

## Mixed broods of Blue Tits and Great Tits in Langdale Wood, Malvern (S07943)

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In 2007 I wrote a short note for the journal *British Birds*, reporting instances of mixed broods of Blue Tits *Cyanistes caeruleus* and Great Tits *Parus major* in nestboxes in Langdale Wood (Holmes 2007). Between 1996 and 2006 I recorded six instances of this, almost one every two years. On three occasions there was a single individual of one species in a full brood of the other, probably as a result of ‘egg dumping’. The Sialis website specifically mentions this behaviour as “not uncommon” in Chickadees’ (tits to us). The other three occurrences were of genuinely mixed broods with more than one individual of each species present. Of especial interest was that of all the boxes available, two boxes were involved twice.

Publishing this note clearly drew the two species’ attention to this perverse practice, and no such mixed broods were recorded between 2007 and 2022, a gap of 16 years. So I was surprised to find one such mixed brood this year (2023), and even more surprised to find a second one! One box had eight Blue Tit young and five Great Tit young, all of which apparently fledged; a Blue Tit was recorded incubating. The other had a Great Tit incubating, with six Great Tit and two Blue Tit nestlings; again all apparently fledged – three of the Great Tits from this box have been re-trapped subsequently within the wood.

It will be interesting to see if I have to wait another 16 years for the next mixed brood, but I suspect I’ll have hung up my ringing pliers well before then.

### References

Holmes, P.R 2007. Mixed Great Tit/Blue Tit broods in nestboxes in south Worcestershire. *British Birds* 100:445.

Sialis website – Available at:

<https://www.sialis.org/eggdumping.htm>. [Accessed 04.11.23]