

PIED FLYCATCHER BREEDING PROJECT MAGIC OF LIFE TRUST- RHEIDOL VALLEY - 2023

The **Pied Flycatcher** or **Gwybedog Brith** (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) is a summer visitor to the



Rheidol Valley. It is on the UK Amber list of threatened species of birds. It is only found in the upland oak woodlands in the west of Britain. It spends winter in the savannahs of Sierra Leone and neighbouring West African countries. The success of other nest box projects have allowed this species to be moved from the UK red data list to the amber list, albeit by a narrow margin. Its populations have nevertheless declined over 25% in the last 25 years in Britain.

Half of the UK's Pied flycatchers live here in Wales. It can be seen along the forestry path behind the Butterfly House from Mid April onwards. The males are easy to recognise as they are bright black and white. They have a white patch just above the bill.

Pied flycatchers make their nests in holes in dead oak trees. In a now classic study in Wytham Woods in Oxford in the 50s, it was found that simply erecting nest boxes makes a huge improvement to the survival of small birds. Most woods in the UK do not have sufficient dead wood in it to provide for this crucial part of the life cycle. The trees are cut down before they get old and any dead wood is used for carpentry and log burning. Out of all the woodland birds, the Pied Flycatcher is the species that benefits the most from nest boxes. In fact, nearly all the Pied flycatchers in Sweden rely solely on nest boxes for their survival.

Fifteen years ago some nest boxes were put up in the oaks on the Statkraft forestry path, just above the Butterfly House. While some birds did use them, these boxes were quickly drilled out by Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, that eat the eggs of small nesting birds.

This project is to restore these next boxes but this time using zinc plates to protect the nesting holes from being drilled out. We will then monitor the boxes this April and May and report back on the results. Video footage of any successes will be uploaded onto our website and social media.