



The Supporter

Newsletter for Lewes Swift Supporters

July 2023

Dear Lewes Swift Supporters,

Welcome to the July edition of the newsletter from Lewes Swift Supporters! It is great month for watching Swifts. The third wave of younger birds have been delighting us with their screaming fly-pasts often in groups of about thirty! These Swifts have a useful role. As they scream past nests where chicks are about ready to take their first flight, their cries encourage the fledglings to leave the nest and join them on the flight to Africa. It is amazing to consider that they will not usually touch down until their fourth summer, when they are ready to breed. We hope all the fledglings will return to Lewes and boost our numbers!

Nest activity so far in 2023

Let's start as usual with an update on the recorded nests this year – we're now up to 77 nests! Well done to all our surveyors and Swift Watchers! This is where the nests are:

- Upper Western Road – 8 nests, (one in a box)
- St. Anne's Church – 8 nests
- Valence Road – 2 nests
- Rear High Street, (top of St. Swithun's) – 5 nests
- The Maltings – 11 nests
- De Montfort Road - 3 nests, (one in a box)
- Market Lane - 1 nest
- Gallows Bank - 2 nests
- 144 High Street – 1 nest
- Westfield House – 1 nest
- King Henry's Road – 3 nests
- St. Martin's Lane – 5 nests
- Station Street – 8 nests
- Bridgewick Close – 3 nests
- Southover High Street – 4 nests, (2 in a double box)
- The Avenue – 4 nests
- Flea Market – 8 nests
- Potter's Lane – 2 nests
- Old Malling Way – 1 nest



Here is a photograph from the nest cam in nest 1 at King Henry's Road to show just how much the chick has grown!

We think that the chick fledged early in the morning of 14th July and wish it a safe journey. Once it has taken its first flight from the nest it will be off towards Africa and will not land again until its fourth summer, when it will be ready to breed – in Lewes we hope!

Save our insects – save the world!

We all know that Swifts are aerial feeders, depending for food upon insects and invertebrates that they catch in the air. Swift numbers have declined by 58% since 1995 and one factor contributing to this is the fall in the population of insects. Research by Bug Life suggests the abundance of flying insects in the UK has plummeted by nearly 60% over the last 17 years.

As Sir David Attenborough has said: *“If we and the rest of the back-boned animals were to disappear overnight, the rest of the world would get on pretty well. But if the invertebrates were to disappear, the world’s ecosystems would collapse.”*

So, save our insects and save the world! To celebrate this essential wildlife and learn how to help them to survive and thrive, Lewes Climate Hub is hosting a display of Bees, Bugs and Butterflies from 8th July to 27th July. Visitors to the Climate Hub can learn all about this fascinating and essential wildlife. Displays showcase some of the species of bees, bugs and butterflies that can be spotted in and around Lewes and how they support our natural world – with tips on attracting them to your garden.

There’s also an opportunity for artists of all ages to add to the Hub’s ‘Mini-Beast Mural’ by making or drawing their favourite bee, bug, butterfly, or any other mini-beast!

A special Garden Day is being held on Saturday 22 July. Mini-safaris and pollinator counts will take place in the beautiful gardens of Lewes House and School Hill Surgery, led by Jan Knowlson, Biodiversity Officer at South Downs National Park. Visitors can make their own ‘mini-beast mansion’ to take home to attract insects and bugs. Refreshments are available and the community choir “Angels with Attitude” will be performing their “Heartland” song cycle in the afternoon from 2.00 p.m.



The Climate Hub is at Lewes House, 32 High Street, and is open Wednesdays to Saturdays, 11.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. It is well worth a visit!

Swifts and Sussex Wildlife Trust

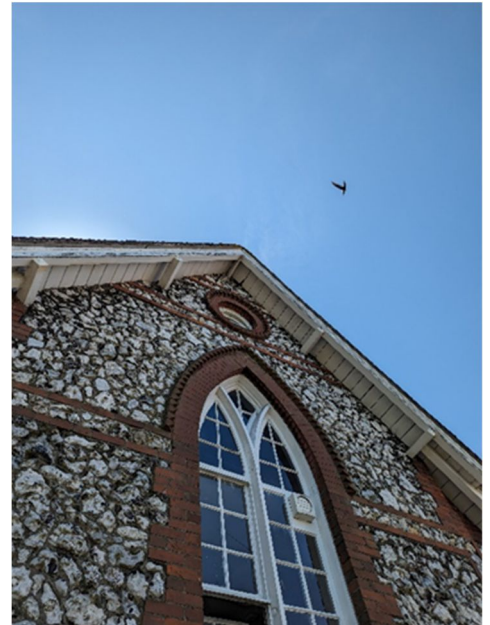
Thanks to support from Emma Chaplin of Sussex Wildlife Trust we have several new members. During Swift Awareness Week, Emma published our blog on “5 ways to help Swifts” which is shared on our website:

<https://e-voice.org.uk/lewesswiftsupporters/swift-diary-2023/>

Some Swift Highlights

Some exciting moments from Nick and Audrey, who survey at the top of the town.

“Last week, Swift Supporter Michael invited us to join him in his garden for a close look at the nest box in De Montfort Road. This nest box has been active for at least ten years and at about this time last year we had the thrill of seeing two chicks peering out of the doorway. This year it was even better! After hearing a lot of noise from the box, we kept watching as a chick gradually came into view. Zooming in with a camera to see more clearly, we caught this picture of the Swift just as it positioned its wings for a take-off flight over our heads! Because it had quite a lot of white around its face, we think it may have been a fledgling beginning its first flight towards Africa.”



“Earlier the same day in De Montfort Road, we watched for several minutes as six Swifts screamed around the Montessori Nursery banging against the gable end. At least one Swift entered a small space at the apex of the gable, closely followed by another one which appeared to get stuck and had to corkscrew itself out backwards.”

A determined effort from Kevin brought results in Western Road!

“Really awful night for me, I had to sit outside the Black Horse and stare at Westfield House. It was worth it though – after 40 minutes I saw a Swift enter!”

Kevin and other surveyors have done some similar “stake-outs” at sites where we have seen Swifts nesting in previous years or seen a lot of activity. Unlike many other birds, there is usually no visible sign of a Swift’s nest from outside. We can only confirm them through observing repeated entries through the same nest entrance. We need to follow the Swifts and then be lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. It is very satisfying when you see one swooping into the nest!

The picture shows the air brick hole where the Swift enters at Westfield House.



In Malling, Emma had a new view of Bridgewick Close which was very rewarding!

“Sussex Police are doing their bit to support Lewes Swifts, kindly hosting two apex boxes and one single Peak nest box on some of the older buildings at Police HQ in Church Lane. This is a site where Swifts are known to have nested in the past. At the end of June, Audrey and I met with PCSO Daryl Holter, Wildlife & Heritage Crime Officer, to see the boxes in situ and look for any signs of activity. Although we didn't see any birds using the boxes yet, there were Swifts over the grounds and, to our delight, we discovered a viewpoint, (complete with handy picnic bench,) where it is possible to view the backs of the houses in Bridgewick Close. This is a real Swift hot-spot where we have suspected that Swifts might be nesting but it is not visible from the road. On 9th July I returned to meet PCSO Dave May who accompanied me on a survey, and we were rewarded with views of seventeen low-flying Swifts and a brand new nest record. It is on the back of number 6, right where Bridgewick resident Trish had indicated she thought there was a nest! We know we haven't identified all the nest sites in Bridgewick Close yet, so I am looking forward to meeting up with Dave again for another look before the end of the season.”



The nest boxes at Sussex Police HQ and the view of the rear of Bridgewick Close.

Sue has sent us this report from her surveys in Southover.

Swift sightings in the summer evening skies have been in quite low numbers of about six altogether during May and June up here near the Swan Inn. But tonight, 12th July, I have just walked back through the town from the Cliffe to Southover and the sky was full of noisy Swifts. When I say full I mean at least thirteen Swifts, which is the most I have seen together this year in the Southover area. At 9.15pm, in a partially clouded sky with a light, cool breeze, they were flying backwards and forwards and around to feed..

Swift Awareness Week 1st to 9th July

To celebrate Swifts at this special time of year, thirty-five people took part in our Swift walks around some of the sites where Swifts are nesting. We were lucky with the weather for all three walks on 1st, 5th and 8th July and all the surveyors said what a pleasure it was to meet up with people who are so interested in finding out more about Swifts and sharing what they have seen.

Watching for Swifts at 98 Western Road





On 12th July we organised an extra Swift walk for the Wellbeing in Nature group from the Railway Land and we had the wonderful experience of being followed up the High Street by a screaming group of 28 Swifts! If you are thinking of going out for your own Swift walk one evening soon, the best time is about one hour before sunset. This was our route: starting at the rear of the Flea Market, past Swift House in Market Lane, past the Lewes Arms to The Maltings, through the Castle Barbican to 80b High Street, then through the bottleneck to St. Anne's Church then up to 98 Western Road. Good luck!

Swift watching at St. Anne's Church

Keep your eyes open during the day too, because the parent birds are flying back and forth to the nest quite frequently to feed their chicks. Don't forget to let us know what you see!

Lewes Swift Supporters AGM date

On Tuesday 5th September, Lewes Swift Supporters will be holding their AGM at the Linklater Pavilion from 7.30 p.m. More details later, but please put the date in your diary and come if you can!

Thank you to all the kind residents who have made donations to Lewes Swift Supporters. If you would like to make a donation, enquire about a nest box, or join us as a surveyor, please contact us via:

lewesswifts@gmail.com

You may also support LSS by choosing us as your "good cause" in the LDC Local Lottery:

[Support Lewes Swift Supporters when you play Lewes District Local Lottery - Lewes District Local Lottery \(leweslocallottery.co.uk\)](http://leweslocallottery.co.uk)

With best wishes from the LSS Committee:

Mike Ramsey, Chairperson and Surveyor

Kevin Murphy, Recorder and Surveyor

Sharon Hall, Treasurer

Crispin Holloway, Founder Member and Surveyor

Emma Allen, Surveyor

Audrey Jarvis, Secretary, Surveyor and Website Manager

