retraps of



each. One of the Lesser Whitethroats had been ringed as an adult in 2015, so has covered a lot of miles in its journeys to and from Africa. Its interesting to note that lesser were heard before Whitethroat this year, possibly showing that the more easterly route taken by the lessers around the Mediterranean was a less stressful route this year than the westerly route around the other end of the Med. Taken by Whitethroats. Further evidence of their earlier arrival, was in the form of



the female lesser which had a well developed brood patch and had been egg laying, whereas none of the 8 whitethroats handled were this advanced in the breeding cycle.

14 species were handled, which is high for this time of year, again hopefully boding well for the season ahead. The final totals:

Species	New ringed	Re-trapped
Reed Bunting	1	2
Whiethroat	6	2
Redstart	3	0
Willow Warbler	1	3
Linnet	4	2
Sedge warbler	4	0
Dunnock	0	1
Blackbird	1	2
Blue Tit	0	2
Great Tit	1	0
Chiff Chaff	1	0
Robin	0	1
Lesser Whitethroat	1	1
Wren	1	1



One of the Reed Buntings caught was ringed as a juvenile male on the 11/10/2014, was caught again on 05/08/2015, but has not been seen since. 41 birds caught was the



fourth equal highest count for a first visit, but none of the years bettering this total went on to be the highest catches for the season, but also none of those years were near the bottom either. The Chiff Chaff caught was bird that had only recently been feeding in the Orange groves of the Mediterranean, as shown by the “pollen horn” on the bird. A Sticky blob of pollen holding the feathers just above the beak into a horn shape. This type of pollen is characteristic of orange flowers and is regularly seen on Chiff Chaffs and Blackcaps which have been gleaning insects from the orange flowers.



During the morning all our regular breeding birds were heard to be singing, and the first cuckoo was heard. This been the first year that one has not been heard until May. Two active carrion Crow nests are in the ringing site this year, both overlooking the fields in which Curlew try to breed. Skylarks were observed going to the ground regularly in two places, so perhaps the successful breeding of last year is going to be repeated. No less than 8 little Egrets were feeding in the scrape field along the edge of the remaining flood.