

Offaly Swift Survey 2017



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1 Introduction

The Common Swift *Apus apus*, is perhaps the most iconic and intriguing of our urban bird species. It is a summer migrant that breeds throughout Europe and much of Asia, and winters in southern Africa. In recent decades, Swift numbers have been in decline throughout many parts of their range, giving much cause for concern. In Ireland, the recent Bird Atlas 2007-11 shows there has been a 26% loss in range since 1970 and a severe decline in abundance since 1990 (Balmer et al. 2013), while the latest Countryside Bird Survey data show an alarming 39% decline between 2008 and 2013 (Crowe et al. 2014). As a result, Swift is now of conservation concern in Ireland, and is Amber-listed (Colhoun et al. 2013).



Figure 1: Swift approaching its nest under the gutter in Clonbullogue, St Kevin's Church of Ireland

Throughout most of its breeding range, the Swift nests in cavities in walls or under eaves of houses and old buildings. Because of this they are a well-known bird species in urban centres, particularly cities and towns. Based on data from existing surveys, it is known that Swifts nest in several Co. Offaly towns, including Banagher, Birr, Tullamore, Cloghan and Daingean. However, anecdotally it is thought that numbers locally are in decline, mirroring the national and international trends. Reasons for the decline of Swifts are not fully understood, but it is thought the loss of available nest sites due to renovations of old buildings and modern building techniques restrict the availability of nesting cavities is a significant factor (Concern for Swifts 2013)

It has been proven that Swifts will nest in artificial nest boxes, thus allowing for populations to be maintained, particularly where renovations to buildings have reduced nest site availability. Swifts are long-lived and faithful to their nest sites from year to year and it is known that individual pair will not readily move to a newly provided colony. Newly available sites are most likely to be occupied by new pairs if they are attracted to the area by other birds. Therefore, it is essential that any provision and placement of alternative nest sites must be guided by information on where Swifts are currently nesting.

2 Project Objectives

Aim: To undertake a detailed survey of Swifts in towns and villages across Co. Offaly to establish a picture of the distribution of nesting Swifts in the county. The data collected will allow planners and decision makers to effectively manage Swifts at site level, helping to conserve this important part of Offaly's urban heritage.

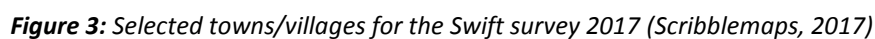
Objectives:

- Carry out a survey of Swifts in Co. Offaly towns and villages to locate nesting colonies.
- Engage volunteers, community groups and local people to take part in Swift survey work.
- Encourage the development of Swift projects in towns and villages and provide training and advice to local groups and communities for the implementation of conservation projects.



Figure 2: Birr Tidy Towns Group and residents pictured during an evening Swift Survey with Anton Krastev of BirdWatch Ireland

A total of 47 towns in Co. Offaly have been identified for Swift survey work. Of this number, 16 towns have been ranked as 'High Priority' for survey work, with the remaining 31 towns ranged as 'Lower Priority'. The 'High Priority' towns were selected on several criteria, particularly the known presence of nesting Swifts, the town size and the suitability of buildings for nesting Swifts in the town. 'Lower Priority' towns were those where there are no records of Swifts and where the town buildings are less likely to be suitable for nesting.



The survey work took place from early May to early August 2017. Survey visits were carried out during fine weather to increase chances of encountering Swifts. Survey visits were carried out before 11am and after 6pm where possible to maximise encountering peak Swift activity. A standardised survey form was designed to capture survey location, date, time, weather conditions and Swift activity. (See Appendix 2) Details of Swift nest locations were also recorded, information on location, building type, site of nest entrance, number of nests present and photos of each site were all noted.

This project also aimed to engage volunteers and local community groups to take part in the survey work, developing a local network of Swift volunteers and encouraging the development of local Swift projects in towns and villages across the county. At the beginning of the project, contact was made with local groups (particularly Tidy Towns Groups) and volunteers. They were invited to take part in the Swift survey of their local town/village. This provided them with the opportunity to avail of survey training and advice, while also helping to reduce the overall cost of this project.

4 Data Collection

Survey data from all locations was entered to Microsoft Excel and mapped in ArcGIS Online. All confirmed nest sites are photographed and Included in the Site Based Results section of this report.

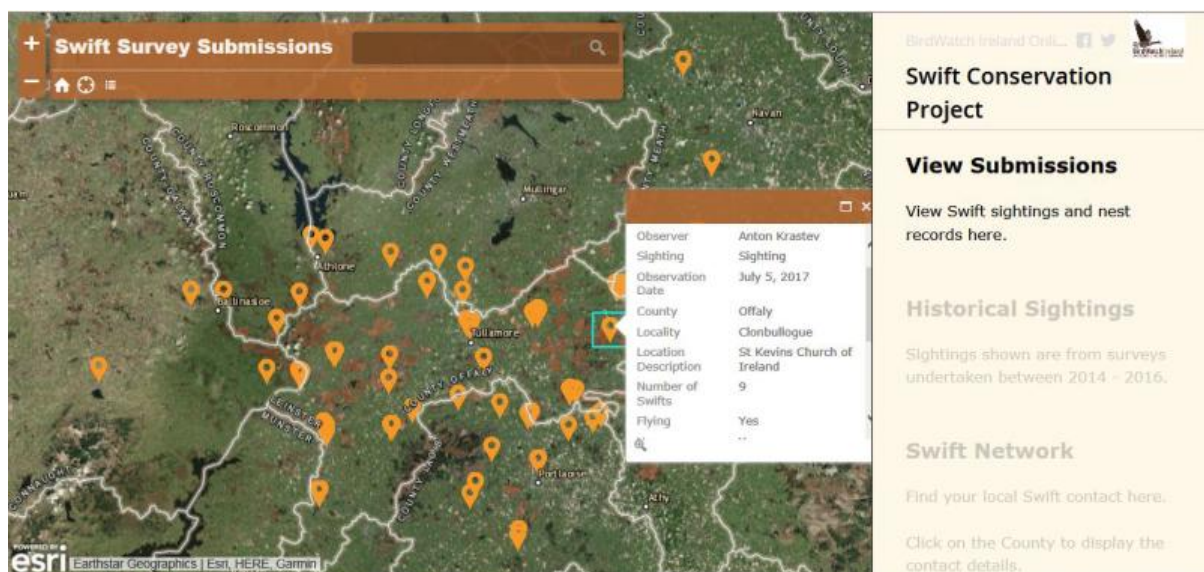


Figure 4: Screenshot of ArcGIS Online Swift sighting mapping tool

5 Citizen Science

A network of volunteers was established to help with survey work and links developed with Tidy Towns Groups across the county.

Input from local volunteers was collected through the ArcGIS Online Mapping Application and bulk records were accepted in Excel format and integrated online.

Regular contact and liaison with local groups was made throughout the project to support on the ground citizen science efforts and promote the survey and follow up actions locally.

Active effort was made to meet with local groups to recruit new citizen science contributions, this was supported by awareness raising through social media platforms and local media coverage (print and broadcast). See Appendix 4, 5, 6.

6 Results

Overall the Offaly Swift Survey 2017 identified 251 Swifts (peak count of all areas combined) and confirmed 165 nests. These results provide a baseline figure from which we can measure future changes of Swift numbers in the county. These findings are concentrated around 75 buildings/structures which are documented with photographs and plotted in ArcGIS Online. In total BirdWatch Ireland has conducted 45 field survey days and 26 days of office work to complete and coordinate the survey work and to collate the results. During this time, 12 Tidy Town Groups took part in this project. Overall results of the Offaly Swift Survey 2017 are presented in Table 1.



Figure 5: Swift and its nest found at Birr Castle outer wall

6.1 Survey Visits

An initial visit to each of the 47 Offaly towns and villages was completed to survey for the presence of Swifts. In towns or villages where Swifts were recorded on first visits, subsequent surveys were completed to confirm breeding and identify exact nest site locations.

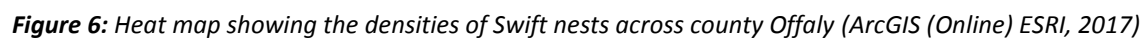
The highest number of Swift nests were recorded in Banagher, where 32 nests were found. This was followed by 30 nests in Tullamore, 24 in Edenderry 23 in Birr and a remaining 14 towns reporting between 1 and 9 nests. The largest peak count (maximum number of birds observed during a single visit) of Swifts were recorded in Banagher – 35 Swifts and Edenderry - 30 Swifts.

Table 1: The presence of Swifts and their nests across county Offaly

	Town/Village	Number of Visits	Swifts Present	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests
1	Banagher	2	Yes	35	32
2	Tullamore	3	Yes	28	30
3	Edenderry	4	Yes	30	24
4	Birr, Crinkil & Riverstown	3	Yes	27	23
5	Clara	2	Yes	12	9
6	Shinrone	2	Yes	10	6
7	Clonbollogue	3	Yes	11	5
8	Portarlinton	2	Yes	17	5
9	Daingean	2	Yes	6	5
10	Durrow	2	Yes	7	4
11	Shannonbridge	3	Yes	13	4
12	Cloghan	3	Yes	12	4
13	Horseleap	2	Yes	11	3
14	Kinnitty	2	Yes	9	3
15	Shannon Harbour	2	Yes	3	2
16	Killeigh	2	Yes	12	2
17	Kilcormac	2	Yes	4	2
18	Cadamstown	4	Yes	3	1
19	Clonmacnoise	2	Yes	1	1
20	Roscore	2	No	-	-
21	Rahan	2	No	-	-
22	Mucklagh	1	No	-	-
23	Mountbolus	2	No	-	-
24	Killoughey	3	No	-	-
25	Rath	2	No	-	-
26	Walsh Island	1	No	-	-
27	Tubber	1	No	-	-

28	Pollagh	2	No	-	-
29	Geashill	1	No	-	-
30	Dunkerrin	1	No	-	-
31	Cushina	1	No	-	-
32	Croghan	2	No	-	-
33	Coolderry	1	No	-	-
34	Clonygowan	2	No	-	-
35	Clonony	1	Yes	-	-
36	Clareen	2	No	-	-
37	Capppancur	1	No	-	-
38	Ballycumber	2	No	-	-
39	Ballyboy	2	No	-	-
40	Ballinagar	1	No	-	-
41	Brosna	1	No	-	-
42	Bracknagh	1	No	-	-
43	Blue Ball	3	No	-	-
44	Rhode	3	No	-	-
45	Moneygall	1	No	-	-
46	Ferbane	1	No	-	-
47	Doon	1	No	-	-
			Total	251	165

Figure 6 shows the density of Swift nest sites, low density (blue), average (red) and high density (yellow). This map depicts Banagher, Birr, Tullamore and Edenderry to have the highest densities of Swift nests.



The survey has identified a total of 165 Swift nest sites across the county. These have been found in roofs of houses, religious buildings, schools, heritage sites, industrial buildings, Swift nest boxes and other structures i.e. bridges.



Figure 7: Photograph of Swifts nests – church, school, castle walls, old bridges, nest boxes & house A.Krastev

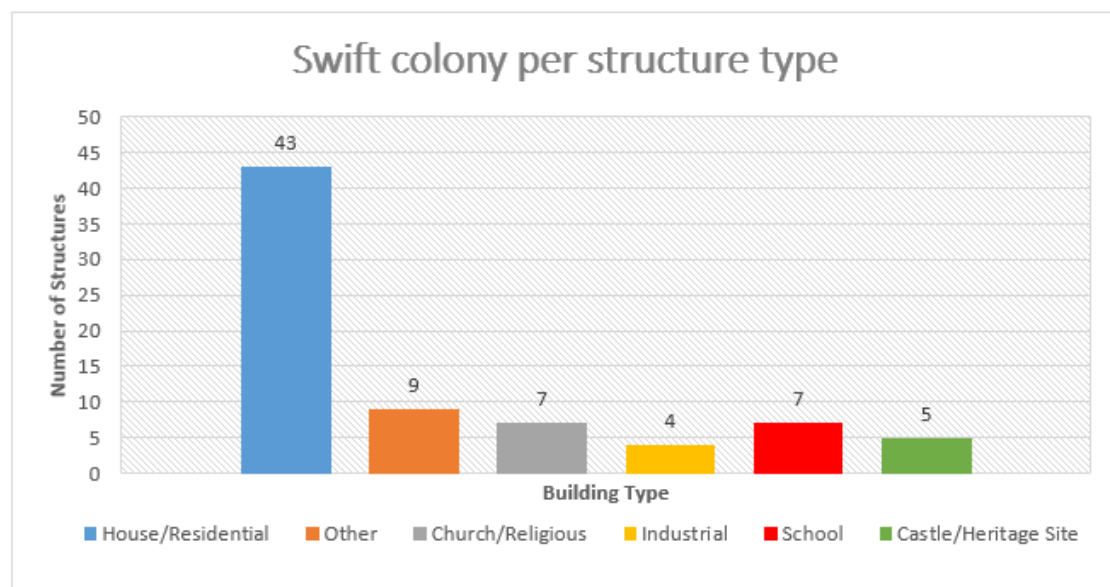


Figure 8: Number of buildings/structures which are used by Swifts

Swift colonies have been recorded in a total of 75 different buildings and structures across Co. Offaly. A Further breakdown of this figure is shown in Figure 8, with 43 houses, 7 churches, 4 industrial buildings, 7 schools, 5 heritage buildings/structures and 9 other buildings/structures - consisting of a bridge, commercial three storey houses, and a hotel.

It's important to note that category 'House/Residential' includes some business premises (i.e. shops and pubs), particularly where there was residential accommodation in the same building.

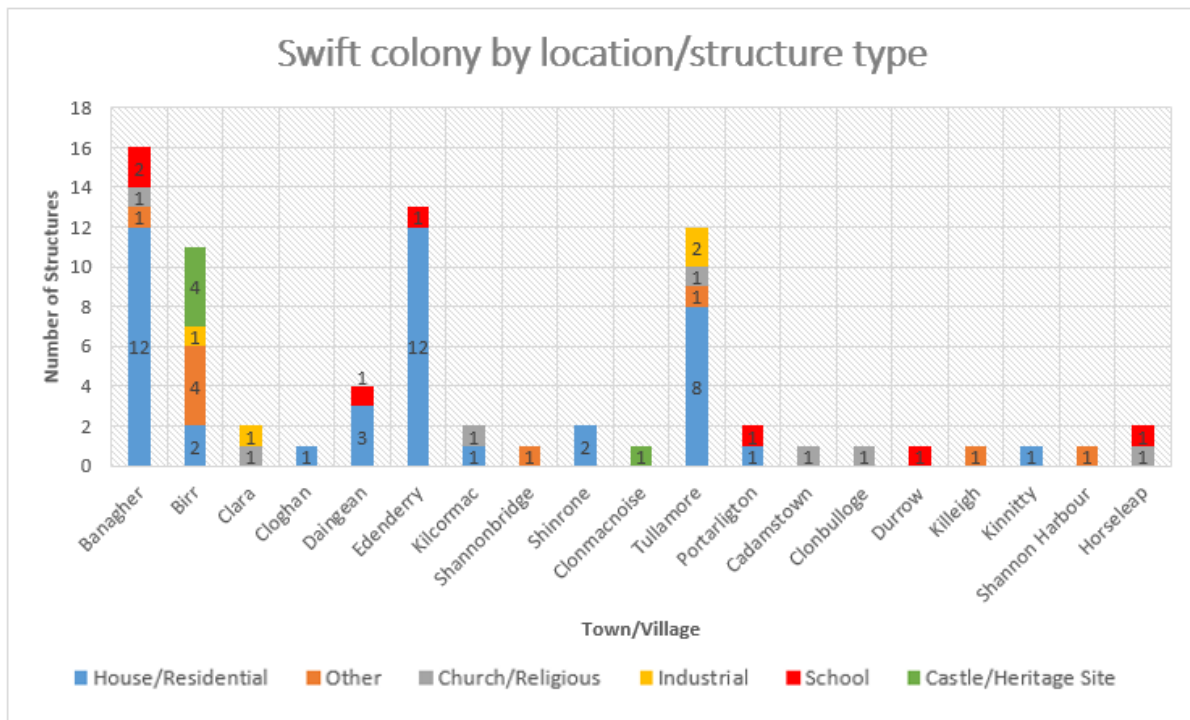


Figure 9: Towns/Villages and the different buildings/structures which have Swifts nests

Figure 9 presents the number of buildings/structures which hold active swift colonies across county Offaly. There are 12 houses in Banagher which are occupied by Swifts this is similar to Edenderry and Tullamore. Swifts nests have been found in churches in Clara, Kilcormac, Cadamstown, Clonbullogue, Kilcormac, and Horseleap. Schools also featured as an important building for nesting Swifts, with colonies confirmed in Banagher, Daingean, Edenderry, Portarlinton and Horseleap. The importance of heritage sites is particularly evident in Birr, where four of the Swift colonies in the town are located in this category (refer to Site Based Results).

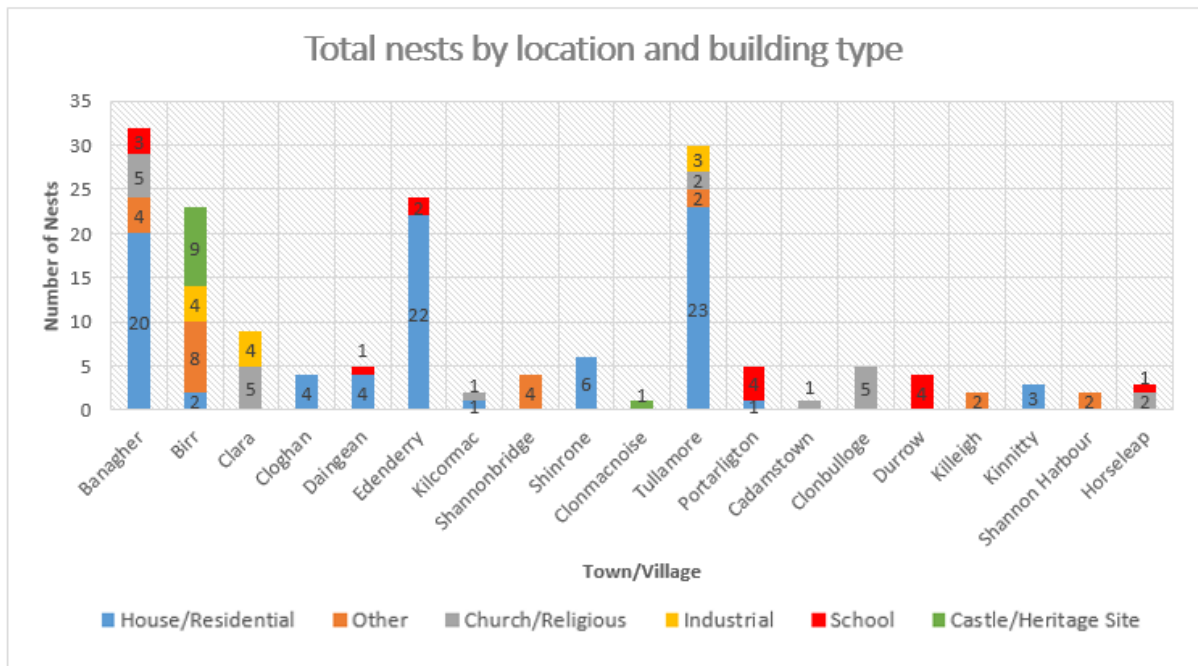


Figure 10: Number of Swift nests by buildings/structures across town/villages in County Offaly

Figure 10 presents the number of Swift nests recorded per town/village, split by type of building. In Banagher there were 20 nests found in houses, four in other buildings, five in a church, and three in a school these results are comparable to Edenderry and Tullamore, but contrasts with Birr. In Birr two nests were found in houses, eight in other structures (hotel and shed), four in an industrial building and nine in heritage structure.

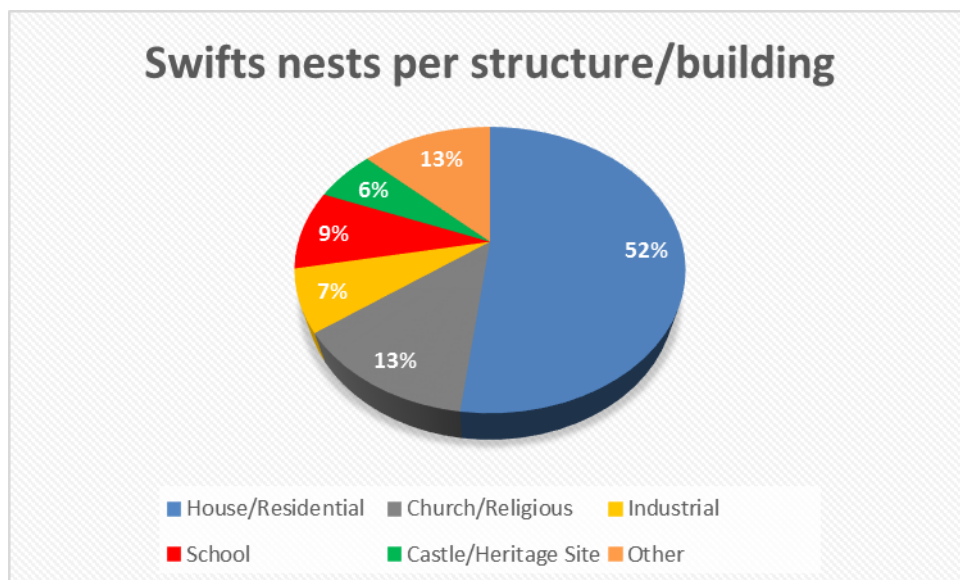


Figure 11: Percentage of Swifts nests per structure/building

Figure 11 identifies the percentage of Swift nests per building/structure - 52% of the confirmed Swift nests were found in houses, 13% in churches 7% in industrial buildings, 9% in schools, 6% in heritage buildings/structures, and 13% in other buildings.

Table 3 shows the percentage of Swift nests that each town holds, it has been identified that Swift nests in Tullamore compromise 18% of the total confirmed Swift nests in county Offaly and Birr represents 14% of the total confirmed Swift nests.

Table 2: *Percentage of the total confirmed Swift nests by town/village*

Banagher	19%	Durrow	2%
Tullamore	18%	Horseleap	2%
Edenderry	15%	Kinnitty	2%
Birr	14%	Shannonbridge	2%
Clara	5%	Cadamstown	1%
Shinrone	4%	Clonmacnoise	1%
Clonbollouge	3%	Kilcormac	1%
Daingean	3%	Killeigh	1%
Portarlinton	3%	Shannon Harbour	1%
Cloghan	2%		

7 Site Based Results

A total of 47 towns/villages in Co. Offaly were surveyed for this project, with Swift recorded in 19 of these locations. The towns/villages where Swifts were not found are listed in Table 1.

Results of the Swift survey are represented below for individual towns and villages. Each location where Swifts were found is documented with photographs of the nest sites included with the approximate location of the nest entrance marked on each photo (red circles/arrows). Peak numbers of Swifts observed flying at each location is also given. Peak number of Swifts observed relates to the highest number of Swifts counted in a town or village at any one time during survey work.

To view the online map and nest site locations of Swifts for each town/villages surveyed use the following link:

<https://bwi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=81ddc38cfcde40ffab699be638ee5b20>

7.1 Banagher



There were 32 nest sites confirmed in Banagher, a peak count of 35 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.

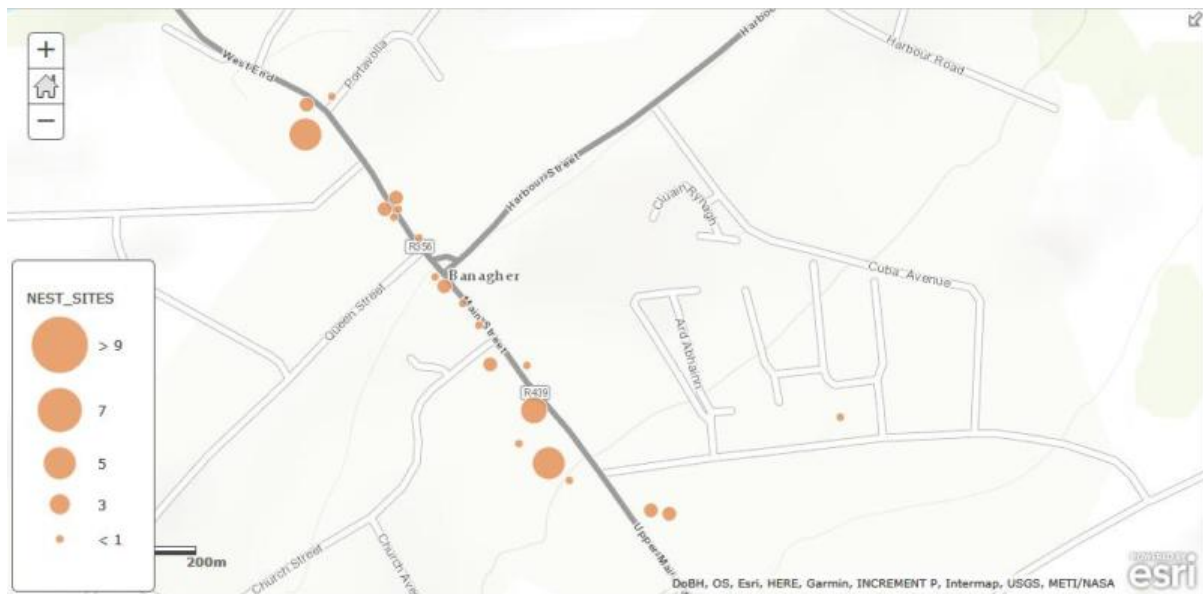


Figure 12: Confirmed nests in Banagher represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 3: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Banagher

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Portavolla	35	1	House
2	Main Street, Quigleys		2	House
3	Main Street, at the back of building left to Quigleys		5	House
4	Old Pub (now house) on Main Street		2	House
5	Main Street		1	House
6	Main Street, Lynch's Fashion		1	House
7	Main Street, M&S Country Garden		1	House
8	Main Street, Home Needs Ladies Fashion		2	House
9	Main Street, Feeney's Day-Today News		1	House
10	Main, Street, Horan Print		1	House
11	Main Street, house directly opposite St. Helens Court		1	House
12	Bank of Ireland Building		4	Other
13	Building at the back of La Sainte Boarding School		5	Church
14	Saint Rynagh's Community College		2	School
15	Cuba Avenue, Community Services Building		1	School
16	Building at the back garden of a house beside St. Helens Court		2	House
			Total 32	



7



8



9



10



11



12





7.2 Birr, Crinkil & Riverstown



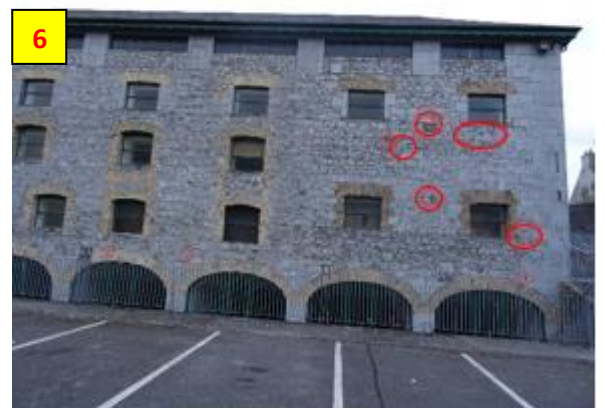
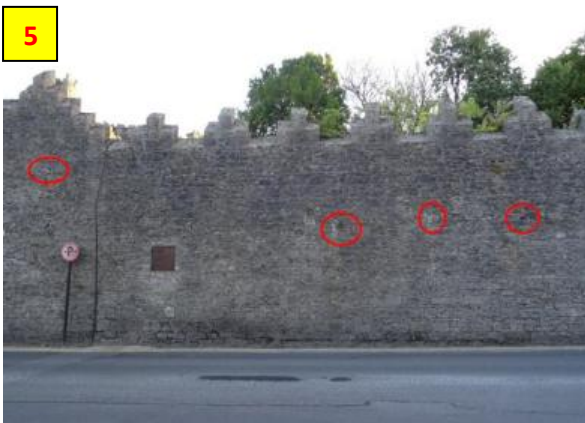
There were 23 Swift nest sites confirmed in Birr, a peak count of 27 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 13: Confirmed nests in Birr, Crinkill and Riverstown represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 4: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Birr, Crinkill and Riverstown

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	29 Eden Rd 2, house adjacent to Cappaneale Upper	27	1	House
2	Outer Wall of Birr Castle on (R439) section between Castle Gates up as far as Purcells Auctioneers		3	Heritage site
3	Rosse Row 3, Swift Nest at the outer wall of Birr Castle opposite from parking meter 16		2	Heritage site
4	Entrance of Birr Castle		1	Heritage site
5	Opposite Marian Hall, the outer wall of Birr Castle		3	Heritage site
6	The Maltings B&B		4	Other
7	The Market Square			Other
8	Emmet Street 14, Opposite Kirwan Agri Consultants		1	House
9	Dooleys Hotel		1	Other
10	At the back of Birr OCC offices		1	Other
11	Roscrea Road, Seefin, Buildings belonging to Birr Packaging and Hollywoods Garage		4	Industrial
	Moorpark Street			
12	Birr Civic Offices			
13	Riverside Apartments, Newbridge St, Clonoghil Upper,		2	Other
			Total 22	



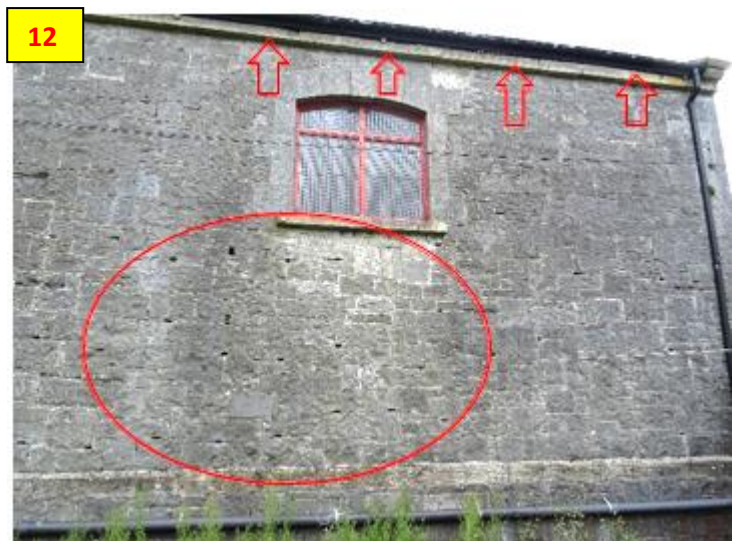




Figure 14: Birr Tidy Towns participating in the Offaly Swift Survey 2017

7.3 Clara



Nine Swift nest sites were confirmed in Clara, a peak count of 12 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.

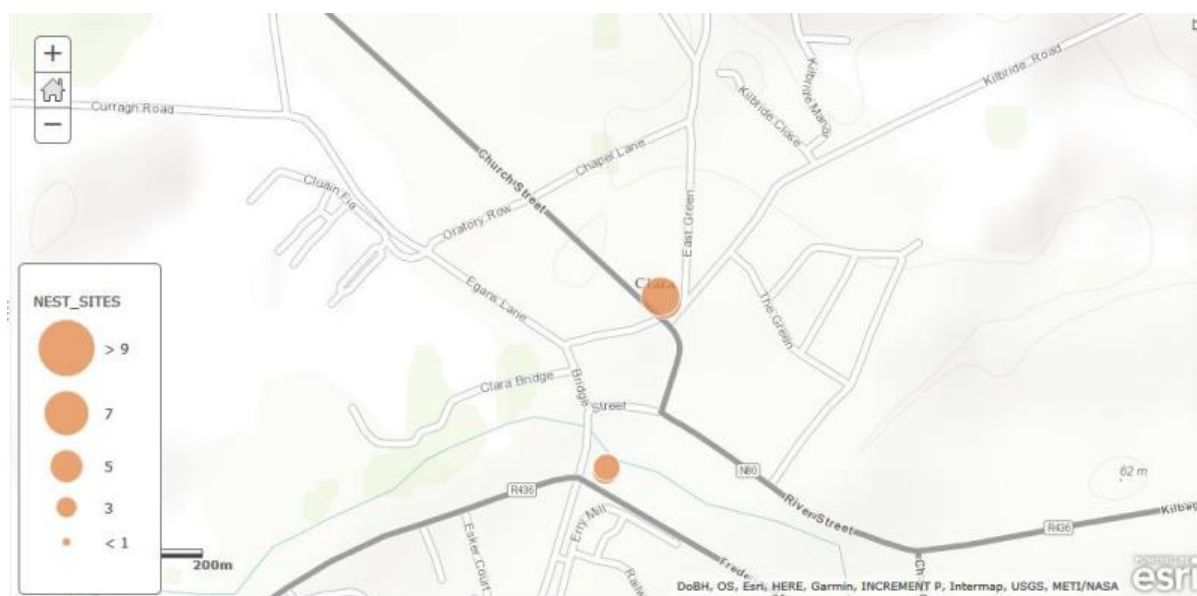


Figure 15: Confirmed nests in Clara represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 5: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Clara

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	St Brigids Church of Ireland	12	5	Church
2	1 Frederick Street, Erry Mill		4	Industrial
			Total 9	



Figure 16: Clara Tidy Towns participating in the Offaly Swift Survey 2017

7.4 Cloghan



Four Swift nest sites were confirmed in Cloghan, a peak count of 12 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 17: Confirmed nests in Cloghan represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 6: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Cloghan

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Castle Street, House owned by Anthony Garahy	12	4	House



7.5 Daingean



Five Swift nest sites were confirmed in Daingean, a peak count of 6 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 18: Confirmed nests in Daingean represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 7: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Daingean

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Scully's Supermarket, Main St. Daingean	6	1	House
2	Main St. house owned by John Kearney		1	House
3	Main st two houses beside above record		2	House
4	Community services		1	School
5	Reformatory Site, Fortyacres, The Grand Canal Way		1	Industrial
			Total 6	



7.6 Edenderry

There were 24 Swift nest sites confirmed in Edenderry, a peak count of 30 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 19: Confirmed nests in Edenderry represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 8: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Edenderry

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	St.Teresa's Terrace	30	1	House
2	15 St Patricks Road		1	House
3	9 St Patricks Road		1	House
4	37 Castleview Park		1	House
5	34-35 Castleview Park		3	House
6	33 Castleview Park		2	House
7	25 Castleview Park		3	House
8	27 School Lane		1	House
9	Scoil Muire Banríon, 20 Gilroy Avenue		2	School
10	188 Churchview Heights		4	House
11	2 Father Paul Murphy Street		1	House
12	15 Father Paul Murphy Street		2	House
13	45 Father Paul Murphy Street		2	House
			Total 24	



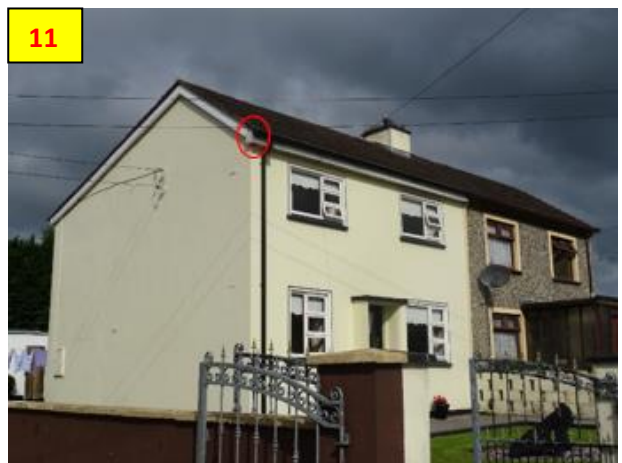




Figure 20: Edenderry Tidy Towns Frank Hardy (left) and Declan Manley, Birdwatch Ireland member (middle) have participated and assisted in the Offaly Swift Survey 2017.

7.7 Kilcormac



Two Swift nest sites were confirmed in Kilcormac, a peak count of 4 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 21: Confirmed nests in Kilcormac represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 9: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Kilcormac

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Convent of Mercy, St. Annes	4	1	Church
2	House directly opposite the Convent. Owned by Malachy Gatts		1	House



7.8 Shannonbridge

Four Swift nest sites were confirmed in Shannonbridge, a peak count of 13 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 22: Confirmed nests in Shannonbridge represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 10: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Shannonbridge

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Shannonbridge	13	4	Other



7.9 Shinrone



Six Swift nest sites were confirmed in Shinrone, a peak count of 10 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 23: Confirmed nests in Shinrone represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 11: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Shinrone

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Main Street, Wines McNamaras Spirits,	10	4	House
2	Old Cannon Hannons House (disused)		2	House



Figure 24: Shinrone Tidy Towns participating in the Offaly Swift Survey 2017

7.10 Clonmacnoise

One Swift nest site was confirmed in Clonmacnoise, a peak count of one Swift was observed during the survey visits.



Figure 25: Confirmed nests in Clonmacnoise represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 12: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Clonmacnoise

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Clonmacnoise Monastic Site (OPW)	1	1	Heritage Site



7.11 Tullamore



There were 30 Swift nest sites confirmed in Tullamore, a peak count of 28 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.

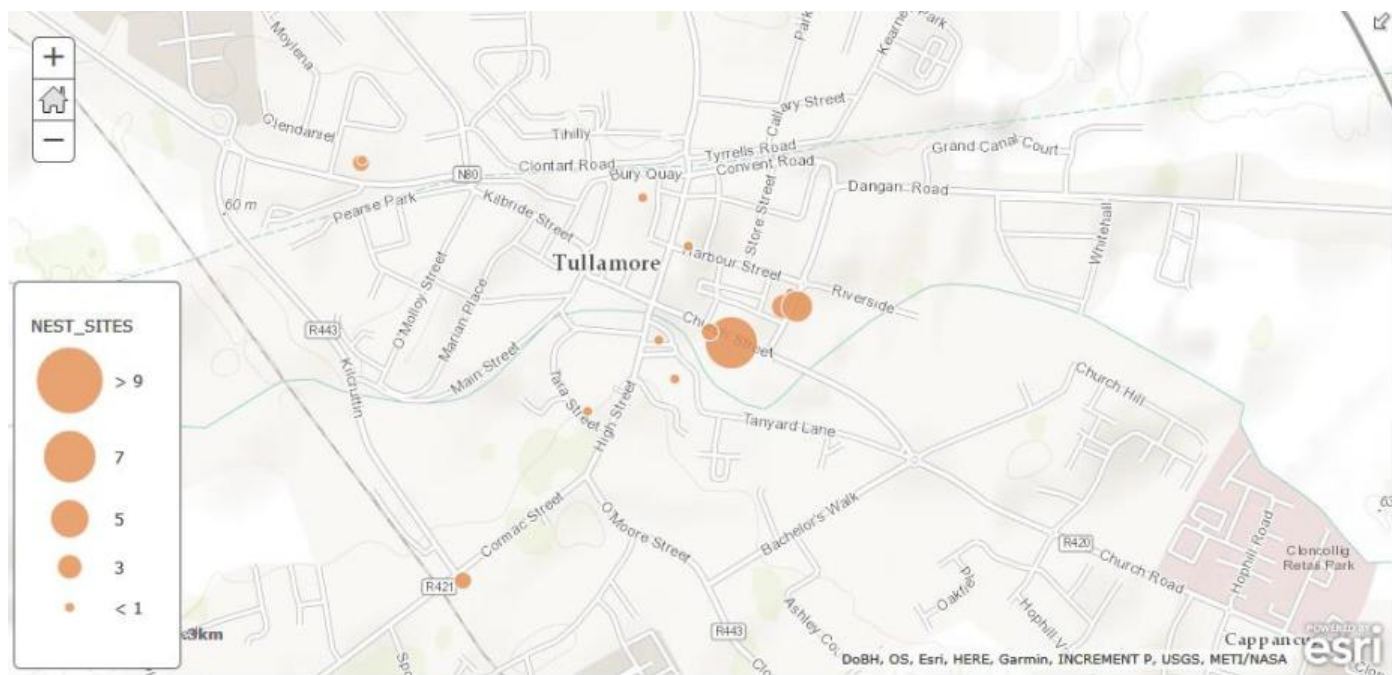


Figure 26: Confirmed nests in Tullamore represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 13: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Tullamore

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Lock House View, Tullamore.	28	1	House
2	Offaly Street, Former TEXAS Department Store – now derelict		2	Industrial
3	High Street, Former Hostel Mercy Nuns		1	House
4	O'Connors Square,Eddie Rockets Restaurant		2	Other
5	Oisin O Sullivans Furniture, Tanyard		1	Industrial
6	O' Carroll St, Pat's Auto Parts		1	House
6	O' Carroll St, G&C Flynn's Bakery		3	House
7	O' Carroll St, Offaly Hospice Building		7	House
8	The Lawn, Cormac Street, Kilcruttin		2	House
9	Harbour Street, Eclipse Hair Salon		1	House
10	10 - 11 Church Street		7	House
11	Church Street, Methodist Church		2	Church
			Total 30	



7



8



9



10



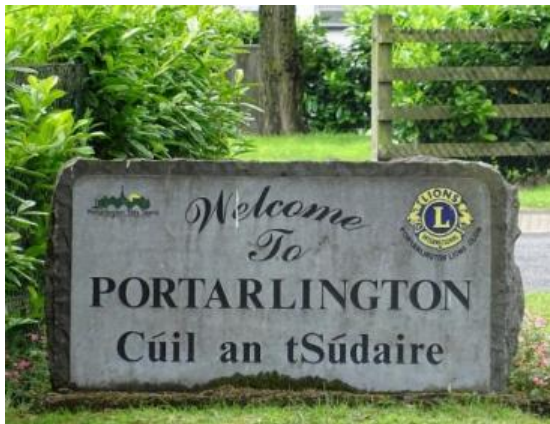
11





Figure 27: Tullamore Tidy Towns participating in the Offaly Swift Survey 2017

7.12 Portarlington



Five Swift nest sites were confirmed in the Offaly side of Portarlington, a peak count of 17 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 28: Confirmed nests in Portarlington represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 14: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Portarlington

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Patrick Street, third building beside the Hawthorn Bar	17	1	House
2	Patrick St, Kilmalogue, Primary School		4	School
			Total 5	

1



2



2



7.13 Cadamstown



One Swift nest site was confirmed in Cadamstown, a peak count of 3 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 29: Confirmed nests in Cadamstown represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 15: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Cadamstown

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	St. Luna Church	3	1	Church

1



7.14 Clonbullogue



Five Swift nest sites were confirmed in Clonbullogue, a peak count of 11 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.

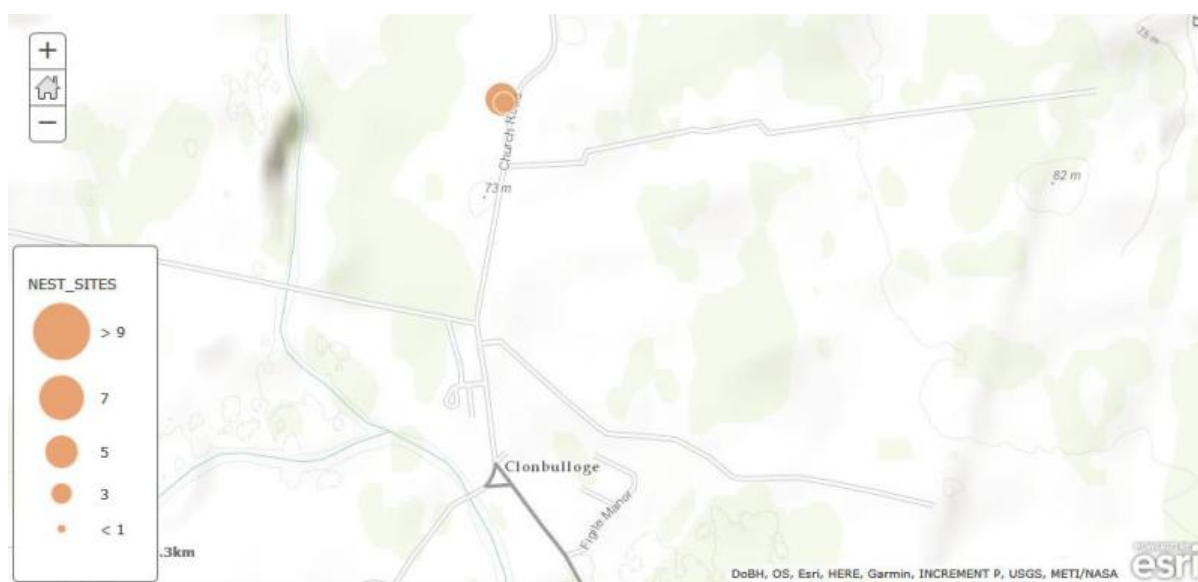


Figure 30: Confirmed nests in Clonbullogue represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 16: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Clonbullogue

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	St Kevins Church of Ireland	11	5	Church



Figure 31: Clonbullogue Tidy Towns participating in the Offaly Swift Survey 2017

7.15 Durrow



Four Swift nest sites were confirmed in Durrow, a peak count of 7 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 32: Confirmed nests in Durrow represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 17: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Durrow

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	St Colmcille, Durrow Community Centre, Durrow National School 1888	7	4	School



7.16 Killeigh



Two Swift nest sites were confirmed in Killeigh, a peak count of 12 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 33: Confirmed nests in Killeigh represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 18: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Killeigh

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Abbey Farm	12	2	Other



Figure 34: Killeigh Tidy Towns and Ken Mathews participating in the Offaly Swift Survey 2017

7.17 Kinnitty

Three Swift nest sites were confirmed in Kinnitty, a peak count of 9 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.

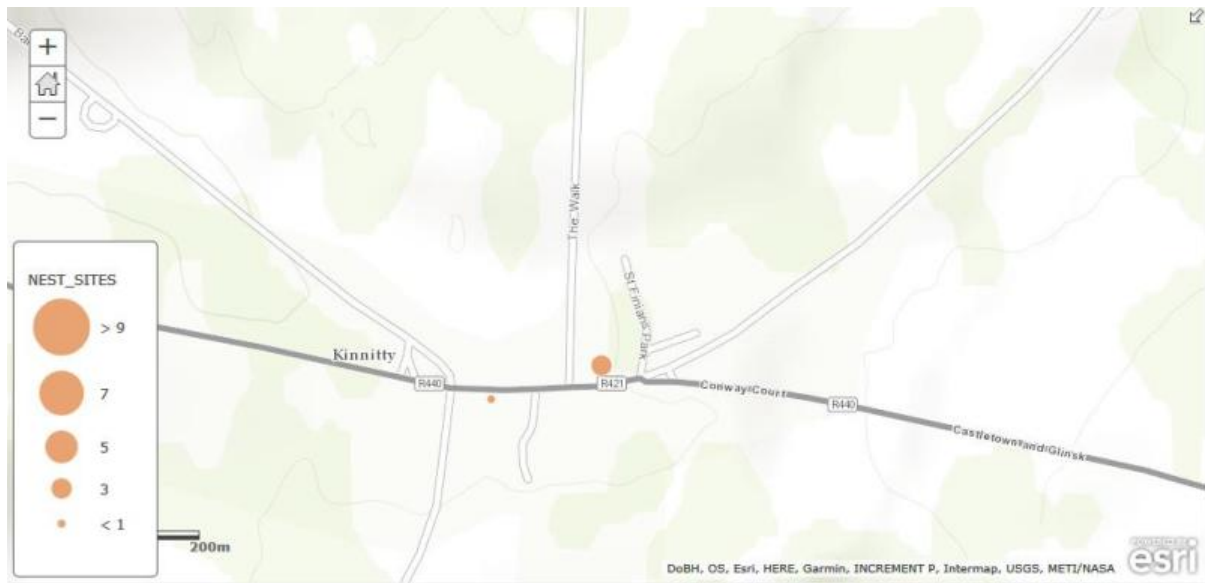


Figure 35: Confirmed nests in Kinnitty represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 19: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Kinnitty

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Ardmore Country House B&B Kinnitty	9	3	House
	Slieve Bloom Lounge		-	



7.18 Shannon Harbour

Two Swift nest sites were confirmed in Shannon Harbour, a peak count of 3 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 36: Confirmed nests in Shannon Harbour represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 20: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Shannon Harbour

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Derelict building opposite McIntyer's Pub	3	2	Other



7.19 Horseleap

Three Swift nest sites were confirmed in Horseleap, a peak count of 11 Swifts were observed during the survey visits.



Figure 37: Confirmed nests in Horseleap represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2017)

Table 21: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Horseleap

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Horseleap Primary School	11	1	School
2	Ardnercher Church		2	Church





Figure 38: Horseleap Tidy Towns participating in the Offaly Swift Survey 2017

8 Publicity

The Offaly Swift Survey 2017 was publicised in the following media:

- BirdWatch Ireland Blog – Life on the Wing post (07/07/2017)
- BirdWatch Ireland Website - <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/OurWork/ResearchSurveys/SwiftConservationProject/tabid/1389/Default.aspx>
- Newspapers - Offaly News (06/07/2017), Midland Tribune (03/08/2017).
- Radio – Midlands 103, The Open Door with Ann-Marie Kelly - Ricky Whelan (27/07/2017). Midlands 103, Midlands Today – Heritage Week coverage (23/08/2017).
- Facebook - Offaly Heritage, BirdWatch Ireland, Irish Young Environmentalists Pages.
- Twitter – @birdwatchireland, @rickywhelan



9 Community Involvement

In total, 12 Tidy Town Groups took part in the project. Their involvement was crucial to help to engage the wider community for the common goal to protect the nest sites of Swifts.

Table 22: Meeting dates of Tidy Towns across county Offaly

Tidy Town Groups	Date of Initial Swift Meeting/Workshop
Daingean	18/05/2017
Banagher	05/07/2017
Shinrone	21/06/2017
Edenderry	22/06/2017
Clara	23/06/2017
Birr	04/07/2017
Clonbullogue	12/07/2017
Killeigh	14/07/2017
Kilcormac	07/07/2017
Tullamore	19/07/2017
Horseleap	10/07/2017



Figure 39: Kilbeggan Tidy Towns participating in Offaly Swift Survey 2017

10 Discussion

The Offaly Swift Survey 2017 is an innovative step towards safeguarding Swifts in the county. It is heartening to see Offaly County Council recognising the importance of Swifts as an integral part of the urban landscape and of the counties heritage, and putting in place proactive measures to help conserve the species. This project and associated findings provides our first detailed picture of distribution of nesting Swifts in the Co. Offaly. Indeed, this project is pioneering in many respects and can be used as a flagship project, from which many other councils, organisations and communities can learn.

It is this basic nest site information on the location of Swift colonies which is the essential first step in conserving Swifts in towns and villages across Ireland. Of the 47 towns and villages surveyed for Swifts in Offaly, only 19 have nesting Swifts. Of these, 13 holds five nest sites or less, some of these concentrated in just one single colony in the town or village. This emphasises the extremely vulnerable nature of Swifts in many of these locations, where planning decisions or construction work on just one building may lead to the complete loss of Swifts from a town/village. The survey results also clearly identify some of the most important towns in the county for Swifts particularly, Banagher, Tullamore, Edenderry and Birr all of which hold over 20 nest sites.

It was also interesting to learn, for the first time, the importance of various building types for Swifts in Offaly. The data shows us that houses/residential buildings are the most commonly used building types used by Swifts in the county, with a total of 43 house providing nest sites for Swifts. This is followed by churches/religions buildings, schools, castle/heritage and industrial buildings. This information is important in helping direct conservation effort in the future.

The site based results and accompanying detailed online maps and photographs in this report, provide an excellent user-friendly account of Swift nest site locations across each of the 19 towns and villages surveyed across Co. Offaly. It is hoped this will be a valuable resource for both the council and local communities to help safeguard these important colonies into the future. In addition, the collaborative approach taken with this project to secure buy-in from local communities, volunteers and groups has established a strong and energetic county wide network of Swift Champions, a key component to future conservation efforts.

11 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the Offaly Swift Survey 2017 has been a tremendous success. We now have, for the first time, a detailed picture of the distribution of Swifts in the county. We have identified and mapped 165 confirmed nest sites throughout towns and villages across the county, a basis on which conservation measures can be based. Other results include new information on the building types used by Swifts for nesting, which will help inform conservation priorities and policy. The engagement with local communities, volunteers and groups has established an extensive network of skilled and knowledgeable of Swift Champions across Offaly, who will now form the back-bone of future Swift conservation efforts in the county.

General Recommendations

- Ensure the results of this report are made available and utilised for the protection of Swifts in Co. Offaly.
- Measures should be taken to protect every colony identified through this project.
- The map data associated with this report (nest site grid references) should be made available to relevant personnel in the council (e.g. planners/architects) or incorporated into council systems in order to prevent future loss of Swift nest sites.
- More work is needed to raise awareness about the status of Swifts and the conservation measures needed to prevent their future decline with all members of the county council responsible for heritage, planning, environmental management and administration.
- Continue a small-scale project to encourage local volunteers and community groups to continue surveying for Swifts each summer and entering records to the online mapping system.
- Following on from this project work with local community groups to establish Swift conservation projects in town and villages across the county.
- Incorporate measures for Swifts into the local county biodiversity action plan which outlines their status, conservation measures and management practices needed - architects and planners should be involved delivering these results. Local authority should include Swift conservation measures in County Development Plan and insist in the plan to incorporate artificial nest sites for Swifts e.g. Swift bricks, Swift nest boxes during the planning and building stages of public buildings. Local authority can include Swifts as a monitoring species in the local development plans, local biodiversity action plans. Furthermore Strategic Environmental Assessments must use existing information about Swifts and consider the scenarios of potential disturbance from new developments or else consider new developments as an option to stabilise Swifts population.
- Swift conservation should be highlighted through Tidy Towns on an annual basis as the current awareness raising initiatives have certain timespan.
- Develop a schools programme to engage and educate primary schools about Swifts, their conservation and to establish schools conservation projects.
- Local authority/Tidy Towns can establish partnership with MenSheds to install/make Swift nest boxes, BirdWatch Ireland is happy to provide the required dimensions, advice and consultancy.

Town and Village Specific Recommendations

A key recommendation for all towns and villages is to ensure the protection of existing Swift colonies.

Banagher	Potential threat for many buildings to be renovated in the future. Work with local residents and businesses to secure colonies.
Birr, Crinkill & Riverstown	New developments should be informed about the importance to conserve Swifts and the possibility to incorporate nest boxes and bricks in the new building,
Clara	Provide nesting locations for Swifts on the buildings around the church with an objective to increase Swift population.
Cloghan	Provide nesting locations for Swifts on the buildings around the Swift colony in Castle Street with an objective to increase Swift population.
Daingean	Provide nesting locations for Swifts on the buildings around the Swift colonies as documented under heading Site Based Results – 7.5 Daingean.
Edenderry	Important to protect and conserve the existing nest sites, Swift nest box with camera may produce the best results for the conservation of the Swift population (ie. delivering good results of awareness and knowledge among families)
Kilcormac	Must ensure to maintain the existing Swift population in order to ease the process bringing over more Swifts in targeted locations (buildings near the Convent of Mercy)
Shannonbridge	Protect the existing colony and ensure to engage with the wider community.
Shinrone	Protecting existing sites, engaging local businesses and school for the potential to install Swift boxes/brick etc. There is strong colony of Swifts now which may ease the re-integration process of young Swifts.
Clonmacnoise	Protect the nest site by working with OPW to ensure nest site is incorporated into conservation plan for the site. Inform all staff present.
Tullamore	Work with businesses and local residents to protect the existing nest sites; there are opportunities opening up for Swift boxes/bricks new developments like Arts Centre, Marian Hostel etc. Encourage more involvement with Tidy Towns Group.
Portarligton	The primary school holds strong colony which may be used for education purposes. Start a schools project.
Cadamstown	Protect the existing nest sites it is likely that decision might be taken to replace rotten boards – (maintain the gap between the wall and the fascia board)
Clonbullogue	Operate lure system in the existing Swift nest boxes; Close off the nest boxes when Swifts are away
Durrow	Protect the nest sites; Renovations are planned for the Community Service Centre it is highly advisable to install nest boxes during the renovation process and it is desirable to leave half of the natural Swift nests intact
Killeigh	Use the strong colony in Abbey Farm to establish Swift population in the buildings near the townpark.
Kinnitty	Use the strong colony in Kinnitty B&B to establish Swift population in the buildings of the main.
Shannon Harbour	Install Swift nest boxes to establish stronger population of Swifts, lure call system may be needed.
Horseleap	Protect the existing nest sites and install Swift nest box in the primary school.



A.Krastev

Acknowledgements

Birdwatch Ireland would like to acknowledge the support of Offaly County Council in funding this project with special thanks to Amanda Pedlow Offaly Heritage Officer for her ongoing support and enthusiasm.

Many Tidy Towns and local groups have been involved in their respective communities and we would like to thank:

- Banagher Tidy Towns – Therese Kelly and Brian Caffrey
- Birr Tidy Towns – Bernie and Fiona
- Clara Tidy Towns – Tim McMahon
- Clonbullogue Tidy Towns – Maura Allen
- Daingean Tidy Towns - Malachy Mangan
- Edenderry Tidy Towns – Frank Hardy and William McCreanor
- Horseleap Tidy Towns – T.P. O’Gorman
- Killeigh Tidy Towns – Brendan Lynam,
- Kilcormac Community Development Association - Ernest De Vito
- Tullamore Tidy Towns – Richard Jack and Amanda Pedlow
- Shinrone Tidy Towns – Margauerite Walsh

We thank all the residents and business owners that allowed us access to their properties to aid with survey work and aims of the 2017 Offaly Swift Project.

A special thanks to Tim O’Rourke who has worked tirelessly behind the scenes in Offaly to identify Swift nest sites within the county.

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Appendices



Swift Survey of Offaly Towns & Villages



This summer we are looking for your help to find Swift nest site locations in towns and villages across Co. Offaly.

Swifts are an enchanting species, migrating to Ireland each summer from Africa. A bird of the skies, they live much of their lives in the air, only ever touching down for a couple of months each summer to nest in buildings, generally in urban areas. Sadly, Swift numbers are in decline and they urgently need our help. We need to know where they are nesting, so that we can put in place better measures to protect their important nesting colonies.

To help save your local Swifts, follow these simple steps:

- 1) Learn how to identify Swifts, Swallows and Martins by watching the BirdWatch Ireland video [Ireland's Special Swifts](#)
- 2) Enter your Swift sightings and nest site records to the BirdWatch Ireland [Swift Survey](#)
- 3) Sign up to do a more comprehensive Swift survey of your local town or village in Co. Offaly. To take part, select a town or village to survey by entering your details [here](#)
- 4) Learn more about surveying Swifts with our page on [Swift Survey Tips](#)

Additional information:

- For more information on Swifts and for details of upcoming events see our [Swift Webpage](#)
- Follow our BirdWatch Ireland Swift Blog for latest news and project updates - [Life on the Wing](#)
- For more information contact Brian Caffrey & Ricky Whelan swifts@birdwatchireland.ie or phone: 05791 51676

Offaly Swift Survey 2017

Location	Grid Reference	Date	Surveyor	Weather	Start Time Finish Time
Exact Location	Approximately how many Swifts did you see?	Were they flying at roof level? Yes No	Did you hear them? Yes No	Did you see any Swifts disappear into a nesting hole? Yes No	What type of building were they nesting in? Building - house Building - office Building - school Building - church Building - public Building - industrial Building - other Building - ruined Building - farm house Building - farm building Building - heritage site
Reporting a Swift sighting or colony or reporting an absence of Swifts? Absent Sighting	Approximately how many nest sites are present?	Have purpose-built nest boxes been provided for Swifts at this location? Yes No Unsure	Any additional observational comments?	Attachment (Picture Number)	
Exact Location	Approximately how many Swifts did you see?	Were they flying at roof level? Yes No	Did you hear them? Yes No	Did you see any Swifts disappear into a nesting hole? Yes No	What type of building were they nesting in? Building - house Building - office Building - school Building - church Building - public Building - industrial Building - other Building - ruined Building - farm house Building - farm building Building - heritage site
Reporting a Swift sighting or colony or reporting an absence of Swifts? Absent Sighting	Approximately how many nest sites are present?	Have purpose-built nest boxes been provided for Swifts at this location? Yes No Unsure	Any additional observational comments?	Attachment (Picture Number)	

Appendix 3

Swift Blog

Life on the Wing

The latest news, events and project updates from BirdWatch Ireland's Swift Conservation Project

[Swift Conservation Project](#)
[Add A Swift Sighting](#)
[How To Help Swifts](#)
[Home - Swift Blog](#)

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- 2,000 active volunteers
- 30 local branches across the country
- 400 events free to the public in every year
- 116 partners across the globe in BirdLife International
- 18,000 people who receive our e-zine, a monthly update about our work.

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BLOG ARCHIVE

- ▼ 2017 (9)
 - ▼ July (2)
 - Swifts Season Close to Completion
 - 2017 County Offaly Swift Survey
 - June (4)
 - May (2)
 - January (1)
- 2016 (7)
- 2015 (1)

FRIDAY, 7 JULY 2017

2017 County Offaly Swift Survey

With funding from Offaly County Council, BirdWatch Ireland is undertaking a whole county Swift nest site survey. The objective of the survey is to establish detailed results on the presents of Swifts in the county and the location of nesting colonies.

The engagement of Tidy Towns and residents as part of this survey is fundamental to this project for many reasons including the principal that, increased awareness leads to increased consideration (protection) and we are already seeing the results in Offaly!

With our enthusiastic and dedicated Fieldworker "Anton" on the case we had no fear that county Offaly would be forensically searched for Swifts.



Distribution of County Offaly Swift colony records ArcGIS Online

(AK) The first week of Swift surveying was over at blink of an eye, the focus was to survey the smaller towns and villages of the county. The county it seems is a mixed bag for Swift distribution, unfortunately, empty skies and silent streets greeted us at many of survey areas. Thankfully it wasn't to be all doom and good strong colonies were also observed dispersed throughout the county boundaries.



Tim MacMathon of Clara Tidy Towns and Anton Krastev out surveying the local RC church at Clara BirdWatch Ireland

The second week of Swift surveying began with a concentrated effort on priority areas (Large towns with known Swift abundance) like Birr, Edenderry, Clara, Shinrone, and others. We got together in the evenings to survey these locations with active local groups who were interested in surveying their own localities for Swifts and we were delighted to introduce them to the species and survey methods whilst drawing on the rich local knowledge held by the groups members.

During week two of surveying we happened across Edenderry Tidy Towns whom were carrying their duties around the town. Their interest towards wildlife ensured a good link for future cooperation. One of the evenings

COMMON SWIFT



Common Swift - Arthur Tabor

CONTACT

E-mail: swifts@birdwatchireland.ie

SWIFT NETWORK - FIND YOUR LOCAL CONTACT HERE



Click map to find your local swift contact

MY BLOG LIST

- [Irish Raptors](#)
- [Dublin Bay Birds](#)
- [Kilcoole Little Tern Conservation Project](#)
- [Garden Bird Year](#)

during that week we surveyed the whole town for Swifts. Special thanks to Frank Hardy and Willie McCreanor for availing their time to carryout survey work.



Members of Shinrone Tidy Towns Group
with BirdWatch Ireland's Anton Krastev BirdWatch Ireland

Shinrone Tidy Towns have enthusiastically accommodated a meeting and their interest promises secure future for the Swifts inhabiting their area. During the visit in Shinrone we went for quick cup of tea, until a shower of rain passed. This gave us an opportunity to get to talk on different themes and spontaneously one of the members of Tidy Towns mentioned that he has a painting and a poem about Swifts in Shinrone. This immediately settled us down for another cup of tea and a pint of Guinness for Henry, who began reading the poem. It was fascinating to find out the buildings present in his painting are the same buildings which hold the largest part of the population of Swifts in Shinrone.

In Clara it was found that Swifts rely on two buildings for nesting. However, the likelihood is that these building will change or be modified makes the local population vulnerable. We needed to see if there may be more Swifts present somewhere else that we were unaware of. We got in contact with Clara Tidy Towns and since meeting up, Tim and the gang are on the case combing the town for new colonies yet to be recorded.



A great turn out in Birr to survey Swifts around the town BirdWatch Ireland

Week three of surveying came and went and we met with Birr and Clonbullogue Tidy Towns groups and have robust monitoring schedules in place and lots of new enthusiastic Citizen Scientists. Heavy rainfall dampened survey efforts at the end of week 3 and with week 4 and 5 now behind us there are colonies being logged all over the county.

More details on how to take part in the [County Offaly Swift Survey here](#):

You can review our results to date and add [new sites here](#):

Standby for a 2017 County Offaly Swift Survey update soon!

Thanks to all the local Tidy Towns groups, residents and volunteers who have made the survey such a success to date. Thanks to Amanda Pedlow Offaly Heritage Officer for her help and enthusiasm in getting this project up and running. It's very heartening to see local communities come together to protect their rich natural heritage. We will continue our work and liaison with local groups over the coming weeks.

Posted by Ricky Whelan at 23:20



Appendix 4

Facebook update post of Offaly Swift Survey 2017



BirdWatch Ireland
@BirdWatchIreland

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**BirdWatch Ireland**
8 July · 🇮🇪

(RW) The BirdWatch Ireland Swift Project Team have been busy undertaking a whole county Swift Survey in Offaly with funding from Offaly County Council and a massive input from local Tidy Towns and residents groups...Read all about it here and find out how you can get involved...
<https://birdwatchirelandswifts.blogspot.ie/.../2017-county-of-...>



2017 County Offaly Swift Survey
A blog about Swift Conservation In Ireland by Birdwatch Ireland and community projects, swift boxes, swift events and swift surveys.
BIRDWATCHIRELANDSWIFTS.BLOGSPOT.COM

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28 6th July, 2017

NEWS

The Tribune

OffalyNews

Members of Shinrone Tidy Towns on the recent walk around the village with Bird Watch Ireland. MT2791JOC

SHINRONE

Shinrone Active Retirement

Shinrone Active Retirement are going for a cruise on the Shannon on Tuesday next July 11, leaving from Banagher. They are also visiting the Castle and Workhouse in Portumna. It should be a very interesting outing. Cost €20. Please note bus leaving Shinrone at 9.30am.

On August they will have an outing to Salway city. Refreshments in the Galway Bay Hotel on arrival. You can relax in Hotel for the day or if you wish to visit the city, there is a bus stop outside the hotel. Bring your bus pass if you're going in. Bus leaving at regular time 9am. Cost €10.

The group want to extend best wishes to their members to all members convalescing and also those waiting on operations, the best of luck and a speedy recovery.

You can text or call Mary Maher Walsh on (087) 2624802 to book your seat for any of the outings. They want to thank their members who supported their outings to date. It makes all the organising worthwhile.

Shinrone Tidy Towns

Shinrone Tidy Town were delighted to welcome Anton Krastev from Bird Watch Ireland to Shinrone Village. Anton gave a detailed talk on the plight of the Swifts, and this was followed by a walk about around the village to view the sites where they have settled to raise their young. Henry Bevens delighted the group with his poem and beautiful painting of

the Swifts around Shinrone.

Many thanks to John Maher, Castle Bar for the refreshments and use of his dining area. A special thanks to Billy Kavanagh and Harold Whelehan for allowing the group access to Cloughmoyle House. The weekly clean up continues each Wednesday night 7-8pm and they have added an extra day on Saturdays at 11am. Hoping that if you can't make the evening session, you can come out for just one hour on Saturday mornings.

Parents please feel free to bring children, this is to encourage them to be more aware of the need to keep our environment clean and tidy.

Shinrone Craft Group

Shinrone Craft group meet in the new meeting room (downstairs) at the Community Centre Shinrone every Monday morning, except bank holidays, from 11am to 1pm. New members are very welcome and members are most willing to share their skills to help beginners. Come along any Monday morning to find out more.

Black Bull Threshing Festival

This year's Black Bull Threshing Festival will take place on Sunday August 27. This year the event is in aid of Coolderry Central School Improvement Works. If anyone still has signs from last year's festival, can you bring them back to Fr Kieran's Blake's house so they can reuse them again for this year's festival.

The next Threshing meeting will be held in Ballyegan hall on

Wednesday July 12 at 9.30pm. All welcome.

Dunkerrin Church Of Ireland

Fun Dog Show & Sale will be held on Sunday July 16 in Dunkerrin Community Centre. Tea and home bakes, cakes, country produce, bran dip, bric-a-brac, book stall and lots more. Registration for dogs start at 12.30pm. Classes for all sorts and rosettes. Admission €5 including tea and coffee ticket. Dog owners free. John Browne Perpetual Shield for show champion.

Big Brother Big Sisters Looking For Volunteers

Big Brother Big Sister is a one to one Mentoring Programme for Young People aged 10-18 years, in which a young person, who could benefit from a little extra support, is matched to an adult volunteer. They are actively looking for volunteers throughout the county. If you are interested in volunteering for 1-2 hours per week as a

mentor and would like to make a positive difference in a young person's life please contact Una Daly on (086) 85946879 / email una.daly@foroi.ie or Mary Gaughan on (086) 0471420 / mary.gaughan@foroi.ie or alternatively check out www.foroi.ie.

Support Group For People Bereaved By Suicide

Have you been bereaved by suicide? Tipperary Living Links are facilitating a Support Group for people bereaved by suicide at the Business Innovation Centre, Nenagh (opposite the Arrabawn Co-op) on Thursday July 13 at 8pm. If you are interested please contact Michael at (086) 6029684.

Dochas

Dochas, the Offaly Cancer Support Group outreach centre located at Market Square, Birr, is open Tuesdays from 11am to 3pm. Phone support (057) 93 28268 or (087) 2777728. All welcome.

Shinrone pub to go under the hammer

Karen O'Grady

A substantial former public house in Shinrone is to go under the hammer as part of the forthcoming Allsop's auction.

With a reserve range of between €90,000 and €100,000, Tierney's pub, Main Street, Shinrone is included as part of the July auction at Allsop. It is situated on a site extending to over 1.8 acres and has a seven

days' publican's licence also attached to the property.

According to the property description, it's arranged over ground and one upper floor to provide a public house together with residential accommodation. Internally, the property provides a ground floor bar and lounge together with residential accommodation overhead. The property benefits from lands to the rear, totalling 1.83 acres.

KINNITTY

Kinnitty Tidy Towns

Kinnitty Tidy Towns clean-ups are usually Thursday evening, meet in the village about 7.30pm.

Seir Kieran Church Of Ireland

Seir Kieran Church of Ireland change to service times. Services on the first and third Sunday mornings will be at 9.30am as usual. Those on the second and fourth weekends will be on Saturday evenings at 8pm.

Wedding Flowers

Wedding Flowers by Majella Main Street Birr (at Horse & Dog) Contact Majella on (086) 1527006 (advert)

Clonaslee Monthly Bingo

Monthly Bingo in Clonaslee Community Centre on Sunday July 9th starting at 3pm with doors open at 2.15pm. Over €1,800 in prize money to be

won. Lots of parking.

English/Drumcullen Parish Outing

The English/Drumcullen parish group is proposing to hold a parish outing to Clare and Limerick on July 27 if there is sufficient interest.

The trip will take in Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, Ennis and Limerick City. If you are interested please give your names as soon as possible as they cannot book a bus or dinners until they have the necessary numbers. All are welcome to enjoy the trip.

Names please to Fr Moorhead (057 9133010), Oonagh's Shop (9133100), or Bridie (9133006). If there is sufficient interest the times will be announced later.

Black Bull Threshing Festival

This year's Black Bull Threshing Festival will take place on Sunday

August 27. This year the event is in aid of Coolderry Central School Improvement Works. If anyone still has signs from last year's festival, can you bring them back to Fr Kieran's Blake's house so they can reuse them again for this year's festival.

The next Threshing meeting will be held in Ballyegan hall on Wednesday July 12 at 9.30pm. All welcome.

Home Instead Senior Care

Home Instead Senior Care are hiring. They are looking for caregivers to attend to the elderly in their own homes. If you are a kind, caring person looking for flexible hours in your local area please contact Mary at (044) 9385260 for a chat or email mary.costello@homeinstead.ie for more information.

Playschool

Playschool open Monday-Friday in Kinnitty Community

Centre. Your child can avail of two years free pre-school from the age of three years. Early booking advised to secure your place. Call (086) 0876612.

Volunteers Sought

Parents First is seeking parents or grandparents to pass on their valuable knowledge and experience to young families. Volunteers visit families in their own home and receive training, ongoing support and expenses. For an informal chat about volunteering with them call (057) 9322996 or (086) 195 9221 or email coordinator@parentsfirst.ie

Dochas

Dochas, the Offaly Cancer Support Group outreach centre located at Market Square, Birr, is open Tuesdays from 11am to 3pm. Phone support (057) 93 28268 or (087) 2777728. All welcome.

CLOGHAN

School Of Rock Summer Camp

School Of Rock Summer Camp coming to Banagher this Summer from July 10-14. Five action packed days full of music, dance, performing and expression. Lots of variety of music from rock, pop, country, gospel. If you are fans of School of Rock, High School Musical, Disney Classics this is a week not to be missed. €70 for the week, discounts available for siblings.

Call (087) 3364418 for details or email schoolofrock-banagher@gmail.com

to book your place.

Art Talks At Belmont Mill & Studios

There will be illustrated talks by Art Historian from National Gallery of Ireland at Belmont Mill & Studios in the coming months.

Thursday August 31 at 7pm: Margaret Clarke: An Independent Spirit of 20th Century Irish Art.

Thursday September 28 at 7pm: British Art in the Collection of the National Gallery of Ireland.

Tickets €5 each or three talks for €12

Including tea/coffee. All welcome. Enquiries Sandy (087) 989 3805.

West Offaly And Galen Cycling Club

Congrats and well done to Michael Kelly who won West Offaly and Galen Cycling Club's 20km cycling road trip to Clonmacnoise last Sunday in a time of 40 mins. 2nd Peter Van Hooke and 3rd Steve Hackett. Next 20km Race to Athlone on Sunday July 9 next. All welcome.

Ferbane Bridge Club

Bridge continues

every Monday night at 8pm in the Ferbane Bridge Centre. Beginners, improvers, all welcome.

St Vincent de Paul Cloghan Branch

Society of St Vincent de Paul Cloghan branch - Confidential helpline (087) 1221870. All requests will be dealt with in strict confidence.

Friends Of Asthma

Friends Of Asthma, Lower Main St, Banagher. Open daily 9.30am - 4pm (Monday-Saturday). Your support is greatly appreciated.

CADAMSTOWN

No Progress On Ardara Bridge

Rambles in Eireann came to the village on Sunday June 25 for a history tour. They walked the Slí Mór and noticed that no progress has been made on the restoration of Ardara bridge for many months.

Restoration work began on this beautiful bridge ten years ago and it is still a long way from being finished. The bridge could date to the early 1600s and has been called one of the

loveliest bridges in the midlands. Unfortunately it has been hidden behind scaffolding for several years.

Rambles in Eireann also walked to the Giant's Grave and strolled along the Nature Trail. The walkers had praise for the village, saying how well-tended it looked and how the absence of litter was noticeable everywhere.

Bridge Needs Restoration Work

The bridge which

spans the Silver River in the centre of Cadamstown village needs restoration work. This very old structure, constructed in 1801 by the Buckley family Kilcormac, who were builders and stone-masons, is now covered with ivy and weeds. It is dangerous to allow Tussock or other organisations to work on the structure without proper harnesses and ladders. Locals hope County Council will solve the problem in due time.

Below the bridge was built, travellers on the old Coach Road forded the river south-east of the village, and then continued to O'Carroll's Castle and the ancient monastery of Kilmacuddy, and on to Birr.

Ardara Walking Club

On Sunday June 25 the club moved to a new hour walk in the Kinnitty Castle, to Clonmacnoise. There was a good turnout and everyone had a fine time.

Midland Tribune Newspaper

Related Page photos

NEWS 3rd August, 2017 45

Offaly communities rallying to reverse swifts' decline

Just timing

SEVERAL Offaly communities are currently rallying and working hard to combat and reverse the worrying decline of swifts.

A fieldworker with Birdwatch Ireland, Anton Kratzer, is travelling the length and breadth of the county and working with Tidy Towns groups to reduce the numbers of this beautiful and much-loved bird.

There are a number of theories why their numbers are in decline. One theory is it's because of Climate Change. Another theory is that with the improvement of building techniques there are less nooks and crannies for them to squeeze into.

"Swifts like to nest in the same walls year after year," explained Brian Cadogan of the Birdwatch Ireland office in Banagher. "When people renovate these walls they accidentally knock the birds' access holes."

The work which

Anton is engaging in with the other groups is not as trying to pin down the exact reasons, and so can provide a bit of help. These houses contain holes, i.e. the walls of swifts, which attract the birds in. We need to provide a lot more holes for the birds because they are losing nesting sites at an alarming rate.

"We are very happy with the response to this conservation programme and a lot of young people are involved which is great to see."

"Swifts are extraordinary creatures. They are not to be confused with sand martins or swallows. When the young swifts leave their

the wing. They have the ability to stretch off half their brain which allows them to sleep on the wing.

"In the evening they can commonly be seen creating a considerable commotion. They become pretty vocal as they interact with each other."

Bird numbers are detailed in the Bird Atlas and the Countryside Bird Survey and because of these surveys it could be discerned that the swift was in decline. The surveys show that over the last 20 years the number of swifts has

dropped by a quarter. Brian said there is hope of restoring their numbers because they are an urban bird and therefore there is a better chance of restoring a successful conservation scheme.

He thanked Offaly County Council for supporting the scheme.

He said people living in town can see swifts on the Castle's outer wall, in Burr Library/Civil Offices, and Townend Street. In Banagher they can be viewed on Main Street.

Members of Banagher Tidy Towns who are involved in a scheme to restore the numbers of Banagher's swifts. The bird is a common sight on the town's main street. RT314450P

Public

August Bank Holiday Deadlines

CASTLE

Members of Banagher Tidy Towns who are involved in a scheme to restore the numbers of Banagher's swifts. The bird is a common sight on the town's main street. RT314450P

Offaly Heritage
Like This Page · 4 hrs

Tribune features article on the county wide swift bird survey being undertaken by BirdWatch Ireland with Offaly Tidy Towns groups.

Like · Comment · Share

BirdWatch Ireland and 6 others

1 share

Write a comment...

People you may know [See All](#)

Swift Nest Sites Subject to Renovations brought to our attention by Tim O'Rourke

During the survey Durrow Community Centre has been found to provide nesting area for Swifts. There are 4 confirmed nests in the Durrow Community Centre. We have noticed that there are future plans for this building to be renovated with work consisting of replacing fascia and soffit, doors and windows, dry lining all walls and re-wiring the building. This repair can cause the existing nests to be lost if not aligned with conservation technology e.g. nest boxes, swift bricks and conservation measures e.g. carrying out the work well ahead or after the nesting season.

The Tribune NEWS 20th July, 2017 9

Fundraising drive launched for major upgrade of Durrow Community Centre

Ger Scully

A FUND-RAISING drive to raise finance for a major upgrade of historic Durrow Community Centre has been launched.

Upgrading and maintenance work needed on the hall will cost approximately €100,000 and the local community and the wider public have been urged to support the appeal.

No major structural changes are planned in the structure of the building but a significant upgrade is required, Chairman of the Community Centre committee, Paddy Kinnarney told the Tribune last week.

The proposed works will cover replacing fascia and soffit, doors and win-

dows, dry-lining all walls, rewiring the building and upgrading the heating system.

The hall is the centre of the community in Durrow, explained Mr Kinnarney, who said it was used by a host of local clubs for meetings and gatherings.

It is also a source of solace to many families at funerals, offering them a place to reminisce and chat over a cup of tea, he outlined.

Committee treasurer, Adrian Flynn said the decision had been taken to carry out much-needed work to the hall after the upgrading of the graveyard and the adjoining car-park.

The committee has planned a number of areas of fund-raising and members have already visited every house in the locality to brief people on the scheme.

A weekly collection of €5 from each house in Durrow parish will be taken up for one year while a church gate collection will also be held.

The first edition of a quarterly newsletter to update parishioners on work and expenses incurred has already been issued and three more will be published in the coming 12 months.

An account has also been opened at Tullamore Credit Union and people may transfer directly into the account as follows:

Account: Durrow Hall Community
Account Number: 06722306 - Tullamore

Credit Union
BIC: TURUIE21
IBAN: IE15TURU99100406722306

You can also follow the committee's "Go Fund Me" account on their Facebook page -

St Colmcille Durrow Co. Offaly Community Centre.

Stressed Paddy Kinnarney: "This is the first time we have approached our parishioners for support on the upgrade of the hall".

The hall was originally built in 1888, explained fund-raising committee secretary Mary B. O'Connell, and it was used as the parish's Boys National School until 1944.

The boys school and the girls school amalgamated in 1944 and a new school was constructed which continues to thrive.

For more information on the development and the fund-raising drive contact Paddy Kinnarney 086 1659246, Adrian Flynn 087 2792338 or Mary B. O'Connell 087 5 3 4 4 7 2 5 Gormagh@aol.com



St. Colmcille Community Centre, Durrow. 0H29-0720

A view of the hall at St. Colmcille

The St. Colmcille Durrow Community Centre Committee. 0H29-0703

The Tribune

Classifieds

For all your everyday needs

- Tullamore 057 9321152
- Birr 057 9120003
- Roscrea 050 523747
- advertising@midlandtribune.ie

PLANNING

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

We, Gold & Amber Apartments Ltd, intend to apply for planning permission of development at the former Marian Hostel, High Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Which consists of two protected structures listed in the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 -2020 as RPS 23/384 & RPS 23-385. The development consists of the change of use from hostel to 23 no. apartments and the restoration and repairs, alterations and additions to the protected structure. The works are to include the renovation and restoration and subdivision of the existing structures, the replacement of non original and non matching windows with more appropriate replicas and all associated site works and services to facilitate the development. The Planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of the receipt by the authority of the application, and such submission or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

PLANNING

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

We, Gold & Amber properties Ltd, intend to apply for planning permission of development at the 10 Church Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Which is a protected structure listed in the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 -2020 as RPS 23/347. The development consists of the change of use from office to 4 no. apartments and the restoration and repairs, alterations and additions to the protected structure and all associated site works and services to facilitate the development. The Planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of the receipt by the authority of the application, and such submission or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Janet Cawley, am applying for planning

The proposed development of Marian Hostel, High Street, Tullamore and the building of 10 Church Street, Tullamore have been confirmed with Swift nests. Marian Hostel one Swift nests and 10 Church Street and 11 Church Street seven Swift nests (refer to photograph 2 and 10 in heading 7.11 Tullamore, Table 13. It is advisable to leave half of the existing nest sites intact and install additional Swift nest boxes near the proximity of the nests which will be removed.