

Swift Conservation Mayo's Contribution to Research on European and Chinese Common Swifts 2015

Several years ago the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) fixed geolocators onto Common Swifts at their nest site in East Anglia, UK. The object of this exercise was to find out the exact migration route that the Swifts were taking to their wintering area and to find out the exact destination. The results of this research showed that the destination is South East Africa, in particular Malawi and Mozambique. The route taken was not a direct line over the Sahara but via West Africa, over the tropical forests (a great source of food). The route is shown by the blue line on the map of the globe below.

You can find out more by using this web link:

<http://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/swifts>

In 2014/15 similar research was conducted on the Common Swifts that breed in Beijing, China. Much to everyone's surprise, the Beijing Swifts also winter in Africa but they go the South West coast and in particular to Namibia. This means that the UK and Chinese Swifts have a cross over point – as can be seen on the map of the globe below.

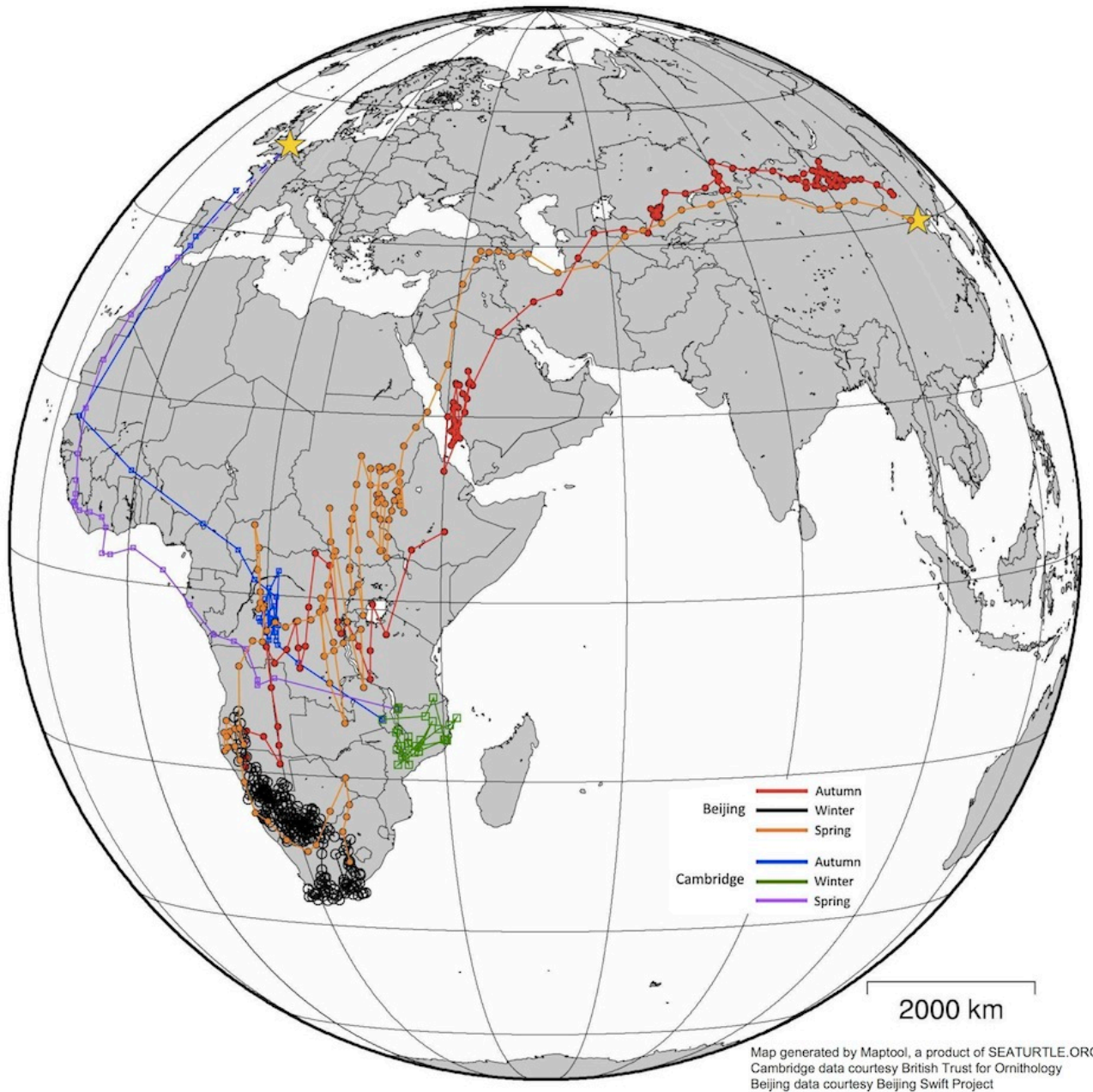
You can read more by using this web link :

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/may/25/swifts-migrate-beijing-southern-africa-without-landing>

The Chinese scientists are now taking this research one step further. They want to compare the DNA of the Chinese Common Swift against that of European Common Swift. Swift Conservation Mayo has been able to contribute to this research by supplying feathers and skin samples of Swifts from the West of Ireland. Sadly in 2015 two Swifts were found dead, one was an adult found on the pavement in Westport near the Court House and the other bird was a newly fledged bird found on the pavement in Longford Town. There was no obvious sign of death for both birds other than that they were both underweight and so may have had difficulty finding enough food. However, these birds did not die in vain as we were able to send samples of both birds to the scientists in China via the partner research University in Sweden.

We now await the outcome from this research and will post information as soon as we can.

SWIFT MIGRATION



The migrations of 2 Swifts, one from Cambridge, UK and the other from Beijing. The tracks, the results of geolocator studies, show autumn and spring migration routes as well as stopover areas.