



Commonswift Worldwide Seminars Berlin 8th – 11th April 2010

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Appr. **50** attendees from **14** different countries:
Northern Ireland, Scotland, England,
Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Poland, Turkey,
Israel, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Czech Rep.,
Germany (Hessen, Bayern, Niedersachsen,
Nordrheinwestfalen, Berlin)

Official language: English



Members of the seminar on Saturday, April 10th

This outstanding event in Berlin is characterized by its passionate and highly competent attendees who provided a wide range of topics – from raising abandoned swifts, maintaining own swift “colonies” ☺ already for years, to educating kids and officials as well as public mobilization on swift conservancy – and, last but not least, many different fields of scientific approach and research were present. Thanks to people’s diverse geographic provenance, we were able to get a general idea of swift’s position in Europe.

I really loved the highly focused and friendly, often even humorous atmosphere, being with people who are engaged in helping swifts survive.

We agreed upon supporting each other and having a next meeting.



Introduction

Lectures and Discussions

Thursday, April 8th

1.)

In our first lecture, **Hilde Matthes** from Germany tells us about her work with swifts. Everybody has the possibility to practice feeding (on a fake chick, very yellow) – a little tricky for sure. **Ulrich Tigges** admits that he never succeeded in feeding a young swift.



2.)

When **Zofia Brzozofska** and **Piotr Cyga** from Poland perform their lecture, it becomes obvious how dramatically threatened swifts are in their town of Szczecin, 400 000 inhabitants. Not very different is the situation in other Polish areas. According to her research, already 85% of swift population in their town has been wiped out. Since **Zofia** never got any attention and resonance of Polish officials, she asks for urgent help.



(Thanks **Zofia** for sending your lecture to everyone!)

Discussion about the situation elsewhere. **Brian** determines that the law is often only a piece of paper and that information is needed and has to be spreaded, so that the battle can be won. **Edward** contributes that habitat directive creates reserves (similar to what Americans did to Indians). **Hilde** tells us that she goes to every scaffolded building to ask for the owner. **Amnonn** from Israel agrees that the best way is to raise awareness, otherwise it will become a lost battle.

3.) After **Gillian Westray** from England has performed about her Commonswift Care Environment, it follows a **discussion** about essential food. Another point is what time of the day they tend to fledge. While **Dick** says, they fledge between 9 – 10 pm, **Mark** observed them fledging during daytime. As on food for hand-reared birds, **Gillian** recommended to provide calcium + vitamin B for strength a few days before release.

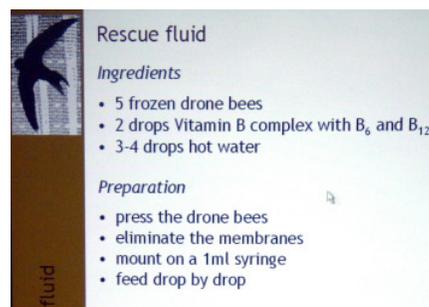


I really loved to hear about “press ups” done by common swifts to train their wings. For me it sounds like an explanation how they are able to get the necessary strength even in small nesting sites.

4.) **Gilda Goedert's** (Germany) lecture is about conditioning of swifts for species-appropriate feeding. (valuable hints by Heinroth). She runs a private station in connection with a vet and bird rescue station in the Eifel area. She raises lots of swifts every year and provides little videos about feeding with syringe and whole insects. (“rescue fluid”).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAxRLgWhRc0

She lost many swifts by parasites and discovered a new sort of parasite, which is not examined yet.



5.)

Dr. Renato Ceccherelli about CRUMA's experiences Livorno/ Italy.
Rescue Center of water and sing birds.
About swifts main causes of hospitalization.

6.)

Enric Fuste about hand-reared common swifts (apus apus) in a wildlife rehab center
Torreferrussa/ Spain
Research, Diets, Results, Future (Book: hand-rearing birds)
Survival rate of swifts is 75%.

Discussion about the appropriate diet and possible damages on feathers, wings and tail.(stripes to look through). Damage is not changeable anymore. Feathers may fall out, when birds change diet in the wild.

(Kyle and Kyle on diet, mostly mealworms)

7.)

Maciej Luniak from Poland about dairy food for swifts – by **Jerzy Desselberger**
He describes dairy food as simple, cheap, efficient food for birds, common in Poland.
Miguel's question: Do you know, how many birds died?
Maciej's answer: No.

8.)

Dick Newell from Cambridge UK, who has a swift colony: Some swift questions
About 1.return to colony, 2.close nesting, 3.mortality and survival.
Point 1:
19 nestboxes with 3 cabinets. From 621 only 8 returned (first year). They return mostly to their local population (UK).
Point 2:
Shows photo with 3 big boxes on his house – they seem not to care how close to a neighbour
Point 3:
Sorry, I couldn't follow with my English.



Discussion about what size the nestbox should be?

175 mm swift wing length – span double + body; relatively huge, space to do exercise
(**Gillian**).

Interior: seem to have no preference. Exterior: a little rough, but all kinds. In Ireland low success for nestboxes.

Nest concave helps, but no proof.

Entrance: no more than 30 mm high, as long as you like. (**Dick**)

Entrance underneath or not: they learn, they look how others do.
Hilde: they take all different entrances – Schwegler etc., all shapes.
Hein from Holland says, they learn. Slightly geographical reason for preferences.
If it's very hot, they can stand the temperatures, when box is long inside.
Peter from N.Ireland says, that swifts prefer entrances underneath.
Hilde from Germany watched male starlings bring flowers into the nest for the female.
Dick says swifts can nest in a kind of pipe shape.
Edward saw swifts nesting in draining pipes.

Further interesting [discussion](#) about definition of the word “colony”.
Swifts sometimes live together, sometimes not.
Dick: swifts attract other swifts. Will end up with a group.
Martine from Belgium asks how many boxes should you recommend people?
Dick says, start with one or two, then more if a pair is there.

Friday, April 9th

1.)
Klaus Roggel from Berlin about the legal situation of swifts in Germany.
“The rules are ok, the controlling not”.
Punishment according to the laws, but in reality no enforcement.



www.mauersegler.klausroggel.de

2.)
Arlet Wills from Regensburg about her Swift School.
They received The Environmental Award Of The Town (2000 DM)
and in the year 2001 they got it the second time which again gave them the opportunity
to invest in swift conservation activities.
Some main aspects of her education of children:
To learn the difference between swallows and swifts.
How to feed.
Watch and give them names (for instance “findi”, first swift she has “found”)
Swift song/ phantasy stories and tales/ handicraft work/ webcam/ exhibitions

www.mauerseglerschule.de





Arlet gives **Ulrich** a swift poem as present, nicely designed (linocut) and framed.

Since **Arlet** as school principal is retired yet and unfortunately her successor is not that much interested continuing her swift conservation efforts, she asks for help by writing letters to the town administration, and probably to the school also. She will keep us informed.

3.) **Edward Mayer**, London about swift conservation in England.

Some quotations:

“Cut a hole, put in a partition. Just leave the holes after having marked them.”

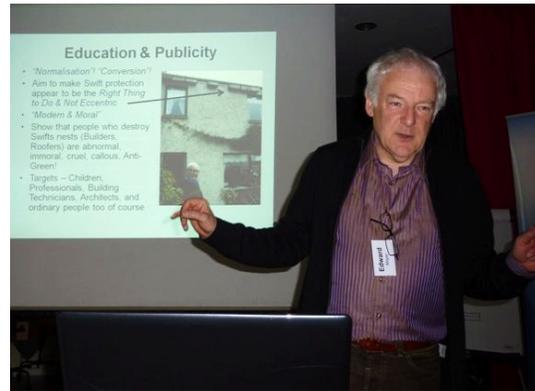
He recommends and uses Schwegler swift bricks.

Edward: Local government contact is crucial: “let them look good. It’s easy, it’s cheap, and it looks good.”

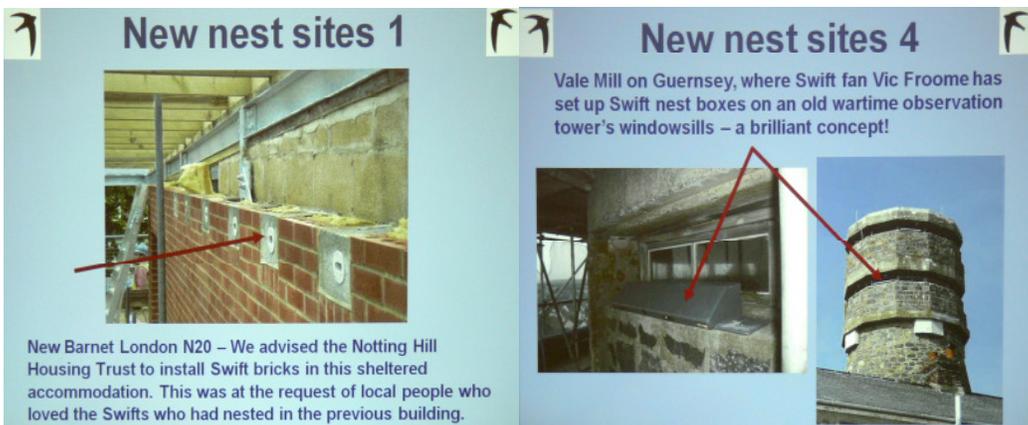
It must be told by the government: “If you want a permission to build, you have to put in nestboxes and bricks for swifts, sparrows, bats etc.”

www.swiftconservation.org

www.londons-swifts.org.uk/



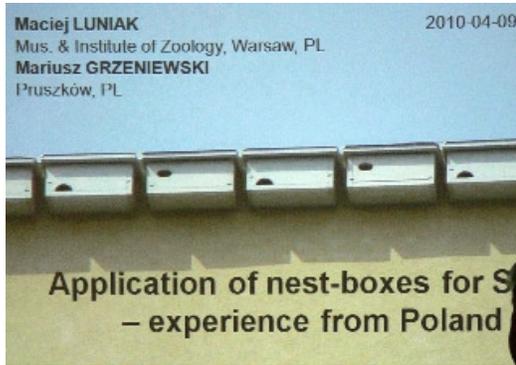
Discussion about the size of Schwegler boxes.



New nest sites 1
New Barnet London N20 – We advised the Notting Hill Housing Trust to install Swift bricks in this sheltered accommodation. This was at the request of local people who loved the Swifts who had nested in the previous building.

New nest sites 4
Vale Mill on Guernsey, where Swift fan Vic Froome has set up Swift nest boxes on an old wartime observation tower’s windowsills – a brilliant concept!

4.)
Maciej Luniak, Poland, about nest boxes.



5.)
Dick Nevell, Cambridge UK, about swift population in England – datas and curves etc.

Discussion about qualifying observers, decline of swifts due to renovations incl. different sorts of birds, (example of **Peter**, N.Ireland, who talked about the swift colonies which are gone due to the vanishing of mills).

Dick makes an argument for survey guidelines as on the preferred daytime, weather etc.

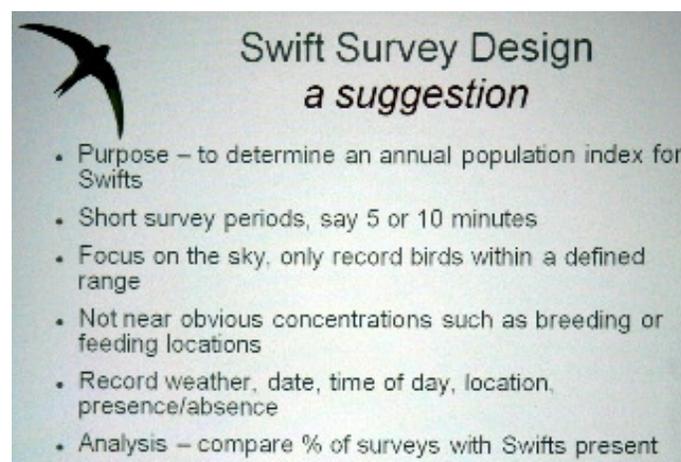
Amnonn from Israel talks about survey the last weeks of July and the use of radar.

Luit, radar expert from Holland says that the focus should on the first period and the breeders.

Hein from Holland says that survey on breeders is labour intensive. “No matter what time, but the same time every year. Have a system and keep it in order to compare”.

Dick says, you have to have hard and defensive numbers (facts), first and foremost for politicians. If you have lots of data from lots of people you have the chance to have s.th.

If you have only a few, you have more to pay attention of the conditions of getting data. Some suggestions given by **Dick**:



Swift Survey Design
a suggestion

- Purpose – to determine an annual population index for Swifts
- Short survey periods, say 5 or 10 minutes
- Focus on the sky, only record birds within a defined range
- Not near obvious concentrations such as breeding or feeding locations
- Record weather, date, time of day, location, presence/absence
- Analysis – compare % of surveys with Swifts present

Amnonn's opinion is to concentrate on breeding areas.

Dick says, all the standard surveys are not suitable for swifts.

6.)

Ingolf Grabow, from Frankfurt/Germany Frankfurter-Segler-Initiative
BUND, NABU, Vogelschutzwarte, Mauerseglerinitiative Christiane Haupt (she is running a swift clinic in Frankfurt)

Uses boxes for less than 20 euros, made by special workshops for disabled people.

Uses also Schwegler and Hasselfeld boxes. He installed more than 1000 nestboxes already.



Gesucht: Dachwohnung fuer Luftkussse

As well as a drain pipe a swift box has to be attached on every single house!



The Common Swift was Bird Of The Year 2003.

Keep in mind: 2010 Internationales Jahr der Biodiversitaet!
2010 International Year of Biodiversity!

7.)

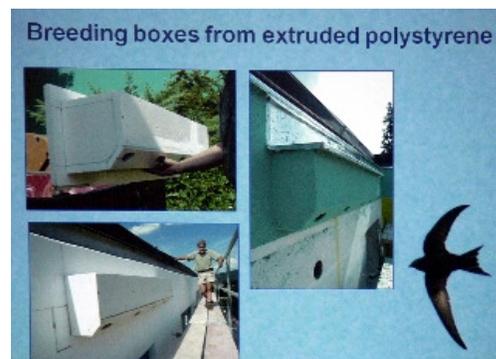
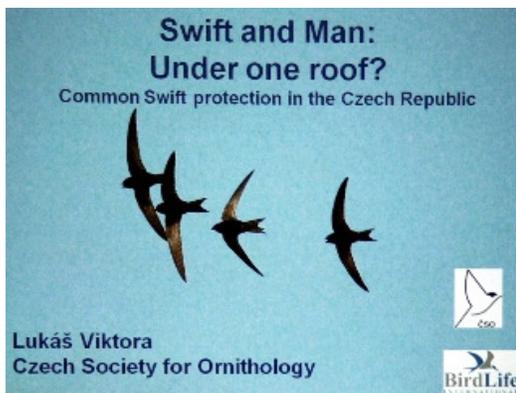
Lukas Viktora, Czech. Society of Ornithology

Swift and Man – under one roof? About the situation and protection of swifts in the Czech Republic.

www.rorysi.cz

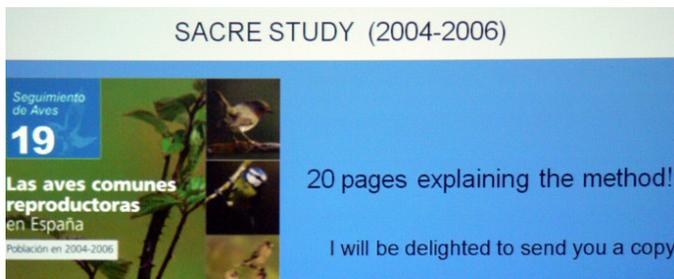
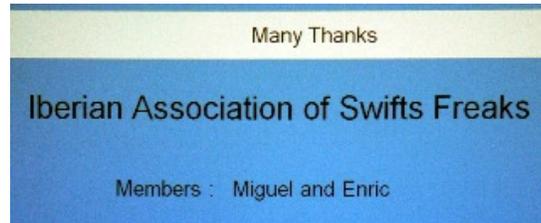
Some points: involve the public, educate administration, collaborate with schools etc. and other trusts (bat ass. etc.), building companies. Motivation programs in Praha (Prag) for 2010. He presents a nestbox sample from Chemnitz for 18 euros.

More than 3500 boxes this kind in Chemnitz, 15 years experience, 50% occupied.



8.)

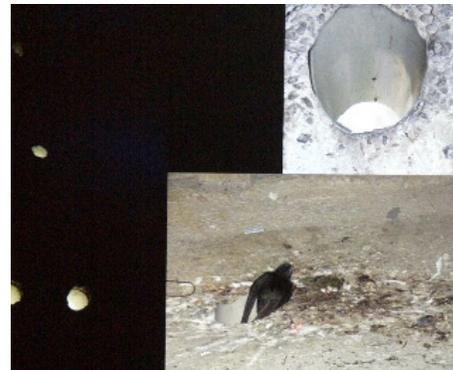
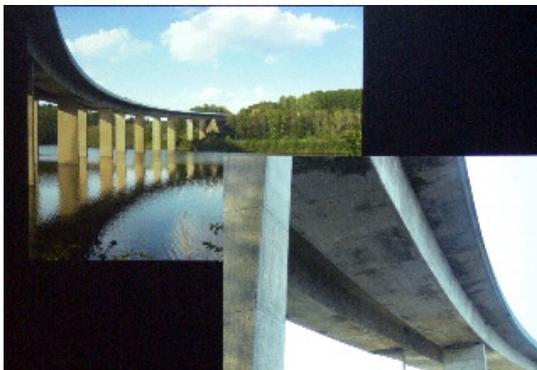
Enric Fuste, Spain about population data in Spain/ Catalonia
("Before you ask: I don't know how they do it!")



copy can be sent !

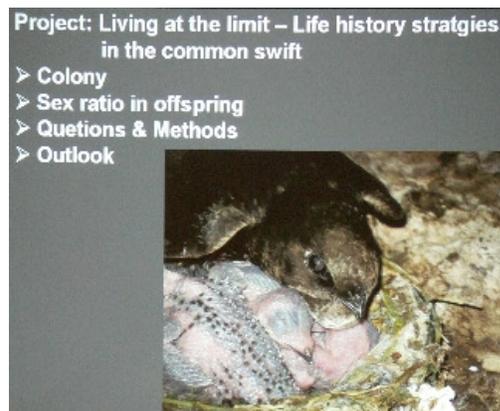
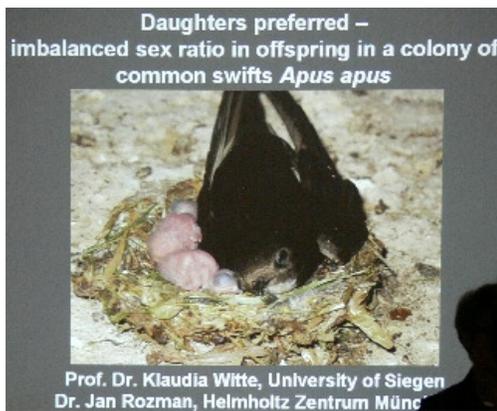
9.)

Prof.Dr. Klaudia Witte, University of Siegen/ Germany
about an amazing swift colony inside the bridge of Lake Bigge (Biggensee), named
Talbruecke Ronnewinkel, and their research project.
Some facts: length of the bridge is 200 meters, 8 chambers, 243 holes in the bottom
(actually for ventilation).
Name of the project: "living at the limit"



They want to find out:
The imbalanced sex ratio in offspring (more females).
Genetic profile of lousefly. Probably they come from Africa?
Other parasites.

They use (kissing) bug (from South America) to determine the bloodsamples.



Lots of questions are coming up in the following [discussion](#).

Some questions and answers:

Louseflies were coming in the middle of the breeding season – although boxes were brandnew. Where from? (They want to mark the flies to track them)

Dick asks if production of more females because of greater loss of females during breeding season?

(Paternity analysis has to be done)

How leave the chicks? – jump? **Klaudia**: Didn't watch yet. Adults crawl through the holes)

Erich Kaiser says that according to his blood samples the sexes in his colonies were equal. Swifts have own species of louseflies.

Peter from Ireland: What about normal behaviour because of all the nearby activities?

Klaudia: We are very careful in breeding season. Ring the adults late in the season.

No rats in the bridge.

Peter: Why don't you use the natural parasite for blood testing?

Klaudia: Wouldn't know what happens to the blood, how it will change inside the lousefly.

Luit: How old is the colony? **Klaudia**: The bridge is from 1968. There are more than 200 holes. They think of putting artificial nests inside and maybe a chamber for each nest.

Question on the survival rate: Last year 80% survived. 2007 was bad. Condition of the colony is different. Wind is an issue.

Peter doubts again about possible bad influence on the colony by going inside the bridge.

Gillian thinks that **Klaudia** should maybe save the starving birds along her research.

Miguel thanks **Klaudia** for doing what she does.

I remember that **Gillian** had some more remarks and talked to **Klaudia** about her research, but I missed some notes about that. Maybe somebody else knows?

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