



Tayside Biodiversity Partnership



**BIODIVERSITY**  
THE VARIETY OF LIFE

**Joint Leaders:**

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## **TAYSIDE SWIFT INTEREST GROUP (“Tayside Swifts”)**

Notes of meeting held at the James Hutton Institute, Invergowrie -  
Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014

**Present:**

Daniele Muir (DM)	Perthshire Wildlife (Joint Leader)
Catherine Lloyd (CL)	Tayside Biodiversity Partnership
Fergus Cook (FC)	Tayside Swifts (Kirriemuir Project)
David Williamson (DW)	Perth & Kinross Council
Andrew Law (AL)	Tayside Biodiversity Partnership
Catriona Davies (CD)	Tay Landscape Partnership
Janice Fraser (JF)	Hillcrest Housing Association
Charles Macpherson (CM)	Scone & Perth Survey Co-ordinator
Ian Ford (IF)	Broughty Ferry Environmental Project
Barry Caudwell (BC)	Voluntary Surveyor, Carse of Gowrie
Brian Boag (BB)	James Hutton Institute
Elsbeth Coutts (EC)	Stanley Swift Project
Bill Henderson (BH)	Swift Enthusiast
Marian Antrum (MA)	Swift Survey Co-ordinator, Kilspindie

**Apologies:**

Craig Borland	Angus Council Ranger Service (Joint Leader)
Clare Darlaston	Concern for Swifts Scotland
Claire Smith	RSPB
Andrew Rodger	Architect (Glen Devon)
Kate Baird	SEPA

**Circulated to:** Andrew Barbour, TBP Chairman; Mark Simmons, Perth Museum; Esther Rogers-Nicoll, Perth & Kinross Council; Ann Lolley, Broughty Ferry Environmental Partnership; Forbes Browne, Voluntary Surveyor, Broughty Ferry; Ron Downing, Voluntary Surveyor, Broughty Ferry; Doreen Bell, Scottish Water; Richard Higginbottom, TullochNET; Amanda Szostak, Voluntary Surveyor, Dundee, Karis Fairfield, Voluntary Surveyor, Dundee, Martin Ridley, Voluntary Surveyor, Comrie. Edward Mayer, Swift Conservation.

### **1. Notes from last meeting – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

The Actions Points from the last meeting were checked, namely:

- CL circulated the existing Advice Note to local developers, architects and scaffolders before the swift season, but has been widely publicising the Swift Conservation Advice Notes. She suggested it might be possible to work with Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation to prepare Scottish versions of all his Advice Notes; she will follow this up. **ACTION: CL**
- DM has not had an update on Dundee but will try to find Amanda Szostak’s new contact details (since her email address appears to have changed) and ask Karis Fairfield for further details. Also ask Alison Anderson if DCC are doing anything & put in touch with Hillcrest HA. **ACTION: DM**

- There is still a need for a Surveyor in the Dunkeld and Birnam area; CM will contact WWF to ask if anyone would be willing to undertake surveys next year. **CM has since found a surveyor in Dunkeld, who will be added to the distribution list.**
- Changed wording re Andrew Rodger's property at Glenhead.

## **2. Tayside Swift Survey Data Update 2014**

It was generally reported that swift numbers in Scotland appeared to be up from previous years. They arrived quite early in the season and were late in leaving. Swallows and House martins have also been late in departing.

DW and AL reported that all past records have been updated within the Perth & Kinross GIS (including general details for Angus too). They circulated the most up-to-date "dots on map"; CL asked that this be made available for the Swift section of the TBP website. DW also confirmed that all information was readily shared with the National Biodiversity Network. **ACTION: CL/DW/AL**

CB had not been able to arrange an Angus Glens Swift Survey owing to ill health, but will ask if this might be possible in 2015. **ACTION: CL**

## **3. Updates since last meeting**

### **Score:**

CM apologised that he could not undertake Scone surveys this year owing to his health; however he will ask the SWT Local Group for any feedback for this year's survey and remind them that all records are welcome via either the Facebook page or the TBP website swift section. In the meantime he confirmed that numbers of swifts in Scone were greater this year: c30. There was, unfortunately, only one nest occupied this year at his house.

### **Abernethy:**

CL confirmed that numbers had increased to c36 individuals in the screaming parties over the village. This is on a par with numbers seen 20 years ago but which have not been matched for many years.

### **Dundee & Broughty Ferry:**

No update.

### **Stanley:**

EC updated the group on the Stanley Swift project which started in July. Up to 40 swifts have been seen in screaming parties and many new nest sites discovered. There is the potential to work with Hillcrest Housing next year, more voluntary surveyors are required. **ACTION: DM to pass JF details to EC**

### **Scotland Projects:**

No report from Clare Darlaston.

### **Kirriemuir Swift Conservation Project: FC & DM**

Angus Environment Trust has granted funds to undertake this project (2015 to early 2017), based on the success of the Carse of Gowrie project, focused on the town centre. DM's 2013 survey of the Conservation Area found c45 possible nest sites. The Heritage Lottery Fund is enabling Angus Council to offer grants to improve the buildings frontages in the Kirriemuir Conservation Area. The Swift Project is working in tandem with this advising property owners how best to conserve existing nest sites and also offering free nestboxes and advice. So far a new leaflet has been printed/circulated and 50 nestboxes purchased.

HLF monies enabled a Swift & Bat Conservation Workshop to be held in February of this year, bringing together Anne Youngman, the Scottish Bat Officer (Bat Conservation Trust) and London-based Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation. A well-attended day-long event took place.

JF confirmed that Hillcrest Housing Association were keen to work with Tayside Swifts in Kirriemuir.

DM reported that she had worked with Redford Construction to re-open a natural swift nest site on Glengate Hall; the company had been extremely helpful. The integral nest site has now been supplemented by a triple nest box.

### **Carse of Gowrie Swift Project Summary:**

DM gave a presentation on this successful project. From a one-day a week project which started in April 2013 and continued until October 2013, small-scale funding was found to extend the project and this has recently come to an end.

BC suggested that all the Carse of Gowrie Nestbox Sites be added to the PKC GIS. Voluntary survey co-ordinators in Errol & Kilspindie have large scale maps to mark new nest sites from future surveys. The possibility of TayLP carrying on swift surveying in the Carse was also discussed with CD to look at possibility of the LP continuing the survey. AL to liaise with CD about swift and Barn Owl boxes in Castle Huntly.

**ACTION: CD/AL**

### **Tay Landscape Partnership Projects:**

CD gave a presentation to update everyone as to which biodiversity projects were relevant to the group. She confirmed that the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund had given monies to purchase 41 swift nestboxes, 150 bird boxes and 150 bat boxes. The swift nestboxes will supplement the Carse of Gowrie swift project, but also enable the area to be expanded to include the whole TLP area (ie outwith the Carse itself).

Caledonian Consultants are undertaking both a habitat and buildings survey. A leaflet will be published in due course with simple ideas to engage with a wide audience. Information will also be readily available and easy to find for developers and other companies and contractors (pest control etc.).

The project will focus on spots surveyed which are good for habitats and will also be looking to make wildlife corridors as well as installing and monitoring the nest boxes.

Barn owl boxes are looking to be placed no closer than 5km to main roads unless the roads have high hedges.

**ACTION: ALL – any known sites of interest to the TLP, please contact CD**

### **4. Town Centre Regeneration Projects**

DM reported that contractors were contacted during the breeding season when work was started in both Invergowrie and North Muirton. BC suggested it was important to tell residents of any known natural nest sites, but to also pass on the legal information to highlight the need not to undertake work during the breeding season. FC suggested that a simple Swift Information Pack could be prepared and put through the door. JF wondered if funding might be available to offer the householder an external nestbox.

Coupar Angus Regeneration Trust – it was suggested there should be a New Homes Policy for nestboxes.

**ACTION: AL/DW**

CD confirmed that the TLP would be handling the Conservation Areas Façade Grant for Abernethy, Perth and Errol. It was suggested a meeting take place with the PKC Conservation Department to highlight the opportunities to add nestboxes and the need to check existing nest sites.

**ACTION: DW/CL**

### **5. Report on events 2014 and plans for 2015**

Last year's Swift Newsletter continues to be widely distributed at events and in libraries, etc. Thanks to funding from Hillcrest Housing Association, the Swift bookmark re-print has been extensively used. The two sets of swift display banners also continue to be regularly used throughout Tayside. The Facebook page has proved very popular and currently has 129 members (up from 76 a year ago). The Swift information on the TBP website also continues to be extensively used.

**ACTION: ALL – ideas for new venues for newsletters/display banners to DM/CL**

2015 is the year of food and drink – how can we apply this to swifts?

**ACTION: ALL – ideas to AL**

During 2014 DM led a walk at the Loch Leven BioBlitz, plus others in Invergowrie and Stanley. FC led walks in Kirriemuir.

It is hoped the Angus Ranger Service can undertake walks/survey training events in the Angus Glens in 2015. JF suggested that walks/talks could take place in/around Hillcrest properties in Kirriemuir, Coupar Angus and Stanley. CL said there was a need for guided walks in places such as Auchterarder, Crieff, Dunkeld, Glenfarg, Kinross and Abernethy to raise awareness, but there is an issue of funding involved.

**ACTION: CL/DM to discuss**

### **6. Tayside Swifts Newsletter**

The draft 2014 Newsletter had been delayed owing to a lack of funding and a proposal to just have a pdf designed and no paper copies made available. With Angus Environment Trust funding now reserved for a Newsletter, CL proposed the existing draft be updated over the winter, new projects and reports added and for a 2015 Newsletter to be published ahead of the next swift season.

**ACTION: ALL – new articles and updates welcome, send to AL before Christmas**

#### **7. AOB and Date of Next Meeting**

**Ringling Swifts:** BC pointed out that if you can access a swift nest from inside a property this information should be shared with the group. There is a very real shortage of ringed Scottish swifts and BTO are keen to fit geo-locators to our local swifts. Martin Ridley, Derek Robertson and Keith Brockie can all give advice on this if anyone can suggest a suitable site for 2015. CD said she was willing to find an integral site and BC added that Longforgan is a possibility. EC also suggested that Stanley Church and its louvred area might be suitable for an integral nestbox. Castle Huntly prisoners might be able to make made-to-measure integral swift nestboxes.

**ACTION: BC/CD/EC/DM to liaise**

Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum – swift data has yet to be shared with the SBIF.

**ACTION: CL to contact SBIF, copying DW/AL into the reply**

There was discussion about how **swift nest sites need more protection**. CL confirmed she had contacted Gareth Heavisides in the Scottish Government to ask how we go about changing the law to safeguard swift nest sites throughout the year. There had been no response as the Biodiversity Team had been temporarily disbanded to focus on the Referendum. Although Gareth Heavisides has now moved on permanently, CL would contact the department again to raise the issue. CS from RSPB suggested checking planning applications against swift records – this is already done by DW & CL agreed to forward the lists she receives from Angus Council.

**ACTION: CL**

BH asked for help to ensure the **Dunfermline Tesco** included swift nestboxes to replace the natural ones that had been present in the previous Victorian building for some 125 years. Although Fife is outwith our patch, DW said he would look into the planning application and report back. He suggested BH check the delegated report and if a condition had been included to contact the Fife Council Enforcement Officer. Johanna\_Willi also needs to be notified about the Swifts in Dunfermline's Tesco – this has been done.

**ACTION: DW to liaise with BH re. the Dunfermline Tesco building**

JF highlighted the fact that integral nestboxes have been included in Hillcrest's Jeanfield Road (Perth) development.

Project listing form is to be circulated by for ideas and additions – please add project details. **ACTION: AL**

The next meeting will take place next autumn (2015), date and venue to be confirmed. In the meantime please keep in touch via the Tayside Swifts Facebook page or email. DM thanked everyone for coming to the meeting: one of the best turnouts for years!

*Thanks to Hillcrest Housing Association for its continuing support of Tayside Swifts over the past year, to the James Hutton Institute for hosting the meeting and the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership for providing lunch.*