

CASE STUDY: SWIFTS IN POWYS



Photo: Stefan Johansson

Introduction

Swifts in Wales have declined by 69% since 1995 and in 2021 they were added to the Red List of birds requiring special protection measures. This decline is thought to be due to a combination of loss of nest sites and a decline in insects.

The project

Teams from the three Powys Wildlife Trusts have recruited and trained volunteers to identify swifts and locate existing nest sites. These volunteers will form Swift Groups to promote and monitor swifts.

A series of three, well attended, swift talks were arranged, two by Edward Mayer, from Swift Conservation, who delivered a talk about the threats and challenges faced by this charismatic summer visitor and gave advice on what everyone can do to help swifts. Sarah Gibson, Communications Officer at the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and author of *Swifts and Us: The Life of the Bird that Sleeps in the Sky*, gave an inspiring talk on swift behaviour and swift studies.

Project Outputs

These are the fantastic results of this project.

Trust	Swift events	Attendees	Boxes donated	Nest sites found
Radnorshire	10	43	42	15
Brecknock	12	69	13	20
Montgomeryshire	10	115	25	60
Swift Talks	3	249		



A grand total of 32 walks, 3 talks, 476 people engaged, 80 swift boxes donated, and 95 nest sites identified.



Brecon Swift Group



Swift nest boxes installed on the Sennybridge Pumping Station

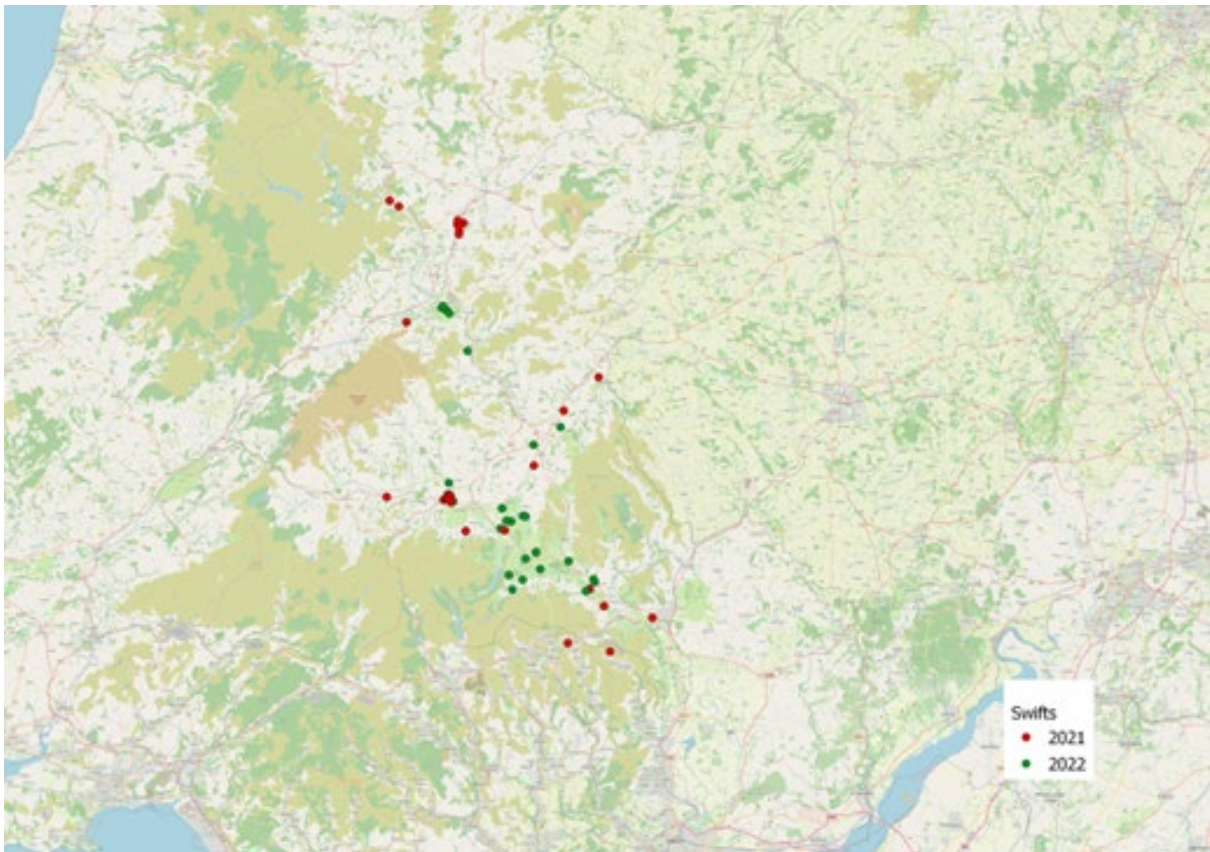
Photos: Pauline Hill

Project Outcomes

The newly trained Swift volunteers are carrying on the good work, leading new groups of people, discovering more nest sites and training more leaders. They will be able to recognise when swift and nest numbers decline, and this will help conservationists take action to prevent further decline.

In Brecknock, with the help of Biodiversity Information Service, (BIS), a new swift data map, below, clearly shows the impact of installing new swift boxes and increasing swift monitoring. Future data can be added to the map allowing conservationists to see the bigger picture. As Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire volunteer swift groups collect and submit more data, BIS can develop swift data maps for them, providing valuable information about swift populations in Powys.

The map clearly shows the positive impact of the project, highlighting the increase in sites where swifts were recorded. In addition, four new volunteer swift groups were formed across Powys. All the data gathered at the Swift events has been recorded on the BIS website/LERC app.



Brecknock Swift Data Map 2021/2022



Helping swifts

Swifts like to leave their nests by dropping into the air from the nest entrance. This is why they choose to nest in the eaves of houses and other buildings. During home renovations or when insulation is fitted, old nest sites can be blocked. New builds often do not include space for nesting, whether that be eaves or specially designed nest boxes.

Volunteers and members of Men's Sheds have built 80 swift boxes which have been donated to building owners willing to put a swift box under the eaves.

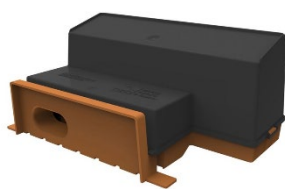
The Trusts' teams have been working with local authorities and Construction companies to encourage swift friendly building schemes,

Incorporating swift bricks where possible and erecting swift boxes if not. One company has already agreed to incorporate a swift brick into their new build.

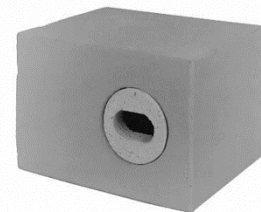
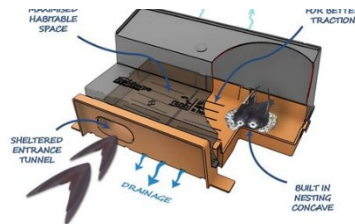


Swift bricks

A swift brick is a preformed nest box designed to be incorporated into the eaves of the house during the building process. Swift bricks cannot be added after a house is built. There are many types of swift bricks and as builders use several different building methods it is not possible to find one size that fits all. The pictures below show some of the different types of swift bricks available.



The Manthorpe Swift brick



The Schwegler Swift brick

Swift facts

These magnificent birds complete an amazing migration feat each year, flying an incredible round trip to Africa of 22,000km (14,000miles).

Swifts do everything on the wing except lay eggs and feed young. They feed, drink, sleep and mate on the wing, catching insects in flight and swooping over lakes to scoop up water. A young swift completes the annual migration to Africa four times before finally mating and landing to building a nest. Adult swifts return to the same nest sites year after year.