

Spotted Flycatcher

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Spotted Flycatcher
(*Muscicapa striata*)



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Ecology

Appearance

The spotted flycatcher is a small bird, only 14cm long with grey-brown underparts, a streaked forehead and an off-white breast streaked with darker grey. They tend to perch conspicuously and watch for any passing insects, flying out to snap them up, before returning to their perch.

Habitat

They prefer woodland edges and parks and gardens but will also inhabit hedgerows, broadleaved woodland and even mature coniferous woodland.

Food

Spotted flycatchers eat insects, usually catching them in flight. In the autumn spotted flycatchers will also eat berries.

Predators

The grey squirrel and other nest predators affect the survival rates of the spotted flycatchers.



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Life Style

- Spotted flycatchers arrive in the UK in May and leave again in July and August
- The breeding season starts in May and ends in July
- The females have one or two clutches each season with between 4 and 5 eggs in each clutch
- The first brood often helps the parents rear the second clutch

Current status

The spotted flycatcher is a Red List species on the Birds of Conservation Concern (RSPB, 2009), its numbers having declined in the UK by >50% since 1969 and over the last 25 years. It is also a species with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe.

A declining summer migrant, the Spotted Flycatcher favours broadleaved woodland, hedgerows and mature trees, parkland, churchyards and large gardens. This species has almost disappeared as a breeding species in much of northern, western and central Cheshire. The population is estimated at 2000 individuals and was confirmed breeding in only 101 tetrads compared to 267 in the first Cheshire Atlas (1978-1984).

Threats

- Changes in agricultural practice resulting in a low availability of invertebrates during the summer.
- Loss of nesting habitat due to loss of:
 - woodland
 - parks
 - hedgerows
- Weather effects:
 - earlier breeding with warmer temperatures
 - clutch sizes larger in drier weather

The reasons for the decline are well documented in Freeman & Crick, 2003.

How are we helping to conserve Spotted Flycatchers in the Cheshire region?

- The Environmental Stewardship options provide grant aid to farmers to encourage environmentally sensitive management practices - options under this scheme will enhance the favoured habitat of the spotted flycatcher.
- Little action has been taken directly to conserve this species, although the provision of nestboxes will have encouraged breeding.
- The maintenance and creation of woodland clearings and rides will have benefited the species.
- BTO Breeding Bird Survey are on-going.
- Norman (2008) notes that 'especially with their liking for human habitation, there seems to be plenty of scope for active conservation measures to try and assist this species and attract it back to now abandoned areas; the efforts of a team of amateurs in Worcestershire shows what can be done (Clark, 2005)'.

Objectives, targets and actions

The objectives, targets and actions to help conserve the Spotted Flycatcher in the Cheshire region can be found on the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) along with full details of our progress so far.

How to find out more about Spotted Flycatchers

Visit the RSPB website for information on the spotted flycatcher - www.rspb.org.uk/birds/guide/s_spottedflycatcher/index.asp

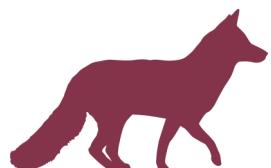
UK BAP for Spotted Flycatcher - www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=463

Contact details

LBAP Chair Cheshire Wildlife Trust

Phone: 01948 820728

National Lead Partners Royal Society for the Protection of Birds



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References and Glossary

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- Norman, D. on behalf of CAWOS (2008) Birds in Cheshire and Wirral. A breeding and wintering atlas. Liverpool University Press.

www.arkive.org/species/ARK/birds/Muscicapa_striata/more_info.html

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www.garden-birds.co.uk/birds/spotted_flycatcher.htm

