

Did you know?

Swifts spend their entire life in the air, landing only to nest.

They mate, sleep, feed and collect nest material on the wing

When a young swift leaves the nest, it will be four years before it ever lands again to breed.

A swift has the fastest recorded level flight at 69mph

Amazing journeys

Swifts from both Europe and China spend winter mostly in the Congo.

The UKs' birds also nip to Mozambique for Christmas

Potton swifts - A scream for help



Helping Pottons' swift colonies

OUR SUMMER VISITORS

Between May and August, one of the UK's most enigmatic birds, the swift, spend its summer here. They are our most urban bird, relying entirely on sharing our houses and buildings to breed and raise their young.

You may have seen or probably heard them in Potton, particularly in the morning and evenings as they fly around the roof tops of the town, uttering their 'screaming' call.

Swift boxes in Potton

For the past few years, you may have noticed beneath the clock tower a number of wooden bird boxes. These were put up in the heart of Pottons' remaining colonies, in the hope more swifts will take up residence.



Useful websites:

www.swift-conservation.org

actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk

www.rspb.org.uk/helpswifts

Why the calls

Establishing a new colony is notoriously difficult without the aid of a call lure.

The Potton birds have not found their new nests and we are giving them a bit of encouragement.

For a short time each morning and evening, from Monday to Saturday you will hear the sound of swifts coming from a speaker just below the clock tower.

How do the calls work?

Swifts are colonial nesters and young birds looking for a potential future nest or birds displaced from a traditional nest site can be drawn to new nests by calls of other swifts played through an MP3 player.

What to do

If you see birds going in or up to any of the boxes please let the librarian know and she will pass the information on.



Pottons' swifts

Potton has a locally important population, but their numbers, as with elsewhere, are declining. Between 1995 and 2016 there has been a significant 51% drop in the UK population.

In Potton, little over 40 nests remain, one building alone holds approximately 10% of the towns entire population.

Things you can do to help

Most people never know they have swifts nesting in their house. They fly so fast its very easy to miss when they enter and leave a nest.

- If you're lucky enough to have swifts, protect them. If you need roofing work undertaking, do not do it while the birds are nesting – it is an offence.
- If you are having an extension or renovation work install an integral nest brick.
- Put up external nestboxes or retrofit a brick into the wall of the house
- Request integral nest provision as a condition of all planning applications.
- Visit the Swift Conservation and Action for Swifts websites for advice.
- Report your sightings or nests to the RSPB National Swift Inventory.

Popular misconceptions about swifts

- They **do not** leave droppings down walls (Starlings and pigeons)
- They **do not** walk or scabble around in the roof (Starlings)
- They **do not** make a big nest in the roof (Starlings)
- They **do not** make a nest out of mud stuck on the wall under the eaves (House martins)
- They **do not** smell