



# The Supporter

Newsletter for Lewes Swift Supporters

August 2025

Dear Swift Supporters,

## Swift update

Here is the monthly update showing the number of sites where nest entrances or exits have been recorded. We have now recorded 107 different nest spaces visited by Swifts!

Swift site/colony	Number of nest spaces where entrances/exits recorded
Upper Western Road	5
Rear of Western Road, (RSPB box)	1
St. Anne's Church	22
Valence Road, (two in a double Peak box)	4
High Street	1
Top of St. Swithun's Lane, (rear of High Street)	13
Grange Road	1
The Maltings	9
Castle Precincts, (opposite The Maltings)	1
Market Lane	2
Gallows Bank, Abinger Place	5
St. John's Terrace, (one in a Swift box)	2
King Henry's Road	3
St. Martin's Lane	3
De Montfort Road, (one under eaves, four in boxes)	5
Station Street	5
The Avenue	5
Mealla Close	3
Southover High Street, (two in boxes)	4
Flea Market	3
Potter's Lane	2
Rotten Row, (in double Peak box)	2
Westfield House, Western Road	1
Bridgewick Close, Malling	3
Old Malling Way	1
Anne of Cleves House	1

To see a map showing where we have seen Swifts entering nests in Lewes, click [here](#), or visit our website Swift diary page: <https://e-voice.org.uk/lewesswiftsupporters/swift-diary-2025/>  
Our records show that, at some of the nest spaces, only one or two nest entrances or exits have been seen. This may mean that a prospecting Swift was investigating to find a good breeding site for next year,

or that returning Swifts entered several times outside our usual survey sessions. A good example of this happened on 24<sup>th</sup> July, when Rus was doing a mini-survey in the afternoon. Just before the rains started at 4.20 p.m., she saw a Swift enter a nest entrance in Old Malling Way that had not been recorded yet this year.



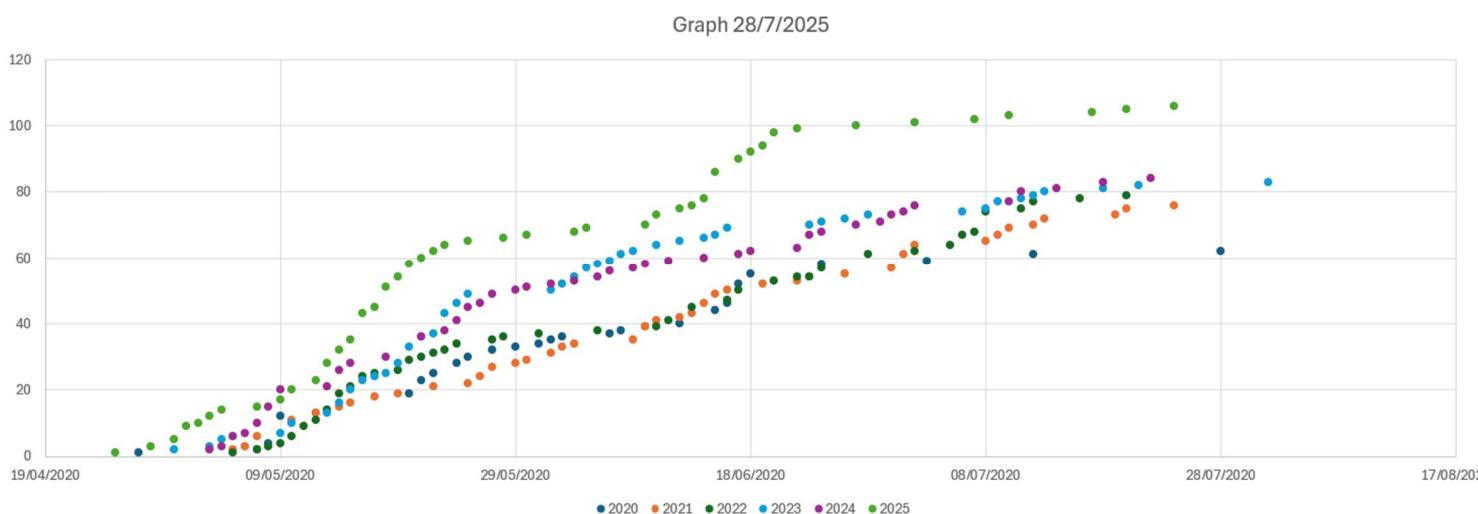
Old Malling Way



Swift entering nest 1 in Western Road

We have seen other nests visited repeatedly since late April or early May. For example, we have recorded 106 entries to, or exits from, nest 3 at the junction of Western Road and Spital Road since 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Although we cannot see inside the nest, we would like to think that this indicates successful breeding has taken place here!

Kevin has updated the graph, below, which compares numbers of Swift nests recorded by LSS over the past few years. It shows how many more nests we have confirmed this year! Thank you to all our surveyors and Swift Watchers for their valuable contributions to our records.



### Nest box occupancy

So far, we have installed 143 single nest boxes, 53 double boxes and one triple box in Lewes. Through grant funding we have been able to pay for boxes and their installation at properties close to an existing colony, where there is a good chance that they will become occupied and help the colony to expand. As we expected, the take-up of boxes has been slow because our Swifts prefer to nest under eaves. This year has shown a small but positive boost in occupancy of boxes by Swifts, with entries recorded to twelve of them, compared to four in previous years. Consistent entry to some of the boxes has been seen over several weeks of the season, especially in De Montfort Road and Valence Road. Our hope is that chicks fledging from these boxes will recognise them as good breeding spaces when they return as three year old mature Swifts that are ready to breed.

As mentioned in our July newsletter, we would love to know of **any birds** that you have seen visiting boxes, at your own home or elsewhere in Lewes. Dave Boddington is compiling this data on behalf of Sussex Ornithological Society. This is not only interesting information but may also be a good indicator of follow-up occupancy by Swifts.

So far, you have told us of occupancy by Sparrows, Great Tits, Blue Tits, and Starlings – and Swifts!



*Swift activity around the occupied nest box in Valence Road*

### **Nest Cam Diary**

Thanks to the nest cam in one of the nests under the eaves of a house in King Henry's Road, we have been able to follow the progress of one family of Swifts throughout the season.

The first Swift arrived back on 25<sup>th</sup> April, and the partner returned on 14<sup>th</sup> May. By 24<sup>th</sup> May, we could see one egg in the nest, and we could see two eggs by 28<sup>th</sup> May. Once two eggs are laid, that is when the Swifts begin to take turns with incubating them.

On 20<sup>th</sup> June, we were able to distinguish two chicks amongst the tangle of Swifts in the nest. As the chicks grew we were able to see them more clearly when the parents left to hunt for the 20,000 insects needed every day to feed themselves and the chicks.



*Two Swifts 14<sup>th</sup> May*



*Two Eggs 28<sup>th</sup> May*



*Parent Swift and two chicks 2<sup>nd</sup> July*



*Two chicks 10<sup>th</sup> July*



*Two chicks, showing their wide gape, 12<sup>th</sup> July*

It takes thirty days before the fluffy baby coat is replaced by feathers and by July we could plainly see the feathers developing. RSPB suggest that Swift chicks reach their maximum weight after four weeks, then they slim down again as their bodies direct resources to growing their feathers. As they grew larger, the

chicks became more restless, moving from the lower to the upper part of the nest space and beginning to flap their wings. We think that the Swift chicks fledged at 7.18 a.m. on 28<sup>th</sup> July. Swift experts advise that the fledglings leave the nest and join parties of younger Swifts to immediately begin their return towards Africa, not landing again until they are ready to breed in their fourth summer. The parents may return to the nest for a few days before beginning their migration separately. The male and female will not meet again until they return to the same nest space next year.



*Four Swifts in the nest 25th July*



*Flapping wings, 26<sup>th</sup> July*

In Southover High Street, Margaret has reported that her Swift chicks fledged on 18<sup>th</sup> July, and the adults left on 26<sup>th</sup> July. She had three nests where the Swifts bred successfully, (two in the roof and one in a box). Although there were two more Swifts in another box all Summer, she does not think they had chicks this year.

### **Wellbeing in Nature Walk**

On 11<sup>th</sup> July, we met with members of the Wellbeing in Nature group, based at the Railway Land to lead them on a walk around some of our Swift colonies. On the way we saw a Swift enter the broken air brick at Westfield House, one entry at St. Anne's Church and five Swifts entering nests in upper Western Road. These walks are part of our partnership of the Mosaic Project with the Railway Land, Lewes Urban Arboretum, Wildflower Lewes, and Common Cause. You may find out more about the Mosaic Project, and add your garden to the map, here: <https://www.railwaylandproject.org/lewes-mosaic-map>



*At St. Anne's Church, Western Road*

## Save the date - Lewes Swift Supporters Annual General Meeting

We will be holding our Annual General Meeting at the Linklater Pavilion on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October, from 7.30 pm. At the meeting we will share an overview of the 2025 season, answer any of your questions, and enjoy listening to any of your reports of Swift sightings and behaviour. Refreshments will be available. Invitations and details of the guest speaker(s) will be shared as soon as they are confirmed.



*The Mayor of Lewes in 2024, Imogen Makepeace, celebrating our Swift-friendly town status at the 2024 AGM*

### Thinking of installing a Swift box or House Martin cup at your home?

Do get in touch with us with an email to [lewesswifts@gmail.com](mailto:lewesswifts@gmail.com) if you are interested in installing a Swift box or an artificial House Martin cup at your home.



*Swift box in Church Lane*



*HM cup in Cleve Terrace*

You may find out more about our usual arrangements for installing nest boxes in Lewes on our website page: <https://e-voice.org.uk/lewesswiftsupporters/helping-swifts/>

If your property is suitable and near an existing Swift colony, we are often able to fund the purchase of the box and the installation. We are very grateful for donations from local residents and businesses and for grant funding from Chalk Cliff Trust that makes this possible.

If you chose Lewes Swifts Supporters as your good cause in the LDC Local Lottery, this also supports our work: <https://www.leweslocallottery.co.uk/support/lewes-swift-supporters>



Swift entering Valence Road nest box 8<sup>th</sup> July



Swift in the Valence Road nest box, 1<sup>st</sup> August

### Get in touch or follow us:

- Email: [lewesswifts@gmail.com](mailto: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! Do encourage people to sign up as a member and receive our newsletter and invitations to our talks and walks – a growing membership can help us when we are making grant applications.

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