



The Supporter

Newsletter for Lewes Swift Supporters

June 2025

Dear Swift Supporters,

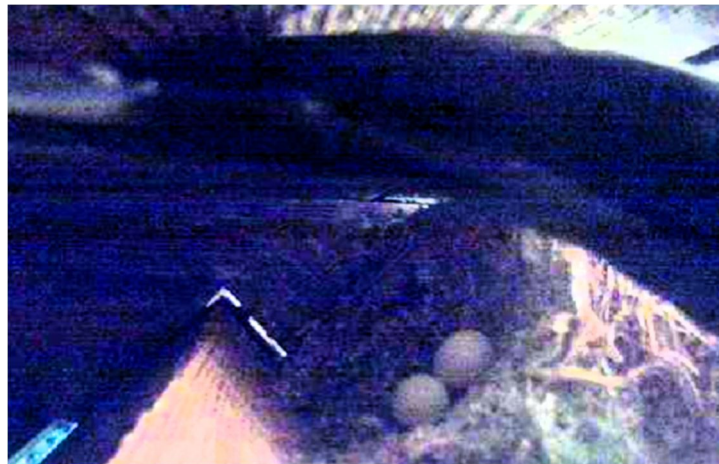
Swift update

In our mid-May newsletter, we reported that we had recorded 34 occupied nests by 14th May - and now we are up to **66 nests!**

These Swifts will be the “first wave” of experienced breeders who, barring accidents, return to the same nest and mate with the same partner every year. Over the past few days, we have seen the beginning of the “second wave” of Swifts that are looking for nest spaces where they might breed for the first time. As you may see from the chart, below, most of our Swifts prefer to nest under the eaves or in some other nook or cranny of a building. We know we have to be patient while Swifts learn to accept the nest boxes, so we are thrilled to see some of the boxes that we have installed in use this year for the first time. De Montfort Road is fast becoming something of a “Swift Street” with four occupied boxes there and one at the rear of Western Road that faces on to it. On 23rd May, on hearing loud calling from two of the adjoining boxes in De Montfort Road, we looked up and saw the face of a Swift peering out from each one!

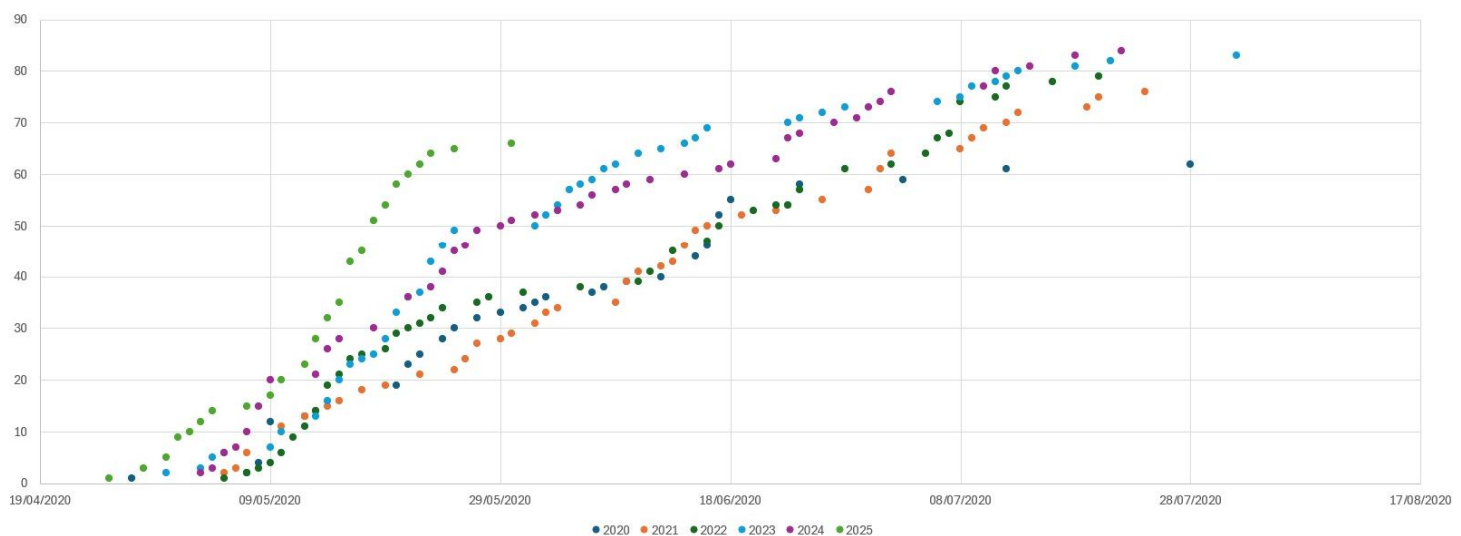
Swift site/colony	Number of nests – so far!
Upper Western Road	3
Rear of Western Road, (RSPB box)	1
St. Anne’s Church	12
Valence Road	2
St. Swithun’s Terrace, (rear of High Street)	9
Grange Road	1
The Maltings	6
Castle Precincts, (opposite The Maltings)	1
Market Lane	2
Abinger Place	1
St. John’s Terrace	1
King Henry’s Road	2
St. Martin’s Lane	3
De Montfort Road, (1 x Woodcrete box and 3 x Peak Boxes)	4
Mealla Close	3
Southover High Street	3
Flea Market	2
The Avenue	1
Station Street	5
Potter’s Lane	2
Rotten Row, (in double Peak box)	2

We have begun to notice “changeovers” at the nests in the evening, where one Swift enters the nest and another one leaves a few minutes later, suggesting that they may be taking turns with incubating eggs. Sure enough, on 26th May, our nest cam showed the first egg in the nest space under the eaves of a house in King Henry’s Road, with two eggs being apparent by 28th May.



Kevin has updated the graph, below, which compares numbers of recorded nests over the past few years. It suggests that we have confirmed more nests by the end of June than at this time in previous years.

Graph 2020 - 2025



Swift Watch and Surveyor Sightings

Thank you to all our surveyors and Swift Watchers for sending their sightings to us. Here are some of their records.

16th May

- Debs saw nine Swifts behind her home in the High Street
- Lynn reported a marvellous evening sitting in the garden at St. Martin’s Lane watching at least twelve Swifts constantly flying around her and dive-bombing the house. She saw banging on the nest to the right of the window, several entries there and to the nest over the window.

18th May

- George saw one Swift enter nest 3 at St. Anne’s Church at 9.00 p.m.
- Nigel recorded Swifts entering each of nests 1, 2 and 3 in upper Western Road between 8.56 and 9.10 p.m.

19th May

- Jane told us that she saw a Swift enter at the end of the terrace in Wallands Park Rise.

20th May

- Bill saw one Swift enter nest 1 in Western Road when he was going past on the bus at 11.15 a.m!
- Margaret updated us on the Swifts at the rear of Southover High Street. One double box has both sides occupied and there has been some interest in the double tiered box she put up next to it last year. In the roof space at 59 she has have seen several Swifts going in and out, suggesting at least one nest here again but possibly more. She says that the noise from the colony seems louder than previous years!

24th May

- Mike recorded the first Swift nest at the Flea Market.
- Larissa and Gill recorded an eighth nest at the top of St. Swithun's Terrace.
- Larissa had been in touch to say that she saw more than 20 Swifts and some House Martins flying low over the water at the Cockshut wetlands, possibly drinking.



A photograph by Marc Guyt, courtesy of Swift Conservation: "The Swift is scooping up water at high speed, leaving a white-water wake where its lower bill cuts the surface of the water"

25th May

- Kevin confirmed a ninth nest at the top of St. Swithun's Terrace!

27th May – a day of 45+ mph winds!

- At 3.45 p.m., Audrey saw one lone Swift battling against the wind while flying over De Montfort Road towards St. Anne's Church.
- At 4.00 p.m., Debs saw six Swifts trying to navigate their way past the rear of the High Street.

30th May

- Barry saw "hundreds" of Swifts by the Cockshut.

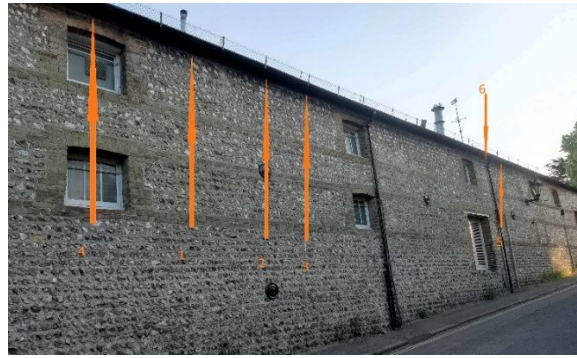
1st June

- Audrey and Nick saw at least forty Swifts over the Cockshut wetlands, and twelve House Martins. Douglas also saw them – and some Swallows too!

Some of our Swift colonies



Top of St. Swithun's Terrace



The Maltings



St. Anne's Church East



St. Anne's Church West

A Swift-friendly Town for Nature Recovery

We had 399 lovely visitors to the six Saturday events during our Swift-friendly town season at Lewes Climate Hub!

When Dylan Walker from People's Park for Nature joined us on 17th May, he invited visitors to draw or write to show what nature and wildlife they would like to see in Lewes in the future. Here are some of their imaginative ideas.



Wild Boar



White-tailed Eagle



Beaver

To mark the visit of Emily Thrift, who gave an informative talk on "Protecting our Hedgehogs – the importance of Plastic", we held a special "Hedgehog day at the Hub. Rustic Tim and his son Michael joined us to help visitors to craft wonderful Hedgehogs out of pine cones and Hazel sticks.



To finish off the season, we had a visit from Alice Parfitt from Buglife, who shared interesting information about the bees, moths, butterflies, and beetles, and their importance for pollination.

We have all noticed that there are many more insects around this year – and this is very good for Swifts! The main focus of our “Swift-friendly Town for Nature Recovery” season at Lewes Climate Hub has been to encourage and share ideas for improving our environment for Swifts and other wildlife. Here are some of the top tips from our visitors, speakers, and guests.

- Planting a native tree and wildflowers or making ponds however small, compost heaps and log piles, will help our insect and invertebrate population to recover from the 61% decline since 2004.
- Help House Martins to continue to be able to make their nest cups by placing a builder's tray full of water and mud in your garden – and help out our bees and other insects too!
- For a healthy pond replace any non-native plants with Hornwort. It is a natural oxygenating plant that competes with non-native species, removes algal blooms, and keeps the water fresh.
- Avoid cleaning out your pond in the Autumn or Winter because the animal and plant life cannot replenish itself at that time of year. If you have a build-up of silt, it is better to take out one bucket every day during the late Spring or Summer, so the wildlife has time to recover.
- Help insects during dry spells by making Hoverfly lagoons to provide egg-laying space for Hoverflies, and insect drinking stations to benefit smaller insects. You could join the Buzz Club project and contribute to their research: <https://www.thebuzzclub.uk/hoverfly-lagoons>
- Connected green spaces are best for promoting biodiversity. Become part of the Lewes Mosaic for Nature by adding your garden, planter, or even a window box full of wildflowers: <https://www.railwaylandproject.org/lewes-mosaic-map>
- Wash your clothes in a laundry bag to prevent microplastics entering the water and soil systems, being swallowed by small animals such as insects and snails, then being ingested by larger other animals, including humans.
- Close your curtains when you turn the lights on to keep the skies dark. This helps Swifts, other migrating birds, bats, and moths to navigate safely.
- If you have a patch of grass, keep one section of it cut to a close turf to benefit those solitary bees that “mine” into the ground to build their nests, such as the Ashy Mining Bee.
- Include some early flowering plants such as Willow, Blackthorn and Primrose - insects emerging earlier in the year due to climate change need a source of food.

Thank you again to the team at Lewes Climate Hub for letting us use their lovely room and for supporting us in so many ways! <https://lewesclimatehub.org/>



Photograph by Amir Ben Dove, courtesy of Swift Conservation, capturing the moment when a Swift is lining up with its target snack, a large flying insect.

Thinking of installing a Swift box or House Martin cup?

We have been making a lot more site visits to prepare for our next batch of Swift box and House Martin cup installations. Do get in touch by contacting us via lewesswifts@gmail.com if you are interested. Three of the boxes we installed in De Montfort Road, two in Rotten Row, and two at the rear of Southover High Street have been occupied by Swifts. Boxes installed by residents at the rear of Western Road and in De Montfort Road have also been entered by Swifts.

We install boxes throughout the year, so you do not need to wait until next Swift season to contact us!

Swift walks 2025

Members of the LSS Committee are leading three Swift walks around some of the colonies of central Lewes on Saturday 14th June, Wednesday 18th June, and Saturday 21st June, from 8.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. Just contact us with your preferred date if you would like to come along! You will be very welcome!



Get in touch or follow us:

- Email: lewesswifts@gmail.com
- Facebook: Lewes Swift Supporters
- X: @LewesSwifts
- Instagram: @lewesswifts
- BlueSky: @lewesswifts.bky.social
- Website: <https://e-voice.org.uk/lewesswiftsupporters/>

Spread the Word!

If you have a friend or relation who might be interested in helping Swifts or learning more about them, please do share this newsletter with them. The more people who know and care about Swifts, the better their prospects will be!

With best wishes from the LSS Committee:

Mike Ramsey, Chairperson and Surveyor
Kevin Murphy, Recorder and Surveyor
Sharon Hall, Treasurer
Crispin Holloway, Founder Member
Audrey Jarvis, Secretary, Surveyor and Communications