



Claydon Swift Project

Report 2021-22 April

Project Organiser:

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Project Aims:

- To increase the awareness of the dwindling Swift population in Claydon
- To provide swift boxes to be fitted to resident's home and encourage expansion of the existing colony
- To reverse the decline of available nest sites and the Claydon colonies population
- To better inform planning decisions to take into account historic nesting sites and introduce future nest facilities in new buildings or renovations

2021-22:

In 2020 sixteen swift nest boxes (produced by swift enthusiast, John Stimpson) were fitted to residents properties across the Claydon and Barham at the beginning of April. A report was submitted to the parish council detailing the success of this modest project in 2021.

In 2021 the swifts started to arrive very reliably, always in the first to second week of May each year, and committed residents were involved in attracting the young swifts that are ready for breeding (around 4 years old) to use the nest boxes provided across the villages.

I was unable to carry out many of the proposed actions from the previous report due to work commitments but was still able to maintain contact with the local residents who had been keeping an eye on their swift boxes through the season. No additional funds were requested in this period.

Highlights:

- A Twitter feed with 192 followers has kept all who were interested updated on the projects progress
- 15 boxes fitted across Claydon and 1 in Barham as funded in 2020- 4 of these have cameras inside and 2 recorded families of House Sparrows raising young over the Spring/Summer 2021.
- Several boxes had physical investigations by prospecting swifts this year. The birds fly around the nest boxes at roof height before deciding to enter for a few seconds to examine the potential new nest site. They then exit but repeat this behaviour over the Summer season and are likely to return to the same box to breed next year. Boxes on Thornhill Road and Norwich Road had swifts enter.



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- Residents played swift sounds near their boxes to attract in prospecting swifts.
- Informal counts put the number of swifts over the village at regularly over 40. An increase in individuals in years past, which have been as low as 12.

The Future:

There is an excellent chance that the funded nest boxes will be taken up by returning swifts next year, which will undoubtedly give those households that have been given a box much to look forward to. It can take time for swifts to take up new boxes but the important thing is that this council has seriously improved the chances of the colony's expansion over years to come.

The colony appears to be expanding in numbers and the number of nest sites now provided locally has meant that young birds returning to pair up have spaces to nest (which is one of the key issues in swift ecology).

If pressure can continue to be placed by the parish council on developers to include 'Swift Bricks' into new builds within Claydon (both residential and commercial), and those making alterations that may block access to historic nesting sites are required to make alternative provision (such as a swift brick or box) then this would show a true commitment to these birds.

I would very much like to consider sourcing additional funds for some more boxes and associated camera systems which would increase the visibility of the life of swifts in the village and really give accessibility to all residents, perhaps allowing them to watch swifts on the nests, chicks and their growth.

Proposal:

- Contact the swift box owners to check on any interest or nest from swifts.
- If nest boxes are used for swift breeding in 2022, ask the Claydon and Whitton Parish Council for some funding for some more swift boxes for 2023 season and to install some WiFi Nestbox cameras in existing nest sites in the village, and some for the new nest boxes.
- Work with parish council as needed to help advise on and swift nests, activity around potential building applications and considerations on installation of provision of swift nest bricks or similar.



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Photos of Boxes:

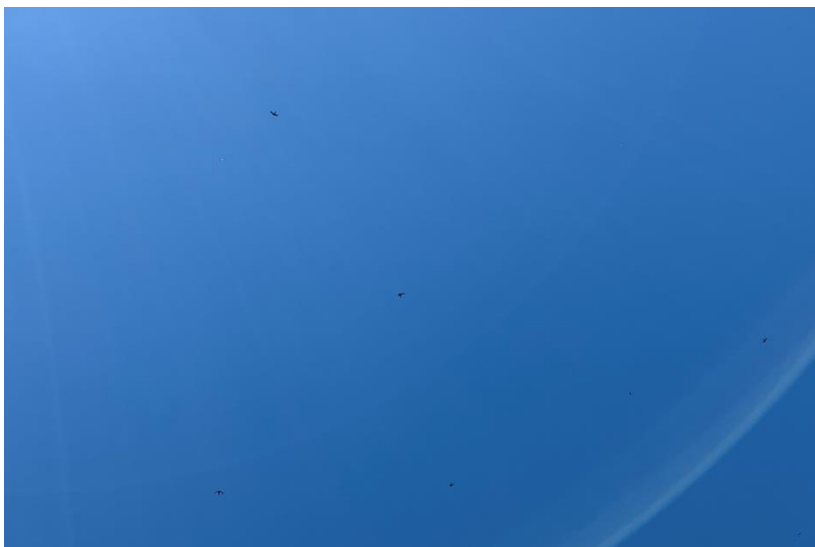
Example of one of the swift boxes in place:



A Claydon Swift investigating a box on a nearby house:



A group of Swifts over the Co-op in Claydon:





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A pair of Swifts entering one of the provided boxes on Norwich Road in 2021:



Sparrows making full use of one of the boxes on Norwich Road in 2021:

