

Following on from the news that swifts had a disastrous breeding season, I'm interested to find out how other birds have fared this year. One of the best ways of measuring the breeding success of birds is via bird ringing. When ringers catch a bird they can tell if it's a youngster and therefore easily establish which species have managed to rear young during the year.... however, I've not seen any such data yet.

My personal feelings are that some species will have done better than others; Birds that have several broods, such as song thrush, blackbird, robin and house martin will probably have managed to rear at least one young family. For those that lay one brood, success will depend largely on the weather at the time.

One very good bit of news comes from Richard Evans of New Inn who has sited hundreds of nestboxes around Gwent. He has reported that over 300 of his boxes were successfully used in 2012 ! The majority of boxes were taken up by blue and great tits, but house sparrows, pied flycatchers and redstarts (pictured) have also made use of them. This is especially pleasing as blue and great tits are 'one brood' birds and it appears that they managed to raise their young while the weather was good.

Another interesting report, of swifts visiting their nest to feed young, was made the other day from Blaenavon. This is very late for swifts and suggests to me that the birds are either having an unusual second brood or have delayed their attempt due to a wet July.





Dragons and Damsels

If you fancy something a bit different pop along to Newport Wetlands at 1.45pm on Wednesday 22nd August for a 2 hour walk to see some dragon and damselflies. These are fascinating predatory creatures – the insect equivalent of birds of prey and Reserve Manager Kevin Dupe will be on hand to help you identify them. For more details call 01633 636363.

Coming Up...

GOS start their eagerly anticipated programme of illustrated talks on Saturday 22nd September with a presentation on the majestic and elusive harpy eagle. The venue is Goytre Village Hall and the talk starts at 7.30pm. Entry costs £2 and includes tea and biscuits.

Keep in Touch

Thank you to all readers that have taken the time to get in touch.

I always enjoy hearing from you and can be contacted at smegstevens@gmail.com