

Friends of The Emm Brook (FOTEB) : Use of Nest Boxes, 2019 (Year 13)

The nest boxes along two sections of the Emm ('Riverside Walk' and 'Emmbrook Walk') were taken down, checked and cleaned in December 2019, and the results with comments are shown in the table. 2019 would seem to have been a successful breeding season for a number of species, particularly tits. 10 of the 12 boxes designed for these species had been used with most chicks apparently fledging successfully (few skeletons or unhatched eggs in the nests - see table).

More (73 compared with 66 per cent) of the boxes had been used in 2019 compared with 2018. Nuthatches had used the box with a 'small hole and spout' as they had done the previous year, and similarly, but regrettably none of those designed to attract tree creepers had been used. Wrens rather than grey wagtails probably used the 'open fronted' box positioned under a bridge along Emmbrook Walk because the nest was domed, more typical of wrens' nests. Both spherical boxes designed for wrens, however, had probably been used by rodents (species unknown), and indeed a very startled occupant was present when one box was examined!

Both owl boxes had been used, presumably by tawny owls. The boxes contained large amounts of material - leaves and twigs topped with an unpleasant mixture of droppings and old food. Three almost entire but flattened, pigeon skeletons were present in one nest and both contained unhatched eggs (2 or 4) which suggests that the birds attempted unsuccessfully to raise second broods.

After 13 years Eddie Napper is taking over the responsibility for monitoring these boxes and I wish him well. Mike Smith accompanied us again this year to 'fine tune' the GPS system he uses to locate the boxes, something I am sure Eddie will find invaluable and for which we are most grateful.

Nest Box Type	Used	Not used	Comments
Small hole boxes	10	2	1 with 2 skeletons and 1 egg; 3 other nests with a single skeleton (or just a skull).
Small hole with spout	1	0	Used by nuthatches, as it had been last year.
Open fronted	1	1	The used box installed under a bridge in Emmbrook Walk. Possibly used by wrens rather than grey wagtails as the nest was domed.
Tree-creeper	0	3	None used by the intended occupants
Wren	2		Both boxes probably used by rodents not wrens - with an unidentified occupant present in one box! The nest material left in place in both boxes.
Owl	2	0	Both boxes contained the characteristic combination of leaves and twigs topped by a compacted mixture of droppings and old food. 4 and 2 eggs respectively present.
Total	16	6	73 per cent of the boxes used, compared with 66 per cent in 2018

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