



TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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TAYSIDE SWIFT INTEREST GROUP

Thursday, 26th July 2007

Perth & Kinross Council offices, Pullar House, Kinnoull Street, Perth

NOTES OF THE MEETING

Present

Catherine Lloyd (CL)	Tayside Biodiversity Partnership
Daniele Muir (DM)	Perth and Kinross Ranger Service
Suki Fleming (SF)	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Esther Rogers-Nicoll (ER-N)	Perth & Kinross Council (Planning)
(guest) Martin Ridley	Comrie

Apologies

Kate Farrer	SEPA
Ron Youngman	Bird Recorder, Perth & Kinross
Andrew Rodger	Private Architect
Craig Borland	Angus Ranger Service
Dave Ferguson	Dundee Ranger Service
Charlie McPherson	Scone & Perth Survey Co-ordinator
Clare Darlaston (CD)	Concern for Swifts (Scotland)

Copied to:

Vicky Hilton, National Trust for Scotland; Ann Lolley and Ian Ford, Broughty Ferry Environmental Project; Carolyn Deasley, SNH (Battleby); Mark Simmons, Perth Museum; David Lampard, McManus Collections (Dundee); David Williamson, P&KC (Environment Services); Andrea Williams, Scottish Wildlife Trust.

1.	OVERVIEW OF PAST MEETINGS	ACTION
	Last year three meetings took place: Interest Group and training session - 20 th June (in Perth); Tayside Mapping Session - 18 th September (in Dundee); and the Scottish Swift Gathering - 2 nd November (in Stirling). Clare Darlaston continues to have meetings elsewhere in Scotland, most recently in the Borders. There is heightened interest in the subject and potential for another Scottish meeting later in the year.	CD
2.	SURVEY PROGRESS REPORT	
2.1	From the minutes of the Mapping Session (held in September 2006), CL confirmed that Craig Borland had offered to collate all the 2006 records and record them using the 'fields' recommended by CD. He also confirmed the 2005 records would be added to the new database in due course. CB had not been able to update the Group before he left on holiday, but CL did not think the latest 2006 Map had been circulated to any of the local authorities.	CL/CB

2.2	<p>Survey areas covered so far in 2007 - Perth and Kinross:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlie McPherson - volunteer surveyors helping in Scone, Perth, Birnam and Dunkeld; CMacP undertaking surveys in Balbeggie, Burrelton, Coupar Angus, Meigle and Ardler. • Daniele Muir - predominately Comrie/Crieff. • CL confirmed that the Interest Group's Swift Walk in Auchterarder during Scottish Biodiversity Week proved there were swifts both in the town and at Cloan. Those who visited Cloan witnessed the swifts using the new swift nestbox on the house. • NTS - no report. <p>Dundee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dave Ferguson - Dundee survey letters sent; work still being undertaken at Dochart Terrace. • BFEP - no report. <p>Angus: Craig Borland - 13 responses in Angus to the swift sighting campaign but as yet no follow up site visits arranged.</p>	
3.	PROJECTS	
3.1	<p>RSPB - SF confirmed that the swift is not listed in <i>Birds of Conservation Concern</i> (BOCC) largely due to difficulties in obtaining systematic survey data. However, the survey data that is available indicates considerable population declines since 1994. If this decline continues, the swift will qualify for listing in the next revision of BOCC. This is likely to increase RSPB action for this species. SF is producing an advisory leaflet on "Birds in Buildings" for Planning Officers in the Tayside and Fife area.</p> <p>CL mentioned that Clare Darlaston had drafted a leaflet about Roof Contractors and Swifts. It had not been taken further, but it had been proposed that the leaflet be widened to include Bats. It was suggested we all liaise as regards the different leaflets before their publication/circulation.</p>	SF/CL/CD
3.2	<p>Dundee - Dave Ferguson had confirmed that the Swift work underway at present will continue, but it had been decided not to take on any extra work. A Swift Walk is being planned for next year. The nestbox given to the Dundee Ranger Service for Camperdown House (as part of the Tayside Swift Nestbox Trial Project) has not been used. There is a possibility it will be used on the Baxter Park Pavilion instead.</p> <p>CL updated the group on the situation that arose at Janet Brougham Sheltered Housing (DCC) - a fear of bird flu had suddenly derailed the opportunity of incorporating integral nestboxes into the newbuild. The architect was now liaising with Clare Darlaston with regard to ordinary nestboxes being added to the completed building.</p> <p>Hillcrest Housing Association - CL had met the Business Environment Partnership's Student Placement who is undertaking a Biodiversity Review for Hillcrest this summer. Swifts will continue to be considered at the Association's properties.</p>	DF/CL
3.3	<p>Angus - CL said she had arranged a photocall with the Courier to publicise the SITA TBAF-funded swift boxes on Angus Council's new Housing Department buildings in Orchard bank, Forfar. Craig Borland had also offered to liaise with the Manager of the Guide Dog for the Blinds Association at Orchardbank as the charity had been given one of the nestboxes from the Tayside Nestbox Trials Project. Although too late to consider integral nestboxes for the Association's building in Forfar, the awareness raised may pay off in Bolton, Lancashire where there is to be a new Association office built.</p>	
3.4.1	<p>Perthshire - DM reported that she had had a very successful Swift event during the Comrie Fortnight (21 July), although the weather stopped many people taking part in the evening walk. There had been good media coverage in the Strathearn Herald, Perthshire Advertiser and Courier. CL asked for copies of the news cuttings.</p>	DM

3.4.2	<p>Andrew Rodger (Glendevon Architect) had reported: "The apodiblog is probably the last entry for this year as I think the nest is empty and the birds are away. I was not able to establish how many young there were but I do know there was at least one. It remains to be seen whether the new Errol brick nest boxes and CD made any impression."</p> <p>http://web.mac.com/arodger/iWeb/Swift/Apodiblog/95047CD3-0EC5-42C7-9DE3-4B93AF8C4A04.html. Click on "previous" and "next" to see other reports on swifts (and also a photograph of the landscape the swifts are using in Glendevon: not the "usual" swift habitat we assume they live in).</p>	
3.4.3	<p>Charlie MacPherson had reported that he had run a Scone Swift Walk on 24 July (starting at 8pm); there was publicity about this in the Perthshire Advertiser.</p> <p>His own swifts had returned this year and his latest news is: "Wednesday, July 25: two little white faces at nest entrance; Thursday, July 26, morning - one little white face at nest entrance; afternoon no little white faces - climbed into loft for look - one young bird, fairly active still in nest. Do not know if there were two or three young, but have read that last youngster may take even three days longer to leave. Seems like good news!"</p>	
3.4.4	<p>Planning with Swifts in mind was discussed at length. DM reminded the Interest Group that Norma Robson of Perth & Kinross Council Housing Department had attended the Group's training session last year. With the willingness to put up the nestboxes on the council offices in Crieff, there was, perhaps, an opportunity to request further sites across Perth & Kinross to be considered. CL said she would contact Ms Robson to take this forward.</p>	CL
3.5	<p>Tayside Swift Nestbox Trials Project - CL updated everyone on the progress made in the project. There had been continued interest arising from publicity in the local papers and she asked for additional ideas for a second phase of nestbox trials. If sufficient sites/organisations are mooted, she will approach SNH for a second phase of funding for the project. It is essential the second phase is completed by the end of the financial year (preferably by January 2008).</p>	ALL (by mid-Sept)
4.	PUBLICITY AND MATERIALS	
4.1	<p>There has been some excellent media coverage about swift issues this year. Felicity Martin (journalist) devoted a whole page of the Perthshire Advertiser to swifts, publicising the survey and projects, as well as the Swift Day in Auchterarder; the Strathearn Herald and Courier covered the Tayside Swift Nestbox Trial Project at the two Crieff sites: the Council offices in the centre of town, and the hospital. The Courier had also covered the story about the Angus Council swift nestboxes. DM confirmed further coverage of the subject from the Comrie Fortnight event.</p> <p>The results of the Swift Mapping Session will be publicised in due course, but in the meantime there is still an opportunity for additional reporting.</p>	ALL
4.2	<p>CL had circulated the Town Swift Survey poster widely and had arranged for the Swift Survey form to be available in a format that can be edited electronically. Clare Darlaston will now circulate the Tayside survey form for use elsewhere in Central and Southern Scotland.</p>	CD
4.3	<p>The Tayside Swift Newsletter was proving to be popular. CL replies to each completed survey form sent to her with a copy of the Newsletter and further information about the Partnership. She suggested sub-group members might want to do the same by way of thanking volunteer surveyors. Alternatively, CL could undertake a mailing in the autumn when the survey forms are collated at the Mapping Session. Please contact CL if you would like a supply of Newsletters or more survey forms.</p>	ALL
4.4	<p>The survey form is now available on the website (along with other Tayside surveys covering barn owls, red squirrels and sand martins); this has already proved to be a success.</p>	
4.5	<p>CL is keen to have a supply of printed survey forms in 2008 and asked for feedback on any improvements to the existing form. It was agreed a direct Swift Survey link be given on the form rather than just the website address - http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/Biodiversity_Survey_Swift.asp. The web-based Newsletter could also be highlighted on the form - http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/Project_Swift_Newsletter.html.</p>	

	If anyone else has any suggestions for changing the leaflet, or advice on where to find funding to print it, please contact CL before the end of September.	ALL
4.6	CL confirmed that Clare Darlston's presentation from the Partnership's "Accommodating Wildlife" seminar held in March could now be accessed via the website: http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/Information_Training_Seminar.html . The presentation includes 60 pages of good practice examples from Tayside and beyond.	
5.	TRAINING	
5.1	DM suggested that a presentation to the Perth and Kinross Council's Environment Service would probably still be welcomed (discussed at the Mapping Session last year). This would be at one of the Council's internal training sessions held the first Thursday of every month. As Clare is Glasgow-based, the 9am start might be problematical. It might, however, offer an opportunity for Clare to continue on to Dundee to give a lunch time seminar at Tayside House (for local authority staff and others).	DM/CD CL/CD
6.	AOCB	
6.1	CD telephoned to give her apologies; she had mis-read the Agenda and had travelled to Dundee for the meeting.	
6.2	<p>The Interest Group was very pleased to welcome Martin Ridley who had met DM and told her about the swift chick he is rearing. He brought along some video footage of the bird and explained the ins and outs of the (complicated) task currently in hand - including the feeding required at 1.5 hour intervals.</p> <p>Martin confirmed that the weight of the chick was originally 26g (10 days ago) and was now 42g, and that the original wing length of 12cm was now 15cm. He is happy to discuss the different aspects of rearing; his e-mail is: art@martinridley.com. He also suggested three sources of information, namely: http://www.commonswift.org/Hand_rearing_Swifts.html; http://www.commonswift.org/3035Matthes.html; and http://www.uec.ac.uk/biology/research/downloads/thais-martins/fledge.pdf.</p> <p>Martin is a wildlife artist. His own website is www.martinridley.com. The Interest Group thanked him for joining the meeting and wished him well. We hope the chick successfully fledges! <i>[subsequent update given below]</i></p>	
6.3	CL thanked E-RN for providing the meeting room and refreshments at Pullar House.	
7.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
7.1	Tayside Mapping Session: Living Field Studies Centre, Scottish Crop Research Institute, Invergowrie - Monday, 8 th October. As before this will be a "drop in meeting" from 11.30am to 2pm. A sandwich lunch will be available (please pre-book with CL). Please bring maps and sightings information.	

On 6th August Martin Ridley reported:

"The swift flew on 29th with good weather and a tail wind to help it to France. It took off from the ground after being placed on a rug for a couple of seconds. I was impressed given that only a fit adult is supposed to be able to take off from a surface clear of obstructions. It looked around then took off circling past the artificial nest holes and departed over the garage. It was a very confident first flight.

I took the photo below in the couple of seconds prior to lift off. We had a step ladder to hand and were planning to take it down to the field for an elevated release but in the end it was not required.

The maximum weight was 44g and it weighed 37g after its self-enforced pre-flight starvation."



© Martin Ridley