

## Swift Newsletter March 2023

Hello

We now have over 100 households in Winchcombe who have been in touch with the Winchcombe Swift Support Group to set up a swift box. Thank you for supporting the swift, and other UK red listed birds whose numbers have dropped significantly over the last twenty or so years.

The swift season is from the end of April to early August, although some birds arrive a bit later (mid-June) and leave towards the end of August. We are around six weeks away from the return of the swifts and this of you with a new swift box may be wondering whether your box will be occupied this coming season. This will depend on when your box was installed and your location.

We installed a batch of swift boxes last March and these are likely to have been 'seen' by returning swifts in 2022 - paired swifts who have previously identified nests, and first year swifts without mates or nests. The first year swifts are the most likely occupants of the new boxes, some may have briefly visited the box last year, others may have 'noted' the box for this coming season.

Swift boxes installed mid-season would have been noticed by the swifts in Winchcombe, but unlikely to have been visited. The boxes installed in the autumn will not yet have been 'seen' by any of the returning swifts. Therefore, there is a chance that swifts might use the boxes this year that were installed from last March to the middle of the season.

Currently many swift nests in Winchcombe are concentrated in the older dwellings along Cheltenham Road, Gloucester Street, through to Abbey Terrace and the High Street, and along North Street to the Old Boys School. These older buildings in the town are most likely to have nooks and crannies and minor defects in the fabric of the buildings and in the roof, which are ideal nesting places for swifts.

The purpose of our project is to increase the population of swifts in Winchcombe by expanding the available nest sites so eventually they nest all over Winchcombe. If you are away from this main swift highway, it may take time for the swifts to become interested and eventually nest in your box.

You may also get other birds entering and nesting in your box. From our experience the most likely birds are sparrows and starlings. Whilst this maybe disappointing for those who want swifts to nest, we would still be helping other red listed species to thrive and you may still get swifts nesting later on.

If you are further away from the Winchcombe swift highway, the likelihood of attracting swifts to your box is increased by playing swift calls through a small speaker system. You will need a power supply and a timer. Details are available at [Swift Conservation Homepage \(swift-conservation.org\)](https://swift-conservation.org)

You can also find out more information about swifts on our website [Home - Winchcombe Swift Support Group \(e-voice.org.uk\)](https://www.e-voice.org.uk)

It would help enormously if you can let us know whether your swift box has any visitors this summer. You can email us [wssgroup7@gmail.com](mailto:wssgroup7@gmail.com) or share your updates on [Winchcombe Swift Support Group | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/winchcombe-swift-support-group)

Thank you for supporting the Swift.