

Friends of The Emm Brook (FOTEB) : Use of Nest Boxes, 2013

The nest boxes along the Emm were taken down, checked and cleaned in December 2013, and three new boxes were put up. The results with comments are shown in the table.

As in previous seasons most nest boxes (c. 87 per cent) were used, mainly by tit species, probably blue, coal or great tits. Again they not only used the boxes with small, circular holes designed for them, but used two of the boxes designed to attract tree-creepers. Only one of the three used tree creeper boxes were used by this species. The owl box in Riverside Walk was used again, probably by tawny owls, so a similar box was installed in Emmbrook Walk.

Four tits' nests contained unhatched eggs and/or skeletons, and a mouse was again present in the box in which they have been present in previous years (so it was left undisturbed).

Rather fewer tits' nests contained 'casualties' this year, as was the case in Holt Copse, indicating that these species had a successful breeding season, possibly a reflection of the dry weather last spring and early summer.

Nest Box Type	Used	Not used	Comments
Small hole boxes	13	0	Eggs and/or skeletons present in 4 nests (8 skeletons in one), and a mouse in one box. The size, contents and the way the nests were constructed varied considerably, possibly because they were made by different species of tit. 2 new boxes installed along Emmbrook Walk..
Open fronted	1	2	2 boxes under bridges, intended to attract grey wagtails, 1 in a tree, the latter unused (as in most years). 1 nest under a bridge made mainly of leaves, but also contained a circular mass of moth cocoons (many hundred), probably of a species related to ermine moths. The unused box under a bridge had been flooded at one time, so re-positioned higher on a ledge. 1 box, also under another bridge, still to be checked.
Tree-creeper	3	1	1 used, almost certainly by tree creepers - nest simple and made mainly of grass; contained 1 egg. 2 boxes with more elaborate nests, mainly of moss, typical of tit species. 1 unused box hanging upside down, attached only by one fixing, so re-attached in a more secure way.
Wren	2	0	4 eggs in one nest, none in the other. Uncertain if used by wrens or other species e.g. tits.
Owl	1		Located in Riverside Walk and probably used by tawny owls. As in previous years it contained much grey material, probably a mixture of nesting material, droppings and uneaten food (plus a bit of eggshell). A new box (same design) put up in Emmbrook Walk
Total	20	3	(3 new boxes installed, plus 1 box still to check.)

Mike Saynor and Malcolm Dunmore

January 2014

FOTEB