



BALLA NEST SITE REPORT – updated 2023

Overview

SITE No.	Address	Building Type	Occupied Natural Nests	Occupied Nest Boxes
1	Secondary School	School	1	0
2	Town Centre	Community Centre	n/a	1

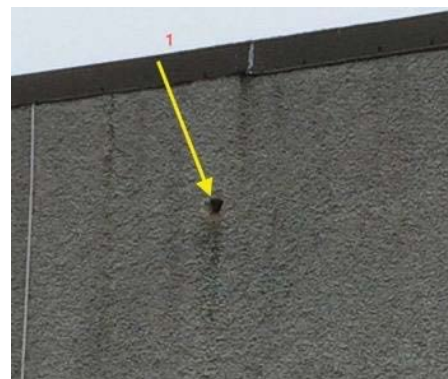
Site No. 1 : Secondary School

Town	Balla
Address	
Use of Building	Secondary School
Spatial Reference	53.80639439,-9.13855433
Protected Structure Reg. No.	Not applicable
Year of Construction	1880s
Natural Nest Sites	1
Aspect of Natural Nests	NNE
Nest Boxes	16 Vivara GZ03 nest boxes built into new school extension 2022
Aspect of Nest Boxes	NE
Total Occupied Nests	1 natural, 0 nest boxes
Swifts seen flying	8

Additional Information

Natural Nest Site :

Just one natural Swift nest site at the school in a pipe hole in the end wall of the school gym. This gym is a relatively new building but the school itself was built in the 1880s. The school guttering and fascia/soffit has been replaced in recent with plastic guttering, fascia and soffit and this may have led to loss of some natural Swift nest sites in the main school building. A total of 8 swifts were seen flying above the school.



Nest Box Project :

A nest box project was funded through a Heritage Council grant in 2021. This has provided 16 built-in Woodstone Swift Nest Box Deep. The project was completed in 2022 and the attraction calls playing for the 2023 season but no activity was seen at the nest boxes in this first season.



Site No 2 : Community Centre

Address	Town centre
Spatial Reference	53.80508, -9.131108
Protected Structure Reg. No.	Not applicable
Year of Construction	Not known
Natural Nest Sites	n/a
Aspect of Natural Nests	n/a
Nest Boxes	3 (1 triple entrance)
Aspect of Nest Boxes	NE
Total Occupied Nests	1
Swifts seen flying	3

Additional Information

Nest Box Project

This nest box project was established in September 2017 with donation provided to Swift Conservation Mayo. Attraction calls played for first time in 2018. The nest box is a Genesis triple cavity.

In 2021, 2022 and 2023 swifts were seen entering and leaving Box 1 (left hand box) throughout the breeding season.



THE AMAZING SWIFT

Common Swift Gabhlán gaoithe *Apus apus*



BALLA NESTBOX PROJECT

TRAVEL ROUTES



The round trip to Africa is 14,000 miles!

LIFE ON THE WING



They drink, sleep, eat on the wing.

FINDING HOME



They use the same site for the rest of their lives.

NEST WITH EGGS



They lay 2 or 3 eggs each year.

FAMILY LIFE



Chicks open their eyes 6 days after hatching.

SWIFT FACTS

- They come to Europe each Summer
- They make their way back to Africa in late August
- They return to their nest sites in early May, a round trip of 14,000 miles!

SPEED	Can reach speeds of 135 miles per hour and approach their nest site at 40 miles per hour
WINGS	Very rapid wing-beats: 8 per second
AGE	They can live for up to 20 years
FEET	Small with sharp claws used to get to the nest
TRAVEL	They fly about 500 miles per day and during its life the Swift will travel 3 million miles
FLIGHT	They zoom about at very high speed, usually screaming as they go in "screaming parties"

TRAVEL	They arrive from Africa Apr/May, leave in late Aug
FOOD	Aerial spiders, midges, aphids and airborne insects
LIFE	They breed in Ireland (lay eggs and rear chicks), mostly in our towns
LIFE	They stay with the same partner their whole life
NEST	They collect nest material while flying and stick it together with saliva to make a cosy nest (feathers, dry grass, dandelion clocks etc.)
NEST	They use that same site for the rest of their lives

WHY SWIFTS?

The Swift is a bird of conservation concern due to a population decrease of close to 50% in the past 20 years. County Mayo has approximately 290 breeding pairs of swifts in "natural" nest sites but this has now been increased by 10% in the last few years by the provision of nest box projects in almost every town in the county. The Balla nest box project was set up with a generous private donation and is a collaboration between Swift Conservation Mayo and Balla Tidy Towns. The box was erected in 2018 and has entrances to three separate compartments. Attraction calls will be played each year from May to end of August. Swifts have to find their nest sites whilst flying around at high speed so the calls will help them locate our nest boxes.

There is at least one "natural" Swift nest site in Balla in a hole in the end wall of the gym at Balla Secondary School. By providing nest boxes in the town we aim to help grow the numbers of this amazing bird. This is an exciting project to enhance the urban biodiversity of our town.

You can find out more about this bird and where it breeds in the county by visiting the Swift Conservation Ireland website www.swiftconservation.ie

AMAZING. MYSTERIOUS. VERY FAST.
EATS MILLIONS OF INSECTS.



See GMIT Swifts LIVE between May and mid-August at:

swiftconservation.ie/gmit-swiftcams