

Gunton Woodland Community Project

Bird & Bat Box Survey : October 2019

For comparison / correlation purposes, the findings of the two previous Bird & Bat Box Surveys, dated February 2018 and November 2018 have been detailed, in summary form herewith.

Survey Report Summary, dated February 2018

A previous survey, carried out under the control of B. Shimmield, was dated February 2018. Barry's summary results were as follows : (Figures quoted from Barry's summary sheets).

70 Bird boxes were inspected. Zero Bat boxes were inspected.

34 Bird boxes had nests. 2 had been used as a winter shelter. 21 were found to be empty. 7 were not checked and 5 were missing. 4 new boxes were installed and 2 boxes were repaired.

Survey Report Summary, dated November 2018

A survey, under the control of M.Thomas, was undertaken between 28 September and 08 November 2018. Barry's box location chart and log sheets were used as a reference. In summary, the results were as follows :

In total, 75 Bird box locations were inspected. 5 boxes were found to be missing. 36 boxes had nests. 36 boxes were found to be empty. Of the remaining three bird boxes, 1 was found to be part full of bird guano only, (used as shelter only?), one was half full of wood shavings (possibly used by mice ?) and one box indicated use by a solitary bee or similar species.

7 Bat box locations were inspected. 4 were found to be missing. The remaining three were found to be in poor condition. One box had been used by birds, a moss nest having been found inside.

Note 1 : the survey dated 01 November 2018, included the inspection of an additional 7 bird boxes, to those listed / charted by Barry. These boxes are located in the Moore's Lane area of the woodland and were not part of the initial GWCP remit. They now come under the auspices of GWCP and will be included in any future inspection surveys.

Note 2 : Further boxes, both bird and bat boxes, were installed during the survey dated 08 November 2018. 4 new bird boxes were installed, 3 boxes were repaired in-situ (new metal faceplates fitted) and 2 others were removed, repaired and then re-instated. One bird box was removed and not re-instated, a major repair being required. Three new bat boxes were also installed.

In summary, 75 Bird and 6 Bat Boxes are currently in-situ within the GWCP Woodland Area.

Survey Report Summary, dated October 2019

A survey, under the control of M.Thomas, was undertaken between 03 and 17 October 2019, over a period of 5 separate visits. The box location chart and log sheets created as a result of the November 2018 Survey were used as the baseline reference. In summary, the results were as follows :

In total, 78 Bird box locations were inspected. 4 boxes were not found. (Indeed, these boxes were never shown on the initial chart, thus their original locations are unknown). 44 boxes were noted to have had nests; 33 boxes were found to be empty. (1 x box was removed in 2018 and has yet to be

replaced). Five boxes required minor repairs; 2 boxes were completely replaced. Generally, box damage had been caused by other woodland predators, eg. squirrels, woodpeckers, magpies, jays etc.

In summary, 44 bird boxes were found to have been occupied during the breeding season. This equates to 56.4 % occupancy. The figure for the 2018 survey was 51.4% occupancy. Nest box occupancy has thus increased, which is a promising sign.

6 Bat box locations were inspected. 4 boxes were not found. (Indeed, these boxes were never shown on the initial chart, thus their original locations are unknown). Two of the six bat boxes had nest material in-situ. It is suspected that these boxes had been used by birds, rather than by bats.

Birds nests were noted, as in previous inspections, to be generally of moss/ feather construction, suggesting blue tit/great tit/coal tit occupancy, or similar bird species. (Abandoned / non-hatched eggs were found at 6 locations; typically 1 -2 eggs were recorded. Chick carcasses were found in 2 bird boxes.

This year, once the various bird boxes had been inspected and findings recorded, the bird boxes were cleared of nesting material and the boxes cleaned with a diluted (weak) bleach mix (1 part bleach to 10 parts water). This was undertaken following review of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) websites. Essentially, when the breeding season is over, old nesting material can be removed and the boxes cleaned out. Bird Protection Law (Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981), permits the cleaning out of nests between 01 September and 31 January. Old nests tend to harbour parasites and fleas and if not removed these remain and infect young birds of the next hatch.

It is recommended that for any future bird box installations, the proximity to existing boxes should be considered a priority, since placement of boxes too close together promotes aggressive behaviour between neighbours.

The chart, detailing the location of each box, within the woodland, has been updated as a result of the latest survey. The logsheets, detailing the findings at each box location, have also been updated. These documents should be consulted in conjunction with this report. The chart includes a key / legend as an aid to differentiating between bird and bat box locations. A North arrow has been added, for chart orientation.

In summary, 78 Bird and 6 Bat Boxes are currently in-situ within the GWCP Woodland Area.

Report date : 17 October 2019

Submitted by : M. Thomas