

MANDARINS

2015 appears to have been an extraordinary year. We had 15 boxes used by Mandarin and they laid 349 eggs.

Of these nearly all eggs failed to develop and we believe only one clutch of 17 (N05) actually hatched and even that is uncertain. One nest still had 10 warm eggs at the end of June – hopefully they will hatch but this is late for Mandarins. One nest-box accumulated 52 eggs.

As well as dumping by multiple Mandarins there is competition between the species that use our large nest-boxes and a particularly extreme case is given below.

C09 - new box in 2015, shelf, hole in door c 15ft above ground NE facing, near reservoir

Visit history - 17.3.2015 flushed Tawny Owl 7.4 empty 14-21.4 Mandarin 15 cold eggs 28.4 MN flew off 20 eggs 5.5 MN eggs not counted 12.5 MN c19 eggs + Stock Dove 2 eggs 19.5 MN eggs cold

On 23.5 decided that the nest had been deserted and worth clearing for re-use by Stock Doves which carry on breeding till October.

All eggs were taken out carefully and measured with vernier callipers, after that broken by Ted Kommer to see if any development of embryo – none developed

Egg number	Length mm	Breadth mm	L/B	L x B
1	56.2	42.1	1.33	2366
2	54.8	40.4	1.36	2214
3	54.4	40.7	1.34	2215
4	53.8	36.6	1.47	1969
5	54.4	42.3	1.29	2301
6	54.8	40.4	1.36	2213
7	54.2	42.5	1.27	2303
8	52.0	40.2	1.29	2090
9	52.3	41.0	1.28	2144
10	54.0	40.9	1.32	2208
11*	45.6	39.4	1.16	1796
12	55.8	40.7	1.37	2271
13	53.7	40.1	1.34	2153
14	53.1	40.2	1.32	2134
15	53.2	39.3	1.35	2090
16	54.0	40.9	1.32	2208
17	53.3	40.5	1.32	2159
18	52.9	40.5	1.31	2142
19	53.1	40.6	1.31	2155
20	54.7	37.6	1.46	2056
21	55.6	39.9	1.39	2218
SD1	36.7	27.4		

MN means 54.0mm (s=1.12) 40.4mm (s=1.37) L/B 1.34 L x B 2181

Egg 11 is consistent with a Tawny Owl size and is clearly not Mandarin.

The 2 Stock Dove eggs had slipped down between the bigger eggs so the SD could not incubate (stupid to lay on such a base).

It is judged by me (a statistician may do it better) that 12 eggs with width c40mm were laid by one MN. 6 eggs with breadth >40.8mm were another and 2 around 37mm were a third MN. This is also consistent with 15 eggs appearing between the 7th and 14th of April (3 different birds- laying 2+6+7) and the bird that laid either 6 or 7 laying another 5 the next week. None of the eggs had any embryo development but had good looking yolk.

As can be seen in the picture, egg 11 (bottom left) when among the others, partially covered with down and being inspected while on top of a ladder is not very obviously different. When laid on a bench it is a different shape and shade of pale.

The 2 left hand MN eggs are numbers 1 and 12 which are the 2 longest eggs and they also appeared to me to be greyer. Probably insignificant ?! (Nest in G05 on 26.5.15 with 13 eggs also had one that appeared greyer)



On 3 June we measured the last 3 eggs in W15 as
56.1 41.2 1.36 2311 55.7 40.8 1.36 2272 55.2 40.7 1.36 2246
Next year may do more on variability from bird to bird.

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