

BALLYMOTE BULLETIN

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Locals hoping to revive swift population as numbers are in decline

Ballymote is trying to revive the swift population in the area.

The bird species is in decline in Ireland in particular - in contrast to the rest of Europe - and in an effort to increase the population, specialised boxes have been erected around the Ballymote area in an attempt to encourage swifts to stay and build nests.

Recently, some specialised bird houses were placed on the TopChem building in the Ballymote Business Park while there are also boxes at the local national school.

Local educator and Nature Learn founder Michael Bell explained the rationale for the boxes, and says they are going to help grow the swift population.

"They [boxes] are up in a couple of places in Ballymote and have been purposely designed to suit the needs of the swift.

"There is one at the national school, and there

are actually swifts using that at the moment.

"There are also six boxes up at TopChem in the Ballymote Business Park.

"At the ones in the Business Park, we are playing recordings of swifts in order to try to attract swifts, as if they hear the sound of the bird they are more likely to go there and nest."

"We received some funding from Sligo County Council for the project and the boxes have turned out really well."

The swift is about the same size as a swallow, and tends to be seen in Ireland between April and September. The bird is distinctive in that it spends virtually all of its life airborne, and hence why the boxes for nesting have been placed at a height to suit the swift.

It is common in Ireland during the summer months, and, coincidentally, a new walkway opened in Tubbercurry recently was named after the swift.



The photo of a swift in the hand was taken last year at a swift colony in Tubbercurry started by Michael Casey, a licensed bird ringer. This was one of several birds fitted with geolocators that will hopefully allow us to learn more about these birds' migration patterns and where they spend the winter.