



The Supporter

Newsletter for Lewes Swift Supporters

June 2026

Dear Swift Supporters,

We have had an unusual start to the season, with early returns during the warm weather at the end of April reported all over the country. This was followed by a quiet spell for sightings as the weather became colder again – and rather windy! As the warmer weather returned, so did the Swifts! Let's see what June will bring!

Swift update

First of all, here is a record of the sites where nest entrances or exits have been recorded so far in 2026. So far, we have recorded **57 different nest spaces** visited by Swifts - and you may be able to add to this total!

Swift site/colony	2026 records – number of nest entrances	Where is the nest?
Upper Western Road	4	Under eaves
Rear of Western Road	1	In nest box
St. Anne's Church	8	Under eaves
Valence Road	5	Three under fascia board and two in nest boxes
High Street, newly discovered nest entrance	1	Under eaves
Top of St. Swithun's Lane, (rear of High Street)	7	Under eaves
The Maltings	4	Under eaves
King Henry's Road	1	Under eaves
De Montfort Road	5	Four in nest boxes and one under eaves
The Avenue	4	Under eaves
Station Street	5	Under eaves
Bridgewick Close, Malling	1	Under eaves
St. John's Terrace	1	In nest box
St. Martin's Lane	2	Under eaves
Flea Market	3	Under eaves
Mill Road	2	In boxes
Abinger Place	1	Under eaves
Grange Road	1	Under eaves
Mealla Close	1	Under eaves

Swifts Local Network shared this interesting article by Bernard Genton to explain the “three waves” of Swifts.

Common Swifts *Apus apus* and Their Three-wave Arrival

Bernard Genton

We normally talk about the return as the arrival in our countries of the Common Swifts *Apus apus* in the spring; in fact it is a little more complicated than that. Birds belonging to the same colony return to their breeding site at different times, more precisely in three main consecutive waves: these are the findings based on 939 young swifts, ringed at the nest between 2008 and 2019, in a colony of artificial nest boxes (62 pieces in 2019) which have been designed, built and installed (Photo 4) in Féchy (VD), in the Lake Geneva Basin, Switzerland, at an altitude of 440 m (6-22'33" E / 46-28'43" N). My research method was published in 2014*: individual swifts are ringed with a different colour accordingly to the breeding season in which they are born; this way each generation is easily recognizable and identifiable in the thousands of photos taken in front of the holes of the nest boxes when the swifts return to the colony in the following years. Of course, mainly depending on the latitude and altitude of the site, the timing of arrival indicated here could differ significantly from that of colonies in other Countries.

*Bernard Genton, Marcel Jacquat, 2014. *Martinet noir entre ciel et pierre*. Editions de la Girafe, Musée d'histoire naturelle, CH 2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds. To order, email: mhnc@ne.ch



First wave

The first wave is that of the breeders who will lay eggs in the colony during the current year: this wave begins in mid-April and usually ends around the 18th of May. In this interval of time, the first to arrive are the faithful 'old' breeders, whilst the last ones are swifts who will lay eggs for the first time. It should be noticed that this wave has a period of overlap with the second wave.

Photo 1: A breeder defends his nest against an intruder. Féchy. Switzerland. Bernard Genton

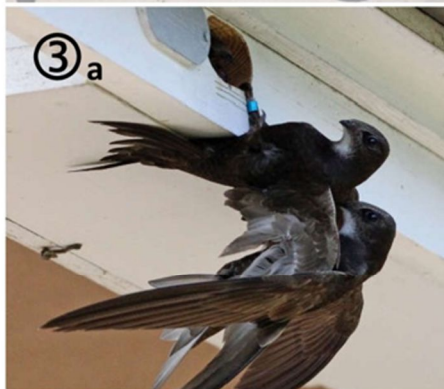


Second wave

The second wave consists of 2-year and 3-year-old individuals. The older ones (a minority in number) will become 'pre-breeders', the others 'bangers'. This wave starts on about the 10th/15th of May and continues until the 10th/15th of June.

In this time period, first to arrive (numerically fewer) are the older swifts, while the bulk of the troop comes later and it is mostly composed of 2-year-old swifts. It should be noticed that this wave partly overlaps in time with the first wave. The arrival at the nests of the 2 and 3-year-old members of the colony is recognizable by their banging and by their hesitation to enter the cavities (while the breeders enter at once).

Photo 2: A young swift, ringed in gold colour in 2010, tries to escape as it is fought back by the breeder, following his attempt to intrude into the nest. Control photo of May 12, 2breeder 012. Féchy. Switzerland. Bernard Genton



Third wave

The third wave is made up of 1-year-olds (called 'yearlings'); they are often in groups and behave like bangers. They do not arrive until the 12th/14th of June

Photo 3a: A young swift, ringed in blue in 2009, explores a nest already occupied by breeders of the current year; another immature swift is clinging onto his back. Control photo, June 29, 2010. Féchy. Switzerland. Bernard Genton

Photo 3b: Common swifts banging at the colony's scaffold holes which have been modified for them, Civic Tower Ghirlandina, Modena. Mauro Ferri

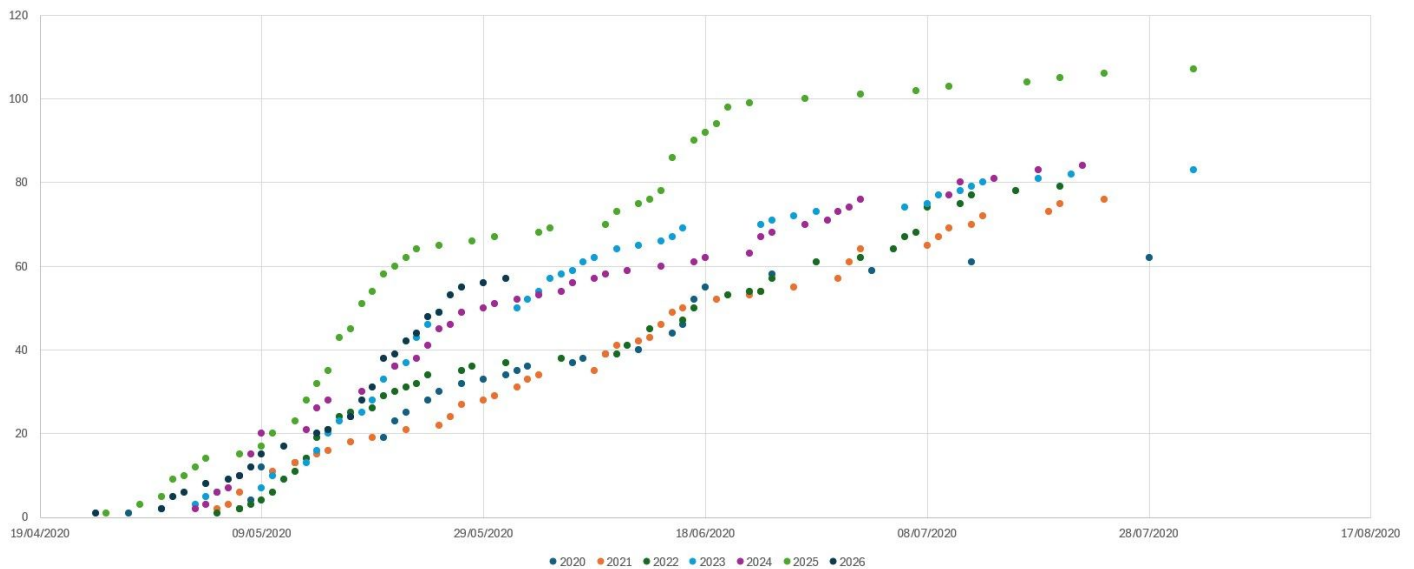
Photo 4: Swifts banging at the artificial nests of the Jordil colony, Féchy (VD), Switzerland. Bernard Genton



Text and captions: Bernard Genton; Translations: Mauro Ferri, Marcel S. Jacquat, Eugenio Parisi; Graphic design: Mauro Ferri

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This graph from Kevin Murphy compares the numbers of nest entrances recorded this year with those recorded in previous years. The number is lower, probably because of the sustained cold spell at the beginning of May. By this time of year, the second wave of prospecting two year old Swifts arrive to look for a nest space for next year - but there is likely to be an overlap with more of the first wave of breeding Swifts. Swifts in a nest box in Valence Road did not arrive until mid-June last year – and they stayed until late August and bred successfully



Thank you to all the surveyors and Swift Watchers who share their sightings with us and help us to monitor the Swift activity as carefully as possible. Every sighting that you send us might help us to find new places where the Swifts are congregating - and perhaps even nesting birds!

We usually receive a lot of sightings during May and then they decrease over the summer. If you can continue to send sightings throughout the season, even if they are from the same place as your previous sightings, that is helpful because it shows continued interest in a particular area.

If you see some Swifts, this is what we would like to know:

- Date
- Time
- Address of nearest property
- Number of Swifts
- What the Swifts were doing, for example, flying, screaming, or banging against a potential nest space.

Swift surveying

We are delighted to be joined by several new surveyors this season!

Tom is one of those monitoring the Wallands area and he sent us this message about his experience so far.

“I am very proud to be joining the Swift Survey team this year. As a resident in Wallands area and with a Swift nest in our eaves, it was important for me to learn more about this great species. What began as a learning experience has also turned into a wonderful way to see, hear, and discover our local area, seeing new views and landscapes and meeting fellow residents along the way. Thank you to fellow surveyor George for all her enthusiasm to log this year’s nests on the Avenue. Let’s get out there soon to record some more! And a huge thank you to Audrey and Kevin for their guidance and encouraging comments throughout. We are very fortunate to have you championing the Swifts of Lewes!”



A Swift about to enter a box in De Montfort Road



Swifts above St. Anne's Church

If you have the time to spend at least two evenings a month watching the Swifts and letting us know what you see, do get in touch. Experience surveyors would send you information, accompany you on your first survey, and put you in touch with other surveyors of your area. We are particularly interested in hearing from anyone in Malling – because that is such a large area to walk around!

Swift Walks 2026

Swift Awareness Week this year is from 27th June to 5th July. This annual event aims to celebrate these migratory birds, highlight their declining numbers, and encourage communities to protect nest sites and install Swift nest boxes or Swift bricks.



Photograph from one of our Swift walks in 2025

We are organising guided Swift Walks around central Lewes again on **Saturday 27th June, Wednesday 1st July, and Saturday 4th July, from 8.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.** The walks are free, but spaces are limited. If you would like to book a place, please contact us via lewesswifts@gmail.com and we will send you details of the agreed meeting point.

The route will be a gentle walk along pavements. If the weather is very wet or windy, the walk will be cancelled.

Behind the nest cam

Here are some nest cam photographs showing that the Swift activity in the attic of King Henry's Road has resulted in two eggs! It was wonderful to watch the chicks growing last year, so fingers crossed!



One egg in nest on 24th May



Second egg on 26th May

Nature Recovery season at Lewes Climate Hub

Thank you to everyone who attended our Nature Recovery season at Lewes Climate Hub in May. We had 330 visitors over the four main Saturday events, Swift Day, Hedgehog Day, Wildflower Day and Rewilding Day with People's Park for Nature.

Each of the special Saturday events following our wonderful Swift Celebration Day on 9th May was chosen as being relevant to our Swift-friendly Town project.

On Saturday 16th May it was **Hedgehog Day!** Trevor Weeks from East Sussex Wildlife Rescue and Ambulance Service gave an excellent talk to explain the challenges that Hedgehogs face. Hedgehogs are classified as vulnerable to extinction in Great Britain, with populations having declined by up to 75% in rural areas since 2000. Many of the ways that we might support Hedgehogs are similar to those we encourage for our Swift-friendly Town, such as leaving wild edges to our gardens, building log piles and making leafy corners.



A wonderful talk from Trevor Weeks, founder of ESWRAS, on Hedgehog Day

Saturday 23rd May was our **Wildflower Day!** We were joined by Lesley Healey, secretary of Wildflower Lewes, to share tried and trusted ways of growing native wildflowers in our gardens, planters, or window boxes. Lesley brought along wildflower plugs grown from seed in our Mosaic Project tree and wildflower nursery so that visitors could take home a starter pack. Thanks to Peter Thurman, of Lewes Urban Arboretum, we also had packs of native wildflower seeds that we gave away in return for donations to ESWRAS.

As you know, growing native wildflowers and trees provides food and habitat for the insects and invertebrates that our Swifts feed upon.



Making badges and choosing wildflowers to take home on Wildflower Day

On Saturday 30th May, Dylan Walker of **The People's Park for Nature** came along to share advice on renaturing our gardens and green spaces. He gave an excellent talk that showed how small actions can make a big difference to improving biodiversity.



Dylan explained one of the basic principles behind the introduction of “lost” species across the UK. Even if the habitat is perfect for the once-prolific animal to return to, they will not consider it unless they can sense the presence of breeding animals of their species.

You can find out more about the People's Park for Nature here: <https://www.peoplesparkfornature.org/> and register your garden as part of the People's Park!

Each Saturday, we were collecting donations for East Sussex Wildlife Rescue and Ambulance Service, (ESWRAS). We chose ESWRAS to support because they had successfully rehabilitated a Swift that was found in Lewes, then set it free from Malling Down. We are delighted to report that we have raised a magnificent £350 for this charity! Thank you very much to everyone who donated!





ESWRAS is a front-line rescue service for wildlife casualties who, unlike their domesticated cousins, do not have owners to help look after them.

Our contributions should be very useful because they are currently collecting funds to replace their X-ray machine. Having a modernised machine will enable their team to continue to provide vital on-site diagnostic imagery without causing additional stress to the casualties. Find out more about ESWRAS here: <https://wildlifeambulance.org/>

What to do if you find a grounded Swift

Because Swifts eat, sleep, drink and mate in the air, only landing when they are ready to breed, a Swift on the ground it is likely to be in trouble. It could be injured or be a fledgling that has fallen out of the nest before it is ready to fly.

Once we saw a Swift fall out of a nest space in Western Road with an audible bang. Before we could even cross the road to reach it, it recovered and flew off safely – proving that healthy Swifts can take off from the ground!

If the Swift doesn't recover immediately and fly away, put it in a quiet place in a suitable covered container with air holes, such as a shoe box, and contact ESWRAS for advice. Their 24 Hour Emergency Rescue Line number is **0300 10 26 999**.



Here is some advice from **Swift Conservation** about what NOT to do with a grounded Swift.

- Never leave grounded Swifts where they are found - they need help as soon as possible.
- Don't attempt to feed it or give it something to drink. Swifts have a unique diet and feeding a dehydrated or poorly Swift can kill it very quickly.
- Don't attempt to make it drink in case it inhales the water.
- Don't throw or launch the Swift into the air. This could pose a serious injury risk - like forcing you to run to see if you have a broken leg!

Get in touch or follow us:

If you live in an area where there is an existing colony of Swifts or House Martins, or where there used to be, do get in touch if you would like a Swift box or an artificial House Martin cup installed at your home. When we have the opportunity to expand existing colonies for these social birds, we are usually able to fund the boxes/cups and their installation if your property is suitable.

Just contact us via lewesswifts@gmail.com

To report your Swift sightings, or to ask for advice about installing a Swift box or House Martin cup, you may contact us via:

- 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! Do encourage people to sign up as a member and receive our newsletter and invitations to our talks and walks – a growing membership can also 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
Georgina Lee, Surveyor
Russo James, Surveyor
Loick Tyson, Surveyor
Audrey Jarvis, Secretary, Surveyor and Communications

