



## Summer 2021 News

### **Welcome**

**The weather has been rather mixed this year so we hope you've been able to dodge the showers and make the most of the sunshine.**

The online talks that we've been part of, alongside other local groups across the county, have proven to be really popular. Our own Gary Farmer gave a special April Fool's Day talk about the tricks that nature plays to ensure survival but we also discovered more about the fascinating worlds of flies and bees as well as departed on a voyage to Antarctica with Worcestershire wildlife artist Shelly Perkins.

Along with a number of other groups, we have decided to postpone our return to indoor meetings until 2022. Not to worry, though, because there will be monthly online talks taking place throughout our usual autumn season - as we go to print, details are being finalised but we're looking forward to fossils, food and a very special Christmas panel show!

Please keep up to date via the Trust's website - we'd love to see you on our screens!

**[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on)**

Until we can meet in person, stay safe and well.

### **Can you help?**

As we start to look forward to returning to meeting people face to face rather than via screens, our committee are looking for new members to help out.

Committee work is not particular time-consuming or onerous so please don't let those thoughts put you off! We're a friendly bunch of folk who are just looking for a few more people to help book speakers when our indoor meetings resume as well as helping to fill this newsletter three times a year. If you can make a good brew for the people who come to our meetings or don't mind putting out a few chairs, even better!

As Covid restrictions lift and life starts to regain some form of normality, we plan to hold a drop-in session where you can come and meet us to find out more. In the meantime, if you'd like an informal chat, please email Anne Williams at the Trust who liaises with all the local groups [anne@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org](mailto:anne@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org) or give her a call on 01905 754919.

We look forward to meeting you in due course.

*Thank you!*

## Swifts



Swift © Martin Crookston

I live in a house in Headless Cross, close to where I grew up, and one of the fondest memories that I have from my younger days in our street is the large numbers of swifts screaming through the summer skies. Sadly, as with so many streets, we are losing our swifts; they have declined to just a handful of birds.

There are many reasons why this is happening but loss of nesting sites due to plastic facias and soffit boards being fitted is certainly not helping. I have watched birds returning each summer to houses where they bred in previous years only to find they can no longer access their nest sites. So a few years back I purchased a swift box and fitted it to the front of our house in the hope that I could help at least one homeless avian family.

The first year the box had nesting house sparrows, a little disappointing but this species is also in decline in our area. To try to get over this problem I built two boxes and fitted them to the side of our house. Unfortunately the gap between our house and our neighbour proved too tight for swifts to manoeuvre into the boxes. All was not lost there though as a pair of starlings moved in to one box - yet another species in decline and one that had not graced our garden for many years. House sparrows continued to breed in the original box but quite amazingly they now share their home with a pair of swifts each year. The sparrows fledge early enough for the returning swifts to take over the box (around 5<sup>th</sup> May).

In the meantime a second family of starlings have taken up residency in the boxes on the side of the house and the two pairs had two broods this year. We counted 15 young starlings in the garden in early June, an amazing increase in just a few years. I don't think we will ever see the swifts return to such good numbers but hopefully we are helping to keep one of the most joyful sounds in nature alive in our street.

Putting boxes up on your house does come with a health warning though - not just the danger of falling from your ladder but think about where you are fitting the boxes. I have fitted all three boxes outside our bedroom and we live in a 1930s house with solid brick walls so any sound in the boxes travels through the house walls. I now know that swifts enter a box at ridiculous speeds, thumping on the ledge as they land. I have also learned that starlings never sleep - instead, they spend all night scratching and pecking the inside of their boxes! This might take a bit of explaining if we ever move house but to know that we are doing our bit to help these declining birds makes the sleepless nights worthwhile.

*Gary Farmer*

The Trust are asking for sightings of house sparrows - please take a picture (or record their calls) and submit via a short form on the website [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)

For a short video about swifts visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gT6XLk2Vz-k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gT6XLk2Vz-k)