

The Spotted What!?

By **John Clarke**



Known to many locally as “The Flycatcher Man”, John Clarke has written a humorous and interesting account of his adventures tracking down the Spotted Flycatcher. This little book is not only about the bird itself but also about the villages and the people who have taken part in this fascinating survey.

John’s own story is also interesting; he was born on a smallholding near Oxford and grew up in a farming and wildlife environment. As a young man he took up an engineering career and then ran a village garage for a while. John’s heart, however, has always been in wildlife and conservation and during the early eighties he and his wife spent four years working as conservation wardens on an estate in South Worcestershire. Following this they went to live on the remote Scottish island of Colonsay. During their eight-year stay there they monitored the island’s wildlife, worked on numerous research projects and helped to produce a number of wildlife booklets.

In 1994 they returned to Worcestershire where they began working as wildlife conservation advisers. Illness caused John to retire early from this work but did not stop him from taking on a new challenge that would use his experience and knowledge, ‘The Spotted Flycatcher Project.’ Within this John saw the opportunity to carry out useful research whilst increasing public awareness of local wildlife. The Spotted Flycatcher is a small migrant bird that is currently in serious decline. He would study their nests and collect observations on their behaviour. John placed details of the project in parish magazines and the response was incredible. The project grew rapidly and over a four year period covered nine villages with over 120 households contributing towards the research.

Within the book John includes a variety of fascinating and amusing anecdotes about the lighter side of the survey and the people who took part in it.

“The Spotted What!” by John Clarke.

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