

Potteric Carr – Nestbox results 2011

The following is a brief report on the outcome of the various nestboxes located at Potteric Carr in 2011. Note that it does not include those nestboxes generally located in the Loversall Bank area, which are monitored by John Linton Smith.

A minimum of three visits per box was made over the breeding season.

A total of 574 eggs were laid in the boxes and resulted in a total of 484 fledglings. Note that these can be considered minimum numbers since I do not disturb sitting birds and it is therefore sometimes difficult to obtain an accurate count. Four species of birds nested, *viz.* Blue Tit, Great Tit, Tawny Owl and Jackdaw.

Potteric Carr nestbox results and comparison 2011/2010									
	Eggs		Pulli			Fledged			
	No.	Average per pair	No.	Average per pair	% of eggs	No.	Average per pair	% of eggs	% of pulli
2011	574	7.76	515	6.96	90	484	6.54	84	94
2010	507	7.24	466	6.66	92	452	6.46	89	97

It can be seen that the results for 2011 are an improvement over 2010 in terms of overall numbers. This is mainly due to the use of additional boxes installed in conjunction, and as part of, the Willow Tit breeding survey (24 fledglings from 3 boxes, but none were Willow Tits). Also, could be attributed to the dryer weather conditions during the breeding season. The survival rate of fledglings, however, shows a small fall in percentage terms from both the egg and pulli stages.

Looking at further data the success rate of open boxes was very poor. Although no records are shown at least three boxes had completed nests, but it was difficult to establish which species was involved, although indications were that they were Robin, Wren and perhaps, Song Thrush. The intention in 2012 is to re-site some of these nestboxes and also convert some to holed ones, where a good occupancy rate of existing holed ones exists. It is considered that the herb layer and under-storey in the woodlands, predominately nettle and creeping bramble, do not provide enough cover and medium height scrub habitat in the spring, so as to encourage the use of partly concealed open boxes.

All the 'treecreeper' boxes were used by Great or Blue Tits, not by Treecreepers as they did in 2009!

Great Tits took up all the communal House Sparrow nestboxes.

David Carroll and Susan Bird published a separate report through the Doncaster & District Ornithological Society covering the 2011 breeding Willow Tit survey and special nestboxes installed for them at Potteric Carr.

It was pleasing that there were four breeding pairs of Tawny Owl in the boxes, but disappointing that the fledgling success rate was low at just three young from 12 eggs.

A visit was made on the evening of 13th May 2011 whereby Karen McDiarmid ringed two owlets. No recovery news has been received of these birds by January 2012, so hopefully they remain alive and well.

All the nestbox records have been sent to the BTO Nest Records Scheme using their bespoke Integrated Population Monitoring Report (IPMR) database.

My thanks are offered to all the staff and volunteers whom helped during the monitoring of the nestboxes and they are most welcome to help in 2012.

R W Bird
January 2012