



The Supporter

Newsletter for Lewes Swift Supporters

June 2024

Dear Lewes Swift Supporters,

Welcome to the June edition of the newsletter from Lewes Swift Supporters!

This year the weather has been very changeable during Swift season – with a range of hot, cold, wet, and windy evenings for surveying. Thank you to all the surveyors and Swift Watchers for sending in their valuable reports.

Nest activity so far in 2024

At the time of writing, our surveys and reports from Swift Watchers have confirmed that Swifts have returned to **68 nest spaces** in Lewes.

The current range of the Swift nests across Lewes is as follows:

- Upper Western Road – 5 nests
- St. Anne's Church – 9 nests
- Valence Road – 2 nests
- St. Swithun's Terrace, (rear of High Street) – 7 nests
- The Maltings – 7 nests
- De Montfort Road - 3 nests, (two in boxes)
- Market Lane - one nest
- Westfield House, Western Road – one nest
- Grange Road – one nest
- Abinger Place – one nest
- St. Martin's Lane – 5 nests
- Station Street – 7 nests
- Bridgewick Close – 2 nests
- Southover High Street – 4 nests, (2 in a double box)
- Potter's Lane – one nest
- The Avenue – 4 nests
- Flea Market – 5 nests
- King Henry's Road – 2 nests
- High Street – one nest

Here are some updated marked photographs from our surveyors which show the positions of the nest entrances recorded in 2024 at some of our colonies.





More Swift boxes and House Martin cups in Lewes!

On Wednesday 19th June, we met up with Dave Boddington, Swift Champion of Sussex Ornithological Society to install eight more Swift nest boxes in Valence Road, West Street, Spences Lane, Queen’s Road, and Stoneham Close. It was a beautiful day and we enjoyed watching the Swifts swooping and screaming low above us – a sign that we were installing the boxes in good places!

Thank you to Dave Boddington for his excellent help – and for his kind donation of the three boxes with bat backs which we installed in Valence Road.



Valence Road



Stoneham Close

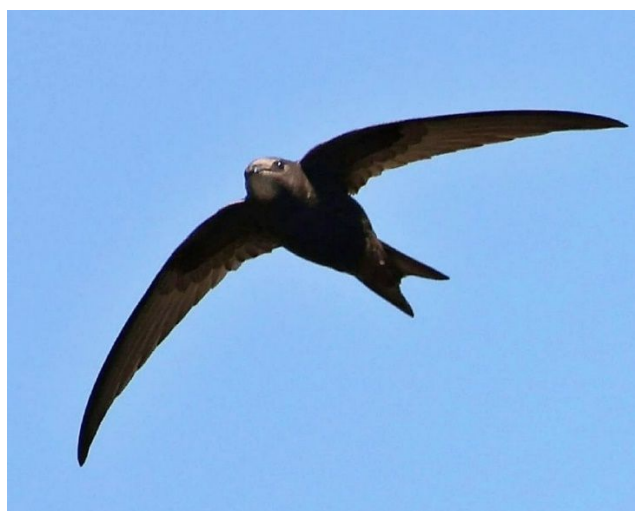


View of the bat back on some boxes

On Tuesday 25th June, we installed six artificial House Martin cups and three Swift boxes in Garden Street, Dorset Road, Southover Road and Southover High Street. We funded the House Martin cups in Garden Street and Dorset Road because, until recently, House Martins have built their own nests here and we wish to encourage them to return!



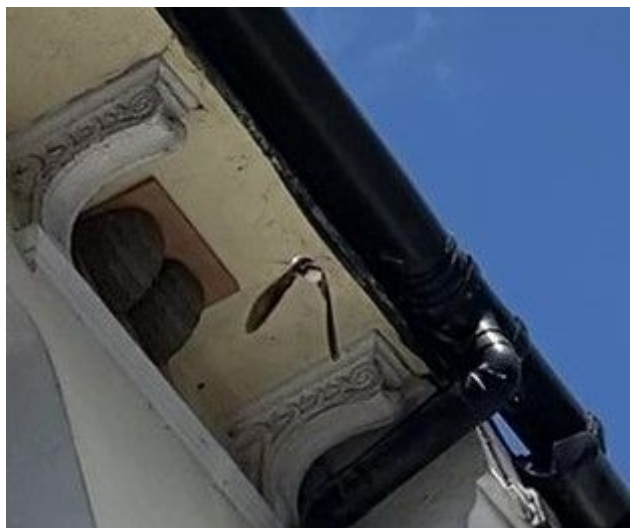
While we were installing the House Martin cups, see photographs above, we had the pleasure of watching House Martins flying above us and flying in and out of one of the established artificial nest cups in Garden Street. There were lots of Swifts flying over Southover Grange too!



Photographs of a House Martin, (left) and Swift, (right), for comparison

Nest Box successes!

During one of our transect surveys on 5th June, we took a detour down St. John's Terrace to follow a group of seven Swifts and three House Martins flying over the terraces. We were delighted to see two of the House Martins enter a natural nest cup there. The resident reported that there had also been a lot of interest in the artificial House Martin cups which we installed in the street in December 2023. Sure enough, on 17th June, we were thrilled to hear from a resident in St. John's Terrace that House Martins were now going in and out of one of her artificial nest cups! We are funding nest cup installations in some of the streets where we have a record of House Martins nesting recently, so this news is very encouraging!



House Martin leaving the nest in St. John's Street

On 26th May, a resident of De Montfort Road contacted us to let us know that they had seen and heard Swifts in the nest box which we had installed for them in April 2021. This was part of our project which aimed to expand the colonies in the Swift hotspots of De Montfort Road and Western Road. The very next day our surveyors were able to see the Swifts entering the box for themselves.

Nearby in De Montfort Road is a Woodcrete box, installed by the previous resident eighteen years ago and used by the Swifts every year since then. On 6th June we were lucky enough to capture this shot, below, of one of the Swifts leaving the nest box.



Occupied Peak nest box in De Montfort Road



Swift leaving occupied Woodcrete box in De Montfort Road

If you live in Lewes and are thinking of installing a Swift nest box or an artificial House Martin cup, this is how we might support you – if your building proves to be suitable and there is access for a long ladder.

- Funding a Swift box and the installation when someone lives next to an existing Swift colony.
- If you do not live next to an existing colony, we still offer support and advice on installing a Swift nest box. We visit the homeowner to find out if the building and location are suitable and help to decide on the best place for a box. At current prices, this would cost you £48 for a single box and £25 for the installation. See: <https://www.peakboxes.co.uk/shop>
- A free House Martin cup and installation for anyone who lives in a suitable location in an existing colony so that we might encourage expansion of the existing colony.

Just get in touch with us if you are thinking of installing a Swift Box or an artificial House Martin cup: lewesswifts@gmail.com

If your home is not suitable for a Swift box or House Martin cup, remember that there are other things you may do to help our Swifts to thrive: [How can we help Swifts? - Lewes Swift Supporters \(e-voice.org.uk\)](http://www.lewesswifts.org.uk)

Visit to Wallands School

On Tuesday 11th June, Lewes Swift Supporters were invited to Wallands Primary School during their “Biodiversity Week” to tell all the Key Stage 2 children about Swifts and how to help them. We were given a very warm welcome and we were very impressed by the children – they listened carefully and asked some intelligent questions. We have been donated three Swift boxes which we hope to install at the school later in the year.

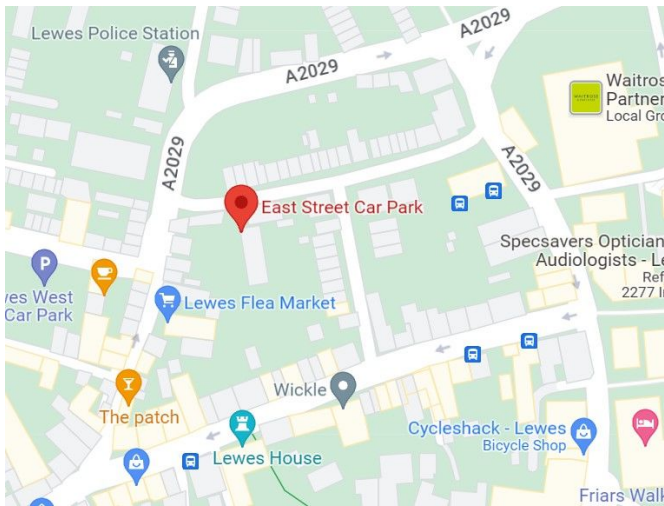
If you belong to a community group which would like to hear about Swifts, do get in touch with us!



KS2 assembly at Wallands School

Reminder - Swift Awareness Week, 29th June to 6th July.

We still have a few places left on our Swift walks on Saturday 29th June, Wednesday 3rd July and Saturday 6th July to celebrate Swift Awareness Week. Each walk starts at 8.00 p.m. from the East Street car park at the rear of the Flea Market and end in Western Road.



We will be walking at a gentle pace around the streets of Lewes.

To book a place on one of our Swift walks, please send an email to lewesswifts@gmail.com and let us know your preferred date and a second choice of date if possible.

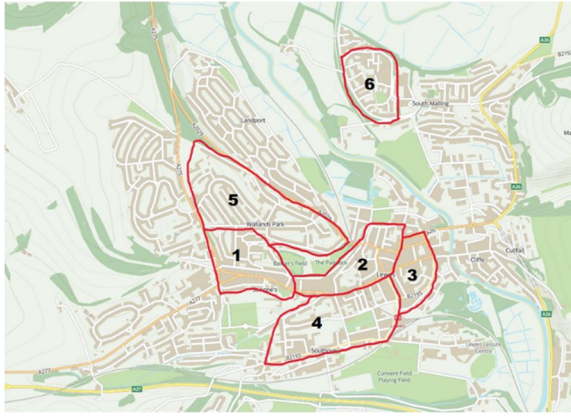
If the weather is not suitable, we will send out a message by 6.00 p.m. on the day.

Our Surveys in 2024

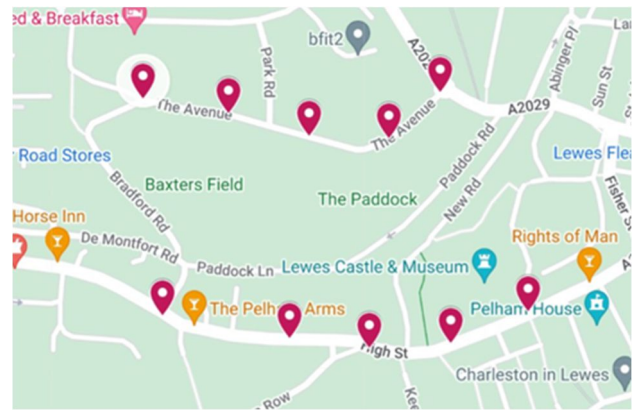
This year we are using several survey methods so that we might find out more about “our” Swifts and their behaviour and nesting sites.

Our tried and tested survey method involves several different surveyors who regularly monitor one of six areas of Lewes by following the Swifts and seeing where they go and what they do. We have several new surveyors this year, and if you would like to join in you would be very welcome.

We have also been trying out a transect method which was shared with us by RSPB. Once a week for eight weeks we are recording Swifts seen along The Avenue and the High Street, along the routes shown by the red markers on the map below.



Map showing survey areas



Map showing transect route



We are also experimenting with two hour surveys at three of our colonies: St. Anne's Church, The Maltings and the Flea Market. We chose the perfect evening for our first two hour survey at St. Anne's Church!

We hope that a combination of the information from these surveys will help us to protect known nest sites, expand colonies with more Swift accommodation, and compare results year by year to reveal more about changes in our Swift population.

St. Anne's Church, Western Road

Last but not least, we never forget the valuable contributions to our data from Swift Watchers, including those residents who report activity at the nests they are lucky enough to have at their own home. Thank you!

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

Emma Allen, Surveyor

Audrey Jarvis, Secretary, Surveyor and Website Manager