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Did you know?
Young swifts do press ups on their wingtips to strengthen their muscles before leaving the nest.

The swifts' amazing lifestyle

Swifts usually nest over five metres high so they can get airborne easily – when a young swift leaves the nest it won't stop flying until it starts to breed, which could be in three or four years' time! Swifts are unique among birds as the chicks can go into a period of torpor when the weather is poor and the adults can't find enough food. This helps them to survive periods of low food availability.

Swifts are so well adapted to their aerial lifestyle that they resemble a boomerang in flight - they have long, thin wings and a short forked tail. They can sleep whilst flying and reach altitudes of ten thousand feet, the same height as small planes.

For more information about swifts see the following websites:

- www.facebook.com/taysideswifts - 'like' us for updates about swift guided walks and other local information.
- www.swift-conservation.org
- www.concernforswifts.com
- www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk - swift advisory notes can be downloaded from the Developers & Householders section.

Please contact us

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Did you know?
Swifts can each eat thousands of midges every day.



With thanks to Hillcrest Housing Association for sponsoring the publication of this leaflet.

Tayside Biodiversity Partnership



SWIFTS NEED OUR HELP





©Daniele Muir

Loch Leven is a great place to watch them feeding.

Did you know?

Swifts can travel hundreds of miles per day to find food.

The Common Swift (*apus apus*) is our swift: it is born in Scotland and leaves in early August to over-winter in central and southern Africa. According to BTO surveys, their numbers have dropped by over 60% in the last 15 years and the main reason for this is thought to be loss of nest sites.

Swifts feed exclusively on insects and other small invertebrates which they catch whilst flying. They also sleep and mate on the wing and only ever stop to nest and raise their young. They don't perch on wires like swallows or martins do.

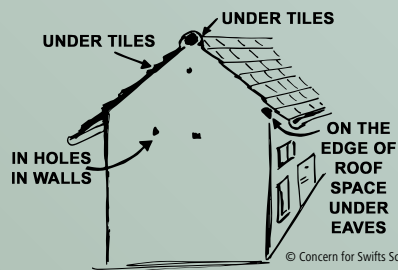
We can provide free advice (and occasionally free nestboxes) to public buildings, care homes, schools and churches throughout Tayside. Contact us for more information.

Where do swifts nest?

Swifts mate for life and are faithful to one nest site, returning there year after year. They are associated with older buildings where they use gaps under eaves and cracks in stonework to nest. Swifts make next to no mess and often you won't even know they are there. As old buildings are renovated or demolished, whole colonies of swifts can be lost.

New buildings tend not to offer nesting opportunities for swifts which is why it is so important to conserve existing nest sites. However, we can advise on how to incorporate integral nestboxes into new-builds and we work with local craftspeople to design nest boxes that blend in with the local stone used in many of our towns and Conservation Areas.

All birds' nests are protected by law and it is an offence to disturb or prevent access to a nest. The erection of scaffolding and nets must be timed to ensure they do not interfere with the nesting season which runs from early May to the end of August.



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Did you know?

On fine summer evenings, swifts gather in 'screaming parties' chasing each other around the buildings where they nest.

What can you do to help swifts?

- Tell us if you see a screaming party - how many birds there were and the address of the buildings nearby.
- Swift Survey forms can be collected from the local library, or add your sightings online at www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk
- Tell us if you know of a swift nest site in use.
- We can advise which is the best nestbox for your property. Sometimes funding is available to reduce the cost of installing a new nestbox.
- We offer swift talks and guided walks to community groups, businesses and schools - please contact us (details are on the back of this leaflet).
- Can you sponsor a nestbox or a day's hire of a cherry picker - or a guided walk? Contact us for further information.