



The Supporter

Newsletter for Lewes Swift Supporters

June 2022

Dear Lewes Swift Supporters,

Welcome to our June edition of the newsletter from Lewes Swift Supporters – which we are sending out just ahead of **Swift Awareness Week, 2nd July to 10th July!**

We have had some wide variations in weather over Swift season so far but our dedicated Swift surveyors and all of you taking part in Swift Watch have helped to record **60 nests** across Lewes! The reports from LSS Swift Surveyors, below, will let you know more about what is happening in each area of Lewes that we survey.

School Hill area

At the rear of the Flea Market, visible from the car park in East Street, LSS Chairperson Mike has recorded four nests this year, including one that has not been recorded previously. He has seen a party of 12 swifts circling over East Street - these Swifts often scream around the Flea Market and into neighbouring streets so you may see them during the day!

Marked photograph from Mike showing the sites of the nest entrances he has seen.



Mid-town



Kevin, our Recorder, has been kept very busy in this area! He has found seven nest entrances at The Maltings, six above the paint shop in Station Street, six at the rear of the High Street, one in Market Lane and one in Gallows Bank! With the help of custodian, Sue, he has also recorded four nests at the colony in St. Martin's Lane. Watch out if you are ever passing the top of Station Street – the Swifts exit from the nests very low and fly up towards Fisher Street just above head height at high speed!

Marked photograph from Kevin showing all the nest entrances at The Maltings.

Southover

New surveyors Sue and Lubna have been monitoring the Southover area this year. The nest in Potter's Lane, found by Talitha last year, is active again and there is at least one nest at Anne of Cleves' House.

Nearby in Southover High Street, when Margaret had a double Peak Swift nest box installed last year, one pair of Swifts took to it straight away. Well, this year she has a pair of Swifts in each side – and there is another active nest under the eaves nearby!

In Grange Road, Douglas and Evelyn Dodds have shared reports of a safe return to breeding in the nest at their home.

Photograph of a Swift entering a nest at Anne of Cleves' House from 2021 by Douglas Dodds



Top of the town



When Nick Jarvis and Audrey Jarvis, (Secretary), survey De Montfort Road, Western Road, and the surrounding area their favourite place for Swift watching is at the junction of Western Road and Spital Road, where Swifts scream at high speed around the lamp post inches from their faces and past the terraced house where there are eight nest entrances. There has been lots of “banging” at nearby nest boxes too, which may mean that the Swifts could return there next year to breed!

Audrey and Nick have also confirmed that the nest under the eaves at the Bradford Road end of De Montfort Road is active again, and so is the nest box where Michael has recorded Swifts for at least nine years, pictured left. This year Swifts have also been showing an interest in finding nest spaces at the Montessori Nursery building.

St. Anne's Church in Western Road has a history of hosting a large colony of breeding Swifts. In 2020 Mike Helps recorded 30 breeding pairs there! Our best year so far has been 2020 when we confirmed nineteen different nest entrances there. So far this year six nests have been confirmed as having regular visitors.

Wallands

Surveyors Mary and Steve have been able to confirm two nests at homes in The Avenue. Mary reports that on one occasion a Swift dived right over her head - so close that it ruffled her hair! We installed a nest box in The Avenue in March 2022, (pictured right), and we were thrilled to hear from the homeowner, Mark, that he had seen Swifts using it already! Our LSS treasurer, Sharon, has kept us up to date with news of the two breeding Swifts at her home in King Henry's Road through the nest cam. Unfortunately, it is offline now but, having seen an egg in the nest, we hope one day we might see the young chick(s)!



Malling

Surveyor Emma kept seeing four to six Swifts low-flying Swifts around Harvard Close and Lambert Close - and her persistent watching led to her recording a new nest under the eaves of a house in Lambert Place that we have never recorded before! So far, she has seen Swifts visiting just one of the six nests in Bridgewick Close and Old Malling way recorded as active in previous years, but she reports that there are six birds that are consistently active over the Close. They regularly fly through the gaps between the houses - and the banging and Swift calls from inside the other nesting places suggest more possible nests there. She has also seen one Swift almost touch the ground at the junction of Peckham Close and Old Malling Way, so it is possible there's a nest near there too!



Photograph showing nest entry site in Bridgewick Close from Gill Garratt

Swift Awareness Week, 2nd July to 10th July



The **National Swift Awareness Week** has been held every year since 2018 to raise awareness of Swifts and bring a focus to their plight, and of course provide information about how to help them.

Swifts are now on the **red list** of birds of conservation concern because of a decrease in their numbers by 58% since 1995.

Photograph by Robert Booth

How can we help Swifts?

- *Provide more accommodation for breeding*

There is thought to be a lack of nest spaces for breeding since many of the suitable nooks and crannies under eaves where Swifts have historically nested have been lost through modern building methods, renovations, and demolition. We have helped several people in Lewes to install nest boxes to try to compensate for this loss. Together we have provided an additional 111 nest spaces to date with the single and double boxes we have installed. We also work with local councils and developers to encourage the use of Swift bricks in new buildings or renovations near to existing Swift colonies.

- *Help to increase the populations of insects and other invertebrates*

Swifts feed on “aerial plankton” - such as spiderlings, mosquitoes, aphids, flying ants hoverflies and small beetles. The dramatic fall in the population of insects and invertebrates, attributed to widespread use of pesticides reduces their ability to thrive and feed their chicks. We can help by planting native wildflowers and trees or making a pond, however small, in our gardens. See our website for more details: <https://e-voice.org.uk/lewesswiftsupporters/helping-swifts/>

Sadly, there is emerging evidence that the new bright LED street lights “reduce insect populations by half”, which is bad news for all insect-eating birds and bats, (see attached link via email). Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation asks us to make all our local councillors and M.P. aware of this new research. Although LSS will spread the word, it will have more effect if any of you are also able to write to your local councillor as well.

School pupils spread the word about Swifts!

As a way to help Swifts, renowned Swift expert Edward Mayer always includes the message to “spread the word” about these marvellous birds. You can imagine how delighted we were to hear of the recent Swift project by Year 5 students at Western Road Primary School. As part of the Youth Justice Festival at Depot on Sunday 26th June they held an exhibition of their artwork which highlighted the plight of endangered animals and included a display of their pictures of Swifts and speeches from the children to tell everyone just how special Swifts are! **Congratulations** to all the pupils and staff involved.



With best wishes from the LSS Committee:

Mike Ramsey, Chairperson and Surveyor

Kevin Murphy, Recorder and Surveyor

Sharon Hall, Treasurer

Crispin Holloway, Founder Member

Emma Allen, Surveyor

Audrey Jarvis, Secretary, Surveyor and Website Manager

