**Saltburn Golf Club nest box report.**

A very difficult year for us all. I took over the responsibility of the nest boxes around the course after the sad passing of the club’s former member Geoff Myers.

Over the winter I replaced and repaired the existing small bird boxes. There are 30 in total. I also installed a new tawny owl box making 2 around the periphery of the course.

I had plans to check and record for the British Trust in Ornithology (BTO) the contents of the boxes and also report back for your members.

Covid 19 and the lockdown restrictions on travel prevented me from doing an early comprehensive check. By the time lockdown was lifted it was half way through the small bird nesting season. Due to this I can not give exact numbers of how many eggs and chicks there were.

I can though, say that it was a very successful season.

The clubhouse end of the course has 17 boxes, 7 were occupied by blue tits, 5 by great tits and 4 by tree sparrows. Only 2 boxes were empty and not used.

At the other end of the course around the 10th hole there are 13 boxes. Amazingly 11 had tree sparrows, 1 a great tit and the last was used but chicks flown before I was able to check its species.

That means only 2 out of the 30 boxes were not used.

Sadly we had no owls this year, I blame the squirrels for occupying the boxes over the winter.

Blue and Great tits only have 1 clutch of eggs a year but these can be up to 12 eggs. The tree sparrows only lay small clutches of eggs, 3 – 5 but have 3 clutches a year.

I have been back several times and put rings on the tree sparrow chicks as in recent years they have been on the decline and it is important to try and count each year how many we have. Your ‘colony’ is one of the best in the area.

I have 100 boxes at Wilton and do not have 1 sparrow. I have 70 blue and great tits so success in a different way.

Also pleasing to me is when checking the boxes, wearing my high viz jacket, is the amount of interest the golfing members have in the local wildlife. If anyone sees me about I am always amenable to stop and have a chat.

Here’s to a safe future and better checking circumstances in 2021.

Colin Gibson