

# NEST BOX CLEANING REPORT NOVEMBER 2012

## Observations

- All the nest boxes in City gardens were cleaned 15/16th November 2012. In total there are 48 nest boxes; 14 (29%) had been used during the 2012 nesting season in comparison to 35% in the 2011 nesting season.



- The majority of nests were those of blue tits (69%) with the remainder being those of great tits and one possible coal tit. No nests had been built in sparrow or open-type 'robin' boxes. These results are similar to those for the 2011 nesting season. (See tables 1 and 2 below.)

*Blue tit nest Bunhill with nine abandoned eggs*

- Six of the nests had either a number of abandoned eggs or bodies of nearly fledged chicks. This compares with five such nests in 2011. This means that cleaning is vitally important. It is probably too early to speculate as to whether this is normal or the result of adverse conditions - but it would seem that both 2011 and 2012 were characterised by a warm early spring and then cold, wet weather in late spring and summer which may explain the number of casualties.



- Five nest boxes had fallen down over the summer. Four nest boxes were damaged and removed to the depot for repair. One nest box was relocated to another garden.
- Cleaning took 24 man-hours of gardener time spread over 2 days plus 20 hours of volunteer time to take notes and photographs. The cleaning took longer than expected because some boxes had to be removed from the tree to be cleaned. Many of the boxes were

extremely difficult to open and were not easy to clean. Other boxes that had fallen down had to be reinstalled.

## Recommendations

- **More boxes** - 13 gardens have nest boxes. There is considerable scope for more gardens to have nest boxes. The location of more sparrow terraces and open boxes needs to be carefully considered - as it is possible that the current location of existing boxes of this type may not be optimal.
- New boxes should be low maintenance and easy to clean and install.
- **Sponsorship** - the City is considering sponsorship of nest boxes, which would enable a step-change in the numbers of boxes. This initiative is definitely worth pursuing.
- **Webcam** - consideration should be given to setting up a webcam in a couple of boxes. A sponsor might also be found for this.
- **Educational opportunities** - selection of recovered nests could be displayed for educational purposes.
- Cleaning the nests in Bunhill could be part of an educational session for children.
- **National Nest Box Week** (14-21 February) although a little late for early nesting birds in the City, this week could be used as a focus for activities such as making nest boxes - or if sponsorship of boxes is forthcoming - celebrating the installation of more boxes.
- **Interpretation boards** - consideration should be given to placing interpretation boards in some City gardens showing the type of birds that nest and feed.
- **Bird feeders and birdbaths** - the positive benefits of bird feeding have been seen in the improvement in the results of the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. There are many gardens that would benefit from feeders and baths - provided that they are kept filled and clean. Again it is important that the feeders are easy to clean and squirrel and pigeon proof.

**Table 1: Nest box results 2012**

	No. boxes	No. nests	Type of nest		
			blue tit	great tit	coal tit
Finsbury Circus	2	2	1		1
Cleary Garden	2	1	1		
St Botolph without Bishopsgate	2	1	1		
St Mary Aldermanbury	2	2	1	1	
St Paul's Cathedral	6	1	1		
Bunhill Fields	5	2	2		
Fann Street Wildlife Garden	5	0			
Bernard Morgan House	1	0			
Postman's Park	3	1	1		
Christchurch Greyfriars	13	0			
St Dunstan's in the East	2	0			
Byward Street	1	0			
Thomas More garden Barbican	3	3		3	
Speed House garden Barbican	1	1	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>% occupied</b>	<b>29</b>				
<b>% of total nests</b>			<b>64</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7</b>

**Table 2: Nest box results 2011**

	No. boxes	No. nests	Type of nest		
			blue tit	great tit	coal tit
Finsbury Circus	3	2		1	1
Cleary Garden	2	1	1		
St Botolph without Bishopsgate	2	1	1		
St Mary Aldermanbury	2	2	1	1	
St Paul's Cathedral	6	1	1		
Bunhill Fields	7	4	4		
Fann Street Wildlife Garden	5	1	1		
Bernard Morgan House	1	1		1	
Postman's Park	3	1		1	
Christchurch Greyfriars	13	0			
St Dunstan's in the East	3	2	2		
Byward Street	1	0			
Thomas More garden Barbican	1	1		1	
Speed House garden Barbican	2	1		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>% occupied</b>	<b>35</b>				
<b>% of total nests</b>			<b>61</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6</b>