

Ludlow Swift Group Newsletter

May 2013

Introduction

There have been reports of swifts in Europe since the start of April and indeed a few swifts were seen in Ludlow on 25th April – the earliest ever recorded. However these birds have not been seen again so perhaps they were on their way further north. On 1st May there was a report from a swift enthusiast in Crumlin, Northern Ireland of “Ten swifts back at house, small screaming party of seven this afternoon, with three going into the same box.” - as well as reports of swifts in Henley-on-Thames. So – hopefully not too long before we hear the sounds of the swifts screaming through the sky here in Ludlow complementing the fantastic dawn – and evening – chorus that we have had in recent weeks.

UPDATE – swifts were seen on 4th May over the Teme at Ludford and inspecting some of their nest in Mill Street and on the 6th a screaming party of 7 birds was seen over St Leonard’s churchyard – so looks as though our resident birds are now back.

Welcoming the Swifts

At the Common Swift Seminars in Berlin in April 2012 we heard how the mayor of Jerusalem welcomes the swifts when they return from Africa so we thought that we should try a similar event in Ludlow. The first event will be at the Local to Ludlow Produce Market on 9th May. We will be on the balcony of the Charlton Arms on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th May from 6pm to 10pm. See the poster opposite for full information.

Do come and support this event – and bring your friends and neighbours. We would like to make it into an annual event.

Ludlow Swift Group

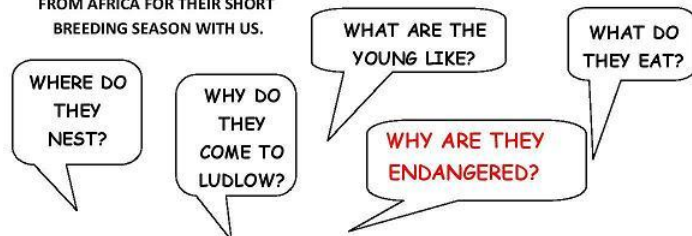


Join communities around the world

WELCOMING THE SWIFTS

*** THURSDAY 9th MAY AT THE LOCAL TO LUDLOW PRODUCE MARKET – 10am - 2pm ***

VISIT OUR GAZEBO TO FIND OUT ABOUT LUDLOW’S SWIFTS WHO WILL JUST BE ARRIVING BACK FROM AFRICA FOR THEIR SHORT BREEDING SEASON WITH US.



*** SATURDAY 18th AND SUNDAY 19th MAY 6pm – 10pm ***

Watch the swifts feeding over the river from the balcony of the **Charlton Arms**. Members of Ludlow Swift Group will answer your questions about these summer visitors.

Come and see Ludlow’s wonderful swifts as they screech across the sky.



Contact – 01584 876818 or email swifts@ludlow21.org.uk

Swift Watch

Ludlow Swift Group



Come and see Ludlow's wonderful swifts as they screech across the sky

SWIFT WATCH

**MEET EVERY THURSDAY AT THE BUTTERCROSS –
TIMES ALTER ACCORDING TO SUNSET**

Thursdays 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th May, 6th June Meet at 8:45pm

Thursdays 13th, 20th, 27th June, 4th July Meet at 9pm

Thursdays 11th, 18th, 25th July Meet at 8:45pm

KEEPING THE SKIES ALIVE



Contact – 01584 876818 or email swifts@ludlow21.org.uk

We will again be going out every Thursday evening to look for new nest sites around town.

Despite the bad weather last year a significant number of new nest sites were found – especially around Corve Street.

It is important that we continue to survey the town so that we can respond to planning applications – and also talk to people about our work as we walk around.

The starting time varies depending on the length of the day so please keep a note of the dates and times and join us at the Buttercross.

We have been asked to survey in some of the other towns – Craven Arms, Church Stretton, Bishop's Castle so we will be out and about on other evenings as well getting a bigger picture of Shropshire's swift population.

Surveying Swift Nest Sites

The information we have collected from 2 seasons of surveying has been submitted to the Shropshire Ecological Database which is consulted when planning applications are considered by Shropshire Council. We had no idea what we would find when we started looking for swifts – but already we have built an important picture of Ludlow's swifts. These records are crucial if we are to maintain natural nest sites for swifts in Ludlow's older buildings. We still need to talk to residents and builders as many home improvements can be done without planning permission. Last year a swift group started in Oswestry and we are hoping that other groups will be starting soon in the north of the county.



Contact swifts@ludlow21.org.uk or phone 01584 876818



Wigmore Church



In September 2012 we visited St James' in Wigmore which has a large colony of swifts on the south wall – we found evidence of at least 16 nest sites.

The church is on top of a hill and there is a clear flight path in from the south. The loose stone construction under easily accessible eaves with swift sized holes around the rafter ends makes this an ideal location.

Substantial work is planned for this church but we have submitted a report and recommendations to the architect and a local resident is keeping a keen eye on progress.

However we need to keep an eye on developments here. There is other wildlife to be protected as well as the swifts.



The above photograph is a close up of a section of the south wall showing the gaps around the rafters. The red crosses mark white streaking on the wall – a good sign that swifts have nests and have bred young. Thanks to Gareth Thomas for these detailed photographs of the swift sites on the church.

Swift First Aid

Last year we took 2 swifts to a Swift Carer in the Cotswold. One was an adult swift who unfortunately did not survive as it had a broken wing and was unable to ever fly again. The 2nd casualty was a 3 week old chick who, with much care, was able to be released at the start of September. We will again try to help any injured birds that are found locally – although as this is very specialist work will not be undertaking this ourselves. We will put some copies of this poster around town to spread the word that injured birds can be helped.

Ludlow Swift Group



Vital Information if you find a fallen Swift

Don't delay!

Swifts come to Ludlow – and other towns in Shropshire – between May and August each year to raise their young. They spend most of their life on the wing but occasionally may be found on the ground – and this means they are in trouble.

So – if you find a fallen swift please follow the guidelines below.

1. Put the bird in a warm, safe, calm environment
A good sized cardboard box lined with paper towels and with some air holes is ideal. Put the box in a quiet room out of the sun and away from cats and dogs.
2. DO NOT feed the bird.
3. Try to give it water by putting drops on its beak with a Baby Bud.
4. DO NOT throw it into the air - this may seriously injure or kill it.

Contact a member of Ludlow Swift Group as soon as possible on 01584 876818 or 01584 875031 or email swifts@ludlow21.org.uk
We may be able to take the bird to a specialist carer

 LUDLOW 21
LOCAL INITIATIVES SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

KEEPING THE SKIES ALIVE

Talks

The group has recently given talks to the local Shropshire Wildlife Group and the local RSPB group where around 60 people came to hear about the life of swifts and the work of the Ludlow Swift Group. We also gave a talk in the series of wildlife lectures arranged to support the Bishop's Castle Town Hall Renovation project. We already have a booking to give a talk in 2014 but are more than happy to talk to any other group that is interested to find out about Shropshire's swifts. Please pass our contact details on to anyone who you think might be interested.



Other News



This swift tower which has 16 nest chambers is on a 10m pole in a city park in the Netherlands. Note the solar panel which provides power to play swift calls to attract the birds. The pole is apparently collapsible so that the boxes can be inspected and maintained. Let's hope the birds like this new residence which was funded by the city council.

We still keep thinking about the possibility of a swift tower in Ludlow.

Great news from Exeter

RSPB volunteer gets amazing results...



Above: Isca College Exeter; Three Schwegler nestboxes have been fitted to the high brick wall to encourage Swifts to nest there. Photo © Emily Stallworthy, Devon Wildlife Trust

Exeter City Council's official policy is to integrate nest/roost boxes for birds/bats into all new residential properties. Of course a degree of flexibility to make sure that only suitable locations are used, but the aim is one nest box per residential unit. Within this policy, swifts are treated as a priority species and the work done by the Exeter Swift Project – a partnership of Exeter City council, Devon Wildlife Trust and the RSPB should make sure that there will be ample nesting opportunities for Swifts in the foreseeable future.

The Town and Country Planning Association has adopted the Exeter

Model as an example in its new Good Practice Guidance which is being promoted throughout the UK. The documents can be read at <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/planning-for-a-healthy-environment-good-practice-for-green-infrastructure-and-biodiversity.html>.

How long til Shropshire starts to adopt these guidelines?

Trying to persuade architects, builder, roofers, scaffolders that wildlife matters and can be built into plans at little or no cost needs to be a key aim of our group. Please do anything you can do to help us with this work – or get in touch if you know a sympathetic architect or builder that we can talk to.