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# Wild Woodbury Bird Ringing Report

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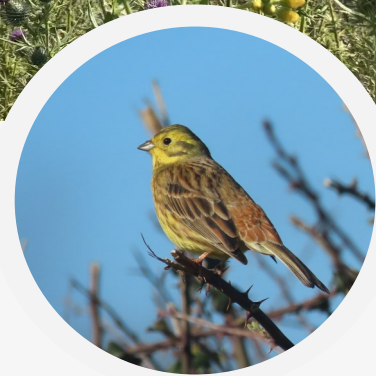
# Wild Woodbury

Wild Woodbury is a 420-acre rewilding site owned and managed by the Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT). DWT purchased the land in July 2021 and are restoring natural processes (vegetation growth, mixed grazing, water restoration) across the site to create a mosaic of habitats which will benefit biodiversity, the climate, and people.

The non-prescriptive and non-intensive nature of rewilding will lead to a complex and diverse vegetation structure, providing more habitats for species to colonise and breed, as well as supporting more species migrating through the site. The water restoration, which has created approximately 80-acres of ephemeral wetland, will further add to this complexity and continue to support wetland species throughout the year.

The introduction of cattle, ponies, and pigs has restored a more natural level of disturbance, creating bare ground for foraging and nesting for birds, and well as encouraging bare-ground specialist plants to grow. The wormer-free dung from these livestock has increased invertebrate diversity and abundance, further adding to the potential food for birds on site.

Previous management of the site had been a relatively intensive farming system, a mixture of arable crops and permanent pasture, that led to soil degradation and the draining of the land. Sitewide baseline surveying through the first year of DWT ownership showed the land as having poor ecological value. Two areas of set-aside that hadn't been farmed for several years held the most diversity and abundance across several species groups, and provided a look at what could develop across the site once natural

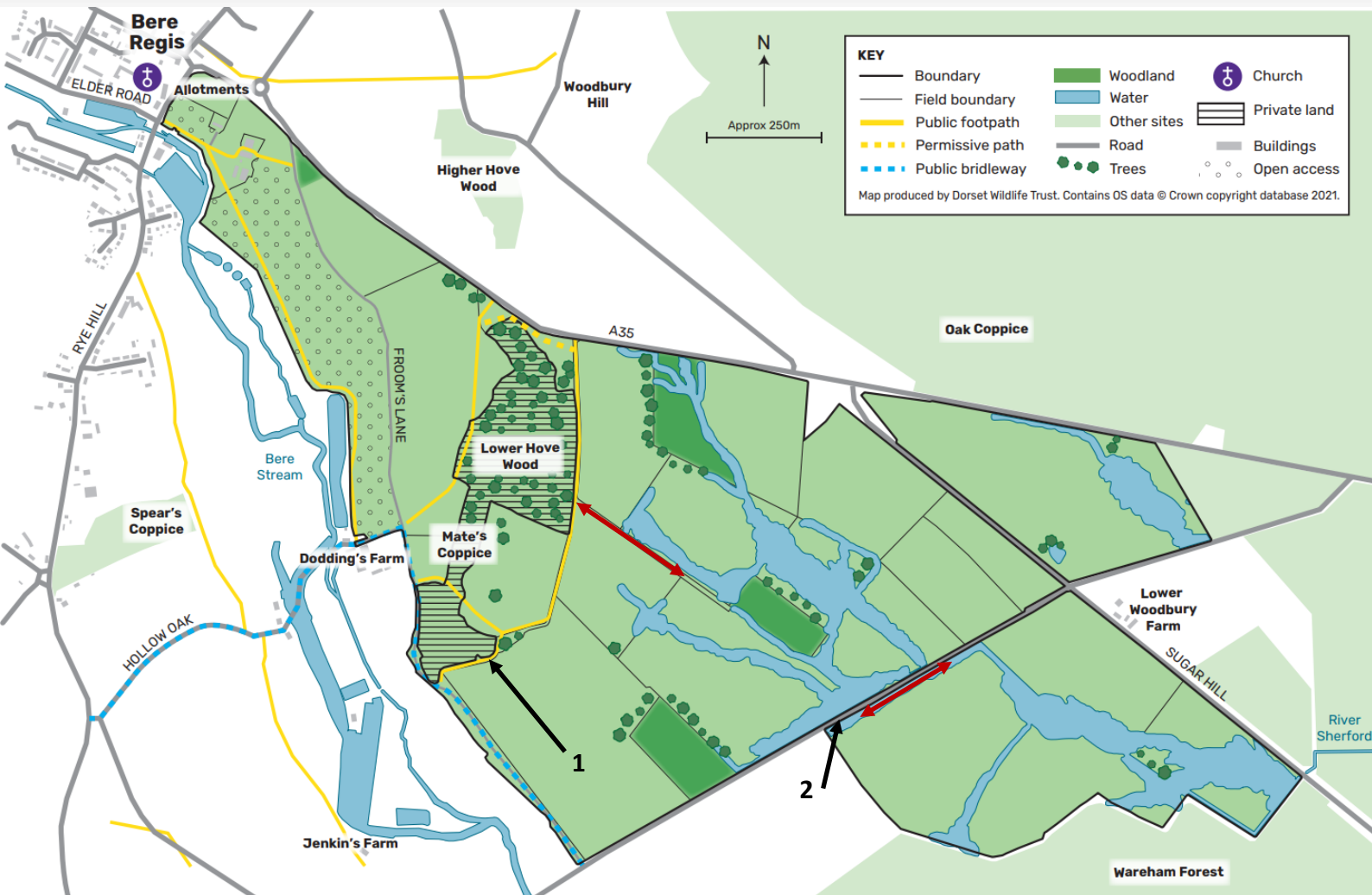


process lead management is in place.

DWT are continuously monitoring several groups to see how the species diversity and abundance changes over time, as the site rewilds. This includes regular bird surveys to monitor breeding populations, migrants, and overwintering birds. At the end of 2024, there have been 128 species of bird recorded on site, 28 are on the Red List for Birds of Conservation Concern, and 53 of which have been confirmed breeding on site. With the continuation of rewilding, it is vital that we continue to collect data and monitor species to see how the change in land management is effecting populations. To aid the understanding of how bird populations are changing and how the site is being used by birds throughout the year, Seb Elwood, Stour Ringing Group (SRG) member and Species Survival Manager at DWT, set up a couple of ringing rides with the help of his trainer Shaun Robson in 2022.

SRG started ringing on site in the Winter of 2021-2022 with a few dazzling sessions using thermal imagers, to see whether the site held potential for Woodcock, Snipe, Jack Snipe, and any other species that roost on the ground. The first mist netting sessions were held in May 2022, and have continued regularly throughout 2022, 2023, and 2024.

# Site Map



Wild Woodbury rewilding site. Main ringing rides denoted by red arrows, the one in the middle of the site being along a drongway, the south-east rides along a hedgerow. Main parking denoted by black arrows and numbers.

The 420-acres of Wild Woodbury stretches South-East from Bere Regis village until it reaches Forestry Commission land near Lower Woodbury. It is divided into 3 separate land parcels by roads, with the smallest block of 35-acres East of Sugar Hill Road, the medium sized block of 80-acres bordering Wareham Forest, and the remaining block of 305-acres. DWT do not own Lower Hove Wood, the large block of woodland in the centre of the site.

There is a public footpath that runs from Bere Regis and loops around the site, passing through several rewilding fields and near the top of the drongway rides. The footpath historically connected to a blind corner of the A35, and therefore was not well walked. DWT have connected this footpath off the road, to the North of Lower Hove Wood, and have seen an increase in use over the past two years. As Wild Woodbury becomes more well known, I expect

footfall to increase further. This won't impact ringing, as the footpath will only ever pass by the top of the rides, where the ringing table and ringers should be stationed.

Currently, access and permissions for ringing can be gained from SRG member Seb Elwood, who works for DWT. Were this not the case, SRG would have to let other site managers know of their plans to ring on the site prior to going.

Parking is along a bridleway for the drongway ride, and in a lay-by for the hedgerow ride. The bridleway is accessible off Lane End, the road that separates the largest and middle blocks. The lay-by limits the number of cars able to attend the southern ringing sessions to a maximum of 4. There are other access points should the ringing ride locations change in the future.

# Ringling Rides



## Drongway Rides

These rides run in between two lines of hedgerow and trees, dominated by bramble, hawthorn, blackthorn, and willow. Until the end of August 2024 we had been running five 18m nets in this area, four going along the ride, and one going across the ride through holes cut in the hedges. However, the height of the Willow was heavily impacting the catch rate in 3 of the nets, so new rides were cut along the drongway and two nets moved, along with the addition a one, 12m net, going perpendicular across the rides. The new net rides immediately increased catch rates, with sessions from September onwards being very productive and giving the largest session totals so far.

The nature of rewilding will be to let these hedges grow out and naturally get taller, which will make some areas unsuitable for ringing in the future. However, there will be some scope to keep certain areas cut to the height of nets, and therefore allowing ringing to continue.

We have ringed these rides throughout the whole year, with them proving particularly productive during Autumn migration. They have also been successful in catching thrushes during winter, and several resident species throughout the whole year.



## Hedgerow Rides

We have tended to ring the hedgerow rides mainly during the Winter months, placing nets along hedgerows to target wintering flocks of finches and buntings. The roadside hedges here will have to be cut for traffic management, and should therefore stay at a reasonable height for ringing going forward. The other hedges in these fields will be left to grow outwards and upwards, and will therefore become less suitable over time. However, the regeneration of scrub throughout the fields will present more opportunities to place nets once it gets established.

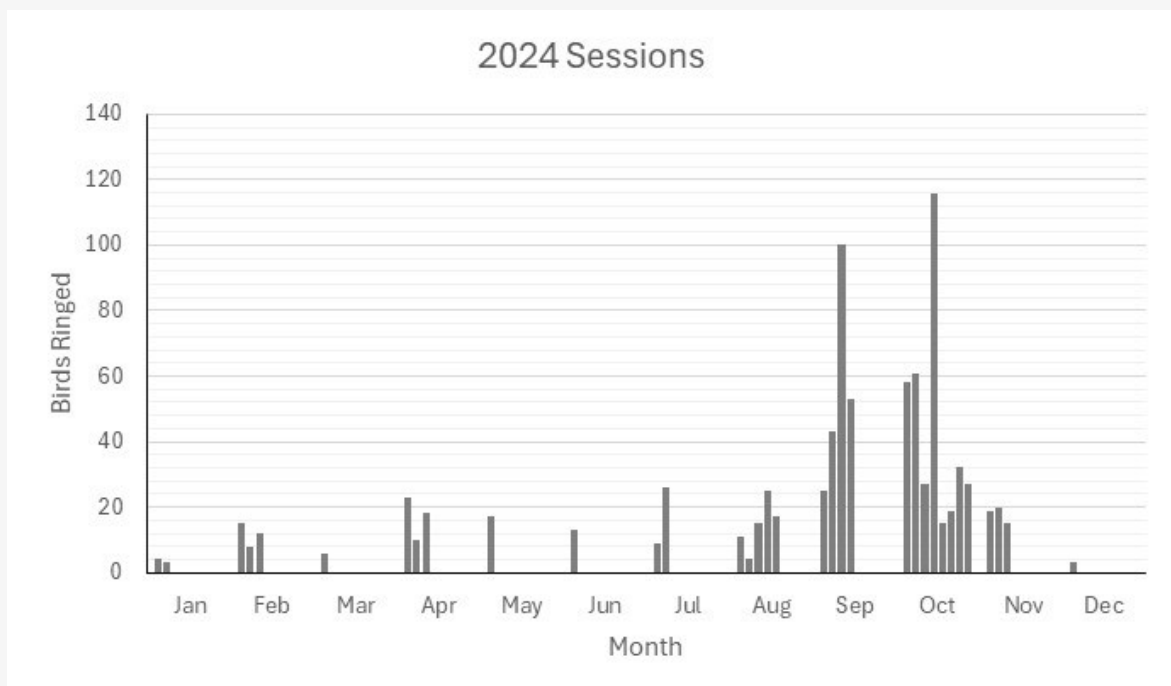
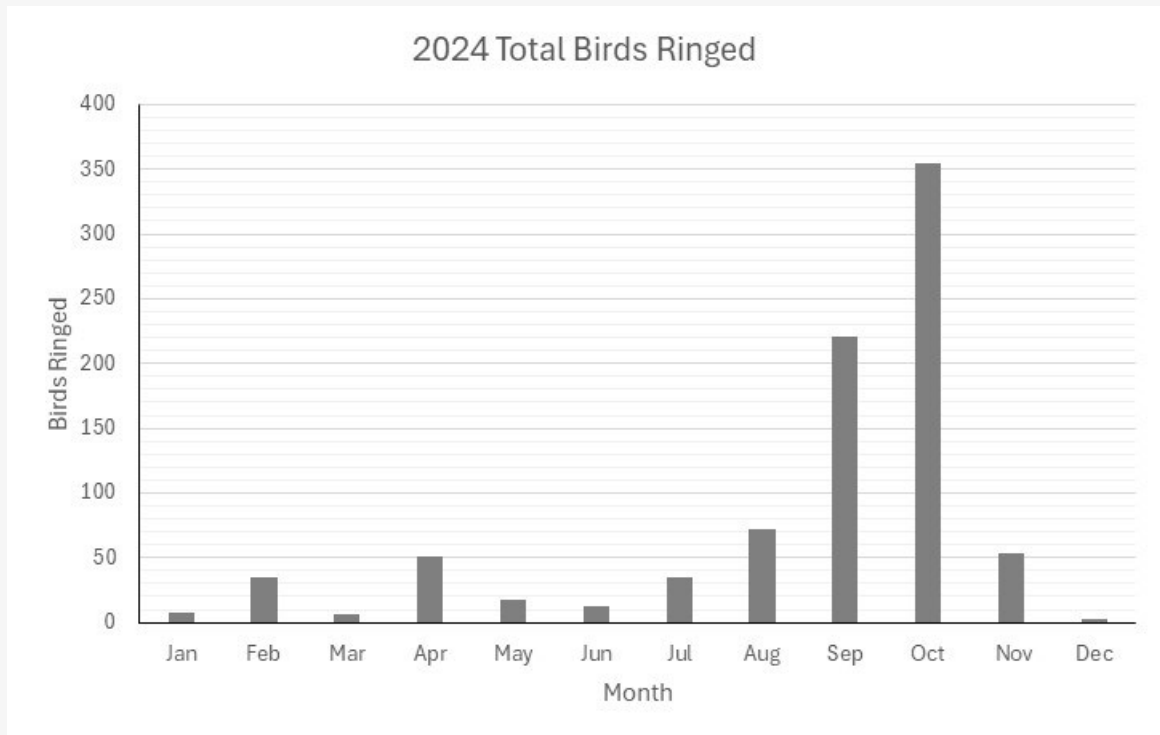
We have been running combinations of 5 nets along the hedges here, but there is potential to net much further along or in other locations in this field, and nets could be moved to where flocks are favoring on any given day. As scrub develops in the fields, a 2-panel net system may well prove productive in the field for larks, buntings, and finches.

These start of these rides are approximately 100m from the gateway by where you can park, allowing easy access and ringing at the car possible.

Ringling these rides in 2024 has been very limited, with most efforts concentrated on the drongway rides.

# 2024 Overview

2024 was the best year of ringing yet at Wild Woodbury for overall birds caught, number of sessions, and the highest number of birds in a session. 808 new birds were ringed and 69 birds were re-trapped, totaling 877 birds encountered for the year. There were 34 ringing sessions carried out, with at least one session in each month of the year, however, the majority of ringing took place from August to November, with 20 of the 34 sessions in this period. 702 out of the 877 birds were also caught during this period. For the first time at Woodbury we ringed 100 or more birds on a session in 2024, hitting 100 on the 13th September, and then 116 on the 11th October. Full details of each session can be explored on Trektellen, here: <https://www.trektellen.org/count/view/3395/20241213>.

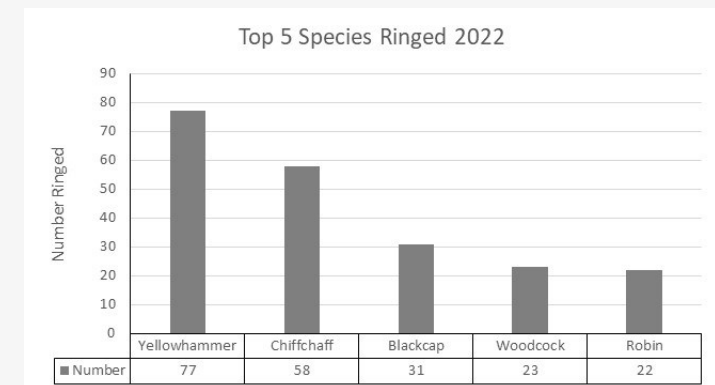
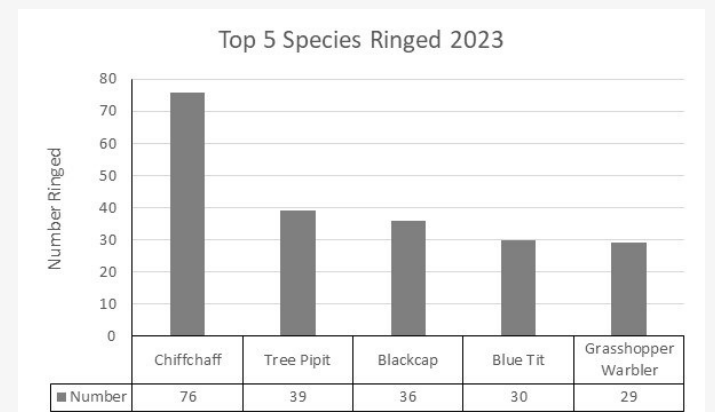
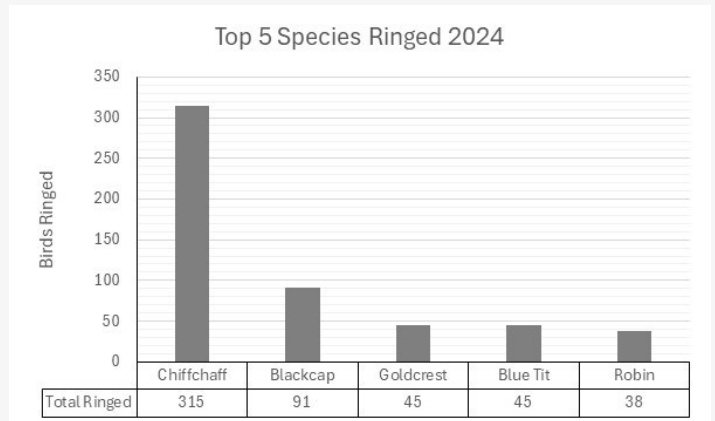


# Species Comparison

We caught 41 species in 2024, with 4 new species ringed on site - Wryneck, Lesser Whitethroat, Treecreeper, and Nuthatch. This brings the total number of species ringed since 2022 to 53. The 2024 total is three fewer than the 2023 total of 44, but above 35 species in 2022. Some surprising omissions this year were Meadow Pipit, Reed Bunting, and Fieldfare. There were plenty of Meadow Pipit on site, but seemingly not attracted by the tapes during Autumn. Reed Bunting suffered from us not ringing in the bottom field where we've previously caught the majority, and fewer sessions targeting thrushes was the likely cause for no Fieldfare. We had fewer sessions targeting specific species, such as dazzling for Jack Snipe and setting up early for Nightjar, so these species were also missed.

In hindsight, I should have moved the drongway nets at the beginning of Autumn, and not waited until September, as the tall willows definitely impacted the catch rate in three of the nets, and I think the reason why no Redstart were caught this year, and why our numbers of Grasshopper Warbler and Tree Pipit were down, especially as the latter were breeding in record numbers on site.

Keeping top spot for most ringed bird was Chiffchaff, way out front with 315. Blackcap moved up into second, with 91 ringed, followed by Goldcrest and Blue Tit, both on 45. Robin completes the top five with 38 ringed. Both Chiffchaff and Blackcap were expected to take their spots in the top, but the remaining three places have changed around over the last three years. It appears to have been a good year for crests on site, with 45 Goldcrest the most we've ringed in a year by far, whilst being supported by a record 11 Firecrest ringed too. Blue Tit and Robin making up the top 5 highlights the importance of the site for resident breeders, with both of these species successfully breeding in increasing numbers. All of these species migrate in their own way, showing the site has also been vital as a stopover for species feeding up before moving on, be it overseas or local movements.



# Species Highlights

This years top bird was undoubtedly a Wryneck, caught at 08:30 on the 12th September. Having created some new rides to avoid tall willows, this was the first session in the new location so hopes were high for a good session. A steady morning dominated by Chiffchaff and Blackcap was pushing the total for the morning towards 40 birds, when I wandered down towards the rides and saw the Wryneck in the top panel of one of the newly moved nets. A few expletives and a quick sprint later, I was at the bird and safely extracted it into a bag. An otherwise quiet round gave plenty of time to examine and process the bird - this individual being a first year bird, and get a couple of photos. I happened to be by myself at the session, but the site manager was nearby, so a quick phone call allowed him to come and see the bird too. Amazingly, there was a second Wryneck reported on site by a colleague whilst I was ringing this bird, sat on a fence post about 800m away as the crow flies. The second bird did not make its way into the nets on that morning, or any other morning. These were the first records of Wryneck for the site as a whole.

Other highlights of the year have included the first ringed Lesser Whitethroat, Nuthatch, and three Treecreeper. The former has been heard singing on several occasions but has not yet bred, the latter two common on site, but as we don't ring in the woodland, hadn't been ringed. The second Pied Flycatcher in as many years was lovely to see, and the sites second Jay welcome. Bizarrely, the Jay, Nuthatch, and Lesser Whitethroat all came on the same session and within the same hour.



Species top to bottom (R): Jay, Pied Flycatcher, Lesser Whitethroat, Wryneck.

Species top to bottom (L): Treecreeper, Nuthatch.

# Totals

Species (*new species to be ringed)	2022	2023	2024	Total
Sparrowhawk	0	2	1	3
Woodcock	31	6	2	39
Snipe	3	0	2	5
Jack Snipe	10	1	0	11
Stock Dove	0	1	0	1
Nightjar	0	1	0	1
Wryneck*	0	0	1	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	0	1	3	4
Kestrel	0	1	0	1
Skylark	17	3	1	21
Swallow	1	16	2	19
House Martin	0	15	4	19
Tree Pipit	15	39	10	64
Meadow Pipit	7	1	0	8
Wren	23	15	28	66
Duncock	15	6	15	36
Robin	22	20	52	94
Nightingale	0	1	0	1
Common Redstart	0	6	0	6
Stonechat	6	0	4	10
Blackbird	5	12	29	46
Ring Ouzel	0	1	0	1
Song Thrush	9	12	11	32
Redwing	6	16	23	45
Fieldfare	3	2	0	5
Cetti's Warbler	1	0	0	1
Grasshopper Warbler	5	29	17	51
Sedge Warbler	6	6	3	15
Reed Warbler	5	3	3	11
Lesser Whitethroat*	0	0	1	1
Common Whitethroat	5	14	6	25
Garden Warbler	0	2	2	4



# Totals Continued

Blackcap	31	35	95	161
Chiffchaff	58	76	320	454
Willow Warbler	19	25	9	53
Goldcrest	8	17	54	79
Firecrest	1	4	12	17
Pied Flycatcher	0	1	1	2
Long-tailed Tit	1	20	33	54
Coal Tit	0	1	2	3
Blue Tit	20	30	48	98
Great Tit	13	15	31	59
Nuthatch*	0	0	1	1
Treecreeper*	0	0	3	3
Jay	0	1	1	2
Chaffinch	1	1	7	9
Goldfinch	17	9	12	38
Linnet	7	0	5	12
Lesser Redpoll	0	8	1	9
Siskin	1	0	0	1
Bullfinch	2	7	16	25
Yellowhammer	77	9	6	92
Reed Bunting	17	1	0	18
	<b>454</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>1824</b>

# Controls and Recoveries

**Recovery** - A bird ringed at Wild Woodbury and recaptured at another location.

**Control** - A bird ringed at another location and recaptured at Wild Woodbury.

Any data gained from recapturing a bird is fed back into the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) and the relevant ringing person/group is notified that their bird has been caught elsewhere. Members of the public can also report any found rings e.g. from a dead bird found in the garden.

## Age codes in the table below explained:

1- Pullus in nest

3 - Hatched during the year in question.

4 - Hatched any year other than the year in question,  $\geq 1$ yr old.

5- Hatched in the previous year.

6 - Hatched the year before the year in question,  $\geq 2$ ys old.

## Recoveries 2024

Species and Ring Number	Age	Date and Time	Location	Time since first Ringed	Distance and Direction	Ringer/ Group
<b>Blackcap</b>						
Y449582	3	15th Aug 2023	Wild Woodbury, Dorset, UK.			
	5	4th & 12th May 2024	Martin Down, Hampshire, UK	263 & 271 Days	34km NE	S. Lane
<b>Chiffchaff</b>						
CLP539	3	10th October 2023	Wild Woodbury, Dorset, UK			
	4	1st May 2024	Church End, Cambridgeshire	204 Days	231km NE	
<b>Chiffchaff</b>						
CLP582	3	24th November 2023	Wild Woodbury, Dorset, UK			
	4	12th January 2024	Hanley Castle, Worcestershire	49 Days	146km N	
	5	24th January 2024	Hanley Castle, Worcestershire	61 Days	146km N	

# Controls and Recoveries

## Recoveries pre- 2024

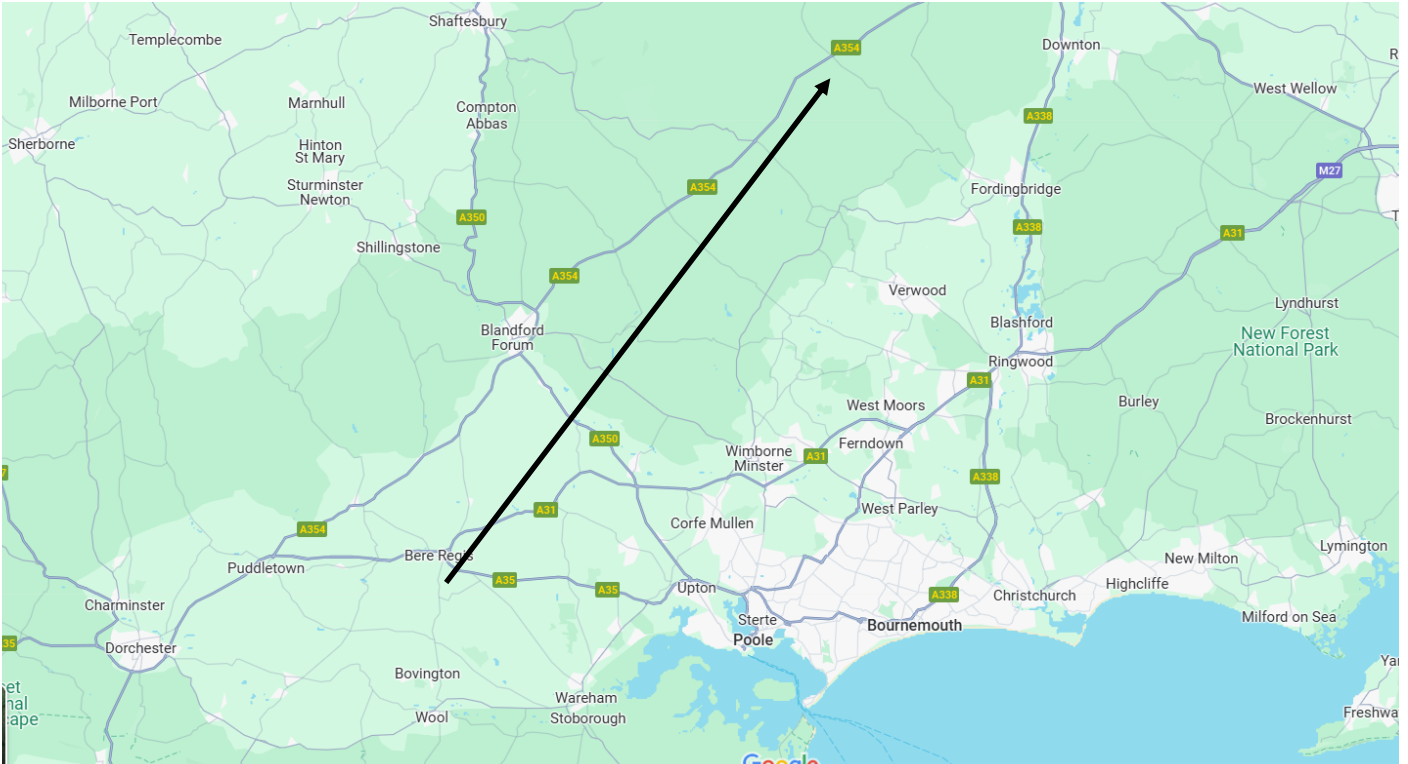
<b>Woodcock</b>						
EY18864	6	27th Jan 2022 21:45	Wild Woodbury, Dorset, UK			
	x	25th Apr 2022 -	Mashino, Leningrad O, Russia	88 Days	2298km ENE	N/A Shot
<b>Yellowhammer</b>						
TW94100	3	10th Sep 2022 11:00	Wild Woodbury, Dorset, UK			
	x	17th July 2023 -	Winterborne Kingston, Dorset, UK	310 Days	4km N	Killed by cat
<b>Sedge Warbler</b>						
AYR3718	3	26th Jul 2022 06:15	Wild Woodbury, Dorset, UK			
	4	16th Aug 2023 13:30	Nanjizal, Land's End, Cornwall, UK	386 Days	259km WSW	K A Wilson

## Controls 2024

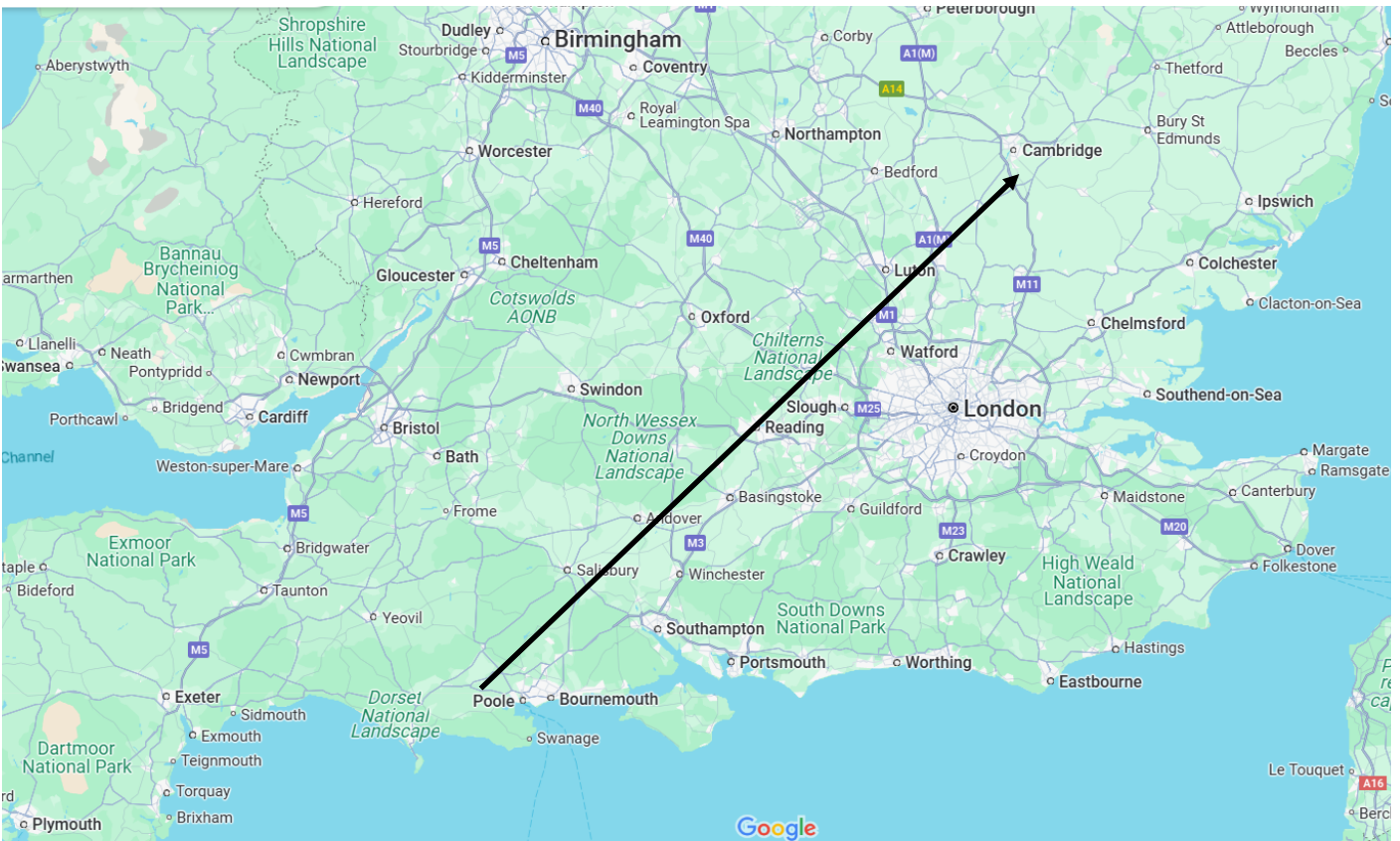
Species and Ring Number	Age	Date and Time	Location	Time since first Ringed	Distance and Direction	Ringer/ Group
<b>Tree Pipit</b>						
	1	19th June 2024	Staple Edge, Gloucestershire.			
BDB2380	3	30th Aug 2024	Wild Woodbury, Dorset, UK	72 Days	119km S	

Wild Woodbury gained its first control in 2024, a Tree Pipit originally ringed in Gloucestershire as a pullus, and then caught at Woodbury 72 days and 119km later. This is the first Tree Pipit control for Stour Ringing Group. There were also three more controls this year, with a Blackcap moving from Woodbury to Martin Down in Hampshire, where it looks to have bred; a Chiffchaff moving from Woodbury to Cambridgeshire, and another Chiffchaff moving from Woodbury to Worcestershire. Hopefully with the increased number of birds ringed in 2024, we should gain more recoveries moving through 2025 when our migratory species are coming back into the country.

# Controls and Recoveries 2024

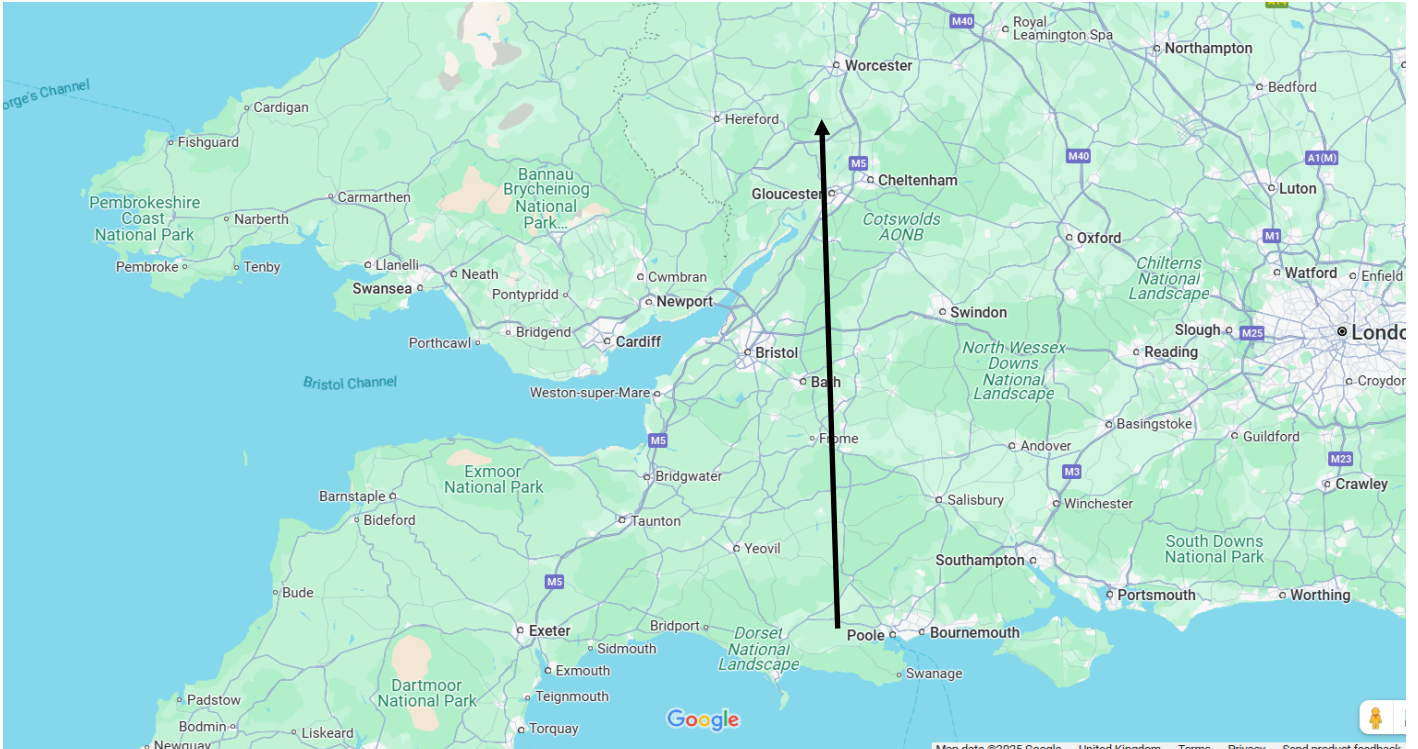


Blackcap recovery—Wild Woodbury to Martin Down, Hampshire. 34km, 263 & 271 days later.

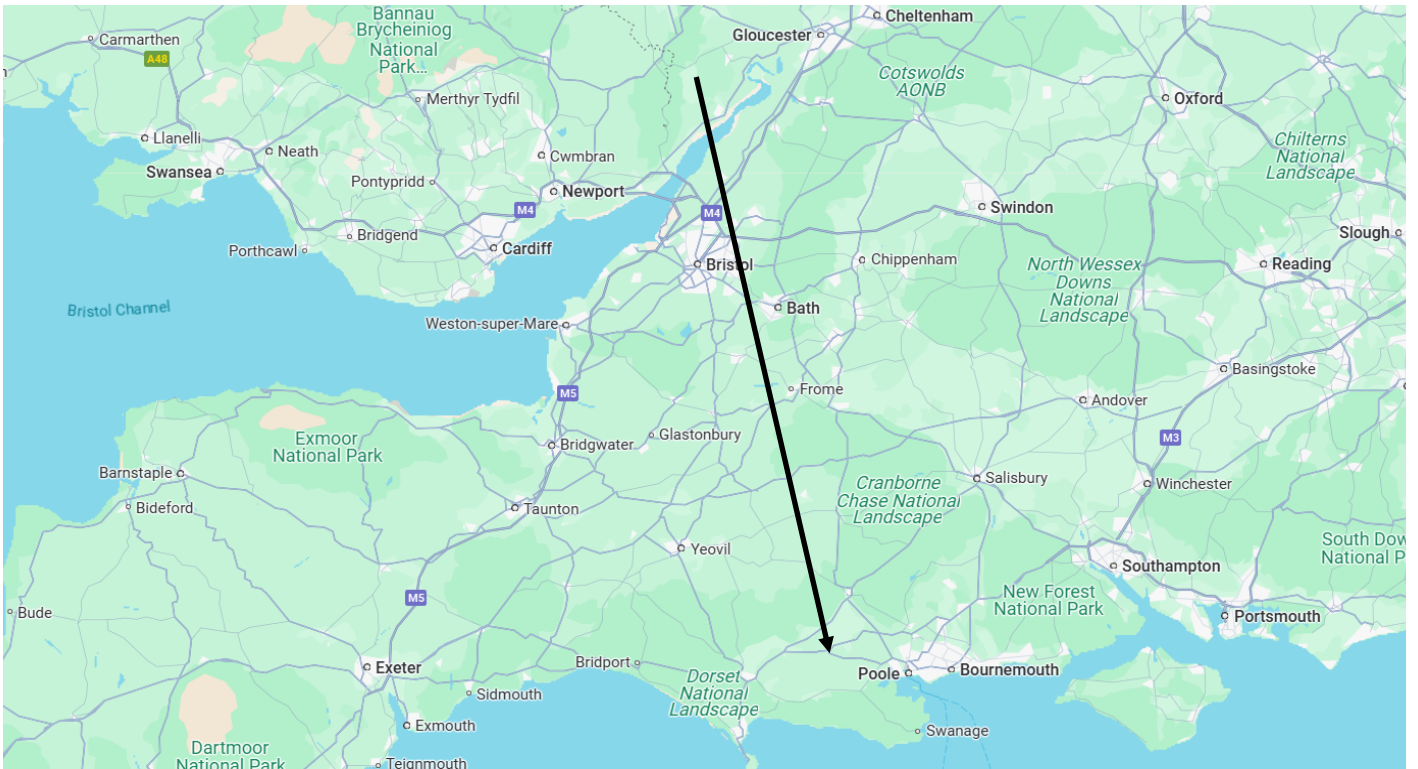


Chiffchaff recovery - Wild Woodbury to Cambridgeshire. 231km, 204 days later.

# Controls and Recoveries 2024



Chiffchaff recovery —Wild Woodbury to Hanley Castle, Worcestershire. 146km, 49 & 61 days later.



Tree Pipit Control - Staple Edge, Gloucestershire. 119km, 72 days later.

# Acknowledgements

Ringling is only possible thanks to permission from Dorset Wildlife Trust, who have been supportive in the ringling locations and openness to moving around site. Thank you to my trainer Shaun Robson, who has supported me through setting up this site, and to all SRG members who have attended sessions on site to help ring over the past year: Ian Lewis, Paul Morton, Alex Gould, Adam Day, Sam Lloyd, Aspen Stobart, Sam Ryde, Ben Coward. Also thanks to transporters of ringers and individuals who have helped scribe: Loy Stobart, Daisy Meadowcroft.