

Saving Swansea's Swifts Report 2023

2023 was the second year of the Saving Swansea's Swifts Project and the aim for the year was to build on last year's survey data and to continue to increase the number of nesting opportunities for swifts. In terms of surveying in 2023, the aims were to resurvey areas where swifts had been seen last year (to both reconfirm nest sites and to find new ones in the same areas) and to survey completely new areas.

Group surveys were again the main focus, making up 16 out of the 18 surveys in 2023, running from the start of May through to mid-July. The surveys were generally well attended, including having a couple of local councillors come along on surveys in their council areas. Through our survey efforts in 2023, we were able to find 13 nests in total (this includes both reconfirmed and new nest sites). Despite two nest sites being reconfirmed in Uplands and one reconfirmed in Brynmill, these areas were once again mostly fairly quiet for swifts. Sandfields was resurveyed and this included covering part of Swansea city centre. No swifts were seen in these areas other than on Swansea Prison where one nest was reconfirmed. However, this survey was early in the survey season and it is likely that more nests are still in use. Sketty East and Mount Pleasant again proved to be good areas for swifts in Swansea with reconfirmed and new nests being found at both locations.



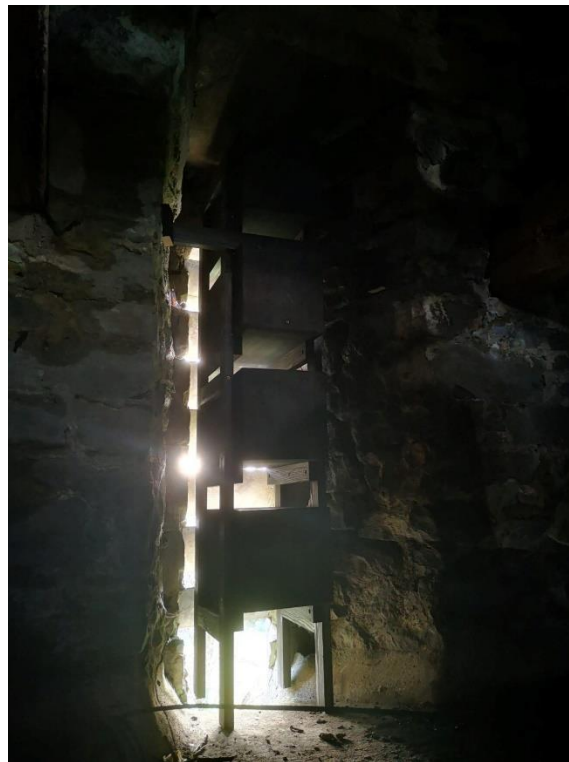
One of the 2023 Swift surveys

The surveys of Killay, Cockett, Hafod, Sketty West, Mayhill, and Loughor all had no low flying swifts and no nest entrances, indicating no current breeding evidence of swifts in these areas. The survey of Mumbles also had no low flying swifts or nest entrances. This is despite that in 2022 low flying swifts were recorded in Mumbles and a nest was found. Low flying swifts were seen in the surveys of Morriston, Gorseinon, and Pontarddulais, but no nest sites were located. Penclawdd and Plasmarl were two new areas surveyed for 2023 and had three definite nests. There were more potential nest sites that were not confirmed in these areas, partly due to viewing conditions. Overall, through our surveys from 2022 and 2023 we have been able to start building up a good picture of where breeding swifts are concentrated in the county of Swansea and have covered most of the urban areas. The total for the two years is 36 surveys with 22 individual nests found.



Woodcrete swift boxes - photo by Mark Robinson

The other part of the project is providing new nesting opportunities for swifts and good progress has been made in 2023. Boxes have been installed on various private residences within the Swansea area and 14 boxes have recently been installed in St Gwynour's Church in Penclawdd, which was organised by Ursula Jones from Swansea Council's AONB team. In total, over the two years of the project, 365 swift boxes have been bought and are either already installed or are in the process of being installed. It will be important to monitor these over the coming years.



Some of the Swift boxes installed in St Gwynour's Church

A big thank you to Mark Barber and Evelyn Gruchala from Swansea Council for their continued hard work in organising the project and getting members of the public involved. Thanks also to Ursula Jones from Swansea Council for getting the first swift boxes installed in a church in the Swansea area. Thanks to Gower Ornithological Society for their support for the project and helping to advertise the surveys. Lastly, once again a big thank you to everyone who has helped the project, whether that be through surveying or putting up swift boxes.

Josh Greateorex-Davies (February 2024)