



weighing 11–23 g. The orange-red tail, from which it and other redstarts get their names ("start" is an old word for "tail"), is frequently quivered. Among common European birds, only the black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochrurus*) has a similarly coloured tail.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

Southeastern common redstart



Female

The male in summer has a slate-grey head and upperparts, except the rump and tail, which, like the flanks, underwing coverts and axillaries are orange-chestnut. The forehead is white; the sides of the face and throat are black. The wings and the two central tail feathers are brown, the other tail feathers bright orange-red. The orange on the flanks shades to almost white on the belly. The bill and legs are black. In autumn, pale feather fringes on the body feathering obscures the colours of the male, giving it a washed-out appearance. The female is browner, with paler underparts; it lacks the black and slate, and the throat is whitish.

## Distribution and habitat

Common redstarts prefer open mature birch and oak woodland with a high horizontal visibility and low amounts of shrub and understorey especially where the trees are old enough to have holes suitable for its nest. They prefer to nest on the edge of woodland clearings. In Britain it occurs primarily in upland areas less affected by agricultural intensification, but further east in Europe also commonly in lowland areas, including parks and old gardens in urban areas. They nest in natural tree holes, so dead trees or those with dead limbs are beneficial to the species; nestboxes are sometimes used. A high cover of moss and lichen is also preferred. They also use mature open conifer woodland, particularly in the north of the breeding range. Management to thin out the trees is thus favoured.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

In England, where it has declined by 55% in the past 25 years, the Forestry Commission offers grants under a scheme called England's Woodland Improvement Grant (EWIG); as does Natural England's Environmental Stewardship Scheme.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Behaviour and ecology



Nest with a clutch of eggs.

It is a summer visitor throughout most of Europe and western Asia (east to Lake Baikal), and also in northwest Africa in Morocco. It winters in central Africa and Arabia, south of the Sahara Desert but north of the Equator, from Senegal east to Yemen. It is widespread as a breeding bird in Great Britain, particularly in upland broadleaf woodlands and hedgerow trees, but in Ireland it is very local, and may not breed every year.

The males first arrive in early to mid April,<sup>[8]</sup> often a few days in advance of the females. Five or six light blue eggs are laid during May, with a second brood in mid summer in the south of the breeding range. It departs for Africa between mid-August and early October. It often feeds like a flycatcher, making aerial sallies after passing insects, and most of its food consists of winged insects. The call is

chat-like and the alarm a plaintive single note, *wheet*, like that of many other chats.<sup>[2]</sup>

The male's song is similar to that of the Robin, but never more than a prelude, since it has an unfinished, feeble ending.



Eggs, Collection Museum Wiesbaden, Germany

## References

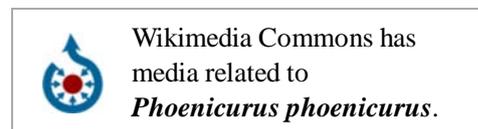
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- RSPB Woodland Management For Birds - Redstart
- [1] (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/r/redstart/index.asp>)



Common redstart diet

## External links

- Common redstart videos, photos & sounds (<http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/common-redstart-phoenicurus-phoenicurus>) on the Internet Bird Collection
- Ageing and sexing (PDF; 3.5 MB) by Javier Blasco-Zumeta & Gerd-Michael Heinze ([http://aulaenred.ibercaja.es/wp-content/uploads/332\\_RedstartsPphoenicurus.pdf](http://aulaenred.ibercaja.es/wp-content/uploads/332_RedstartsPphoenicurus.pdf))
- RSPB Website Description (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/r/redstart/index.aspx>)
- Common redstart Images (<http://www.stevenround-birdphotography.com/Redstart,%20Common.htm>)



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