

# Westmeath Swift Survey 2018



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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, the Swift is now of conservation concern in Ireland, and is Amber-listed (Colhoun et al. 2013).



Figure 1: Common Swift in flight - A.Krastev

Throughout most of its breeding range, the Swift nests in cavities in walls, under eaves of houses and behind fascia boards. Because of this they are a well-known bird species in urban centres, particularly towns and cities. Based on data from existing surveys, it is known that Swifts nest in several Co. Westmeath towns, including Mullingar, Athlone, Kilbeggan, Castlepollard, Horseleap and Coole. 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.

The Westmeath Swift Survey acts to quantify the level of Swift nesting activity across the county. The survey work will highlight areas where nesting Swift populations are found and in need of direct and immediate help. The survey will identify to site level the largest and most important Swift nesting sites that act as source populations within the county and further afield. These sites once identified need to be treated with the upmost sensitivity during any renovation or redevelopment to ensure existing Swift nest sites are retained. The survey team will make special effort to include local

community groups and residents in the project, so they become knowledgeable about Swifts in their respective localities and in turn take increased responsibility in the future conservation and protection of Swifts in their county.



## 2 Project Objectives

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

**Objectives:**

- Carry out a survey of Swifts in Co. Westmeath 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: Tom O'Callaghan (BWI Westmeath Branch), Triona Finnen (NPWS), Carol Hayden, Mia Hayden, Ariane Hayden, Pat Moore, Des Gavin, Suzie Gavin, Pauline Murphy, Bridget Gavin (Castlepollard Tidy Town Group) – A. Krastev

### 3 Methodology

A total of 43 towns in Co. Westmeath have been identified for Swift survey work. Of this number, 23 towns have been ranked as 'High Priority' for survey work, with the remaining 18 towns ranked 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.

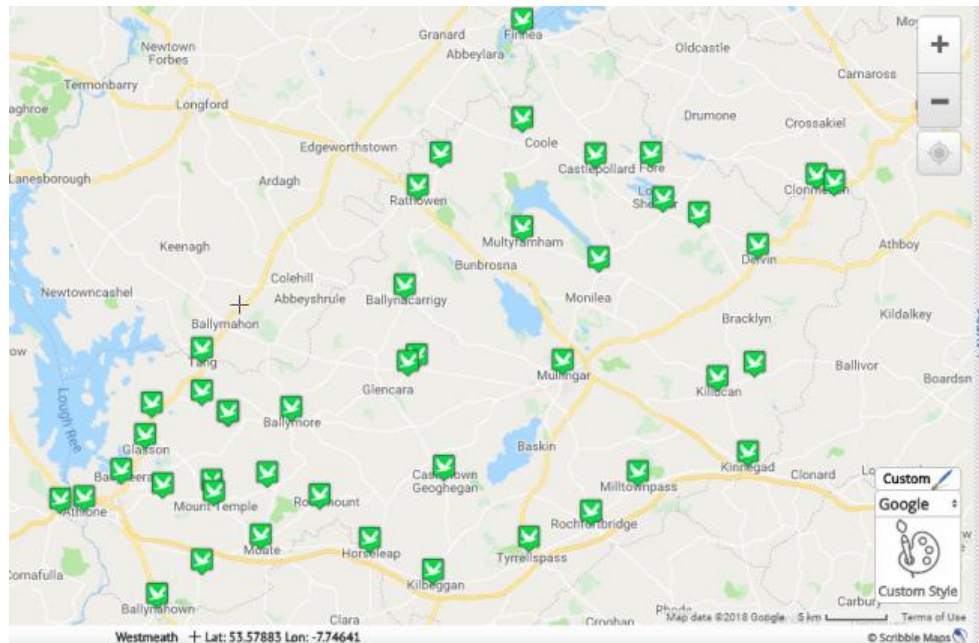


Figure 3: Selected towns/villages for the Swift survey 2018 (Scribblemaps, 2018)

A total of 34 survey days were required and scheduled to adequately survey all the towns and villages in Co. Westmeath. Based on our current knowledge of Swift distributions in the county and the known presence of nesting pairs in specific towns, it was possible to calculate that 24 days would be required to survey the 'High Priority' towns and 10 days for the 'Lower Priority' towns. The number of survey days is weighted toward the larger towns, where more time was needed to identify the location of colonies and where possible, the specific buildings used by the Swifts.

The survey work took place from early May to early August 2018. 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 1) Details of Swift nest locations were also recorded, information on location, building type, point of nest entrance, number of nests present, and photos of each site were all recorded.

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. Yellow arrows or circles were added to each nest site image to illustrate the exact location of the Swift nests.

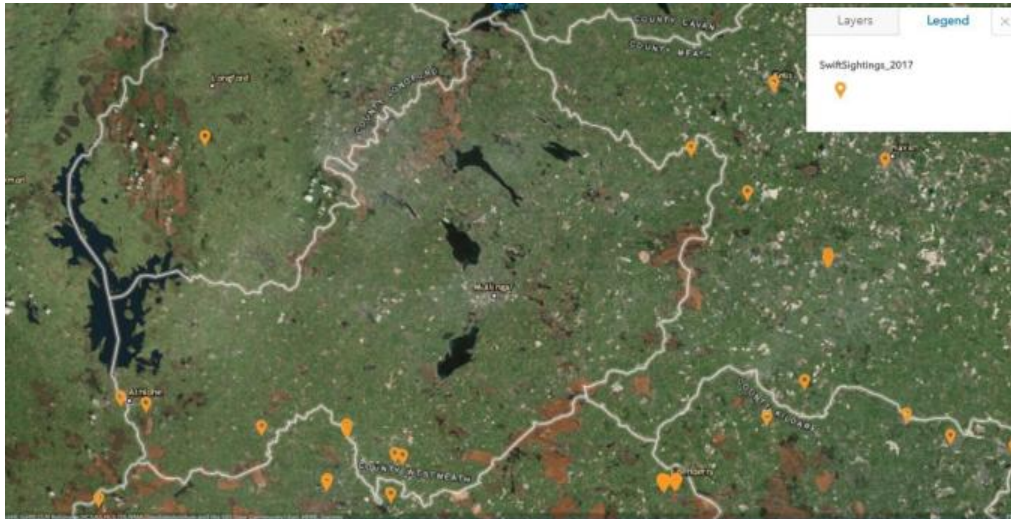


Figure 4: Screenshot of ArcGIS Online Swift sighting mapping tool with historical records of 2017

## 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. Sighting records were also sent by email to BirdWatch Ireland and details of the records entered to the online platform.

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 2 & 3.



Figure 5: Community members, BirdWatch Ireland Branch members and Local Authority Staff with Anton Krastev during the Tidy Towns Event in Mullingar in May.



## 6 Results

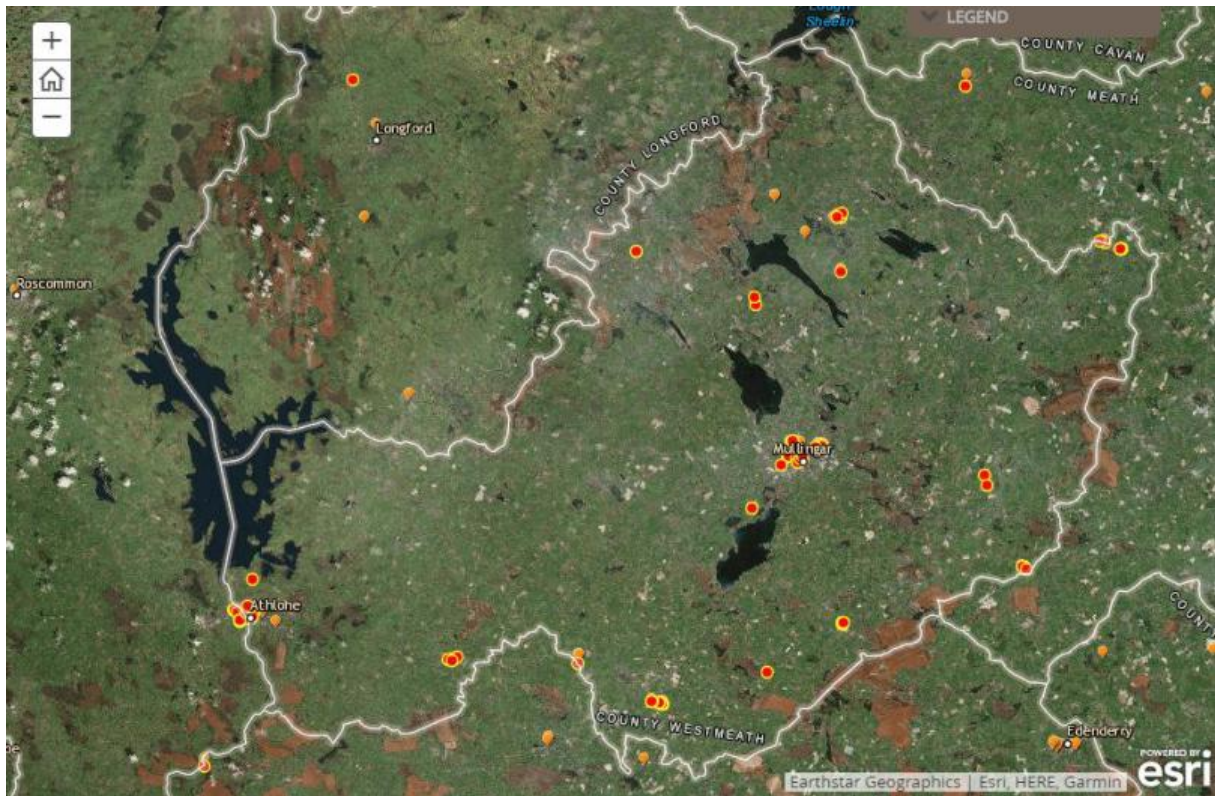


Figure 6: Screenshot of ArcGIS Online Swift sighting mapping tool with current records of 2018 survey.

During the Westmeath Swift Survey 2018 we recorded 247 Swifts (peak count from all areas combined) across 20 localities and confirmed 203 nests in 15 towns and villages. These results provide a baseline figure from which we can measure future changes of Swift numbers in the county. Our findings show Swift nests concentrated within 69 buildings/structures which are documented with photographs in this report and in [ArcGIS Online](#). In total, BirdWatch Ireland staff conducted 34 field survey days and 20 days of office work to complete and coordinate the survey and to collate the results. During this time, 9 Tidy Town Groups took part in this project. Overall results of the Westmeath Swift Survey 2018 are presented by locality in Table 1.

## 6.1 Survey Visits

An initial visit to each of the 43 Westmeath 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. Between 1 and 5 survey visits were required to ensure full coverage of individual towns and villages.

Swifts were recorded in 20 of the 43 localities surveyed. Of the 20 localities where Swifts were observed, Swift nest sites were located in 15. The highest number of Swift nests were recorded in Mullingar, where 96 nests were found. Athlone followed with 35 nests, 20 in Kilbeggan, 12 in Castlepollard, 10 in Moate, 10 in Kinnegad and remaining 9 localities reporting between 1 and 7 nests. The largest peak count (maximum number of birds observed during a single visit) of Swifts were recorded in Mullingar with 60 Swifts whilst 47 were noted in Athlone.

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

	<b>Town/Village</b>	<b>Number of Visits</b>	<b>Swifts Present</b>	<b>Peak no of Swifts observed</b>	<b>Number of confirmed nests</b>
1	Athlone	4	Yes	47	35
2	Ballynacargy	2	Yes	1	-
3	Horseleap*	2	Yes	4	-
4	Kilbeggan	3	Yes	22	20
5	Moate	3	Yes	11	10
6	Mullingar	5	Yes	60	96
7	Milltownpass	2	Yes	3	-
8	Castlepollard	4	Yes	9	12
9	Clonmellon	3	Yes	9	1
10	Finnea	2	Yes	2	-
11	Killucan and Rathwire	3	Yes	4	2
12	Kinnegad	2	Yes	12	10
13	Ladestown	1	Yes	12	3
14	Mount Temple	1	Yes	4	-
15	Multyfarnham	3	Yes	3	2
16	Rathowen	2	Yes	6	1
17	Rochfortbridge	3	Yes	24	7
18	Tyrrellspass	3	Yes	4	1
19	Killua Castle	1	Yes	8	2
20	Whitehall	1	Yes	2	1

	Town/Village	Number of Visits	Swifts Present	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests
21	Ballinahown	3	Not Found	-	-
22	Ballykeeran	1	Not Found	-	-
23	Ballymore	1	Not Found	-	-
24	Baylin	1	Not Found	-	-
25	Castledaly	1	Not Found	-	-
26	Castletown Geoghegan	1	Not Found	-	-
27	Collinstown	3	Not Found	-	-
28	Crookedwood	3	Not Found	-	-
29	Delvin	3	Not Found	-	-
30	Drumcree	2	Not Found	-	-
31	Drumraney	2	Not Found	-	-
32	Fore	2	Not Found	-	-
33	Glassan	1	Not Found	-	-
34	Monksland	1	Not Found	-	-
35	Moyvoughly	1	Not Found	-	-
36	Raharney	3	Not Found	-	-
37	Rathconrath	2	Not Found	-	-
38	Rosemount	1	Not Found	-	-
39	Streamstown	1	Not Found	-	-
40	Street	1	Not Found	-	-
41	Tang	1	Not Found	-	-
42	Tubberclare	1	Not Found	-	-
43	Coole*	2	Not Found	-	-
			<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>203</b>

\*- Historical record of confirmed nest site(s) but was not confirmed during the survey in 2018. The historic records were not included in the analyses of confirmed nests e.g. charts, tables and figures.

## 6.2 Swift Nests

The survey has identified a total of 203 Swift nest sites across the county. These nests have been found in houses, religious buildings, schools, heritage sites, industrial buildings, public buildings and purpose-built Swift nest boxes.



Figure 7: Representative photographs of Swifts nest locations – church, school, castle(s), industrial building and a house A.Krastev

Figure 8 shows the density of Swift nest sites, low density (blue), average (red) and high density (yellow). This map depicts Mullingar, Athlone, and Kilbeggan to have the highest densities of Swift nests.

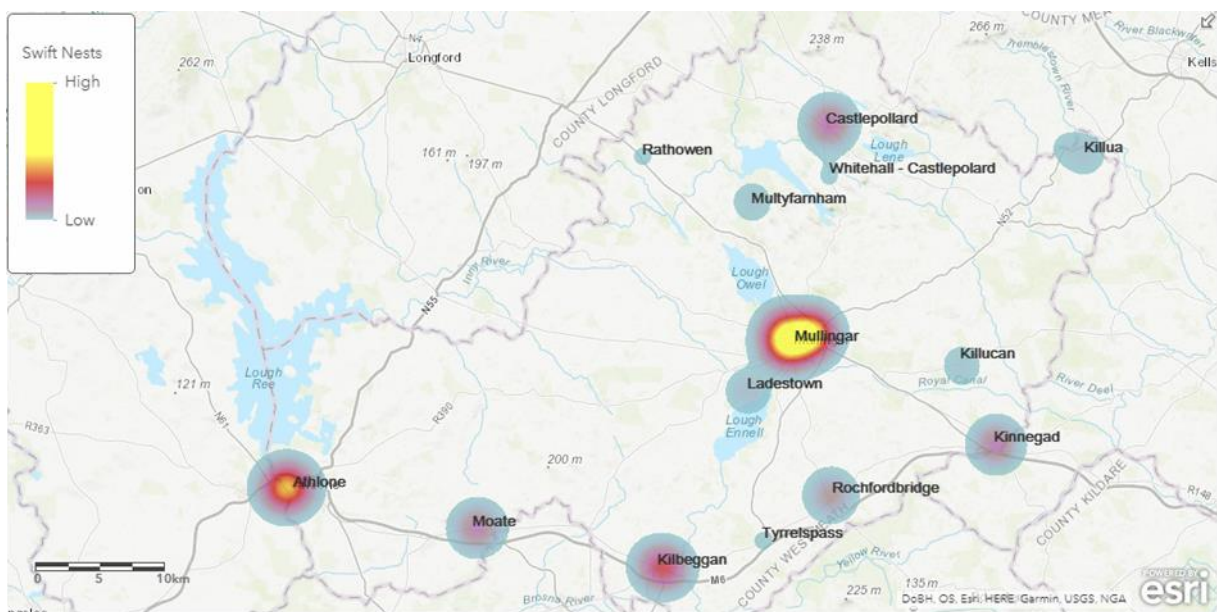


Figure 8: Heat map showing the densities of Swift nests across county Westmeath (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)



Table 2 lists the overall percentage of Swift nest sites by town/village. Three towns contain almost 75% of the entire nesting Swift population in Westmeath. Mullingar contains the largest overall percentage with 47.3% of Swift nests found. Athlone has one third of the Mullingar figure with 17.2% and Kilbeggan just shy of 10% with 9.9%. Castlepollard, Kinnegad, Moate and Rochfordbridge have the next most significant populations with 5.9%, 4.9% and 3.4% of nests respectively. The remaining nine areas contain <1.5% to <.5% of the total county population.

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

<b>Town/Village</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Mullingar	47.3%
Athlone	17.2%
Kilbeggan	9.9%
Castlepollard	5.9%
Kinnegad	4.9%
Moate	4.9%
Rochfordbridge	3.5%
Ladestown	1.5%
Killua	1%
Multyfarnham	1%
Clonmellon	0.5%
Killucan	0.5%
Rathowen	0.5%
Rathwire	0.5%
Tyrrelspass	0.5%
Whitehall - Castlepollard	0.5%

Swift nests have been recorded in a total of 69 individual buildings and structures across Co. Westmeath. These buildings have been categorised under the following classifications - House/Residential, School, Public, Church/Religious, Heritage Site/Castle, Small Business, Industrial and Building (Other). Figure 9 below shows that 32% of all Swift nest sites found during the survey were in the Public Building category, followed by 20% categorised as House/Residential, 18% School, 11% Small Business, 9% Church/Religious, 6% Building (Other), 2% Heritage Site/Castle and 2% contained in Industrial buildings.

These figures show clearly the importance of public buildings such as hospitals for nesting Swifts in the county. Residential properties too contain a large proportion of the Swift nesting population a result reflected in other county surveys. Schools too play a significant role in hosting nesting Swifts but it must be made clear that these are older school buildings such as St Anthony's School/St Mary's Community Centre in Athlone. Modern school buildings don't tend to suit Swifts ecological needs. The final 30% is made up of five categories of buildings with; Small Business, Church/Religious, Building (Other), Industrial and Heritage Site/Castle all represented at variable levels.

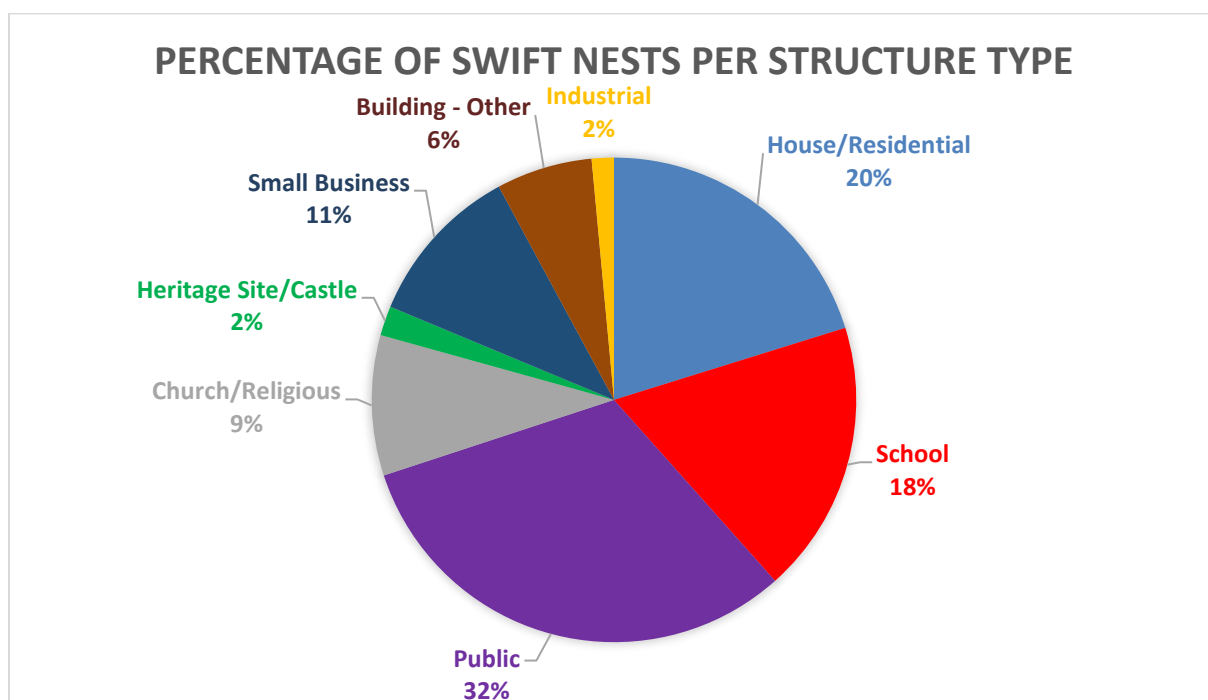


Figure 9: Percentage of Swift nest sites across different categories of buildings and structures

Figure 10 shows the number of Swift nests found in different structure types across the towns and villages in Co. Westmeath. The figure below illustrates that the 96 nests found in Mullingar are associated with Public Buildings (61), Small Businesses (12), Building-Other (13), House/Residential (7) and Industrial (3). Public buildings play a highly important role in Mullingar with two such buildings holding a total of 61 nests. St.Loman`s Hospital, St.Mary`s Care Centre are key sites within the county and demonstrate the importance of individual sites to nesting Swift populations.

Eleven of the 15 localities had Swifts nesting in House/Residential buildings which accounts for 40 nest sites. This demonstrates that homes are important for Swifts as nest sites but Swifts nest in these building in lower densities when compared to Public Buildings. Schools contain important populations in Athlone, Castlepollard and Kinnegad with a total of 36 nest distributed across 5 School sites. Small Business properties account for the site of 22 nests in four localities whilst Church/Religious buildings accounted for 19 nest sites in 6 localities throughout the county.

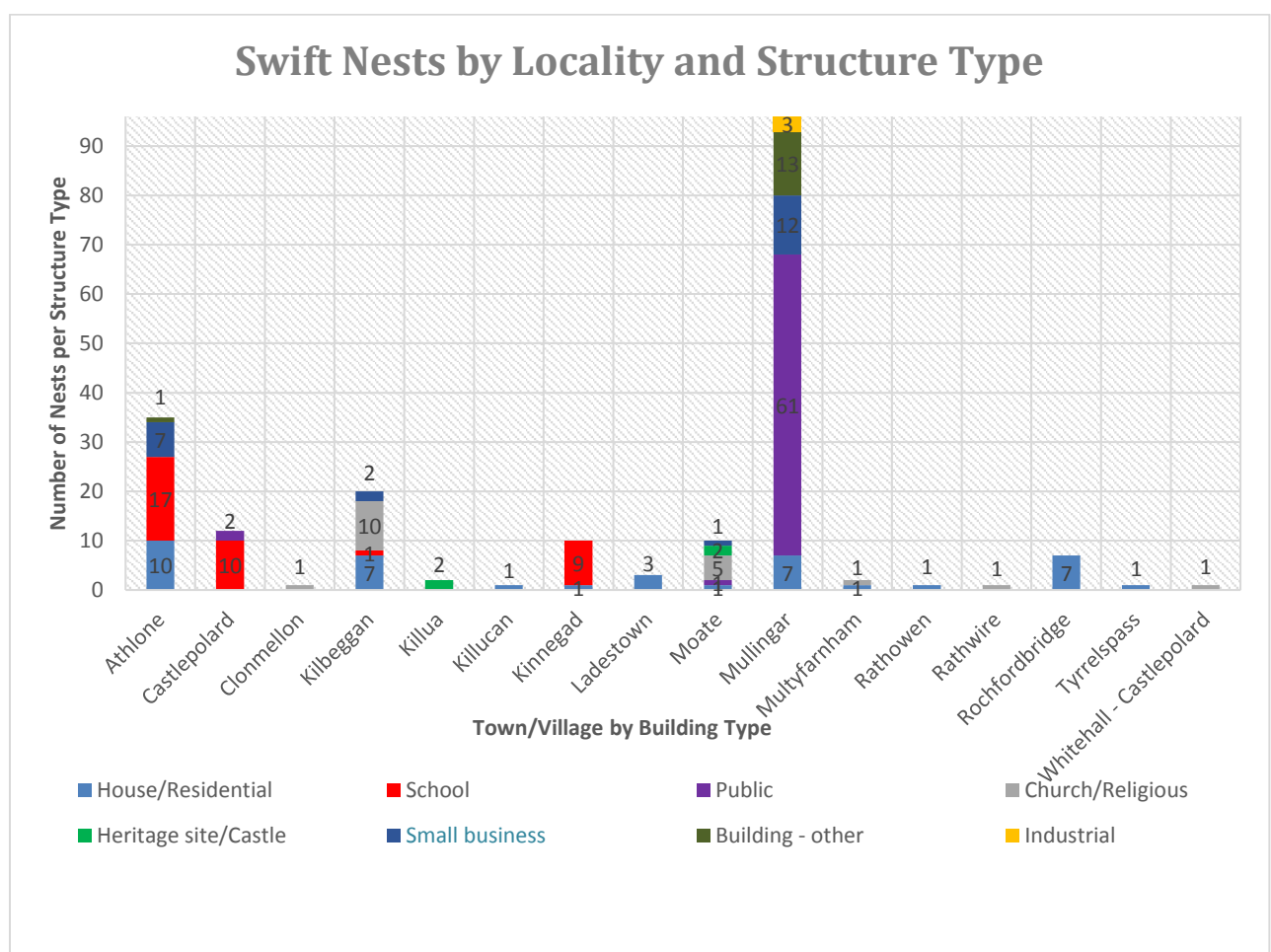


Figure 10: Number of Swift nest sites per building and locality in Co. Westmeath.

## 7 Site Based Results

A total of 43 towns/villages in Co. Westmeath were surveyed for this project, with Swifts recorded in 20 of these locations. The towns/villages where Swifts were not found are listed previously in Table 1.

Findings are broken down by locality and to site level. Properties which have - (P) in front of their address – indicates that the building/structure is registered as a protected structure. 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 (yellow 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.

Results are presented for individual localities in alphabetical order for ease of use of this document.

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>



Figure 11: Screenshots of the Online ArcGIS Swift Conservation Project data entry and viewing system

## 7.1 Athlone

Athlone is a large town divided between the counties of Westmeath and Roscommon. Swift sightings were mostly found in residential buildings, schools, and in some small business premises. A total of 35 Swift nests were found and a peak count of 47 Swifts were confirmed. Swifts were observed being highly active at a number of address listed in in Table 3 but nesting was not confirmed during our survey visits.



Figure 12: Confirmed nests in Athlone represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Ref No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1a,1b,1c,1d	Saint Anthony's School, Saint Mary's Hall Community Centre	47	16	School
2	Athlone Regional Technical College		1	School
3	Townhouse Centre, St Mary's Square		6	Small Business
4	24 Iona Park		1	House/Residential
5	35 Iona Park		1	House/Residential
6	Inis Lacin, St Asicus Villas		1	House/Residential
7	High St R Quirke & Son Limited		1	Small Business
8	27-31 College Park		3	House/Residential
9	22 College Park		1	House/Residential
10	18 College Park		1	House/Residential
11	17 College Park		1	House/Residential
12	8 College Park		1	House/Residential
No photo	Costume Barracks		Swifts seen	Other
No photo	Creaghduff		Swifts seen	House/Residential
No photo	Newtown Terrace, Athlone		Swifts seen	House/Residential
No photo	Assumption Road		Swifts seen	House/Residential
No photo	Beechpark		Swifts seen	House/Residential
No photo	Auburn Road – Auburn Villas		Swifts seen	House/Residential
			Total 35	











Figure 13: Dean Crowe Theatre on the Roscommon side of Athlone where purpose-built Swift nest boxes have been erected, Unconfirmed reports suggest that one of the boxes may be used occupied by Swifts but this was not confirmed during our survey work in the town.



Figure 14: Denis O`Flaherty (Athlone Tidy Town Group) – A.Krastev



## 7.2 Ballynacargy



Table 4: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Ballynacargy

Ballynacargy is a small village to the northwest of the county. No nests were found and with only one Swift observed flying over the village during surveying which wouldn't give a strong indication that Swifts nest in the village.

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
		1	-	NA
			Total	

### 7.3 Castlepollard



Castlepollard is a small village situated to the north of Co. Westmeath. Total of 12 Swift nests were confirmed with a peak count of 9 Swifts observed. The nests are distributed between 3 buildings with the largest colony (7 nests) found in a derelict school building.

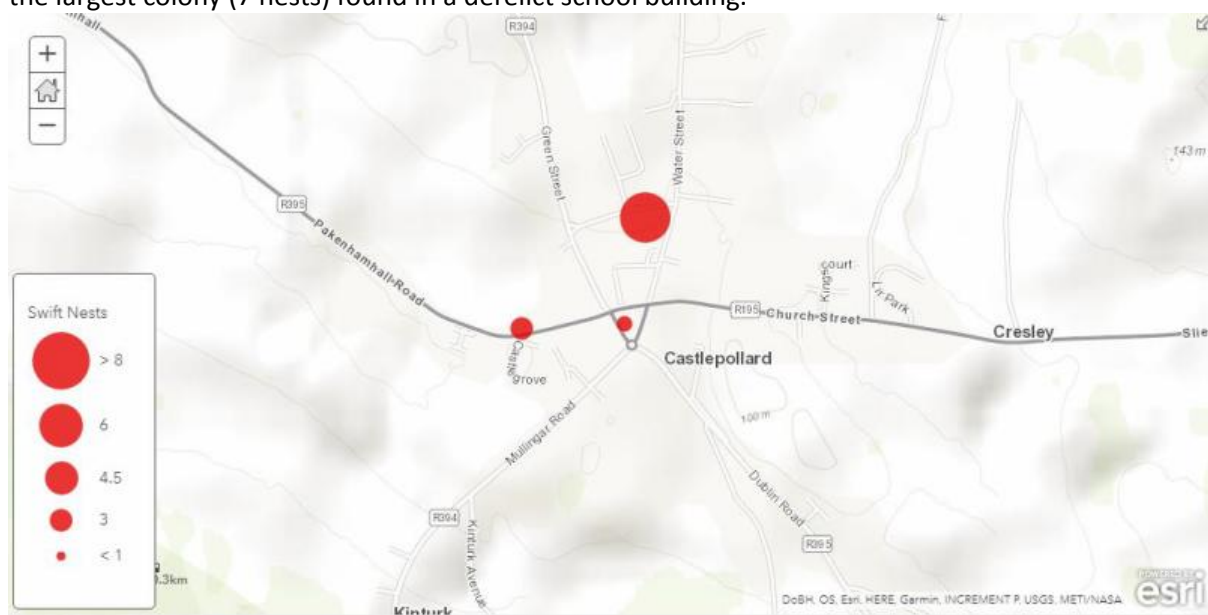


Figure 15: Confirmed nests in Castlepollard represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

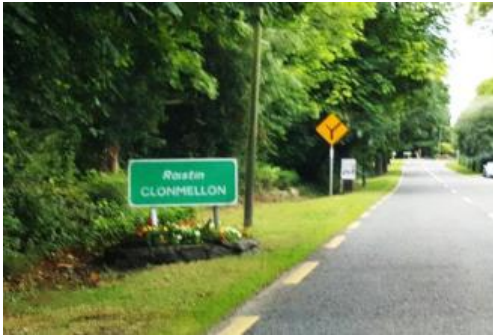
Table 5: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Castlepollard

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Castlepollard Parochial School	9	3	School
2	Castlepollard Town Hall		2	Public
3	Water Street, Townparks, Opposite Saint Michael's National School		7	School
			Total 12	



Figure 16: Tom O`Callaghan (BWI Westmeath Branch), Triona Finnen (NPWS), Carol Hayden,Mia Hayden,Ariane Hayden,Pat Moore,Des Gavin,Suzie Gavin,Pauline Murphy, Bridget Gavin (Castlepollard Tidy Town Group) – A.Krastev

## 7.4 Clonmellon



Clonmellon is a small village in Co. Westmeath which is near the border of Co. Meath. Only one Swift nest was confirmed in the bell tower of Clonmellon Catholic Church, with a peak number of 6 Swifts observed during the visits.



Figure 17: Confirmed nests in Clonmellon represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1a	Clonmellon Catholic Church, Bell Tower, South Side	6	1	Church
1b	Clonmellon Catholic Church, Bell Tower, East Side		-	Church
			Total 1	





Figure 18: Thomas Henry (Clonmellon Tidy Town Group)- A.Krastev

## 7.5 Coole



Coole is a small village in the central area of Co. Westmeath, there were no Swift sightings observed during this survey, however there are records submitted from 2015 and 2017 by Triona Finnen and Suzanne Ledwith at Mayne Church on the southern end of the village.

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
	*Mayne Church	4	4	Church/Religious
			Total 4	

\*- Historical record of confirmed nest site(s) but was not confirmed during the survey in 2018. The record was not included in the analyses of confirmed nests e.g. charts, tables and figures.

## 7.6 Finea



Finea is a small village in Co. Westmeath located near the border of Co. Cavan. Two Swifts were observed around the buildings opposite the Myles O'Reilly Monument, however no nests were found.

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
	Buildings opposite Myles O'Reilly Monument	2	-	House/Residential
			Total	

## 7.7 Horseleap



Horseleap is a small town situated upon the Westmeath, Offaly border and four Swifts were counted near the Horseleap National School and around the Ardnurcher Church. There were no Swifts nests confirmed this year, however Swifts were confirmed breeding (sites listed below) in years 2015 and 2017. Swifts were not confirmed at these sites during the 2018 survey but the sites may still be active.

Table 9: 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	*(P)Ardnurcher Church	11	1	School
	*Horseleap National School		1	Church/Religious
			Total 2	

\*- Historical record of confirmed nest site(s) but was not confirmed during the survey in 2018. The historic records were not included in the analyses of confirmed nests e.g. charts, tables and figures.





## 7.8 Kilbeggan



Kilbeggan is a small town situated on the River Brosna in the south of Co. Westmeath. A total of 20 confirmed nests and a peak count of 22 Swifts observed during the survey visits. The Convent of Mercy held the most Swifts nests (10), The remaining nests were found in residential buildings and in Kilbeggan Primary School.



Figure 19: Confirmed nests in Kilbeggan represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1a,1b	(P)Convent of Mercy, Harbour Road	22	10	Church/Religious
2	Dublin Road, Lynne shop		1	Small Business
3	Kilbeggan Primary School Dublin Rd		1	School
4a,4b	(P)Main Street, Meadow Park		7	House/Residential
5	Kilbeggan Chocolate And Coffee Bar		1	Small Business
			Total 20	

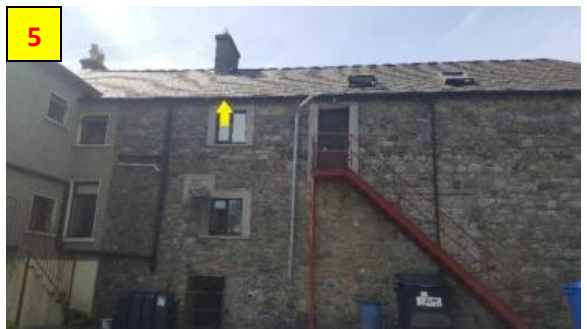




Figure 20: Anne Nowek (Kilbeggan Tidy Town Group) Eileen Moreton (BWI Westemeath Branch) – A.Krastev

## 7.9 Killua Castle

Killua Castle is a heritage site situated near Clonmellon, Co. Westmeath with a total of two Swift nests confirmed in the castle and a peak count of 8 Swifts observed during the visit.

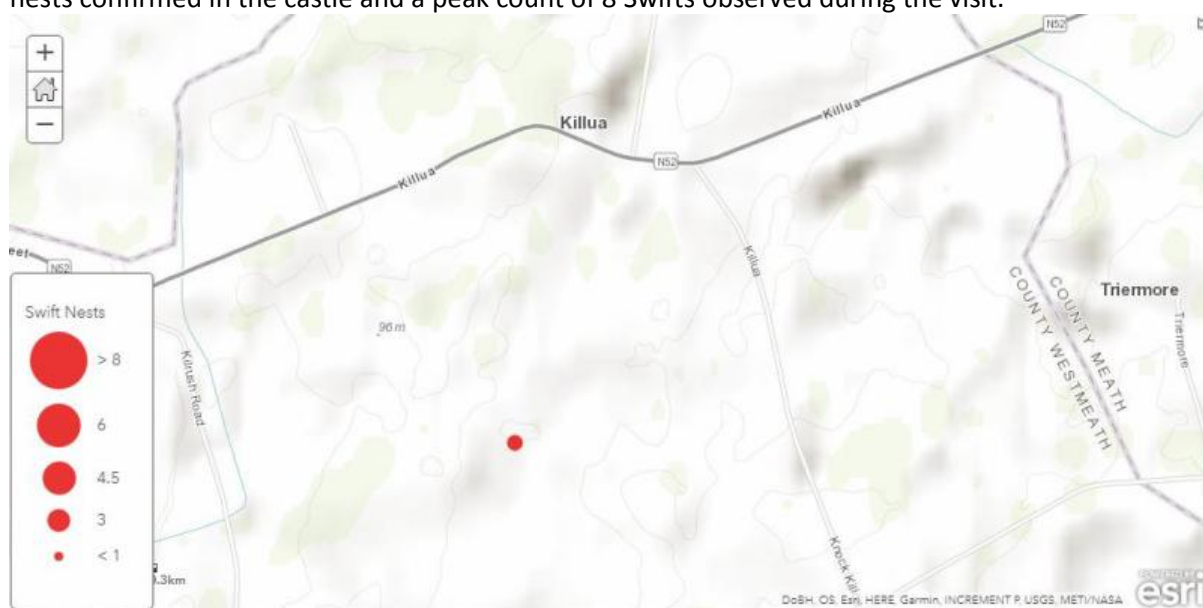


Figure 21: Confirmed nests in Killua Castle represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	(P)Killua Castle	8	2	Heritage Site - Castle
			Total 2	





## 7.10 Killucan and Rathwire

Killucan and Rathwire are neighbouring villages that are located in the east of the county. Surveying confirmed nests in a residential building in Cloghan Road and in Rathwire Church. A peak count of 4 Swifts was observed during the survey.

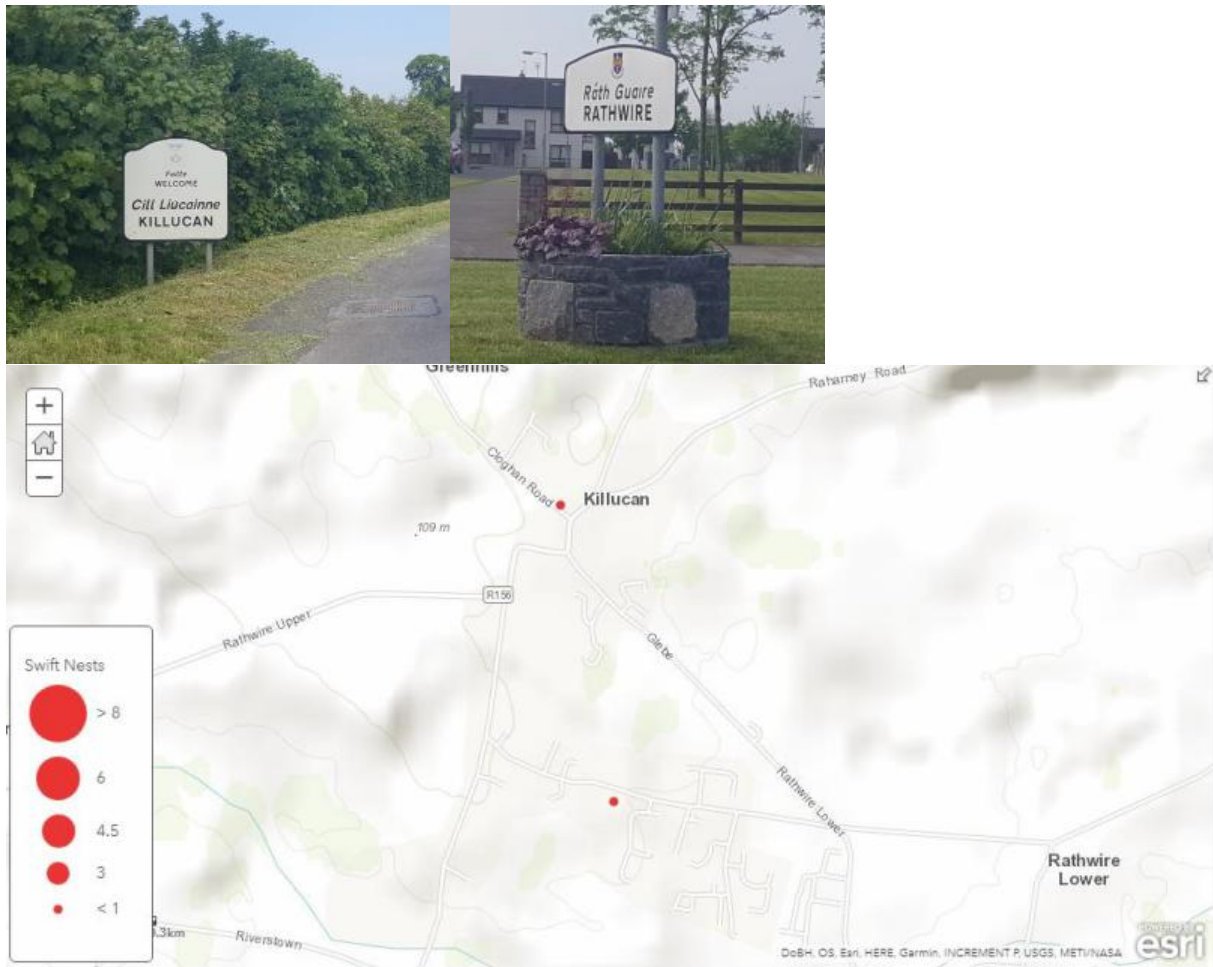


Figure 22: Confirmed nests in Killucan and Rathwire represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Cloghan Road	4	1	House/Residential
2	(P) Rathwire Church		1	Church
			Total 2	



Figure 23: Joan Kelly (Killucan Tidy Town Group) – A.Krastev

## 7.11 Kinnegad



Kinnegad is a small town divided between two counties, Westmeath and Meath, a total number of 10 Swift nests were confirmed in the Vocational Education Committee Building and a residential building on the Main Street. During the survey, a peak count of 20 Swifts were noted.



Figure 24: Confirmed nests in Kinnegad represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1a,1b,1c	(P)Main Street, Vocational Education Committee Building	20	9	School
2	Main Street		1	House/Residential
			Total 10	





## 7.12 Milltownpass



Milltownpass is a small village in the south-east of the county. Three Swifts were observed during surveying but no Swift nests were located during field visits.

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
		3	-	NA
			Total	

## 7.13 Moate



Moate is a small town situated in the southwest of Co. Westmeath. During the survey, 10 Swift nests were confirmed and a peak count of 11 Swifts were observed.



Figure 25: Confirmed nests in Moate represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	(P)Main Street, The Castle	11	2	Heritage Site - Castle
2	Antonia House		1	House/Residential
3	Bank of Ireland		1	Small Business
4	(P)The Newtown, Legan, Carmelite Monastery		5	Church/Religious
No photo	Former Post Office		1	Public
			Total 10	

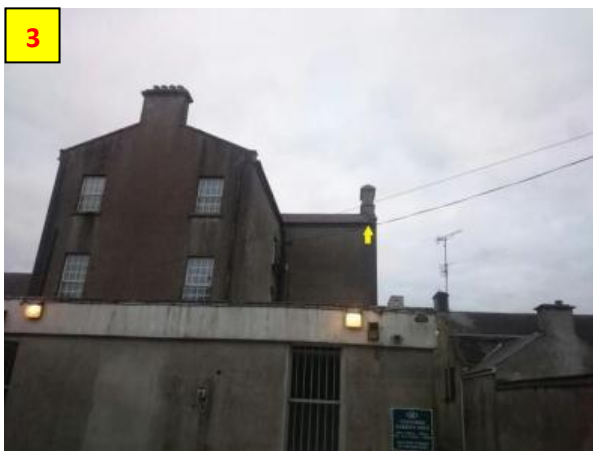


Figure 26: Allan Ennis, Eddie Evans, Jimmy Redmond (Moate Tidy Town Group) Richella Duggan (BWI Westmeath Branch) – A.Krastev

## 7.14 Mount Temple



Mount Temple is a small village in the south-west of the county. A peak count of four Swifts were observed but no nest sites were found during surveying.

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
		4	-	NA
			Total	

## 7.15 Mullingar



Mullingar is a large town in Co. Westmeath, it is the third most populous town in the midlands region. Throughout the survey period, a total number of 96 Swift nests were confirmed and peak count of 60 Swifts observed. Three large colonies have been observed to be present in St. Loman's Hospital, St. Mary Care Centre and Mullingar Army Barracks, while the rest of the nest sites are found in residential areas, small businesses and industrial buildings.

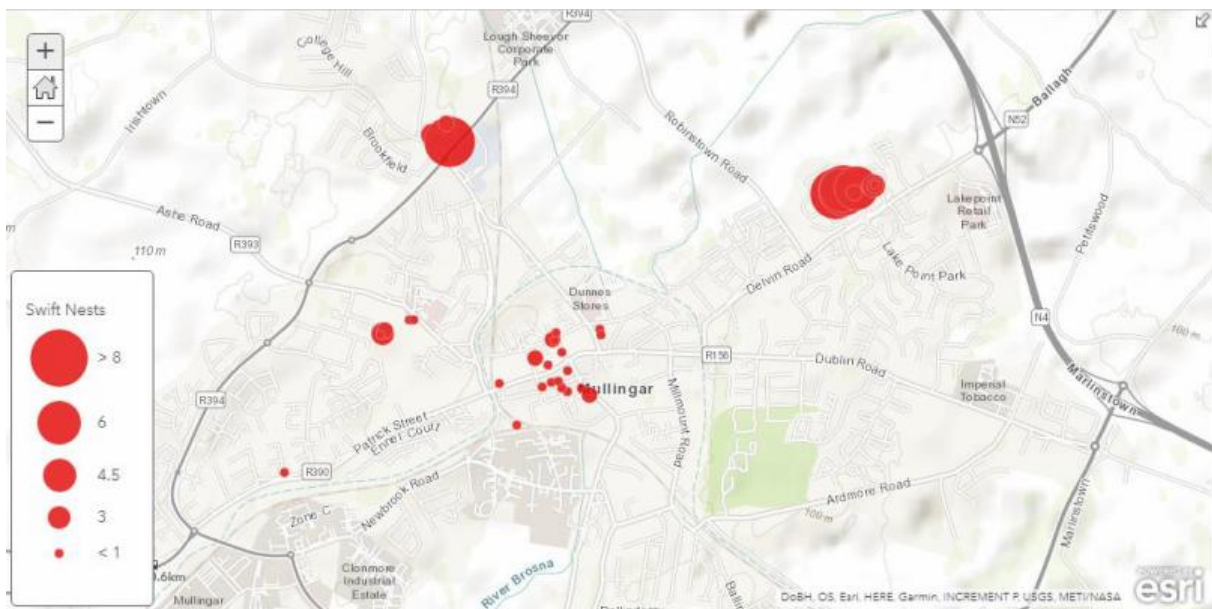


Figure 27: Confirmed nests in Mullingar represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)



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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1 – a,b,c,d,e,f,g	(P)Mullingar Army Barracks	60	12	Other
2 – a,b,c,e,f,g	(P)St Mary's Care Centre		19	Public
3 – a,b	Bishops Gate Street, Impact Training Courses		4	Small Business
4 – a,b	(P)Martins Lane; John Daly's(part of)		3	House/Residential
5	Apache Pizza		1	Small Business
6	Rear of 52 Dominick Street		1	House/Residential
7	Shaw's Funeral Home		1	Small Business
8 – a,b	Eircom Building, Blackhall Street		3	Industrial
9	Backside of 44 Mount St		1	House/Residential
10	Permanent TSB, Blackhall Street		1	Small Business
11	Parkville, Friars Mill Road		1	House/Residential
12	(P)Backside of the 4 The Wardrobe business		1	Small Business
13	(P)Bank of Ireland, Dominick Place		1	Small Business
14	1 Woodlands Avenue		1	House/Residential
15	2-3 Meeting House Lane		1	Small Business
16	16 Mary Street		2	House/Residential
17	Aras an Mhuilinn		2	Public
18 - a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k	(P)St. Loman's Hospital		39	Public
19	Robert B Marren and Co Solicitors Castle St, Bellview		1	Small Business
20	(P)Mullingar Train Station		1	Public
			Total 96	



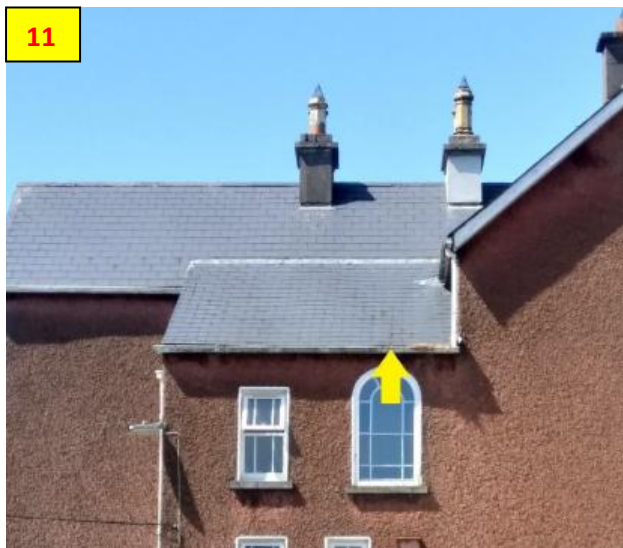




















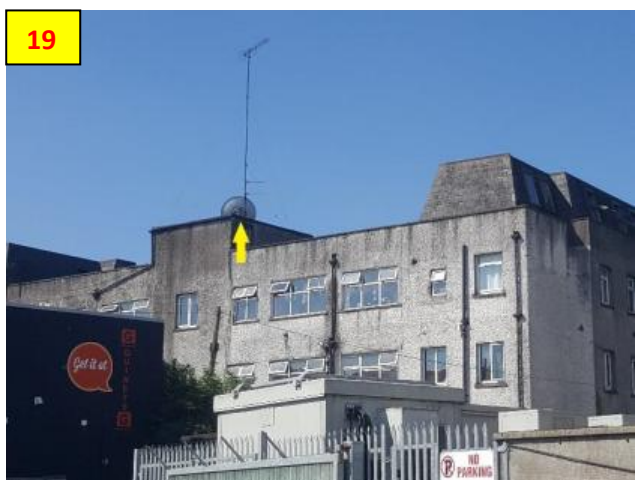
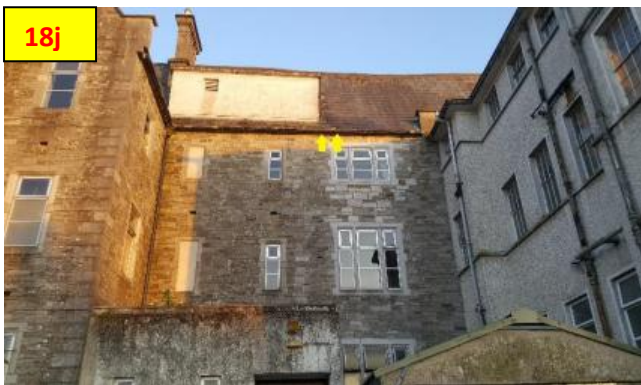




Figure 28: Purpose built Swift nest boxes at Mullingar MABS building – Observations by volunteers confirmed Swifts entering these boxes in 2018 (pers.comm. Richella Duggan). There is high chance that this Swifts will nest here in the 2019 breeding season.



Figure 29: Mullingar Courthouse purpose built Swift nest boxes which were installed during April 2018. Swifts were confirmed entering at least one of the nest boxes on site (pers.comm. Richella Duggan). This behaviour indicates that Swifts will most likely nest here during 2019.





Figure 30: Tom O`Callaghan (BWI Westmeath Branch) Bill Collentine and Anita Kennedy (Mullingar Tidy Town Group), Richella Duggan (BWI Westmeath Branch) – A.Krastev



Figure 31: Members of Westmeath Tidy Town Groups gathered in Mullingar for a Swift introductory evening – R.Maxwell



Figure 32: Morgan Flynn, Tim O'Rourke, Maggie & Ray Dolan, Eileen Moreton, Ina Kelly, Sheena Savedra, Richella Duggan, Triona Finnen, Dolores McCague, Peter Fagan – A.Krastev

## 7.16 Multyfarnham



Multyfarnham is a small village in Co. Westmeath, the survey visits confirmed two nests and a peak count of three Swifts.

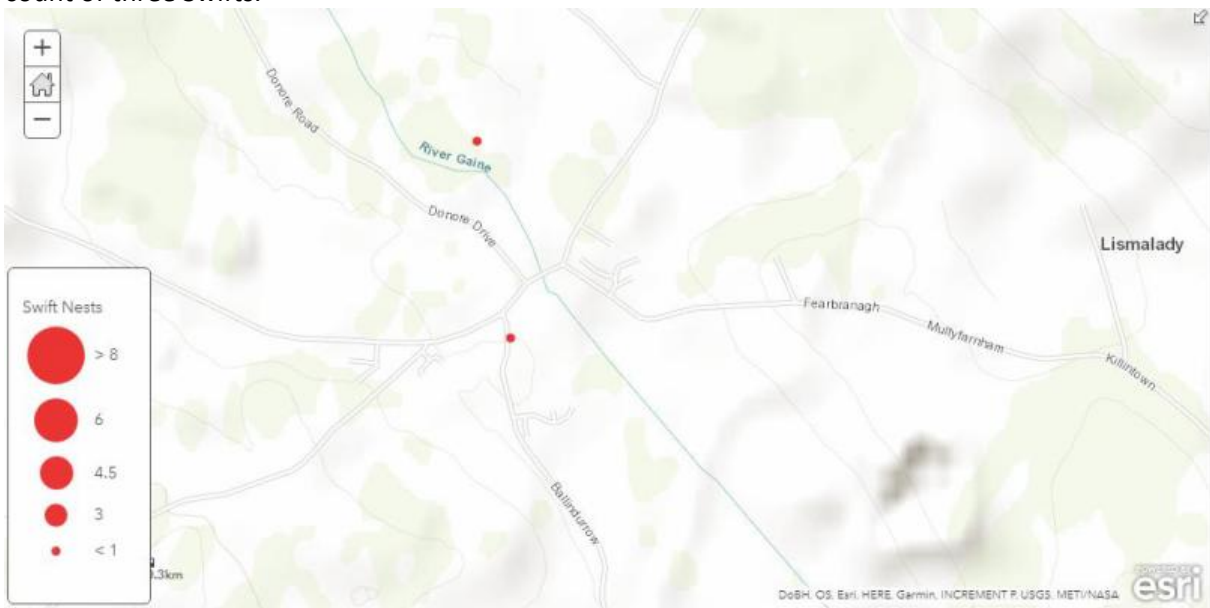


Figure 33: Confirmed nests in Multyfarnham represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Multyfarnham Abbey	3	1	Church/Religious
2	House adjacent to Saint Nicholas' Catholic Church		1	House/Residential
			Total 2	





## 7.17 Rathowen



Rathowen is a small village located in Co. Westmeath, the survey visits have confirmed one nest and a peak count of six Swifts.

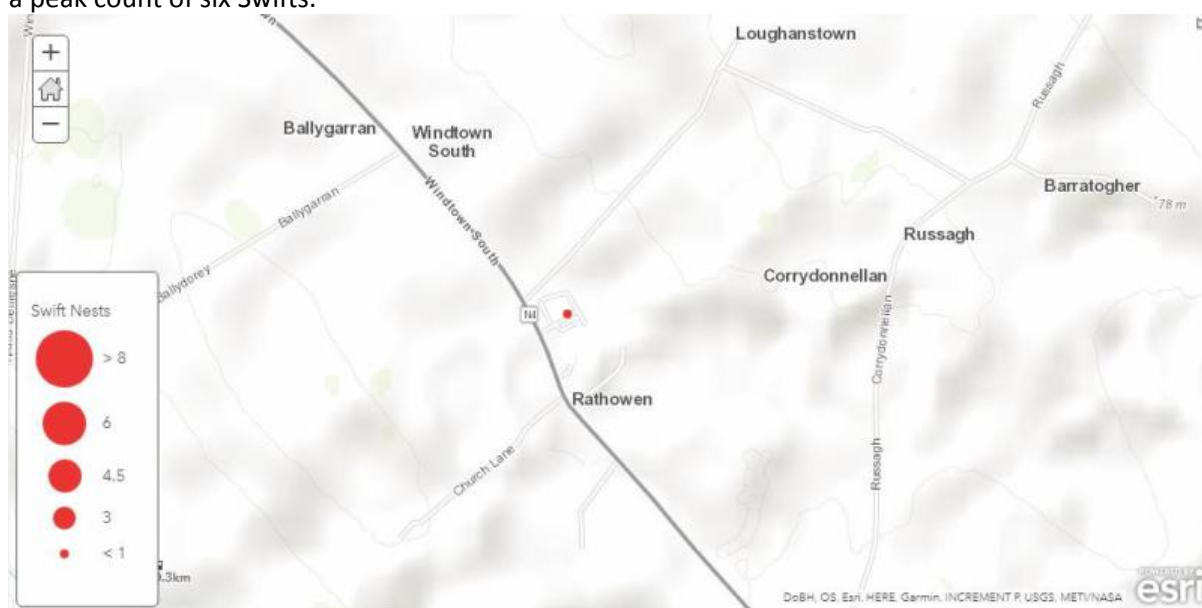


Figure 34: Confirmed nests in Rathowen represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	25 Westwind Park	6	1	House/Residential
			Total 1	





## 7.18 Rochfortbridge



Rochfortbridge is a small village in Co. Westmeath. Derrygreenagh Park housing estate has been found to have a significant number of Swifts. In total the survey confirmed 7 Swift nests and a peak count of 24 Swifts.

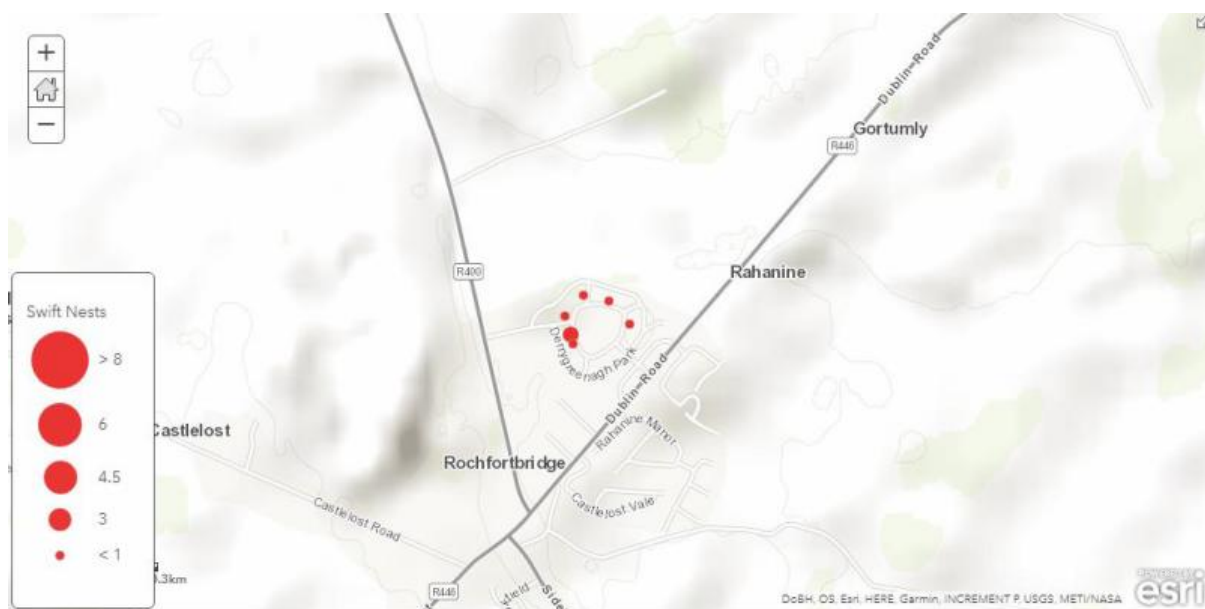


Figure 35: Confirmed nests in Rochfordbridge represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	41 Derrygreenagh Park	24	1	House/Residential
2	45 Derrygreenagh Park		2	House/Residential
3	66 Derrygreenagh Park		1	House/Residential
4	69 Derrygreenagh Park		1	House/Residential
5	93 Derrygreenagh Park		1	House/Residential
No photo	75 Derrygreenagh Park		1	House/Residential
			Total 7	





Figure 36: Rochfordbridge Tidy Town Group and volunteers



Figure 37: Westmeath Swift Survey 2018 results presented during Westmeath Heritage Week in Rochfordbridge on 21/08/2018

## 7.19 Tyrrellspass



Tyrrellspass is a small village in the southern region of Co. Westmeath the survey visits have confirmed one Swift nest and a peak count of 4 Swifts.



Figure 38: Confirmed nests in Tyrrellspass represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

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

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	5-1 Sherwell Ct	4	1	House/Residential
			Total	





Figure 39: Michelle Coleman, Ina Kelly (Tyrrellspass Tidy Town Group,ETHOS) Eileen Moreton (BWI Westemeath Branch), Dolores McCague (BWI Westemeath Branch - not pictured) - A. Krastev

## 7.20 Whitehall



Whitehall is a small village located in the centre of the county. During the survey visits to Castlepollard, local information led us to the discovery of one nest in Whitehall Church where a peak count of two Swifts was made.



Figure 40: Confirmed nests in Whitehall represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

Table 22: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Whitehall

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	Whitehall Church	2	1	Church/Religious
			Total	



## 7.21 Ladestown



Ladestown House has three Swift nests and there was a peak count of 12 Swifts made. There are six purpose-built nests installed in the building to provide more potential nest sites for Swifts.



Figure 41: Confirmed nests in Ladestown represented with graduated scale symbols using (ArcGIS (Online) ESRI, 2018)

Table 23: List of all confirmed nest sites and Swift sightings in Ladestown

Photo Reference No:	Address	Peak no of Swifts observed	Number of confirmed nests	Building type
1	(P) Ladestown House	12	3	House/Residential
			Total	





Figure 42: Bryan Peters (Ladestown House Riding School) – A. Krastev

## 8 Publicity

### Events

Several public events have been hosted by BirdWatch Ireland in Westmeath to promote the survey and raise awareness for Swift conservation generally.

- **Westmeath LAWCO Event:** We presented to the Water and Communities Office – River Awareness Event in Athlone on May 16th to inform participants about the survey and raise awareness locally on the topic of Swifts generally. The event was well attended and involved a walk to the local river in Willow Park where locals are trying to improve the river habitats for wildlife. We observed Swifts and a suite of other avian species during our walk (Appendix 2).
- **Westmeath Tidy Towns Event:** We presented to Tidy Towns Groups, May 10th at Mullingar Arts Centre. We discussed Swift ecology and conservation before going on a short walk where we observed many Swifts, the new Swift nest box project at the local Courthouse and even watched Swifts entering nest sites at the local eircom office. The meeting was well attended, and members of Tidy Towns Groups showed a high level of support for the project. (Appendix 2)
- **Westmeath BWI Branch Event:** The BirdWatch Ireland Westmeath Branch hosted a Swift event on May 29th. We presented an indoor illustrated talk outlining the Swift ecology and conservation and followed it with a walk to the local convent that supports a high proportion of Kilbeggans’s nesting Swift population. We observed large numbers of Swifts. (Appendix 2)
- **Westmeath SAW Event:** To celebrate Swift Awareness Week in Westmeath we hosted a walk in Athlone. Meeting at St Mary’s Square on June 17th . The group took a walk around that area and observed Swifts feeding and visiting nest sites. (Appendix 2)
- **Westmeath Co Co Staff Walk:** Anton Krastev from BWI and Richella Duggan from the BWI Westmeath Branch met with local authority staff to bring them on a short tour to observe Swifts near the council buildings. The group discussed various topics on how the local authority can assist with Swift conservation. (Appendix 2)
- **Westmeath Heritage Week Event:** Presented results of Westmeath Swift Survey 2018 during Heritage Week May 21<sup>st</sup> in Rochfordbridge. (Figure 36)

### Media coverage

- **Wings Magazine:** The project was highlighted on an article in the Summer 2018 edition of BirdWatch Ireland's members magazine Wings (page 15) attached in Appendix 4.
- **Midlands Radio 3** Swift Special on Open Door program with Ann-Marie Kelly broadcast on Monday June 18<sup>th</sup>. Follow link here: <https://soundcloud.com/midlands103official/the-open-door-why-Swifts-are-in-need-of-our-help> (Appendix 2)
- **Westmeath Topic** –June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018, carried a column about the Westmeath Swift Survey Project (See Appendix 3).

### Social Media

In addition to our events and traditional media outlets we publicised details of the County Swift Surveys extensively through BWI social media platforms – Twitter and Facebook (Appendix 2).

## 9 Community Involvement

In total, 9 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. In addition to the formal arrangements made with community groups we met many residents and community groups during survey visits.

Table 24: Meeting dates of Tidy Towns across county Westmeath

Tidy Town Groups	Date of Initial Swift Meeting/Workshop
<b>Athlone</b>	09/08/2018
<b>Castlepollard</b>	30/07/2018
<b>Moate</b>	08/08/2018
<b>Killucan</b>	31/07/2018
<b>Rochfordbridge</b>	25/06/2018
<b>Kilbeggan</b>	02/08/2018
<b>Mullingar</b>	30/07/2018
<b>Clonmellon</b>	31/07/2018
<b>Tyrrelspass</b>	27/07/2018



## 10 Discussion

The Westmeath Swift Survey 2018 is an innovative step towards safeguarding Swifts in the county. It is heartening to see Westmeath County Council recognising the importance of Swifts as an integral part of the urban landscape and of the county's 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. Westmeath. Indeed, this project is pioneering in many respects and can be used as a flagship project, from which many other Local Authorities, 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 43 (including 2 additional areas) towns and villages surveyed for Swifts in Westmeath, only 15 have nesting Swifts, there are 2 locations where Swifts have been seen but their nests have not been found, and further 2 locations where there have been confirmed nesting historically but not confirmed during this year's survey. Eight towns/villages hold 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, Mullingar, Athlone, Kilbeggan, Castlepollard, Kinnegad, and Moate all of which hold 10 or more nest sites.

It was also interesting to learn, for the first time, the importance of various building types for Swifts in Westmeath. The data shows us that buildings categorised as public buildings hold the highest number of Swift nests in the county, a total of 64 Swift nest sites, followed by house/residential, school, small business, church/religious, building other, heritage site/castle, building other and industrial. This information is important in helping to direct conservation effort in the future.

Reviewing the results at local level reveals a few key findings. In Mullingar three buildings contain 74 individual nest sites making them collectively the three most important colonies in the town if not the county and great care should be taken to conserve these colonies. It emphasises the importance of single properties to large numbers of Swifts and these buildings need to be protected carefully.

In Rochfordbridge we found all Swift nests to exist in a housing estate on the edge of the village, with no others found in the village centre. An effort should be made to encourage Swifts to nest in at least one new location in the village as "island populations" are always most vulnerable. Similar situations have been encountered around the county and it's vital to spread colonies wider in these localities to make the population more resilient to future changes.

Tyrrelspass with only one nest site demonstrates the risk to small isolated populations. Any loss here would mean a complete loss of breeding Swifts in the vicinity which will prove difficult to reverse. Any effort to protect isolated colonies and in turn increase breeding populations are most welcomed.

We found repairs ongoing at Horseleap Church all summer long which involved scaffolding surrounding the building. Scaffolding can prove detrimental to nesting Swifts as it excludes adult birds entering and leaving nest sites. Great care must be taken at any location around the county where Swift colonies are found when carrying out renovation and maintenance work during the nesting season. It is key that local stakeholders keep an eye out for such activities that may impact upon these sites and contact their local Heritage Officer or BirdWatch Ireland for advice and assistance.

In Clonmellon and other locations we observed prospecting Swifts in the village, they may be young birds looking for new nest sites or established pairs that have recently lost a nest site. The observations demonstrate that if new nest sites need to be made available throughout the county.

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 15 towns and villages in Co. Westmeath. 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 Westmeath Swift Survey 2018 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 203 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 Swift Champions across Westmeath, who will now form the back-bone of future Swift conservation efforts in the county.

### High-level Recommendations:

- Ensure the results of this report are made available and utilised for the protection of Swifts in Co. Westmeath. Publish a link to PDF report on relevant section of council website.
- Measures are required to encourage all new developments of large buildings such as schools, apartments, and offices to include accommodation for Swifts. This can be achieved relatively inexpensively by using specially designed inbuilt bricks which meet the requirements of Swifts nests and load bearing requirements of the building.
- Measures should be taken to protect every colony identified through this project. Westmeath County Council should ensure that any planning applications for redevelopment or new developments at location highlighted in this report– takes the existing Swift nests into account so that existing nest sites are preserved – or where that cannot happen – that alternative accommodation for Swifts are provided. Ideally these should be built into any new structures. Alternatively, external Swift boxes and call systems must be provided by the developer/property owner.
- 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 mapping systems to help 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 at county level to encourage local volunteers and community groups to continue surveying for Swifts each summer and entering records to the online mapping system. This has been shown to work in county Offaly where members of Tidy Towns groups have surveyed their own localities to ensure Swifts are present at known colonies whilst identifying new and previously unrecorded sites.
- Following on from this project work with local community groups to establish Swift conservation projects locally in suitable in towns and villages across the county.
- Incorporate measures for Swifts into the 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 the County Development Plan which should advise provision to incorporate artificial nest sites for Swifts e.g. Swift bricks, Swift nest boxes into all new public building and renovation works and large scale commercial developments.
- Swift conservation should be highlighted through Tidy Towns on an annual basis as the current awareness raising initiatives have only a limited impact and timespan.

- Develop a schools programme to engage and educate primary schools about Swifts, their conservation and to establish schools conservation projects. This should be aimed at school managers and teachers rather than pupils to up skill and inform school staff, this knowledge can then be integrated into teaching, Green flag initiatives and the overall school ethos of environmental protection.
- 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.

It is recommended to repeat the whole county survey in 5-10 years to assess the Swift population and monitor the success of conservation measures.



### 11.1 Town and Village Specific Recommendations

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

Westmeath County Council should ensure that any planning applications for redevelopment or new developments take existing Swift nest sites into account or consider making provision for nesting Swifts. This will ensure that existing nest sites are preserved, as well as providing new nest. Where mitigation is required, external Swift boxes and call systems must be provided by the developer/property owners.

<b>Athlone</b>	Protect the existing nest sites, increase awareness locally. Ensure that any proposed renovations or redevelopments allows/makes provisions for Swifts nests.
<b>Horseleap</b>	Ensure to protect nest sites at Ardnurcher Church. It is recommended to provide nesting sites for Swifts in the village. Swifts have been observed but not confirmed nesting, last year one pair failed to raise young due to a casualty of one parent bird in the Horseleap National School. Local Tidy Town Group should consider installing nest boxes during 2019 in order to secure/increase the population.
<b>Kilbeggan</b>	Protect existing nest sites, further survey work needed at school adjacent to the Convent.
<b>Moate</b>	Swift nest sites have been confirmed in buildings which may soon be under renovation/construction e.g. former Post Office, Newtown House (part of Carmelite Friary) and Moate Castle. Make submissions highlighting the presence of Swifts when the planning application is lodged, request Swifts nest locations are protected while renovation/construction takes place. Ensure that compensatory measures are put in place if necessary. There are plans for school extension/new building in Moate, its advisable to request in-built Swift Brick nesting cavities are installed in newly built buildings. Local Tidy Town Group should consider installing nest boxes during 2019 in order to secure/increase the population.
<b>Mullingar</b>	Swift population in Mullingar is predominantly concentrated at public buildings, ensure to protect these buildings. Owners of buildings which may be up for sale, renovation and or demolition need to be informed of the Swift nests present in their buildings e.g. Impact Building, St. Mary's Care Centre, St.Loman Hospital, Mullingar Army Barracks, Eircom Building. There are currently plans for two new schools in Mullingar, this provides opportunity to create nesting areas in new buildings, additionally this may be used as an awareness/educational project.
<b>Castlepollard</b>	Protect existing nests sites, inform the building owners of any confirmed nests. There is immediate need to provide Swifts boxes to adjacent properties, due to the unknown future of an unused building site with seven confirmed nests. Local Tidy Town Group should consider installing nest boxes during 2019 in order to secure/increase the population.
<b>Clonmellon</b>	Protect the existing nest site from any future renovation works, the site may contain further Swift nests – resurvey in 2019. Local Tidy Town Group should consider installing nest boxes during 2019 in order to secure/increase the population.
<b>Finea</b>	Re-survey the area for Swifts.
<b>Killucan and Rathwire</b>	Protect the existing nests, it is advisable to take any opportunity which may increase the population. Rathwire Church renovation may be an

	opportunity. Local Tidy Town Group should consider installing nest boxes during 2019 in order to secure/increase the population.
<b>Kinnegad</b>	Immediate awareness raising is required to the owners of the buildings that have Swift nests. It is advisable to try establish more than one colony in town to provide stability to the local breeding population. Local Tidy Town Group should consider installing nest boxes during 2019 in order to secure/increase the population.
<b>Ladestown</b>	Monitor purpose-built nests and report back.
<b>Mount Temple</b>	Re-survey the area for Swifts.
<b>Multyfarnham</b>	Protect existing nest sites.
<b>Rathowen</b>	Swift nest has been found in relatively new built estate, it is of concern that there may not be any more nesting cavities for the remaining Swift population. It is advisable to create nesting areas – purpose-built boxes or retro-fitting soffits to suit Swifts. Local Tidy Town Group should consider installing nest boxes during 2019 in order to secure/increase the population.
<b>Rochfortbridge</b>	Ensure to protect the remaining Swift nests in Derrygreenagh Estate. Consider project through Westmeath County Council or Tidy Town Group to expand the Swift population towards the centre of the village.
<b>Tyrrellspass</b>	Consider engaging the local school in providing nesting sites for Swifts. Local Tidy Town Group should consider installing nest boxes during 2019 in order to secure/increase the population.
<b>Killua Castle</b>	Consider installing purpose-built boxes, on the same side as the existing nests and free from any obstructions.
<b>Whitehall</b>	Protect existing nest site. Further monitoring earlier in the season next year might reveal more nests at the church. Local community should consider nest boxes at or adjacent to the church to increase the small population.

## Acknowledgements

Birdwatch Ireland would like to acknowledge the support of Westmeath County Council in funding this project with special thanks to Melanie McQuade Westmeath Heritage Officer and Ruth Maxwell Environmental Officer for their support and active participation in this project.

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

Athlone Tidy Town Group

Castlepollard Tidy Town Group

Kilbeggan Tidy Town Group

Moate Tidy Town Group

Killucan Tidy Town Group

Mullingar Tidy Town Group

Clonmellon Tidy Town Group

Rochfordbridge Tidy Town Group

Tyrellspass Tidy Town Group

We thank all the residents and business owners that allowed us access to their properties to aid with survey work and aims of the 2018 Westmeath Swift Project.

Thanks to our BirdWatch Ireland Westmeath Branch for all their help and advice in planning and carrying out the survey.

Thanks to all volunteers who assisted in surveying and supplied records, a special thanks to Richella Duggan, Eileen Moreton, Dolores McCague, Morgan Flynn, Tim O'Rourke, Tom O'Callaghan, Ina Kelly, Peter Fagan, Tony Brereton, Carmel Gargan, Brian Convery, Dave McKay and Fiona Smith-Darragh from BirdWatch Ireland Westmeath Branch whom have contributed substantial time and effort in this project. Their contribution has greatly increased the success of this project.

We would like to acknowledge the help we received in this project from the local NPWS Rangers - Triona Finnen and Therese Kelly.

We are grateful to Gabrielle Kelly and her daughter, for their help surveying Kinnegad and their enthusiasm for engaging their local school in this project.

Sincere thanks to Stephen Downey for his ongoing help and expertise in designing the ArcGIS online data application system and his help with data management throughout the project.

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Appendices

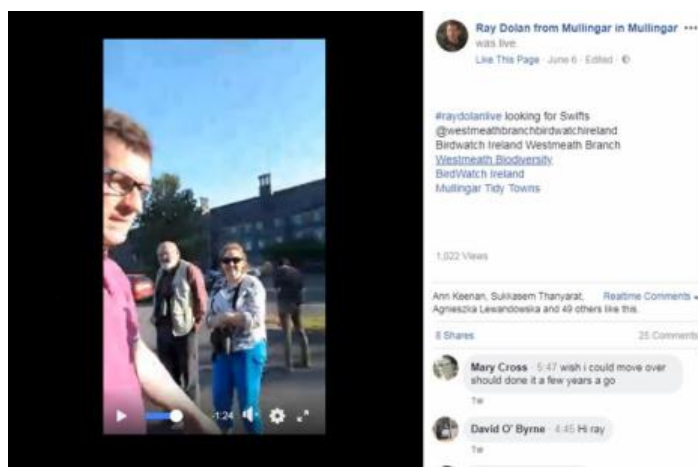
## Appendix 1

### Swift Survey 2018

Observer Name	
Date/Time	
County	Westmeath      Tipperary      Laois
Town/ Village	
Weather	
Final Peak Swift Count	
Total Confirmed Swift Nests	
Local Tidy Town Group Contacted	Yes / No

Nest Site Form							
Time 24hr format	Nest Location (12 Pearse St, Trim)	Building Type: (e.g. House/Residential, Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site)	Using Nestbox (Yes/No)	Swifts Peak Count	Confirmed Swift Nests	Description of Nest Site Location	Photo Tag (as per phone)
		House/Residential, <del>Business</del> , Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site	(Yes/No)				
		House/Residential, <del>Business</del> , Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site	(Yes/No)				
		House/Residential, <del>Business</del> , Industrial, Church/Religious, School, Castle/Heritage Site	(Yes/No)				

## Appendix 2





**BirdWatch Ireland** @BirdWatchIE · May 15

(RW) Great enthusiasm for the @HeritageHubIRE and #CountyCouncil supported Swift Nest Surveys in #Laois, #Westmeath and #Tipperary. Thanks to all the folks & community groups for getting involved and attended our Swift Evenings! @laoisheritage @Wmeathheritage @Tippheritage

**Ricky Whelan** @RickyWhelan

A first round @BirdWatchIE #Swift evenings complete in #Laois, #Offaly and #Westmeath. There will be follow up events in each county in the next week. See table below. All welcome. Pls RT. @HeritageHubIRE @laoisheritage ...

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BirdWatch Ireland Retweeted

**Ricky Whelan** @RickyWhelan · May 10

In #Mullingar on the County Swift Survey 2018 Roadshow (thats what Im calling it 😊). Looking forward to meeting local @tidytoes groups, @BirdWatchIE branch members and local wildlife enthusiasts. This project is supported by @westmeathcoco #HeritageOffice. Come along + Pls RT

**WESTMEATH SWIFT SURVEY: SWIFT EVENING**

THURSDAY, MAY 10TH AT 7:30PM  
MEETING AT MULLINGAR ARTS CENTRE

UPDATES - WORKSHOP NO 2

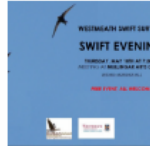
**FREE EVENT, ALL WELCOME**

1 12 16



**BirdWatch Ireland** @BirdWatchIE · May 10

(RW) The Swift Project Team are in #Mullingar this evening talking about #Swifts and the Westmeath County Swift Survey 2018. Check it out and see how you can take part. @Wmeathheritge @westmeathcoco @BioDataCentre @LawcoWaterNews @HeritageHubIRE @NatureRTE @npwsBioData



**Ricky Whelan** @RickyWhelan

In #Mullingar on the County Swift Survey 2018 Roadshow (thats what Im calling it 😊). Looking forward to meeting local @tidytoes groups. @BirdWatchIE branch members and local wildlife enthusiasts. This project is supported...



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**BirdWatch Ireland** @BirdWatchIE · Aug 1

Come and join Anton for the Swift Walk tomorrow in collaboration with the Kilbeggan Tidy Towns Group. Meeting at Roma Pizza Takeaway at 10 am tomorrow morning. All are welcome and bring rain gear if necessary @Wmeathheritge @westmeathcoco @KShamrocks @KilbegganCE



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Tweets Tweets & replies Media

BirdWatch Ireland Retweeted



**Ricky Whelan** @RickyWhelan · 21h

@BirdWatchIE's Anton Krastev was in #Athlone Co. #Westmeath leading a #SwiftAwarenessWeek walk lastnight. There are events happening all over the place for full details see the schedule here:  
[birdwatchirelandswifts.blogspot.com/2018/06/press-...](http://birdwatchirelandswifts.blogspot.com/2018/06/press-...)



**Jackie Gorman** @jackiepoetry

Good evening for #SwiftAwarenessWeek survey in #Westmeath



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**Westmeath Heritage** @Wmeathheritge · May 23

This promises to be an interesting evening for anyone in the Kilbeggan area tomorrow



**Ricky Whelan** @RickyWhelan

Tomorrow night in Kilbeggan Co. Westmeath to chat about the @BirdWatchIE Westmeath Swift Survey 2018 funded by @westmeathcoco @Wmeathheritge. Please come along and RT. @BioDataCentre @OffalyGoodWater ...



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**Westmeath Heritage** @Wmeathheritge · May 22

Thursday 7:30pm #Kilbeggan Parish Hall Ricky Whelan @BirdWatchIE will talk on #Westmeath #Swift survey and lead a guided walk. All Welcome

Westmeath Heritage Retweeted



**Ricky Whelan** @RickyWhelan · May 10

In #Mullingar on the County Swift Survey 2018 Roadshow (thats what Im calling it 😊). Looking forward to meeting local @tidytoes groups, @BirdWatchIE branch members and local wildlife enthusiasts. This project is supported by @westmeathcoco #HeritageOffice . Come along + Pls RT



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## Appendix 3

Westmeath Topic Newspaper Article 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018

# GET INVOLVED WITH THE WESTMEATH SWIFT SURVEY

This summer, Bird-Watch Ireland are undertaking a county-wide survey for nesting swifts throughout Westmeath. The survey is made possible by funding from Westmeath County Council, and is currently underway and members of local groups including Tidy Towns and the Westmeath Branch of BirdWatch Ireland are getting involved to lend a hand.

The common swift is a small migratory bird, arriving in Ireland from southern Africa each May. In recent years the species has experienced significant (up to 40%) declines in breeding numbers in Ireland.

Surveying started in mid-May whilst the first survey visit to Mullingar (which has the highest number of swift nests in the county) took place on Monday, 4 June with the assistance of BWI Westmeath Branch, Mullingar Tidy Towns Group and volunteers.

### MULLINGAR'S SWIFTS

On the day the team identified 32 swift nest sites in buildings, many of which are at risk of renovation or redevelopment,

including St.Mary's Care Centre and Columb Barracks.

Renovations and repairs if not conducted with swifts in mind can result in the loss of the nesting site for these birds which is one of the issues that has resulted in their recent declines.

This survey provides an

opportunity to identify swift nest sites with a view to protect and even increase the size of the breeding population in the county.

Engagement locally with this project is vital for its success therefore Bird-Watch Ireland are asking you to contribute to the Swift Survey by attending

events and/or submitting your records to the online survey.

Anyone who is interested to get involved in the survey should contact the BirdWatch Westmeath Branch by emailing [bird-watchwestmeath@gmail.com](mailto:bird-watchwestmeath@gmail.com), or your local Tidy Town Group for more information.



A swift photographed over Lough Ennell by John McCauley.

## Appendix 4

**Wings Magazine:** Article in the summer edition 2018 of BirdWatch Ireland's members magazine Wings (page 15)

national

# News

## 2018 Swift season has begun!

**By Ricky Whelan**

Making Swift survey plans and scheduling Swift-related events in February, as I do, always seems strange. It feels like the Swift season is never going to come...until mid-April, when we impatiently await their imminent arrival. Our Swift survey and monitoring begins the very day the first birds arrive back from Africa...and it can't come soon enough!

This will be our busiest season yet, with projects planned throughout the country. Currently, we are putting things in place for our **National Swift Survey**, which has been generously funded by the **Heritage Council** since its inception in 2014. Swift nest-site records are vital to the protection of Swifts, and they have resulted in many interventions to save nest sites over the years.

Work also continues at some of our nation's most historic sites, as we enter our fourth year of Swift monitoring at **heritage properties** maintained by the **Office of Public Works** (OPW). Over that period, we have found active nests in castles, abbeys and even round towers. These finds on historic buildings allow

us to guide the OPW on retaining Swift nest-sites while carrying out restoration work.

During 2017, we undertook our first **whole-county Swift survey**, in County Offaly. Supported by the Heritage Office of **Offaly County Council**, the project was an enormous success, with BirdWatch Ireland members, Tidy Towns groups and other interested parties rising to the challenge of locating almost all of the Swift nest sites in the county. We plan to develop this project further during the year.

This year, three more counties will follow Offaly's lead, with **Tipperary, Laois** and **Westmeath** all getting stuck into Swift surveys. If you live or work in any of these counties, please make sure to help out with these surveys. The surveys rely completely on the people who get involved. So, to get the word out, to update and up-skill citizen scientists, we are planning a host of **Swift walks, talks and workshops**. A full schedule of these can be found on the Swift Project webpages on the BirdWatch Ireland website – go to the 'Our Work' section and find it under 'Volunteer



Swift  
Photo: Graham Catley

Surveys,' or just go to [bit.ly/2qIqJoT](https://bit.ly/2qIqJoT). It will be updated as our plans progress.

### Acknowledgments

A big thank you to all of you volunteer **citizen scientists** who have contributed to our Swift surveys. Without even realising it, you may have already saved a Swift nesting colony! Our thanks, too, to the **Heritage Council** for appreciating the importance of our Swift work and supporting it, and to the **OPW** and all of its heritage site staff for their enthusiasm and support. Our thanks, also, to the **Heritage Office of Offaly County Council** for backing the county survey, and to the Heritage Officers of **Tipperary, Laois** and **Westmeath** for getting involved and supporting our Swift work in 2018.

➡ Keep an eye on our Swift blog, *Life on the Wing* at [birdwatchirelandswifts.blogspot.ie](https://birdwatchirelandswifts.blogspot.ie) for event information, project updates and Swift news ■