

COPPERMILL SWIFTS



One of the joys of living in the Coppermill area of Walthamstow is the return each year of the magnificent swifts that visit us from the start of May to the beginning of August.

The Coppermill water treatment centre offers excellent feeding opportunities. They can catch 5000 insects a day and are believed to travel up to 100 miles to visit this area.

Whilst watching these stunning flyers, it is worrying that there is a tragic decline in numbers. The swift population was estimated at 80,000 in 1990 but now it is thought that it has decreased by as much as 50%. There are a number of reasons behind this decline, but the key one is a lack of nesting areas.

Historically it is believed that swifts nested in the Coppermill area. We hope that with the increased awareness generated by the '1000 swifts over Walthamstow', part of the E17 Art Trail and the opening of Walthamstow Wetlands, we can generate some interest in local residents installing nest boxes. We have been in touch with some swifts' organisations for further advice and input and the response has been positive; Edward Mayer from Swift Conservation said, "The area is perfect for them, with plentiful insect food emerging from the waters of the reservoir in the form of Mayflies and similar species."

A group of us based in Elmfield Road are exploring the possibility of receiving some grant money to buy specialist nesting boxes and help with installing them. So we're trying to find out how many people in the area are interested.



Everything you need to know about swifts and their nesting boxes!

What is the swift season?

It is short season from early May to August. They return the same day each year, recorded on the 5th May this year. They only land to breed, and the young fledge after five to eight weeks.

Do we know if they nest in the Coppermill area?

As far as we know they do not. But we have been told that historically they did.

How high should the nesting boxes be?

At least 16 feet/5 metres above ground. The higher the better.

How can we encourage them to the nesting box?

A recorded calling system entices young swifts to explore the nesting box.

What about the noise? And mess?

Most people do not know the birds are nesting. And there is little mess as the adult swift eats the fledgling's waste.

Will the boxes be used by other birds and animals?

Birds like great tits, starlings and sparrows may use it. We have been advised that the entrance hole can be blocked outside the swift season if this is a problem.

If you want further information about swifts look at swiftconservation.org

and if you are interested in a nesting box, e-mail us at:

coppermillswifts@gmail.com

