**Summering Swift Survey 2025.**

This survey aims to capture counts of screaming birds over breeding sites across Cheshire and Wirral.

Most Swifts scream very close to their breeding sites rarely mixing with neighbouring colonies even a few hundred metres away. This helps considerably in locating and counting individual populations.

The aim is for the Survey to be carried out in the first week of June 2025

Experience has shown that maximum numbers are likely to be recorded then. Any earlier, and late arrivals will be missed, whilst any later and sitting birds will not be recorded. However, some flexibility may need to be exercised if the weather in the first week of June is cool and wet. Swifts are most active near their breeding sites in warm, calm conditions, but if the weather is poor they will gather away from the breeding site at favoured feeding areas such as reservoirs. So, the key is to pick a warm, reasonably calm evening.

**Timing for counts**: Swifts are active near their nests particularly during the evenings. Birds usually gather from 19.00 onwards, but on warm evenings in early June maximum numbers are generally not present until around 20.30. Where possible counts are carried out between 20.00 and 21.30. After that time birds either roost at the nest site or drift away for the night. If evening counts are not possible a morning count is acceptable. Counts should not be attempted during the middle of the day when most Swifts will be very high, if it is warm, or feeding elsewhere if the weather is cool.

**Location**: Generally, it is best to identify a main road through an estate or village, and walk along it, stopping periodically to see if any Swifts can be seen or heard. Screaming parties can often be located from a quarter of a mile or more away. Once found, approach the flock as closely as possible, count the birds in it, and then move on.

In larger towns it is essential to use some sort of mapping app to ensure that complete and efficient coverage is obtained. Clearly, in towns such as Warrington, Crewe, Birkenhead and Macclesfield more that one observer may need to be involved in finding birds, and areas can be assigned to individuals. When this has been done observers should then plan a route round their area. Not every street needs to be visited:

NB Many new housing estates appear to be totally unsuitable for Swifts, which favour older properties, particularly pre-War Council estates, and older Victorian and Edwardian houses. However, that this is always the case, as birds have been found breeding on properties only 20 years old the point is though that effort should be concentrated on older houses and buildings.

**Using the recording form**: Most screaming flocks involve fewer than 20 birds, so counting is rarely a problem. In the larger towns record the number of birds on the street map, identifying the street which the birds favour most. In addition, complete the recording form with details of the type of property (Council house, privately owned, hospital, factory etc.) and its age, if known.

Please use one recording form for each town or village, including all the populations found. In areas where there are many separate flocks more than one form may be required.