



The Supporter

Newsletter for Lewes Swift Supporters

June 2023

Dear Lewes Swift Supporters,

Welcome to our June edition of the newsletter from Lewes Swift Supporters! The second wave of Swifts has well and truly arrived in Lewes!

Nest activity so far in 2023

Thanks to the sharp eyes of all our surveyors and Swift watchers we have now recorded 69 nest entrances across Lewes. This is where they 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) – 4 nests
- The Maltings – 11 nests
- De Montfort Road - 2 nests, (one in a box)
- Market Lane - 1 nest
- Gallows Bank - 2 nests
- 144 High Street – 1 nest
- King Henry's Road – 2 nests
- St. Martin's Lane – 5 nests
- Station Street – 7 nests
- Bridgewick Close – 2 nests
- Southover High Street – 4 nests, (2 in a double box)
- The Avenue – 2 nests
- Flea Market – 8 nests

Well done everybody!

Swift Awareness Week

This year Swift Awareness Week is from 1st July to 9th July. As in previous years, we have organised three evening walks around some of the Swift colonies in Lewes on **Saturday 1st July, Wednesday 5th July and Saturday 8th July.**

To book a place, please send a separate email to lewesswifts@gmail.com giving your name and your first choice of date. *It would help if you don't reply to the email accompanying this newsletter because your reply may get lost in the thread.* We will reply to confirm the details of when and where we are meeting.



Swifts in the news!

On 13th May, Audrey and Nick Jarvis met Jonathan Guthrie, who writes a nature column for the Financial Times and was researching Swifts and Swallows for his next article. After a cup of tea and a chat, he went with them on their survey at the top of the town. They were just pointing out where the Swifts usually nested in De Montfort Road when one of them obligingly entered the nest, closely followed by another Swift!

Jonathan kindly sent us a copy of his article and here is an excerpt which eloquently describes the event!

I saw a pair return to their nest hole in a weathered gable. The swifts scythed past my ear at head height as I stood on the pavement. The first bird swung up through 45 degrees and popped straight through the aperture. The second followed minutes later. Their agility was breathtaking.

You can read the full article from Jonathan on the diary page of our website:

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



Nest boxes

Audrey and Nick were out and about with Dave Boddington again on 15th June to install more Swift boxes. What a great day it turned out to be!

All the boxes we installed were from Peak boxes: <https://peakboxes.co.uk/shop-swift-boxes>



At Windmill Inn there is now a new double box which was kindly donated to us by Bidy. We hope that one day this will attract the large groups of Swifts which we see speeding up and down Spital Road late in the evening.

We also installed another single box in Western Road in the hope of extending the colony there. We were much distracted by screaming parties and nest entries nearby at number 98! The Swifts look so much larger when you see them during the day.



While fitting a box in Castle Banks we couldn't resist going round the corner to look at all the Swift action around The Maltings. It was very exciting there, with repeated fly-pasts and entries to three different nests, one of which turned out to be new nest 11!





Last of all, we went to Emma's house in Mill Road to install her wonderful double corner box with a bat back. On the way home we visited Bridgewick Close to show Dave the buildings which have, or have had, nests there. It was a great treat to watch more screaming parties of up to six Swifts going round and round the houses!



Some Swift Highlights

Apart from the thrill of watching Swifts swirling through the air and entering nests, and the relief at their return, some unusual things have happened during our surveys.

Kevin has had a couple of odd moments in the last few weeks.

“The first was one windy evening whilst watching at 30/31 Station Street. A Swift came out of its nest only to have a gust of wind send it almost to the ground, but thankfully it recovered OK. The other was only the other night at the Maltings. Two Swifts were all lined up to enter the same nest. The first entered but before the second could follow a House Sparrow came out of the same hole. That put the second Swift right off! It never came back while I was there. This does tell me that birds, (including different species), will use the same hole and then travel inside to its own nest. It makes for interesting statistics, but we can only record what we see.”

Trish has had some exciting times in Bridgewick Close:

“I’ve sat out in the backyard watching the swifts above as they were literally flying above my head so low that I could hear their wings flapping. It was amazing and every time the adults flew screaming near the nest the chicks started to scream for their parents ! Not long after I watched the first parent enter the nest in the eaves at number 6 whilst the other was darting around. Then they went in and all you could hear was so much screaming which I’m sure was parents and hungry chicks being fed - so all good at Bridgewick everyone!”

Audrey and Nick watch with their hearts in their mouths when this happened up in Western Road:

“It was very, very quiet tonight until up at 98 Western Road until it suddenly became a bit too exciting! There was a lot of very loud calling from the nests and two Swifts dropped to the ground from nest 6 with a thump onto the pavement. They were so tightly tangled together that they looked like a black lump. They lay in a heap on the ground for a few seconds but before we had time to act they flew off independently. What a relief! One returned and entered nest 6 again almost straight away and the other flew clockwise and anti-clockwise 8 times around the lamp post, only about 2 metres from the ground, before entering new nest 7.”

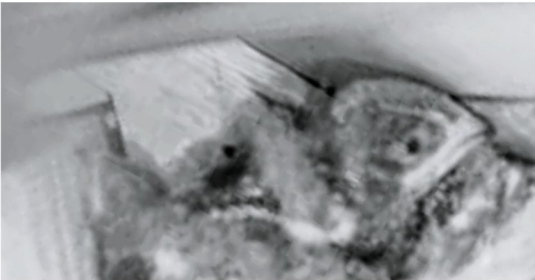
Debs has been enjoying watching the Swifts from her balcony at the rear of the High Street:



“So much activity in the last few days due to the heat! Here is a still from some footage at 1.30pm today in the heat of the day. I just sit here and it's pretty constant - lucky me!”

Nest cam update

Do you remember that we could see two eggs in the Swift nest in Sharon's attic in King Henry's Road? On 8th June we notice that one egg had hatched. At first it was difficult to get a clear picture to share because the parent Swifts were taking such good care of it but on 17th June we managed to save these photographs of the nine day old chick:



Bees, Bugs and Butterflies Days at Lewes Climate Hub

Swifts rely for their food on catching spiderlings, midges and many other insects and invertebrates as they scythe effortlessly through the air. The fall in the population of insects is thought to contribute to the decline in Swift numbers. If you are wondering what you might do to help, you might visit Lewes Climate Hub from **Wednesday 5th July to Friday 27th July** during their Bees, Bugs and Butterflies Days. The Hub will host a display of information to celebrate these amazing mini-beasts and learn how to help them to flourish. Visitors will be invited to draw or make a bee, bug, or butterfly to add to the Mini-beast collage. The Hub is open at 32 High Street from 11.00 a.m. to 3.00p.m on Wednesdays to Saturdays.

On **Saturday 22nd July**, the Hub is hosting a "garden day" when you can join Jan Knowlson, SDNPA Biodiversity Officer, on minibeast safaris of the beautiful gardens of Lewes House and School Hill Surgery. You will also have the chance to make a minibeast home for your garden.

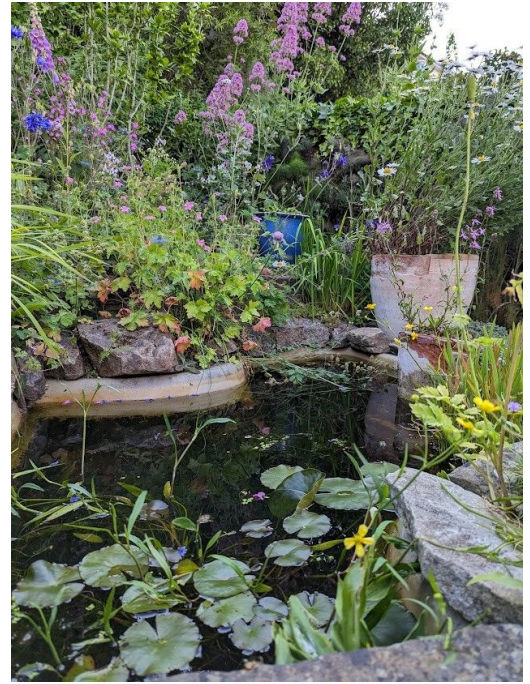
These small animals are important to all of us! Sir David Attenborough has said: *"If we and the rest of the back-boned animals were to disappear overnight, the rest of the world would get on pretty well. But if the invertebrates were to disappear, the world's ecosystems would collapse."*



We can all help to save Swifts - and save the world! If you have a garden, let the lawn grow a bit longer. You could sow a "wildflower mix" that insects will like or grow plants with the single flowers which insects prefer rather than double flowers. Planting a tree or a hedge will also provide the essential food and habitat to allow the numbers of insects to increase. And, if you do not have a garden, a trough, window box or hanging basket would still help!

If you ever walk near a pond you will notice how many insects are swarming just above the surface. A pond in your garden will help the number and variety of insects to flourish. Your pond does not have to be a large one. A bucket or bowl submerged in the ground with oxygenating plants such as Water Milfoil and a tall plant such as an Iris at the edge will soon attract interesting wildlife.

If you stop using pesticides and herbicides, not only will you be helping the insect population to grow but you might also find other animals like hedgehogs and bats enjoying your garden too.



LDC Lottery

Thank you to all the kind residents who have made donations to Lewes Swift Supporters. If you would like to make a donation, please contact us on 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

