

Saving Swansea's Swifts: Survey Report for 2022

The Swansea Swift Project (also known as Saving Swansea's Swifts) was started this year by Mark Barber from Swansea Council, in collaboration with Gower Ornithological Society. The aim for the first year of the project was to survey areas in Swansea and the Gower to acquire some baseline data for nesting/potentially nesting swifts and to encourage participation in the project by members of the public.

Much of the data on nesting swifts and the Swansea swift population as a whole prior to 2022 came from anecdotal sightings and some recorded data on swift mapper (the RSPB app for recording nesting/potentially nesting swifts). Therefore, these first surveys were vitally important to gain some baseline data. The other aim for the first year of the project was to start putting up swift nest boxes/nest bricks with caller systems where possible to increase the number of available nest sites. This is a key part of swift conservation.

Group surveys were organised to cover some of the key areas for swifts within the county of Swansea, based on the previous Swift Mapper data. A total of 9 group surveys were undertaken through the 2022 survey season from May to July. Attendance for the surveys was generally good, with a maximum of 15 people (including survey leaders) attending one survey in Brynmill. Uplands and Brynmill, which are seen as key areas for swifts in Swansea, proved to be fairly quiet with generally low numbers of swifts and only a couple of active nests found. Gorseinon, Tycoch and Mount Pleasant all had areas that had several swifts flying low with a couple of nests found and also areas that had no swifts. Duvant was very quiet apart from one known nest site that was reconfirmed on the survey as still in use.

A group survey was also coordinated to cover Sandfields with a focus on the known existing colony on Swansea Prison. No swifts were seen in Sandfields, apart from by the Prison where 4 nests were confirmed in use with a possible 3 more being used. By far the highest number of swifts found on the group surveys was in the east part of Sketty, adjacent to Uplands. Low flying swifts were seen in a number of locations and 5 nest sites were confirmed/reconfirmed on this survey. As well as the group surveys, several solo surveys were carried out by Owain Gabb, predominantly in the early morning. No swifts were recorded in St Thomas/Port Tennant, Hafod, Manselton and Newton. No swifts were seen on a transect through Mumbles; however, there have been several sightings of low flying swifts in Mumbles this year (on a road not covered by the transect) which have been uploaded to Swift Mapper, including a nest site. Several low flying swifts / screaming parties were seen on the Morriston survey and on surveys in Mount Pleasant (strongly indicating breeding in these areas), and 1 nest site was found on a survey of Trebanos (which had no previous records on Swift Mapper).

The overall effort brings the total number of confirmed nests for the 2022 survey season to 14 and we hope to improve on this number in the 2023 survey season. As well as this, a total of 29 swift boxes have been installed, with many more to be installed in the future. A special thanks goes to Mark Barber for setting up the project and getting it off the ground. Thanks are also due to Evelyn Gruchala for advertising the walks to encourage participation and helping to lead the walks. Thanks also to Owain Gabb and Josh Greatorex-Davies for giving up their time and conducting/leading surveys and lastly, a really big thank you to everyone who came along to the group surveys and participated so enthusiastically.

It is also great news that there is also an active group searching for nests in the Port Talbot part of the recording area. The Trebanos nest may well be inside the NPT part of our recording area! It will be very interesting to understand how many nests the group have found in NPT over the summer.

Josh Greatorex-Davies (August 2022)