



## Shropshire Willow Tit Survey 2018 Newsletter

Dear Willow tit enthusiasts

This year marks the third year of this project and I am pleased to say that although I personally did not have much luck this year, there were still plenty of surveys and reports coming in.

### Survey Results

A total of 24 sites were surveyed with playback during 2018. This resulted in 10 successful results and 14 failures. I also received casual records of willow tit at a further 3 sites bringing the total number of sites to 13 this year. A few of these were resurveys, but most were new. There was again a good spread of survey locations all the way from Whixall and Wem Moss in the north of the county, down to Stokesay in the south. Records also came from woodlands near Eardington in the east of the county and also near Colemere up in the north-west.

I also received a few records of marsh tit from some sites where willow tit were not found. This is also valuable and these, along with all the willow tit records, will be sent to the County Bird Recorder.

### Site Inventory

I have begun work on compiling a site inventory and so far I have worked my way through all the surveys of the past three years and come up with a list of 34 sites. These sites range in size tremendously from the Mortimer Forest which sprawls over many square kilometres on the Shropshire/Hereford border, to small woodland blocks no more than a few hectares in size. For this reason I am also working out how many square kilometres/tetrads these sites cover to give us an idea of how large the willow tit range is within the county. So far the total has reached 44 tetrads and 71 square kilometres. I haven't finished yet and I need to add new sites from 2018. Once I have done that, I have a copy of all the individual sightings from the county records which I need to work through and identify any other sites, so more to do yet.

Once, this is finished I will produce an online map to show the identified range of willow tit through the county.

### Further studies

I continued my search for willow tit at my local site at Haughmond Hill during 2018. Sadly, despite using playback and an extensive search for more nests, I came up short. In fact, I did not get a single sighting which was very disappointing. I don't believe that they have disappeared from the site, but this just further illustrates how difficult they can be to find.

I had slightly more luck in my work time with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust where I organised some playback surveys in some of the Trust reserves, with some success. I also heard a couple of singing birds here and there. I also appeared on Midlands Today to talk about willow tit, which was fun, though obviously the birds did not appear on demand, as to be expected!

Sam King has been studying willow tit at Whixall Moss, and managed to locate an active nest site this year, which makes up for my failure a little bit. He is also planning to carry out a habitat study across a variety of sites using the data collected by the project so far. I am delighted that he is doing this and I am trying to support him as much as possible with this.

One final thing is that there is a National willow tit survey currently in preparation by the RSPB. I have been in contact with the survey organiser and it looks like we should be able to incorporate a lot of the data already collected into this, which is great. I will keep you updated when I find out more about this and hopefully we can do our part to support this.

**Thank you once more for all your help this year. All of the data collected is crucial to help us understand more about willow tit and how they are faring here in the face of such a serious national decline.**

**Kind regards from Jonathan Groom, BTO Regional Representative for Shropshire.**