

CBC Swift pilot survey 2018

Instructions and notes



This is a very simple and flexible survey. You can choose where you survey, how much time you take and how many times you do it. You can even do one on the spur of a moment when you come across Swifts by chance! The only skill you need is in how to identify a Swift.

We have lost half of our Swifts in the last 20 years. This survey will increase our understanding of their distribution in Cumbria and help inform us in how we can improve their chances of survival in the future.

Aims of the survey

- To identify the presence of Swifts in suitable breeding habitat i.e. areas with buildings
- To carry out timed counts and note the estimated maximum number of Swifts seen at any one time
- To note the estimated maximum seen in any screaming parties during the timed count
- To record the details of any nests found

Methodology

Where to survey - You can choose anywhere with buildings to carry out a survey. It is envisaged that most surveys will take place in towns and villages. Some isolated buildings can hold Swifts. You can survey as many locations as you wish. Please use separate forms for each location.

You can choose to carry out a point count or walk a set route (transect count)

- **Point count**
Ideal for open areas with good visibility such as parks, greens etc.
Involves: counting while standing in one place, preferably for at least 10 minutes. Note the time spent.
- **Transect count**
Ideal for covering a street, counting as you walk. Note the start and end points and the time taken. Repeat in the opposite direction.

When to survey

You can carry out a survey whenever you like. The recommended period is from mid-May to the end of July though the most active time is likely to be from mid-June when they are feeding young. The best times are usually from around 8pm to dusk or mornings. The weather should be at least reasonable.

How often to survey

Ideally we would like a series of repeat counts from your chosen places. Weekly would be ideal. However even single counts are very worthwhile.

What to count

All counts are likely to be estimates at best due to the difficulties of viewing fast moving birds

- The maximum number of Swifts you see in one view
- The maximum number in any screaming parties

Please record any zero counts.

Nests

Finding nests can be difficult as Swifts dart in and out quickly. If you are lucky enough to find some please note their details as indicated on the separate nest recording form. Details of any nests found at any time are most welcome.

Please return all forms by August 31st to Dave Piercy, 64 The Headlands, Keswick CA12 5EJ Tel 017687 73201
daveandkathpiercy@tiscali.co.uk

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Background information on Swifts



- Breeding Swifts arrive usually in the first week of May, juveniles about 3+ weeks later.
- Swifts generally depart by about 10th August.
- Juveniles may be 3 or 4 years old before they breed, they cannot be distinguished from breeders.
- From June onwards Swifts in any area will be a mixture of breeders and non-breeders, proportions not known.
- Swifts flying high are feeding, although over water e.g. Foulshaw Moss, or high fells they may fly low.
- Screaming parties (around roof-top level) usually indicate the presence of nests nearby.
- Eggs are laid at the end of May, hatch 20 days later around the middle of June. Chicks fledge 40 days later, towards the end of July/early August.
- Breeding adults always return to their nest site at dusk.
- Chicks are fed usually about once every 40 minutes, but this is variable.
- Nests are invisible, in crevices on top of walls under eaves, occasionally in holes in walls lower down.
- Swifts are almost entirely dependent on buildings for nest sites, with very rare exceptions.
- Most nest sites are in older un-renovated buildings, especially with deep eaves. But some “modern” estates that were built 20 or 30 years ago have suitable sites.

Returning forms

There are three choices:

- 1) Spreadsheet: If you are comfortable using spreadsheets please e-mail all your results using the spreadsheet available.
- 2) Filling in the Word documents on your computer and e-mailing. Provided you click into each box before typing there shouldn't be too many problems. Try to avoid using the return button. Remember to save each form separately.
- 3) Fill in the form by hand and post it to me or scan and e-mail.

The PDF documents are not designed to be filled in on your computer. If you would prefer another format please let me know.

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