



UK Swifts Now Officially Endangered

It was with some alarm that we were alerted to the news that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has confirmed that our Common Swift, *apus apus*, is now on the Endangered List. As the IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it, this information is not something we can ignore. Edward Mayer, of Swift Conservation (UK), sums things up in his recent online article on the subject. He has given permission to replicate it here.

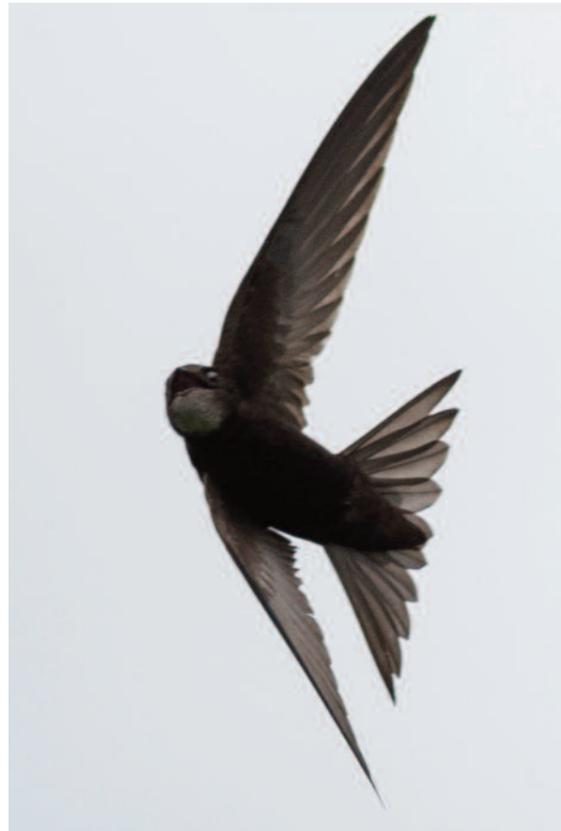
"Depressing but hardly unexpected news, the September 2017 edition of 'British Birds' - in an article titled "The Risk of Extinction for Birds in Great Britain" using the standard IUCN Red List criteria, rates the Swift in the UK as "Endangered".

The emphasis of the IUCN Red List approach is on extinction risk, informed by species' rarity, range restrictions and rate of recent decline measured over the last ten years, or three generations, whichever is longer.

Clearly a lot needs to be done to keep our wild bird populations. We need to keep up the pressure on the media, on non-governmental organisation decision-makers, local government administrators, politicians and civil servants and, of course, do even more ourselves to prevent the dying off of our wildlife and the sterilisation of the world.

Easy actions you can take: buy and put up a swift nest box or - even better - two. Write to your MSP, MEP and local councillors, get an article into your local paper, start off a campaign in social media."

An action we can all take is to spread the word so please look at the Swift websites, share Facebook and Twitter postings, highlight good practice amongst builders and contractors, and contact your local Wildlife Crime Police Officers if you are concerned about actions threatening nesting birds. In this newsletter we will learn about schools and local communities welcoming home our swifts, businesses encouraging new homes to be provided for them, and new opportunities to shout about our favourite birds - such as the UK Swift Awareness Week. If the IUCN says Swifts are "Endangered" we have no time to lose to get them off the global Red List and increase their numbers once again. It is down to us locally to make a difference.



© Craig Cantwell

DID YOU KNOW?

- Swifts live entirely on the wing - feeding, mating and sleeping. They only land to breed.
- They return to Scotland from Africa at the beginning of May and leave again in early August.
- The birds are boomerang-shaped and look all black against the sky (their white throat patch is not often visible).
- They feed on large quantities of insects.
- They only feed on the wing, so are very dependant on weather conditions. The adults will fly hundreds of miles, if necessary, to find food.
- On fine summer evenings swifts gather in "screaming colonies", chasing around the buildings where they nest at high speed.
- Over an average lifetime, each swift will fly approximately 4 million miles to and fro Africa from its birthplace in Scotland.

Swifts in the Community

Ten swift nestboxes found new homes in swift hotspots in 2015/ 16 as part of the Strathearn Swift Conservation Project. These were in Crieff, Comrie, Dunning, Auchterarder, Bridge of Earn, Forgandenny and Muthill.

Guided walks were run in Comrie, Muthill, Auchterarder and Dunning; Tayside Swifts attended Comrie Primary's eco-day; a talk was given to Ruthven Towers care home; well-attended illustrated talks were held at St Columba's church in Comrie and Muthill Parish Church and householders received advice on the best locations to put their nestboxes.

Nigel Franklin from Galvelbeg House B&B in Crieff had assistance from Ian Cramb Slaters in erecting his nestbox. It has been used by House Sparrows but no swifts yet, unfortunately!

The Eco-congregation in Dunbarney were so keen on helping swifts in the area that they went on to find their own funding to run their own project – the Earn Valley Swift Conservation Project, working very closely with all the local schools. A competition was run, with a logo being designed to represent the project and all local schools received a talk on swift conservation. Dunbarney, Forgandenny and Forteviot schools all had a swift box erected on the schools and played the swift call CD to attract the birds to the new boxes. A "Say

Goodbye to the Swifts" event was held in early September in Bridge of Earn, where swift nest sites and boxes were marked on large-scale maps



The Dots on Maps plan of Forteviot, together with the winning logo (c). © Daniele Muir



A new nestbox for the John Muir Trust building, Pitlochry © Daniele Muir



Searching for swifts – Blair Atholl, Highland Perthshire © Daniele Muir



Mapping our Swifts © Daniele Muir



A new nestbox for a Swift enthusiast near Moulin, Pitlochry © Daniele Muir

Edzell Project

The Edzell Swift Mini-project took place at the start of July 2017 with a guided walk around the village, a survey to find existing nest sites and liaison with businesses and householders to find good locations for swift nestboxes. The project started off when we were alerted to a nest site being lost when the Inglis Hall was renovated. A local resident had seen a press release about the Kirriemuir Swift Project and asked if we could put up a nestbox to replace the lost nest site. He commented 'I loved watching the young swifts flying about when we were playing lawn bowls at the back of Inglis Hall.' Tayside Swifts is returning to Edzell this summer to run another walk and to encourage local residents to keep an eye open for their swifts.

The Glens Care Home, part of the Balhousie Group, took two nest boxes and were also keen to arrange a talk for the residents. The Balhousie property in Kirriemuir – Lisden Care Home – also has two swift nest boxes on the building which are monitored by the residents.



Doune House B&B in Edzell has a new triple swift nestbox. © Daniele Muir

Pitlochry Swift Conservation Project

This long-awaited project has been generously funded by the Andie Miller Trust and got off to a very good start in 2017 with plenty of events also planned during 2018. We know swifts nest in Pitlochry so this project is enabling us to raise awareness of the dangers swift face, pinpoint where these nest sites are and, working with both the local community and the local authority, work to safeguard and protect them.

Our first guided walk took place in July 2017 and was attended by eight people. A number of swifts were seen on the walk. Swallows and house martins, along with house martin nests, were also observed, which helped demonstrate the differences between the species.

During the winter, even though our swifts were flying over the skies of Africa at the time, we were still able to raise awareness about them at the Cairngorms National Park Volunteer Day held in Killiecrankie. It seemed very strange to be talking about swifts in January - and having arrived to an extremely snowy venue, but our display was well received and new volunteers were signed up to survey Blair Atholl and Pitlochry later in the year. This

event was followed by the Pitlochry Super Swifts workshop in the local library, attracting a wide range of attendees from school children to retirees. There was a 'Dots on Maps' exercise, swift artwork was produced, and a short film watched about swifts called Silent Spring. There was also time to run a Swift Quiz and a storytelling session.

Logierait and Blair Atholl Primary Schools both enjoyed a talk about swift ecology, why the birds are in trouble and what we can all do to help. The schools were given details about which countries they may be able to twin with – Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa – and were given the choice of which school/ country they would prefer. Both schools chose schools in Tanzania and have recently made their first contact with their 'twinning pupils'. Hopefully this will be the start of a long and productive friendship where both schools can learn about each other's swifts, countries and different ways of life. A copy of 'Screamer the Swift' – a book detailing the life of a young swift – was given to each school, as well as a copy for their twinning school. Another visit will take place after the swifts return so that some swift survey training can take place.

WHERE DO SWIFTS LIVE?

- Almost exclusively in buildings - under roof tiles, on the wall head of buildings (gaining access via gaps and cracks in the wall or soffit), or in holes in the walls of buildings.
- Usually in older buildings, including church towers, but they will use new buildings if there are suitable gaps and spaces. They need a clear flight path to and from the nest, usually over 4m above ground.
- They can use holes too small for starlings or pigeons.
- They are loyal to their nest sites. If disturbed or excluded, they rarely relocate to a new nest site for that season.

Buildings for Biodiversity Project

The Buildings for Biodiversity Project - which was run by the Tay Landscape Partnership - raised awareness of a number of priority species (swifts, barn owls, tree sparrows and bats) as well as swallows, house martins and house sparrows. Throughout the project 50 new swift nest boxes were erected across the TayLP area which stretches from Perth in the north to Forteviot in the west and Newburgh in the east. Householders have been encouraged to play the swift call CD to help swifts find their new homes and the Perth Concert Hall, which has erected a triple nestbox containing a camera, is situated in between a number of natural nest sites. We hope the swift call CD will entice three pairs of young swifts to nest there; if this happens then the Concert Hall will transmit live footage from the nest box to the foyer in the building for everyone to see.

As part of the Tay Landscape Partnership's project, which is making buildings better for wildlife across the TayLP area, four swift nestboxes were erected on Hillcrest's Abernethy properties. Hillcrest Housing Association is a major Swift Champion in Tayside and has supported our projects for some years. It is nice to give something back to them. Other properties in Abernethy have received woodcrete nestboxes so we hope, over time, these will supplement the many natural swift nest sites in the village. It is hoped that young pairs of swifts, looking for their first breeding site, will discover the new nestboxes and successfully raise a new generation of swifts to keep the sound of summer in our skies.



© CAG Lloyd

Buildings and Biodiversity Conference, Perth



© CAG Lloyd



© CAG Lloyd

To bring the Buildings for Biodiversity Project to a fitting close a well-attended accredited conference was held in Perth during November 2017. Its purpose was to raise awareness of how important both rural and urban buildings are to the survival of key species such as Swifts. Its main audience included architects, developers, and timber treatment/pest control specialists. Cost-effective ways to accommodate wildlife were explored, as well as tips given on how to avoid delays to work, and complying with the law. Speakers included Professor Sandy Halliday of Gaia Research, Dusty Gedge of Living Roofs, and Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation. During the extended lunch hour Tayside Swifts' Daniele Muir led an optional walking tour of the surrounding streets to show how to survey buildings for swifts – and how to mitigate for them in development. It was far more popular than we expected!

Kirriemuir Swift Conservation Project

The Kirriemuir Swift Conservation Project took place between 2014 and 2017 and ran alongside the Kirriemuir Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS).

Over the course of the project talks were given to all the local schools - Northmuir Primary, Southmuir Primary and Websters High School. Two nestboxes were put up on Websters High School and these will be monitored in years to come by the pupils. Three guided walks were undertaken in the town and illustrated talks were given at the Gateway to the Glens Museum, at the Kirriemuir Charrette, to Kirriemuir Day Care Group and Kirriemuir Scouts – and also to the Lisdin Care Home residents. We were also able to raise awareness of swifts at a Traditional Roofing & Repair CARS workshop – and arranged a 'drop-in' information session at the library.

Existing nest sites were recorded and new nestboxes were erected in suitable places, many of them being painted with the specially-coloured paint to blend in with the Kirriemuir sandstone. In all one hundred and fifteen new nest sites are now available for the swifts returning to breed in Kirriemuir and the surrounding areas. And we hope we have engendered a lot of new interest in the town's special guests. We often say swifts "visit us" but in reality they are Scottish-born and they just spend the winter away in the southern hemisphere. They breed here, it is their home, so we have a duty to safeguard them and make sure our descendants can still delight at the wonderful "sound of summer" they share with us.



Looking at potential nest sites in Kirriemuir © CAG Lloyd

Swift Best Practice Advice Note

affect swifts – and the all-important aspect of how to go about conserving existing nest sites.

The 'new builds and swift nestboxes' section outlines the work undertaken by Concern for Swifts Scotland and Edinburgh City Council, and also gives examples of best practice where the Premier Inn and Hillcrest Housing Association is concerned.

It was great to be able to give two Tayside examples of successful swift projects in the 'Working in Partnership' section: the Carse of Gowrie Swift Conservation Project was included, as was the community-based Stanley Swift Project.

The Advice Note concludes with a Technical Guidance list of where to get more information.

Copies are available on request to any contractors, builders or architects –

contact caglloyd@pkc.gov.uk, or you can download your own copy via this link:

<http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017-SNH-Swift-Best-Practice-Advice-Note.pdf>.





Blair Atholl Primary School students with their new swift nestbox
© Daniele Muir

Can you spare one hour a year for the Tayside Swift Survey?

If you can spare just one hour during the summer – especially during July - please look to the skies and let us know if you see any swifts - and if so, how many. The online survey is quick and easy: go to the Swift Section on the home page of www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk. The best time to see swifts flying nearby is around 9pm, although mid-day can sometimes be just as good. This is the time when the adults are returning to the nest to feed their young. Other sightings, especially of swift colonies flying over the area, are just as welcome.

Coming to a Sky Near You!

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to “further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions”. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 further requires all public bodies to report every three years on how they comply with this Duty.

The second Biodiversity Duty Reports from Angus Council and Perth & Kinross Council were presented to the Scottish Government in early 2018 and cover the three year period from 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2017.

In its report, Perth & Kinross Council included a mention of its work in conserving swifts by confirming that a condition on planning approval is often added “prior to occupation of the

development a minimum of one swift brick and one bat brick shall be incorporated into each building at eaves height”. Such a planning condition also includes a request to protect existing swift nest sites and to add swift nestboxes where possible.

This was the case where Dunalastair Hotel, Kinloch Rannoch, was concerned. The property was featured in the 3rd issue of the Tayside Swifts newsletter before its conversion to luxury holiday apartments. Amongst the conditions placed upon the property one included the addition of eight swift nest boxes (as well as six bat roost boxes) and all existing swift nest sites to be preserved. Now re-opened, visitors to the hotel will still have the pleasure of watching swifts dashing around the village square but they will

know, too, that the hotel’s swifts continue to have the opportunity to nest in the Victorian building.

Other planning applications that have been approved with conditions attached include: swift and bat boxes on thirty new homes in Rattray, integral swift bricks on a minimum of 40% of all two-storey properties in a new development in Blairgowrie, and similar conditions on a minimum 40% of dwellings in Luncarty incorporating swift bricks and bat roost bricks at eaves height. So if you find yourself buying a new property within Perth & Kinross, remember to check that your new neighbours will also include swifts. Hopefully it will soon be the case that any age of house, new or old, will still be a welcome home to swifts each summer.

Planning Ahead for Swifts

Hillcrest Housing Association has been very supportive of Tayside Swifts over the years; we carried an article about their work in Issue 3. Now they have made a change to their new housing policy which will mean many more new homes for swifts!

Ian Hodge-Neale, Senior Health, Safety & Sustainability Advisor for Hillcrest recently took part in an interview for a Dundee University MSc dissertation about Buildings and Wildlife. Further to this he spoke to Hillcrest’s senior team who then

made the decision that Hillcrest will specify that all suitable new builds will have swift nests incorporated into them as part of the design brief.

As Hillcrest is one of the leading housing associations in the area, this means that not only will there be more nesting boxes available for swifts on their return from Africa in a time when natural nest sites are being lost, but more people will be able to enjoy the sights and sounds of these amazing birds.



© Daniele Muir

Swifts in Churches

Inchture Church had a natural swift nest site in the south-west corner of the building, discovered by a class from the local primary school when on a swift guided walk. Determined to maintain the nest site while undergoing complete refurbishment, Tayside Swifts worked closely with the Minister, Rev Liz Kay, the architect from James F Stephen Architects and George Martin Builders to come up with a simple solution.

Liz said “When we discovered the swift nest site, it was important for the Church to do everything possible to preserve it during our building renovations. The building is Grade B Listed and therefore we had to ensure this was not compromised. Our initial discussions with the architect and the builder proved to be very positive and they were both keen to work around the nest site. The work started prior to the young fledging and we agreed a timetable of work in consultation with Daniele from Tayside Swifts that would enable our work to progress without delay simply by working from the east end of the Church first and delaying the erection of scaffolding around the nest site on the south west corner of the building. This allowed the adults to continue coming and going until the young fledged without any undue disturbance. Once the young had fledged it was easy enough to erect the scaffolding and continue with our renovations.

As we had to try and prevent any access to the internal roof space by birds in the future, we needed to rethink how the site could be protected. Once more in consultation with the architect, builder and Tayside Swifts, it was agreed to build a simple plywood box with some modifications as directed by Daniele and put this in the original nest site, incorporating material from the current swift nest to encourage continued use next year. The entrance to the nest site was made good and looks no different to what it did originally. In addition, we agreed to install another two nesting boxes on the north face of the Church. From an architectural point of view, these are “not permanent”, although we hope they will be there for many years to come. The solutions were simple, inexpensive and in keeping with our status of being registered as an eco Church.”

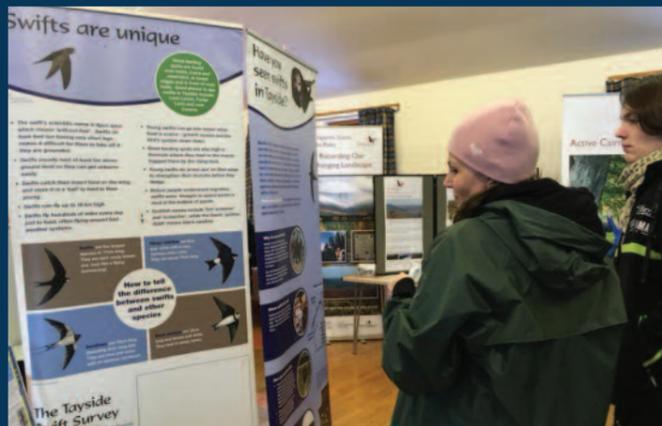
© Daniele Muir

Carse of Gowrie Swift Conservation Project

Although this successful and well-received project finished in 2014, Tayside Swifts still keeps in touch and encourages the continuation of surveys and monitoring of nest boxes. One of the recipients of a nest box, Derek Filingham, last year reported the following from Errol Station in the Carse:

"After the nest box had been in position for a short while House Sparrows took up residence. No sign of Swifts. Recently Swifts have been seen around our house and are now taking an interest in the box. They fly past the box in groups of three or

four. We believe these could be young birds and we may see them again next year. In the meantime we will block the entrance to the box until we see swifts again (we would not do this until the sparrows have fledged). It was exciting to receive a number of visits of approximately 6 or 8 swifts sweeping past our east-facing wall, always accompanied by their wild exciting calls. We must wait until next year."



Wrapped up warm against the winter snow, volunteers read how they can help swifts at the CNPA Volunteer event, January 2018 © CAG Lloyd

Swift Priority Zones

You may have wondered what happens to the data you have collected when you send in your Town Swift survey form, or fill in the on-line survey on the Tayside Biodiversity website. This information is vital for helping our swifts as we need to know where they are nesting to be able to protect those sites.

Our post-graduate intern, Edward Dillon, has been working with the local authority planners to map Swift Priority Zones which means that conservation action can now be focused in these areas. For example, if a planning application for new flats is received for an area which is good for swifts, planners can ask the developers to include swift bricks in the new building, providing new places for swifts to nest at a time when their natural nest sites are becoming more and more rare. They can also work with householders and Tayside Swifts to conserve nest sites if there are changes planned to a house – for example an extension or external insulation.

So your help in recording where you see swifts in screaming parties and their nest sites is invaluable!



Meet Cecil the Swift

Cecil is on extended loan from Perth Museum and Art Gallery. He is a very useful prop when it comes to swift talks and guided walks, illustrating how well swifts are adapted to their aerial habitat with their streamlined shape, long tail, deep-set eyes, small beak and dark chocolate colour. It's rare that we get close enough to a swift to appreciate its amazing design.

School Twinning to Expand

This unique project was officially launched during the Carse of Gowrie Swift Conservation Project and brought together schools in the Carse with schools in Africa. Primary schools in St Madoes, Errol, Longforgan, Abernyte and Invergowrie were all involved with twinning with various schools in South Africa, Uganda and Malawi. The project unfortunately stalled with a lack of funding and a change of staffing in Malawi, but with new funding from the Andie Millar Trust we are now expanding the initiative into Pitlochry and Blair Atholl before hopefully widening the project right across Tayside.

In the meantime, Woodlands Primary School in Carnoustie is the first school in Angus to be part of the Swift School Twinning project – and the school is the official Swift School Champion for Angus.

It is erecting a swift nest box with camera so the pupils can watch the eggs hatch and chicks develop. Did you know a young swift spends a lot of time strengthening its muscles by doing press-ups on its wings, just before it fledges? This sort of behaviour will be fascinating to watch. The Primary Five class will be learning all about the ecology of swifts and what they can do to help, as well as receiving training so they can carry out a survey of the town to discover where swifts are nesting. This information can then be used to help conserve and protect existing swift nest sites.

As before, we are providing John Miles' 'Screamer the Swift' books for the project. This beautifully-illustrated book tells the story of a swift from hatching in the UK to migration to Africa, and covers the trials and tribulations that swifts face

throughout their lives. Each Tayside school taking part in the Schools Twinning project will receive a copy of the book, and those schools in Africa which are taking part in the Twinning Project will also receive a copy, as well as an education pack.

Such is the interest in the Twinning project we are now urgently seeking sponsorship to expand it across both Angus and Perth & Kinross. If you can contribute a minimum of £150 we will acknowledge your donation in the education packs and ensure that each Tayside school taking part in the project receives a swift nestbox and a copy of the book. Perhaps this sponsorship will be of interest to local businesses or your workplace can come together to donate the funding? If so, please contact Catherine Lloyd at caglloyd@pkc.gov.uk.

Screamer the Swift

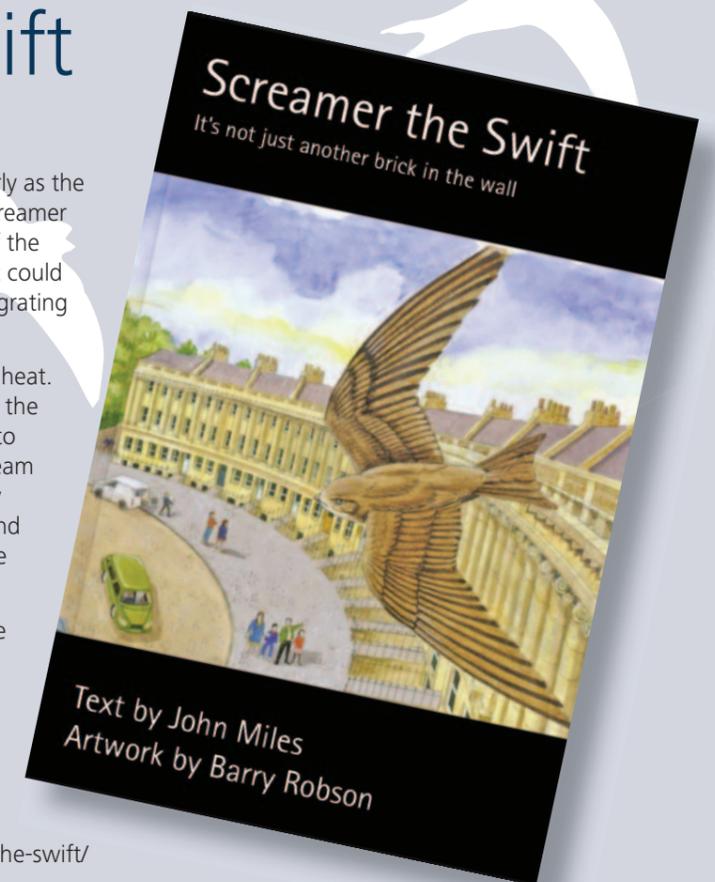
Extract from "Screamer the Swift" by John Miles

"Having arrived in Britain in May, adult Swifts can leave as early as the end of July to start their long migration south into Africa. Screamer was about to embark on a long journey of discovery. One of the oldest Swifts ever recorded was 21 years old. In its lifetime it could have travelled 3 million miles (nearly 5 million kilometers) migrating and feeding.

In no time at all Screamer was in Morocco and enjoying the heat. Soon though, the heat would become intense as he crossed the Sahara desert which covers 10% of Africa. The answer was to gain height like the birds of prey and use the high-up jet stream winds which would speed up his journey into more friendly skies. The last thing Screamer would want to meet was a sand storm blocking his view and filling his mouth with sand as he tried to feed!

With the rest of the Swifts he managed to make it across the sands and into the west of Africa, stopping over for a few weeks around The Gambia's lovely river. Here, too, were many other birds. Some of them, like the young Ospreys, had spent the summer down here as they waited for their turn to head for Britain when they were older."

Copies of the book are available from the publisher Langford Press - <http://langford-press.co.uk/book/screamer-the-swift/> or from www.nhbs.com.



Species Champions Initiative

Angus councillors – and the Provost – have recently promised to lend their support to safeguarding the biodiversity in their area. Many have already signed up to become Species or Habitat Champions, helping to promote one or more species such as Swift, Small Blue butterfly or Badger, or habitats such as Meadows, Hedges or Ponds.

We are very pleased to welcome the Provost of Angus, Councillor Ronnie Proctor, MBE, as our Swift Champion. Every year he looks forward to the return of “his” Swifts to the house he lives in so he shares our excitement where these wonderful birds are concerned. He will be visiting Woodlands Primary School but will also help raise awareness of the plight of our Angus swifts. We look forward to working with him.



© Angus Council

Moving Swiftly On...

Pupils of Blair Atholl School watched excitedly as a swift nesting box was attached to the wall at the front of the school recently. Provided by Tayside Swifts, the school had already been given a talk about the migration patterns of swifts and confirming that because of building renovations and new builds, there were less places for these charismatic birds to roost. Every year they return home to Scotland from eastern Africa and now the school is twinned with a school in Tanzania, a whole new window on the world will be opening for the pupils in both countries.



© L Barr



The Stanley Swift Project (SSP) is now in its fourth year of activity, supported by a small group of dedicated local volunteers, the wider swift network in Tayside and increasing interest and awareness in the local community.

With the first swift seen back in Stanley on 4th May, the 2018 survey season kicked off with a training session to get everyone’s survey skills back and help new members learn the ropes. The group will be surveying until the very last swift leaves in August, during which time any sightings or enquiries from anyone living in or visiting the Stanley and Kinclaven area is very welcome and much appreciated.

Whilst the annual survey of swift nest sites and swift numbers flying above the village is at the heart of the group’s activities, there is also the monitoring of 30+ nest sites to undertake, with the group also aiming to provide additional places for swifts to nest in the coming years.

During 2016 - with a cherry picker generously provided free of charge by locally-based Alba Platforms - nine new swift nest boxes were installed on buildings, including the village hall and private houses. The group has also embarked on a mission to ensure integral swift nest bricks are installed in as many new houses as possible in the extensive Muir Homes development around Stanley.

In 2017, a nest box with a video camera, donated by the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, plus TV screen was installed at the Tayside Hotel where swifts already breed in both a natural nest site and one of two swift nest boxes. Once again, Alba Platforms loaned a cherry picker. More recently, Stanley Men’s Shed has also kindly made three swift nest boxes for the SSP.

The group has produced a logo, letterhead and poster template designed free of charge by renowned local artist, Claire Dalby. Information is shared on the Stanley Development Trust’s Facebook page, posters displayed in shops and community spaces, and a stall taken at a recent Stanley Showcase event. The Stanley Swift Group is participating in the first UK Swift Awareness Week (16th to 23rd June) with some community involvement the preceding week, supported by Tayside Swifts. An event with Stanley Primary School will include swift and bat watching as dusk approaches.

The group is a member of Tayside Swifts and with them they took part in a promotional video commissioned by the Tay Landscape Partnership’s Buildings for Biodiversity Project. Tayside Swifts has also provided the group with a “Welcome Back” flag which Stanley Bowling Club will fly from its flagpole over the summer.

The beautiful swift on the flag will be the largest flying over the village, but will hopefully be sharing many blue skies with good numbers of real swifts during the summer months.

It is obvious this hard-working group loves their swifts and is committed to doing everything possible to enjoy the swifts’ presence in the village in perpetuity. If anyone would like to get in touch with the group, please write directly to stanleyswifts@yahoo.com.



Double swift and bat box (on the left) with a single swift nestbox on the right © Stanley Swifts Group



The Alba Platforms cherry picker hard at work in Stanley © Stanley Swifts Group

UK Swift Awareness Week

During 2018 the UK will become the first country in the world to dedicate a national week in support of Swifts. The first Swift Awareness Week will run from 16th until 23rd June. There will be events and publicity all around the country, organised by dozens of local Swift groups. These events aim to raise awareness of Swifts and bring a focus to their plight, and of course provide information about how to help them. To find a Swift event anywhere in the UK check the Swift Awareness map <https://www.birdguides.com/news/uk-swift-awareness-week-launched/>

The Swift is one of the few endangered species that individuals really can help in their own property and there are many voluntary groups across the country working hard to try to halt their dramatic decline of over 62% in the past 20 years or so. Tayside Swifts will have a number of FREE walks taking place during the summer.

- Friday, 15th June – Celebrating Swifts in Stanley Village: activities for all the family, including a guided walk. Meet 8pm, Stanley Village Hall.
- Saturday, 16th June – Super Swifts of Pitlochry: a guided walk (meet outside the Visit Scotland Office, 22 Atholl Road, Pitlochry, PH16 5BX)

- Friday, 22nd June – Save our Swifts guided walk, Blair Atholl (meet outside the Atholl Estates Ranger Centre, Blair Atholl, PH18 5SP)
- Saturday, 7th July – Find out about Swifts in Edzell (meet in front of the Panmure Arms, 52 High St, Edzell, DD9 7TA)
- Friday 13th July – Find out about Swifts in Kirriemuir (meet in front of the Peter Pan statue by the Gateway to the Glens Museum, 2 High St, Kirriemuir, DD8 4BB)

Each walk is free of charge and about a mile long on pavements. The walks will all start at 8.30pm; everyone welcome, including families. For more information, contact Daniele Muir: dmuir@taysideswifts.co.uk.

Thanks to RSPB Scotland, Tayside Swifts will have a week-long exhibition at RSPB Loch Leven from 16th until 24th June. If you are passing, please call in and say hello.



UK Swift Awareness Week

Partnership Working

A video of swift conservation by community groups has recently been made, through the Tay Landscape Partnership's Building for Biodiversity project. Representatives from Tayside Swifts, Stanley Swift Conservation Project and the Earn Valley Swift

Conservation Project were interviewed at Willowgate Activity Centre on the River Tay in October 2016. The video can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/198993788>

5th International Swift Conference

Following four previous, very successful, conferences in Berlin (twice), Cambridge and Szczecin, the March 2018 conference took place in Tel Aviv, Israel. There were organised trips to local birding and Swift hotspots, including a very special 'Swifts Welcoming Ceremony' at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Over 60 people were able to attend from all over the world, including representatives from Edinburgh, Northern Ireland and England. It was particularly special to welcome a Tanzanian representative via the Jane Goodall Institute (Roots & Shoots).



Copies of this leaflet are available on request – contact DMuir@taysideswifts.co.uk or cagloyd@pkc.gov.uk

Swifts Local Network

Tayside Swifts is part of the Swifts Local Network which enables the many UK-based individuals and small groups now working on Swift conservation initiatives to share experiences and ideas more easily. Join us via the Action for Swifts website: <http://actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk/>

Mapping Our Swifts

We urgently need to map the swift populations of our towns. With external insulation, roof repairs, and re-pointing all taking place across the summer, we need to know where our swifts nest so we can alert

householders to their presence and conserve the nest sites. Is there anybody in Tayside who can survey their local village, or a few streets of their town to find out where their swifts are nesting? We can provide large-scale maps

for recording screaming parties, nest sites and any nest boxes. We can also provide details of any known swift nest sites which may be useful. Please contact Catherine Lloyd on cagloyd@pkc.gov.uk

Swifts Nestboxes at Your Home

Congratulations! You want to help Swifts...



A Swift leaves its nest under pantiles near Lincoln: © Bill Ball



Simply take a snap of this code on your phone for more information on swift conservation

Why Swifts need our Help

Swifts arrive back in the UK from Africa in May and their exciting calls mean that Summer is here. Nesting through to August in buildings, in small holes in the eaves, gables or upper walls, feeding on many harmful flying insects and living in cities, villages and towns, they fill the evenings with stunning aerobatic flight.

They add immense excitement and life to any area. They have shared our buildings for over 2000 years, but new building techniques and materials and insulation of older buildings are preventing them from nesting. As buildings are replaced, insulated or repaired, Swifts find themselves excluded, and they are now declining fast. But we can stop this happening!

How you can help Swifts

Installing simple nest boxes at your home will preserve inner-city Swift populations, enhance local biodiversity. Just like flowers and trees, Swifts will make us feel happier! Creating Swift nest places is not difficult. Using simple DIY carpentry skills you can make low cost Swift nest-boxes. Or you can buy readymade boxes; see the www.swift-conservation.org "Shopping" page for details of types and suppliers.

They cost from under £20 upwards, depending on type and materials used.

Help is available

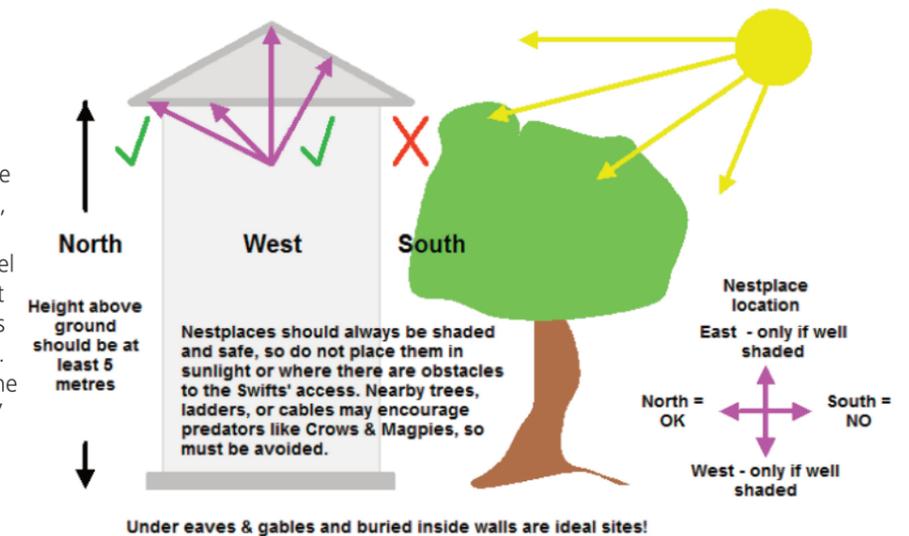
Ask us and we will help you. Contact mail@swift-conservation.org

Choosing the site

Place the nest box or brick on a side of the building that gets some shade during the day. If possible install it under an overhang or under the eaves, to give it protection from weather and heat. It should be sited at least 5 metres above ground, with clear adjacent airspace so the Swifts can access it in high-speed direct flight (they usually fly straight in to avoid the risk of predation). Make sure that predators (cats, crows, magpies, squirrels, and rats) do not have easy access to the nest (e.g. by climbing up creepers or flying in from nearby trees).

Choosing the box

You can find a good range of Swift nest boxes illustrated and described below. Select the box that meets your needs, your budget, and your ability to fit it! Please remember that the longer lasting the box and the more soundly it is fitted, the better for your Swifts.



Plywood

This economical plywood "Zeist Type Swift Nest Box" is available from John Stimpson.

Email: j.stimpson1@btopenworld.com

It is well-proven and is light and easy to fit compared to cement boxes. The downside of plywood is a shorter life, but careful positioning and occasional external surface treatment should prolong it.



Recycled Plastic

A version of the Zeist box is available in strong recycled plastic plank from Filchris Recycled Materials Ltd.

Email: sales@filchris.co.uk

They will also make up bespoke nest boxes in the same material to your own design for sites where this is needed.



Concrete - "Woodcrete"

Several designs of Swift nest boxes from Schwegler are made from a cement mixture known as "Woodcrete". A mixture of cement and plant fibre, it is strong and long lasting. Such boxes have the potential to last a very long time, making them particularly attractive and cost effective.

Opposite is a double Swift and Bat box, which also comes as a smaller single model.

The UK agent for these boxes is Jacobi Jayne

www.jacobijayne.co.uk/nest-boxes-by-species/swift/

Surface Mounted

Several of the commercial designs can be surface fitted under eaves or onto walls. This type opposite is a strong and popular Woodcrete model from Schwegler. We have had success with this box at our project at London Zoo in Regent's Park, and it has also been used very successfully elsewhere.

Do It Yourself

We show some D.I.Y designs for Swift nest boxes on our web site. Choose the one that suits your site and skills.

These boxes are light compared to the concrete ones, and require much less effort to fit, but they will not last as long.

Nonetheless they will, if well made, have a useful life span and are a valuable way of providing Swifts with nest places.

For a choice of designs please see

www.swift-conservation.org/Nestboxes&Attraction.htm#D.I.Y.

Fitting the box

Use strong corrosion-resistant fixings appropriate to the wall material. If you have any doubts at all about your ability to fit the box, ask a professional to do it for you.

Keeping safe

Before fixing or servicing your Swift nest box, make sure your working conditions are safe. Take special care when working at high level. Use appropriate personal protective equipment.

Attracting the Swifts - using the Swift Calls CD & MP3

Occupation of the nest boxes can be speeded up if a recording of Swifts' attraction calls is played to prospecting birds. Recordings are available from us - see our web site's "Shopping!" page. Full instructions are supplied with the calls.

Maintenance

You don't need to clean out the boxes unless other species use them. Swifts nest naturally in holes and crevices, without any cleaning, but the integrity and fixing of the box needs to be assured regularly.

Building on success

If your box is successful, put up some more. Swifts usually nest in colonies, and they like a few neighbours.

Indeed, a busy Swift colony will be a powerful attraction to other Swifts to come in and nest.

CCTV

You may wish to fit CCTV to observe the lives of the birds. Use only wildlife-compatible cameras with infrared lighting. They must only be fitted and adjusted outside the breeding season. If a camera fails while the birds are breeding, it should not be replaced until they have left the nest for good.

Do's & Don'ts

Do give the birds' peace and quiet and every chance to breed.

Do try and keep a diary of the birds' activity.

Do try and put your CCTV pictures onto the Internet so others can share them.

Do check the box each winter to make sure it is still sound and firmly fixed.

If a bird falls from the nest and cannot fly, consult the Swift First Aid pages of our web site, <http://www.swift-conservation.org/SwiftFirstAid.htm>

Don't stand and stare up at the nest box when the Swifts are around. It will put them off.

Don't disturb the Swifts at any time - they will desert the nest.

Don't allow creepers or plants to encroach on the nest. They will give access to predators.

Enjoy your Swifts!

If you need more advice, please contact us at mail@swift-conservation.org



A Swift brings a meal home to its chicks, its mouth is stuffed with flying insects it has caught in flight: © David Moreton

With thanks to Swift Conservation for permission to include its nestbox advice leaflet in this newsletter.

The Stanley Mills Diaspora Tapestry

Volunteers are coming together to sew a special panel highlighting the historical importance of Stanley cotton around the world. This Perthshire site has long been a Swift Priority Zone since Clare Darlestone of Concern for Swifts (Scotland) spotted swifts flying around the old mill buildings when they were being restored. She intervened and working with Historic Environment Scotland the nest spaces under the buildings' eaves were retained and safeguarded. Clare's work led to one of the first Scottish advice notes for swifts being published "Swifts in Historic Buildings".

It is no surprise then to find the Stanley tapestry panel features swifts. The panel design has been approved and transposed onto the linen cloth ready for stitching. Sewing workshops have been taking place in Stanley which have given local people of all ages the chance to practice - and they can then take home samples to practice on. The local school is also involved.

All this is part of a long-term project that extends right across the globe: the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry has been created by countless volunteers in communities world-wide. It is likely to measure at least 90 metres when finished and because it is designed in sections it can be separated and displayed in

different locations. Since 2014 the Tapestry has toured the world and has been seen by over 250,000 admirers in all climates from Iceland and Montreal to Tasmania and Otago. Back in Scotland since 2017, the Tapestry has been ferried across to Dunoon, displayed in Carlisle and for a short time it is displayed in its full glory at Stanley Mills. The Tapestry will then move on to Dunbar, Inverurie, Merseyside and New Lanark before arriving in Glasgow on 1st June 2019. Further details are available via <http://www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org>.

Photo(s) © Stanley Swifts Group - the panel design as drawn on tracing paper



Resources

Swift Conservation has kindly given permission for Tayside Swifts to republish its Save our Swifts postcard. If you would like a batch of these to give to your community group or architectural/building clients, please contact us.

We have also printed a general leaflet 'Swifts Need our Help' to raise awareness

of the increasing plight of our favourite birds. Together with the ever-popular swift bookmark, we are happy to post small batches to you for display in shops, cafes or accommodation throughout Tayside. If you are in a position to sponsor the reprint of any of these items, please contact us – we will

make sure your company or organisation is acknowledged in the reprint.



Are you a business that would like to help swifts in any way? Please contact us if you are!

Tayside Swifts Contacts



Tayside Swifts (Tayside Biodiversity Partnership):

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Project Officer: DMuir@taysideswifts.co.uk / Tel: 07984 975 095

Tayside Swifts

There is a comprehensive Swift information section on
www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk

Concern for Swifts (Scotland)

www.concernforswifts.com / swiftscot@yahoo.co.uk

Swift Conservation (UK)

www.swift-conservation.org / mail@swift-conservation.org



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Published by the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership – 2018