



## Moving Swift-ly Along Camden ...



Remember those sights and sounds of years (decades) ago when you'd see and hear swifts circling high in the sky and everyone would exclaim, "Oh good, summer's on the way!"? Swifts are migratory, reaching northern Europe typically in early May from Equatorial and Southern Africa to breed, a round trip of 22,000 kms! Their numbers however are in sharp decline across the UK, so a few residents met with Stewart Owen from the *Bath Swift Group* recently to consider how to attract more of these amazing birds to our neighbourhood.

Fascinating stuff: swifts can fly up to 800 km a day, reaching speeds of up to 110 km/hr, which makes them the UK's fastest bird in level flight. In its lifetime a bird may fly 6.5m km, equivalent to flying to the moon and back eight times, and only landing after 2-3 years, when it returns to the location of its birth to find a mate and raise its own family <sup>1</sup> Swifts eat only flying insects and don't take the food or nests of any other bird.

If you're not sure how to differentiate a swift from other birds, here's a handy guide, and a model of a nest:



We know that several pairs already return year after year to nests in Berkeley Place, Frankley Buildings and Belgrave Crescent amongst others. Stuart told us that swifts' requirements for a breeding site are quite precise and, as they'll only nest near other swifts, we'll need to be welcoming, patient and handy with the tool-kit. Nests must be out of direct sunlight, facing NE or NW, with an unobstructed flight path and at least 5m from the ground so that the birds can drop out and glide; the nest itself may be inside roof eaves or a box attached in a favourable location; many designs are available to make up quickly and cheaply.

Stewart will be meeting Nancy Coppock soon to look around for potential nest sites. In addition, let's all keep an eye and ear out for those returning swifts and drop a note of sightings on this blog. This could be the next step in developing "green Camden", along with Camden Meadow, our goats, bees and all the additional planting prompted by last summer's Jubilee street celebrations. Come and find us Swifts, we want you as Camden residents!

### More info:

- Bath Swift Group: <https://restoreourplanet.org/uk-project/swift-boxes-for-bath/>
- <sup>1</sup>Bristol Swifts: <https://www.bristolswifts.co.uk>
- Action for Swifts blog which also have designs for boxes and kits <http://actionforswifts.blogspot.com>
- Swift Action (Wilderwatch) <https://wilderhoodwatch.org/swift-action/>