

Leitrim County Swift Survey 2020



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Executive Summary

Swifts are a small species of bird that visits Ireland to breed in spring, arriving in early May and departing as soon as the chicks are fledged usually by early August. They are insectivorous and live life largely in flight and are adapted to feeding, drinking, gathering nest material and mating on the wing. They nest in cavities in masonry and on gaps in the roof spaces of old buildings gaining access through broken fascia and soffit or under roof tiles. They are site faithful and return to the same nest site year on year. Modern buildings are designed and built to be extremely energy efficient, which leave little nesting opportunities for Swifts. The loss of existing nest sites coupled with other wider environmental issues such as climate change has resulted in large declines in Swift populations in Ireland. It is with this in mind that many local authorities including Leitrim County Council have been motivated to carry out a county Swift survey to establish the distribution and density of nesting Swifts in the county and to help conserve this iconic urban species into the future.

The Leitrim Swift Survey 2020 has been very successful in achieving the aims of the project. The survey work commenced at the beginning of June following a delayed start due to restrictions from Covid 19. Surveying was carried out as planned, adhering to HSE guidelines on Covid 19 (e.g. social distancing). However, the community engagement aspects of the project had to be altered to adhere to the restrictions. Local contacts were able to assist the Swift surveyors in identifying areas previously occupied by swifts. The main aspects of the project (surveying, engagement, data analysis and reporting) were carried out by BirdWatch Ireland's Swift Surveyor Annie Birtwistle, while publicity including project promotion/ awareness raising and media engagement were carried out by Project Officer Ricky Whelan.

Overall, it took more than 40 days survey work to adequately survey the 34 towns and villages in the county. A total of 197 Swift nest sites were confirmed during the fieldwork phase. These nest sites were distributed throughout 10 localities with Swifts observed in an additional 3 localities but with no nest sites confirmed. The colonies ranged in size from 1 to 28 nest sites, distributed across 40 individual structures/buildings. Swift nest sites were found in a host of building types with a high proportion located in residential properties in private ownership (39%). Public buildings accounted for 29% of the nest sites confirmed; church/religious buildings host 11%; small businesses account for 10%; castle/heritage sites, other and industrial structures account for 6%; 5% and 1% of confirmed nest sites respectively. The main Swift populations were found to exist in Carrick on Shannon (79), Mohill (36), Drumshanbo (27), Ballinamore (17) and Dromahair (10) respectively. The populations in the remaining 5 localities where Swift nests were confirmed ranged from between 8 and 1 nest site.

Looking at the distribution of Swifts nest sites on a county scale, the main concentrations are found south of Lough Allen, which correlates with the locations of many of the larger settlements, including Carrick on Shannon, which is are found in this part of the county. The Shannon and the mosaic of small lakes further north-east provide all the insect prey Swifts required to rear young and good populations can also be found here in Dromahair, a strong but vulnerable colony close to the coast at Tullaghan and also in Manorhamilton.

There are 40 buildings across 10 localities that house all of Leitrim's Swifts, these should form the focus off future conservation efforts through working with owners, residents and managers to ensure Swifts can be accommodated now and into the future. The next priority is to grow the opportunities for nesting Swifts in the county which can act to increase the population and spread the risk of colony losses where local populations are isolated to single or small numbers of structures.

To achieve this, it is important to secure local buy-in and support from local communities to champion their local Swifts and to carry out the required actions to protect them into the future. However, this can't be done without support from experts and the local authority and this report offers recommendations at both a county and local level to help conserve Swifts. In some towns and villages, individuals and groups are already doing excellent work for Swifts, but more work will be needed at a wider scale to ensure a future for Swifts in county Leitrim. The local authority through its Heritage, Planning, Engineering, Asset Management, and other relevant staff can also play a key role in conserving Swifts through their everyday work.

This report outlines the precise location of every nest site confirmed, it should be used as a reference document within the local authority, for communities and environmental groups alike to help direct the conservation efforts that are now needed.



Figure 1: *Swift in flight. photo: Piotr Rak*

Introduction

The Common Swift (*Apus apus*) is perhaps the most iconic and intriguing of our urban bird species. It is a summer migrant that breeds throughout Europe and much of Asia, and winters in southern Africa. In recent decades, Swift numbers have been in decline throughout many parts of their range, giving much cause for concern. In Ireland, the recent Bird Atlas 2007-11 shows there has been a 26% loss in range since 1970 and a severe decline in abundance since 1990 (Balmer et al. 2013). The Countryside Bird Survey (CBS) monitors trends in relative abundance of birds in Ireland (Crowe et al., 2010) and likewise, has shown a decline of almost 58% in the breeding population between 1998-2016, and one of the largest declines in distribution of any species, almost 53% from 1972-2016 (Lewis et al., 2019). As a result, Swifts are now of conservation concern in Ireland and are Amber-listed (Colhoun et al. 2013).



Figure 2: Swift in flight with large food “bolus”. Photo: Micheal Casey

Throughout most of its breeding range, the Swift nests in cavities in walls or under eaves of houses and old buildings. Because of this, they are a well-known bird species in urban centres, particularly cities and towns. Prior to the 2020 Leitrim Swift Survey, it was known that Swifts nest in several Co. Leitrim towns, including Carrick on Shannon, Manorhamilton, Ballinamore and Dromod. However, anecdotally it has been noted that numbers locally are in decline, mirroring the national and international trends. Reasons for the decline of Swifts are not fully understood, but it is thought the loss of available nest sites due to renovations of old buildings and modern building techniques restricting the availability of suitable nesting cavities is a significant factor (Concern for Swifts 2013).

It has been documented that Swifts will nest in artificial nest boxes, thus allowing for populations to be maintained, notably where renovations to buildings have reduced nest site availability. Swifts are long-lived and faithful to their nest sites from year to year, and it is known that an individual pair will not readily move to a newly provided colony. Newly available sites are most likely to be occupied by

new pairs if they are attracted to the area by other birds. Therefore, it is essential that any provision and placement of alternative nest sites must be guided by information on where Swifts are currently nesting.

In relation to the protection of existing nest sites the Wildlife Act affords protection to all actively nesting birds and to interfere or disturb any nest is unlawful. However, it's important to note that Swift nest colonies are not afforded any legal protection outside of the breeding season, even at nesting colonies where it is known that Swifts return to the same nest sites year on year. It is therefore important that Swift conservation efforts are conducted in partnership with site owners/developers in an effort to ideally retain nest sites or mitigate for any loss of sites.

The 2020 Leitrim Swift Survey acts to quantify the level of Swift nesting activity across the county. The survey work has highlighted areas where nesting Swift populations are found and in need of urgent conservation action. The survey has identified to site level the largest and most important Swift nesting sites that act as source populations within the county and further afield. These sites need to be treated with the upmost sensitivity during any renovation or redevelopment works to ensure existing Swift nest sites are retained. The survey team will make a special effort to include local community groups and residents in the project, to help establish a local network of Swift champions in the county.

Project Objectives

Aim:

To undertake a detailed survey of Swifts in towns and villages across Co. Leitrim to establish a baseline of the distribution of nesting Swifts in the county. The data collected will allow planners and decision makers to effectively manage Swifts at site level, helping to conserve this important part of Leitrim's urban and natural heritage.

Objectives:

- Carry out a survey of Swifts in Co. Leitrim towns and villages to locate nesting colonies.
- Engage volunteers, community groups and local people to become future custodians for Swifts in Co. Leitrim.
- Encourage the development of Swift projects in towns and villages and provide training and advice to local groups and communities for the implementation of future conservation projects.

Methodology

A total of 34 towns and villages (localities) in Co. Leitrim were identified for Swift survey work. Working on the premise that larger settlements generally hold greater densities of nesting swifts, the number of survey days completed per town was weighed towards these larger settlements. Town size was estimated based on the Leitrim CDP 2017-2023, census 2016 estimate. Some smaller settlements which were not included on the initial survey list, were surveyed where the surveyors route passed through them and potentially suitable nesting structures existed.

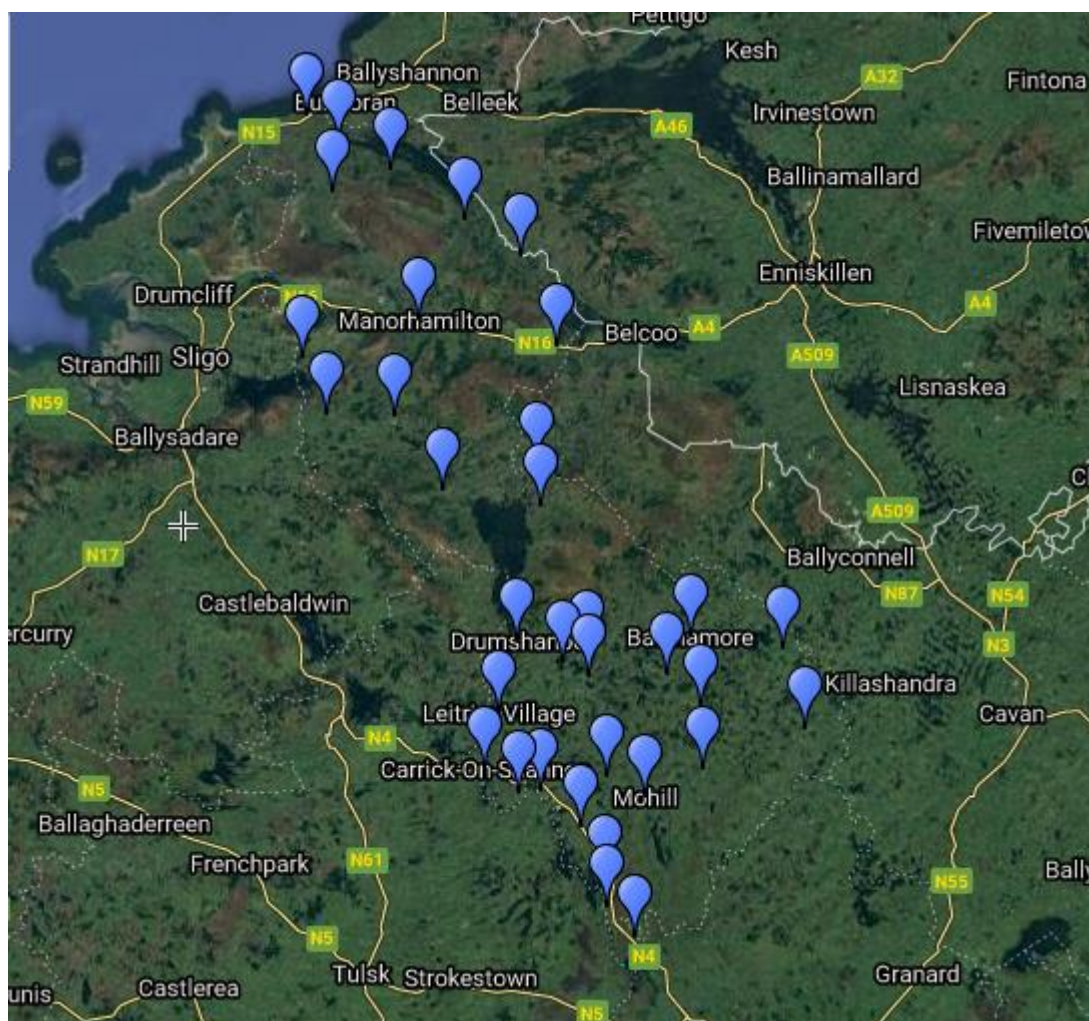


Figure 3: Locations of selected towns and villages for the Leitrim Swift survey 2020 (Scribblemaps)

Three towns were ranked 'High Priority' (Carrick on Shannon, Drumshanbo and Mohill) these towns were selected based on the known presence of nesting Swifts and their population size. The remaining 31 towns ranged from "Medium Priority" to 'Lower Priority'. The larger settlements were given medium priority and the smaller villages lower priority. The priority system is used to ensure the maximum number of nests are found within the season.

A total of 44 days was scheduled to survey this list of towns and villages. An initial visit to all 34 localities took place in June to determine the presence or absence of Swifts. The presence or absence of Swifts during these initial visits was used to schedule and prioritise the localities for further survey visits.

All 34 towns and villages received at least one additional survey visit in July. The number of survey days allocated to each location was weighted toward the settlements where Swifts were present and towards larger towns, where more time was needed to identify the location of colonies and where possible, the specific buildings used by the Swifts.

The survey work took place from the beginning of June to early August 2020. Survey visits were carried out during fine weather to increase chances of encountering Swifts. Survey visits were carried out before 11am and after 6pm where possible to maximise encountering peak Swift activity. A standardised survey form was designed to capture survey location, date, time, weather conditions and Swift activity (See Appendix 1). Details of Swift nest locations were also recorded and information on location, building type, site of nest entrance, number of nests present, and photos of each site were taken.

Swift nest site locations are identified by careful observation of aerial and vocal displays by the breeding birds. Special attention is paid to the most suitable locations and building structures. The presence of a low-level screaming parties can indicate the presence of nest sites nearby, normally within a few hundred meters.

This project also aimed to engage volunteers and local community groups to take part in the survey work, developing a local network of Swift volunteers and encouraging the development of local Swift projects in towns and villages across the county. With Covid 19 restrictions in place for much of the survey period, most volunteer engagement and communications was carried out through digital means. Many Swift records were received by email, through social media and via the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Each record received was acknowledged, investigated, and followed up as relevant. Where possible and safe to do so small survey groups were organised in some localities to help fieldworkers locate locally nesting Swifts.

Data Collection

Survey data from all locations was entered to Microsoft Excel and mapped in ArcGIS Online. All confirmed nest sites are photographed and included in the [Site Based Results](#) section of this report. Yellow arrows or circles were added to each nest site image to illustrate the exact location of the Swift nests.



Figure 4: Screenshot of ArcGIS Online Swift sighting mapping tool

Citizen Science

Several known Swift enthusiasts, local birdwatchers and BirdWatch Ireland volunteers were contacted via email and invited to help with survey work in their local area. In addition, online requests were made for the public to provide information on Swifts nest site locations. The information gathered from the public was entered into an excel spreadsheet and used by the field survey team to narrow their search area in respective localities.

All e-mail and social media records received from the public were answered and contributors thanked for their input. A high proportion of records submitted by the public were in relation to Swallows and House Martins which are commonly confused with Swifts. Nonetheless each contributor was thanked sent a copy of the Saving Swifts guide to help with the ID issues and encouraged to participate in future.

Results

A total of 34 towns/villages in County Leitrim were surveyed for this project. Of the 34 towns/villages Swifts were identified in 13, with nesting sites confirmed in 10 of these. The 2020 County Leitrim Swift Survey identified a maximum count of 140 Swifts (peak count of all areas combined) and confirmed 197 nests. These results provide a baseline figure from which we can measure future changes of Swift distribution and densities in county Leitrim. These findings are concentrated around 40 buildings/structures, which are documented with photographs and plotted in ArcGIS Online. In total 44 days of field survey and 15 office days were completed for this survey. Overall results of the County Leitrim Swift Survey 2020 are presented in Table 1. Localities are presented from the town with the highest number of confirmed nests to the lowest in the site-based results section.



Figure 5: Swift approaching nest site entrance between tile and fascia board. Photo: Mike Taylor

Survey Visits

An initial visit to each of the 34 Leitrim towns and villages was completed to survey for the presence of Swifts. In towns or villages where Swifts were confirmed as present (in flight or at nest sites) on first visits, subsequent surveys were completed to confirm breeding and identify exact nest site locations.

The highest number of Swift nests was recorded in Carrick on Shannon, where 79 nests were found (Table 1). This was followed by 36 nests in Mohill; 27 in Drumshanbo; 17 in Ballinamore; 10 in Dromahair; 8 in both Drumsna and Tullaghan; 7 in Dromod and 1 in Ballinaglera. The highest peak count of Swifts (maximum number of birds observed during a single visit) was recorded in Carrick on Shanonn with 38 Swifts observed.

Table 1: Summary information for all towns and villages surveyed during the 2020 Leitrim Swift Survey

No.	Town/Village	Swifts present	Peak number of Swifts	Nests present	Number of nests
1	Carrick on Shannon	Yes	38	Yes	79
2	Mohill	Yes	35	Yes	36
3	Drumshanbo	Yes	25	Yes	27
4	Ballinamore	Yes	10	Yes	17
5	Dromahair	Yes	6	Yes	10
6	Drumsna	Yes	4	Yes	8
7	Tullaghan	Yes	4	Yes	8
8	Dromod	Yes	14	Yes	7
9	Manorhamilton	Yes	5	Yes	4
10	Ballinaglera	Yes	1	Yes	1
11	Jamestown	Yes	5	No	0
12	Leitrim	Yes	2	No	0
13	Dowra	Yes	1	No	0
14	Aghamore	No	0	No	0
15	Ballinaglera	No	0	No	0
16	Bornacoola	No	0	No	0
17	Buckode	No	0	No	0
18	Carrigallen	No	0	No	0
19	Cloone	No	0	No	0
20	Drumcong	No	0	No	0
21	Drumkeeran	No	0	No	0
22	Eslinbridge	No	0	No	0
23	Fenagh	No	0	No	0
24	Fivemilebourne	No	0	No	0
25	Glenfarne	No	0	No	0
26	Keshcarrigan	No	0	No	0
27	Killarga	No	0	No	0
28	Kiltubbrid	No	0	No	0
29	Kiltyclogher	No	0	No	0
30	Kinlough	No	0	No	0

31	Largydonnell	No	0	No	0
32	Newtowngore	No	0	No	0
33	Roosky	No	0	No	0
34	Rossinver	No	0	No	0

Swift Nests

Figure 6 shows the density of Swift nest sites across the towns/village of County Leitrim, low density (blue), average (red) and high density (yellow).

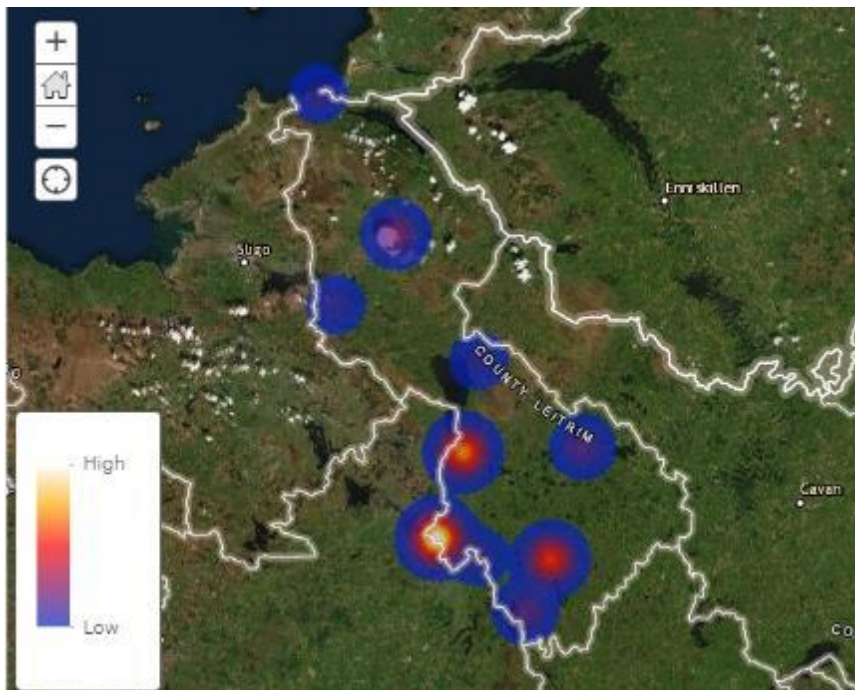


Figure 6: Heat map showing the densities of Swift nests across county Leitrim (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2020)

Of the 197 confirmed Swift nest sites confirmed across the localities they were found to be distributed across a number of building types shown below in Figure 7.

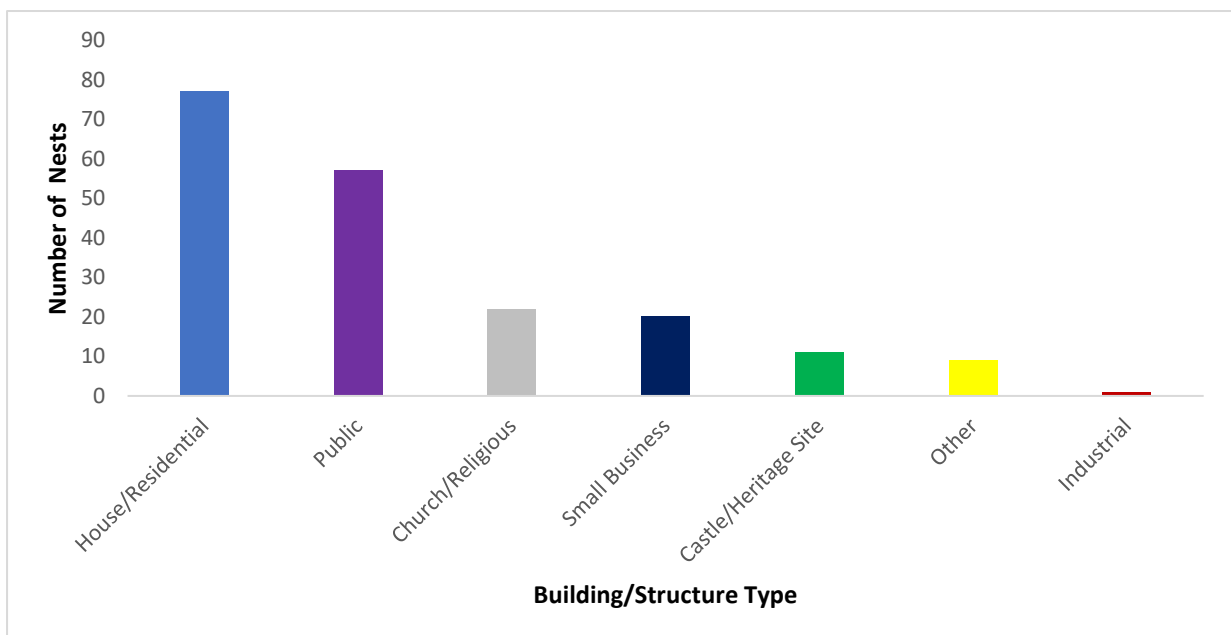


Figure 7: Overall number of Swift nests per building/structure type in Co. Leitrim

Figure 7 below shows a further breakdown of nest numbers by building type and locality found.

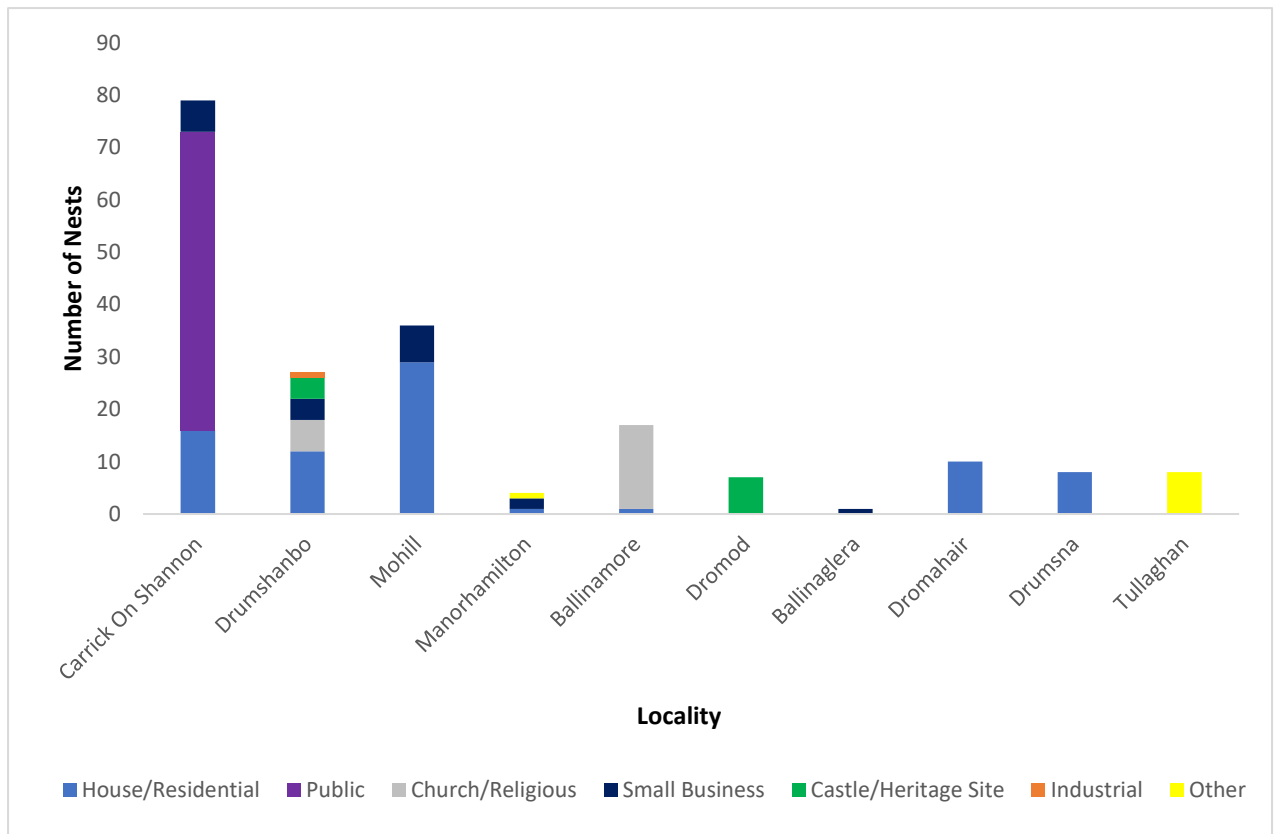


Figure 8: Total nest numbers confirmed by building type withing each of the Roscommon localities.

Swift colonies have been recorded in a total of 40 different buildings and structures across County Leitrim. A further breakdown of use of these buildings and structures is shown in Figure 8. Some localities have a spread of colonies across building types where localities with smaller breeding populations have single colonies restricted to a single building type (Figure 8).

In total 77 nests were confirmed in House/Residential; 57 nests in Public; 22 nests in Church/Religious; 20 nests in Small Business; 11 nests in Castle/Heritage; 9 nests in other buildings and 1 nest in Industrial type buildings.

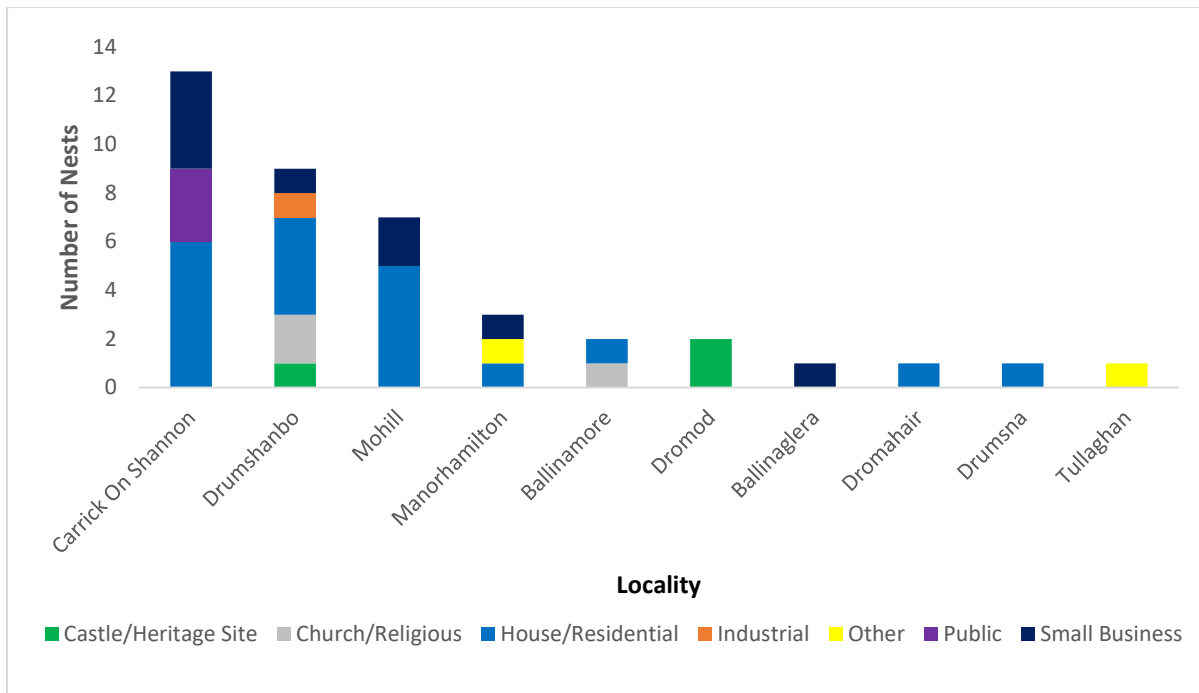


Figure 9: Number of and building type containing Swift nests in each locality.

Overall, 39% of Swift nests were found in houses/residential buildings; 29% in Public buildings, 11% in church/religious buildings; 10% in Small Business buildings; 6% in Castle/Heritage; 9% in Other buildings; and 1% in industrial buildings (Figure 10).

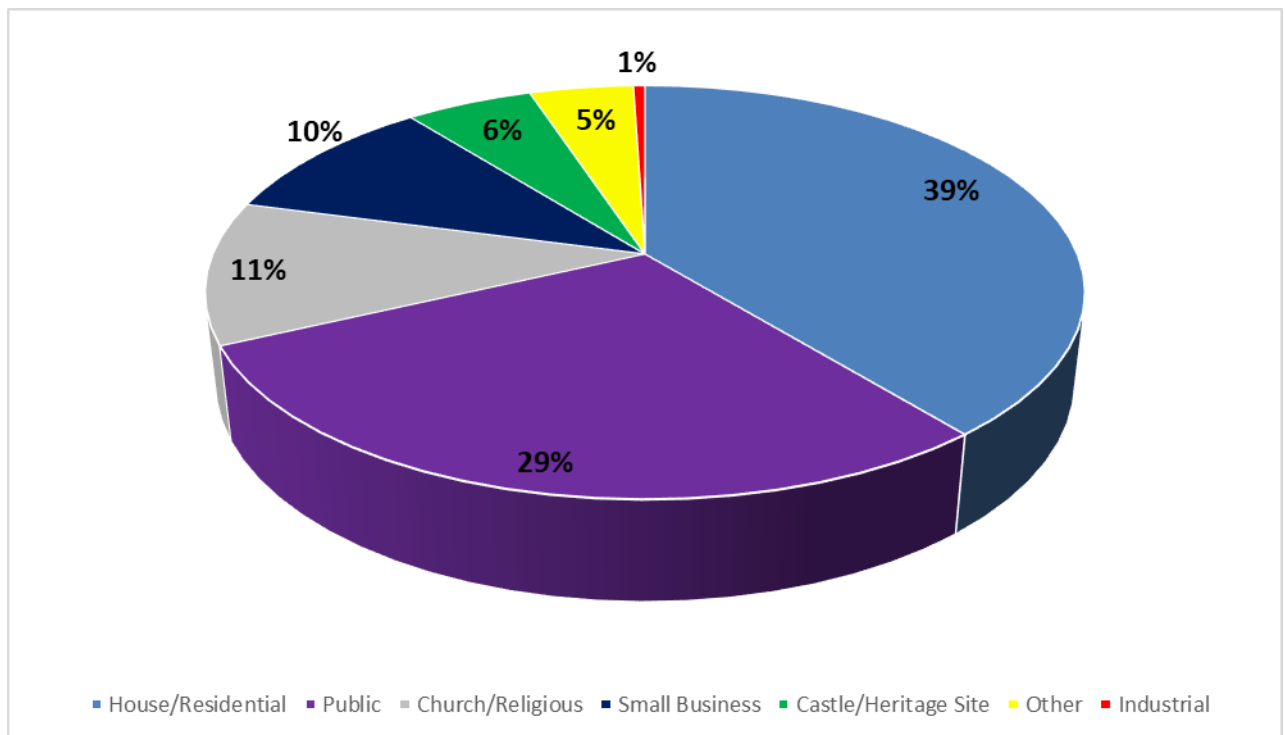


Figure 10: Percentage of Swift nests by building type

The table below (Table 2) shows the total county percentage of the proportion of Swift nests found per town/village. Carrick on Shannon contains 40% of County Leitrim’s Swift nests, followed by Mohill with 18% and Drumshanbo with 14%. The proportion of Swift nests in the other 7 towns ranges from 1-9%. Carrick on Shannon, Mohill and Drumshanbo combined hold 72% of the confirmed nests located during this survey.

Table 2: *Percentage of Swift nest sites found to exist in each locality surveyed.*

Locality	% of Nests
Carrick On Shannon	40%
Mohill	18%
Drumshanbo	14%
Ballinamore	9%
Dromahair	5%
Drumsna	4%
Tullaghan	4%
Dromod	4%
Manorhamilton	2%
Ballinaglera	1%

Site Based Results

A total of 34 towns/villages in County Leitrim were surveyed for this project. Of the 34 locations, Swift nest sites were confirmed in 10.

Results of the Swift survey are represented below for individual towns and villages. Each location in which Swifts were found nesting is documented with photographs of the nest sites, with the approximate location of the nests marked on each photo (Orange arrows). Peak numbers of Swifts observed flying at each location is also given. Peak number of Swifts observed relates to the highest number of Swifts counted in a town or village at any one-time during survey work.

To view the online map and nest site locations of Swifts for each town/village surveyed use the following link:

<https://bwi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=81ddc38cfcde40ffab699be638ee5b20>



Figure 11: Screenshot taken from the online ArcGIS Swift Conservation Project record viewer (ArcGIS Online)

Carrick on Shannon



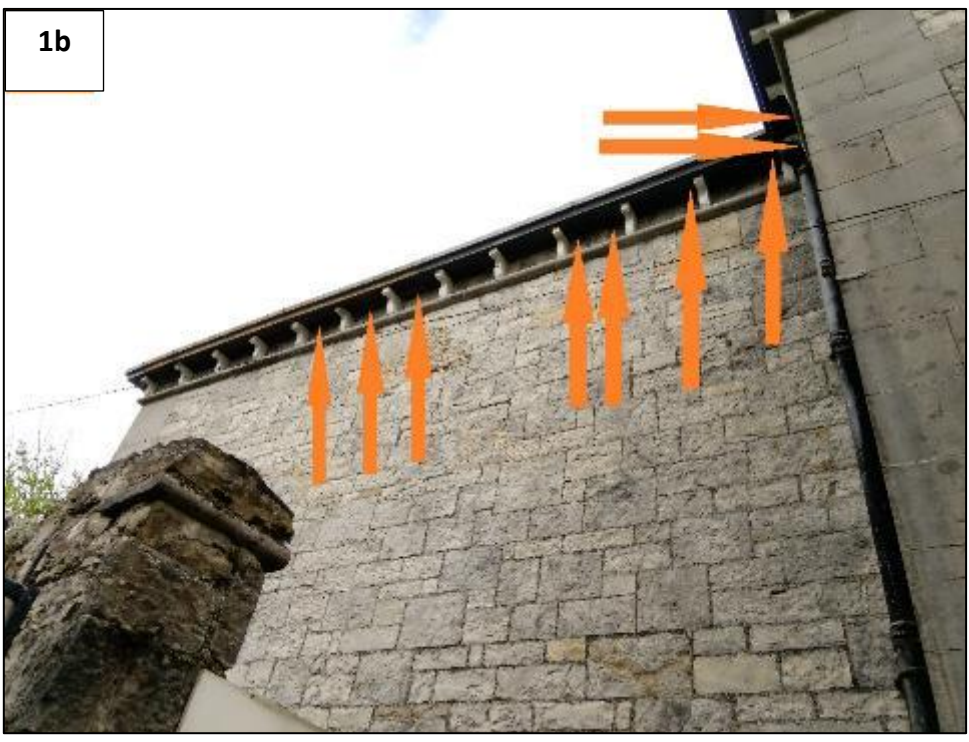
Carrick on Shannon (the weir of the marshy ridge) is the county town of Leitrim with a population 4,062 (in the 2016 general census) making it the smallest county town in the country. The town is on the banks of the Shannon and has a large breeding Swift population.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1a,1b,1c	Town Hall Bridge St N41 K2V4	36	23	Public
2a,2b,2c,2d	Saint Pats, Summer Hill, N41 F303	38	28	Public
3a,3b	Saint Pats, Summer Hill, N41 P897	25	6	Public
4a,4b,4c	Saint Pats Park, Nos; 40, 44, 75	3	3	House/Residential
5	Lisnagat, No 7	3	2	House/Residential
6	Bridge St, Carrick on Shannon, N41 HX00	14	2	Small Business
7	Bridge St, Carrick on Shannon N41 R660	13	1	Small Business
8	Bridge St, Carrick on Shannon, N41 Y4N5	13	1	Small Business
9	Bridge St, Carrick on Shannon N41 DK66	6	2	House/Residential
10	Main St, Carrick on Shannon N41 X310	7	1	House/Residential
11	Main St, Carrick on Shannon N41 CP77	1	1	House/Residential
12	The Archways, Carrick on Shannon N41 DN30	17	5	House/Residential
13	Gable end of extension behind N41 HP60	20	2	Small Business
14	Bridge St, Carrick on Shannon N41 PT92	17	2	House/Residential

1a



1b



1c



2a



2b



2c



2d



3a



3b



4a



4b



4c



5



6



7



8



9



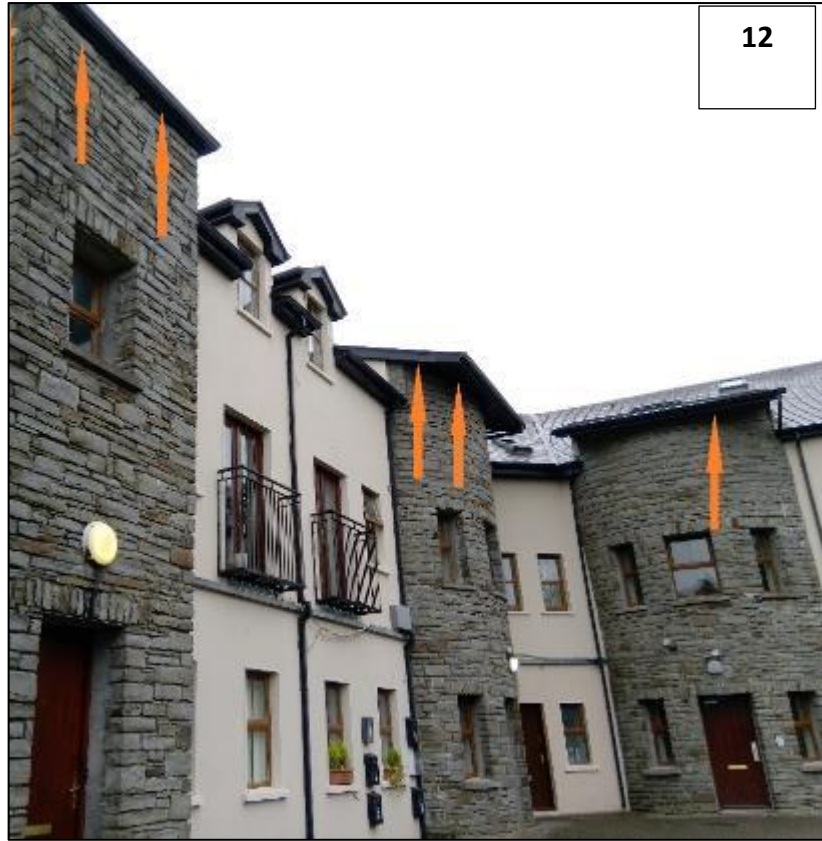
10



11



12



13



14



Mohill



Mohill is a small town in the south of the county with a population of 855 (in the 2016 general census) a total of 36 Swift nesting sites were recorded in Mohill with a peak count of 35.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1	O'Briens Tavern, Glebe St, N41 TW13	14	6	Small Business
2	Tavelers Rest, Glebe St, N41W564	15	1	Small Business
3	Hill St, Mohill, N41 Y368	5	2	House/Residential
4	Station Road, Mohill N41 EV56	25	6	House/Residential
5	Hill St, Mohill, N41 TW71	25	4	House/Residential
6	Water St, Mohill, N41 WV61	1	5	House/Residential
7a,7b,7d,7c,7d,7e	Hyde Terrace Mohill, Nos; 5,7,8,9,10,11,25,27,33,34.	35	12	House/Residential

1



2



3



4



5



6



7a



7b



7c



7d



7e



Drumshanbo



Drumshanbo is a small town in the heart of the county with a population of 903 (in the 2016 general census) on the shores of Lough Allen below the rolling hills of the Sliabh an Iarainn mountain range making it a prime location for breeding Swift with a nearby abundance of feeding habitat. A total of 27 Swift nesting sites were recorded in Drumshanbo with a top count of 32 birds recorded.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1a,1b	Saint Johns Church, Church St, N41 VN32	15	5	Church/Religious
2a,2b,2c	Railway Monument, Church St.	8	4	Castle/Heritage Site
3	Carrick Rd, Drumshanbo, N41 TR94	25	5	House/Residential
4	Storage shed behind N41 HR58, Main St Drumshanbo	14	4	Small Business
5	The FoodHub Drumshanbo, N41 EK82	11	1	Industrial
6	Station House Church St, N41 A7N8	18	2	House/Residential
7	Franciscan Convent, N41 F8P8	10	1	Church/Religious
8	Main St, Drumshanbo, N41 Y725	25	2	House/Residential
9	Main St Drumshanbo, N41 W9X2	12	3	House/Residential

1a



1b



2a



2b



2c



3



4



5





8



9



Ballinamore



Ballinamore is a small town located in the south-east of the county with a population of 914 (in the 2016 general census) a total of 17 Swift nesting sites were recorded in Ballinamore with a peak count of 10 birds observed.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1a,1b	Outreach Parish, Church, N41 EW73	10	16	Church/Religious
2	High St, Ballinamore N41 EK85	6	1	House/Residential





Dromahair



Dromahaire is a small village near the shores of Lough Gill in the in the north-west of the county with a population of 808 (in the 2016 general census) a total of 10 Swift nesting sites were recorded in Dromahaire with a peak count of 6 birds observed.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1	The Mill Appartments, Dromahaire, F91 FX29	6	11	House/Residential



Drumsna



Drumsna is a small village on the banks of the River Shannon in the south-west of the county with a population of 240 (in the 2016 general census) a total of 8 Swift nesting sites were recorded in Drumsna with a peak count of 8.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1	Quay St, Drumsna, N41 TD36	4	8	House/Residential



Tullaghan



Tullaghan is the county's only coastal village in the most northern reaches of the county with a population of 253 (in the 2016 general census) a total of 8 Swift nesting sites were recorded in Tullaghan with a peak count of 3.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1	Duncarbery, Tullaghan (building adjacent to the Dew Drop Inn), F91 ED60	4	8	Other



Dromod



Dromod is a small village nestled between Lough Bofin and Lough Scannal in the south of the county with a population of 555. A total of 7 Swift nesting Sites were recorded in Dromod with a peak count of 14 observed.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1	Railway Station, Clooncolry, N41 KA40	14	2	Castle/Heritage Site
2	Railway Station, Store Shed, Clooncolry, N41 KA40	14	5	Castle/Heritage Site



2



Manorhamilton



Manorhamilton is the second largest town in Leitrim with a population of circa 1500 residents, Despite its large size only four Swift nests were confirmed with a peak of 5 birds observed.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1	Sligo Road, Manorhamilton, F91 YX45	5	2	Small Business
2	Main St, Manorhamilton, F91 CXW0	3	1	House/Residential
3	Stone outbuilding beside, Golden Flats, F91 F210	4	1	Other



2



3



Ballinaglaragh



Ballinaglaragh is a small settlement in the north-east of the county near Lough Macnean upper. A total of 1 Swift nesting site was recorded in Ballinaglaragh making Ballinaglaraghs swift population very vulnerable.

Photo No.	Address	Peak Swift Count	Confirmed Nest Count	Building Type
1	Druminalass, Ballinaglera, Leitrim, N41 D2H9	1	1	Small Business



Publicity

Community Engagement

On site community engagement activities for the 2020 Leitrim Swift Survey was ruled out due to Covid-19 restrictions, in keeping with government recommendations and best practice guidelines. In lieu of local meetups and events in the communities, digital and local media was used to promote the survey and raise awareness.

Birdwatch Ireland staff liaised with local residents, tidy towns groups, Leitrim BirdWatch Ireland branch and local wildlife enthusiasts during fieldwork in order to maximise the number of records received. Records of Swifts in Leitrim were sought from these groups and online from late-May through to early August. All records were followed up.

In autumn and next spring, it is planned to continue the community engagement and present the results and recommendations of the report and begin the process to inform and empower these communities to protect and conserve their own Swift populations locally.

Project Promotion/Awareness Raising

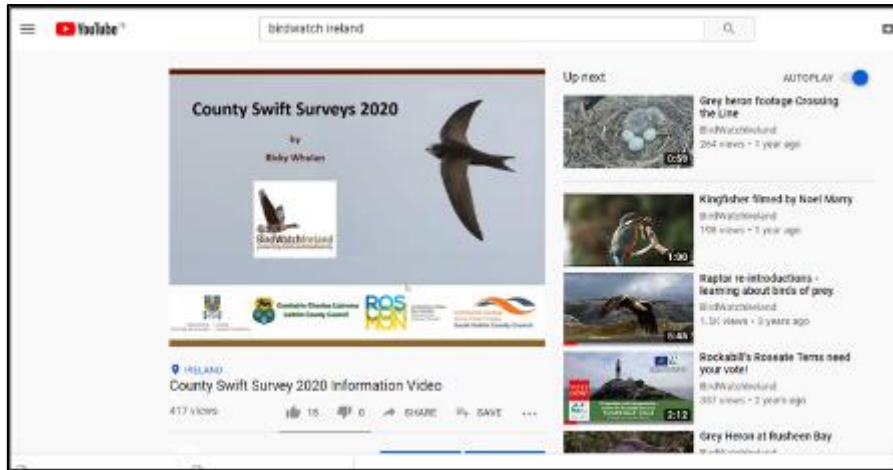
The project has been widely promoted via print, broadcast and social media. The project has also enjoyed coverage on the local authority website, on the BirdWatch Ireland website, Ezine and social media platforms as well as benefitting from targeted emailssent by our Leitrim Branch.

Communications:

- Released a County Swift Survey Info video on YouTube on May 30th.
- Engaged with local media through the issue of a press release.
- Posted a specific ask for records article on our websites News pages.
- Issued a general ask for records on our Ezine on May 30th (issue 128)
- Made multiple Twitter and Facebook postings.
- Sent a direct targeted mail via our mailing list and via our Leitrim Branch.
- Shared project info via Leitrim PPN via Leitrim Heritage Office early on in project and again at halfway point.
- Contributed to YouTube video series: *Connecting Through Leitrim's Heritage*.

Table 3: List of media screengrabs included below

Number	Item	Platform
1	Project launch video	YouTube
2	Promotional "Ask" Poster	Social media (various)
3	Project Press Release	CoCo Website
4	Project Press Release	BirdWatch Ireland Ezine
5	Ask for records	Facebook
6	Connecting Through Leitrim's Heritage Video	YouTube
7	Project Update	BirdWatch Ireland Website



SEEN SWIFTS IN LEITRIM?

DO YOU KNOW A BUILDING WHERE SWIFTS NEST
OR DO YOU ENCOUNTER SWIFTS REGULARLY ON A
PARTICULAR STREET?

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**EMAIL:
SWIFTS@BIRDWATCHIRELAND.IE**



BirdWatchIreland
promoting birds and biodiversity



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council



An Roinn Cultúir,
Oifig na hAis agus Gaibreacha
Department of Culture,
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Leitrim | Leitrim County Council | Leitrim Business | Leitrim Sports | Leitrim Tourism | Leitrim Living

Comhairle Chontae Leitrima
Leitrim County Council

Google | Skip to Content | Text Size: Go

Home | What's Being | News | Services | Your Council | Community & Culture | Economic | Jobs | Contact

Home > Community & Culture > Heritage > Natural Heritage > Leitrim Swift Survey

Heritage

News & Events

WHAT IS HERITAGE?

Archaeological Heritage >


Cultural Heritage >

Draft Heritage >

Natural Heritage

- Guidance for Biodiversity
- Leitrim Biodiversity
- Leitrim Swift Survey

Leitrim Swift Survey 2020



10/5-20200000-W-...jpg | 10/5-20200015-W-...jpg | 10/5-20200030-W-...jpg

[For more information about the CBS Irish Wildlife Manual and CBS trends, please click here](#)

Swift Surveys for Cos. Clare, Dublin, Leitrim and Roscommon



Perhaps the most iconic and intriguing of our urban bird species, the [Swift](#) is a small migratory bird which travels to Ireland from southern Africa each year to breed. They have adapted to nesting in cavities in buildings in our cities, towns, and villages. They are seriously threatened in Ireland, due primarily to the loss of nesting sites: the species has declined at a rate of almost 60% since 1998.

However, the good news is that there is a lot that can be done to halt the decline of these amazing birds, and knowing how many Swifts we have and where they nest is the first step. This summer, BirdWatch Ireland will conduct a series of **County Swift Surveys** in Cos. Clare, Dublin (South Dublin County Council areas), Leitrim and Roscommon. In addition, across Ireland specialist organisations, Tidy Towns groups, community groups and interested individuals are playing a vital role in Swift conservation. (Photo: Swift by Catherine Casey)

[Click here to learn more about BirdWatch Ireland's summer County Swift Survey work](#)

European Commission proposes radical changes for agriculture and biodiversity

BirdWatch Ireland welcomes the release earlier this month of the European Commission's highly anticipated


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BirdWatch Ireland @birdwatchireland

We are also on the hunt for #Swift records in County #Leitrim. If you can identify a building or a street where Swifts nest we would like to hear from you. Email us at: swifts@birdwatchireland.ie 📧 @leitrimcoco @LeitrimLive @leitrimtourism @LeitrimArts @SaveLeitrim pls share



Relevant people

- BirdWatch Ireland @birdwatchireland Following Ireland's largest conservation charity dedicated to protecting birds and biodiversity.
- Leitrim County Council @leitrimcoco Council for the administrative area of County Leitrim, Ireland.
- Leitrim Observer @leitrimlive All the news and sport from Co Leitrim and surrounding areas.

What's happening

- Coastline · 1 hour ago Terry Cross faces backlash for comments regarding the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Technology · 4 hours ago India bans 19 Chinese apps, including TikTok.
- Selfies · 1 hour ago
- #WithAgeTogether · 1 hour ago 'The secret is yet to come,' WHO warns about the pandemic.

Project Laying @lauragunn

YouTube

leitrim swifts



Up next

- 13:02
- 7:37
- 11:45
- 4:25 CONAN
- 11:11

Leitrim Heritage promo

184 views · Aug 12, 2020

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County Swift Surveys for Clare, Dublin, Leitrim and Roscommon

Aug 27, 2020

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Discussion

County Leitrim is a beautiful wild county with diverse topography running from roughly the centre of Ireland right out to the Atlantic Ocean at its most northern reach.

This broad range of habitats within county Leitrim provide an invaluable source of food, shelter and refuge for flora and fauna and produce a rich source of invertebrate species which are critical for Swifts. The abundance of suitable foraging habitat and prey species combined with the availability of nesting opportunities in many of Leitrim's towns and villages means the county still retains good numbers of nesting Swifts.

Swifts are an important part of Leitrim's urban natural heritage. The 2020 Leitrim Swift Survey was successful in locating Swift nesting strongholds and highlighting areas in need of support and/or intervention. The collection of this basic nest site data on Swift colony locations is an essential first step in conserving Swifts in towns and villages across the county. By recognising Swifts as an important part of Leitrim's urban natural heritage and undertaking this survey Leitrim County Council has taken an important step towards establishing a Swift conservation plan. It is funding from the National Biodiversity Action Plan Fund (administered by the local authorities on behalf of the National Parks and Wildlife Service) that makes this work possible and shows their vital and continued commitment to biodiversity research and conservation.

The results from the 2020 survey provide the council and the wider public a solid baseline to move forward with recommended conservation measures to protect Swifts and promote the establishment of community projects centred around protecting existing nest sites and creating new colonies. The survey provides a detailed record of swift nesting sites within County Leitrim in 2020 right down to the specific nest holes, the geographical location and structures used for nesting. The information compiled in this report is put together in a highly detailed yet user friendly way so that it can be utilised by professional policy makers, planners and the general public, local groups and schools to further our knowledge and conservation efforts for swifts.

This survey and associated findings provide the first detailed picture of the distribution of nesting Swifts in the Co. Leitrim. The data from this survey will provide the information needed to establish a swift conservation plan in County Leitrim. It also builds on surveys conducted in other counties around Ireland: the Offaly Swift Survey (2017), the Tipperary, Laois and Westmeath Swift Surveys (2018), the Meath, Sligo and Wicklow Swift surveys (2019), the Clare, South Dublin and Roscommon Swift surveys (2020). The combined data from these surveys provides a far greater understanding of Swift populations dynamics both locally and in a regional context. These projects are pioneering in many respects and can be used as case studies from which many other local authorities, organisations and communities can learn.

Of the 34 towns and villages surveyed in Co. Leitrim in 2020, Swifts were recorded in 13 with nesting Swifts confirmed in 10 of these locations. Five of the towns had 10 or more nest-sites confirmed. The remaining five locations each had less than 10 nests recorded. These nest sites are recorded by location, structure, and specific nesting hole. The Swift nest site data collected through this survey is perhaps the most important element of the project. This key information allows us to take the first steps in protecting each site and make recommendations to further the viability of vulnerable colonies. This report records the site based results and accompanying detailed online maps with photographs of the nest sites by location, structure and exact nesting hole providing an excellent user-friendly account of Swift nest site locations across each of the 10 towns and villages surveyed

across Co. Leitrim. It is hoped this will be a valuable resource for both the council and local communities to help safeguard these important colonies.

The survey results clearly identify the most important towns for swifts in Co. Leitrim as Carrick on Shannon with 79 nests, Mohill with 36 nests, Drumshanbo with 27 nests, Ballinamore with 17 nests and Dromahair with 10 nests. When combined these towns hold 169 nests which is 86% of the swift nests in Co. Leitrim. A concerted effort to protect these larger colonies and bring new recruitment by establishing new nest sites is important for swift survival in Co. Leitrim. Measures to establish a bigger nucleus in these larger colonies within the county will provide source populations for the smaller more vulnerable colonies of Drumsna, Tullaghan, Dromod, Manorhamilton and Ballinaglera that combined have 28 nests which is 14% of swift nests in Leitrim. Drumsna, Tullaghan and Dromod each had between seven and eight nest sites indicating these breeding Swift populations are vulnerable due to low population density. Manorhamilton had only 4 recorded nest sites and Ballinaglera just one nesting Swift making these colonies very much on the edge.

Four of the towns had their swift population concentrated in a single colony (single structure) and two more towns had single colony swifts located between only two nearby structures. This emphasises the extremely vulnerable nature of Swifts in many of these locations, where renovation or construction work on just one or two buildings may lead to the complete loss of Swifts from a town or village. The most vulnerable of Co. Leitrim's populations is probably the single colony of eight nests at Tullaghan which is held in one structure that is semi-derelict and therefore a prospect of collapse, renovation or development looms.

The survey methodology allowed us to investigate the importance of building/structure type for Swift nesting sites. The survey established that 39% of the county Leitrim Swifts nest within house/residential structures this underlines the need to raise public awareness of these birds so as to safeguard their nesting sites within these buildings. This work can be done through libraries, schools and Tidy Towns and distribution of the Saving Swifts booklet (<https://birdwatchireland.ie/publications/saving-swifts-guide/>) to builders, architects and other stakeholders. Swifts are a very unobtrusive species that can be safely accommodated within buildings, without any impacts on the building or its occupants.

Of the remaining nests a further 29% of the swift nests were in public buildings, 11% in church/religious buildings, 10% in small businesses, 6% castle/heritage, 9% other and 1% in an industrial building.

The 29% of swift nests that are in public buildings should be the easiest nests to protect. These buildings include St Patricks Hospital and the Arts Centre in Carrick on Shannon which support the county's largest colonies. The railway monument in Drumshanbo and the railway station buildings in Dromod are other good examples. All these buildings are in public ownership and have the potential to accommodate more nests so any building work should be undertaken with this in mind. County Council planning staff, engineers and other maintenance staff and contractors should be made aware of the Leitrim Swift Survey and the buildings listed which host Swifts.

Church/religious buildings hold 11% of the county's swift nests, as these buildings do not change hands often and by their design and nature the Swifts found in these structures should be relatively safe. In saying this, locals should remain vigilant and keep an eye on these buildings where Swifts are found in churches and similar religious buildings in their communities and communicate any concerns to local parish council if there is potential for the colony to be affected by any work to these sites.

The remaining 26% of nests are spread between small businesses (10%), other (9%), castle/heritage (6%) and industrial (1%). It is important that all these sites are protected, and the relevant stakeholders are informed of the importance of these buildings to Swifts in Leitrim. Small businesses such as the pub and hostel in Mohill, Centra in Drumshanbo and the pub in Ballinaglera could be encouraged to become stewards of Swifts and help raise awareness. The Food Hub in Drumshanbo holds 1 Swift nest and with the support of The Shed Distillery which is at the side of this industrial unit wooden cladding and Swift nest boxes are being incorporated into current building renovation at this site.

Unintentional losses of localised Swift populations can occur where planning decisions, restoration works and building projects have overlooked the presence of Swift nests. In identifying swift nest sites this report is a vital first step in stopping the ongoing losses of Swift nest sites in Co. Leitrim. The next step is to develop and implement the recommendations of this report to ensure that future planning procedures, renovations and new constructions provide proactive protection of sites locally and the establishment of new sites and nest box projects throughout the county. The site-based results, accompanying detailed online maps and photographs in this report provide an account of 197 Swift nest sites in 40 structures across 10 towns and villages that had nesting Swifts recorded in the 2020 Leitrim Swift survey. It is hoped this will be a valuable baseline resource going forward for both Leitrim County Council and local communities to help safeguard these important colonies into the future. In addition, the collaborative approach taken with this project to secure buy-in from local communities, volunteers and groups has established a strong and energetic countywide network of Swift Champions, a key component to future conservation efforts. Efforts should now begin to encourage and activate Swift conservation efforts across the county and with collaboration between the local authority, BirdWatch Ireland and local stakeholders much can be achieved to guarantee a future for County Leitrim's breeding Swift population.

The implementation of other measures to support and increase biodiversity within County Leitrim such as the work that individual stakeholders, Tidy Towns, schools and the County Council are undertaking will also help to support Swifts within the County. Publications such as The All Ireland Pollinator Plan, Gardening for Biodiversity, Celebrating County Leitrim's Wetland Wealth and Saving Swifts Guide provide valuable information to anyone wanting to help make a difference to their natural heritage.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Other results include new information on the building types used by Swifts for nesting, which will help inform conservation priorities and policy. The engagement with local communities, and volunteers through social media platforms has established a growing network of contacts for Swift conservation in County Leitrim. This survey should be repeated every five to 10 years to assess how the current colonies are faring and how many new colonies have been founded or restored.

General Recommendations

- Ensure the results of this report are made available and utilised for the protection of Swifts in Leitrim. Publish a link to PDF report on relevant section of council website for access by the public. In addition, distribute the report to as many localities as possible through relevant local groups and interested individuals.
- The map data associated with this report (nest site grid references) should be made known and available to relevant personnel in the council (e.g. planners/architects) and/or incorporated into council systems to help prevent future loss of Swift nest sites.
- Following the publication of the survey report, present the results of this survey to the community and engage the public to raise awareness whilst encouraging them to protect and conserve their local Swift populations.
- We encourage Leitrim County Council to implement a review of council owned building stock to ascertain suitability to house Swift nest boxes. With buildings identified the council should move to install Swift nest boxes to provide new and additional nesting opportunities for Swifts in the county. Localities with low densities of nest sites should be prioritised.
- County Council should ensure that any planning applications for redevelopment or new developments at location highlighted in this report– takes the existing swift nests into account so that existing nest sites are preserved – or where that cannot happen – that alternative accommodation for swifts are provided to mitigate the loss of existing sites. Ideally these should be built into any new structures using specialised “Swift Bricks”. Alternatively, external swift boxes and call systems can be provided by the developer/property owner as a last resort.
- Local authority should include appropriate wording on Swift conservation measures in the next County Development Plan (suggested text/policy in Appendix). This information should include links to detailed information on the provision of artificial nest sites for Swifts e.g. Swift bricks, Swift nest boxes into all new public building and renovation works and in large-scale commercial developments. Incorporate measures for Swifts into future county Biodiversity Action Plans which outlines their status, conservation measures and management practices needed - architects and planners should be involved delivering these results.
- Through the regular planning process, recommend that all suitable new developments (outside of Local Authority works) of large buildings such as schools, apartments, housing estates and offices to include provision for Swifts. This can be achieved by using specially designed inbuilt bricks which meet the requirements of Swifts nest and load bearing capacity

of the building or by using externally fitted nest boxes. This measure can be used to offset the environmental impact of such large-scale developments.

- More work is needed in 2021 to raise awareness about the status of Swifts and the conservation measures needed to prevent their future decline with all members of the county council responsible for heritage, planning, environmental management and administration.
- Offer Tidy Towns groups the opportunity to be presented with the results of the project and to discuss the findings and recommendations with relevant and experienced Swift experts. Tidy Towns groups play a key role in Swift conservation around the country, an effort that is growing annually.
- Encourage local volunteers and community groups to continue surveying Swifts each summer to monitor local nesting colonies. Following on from this, encourage these groups to establish Swift conservation projects in towns and villages across the county.
- Encourage other neighbouring County Councils to get involved with an annual Swift Survey in 2021. Swifts were observed outside of the County Leitrim boundary on the Cavan side of Dowra during the 2020 survey, and so could not be included in the results of this report.
- Develop a school's programme to engage and educate primary school children about Swifts and their conservation and to establish school conservation projects. A pilot project might be trialled to see how this might work and be rolled out county wide in the future.
- Develop an initiative to work with businesses to protect and promote swifts nesting in small businesses and industrial buildings.
- Work with new and retro fitted commercial developments / housing to include a provision for Swift nest boxes where relevant.
- It is recommended to repeat the whole county survey in 5-10 years to assess the Swift population and monitor the success of conservation measures.
- Distribute the Saving Swifts guide to relevant groups around the county and to relevant local authority staff and councillors. The guide is available online here: https://birdwatchireland.ie/app/uploads/2019/04/4719-BirdwatchIreland-Swift_book_LR.pdf and contains all the information required to help conserve Swifts and establish nest box projects.
- Encourage any uptake or efforts that follow the guidelines within the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan <https://pollinators.ie/> and Leitrim County Council booklets Gardening for Biodiversity and Celebrating County Leitrim's Wetland Wealth. These actions can directly contribute to Swift conservation through the benefits for and related increase in invertebrates especially hoverflies which are a favoured prey item for Swifts.

Locality Specific Recommendations

Carrick on Shannon

Carrick on Shannon holds the county's largest concentration of nesting Swifts, with the two main nuclei in St Patrick's community hospital and Leitrim County Council Arts Office. Special protection must be given to these two main colonies. The rest of the Swift population is scattered across the town between small business and residential properties and work is now needed to protect each individual site.

Carrick on Shannon holds 40% of County Leitrim's nesting Swifts, conservation of this population is very important and all efforts to maintain the current colonies and extend the population through provision of new sites is recommended.

The architectural design of the houses at St. Patrick's Park seems to favour Swifts and the 2020 survey recorded a cluster of nests in this area. Any renovation to these properties should maintain the same architectural style at the eaves and leave access for swifts or include swift bricks to encourage the establishment of a larger colony.

The addition of nest boxes preferably on the more modern builds at the back of the Landmark Hotel could provide nest sites for the many prospecting juveniles recorded around these buildings.

The inclusion of swift bricks in any future new builds in Carrick on Shannon would provide new nest sites to mitigate losses from other sites.

The Council and Tidy Towns have already put in a great effort to promote and protect Carrick on Shannon's Swifts including nest boxes and public information work.

Mohill

Mohill's Swifts are distributed across many structures it would be recommended to work with local groups and schools to raise public awareness about the Swift colonies within Mohill. Special attention must also be given to the Garda Station where there is a significant House Martin colony. The building is also frequently used by Swifts not as a nesting site but as a roosting site, where the swifts can be seen clinging to the exterior of the building at dusk, it would be highly recommended for swift nest boxes to be erected on this building.

There is a cluster of nest sites in the Hostel and adjoining O'Brien's Pub this could provide an ideal setting for a Swift Information hub.

The houses at Hyde Terrace have an architectural design similar to St. Patrick's Park in Carrick on Shannon which seems to favour Swifts. The 2020 survey recorded a cluster of nests in this area. Any renovation to these properties should maintain the same architectural style at the eaves and leave access for swifts or include swift bricks to encourage the establishment of a larger colony. Further survey work here with access to the rear of buildings is advised.

St. Anne's Convent of Mercy would provide a good site for the establishment of a nest box project.

Drumshanbo

Drumshanbo has a diverse range of building types being used by Swifts. An exciting new swift project underway by The Shed Distillery aims to provide multiple nest boxes at their visitor centre to give the swifts much needed safe nesting sites. However, there is still a great need to raise public awareness about Swifts in Drumshanbo which could be done by the Tidy Towns group and local schools. The colony in the old railway monument provides a great opportunity for the placement of a Swift information sign.

Work must be done with all relevant stakeholders as many of the nest sites in Drumshanbo could be unwittingly lost through renovation.

Ballinamore

The Church of Ireland Church in Ballinamore holds 16 of the 17 Swift nest sites recorded in 2020. This makes Ballinamore's swifts both easier to protect and yet very vulnerable to renovation work therefore it would be recommended for other colonies to be established within Ballinamore through nest box projects and provision of nest sites in special swift bricks. The new secondary school building would provide a good site for a nest box project and give a great opportunity for community engagement and education.

All new builds with adequate elevation should include swift bricks.

The single nest on the Main Street must be afforded protection and any re-roofing or renovation in the town could provide an opportunity to include Swift nest sites.

Ballinamore has an active Tidy Towns group who have attended swift information events and expressed interest in establishing a Swift nest box colony.

Dromahair

All the swift nests found in Dromahair were within The Old Mill Apartments complex which appears to be in good repair however single colonies are by nature very vulnerable to change making the long term survival of Dromahair's swifts dependant on one site. It is therefore strongly recommended to involve local groups and schools in protecting this colony and establishing a second colony within a nest box project perhaps on the local Drumlease church where a high amount of Swift activity was recorded indicating its suitability for such a project.

Tullaghan

Tullaghan has a single colony of nesting Swifts found within a derelict building making this colony very vulnerable. High priority must be given to informing the owners of this building and to protecting these sites. Any work on this building must take place outside of the Swift nesting season with the intention to provide swift nest sites for the following season. It would be advised to place swift bricks along the length of this building front and back as well as leaving access under the guttering at the nest sites recorded. As some of the Swifts are nesting in gaps in the masonry every effort must be taken to retain these sites. Public engagement would also be of great benefit. The urgent establishment of a nest box project would be highly advisable. The Catholic Church at Tullaghan was observed to have Swift activity and the presence of juveniles exhibiting "banger behaviour " which indicates they are prospecting for future nest sites as the architecture of this church is highly unlikely to allow swifts any access to nest it is advised to establish a nest box project and Swift caller here.

Drumsna

Dumsna's Swift colony is contained within one privately owned residential building which seems in good repair making it easy to be safeguard with due care. Awareness should be raised locally about this colony which could be done by running a Swift information event followed by a swift watching evening from the next-door community centre. Due to the vulnerable nature of single colonies every effort should be made to establish a Swift nest box project.

Dromod

Dromods nesting Swifts are all within the Heritage Dromod train station buildings making them quite safe for the future and a nest box colony has also already been set up by Dromod Tidy Towns which was warmly welcomed by Irish Rail on to the Railway buildings. It would be very beneficial to involve locals and groups from Dromod in the monitoring and uptake of new nest sites in this exciting new colony project. Irish Rail should also be informed of the exact nest location of Swifts in the building so that they can be protected.

Manorhamilton

Manorhamilton has a very small number of nesting Swifts which must be afforded site by site attention and it would be highly recommended for the addition of a nest box project with the involvement of local schools on a building such as the bee park or the hospital as these buildings offer great elevation for establishing new colonies. The Fever Hospital and The Castle also offer sites where nest box projects could be sited, and these sites could include a Swift caller with little disturbance to neighbours.

The nest in the Yellow house is vulnerable as it could be very easily lost through small remediation works on the broken Fascia however with knowledge and due care it could also be very easily retained.

Ballinaglera

There was only one Swift nesting site found at Ballinaglera in Mulvey's bar protection must be given to this single nest site with hopes to grow the colony in the future. Mulvey's is also the village shop so perhaps this would be a good starting point for distribution of the Saving Swifts booklet. The building is in good condition so this should not be a difficult site to retain. Work here must be in the provision of new sites. The addition of a nest box colony on an ideal location like Saint Hughes Church would be advised and as this is some distance away from the village a Swift caller should not be too intrusive.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following individuals and groups for their assistance in the Leitrim 2020 Swift Survey: Leitrim County Council. The Leitrim Swift Survey 2020 would not have been possible without the commission and funding from Leitrim County Council. Leitrim County Council Heritage Officer Sarah Malone who supported the survey throughout and enabled the Heritage Week podcasts and videos to promote Swift conservation further. Thank you to John Carey and Larry Mitchell for their work in to promote Swifts in County Leitrim and their assistance with the nest box projects in Carrick on Shannon and Dromod. Thank you to Rob and Fiona Wheeldon, their previous survey efforts and reports were of great assistance to us throughout our survey work in Manorhamilton. Thank you also to Rob and Fiona Wheeldon and Miriam Crawley for helping with the 2020 survey work in Manorhamilton. Thank you to John Mathews for his support throughout this project and his knowledge of Swift sightings in County Leitrim. A huge thank you to Sligo Swift Champion Seamus Feeney, who generously shared his time, knowledge and experience of establishing successful Swift nest box colonies with the new nest box project in Drumshanbo and also to The Shed Distillery for funding this project. We thank Micheal Casey, Piotr Rak and Mike Taylor for the kind permission to use their photographs. Thank you to Ben Quinn for sharing his sightings of Swifts in Ballinamore and to Joe Kavanagh for sharing his sightings of Swifts in Tullaghan. Lastly, we thank all those who have contributed Swift records throughout 2020 and given their time to assist with Swift surveys.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Swift Survey Sheet 2020

Observer Name	
Date/Time	
County	
Town/ Village	
Weather	
Final Peak Swift Count	
Total Confirmed Swift Nests	
Local Tidy Town Group Contacted	Yes / No

Nest Site Form							
Time 24hr format	Nest Location (12 Pearse St, Trim)	Building Type: (e.g. House/Residential, Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site)	Using Nestbox (Yes/No)	Swifts Peak Count	Confirmed Swift Nests	Description of Nest Site Location	Photo Tag (as per phone)
		House/Residential, Business, Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site	(Yes/No)				
		House/Residential, Business, Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site	(Yes/No)				
		House/Residential, Business, Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site	(Yes/No)				
		House/Residential, Business, Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site	(Yes/No)				

Suggested Policy Wording – County Development/Heritage Plan documents or similar

It is illegal under The Wildlife Act 1976 (+ amendments) to intentionally kill or cause harm to nesting bird species. Therefore, to comply with Irish legislation and to follow best practice the following actions should be carried out within the respective situations outlined below.

BirdWatch Ireland are happy to supply further steer and recommendations if needed at any point and can be reached at swifts@birdwatchireland.ie or on (0)5791 51676

When working on buildings where Swifts are nesting (during nesting season):

- Avoid working on the building while Swifts are nesting (end April – end August inclusive), if work must take place it must be limited to areas where Swifts will not be affected (internal work) or disturbed. Wholesale removal of roof structures and masonry is to be avoided always within the nesting season.
- Do not block nest access with scaffold and don't net or wrap areas where Swifts are nesting.

When working on buildings where Swifts are nesting (outside of nesting season):

- Preserve the Swifts nest access holes or make new ones to match the old exactly.
- If existing nest entrances can't be retained, mitigation by erection of externally fixed specialised Swift nest boxes should be made.

When working on new builds or renovations to buildings that don't have Swifts nesting:

- At the planning stages for all new public buildings (over 5 metres) built-in Swift bricks (preferable) or externally fixed Swift nest boxes should be incorporated.
- At the planning stages of all new private buildings (over 5 metres) built in Swift bricks or externally fixed Swift nest boxes should be considered.

Swift Nest Boxes and Bricks in use (some examples)

There is a myriad of Swift bricks (integrated into fabric of wall) and Swift nest boxes (externally fitted) available commercially. Within the available options many can be rendered over or painted to match the building. Pages 22-27 of the Saving Swifts guide () offer further case studies where both bricks and boxes have been used at a range of sites/building types.



Figure 12: A row of Swift nest boxes installed at Mullingar Courthouse. Photo: Richella Duggan



Figure 13: Installing Swift boxes as part of the fabric of the wall. Photo: Lynda Huxley



Figure 14: Swift Bricks installed during build phase in Nothing Hill London.



Figure 15: A Swift Brick installed in a newly erected redbrick wall. Photo: www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk

BirdWatch Ireland Saving Swifts Guide



The BirdWatch Ireland Saving Swifts Guide is available as a free download here:

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/publications/saving-swifts-guide/>

The guide is a one stop shop for any and all who are motivated to help conserve Swifts at their own home or on a larger scale such as community and county scale projects.