

## Nest box inspection (30th November 2017)

At the end of the breeding season we check the nest boxes in the woods – thirteen in all – to see whether they have been used, and remove the old nests, which helps to get rid of fleas and mites for future occupants. Some boxes are made of “woodcrete” and Dave M’s are wooden ones. Sadly, we already knew that two had been vandalised; we checked eight of the rest during the action day on 30<sup>th</sup> November; three remain to be looked at. Seven of the boxes had been occupied, beautifully constructed with moss and feathers and flattened nest cups, indicating that youngsters had been active. A couple had two or three eggs left (shown in the photo, removed from the nest material) and the eighth contained a small piece of moss and a dropping but no nest. The occupants had been Blue Tits and Great Tits; sometimes they had been seen going in with food, and exiting with droppings (they like a clean nest).



## Clearing out the nest boxes (March 2016)

After the last work party John Creasey and I visited the 4 nest boxes along the main ride, to empty out the old nests before the new inhabitants began to build. All four had been used. Two of them had a couple of unhatched eggs remaining, and although it is difficult to be certain, the slight size difference (about a millimetre!) suggests that one had been used by Blue Tits and the other by Great Tits. The photos show an amazingly bright lining – it isn’t moss; it’s tennis ball fluff! Dogs lose their playthings and the birds make use of this artificial insulation. The fourth nest puzzled us; instead of moss and small twigs and feathers, it had damp leaves and – a Hazelnut! The nut hadn’t been gnawed so we couldn’t check the tooth pattern but the occupant had probably been a Wood Mouse.



Pictures by John Creasey