



ADOPT-a-BOX FINAL REPORT 2021

Dear Sponsor,

This has been another very strange year and we are sorry that it has not been possible to provide the usual guided walk and general access to the Nature Reserve but we hope that these reports have made up for this.

We would like to thank you for your continued support in spite of everything. This report will summarise the activity in the boxes and on the Island in this year's breeding season.

With the lockdown the number of boxes sponsored has gone up considerably this year from 61 to 89 in spite of the limited advertising in the town, but this is a very good number augmented by sponsors from Newmarket, Dagenham, Biggleswade and France. It will help greatly with the costs of bird food and general maintenance of the Island.

Outcome of the Nest boxes

Again this year there were 28 boxes which are sited round the Island where they can be seen from the paths. Over the winter we carried out a number of repairs to boxes and replaced a couple due to age and being attacked by fungus.

This year was a very difficult year for the birds with first the floods that lasted to the end of February which hampered Blue Tits and Great Tits while they were prospecting for nest sites and then the cold weather persisted when little grew then finally in May, when the breeding season for Great Tits and Blue Tits was almost over the vegetation took off and so did the insects and caterpillars which the birds depend on.



Box 20, Great Tits lined nest Box 14, Blue Tit leaving Blue Tit bathing!

In towns and gardens the Blue Tits and Great Tits gave their young a large amount of food from bird feeders when they should have been fed on caterpillars, many perished, so productivity was very low this year. The reason they were not successful is that the food has no moisture in it so the young become dehydrated. On the Island the number fledging being 28, down from 48 last year. It shows

how dependant they are on the food being available at the right time and having to predict when it will be at its peak. This year things went wrong for them. Early nesters suffered the most. The Great Tits did not fledge any from our boxes, one tried but failed.

Box No	Species	Eggs Laid	Young Hatched	Ringed	Young Fledged
Box 1	Blue Tit	Part built nest			deserted
Box 4	Blue Tit	7 eggs	7	3 out of 7	3 fledged
Box 6	Blue Tit	7 eggs	7	4 out of 5	4 fledged
Box 7	Blue Tit	10 eggs	8	7 out of 8	7 fledged
Box 9	Blue Tit	7 eggs	6	4 out of 4	4 Fledged
Box 10	Great Tit	Sitting on eggs	2		predated
Box 12	Blue Tit	7 eggs	2	2 out of 2	2 fledged
Box 13	Blue Tit	9 eggs	5	5 out of 5	5 fledged
Box 14	Blue Tit	Sitting on eggs		4 out of 4	4 fledged
Box 20	Blue Tit	8 eggs	0		predated
Box 22	Great Tit	Nest lined			deserted
Box 23	Field Mouse				
Box 26	Hornet nest				
Box 27	Blue Tit	8 eggs	7	6 out of 7	6 fledged

So far some of the young have been re-caught, during bird ringing, from boxes 13, 7 and 4. It is hoped more will be caught in the next few months.

With the very hot weather it is important to keep bird baths topped up, not so much for the birds to drink from but to bath. During the breeding season the birds have had their feathers from almost a year and due to hole-nesters having to squeeze through holes their feathers get damaged, one Blue Tit we caught had lost all the yellow from the area round its legs. In late July, August and early September the adults will replace all their feathers including all their flight feathers which they do two or three at a time. During this period they tend to be less visible as they are skulking in the undergrowth keeping out of the way of predators.



Box 20 Blue Tit Leaving



Box 9 Blue Tits Eggs



Box 6 Blue Tits eggs

Other species breeding on the Island

There has been mixed success this year. The ground feeding birds such as the Blackbirds and Robins have done very well with large numbers of young surviving. The Song Thrushes as well as Dunnocks

have also done well. Young Tree creepers and Great spotted Woodpeckers have been seen but there have been no Goldcrests. The Warblers do not seem to be having a good year either, some young Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs and a few Reed Warblers have been present but no Sedge Warblers or Willow Warblers.



Box 12 Blue Tit sitting



Box 13 Blue Tit sitting



Box 7 Blue Tits just ringed

Avian Health

We make no apologies for repeating this very important message

We still see a number of birds with various diseases, mainly mites causing lesions on their legs.

For the last four years the feeding stations have been regularly disinfected which does help to keep these diseases down, but it is important that ALL bird feeders AND nest boxes are similarly disinfected. There are various proprietary brands available at garden centres and other bird food outlets such as Ark-keins, Safe4 or Citrosan, all of which are low cost and safe to use for your own gardens, where there are pets.

Adopt-a-Box 2022

Our avian friends continue to value your support and very much hope that you will feel able to sponsor a "home" once again next year.

All the boxes will be serviced and cleaned and where necessary replaced, in the autumn and we will add some more protective plates to hopefully deter those inquisitive woodpeckers!

Again, thank you so much for your very generous support.

Nigel Sprowell and Julian Limentani, Friends

Photos by Nigel Sprowell, Julian Limentani and Jenny Allaway.



Young Blue Tit



Swans hatching



Juvenile Tree creeper



Juvenile Reed Bunting



Juvenile Chiffchaff



Juvenile Blackcap

