

## Box closed on swifts project but benefits long-lasting

A CONSERVATION project to monitor and safeguard swifts in rural Tayside has come to a close.

Scores of residents in Carse of Gowrie were given nest and bat boxes as part of the exercise, which helped raise awareness of the country's dwindling swift population.

The scheme spread the message to schools and community groups, while people were trained to become "swift watchers" and help feed information back to local authorities and to the national swift survey run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

The common swift is a summer visitor to Scotland and usually arrives from southern and central Africa in early May to nest and breed here.

Over the last decade, however, there has been a worrying 62% drop in the swift population.

The Carse of Gowrie Swift Conservation Project was launched in collaboration with the Tay Biodiversity Partnership and with funding from the waste management giant Sita.

A cherry-picker machine was hired to install nest boxes at homes throughout the area, as well as bat boxes in local graveyards.

Daniele Muir, swift conservation project officer, explained that the effect of the project could be far-reaching. She said: "The project has now come to an end but it's been a great success, with hundreds of people involved in many ways.

"We have managed to provide lots of new homes for swifts.

"Hopefully, many of the new nest boxes will be used by young swifts when they return from Africa in May."