

## SWIFTS

*Gabhlán gaoithe, Apus apus*



OPW

The Castle Park is full of birds including robins, blackbirds, crows, starlings, ducks, and herons and in the summer, the iconic swifts come to visit. The Common Swift, *Apus apus*, travels all the way from south Africa and arrives here in May to breed and departs around the end of August. The scientific name *Apus apus* means 'without feet' and swifts were given this name because of their short legs rather than lack of feet! The birds return to the same places every year. They are found mainly in cities and towns and rely on buildings for breeding and raising their offspring.



SWIFT



SWALLOW

They utilise the crevices to nest and roost, making old historic buildings essential for their lifecycle. The numbers of swifts have been in decline over the last few decades, especially in Ireland and since 2017 the OPW has been involved with a conservation project to protect swifts at its sites. Swift surveys have been conducted at a number of OPW sites, including Kilkenny Castle, in conjunction with Birdwatch Ireland. Standing in the castle park you can see them darting around and in and out of the cavities in the castle walls.

*Swifts are very fast flying birds and have been recorded flying at up to 110Km per hour!*

FILL IN THE GAPS WITH THE WORDS BELOW.....

NEST

INVERTEBRATES

SPECIES

AIRBORNE

AFRICA

SCREAM

Swifts feed on \_\_\_\_\_ such as midges, flies and spiders.

They spend their winters in South \_\_\_\_\_.

Swifts spend most of their lives \_\_\_\_\_ and feed and drink during flight.

They return to the same \_\_\_\_\_ site year after year.

Swifts come from a family of birds with about 100 different \_\_\_\_\_ around the world.

The swift's call is a loud piercing \_\_\_\_\_ which is often heard on summer evenings.

*Swifts are often mistaken for Swallows but they are in fact more closely related to Hummingbirds!*

### **SWIFTS**

- ❖ Blackish brown with small white chin patch, looks black in flight
- ❖ Wide crescent shaped wings
- ❖ Short forked tail
- ❖ Fly at high altitudes
- ❖ Seen May to August
- ❖ Towns, cities, farmland

### **SWALLOWS**

- ❖ Dark blue/black upperside with white underside and red throat
- ❖ Scythe shaped wings
- ❖ Elongated forked tail
- ❖ Fly low to ground up to tree height
- ❖ Seen March to September
- ❖ Lowlands, fields or meadows

*Swifts feed, drink and even sleep in the air! Some of them spend up to a year in continuous flight!*

**FIND THE WORDS IN THE BOX BELOW.....**

**FAST**

**INSECT**

**MAY**

**URBAN**

**WING**

**SWIFT**

**FEET**

**FLY**

W	D	F	E	E	T	W	Q	D	J	N	S	Z	A	I	O
F	Y	R	W	F	U	R	B	A	N	L	S	R	M	N	Q
L	J	N	A	M	V	A	Y	M	O	U	F	J	A	K	W
Y	B	O	H	P	A	Q	G	F	A	S	T	L	Y	S	I
B	M	S	W	I	F	T	E	M	T	O	J	A	D	X	N
A	L	K	H	C	Q	J	K	U	T	V	N	D	S	O	G
U	P	D	O	X	E	J	I	N	S	E	C	T	Y	G	N

*For more information on Swifts and how to help them check out....*

[www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)

**and their Savings Swifts Guide**