



# TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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## **Joint Leaders:**

*Daniele Muir, Perth & Kinross Council Ranger Service, Roads & Countryside Depot, Signal Box Road, Blairgowrie, PH10 6ER Tel. 01250 874661 / Mob. 07919 044346*  
*Craig Borland, Angus Council Ranger Service (currently on sick leave)*

## **TAYSIDE SWIFT INTEREST GROUP**

**Notes of meeting held at Hillcrest Housing office, Dundee - Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

Present:	Daniele Muir (DM) Catherine Lloyd (CL) David Williamson (DW) Clare Darlaston (CD) Amanda Szostak (AS) Forbes Browne (FB) Ron Downing (RD)	PKC Ranger Service (Joint Leader) Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Perth & Kinross Council Concern for Swifts Scotland Voluntary Surveyor, Dundee Voluntary Surveyor, Broughty Ferry Voluntary Surveyor, Broughty Ferry
Apologies:	Kate Baird Esther Rogers-Nicoll Bill Henderson Claire Smith Charles Macpherson (CM) Craig Borland	SEPA Perth & Kinross Council Voluntary Surveyor, Fife & Kinross RSPB Scone & Perth Survey Co-ordinator Angus Council Ranger Service (Joint
Leader)	Ann Lolley Partnership Emma Rawlings Janice Fraser	Broughty Ferry Environmental Scottish Wildlife Trust Hillcrest Housing Association

### **1. Survey Update**

DM reported on sightings received from the public in Perth & Kinross including Methven, Kinloch, Errol, Auchterarder, New & Wester Fowls, Auchterarder, Crieff, Alyth, Balbeggie and areas of Perth. 60 to 100 birds were seen screaming and flying low over the Tay and North Inch in Perth in early June. CL had witnessed literally thousands of fairly low-flying swifts west of Kinross on 9th July; they were beneath a very black raincloud.

CM & his team of surveyors recorded screaming parties across Perth & Kinross, with high numbers in July including 25+ birds at Scone (down slightly on last year), 12 in Ballintuim and 18 in Almondbank.

No news from Angus as CB is on sick leave. **AP – CB to provide 2012 information in due course.**

Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum – with the recent launch of the SBIF, DW/CD agreed to look into providing data to this when further information becomes available. **AP - DW/CD**

AS continued surveying Dundee and has new sightings of screaming parties and nest sites across Dundee. She spotted her 1<sup>st</sup> swift on May 15<sup>th</sup> and had a screaming party of 34 over

Blackness Rd. FB recorded nest sites in central Broughty Ferry and observed 30 swifts in screaming parties in June and August near the harbour – possibly down slightly on last year's numbers. **AP - AS to put sightings into spreadsheet format for DW to input to GIS.**

## 2. Brief updates since last meeting:

### Perth & Kinross:

- DM – A guided walk was carried out in Aberfeldy with 5 attendees. 30 screaming swifts were spotted and 3 new nest sites found. A nest site survey of Aberfeldy to find further nest sites is required. A swift survey training session and guided walk was carried out in Errol for the Braes of Carse Conservation Group who are keen to take a pilot project forward next year (further details below).
- Hillcrest Housing kindly donated 6 pre-fabricated nest boxes and 10 nestboxes made by their apprentices for use across Perth and Kinross. These were erected at the Tayside Hotel, Stanley; Stanley Village Hall; Stormont Arms, Blairgowrie; the Auld Mart, Alyth; Stanley Mills, Stanley (possibly not yet erected, **DM to contact to confirm**); Auchtergaven Primary School; Rattray Primary School; Coupar Angus Primary School and Westbank Nursery, Perth. These were all locations where swifts had either been seen prospecting or where screaming parties were observed close by.
- Newhill primary school, Auchtergaven primary school, Rattray primary school and Coupar Angus primary school all received swift survey training and carried out the Town Swift Survey in their local area.
- DM attended very useful International Swift Seminar in Berlin in April. Thanks for funding to Hillcrest Housing, Tayside Biodiversity Urban Working Group and PKC. A presentation followed this meeting.
- CL and DW have worked with Tulloch Net to install 8 new nestboxes on houses close to the Lade in Perth.
- DW is ensuring all swift data is input into GIS. **AP - DW**
- CL and DW have re-vamped the Swifts and Development advice note which is now available on the TBP website; it was suggested CD's loft insulation leaflet is included into it – **AP: CD to provide insulation leaflet to CL for copying; CL to ensure advice note is sent out to developers, architects, scaffolders and builders in the first quarter of 2013.**
- Tayside Green Graveyard Initiative – As the local community in Errol had shown an interest in setting up a Swift Project, it has been suggested there could be a Carse of Gowrie Church Swift Pilot Project. It may be possible for this to be funded via the Tay Landscape Partnership HLF bid. **CL to look into this; DM to contact Errol community group to confirm the idea is still of interest to them.**
- The RCAHMS (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) has proposed a partnership project with the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership in setting up a Tayside pilot project on 'Dooocots & Biodiversity'. This would include swift, bat and barn owl boxes, but would entail a desk-survey of all doocots within the area and then ground-truthing to find the potential for each site. The project might be funded via the Buildings & Biodiversity Project currently being costed for the Tay Landscape Partnership's HLF bid (this would only cover an area covering Forteviot, Scone and the Carse of Gowrie). **AP: CL to look into this**

**Dundee and Broughty Ferry:** No further reports.

### Update from Clare Darlaston, Concern for Swifts Scotland

CD emphasised that retaining existing swift nest sites is preferable over all other action and to use 'cedar' for wooden nestboxes rather than plywood as it has a much longer lifespan.

## 3. Plans for Year of Natural Scotland 2013

- Establish Swift Twinning Schools – at least 1 in Tayside and 1 in Southern Africa in 2013 - **AP: DM**
- Produce new Swifts in Tayside newsletter – **AP: All to send any swift articles to DM by the end of November 2012**

- More use to be made of the swift banners and a proper loan diary for both sets to be set up; there was a suggestion of arranging an online booking system: **AP - DM to look into**. The P&K set is currently at the Hillcrest Housing office, the Angus banners are in storage at Forfar Loch Visitor Centre. AS was keen to use one set of banners across locations in Dundee until Easter 2013, especially libraries, museums and Camperdown Park. The Swift Interest Group had no issues with this. CL agreed to ask Christine at Forfar Loch Visitor Centre if anyone could deliver the Angus banners to the Central Library in Dundee - **AP: CL to contact Forfar Loch re banners and AS to draw up list of potential sites across Dundee; DM to look into potential for new loans diary system**.
- Produce a Swift Christmas Card to send to all surveyors in December - **AP: DM & CL**

#### 4. Plans for Survey 2013

- Continue with Tayside Swift Survey to fill in data gaps. Using the 'First Sightings Survey' artwork, produce a swift survey poster asking for nest site and screaming party information. Could also include details of the text survey – **AP: DM, CD & CL (by early January 2013)**
- Implement text survey – using radio and website – text address of screaming party to SWIFT (79438) – **AP: DM & CL**
- Tayside Swift Facebook page to be established, incorporating a map for reporting screaming parties and nest sites; DM and CL to administer. Details will also be added to the TBP website (Swift section) – **AP: DM, CL & DW**
- Liaise with RSPB for their 2012 data – **AP: DM**
- When we have established the new survey poster and Facebook page, CL to ask the LBAP Officers throughout Scotland if they would like to use the artwork/CfSS survey information for a Scotland-wide Swift Survey. **AP: CL**
- Ensure promotional material goes in local press, including newsletters e.g. Breadalbane Comment, Newsround North, Kinross Newsletter, UK Biodiversity Newsletter, Scottish Biodiversity Forum Bulletin – **AP: All**
- DM to contact Alison Anderson, Dundee, to ask if she can use AS' data for the DCC planning GIS; this would include both swift sightings and known swift nest sites. – **AP: DM**
- Talks: SWT. We need to follow up pre-April: Aberfeldy – 30 swifts. **AP: DM**
- Carse of Gowrie: survey first, then nest boxes and church swift survey – **AP: DM**

#### 5. AOCB and Date of Next Meeting

- Next meeting to take place Sep or Oct 2013, venue to be confirmed.

*Thanks to Hillcrest Housing Association for its support of the Tayside Swift Interest Group over the past year, and for providing the meeting room for this meeting*

#### Presentation on the Berlin Swift Conference – Daniele Muir

- 15 people present, including 2 Hillcrest staff members

DM reported that 75 people from across the world attended the conference last April. A brief report is attached and full summaries are available on line <http://www.commonswift.org/4951Tigges&Mayer.html>

#### **Summary of Daniele's presentation:**

Frankfurt Swift Group – 122 internal nestboxes installed during 2011, making a total of 552. External nestboxes erected: 708. Details of the external Nestbox will be include in the forthcoming Tayside Swift Newsletter.

It has been found that non-breeding swifts 'play' at a height of 2km – there can be in the region of 100,000 swifts. Breeders return to nestboxes to rest.

Slovakia – insulation is killing swift populations – down 60%. Use of nestboxes and modified ventilation grilles. At the moment advice is being prepared to give to developers on swifts and bats.

Jura, Switzerland – 97 nestboxes on 1 house; 82 breeding pairs!

Lapland – tree-dwelling swifts (in old woodpecker holes); there are still a few tree nesting swifts in Abernethy forest near Aviemore.

Czech Republic Swift Programme – blocks of polystyrene insulation; training of 700 civil servants and school visits. 'Spring Alive' website. 1,000 sites conserved. 140 volunteers undertake surveys (and have made 16k sightings, of which 9k are nest sites). Technical solutions are being researched for both swifts and bats.

Dutch Camera Project – involving 41 villages. 32-52 days nesting period. Breeding success.

China – to 20m people the Swift is called the Beijing Rain Swallow! There is a Swift kite project underway.

Swift road signs – erected in Germany where swifts have been found to feed close to the ground.

