

ACTION FOR WOODLAND BIRDS

Woodland bird populations have been in steady decline nationally since the 1970s with 33 species falling by 20% over the last 25 years. The Dane valley is a national hotspot for remnant populations of Woodland Birds which are a good indicator of the general state of the health of the wider environment.

The reasons for the declining populations are many but changes in woodland structure from long-term under management is thought to be a key factor. Woodland management in the valley has therefore been designed to benefit these birds through stock removal, selective low intensity thinning, retention of older trees and leaving standing and fallen dead wood.



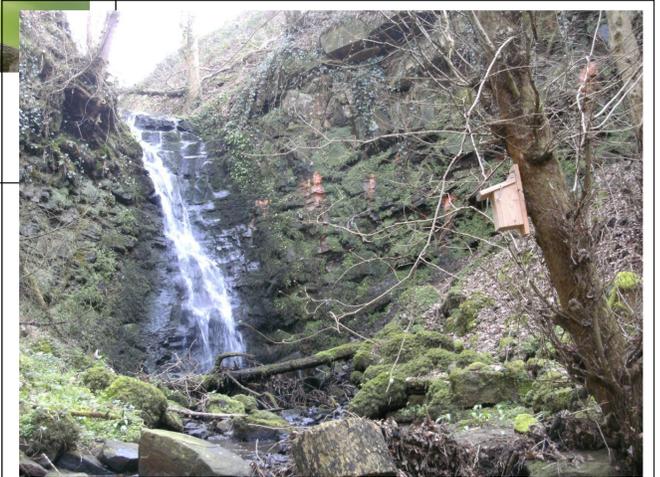
Spotted Flycatcher



Pied flycatcher



Redstart



Bird Box Monitoring at Bearda Mill and Gig Hall 2013

Results (From 106 small-hole boxes at Bearda and 12 at Gig Hall)

At Bearda:

Pied Flycatcher - 15 nests -
94 eggs (6.9 average), 77 hatched and 74 probably fledged

Blue Tit - 11 nests -
86 eggs, 72 hatched and 71 possibly fledged.

Great Tit - 9 nests -
55 eggs, 46 hatched and 44 probably fledged.

At Gig Hall:

Pied Flycatcher - 2 nests -
14 eggs, 12 hatched fledging unknown (not revisited)

Blue Tit - 5 nests -
31 eggs, 20 hatched and 18 possibly fledged.

Great Tit - 1 nest -
7 eggs, 7 hatched and 7 probably fledged.

Bird Box programme

With thanks to:

- Bosley & Wincle Schools,
- Hugh Pulsford and Cheshire & the Wirral Ornithological Society
- Nick Pomiankowski and Andy Lawrence
- Dreamcatcher Farm

Bird Box programme

Pied flycatcher, Redstart and Spotted Flycatcher are all hole nesting species, requiring over-mature trees with decaying wood and cavities in order to make their nests. Older trees are scarce in the Dane Valley Woodlands as a result of intensive woodland management in the past. As a result the population size in at least some of the woods appears to be constrained by the availability of nest sites.

Volunteers including school children and landowners have been involved in making, erecting and monitoring bird boxes suitable for pied flycatchers at and close to Gig Hall, Bearda Mill, Flash & Close Woods. Additional boxes are being erected this winter at Kisswood.

At Bearda Mill up to 16 pairs of Pied Flycatcher successfully rear young in the boxes each year. One of the young flycatchers ringed and fledged at Bearda in 2012 has since nested successfully in Flash Wood.

Woodland Management for Birds

Willow Warblers, as with many other woodland birds, require areas of dense cover for nesting provided by young trees, thicket forming shrubs like blackthorn and patches of bramble. These habitats are not widespread in the Dane Valley for a number of reasons including grazing by agricultural animals, deer browsing and a dense tree canopy which prevents light reaching the forest floor and stimulating tree and shrub regeneration. Woodland thinning, stock exclusion and deer management is aimed at enhancing habitat for these birds.



In **Cartlidge Wood** brush has been piled over tree stumps to restrict deer browsing the coppice re-growth and in the short term provide nesting habitat itself.



Willow warbler