

Swift bird survey results

Roscommon Tidy Towns Association will announce the results of its Swift survey at a Bird-watch Ireland meeting on Thursday, March 3rd, at 8p.m. in Hannon's hotel.

The survey, funded through the Community Heritage Bursary, 2015, and Roscommon County Council, took place in Roscommon Town last summer, under the supervision of Mayo-based conservationist, Lynda Huxley.

Swifts live their lives on the wing, stopping only to nest and rear their young. They eat, drink, preen, sleep and mate while flying. These small birds soar to 3,000 metres to sleep, restfully riding a thermal, with half of their brain on snooze.

When rearing young, they approach their nests at 40 miles per hour and stop instantly, without slowing down. They fold their body down from the neck and use it as a massive break — much like the landing flap on an airplane's wings. Swifts are the perfect guest. Unlike swallows and housemartins, they leave no mess under their nest sites.

Unfortunately, the swift population is falling dramatically — in the last 15 years, it has declined by 46%.

Swifts fly 500 miles a day, or two million miles in a lifetime. Swifts, which arrive in Ireland at the end of April and the start of May, and return to Africa in August, have been around for 50m years.

Swifts nest in old buildings, but old buildings are being demolished or renovated — and new buildings have no nooks and crannies for the swifts.

When the birds arrive back from Africa to raise a new family, they find their nesting places have gone. They have become homeless.

There were many sites surveyed around Roscommon Town and the members of the Tidy Towns are planning on providing boxes to encourage more swifts to the area.

Everyone is welcome to attend the launch on Thursday, March 3rd, and to learn more about these birds, who make Roscommon their home for the summer months.

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