



The Supporter

Newsletter for Lewes Swift Supporters

November 2020

Dear Lewes Swift Supporters,

Welcome to the November newsletter from Lewes Swift Supporters! We are getting in touch to share an update on Swift-related news since our September 2020 edition of The Supporter.

Western Road Project



Dave and Nick installing one of the nest boxes.

It is with great pleasure that we can report that ten new Swift nest boxes have been installed at homes in Western Road!

The beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020 meant that we had to postpone the project of buying and installing ten Swift nest boxes and callers at carefully chosen homes in Western Road. However, we got to work as soon as the Swifts had left us at the end of August to complete the installations before any second lockdown – and we succeeded! We are very lucky in having a good contact in Dave Boddington, who has installed over fifty nest boxes for RSPB and the British Trust for Ornithology over the past few years. Audrey and Nick met him on 14th October to hold the ladders and help out as he worked his way along Western Road until all the boxes were fitted. We hope that the Swifts will investigate this new accommodation when they return to this hot-spot next year! Thank you to all the residents for their co-operation - and to **Sussex Ornithological Society** for their generous grant funding which made it all possible.

In the Autumn, the Leader of Lewes District Council, Councillor Adrian Ross, contacted Lewes Swift Supporters to ask if there was any way that he could offer his support to our group. As a result, after the Western Road nest boxes were installed, LSS Committee members gave both him and Councillor Imogen Makepeace a guided tour of the new Swift boxes and the sites of the two existing colonies in Western Road and at St. Anne's Church.

Over the past year, Lewes Swift Supporters, especially our Chair, Mike Ramsey, have been working with Lewes Town Council to produce a planning guidance leaflet for Councillors. This will inform them about the importance of considering homes for Swifts, especially when considering planning applications for new buildings or refurbishments in areas where the Swifts already nest.



A tour of Western Road Swift boxes: Audrey Jarvis, Councillor Ross, Councillor Makepeace and Kevin Murphy.



This photograph shows an inside view of one of the Swift nest boxes, which include a round depression to secure the Swift eggs – and some feathers to give the parents a good start! They will add to this nesting material with leaves, spiders' webs and feathers that they catch while they are flying. Did you know that **Swifts are very clean birds**, so the nest boxes will not need cleaning out at the end of a season? According to the Swift Conservation group <https://swift-conservation.org/> the parents eat most of the chicks' droppings, possibly to recycle their mineral content!

St. Anne's Church

While being careful to avoid the 19 sites of active Swift nests recorded, we organised an inspection of the eaves of St. Anne's Church and cleared several areas of loose rubble that may have been preventing other Swifts from being able to enter and make a nest. We are very grateful to the Church Leaders for giving us permission to carry out the work and to Ron Hammond, Church Warden of South Malling Church, for his help and his long ladders!

Historical records show that there were thirty Swift nests at St. Anne's Church in 2000, and we would love to be able to record that many there again!

Ron, Kevin and Nick clearing the eaves



Because St. Anne's Church hosts such a large colony of Swifts we have visited other Lewes churches to advise on the possibility of installing Swift nest boxes. A visit to South Malling Church suggested that the eaves on the North side of the tower might be cleared to provide suitable nest sites without boxes being necessary. This work has now been completed by the Church Warden and the Eco-team of Trinity Churches, who intend to fit a Swift caller before the Swifts return next year.

The North Tower of South Malling Church

Sussex Police Headquarters

Back in December 2019, LSS visited Sussex Police Headquarters to begin discussions about the possibility of installing Swift boxes there, since historical records showed that Swifts had nested there in the past. In consultation with Daryl Holter (PCSO, Heritage Crime Officer & Advisor, Wildlife Crime Officer), we successfully applied for a grant from the Police HQ Police Property Act Fund which will pay for two Apex boxes on the North side of The Cottage, (pictured right), and two nest boxes on the North side of the main building.





The grant funding which we received from Sussex Police also includes funds for an additional seven Swift boxes, to be installed by LSS at other suitable locations – see our news of future projects below.

This year Gill and Chris Garratt, (Malling Swift Surveyors), recorded nest visits to six properties in nearby Bridgewick Close and Old Malling Way – so we know that Swifts are still active in this area!

North wall of main building at Sussex Police HQ

Refurbishment of The Crown – with Swift accommodation!

Now that scaffolding has been removed from the building that used to be The Crown, you can clearly see the two double Swift nest boxes installed in Market Lane by Steven Sparks as part of the refurbishment. Steve contacted LSS for advice on the best positions because he was keen to support a resurgence in the numbers of Swifts in Lewes. With four Swift nest boxes on a building opposite, and four active nests recorded at The Maltings this year, we have hopes of extending the existing colony!

Swift boxes on the old Crown Inn



Future projects!

Following the success of our Western Road project, we have been busy over the past few weeks making grant applications so that we might buy and install more Swift nest boxes near existing colonies. We are delighted to report that, in addition to the funding from **Sussex Police** and donations from residents, we have been awarded grants from **Friends of Lewes** and the **Chalk Cliff Trust!** Thank you to all of them for this support!

We have already delivered postcard invitations to homeowners in our chosen areas: focusing on places where we have previously recorded repeated visits by young, prospecting Swifts. Some of them will be looking for a nest site next year and, if all goes well, we plan to have more new nest boxes in place before the Swifts return!

Another thank you to **East Sussex College**, who felt that we were such a good cause that they generously offered to copy the stationery for this project free of charge! If you agree with them and are looking for ways to support us, remember that you can choose Lewes Swift Supporters as your “good cause” in the LDC Local Lottery: <https://www.leweslocallottery.co.uk/support/lewes-swift-supporters>. For every £1 ticket bought, we receive a donation of 50p which we can use towards our funding of future nest box projects! Thank you to those people who are already supporting us through the Lottery!

A special date for your diary!

On the evening of **Tuesday 2nd March 2021**, we will be holding the Annual General Meeting of Lewes Swift Supporters, via Zoom. Nearer the time, we will send you a reminder of the date and invite you to reply if you are able to attend, so that we can forward you a link to the Zoom meeting. After a short “business” session, we will have a series of brief talks from LSS Committee members with an update on our activities and plans for the 2021 Swift season. There will then be time for your questions, suggestions and ideas on how Supporters might become more involved if they wish.

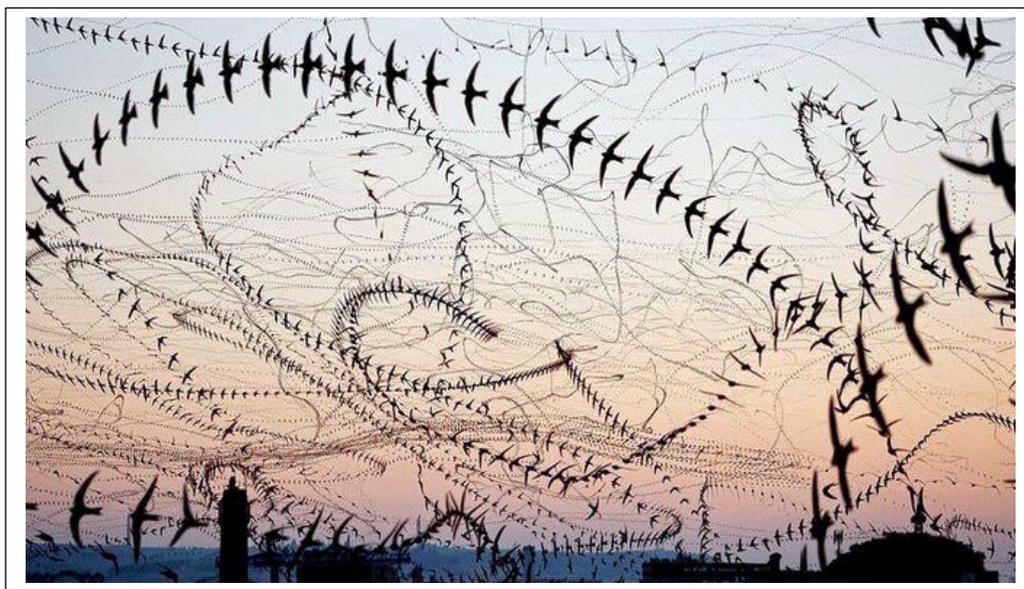
Keeping in touch!

Please remember that you are always welcome to contact us by e-mail, (address below), if you are planning to buy and install your own Swift nest box and would like our advice on the best position for it. We have been pleased to advise 69 residents to date!

E-Mail: lewesswifts@gmail.com
Facebook: "Lewes Swift Supporters"
Twitter: "Lewes Swift Supporters" @LewesSwifts

With best wishes from the LSS Committee and Surveyors:

Mike Ramsey, Chairperson, Treasurer and Surveyor
Kevin Murphy, Recorder and Surveyor
Sharon Hall, Surveyor
Crispin Holloway, Founder member
Gill and Chris Garratt, Surveyors
Nick Jarvis, Surveyor
Audrey Jarvis, Secretary and Surveyor



Swift flight patterns, by Edu Aguilera

All other photographs by members of the LSS Committee

