



SHEFFIELD SWIFT SURVEY GUIDE

If we don't know where they are, we can't protect them

Thank you for helping the Sheffield Swift Network record swifts in our city. Your information helps priority sites to be protected and enhanced. We share nest-record data with local conservation and planning partners. **In line with the [Sheffield Swift Network Privacy Notice](#), we do not share personal data.**

Submitting your records

Please add your Sheffield swift sightings to the national RSPB **Swift Mapper** database – this helps protect nest sites locally and across the UK.

1. Set up Swift Mapper

- Go to the [website here](#)
- Or [download the app here](#)

2. What to record

When adding a record, just follow the on-screen prompts - for example:

- Screaming party
- Confirmed or suspected nest
- Number of swifts involved

When and where to survey

Season: Mid-May to mid-August, with most activity in June and July.

Time of day: Evenings, roughly 7.30–9.30pm, or about an hour before dusk.

Weather: Dry, still conditions are best.

How often: Aim for at least two surveys per month in a small area you know well. We can allocate a map square if you prefer.

Older housing and social housing estates are particularly good for swifts, as older roof features are more likely to remain.

What to look for

Please make a note of any swifts you see in the area you're surveying. Swifts usually nest high up, often inside roof spaces of buildings, such as:

- Open eaves in our roofs
- In holes in walls where pipes / cables have been removed
- Under flashings around chimneys and sky lights
- In gables behind barge boards
- Under loose roof tiles
- **Sparrow's nesting - swifts and sparrows often share nesting sites**

Clues to nesting:

- White streaks of droppings below rooflines
- Birds disappearing into a small gap and not re-emerging quickly
- Repeated visits to the same point, especially once chicks have hatched



Screaming Parties or Swifts Flying at Roof Height

[Please take a moment to watch this video](#) . A 'screaming party' is a fast-flying group of noisy swifts at - or just above - roof height. Their presence usually means nest sites are close by. Watch carefully for repeated passes within 1–2 m of a roof edge or gable for example as this could indicate where the nest is.

- Record all low-flying parties (within about 20 m of roofs or 50 m above ground)
- Count how many swifts you see.

Nesting swifts

Swifts sometimes enter nest sites very quietly, to avoid predation - especially at long-established nests. You may just catch the movement at the edge of your vision. These confirmed nest records are the most valuable for protecting sites in planning and renovation work.

Look and listen for:

- A swift entering a gap and not coming straight back out
- Repeated visits by one or both adults to the same point under the roof
- The sound of chicks begging within the nest

Once chicks hatch, both adults will visit more frequently with food. This is often the best time to confirm an active nest.

- Note the exact location on the building
- Return when you can to check for repeat visits

Your Safety

Your safety is more important than any record.

- Survey with at least one other person whenever possible
- Carry a fully charged mobile phone
- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be back
- Wear light or reflective clothing or a high-vis vest
- Take extra care near roads – it is easy to step into the carriageway while looking up



Respecting People's Privacy

Swifts usually nest on private homes, so please act sensitively and respectfully. Never climb on roofs, walls, or other structures for a better view. Ground-level observations are enough for this survey.

Wearing a high-vis vest and carrying a clipboard can help people recognise that you are part of a community project, and **many new nests are discovered through friendly conversations with neighbours.**

- Do not use binoculars
- Observe from public pavements and open spaces
- Avoid looking directly into windows or gardens

Thank you

By taking part in this survey, you are helping protect one of Sheffield's most iconic birds and giving us the information we need to speak up for swifts in planning and development.

Enjoy your time watching swifts – and thank you for supporting the Sheffield Swift Network.