

Friends of The Emm Brook (FOTEB) : Use of Nest Boxes, 2018 (Year 12)

The nest boxes along two sections of the Emm ('Riverside Walk' and 'Emmbrook Walk') were taken down, checked and cleaned in January 2019, and the results with comments are shown in the table. This year with the help of a new contact keen on geocaching Mike Smith, the precise location of each box was recorded when they were checked (using the 'DDM format' that stands for Degrees Decimal Minutes). With the correct 'app' and the full coordinates, people should now be able to get to within 1 - 2 m of every box and FOTEB are very grateful to Mike for his help. Disappointingly, and for the first time, many nest boxes along Riverside Walk had been knocked off the trees, damaged or could not be found, presumably the work of vandals. This included the large (and expensive!) owl box along Riverside Walk, although fortunately Malcolm Dunmore found it in the river during the summer and rescued it undamaged. Two new ('small hole') boxes were purchased and a third one refurbished and were all put up along Emmbrook Walk that had been vandal-free.

Fewer (66 per cent) of the surviving boxes had been used. Most of the 'small hole' boxes intended for tits had been used, although one by nuthatches, but none of those designed to attract tree creepers had been. Grey wagtails probably used an 'open fronted' type positioned under a bridge along Emmbrook Walk and one of the spherical boxes in the same area designed for wrens had been used.

One or more skeletons and/or more than a single egg were found in 5 of the 11 tits' nests (maximum 6 skeletons). There is no obvious explanation for these higher than average mortality levels. The weather during the breeding season was not particularly inclement and had the parent birds had been killed (e.g. by predators) far more chick skeletons would probably have been found in the nests.

Nest Box Type	Used	Not used	Comments
Small hole boxes	11	2	5 nests with skeletons and/or more than 1 egg. 1 box used by nuthatches.
Open fronted	1	1	The used box installed under a bridge in Emmbrook Walk. Most probably used by grey wagtails because of its location.
Tree-creeper	0	3	
Wren	1	1	
Owl	1	0	The used box was along Emmbrook Walk. The box along Riverside walk found in the river during the summer was reinstalled in a safer location.
Total	14	7	66 per cent of the boxes used. (27 boxes found and checked in January 2018)

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FOTEB

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