

## Keeping swifts in the skies over Rushcliffe – update

We first installed nest boxes for swifts in St. Luke's Church, Kinoulton, in 2011 and were lucky enough to attract one pair which bred successfully that summer, raising two chicks. The following summer the birds returned and again raised two chicks. This time we had a camera in the box and residents of Kinoulton were able to watch the progress of the chicks on a television screen in the church – our very own "Springwatch".

In May 2013 we realised that we had a second pair breeding as well as the original birds. Both pairs laid two eggs and so we started the season with high hopes of fledging four chicks. However, one warm afternoon a few honey bees decided to investigate the nest boxes and, for some reason we don't understand, they completely spooked the adult swifts who made ineffectual attempts to catch them during which one egg and, more upsettingly, one newly hatched chick, were knocked out of their nests. The newer pair of swifts managed to lose their second egg as well and so we ended that season with only one fledged chick which was very disappointing. However, during the summer swifts had been investigating several of the other nest boxes so we were hopeful that they would return to breed in the future.

Sure enough, in May 2014 the swifts arrived and occupied three boxes with cameras as well as one without, so we had four breeding pairs. For the first time we had three eggs in some nests and two in others – a total of ten eggs in the four nests, nine of which hatched and eventually fledged successfully. By contrast we had little success in attracting swifts to new boxes (installed in April 2014) in St. Margaret's Church, Owthorpe. However, we suspect that swifts have not bred in Owthorpe for quite a long time and so it is likely to be harder to attract them to boxes here than it was in Kinoulton where there was still a small breeding population in the village.

If we are not to lose swifts from Rushcliffe we need to give them places to nest and to this end we are hoping to build up a network of swift enthusiasts throughout the borough. If you are interested and have not already been in touch with us please make contact. There is a wealth of information about swifts at <http://www.swift-conservation.org/> and it is easy to make or buy swift boxes to put up on any building. We're happy to help by showing anyone what we've done in Kinoulton.



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