



# SWIFT SURVEY REPORT 2024

## BALLA



Site No.	Address	Natural Nests Occupied	Nest Boxes E=external B= Built-in	Nest Boxes Occupied	Building Type	Protected Structure
1	Secondary School	0	16 - B	0	Public	No
2	Community Centre	0	3 - E	1	Community	No
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>16-B, 3-E</b>	<b>1</b>		

### Balla Summary Table

<b>Total Occupied Nests (natural and boxes)</b>	<b>1</b>
No. External Nest Boxes available	3
No. Built-in Nest Boxes available	16
No. External Nest Boxes occupied	1
No. Built-in Nest Boxes occupied	0
No. Natural nests occupied	0



# Balla

County Mayo Common Swift Survey 2024



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo  
Mayo County Council



Map prepared by: Jarek Majkusiak

## Site No. 1 : Community Secondary School, Moat

Use of Building	Secondary School
Eircode	F23 KT65
Spatial Reference	53.80639439,-9.13855433
Protected Structure	No
Natural Nest Sites	1 pre 2024 – 2024 survey found site was blocked off by pipe
No. Nest Boxes	16 (Vivara GZ 03 built into new school extension 2022)
No. Occupied Nest Boxes	0
Aspect of Nests	NE
Swifts seen flying	3
Total Occupied Nests	0

A nest box project was funded through a Heritage Council grant in 2021. This has provided 16 built-in Woodstone Swift Nest Box Deep GZ03. The project was completed in 2022 and the attraction calls playing from the 2023 season. During the 2024 survey, 3 Swifts observed on two occasions flying close to the built-in nest boxes



1a. Aerial View of school location



1b. Two gables each with 8 built-in GZ03 nest boxes – entrances are staggered



1c. Builders holding samples of the nest boxes GZ 03

## Site No 2 : Community Resource Centre, The Square

Use of Building	Community Centre
Eircode	F23 A303
Spatial Reference	53.80506707, -9.13115948
Protected Structure	No
Natural Nest Sites	None
No. Nest Boxes	3
No. Occupied Nest Boxes	1
Aspect of Nests	NE
Swifts seen flying	5
Total Occupied Nests	1

### Nest Box Project:

The nest box initiative commenced in September 2017, funded by a donation to Swift Conservation Mayo, with installation coordinated by Balla Tidy Towns. Attraction calls were first played in 2018, and the nest box utilized is a Genesis triple compartment. Since 2021, a pair of Swifts has consistently occupied Box 1 (the left-hand box) during the breeding season. In 2024, occupancy of this nest box was verified by Jarek Majkusiak using an infra-red camera and visual observation.



2a. Swift entering nest box



2b. location of nest box

## THE AMAZING SWIFT

Common Swift Gabhlán gaoithe *Apus apus*

**BALLA  
NESTBOX  
PROJECT**

TRAVEL ROUTES	LIFE ON THE WING	FINDING HOME	NEST WITH EGGS	FAMILY LIFE																						
<p style="font-size: x-small;">The round trip to Africa is 14,000 miles!</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">They drink, sleep, eat on the wing.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">They use the same site for the rest of their lives.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">They lay 2 or 3 eggs each year.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Chicks open their eyes 6 days after hatching.</p>																						
<div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;">SWIFT FACTS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ They come to Europe each Summer</li> <li>➤ They make their way back to Africa in late August</li> <li>➤ They return to their nest sites in early May, a round trip of 14,000 miles!</li> </ul>	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; font-size: x-small;"> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>SPEED</b></td><td>Can reach speeds of 135 miles per hour and approach their nest site at 40 miles per hour</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>WINGS</b></td><td>Very rapid wing-beats: 8 per second</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>AGE</b></td><td>They can live for up to 20 years</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>FEET</b></td><td>Small with sharp claws used to get to the nest</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>TRAVEL</b></td><td>They fly about 500 miles per day and during its life the Swift will travel 3 million miles</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>FLIGHT</b></td><td>They zoom about at very high speed, usually screaming as they go in "screaming parties"</td></tr> </table>	<b>SPEED</b>	Can reach speeds of 135 miles per hour and approach their nest site at 40 miles per hour	<b>WINGS</b>	Very rapid wing-beats: 8 per second	<b>AGE</b>	They can live for up to 20 years	<b>FEET</b>	Small with sharp claws used to get to the nest	<b>TRAVEL</b>	They fly about 500 miles per day and during its life the Swift will travel 3 million miles	<b>FLIGHT</b>	They zoom about at very high speed, usually screaming as they go in "screaming parties"	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; font-size: x-small;"> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>TRAVEL</b></td><td>They arrive from Africa April/May, leave in late Aug</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>FOOD</b></td><td>Aerial spiders, midges, aphids and airborne insects</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>LIFE</b></td><td>They breed in Ireland (lay eggs and rear chicks), mostly in our towns</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>LIFE</b></td><td>They stay with the same partner their whole life</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>NEST</b></td><td>They collect nest material while flying and stick it together with saliva to make a cosy nest (feathers, dry grass, dandelion clocks etc.)</td></tr> <tr><td style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;"><b>NEST</b></td><td>They use that same site for the rest of their lives</td></tr> </table>	<b>TRAVEL</b>	They arrive from Africa April/May, leave in late Aug	<b>FOOD</b>	Aerial spiders, midges, aphids and airborne insects	<b>LIFE</b>	They breed in Ireland (lay eggs and rear chicks), mostly in our towns	<b>LIFE</b>	They stay with the same partner their whole life	<b>NEST</b>	They collect nest material while flying and stick it together with saliva to make a cosy nest (feathers, dry grass, dandelion clocks etc.)	<b>NEST</b>	They use that same site for the rest of their lives
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<p>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 200 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.</p> <p><b>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.</b></p> <p>You can find out more about this bird and where it breeds in the county by visiting the Swift Conservation Ireland website <a href="http://www.swiftconservation.ie">www.swiftconservation.ie</a></p>																										

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

See GMIT Swifts LIVE between May and mid August at  
[swiftconservation.ie/gmit-swiftcams](http://swiftconservation.ie/gmit-swiftcams)

2c. Signboard on exterior wall of the Community Resource Centre