

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Angel Febrero

Among 246 ringed adults, 89 were checked subsequently (36,18 %). In the same nesting box were found 55 swifts (61,8 %), while 34 had changed nesting box (38,2 %), sometimes moving from one side of the building (south for instance) to the opposite side (north).

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“Census of swift colonies in medium-large cities: seven cases from N-Italy”

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Given worldwide rapid human population growth, resulting in loss of natural habitats and increase of urban areas, it is important to understand how anthropogenic factors affect species presence, and consequently how well species tolerate or adapt

to human altered environments. Several Swift species utilize cavities in buildings, towers, churches and other anthropic constructions as nesting sites. However, Swifts are facing pressures related to the recent tendency to close all the holes to hamper their use by pigeons or to reduce thermic dispersions of buildings. To achieve a good management and conservation of urban populations of Swift, detailed maps of building positions and the holes utilized is required. In 2018-2019 we compared the census methods and the effort required to map swift colonies (Common, Pallid and Alpine Swifts) in medium-large cities of NW-Italy. Five medium size cities (Asti, Bergamo, Biella, Novara, Vercelli: 40-120.000 inhabitants) were inspected by small teams (1-3 (8) persons), with walking transects in the historical centre. Each transect was repeated three times during the breeding season. Buildings identified were then mapped drawing on pictures the cavities utilized by swifts (at least three 2-hours sampling in different days). The method allowed the precise localization of an average 31 structures utilized by Swifts (range 17-59). Two large cities (Bologna, Milano: 400-1.400.000 inhabitants) were inspected in a selected portion of the historical centre. In Milano 3 professionals and 10 volunteers of a citizen project were employed, and 60 colonies were localized in a 17 km² area. In Bologna, inspections (1 person) were spent to

map hole positions in 5 historical buildings. The working examples here reported for Northern-Italy show the feasibility of censusing medium-size cities (and parts of large cities as well) by small research teams or citizen science projects. The data collected will be essential to restrict future negative management of Swift nesting sites.

“What do swifts eat and where do they find it”

Mark Smyth

We read in books that Swifts eat insects and, according to Lack, drone honeybees. There is video evidence of a Swift bringing two large yellow underwing moths, *Noctua pronuba*, to the nest. There is also a photograph of a swift catching a large moth. What do they actually eat?

A few years ago, I decided to try and find out what my Swifts eat by getting their chicks droppings analysed for insect fragments. I had heard about a lady who looks at bat droppings to see what they eat. I contacted her and she agreed. She requested 20 droppings which I collected below my nests when chicks were c21 days old and able

to defecate out of the nest entrance. This means the analysis is just a snap shot of what Swifts are feeding their chick. We have to assume the adults are eating the same insects. A few weeks later the results were back and showed there was enough evidence to show swifts were eating insects from 14 species. Excited by this I decided to send droppings collected from a colony in Belfast. The results showed their diet consisted of 22 insect families. In 2018 I sent samples from a colony in the middle of the countryside. They also ate insects from 22 families. In 2019 two more samples were sent off from two other colonies here in Northern Ireland. Both had insects identified to 16 families. In some cases for all results there wasn't enough evidence to accurately identify insects to any given species.

The project for 2020 was to send droppings from a remote nest site in the west of Northern Ireland which is 32km north west of Lough Erne and 30km east of Lough Neagh.