

Breeding Swift Survey – 2014-15



One of the major themes to emerge from the recent publication of the SBSG Breeding Atlas was our lack of detailed knowledge on certain familiar species. One such example is Common Swift *Apus apus*, which despite an overall increase in tetrad occupancy, showed a 50% reduction in breeding confirmations between 1975-80 and 2003-08.

Some of this local decline can be accounted for by the fact that the 1975-80 Atlas results were based on a specific survey of this familiar species, but a downward trend has also been apparent at a national level for a number of years.

To celebrate the 35th anniversary of the original survey, we would now like your help in revisiting its strongholds to try and find out how things have changed for these iconic birds. We also plan to share our results with the RSPB, who run an

annual Swift survey on a similar basis.

To start with, we are simply asking observers to submit **ALL** records of Swifts showing breeding behaviour from anywhere within the SBSG area, but particularly SK 38 in and around the city centre, as this 10km square was particularly well-recorded last time around. Depending on the response, we will then either confine the survey to SK 38 or expand the survey to the whole of the SBSG recording area. We are then hoping to combine the results from the 2014-15 breeding seasons into a meaningful comparison with the results from original survey which spanned the breeding seasons of 1979-80.

There is no survey form to complete - simply submit your records in the usual way i.e. via the website 'Submit Sightings' page, **BUT** please try to add the following important information in the 'Comments' section for each individual record:

Location – street name & postcode

Type of building – approximate age & materials

Height of nest – in metres

Position on building – e.g. junction of roof, eaves etc.

Number of nests - where possible

An example of what we are after when submitting records on the SBSG website sightings page is given below:

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Fields in **bold** are required

Site

Ecclesall

Grid Reference

SK 38

Observer Name

RD Hill

Species

Swift

Confidential

Comments

Ansell Road - S11 7PE
Nest site at junction of roof
10 m off ground
Semi-detached house - 1930's brick
North facing wall - 2 NESTS

Activity Code

NY

Photo

Submitted photos may be used on the SBSG website, Bulletin or Facebook page, with full credit to the photographer

Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

29/06/2014

Time

Email

rdhill@yahoo.com

Count

2

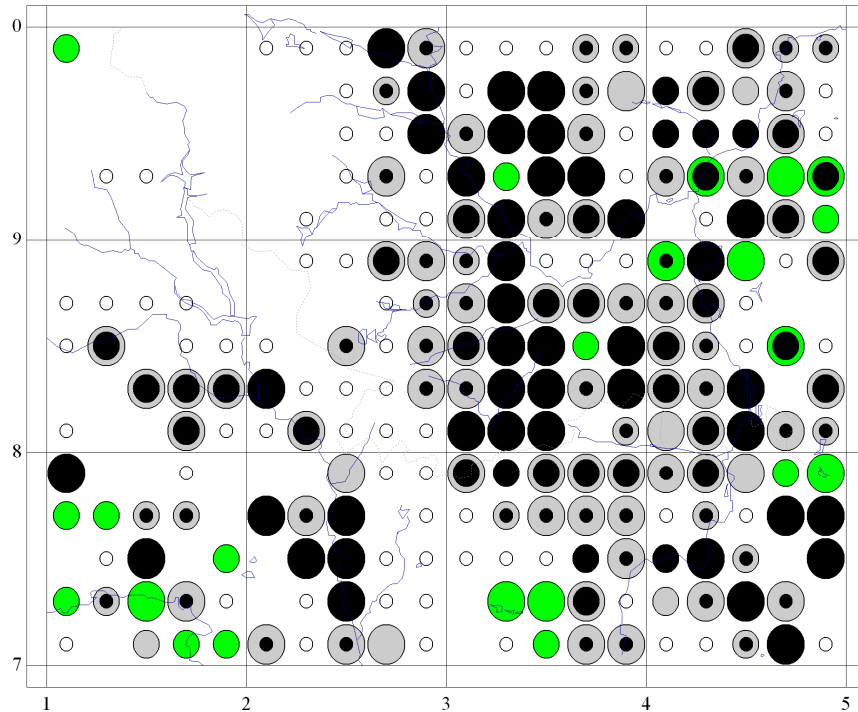
The best time to look for breeding Swifts is during June and July, either during the early morning before adults leave the vicinity of the nest site to feed further afield, or better still, in the early evening, when feeding activity is at its peak.

Breeding behaviour includes:

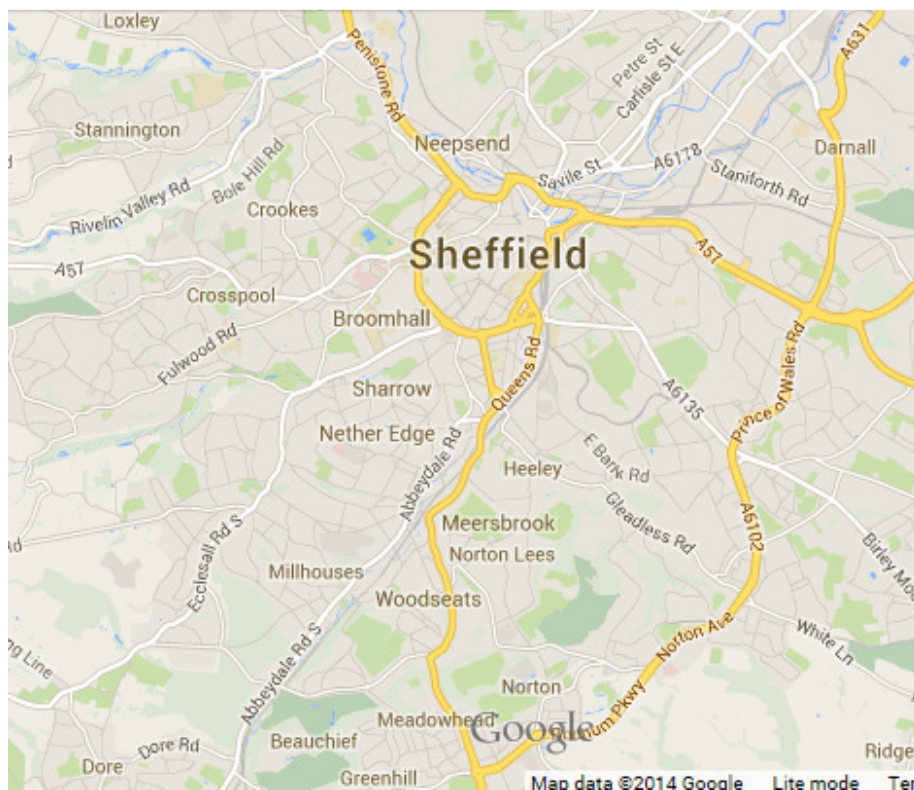
- low-flying birds around suitable nest sites
- adults entering a building on a regular basis
- evidence of droppings under a suitable nest site
- young calling from an active nest.

Although high-flying feeding parties of Swifts are not necessarily indicative of breeding behaviour for the purposes of this survey, please continue to report them in the usual way via the SBSG website, as these records are still of great value for the SBSG annual report.

The distribution map from the 2003-08 Atlas (which also incorporates the 1975-80 Atlas results) is given below – this highlights the strongholds for Swifts across the SBSG area – in particular SK 38 (three squares across from the left and two squares up from the bottom). It is worth noting that open circles most likely indicate feeding birds:



For reference, the rough area covered by SK 38 is given below:



Any queries, please contact Richard Hill at Secretary@SBSG.org - Thanks in advance for your help!