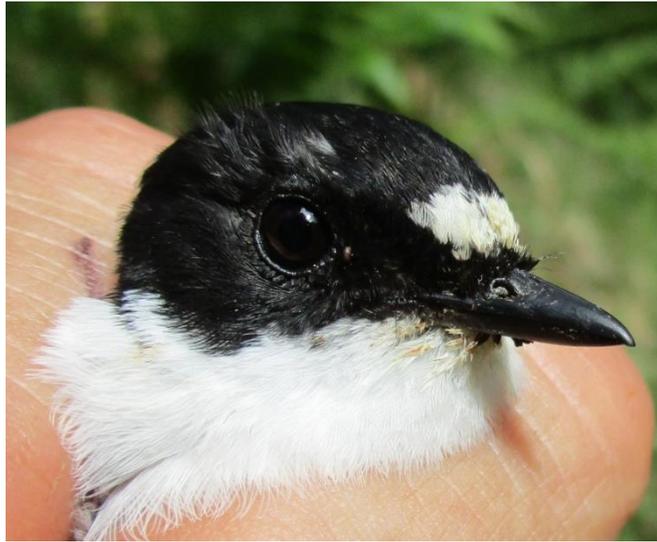


Buccleuch Estates Pied Flycatcher

Ringling Report 2020



This report summarises my results from the 25th year of field work into the Pied Flycatcher breeding population in the four study site woodlands to the east of Sanquhar/Menock. The aims of the project are to provide nest boxes then to count the breeding population and monitor their breeding success annually. The birds are all ringed under licence by the British Trust for Ornithology, and the data generated is held and analysed by, professional ornithologists working for the BTO.

2020 was a difficult year for us all due to the Covid-19 pandemic and at the time of writing is still ongoing. The first lockdown kept most of us restricted to the indoors and the garden but at the end of May the restrictions were partially relaxed and as volunteers for the B.T.O. we were permitted to undertake fieldwork alone or in two's.

With permissions given I was able to make a single visit on the 7th June, alone as no one else from the team was available. It was a clear warm day and I made my way round the boxes starting at Alymerbank as normal about 9am. It became obvious very quickly that there had been a significant increase in the Pied Flycatcher population, which was good news, but it did mean it took much longer to get round the boxes, catch the adults and ring the chicks.

It was a very successful day and I had to give up as it started to get darker in the second part of Ardoch at 8pm. Not only were there more birds but they had also arrived and nested earlier than “usual”, five pairs had already fledged their chicks and I witnessed other chicks leaving the boxes as I approached. I managed to get round about 2/3rds of Ardoch but never got to Lime Cleugh at all. There was no time to properly count the other species singing this year so this report will be much shorter than the previous ones unfortunately.



This male, a 2nd year bird, is known as a “brown” male, a small proportion are this colour in the UK and apparently the proportion increases in Scandinavia. This bird was sexed as a male on the few black feathers in the wing and the white “dots” on the forecrown. See female below for comparison.



Note the tasty Greenbottle ready for her chicks.

Pied Flycatcher breeding population 2020.

Alymerbank **10**

Ardoch **11+?** (7 boxes unchecked)

Lime Cleugh n/c

Lime Cleugh A n/c

So the known population has increased from 7-10 and 10-11 in these two woods, it would not be unreasonable to have expected another 2 nests in the unchecked boxes in Ardoch as they are always used, and even if the Lime Cleugh sites had remained unchanged we could expect a population of 28+ nests this year (24 in 2019). We will never know for certain.



Some of the original (1995) boxes have lasted well and blend in, making them more attractive esp. to Redstarts however as the next photos show they often like to use boxes which are “on their last legs!”

This is box 12 in Alymerbank and is split down one side, I patched it up as best as I could on the day but it really needs replaced. The chicks seemed quite happy.



Box 12

There are still many boxes needing replaced despite another 7 new ones put in this summer, I hope I'll be able to access the woodlands late in March 2021, if access permissions can be granted, to make sure there are good boxes available for the bird's arriving in April.

Ringling Totals 2020

Pied Flycatcher 10 adults, 8 re-caught, and 94 chicks ringed. (2019 108 chicks and 26 adults)

Redstart 14 chicks ringed.

Willow Warbler 7 chicks.

Mean brood size of ringed broods was 5.87, a bit lower than average (6.2), however this total included broods that had partially fledged so is an underestimate. The brood sizes went up to 9 this year which is exceptional and two broods of 8. I strongly suspect that this was a very good season, with lots of caterpillars and insects available to get the females in to good breeding condition and to rear the chicks early. The Redstart total is also reduced due to most having fledged earlier than average as well. Finding the Willow Warbler nest at Alymerbank was a bonus and it too had a better than usual brood size of 7 (often 5-6).

Of the previously ringed adults caught this year (8), two had been ringed as chicks in 2018, one had moved from Lime Cleugh and one from Lime Cleugh A, to breed in Alymerbank, both were

females. One ringed as a 2nd year female in Ardoch in 2018 was recaptured for the first time still breeding in Ardoch. One adult male from 2019 was recaptured in Alymerbank at the same box. The remaining four birds were all ringed as chicks in 2019; two were from the same brood! Ringed in Ardoch they both nested in Alymerbank in different boxes, one a male one a female. The other two were both females, one moved from Lime Cleugh to Alymerbank and one from Ardoch returning to Ardoch. So we still have a fairly young population, it will be interesting to see what happens in 2021.

There were no recoveries of birds we have ringed, this year.



Looking west; approaching the second section in Alymerbank.

I would like to thank the Queensberry Estate, the tenant farmers, namely the Park family and the Anderson family, and the head keeper, Rab Clark for permission to undertake this project. I would very much like to continue again in 2021.

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