

Friends of The Emm Brook (FOTEB) : Use of Nest Boxes, 2015 (Year 9)

The nest boxes along the Emm were taken down, checked and cleaned in February 2016 and the results with comments are shown in the table.

As in previous seasons most nest boxes (over 73 per cent) were used, mainly by tit species, probably blue, coal and/or great tits. Two of the four tree creeper boxes were used, but probably only one was used by the intended species; the other by tits. Nuthatches nested in one of the 'small-hole' boxes intended for tit species. (Tree creeper nests are made mainly of small twigs and grass, those of tit species are largely made of moss and synthetic material like wool and the 'fur' on tennis balls, and nuthatch nests consist mainly of wood chips and bark.)

Again both owl boxes were used, probably by tawny owls, in contrast to those in Holt Copse where only one box is used each year. The Copse is probably too small to accommodate more than one breeding pair, but the boxes along the Emm are sited well apart and so perhaps in different owl territories.

Five tits' nests contained one or more skeletons and/or more than one egg, a similar proportion to last year. Occasional eggs will be infertile but when many eggs or skeletons are found nests, an external cause such as bad weather (e.g. long periods of wet or cold) is the likely cause. When numerous eggs and/or skeletons are present in an occasional nest, however, it is more likely that something happened to one or both of the parent birds. As tits lay up to 12 or more eggs (and great tits have two generations in a year), 2015 was probably another highly successful breeding season for them.

Nest Box Type	Used	Not used	Comments
Small hole boxes	13	2	One box used by nuthatches. 5 boxes with one or more skeletons and/or 2 eggs or more
Open fronted	0	3	Neither box under bridges placed there to attract grey wagtails (although previously one was used in most years).
Tree-creeper	2	2	One box probably used by tits and contained 4 skeletons.
Wren	2	0	Both boxes used, but one probably by tits.
Owl	2	0	Both used probably by tawny owls. The nest contents were similar, a grey (revolting-looking!) mixture, probably of droppings and old food. Broken bits of white eggshell in one nest.
Total	19	7	73 per cent of the boxes used.