

NEST-BOXES FOR THE COMMON SWIFT *APUS APUS* - EXPERIENCE FROM POLAND

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Riassunto - Nidi artificiali per il Rondone comune *Apus apus* - esperienze dalla Polonia.

Questo rapporto si basa su un'indagine effettuata tra persone interessate alla protezione del Rondone comune *Apus apus*. I risultati sono fortemente influenzati da fattori soggettivi che dipendono principalmente dalle competenze dei rilevatori e dall'intensità dei loro sopralluoghi. Nel corso di 1-4 stagioni sono stati presenti 1013 nidi artificiali per rondoni, distribuiti in 53 gruppi (Tabella 1), che furono controllati per verificare le "visite" da parte di questi uccelli. I nidi artificiali visitati dai rondoni sono stati 268 (26,5%) appartenenti a 26 gruppi. I nidi artificiali non visitati (o probabilmente non visitati) furono 745 (73,5%) di 27 gruppi. I nidi artificiali sono stati "scoperti" dai rondoni principalmente (56% dei casi) durante la prima e la seconda stagione dopo la loro installazione (Tabella 2). In 25 casi (gruppi di nidi artificiali) i dati sono stati ottenuti in prossimità di colonie di rondoni installate attualmente o nel passato. Su 18 dei casi di gruppi di nidi artificiali visitati, 15 erano installati vicino colonie di Rondone, mentre per quanto riguarda 7 casi di gruppi di nidi artificiali non visitati, 3 non avevano colonie nelle vicinanze.

Key words: Common Swift - *Apus apus* - nest-boxes - protection of birds - bird nest sites in buildings.

Abstract

This report is based on enquiry data obtained from persons involved in the protection of Common Swift *Apus apus*. The results of the enquiry are strongly influenced by a subjective factor depending mainly on the skill of the respondents of the enquiry and on the intensity of their investigation.

Approximately 1013 nest-boxes located in 53 groups, available to Swifts during 1-4 seasons (Table 1) were investigated with respect to "visiting" by these birds. 268 nest-boxes (i.e. 26.5 %) in 26 groups were reported by respondents as having been visited by Swifts. Unvisited (or probably unvisited) boxes were reported as being a total of 745 (73.5 %) nest-boxes in 27 groups. The nest-boxes were "found" by Swifts mainly (56% of them) in the 1st and 2nd season (Table 2) after they had been installed. For 25 cases (groups of nest boxes) data were obtained concerning the proximity of the actual or former Swift colonies. In 18 cases of visited nest-box groups, 15 were located near Swift colonies. Among the 7 cases of unvisited nest-boxes groups 3 had no Swift colonies in the vicinity.

INTRODUCTION

The Common Swift *Apus apus* is in Poland the only breeding *Apus* species. It is commonly distributed all over the country, mainly in cities and towns. Its nesting sites are buildings and other man-made structures.

The species was not previously a subject of particular studies in Poland. Its population in Warsaw, the biggest Polish metropolis, was estimated in 1990's as being in the "thousands" of pairs (Lu-

niak, 2005), and in the 52 km² area of the inner city as being in the region of 2.0 to 3.7 thousand pairs, i.e. about 38-71 pairs/km² (Nowicki, 2001). It is commonly observed that since that time the Swift population in Warsaw, as well as in other Polish cities and towns, has decreased considerably.

The actual crisis of the Common Swift in Poland is connected mainly with rapid modernization of housing. This causes loss of nest sites of several bird species nesting in buildings, but particularly affects the Swift. This poses a new, tough problem

of nature conservancy for the country. Actually, local law regulations in several cities request managers of renovation work to compensate for lost nest sites, but it is rarely applied in practice, mainly because of low public awareness of the matter. Information in mass media and several leaflets published recently are aimed at publicising the problem. As a result of these actions a new practice of installing nest-boxes for Swifts has been introduced during the last few years.

This paper is a first and preliminary report on the application of nest-boxes for Swifts, which is in Poland a new experience in this field.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The report is based on enquiry data obtained from persons involved in protection of Common Swifts.

A total 1648 nest-boxes established during the period 2006-2009, were known to 18 respondents in 14 cities/towns. The nest-boxes were located in 86 groups (on the same or few closely neighbouring buildings), which were installed during different years within the period 2006-2009. Technical quality (dimensions and shape) of these nest-boxes, and the way of installing of them, followed commonly accepted recommendations (eg. www.common-swift.org and www.swift-conservation.org). The number of nest-boxes installed demonstrates the level of the effort aimed to protect the Common Swift, and this is a new phenomenon in Poland.

Approximately 1013 nest-boxes in 53 nest-boxes groups, available to Swifts during 1-4 seasons in 10 cities/towns (Table 1), were investigated by respondents with respect to visiting (or not) by these birds. The term "visiting" means here that birds were observed, at least once, entering or in very close flight to a particular nest-box. There is no data as to how intensively the nest-boxes were investigated by respondents of the enquiry.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results based on the method of enquiry are strongly influenced by a subjective factor depending mainly on the skill of the respondents and on the intensity of their investigation.

26 nest-boxes groups of different age (1-4 seasons), with a total of 268 nest-boxes, were reported by respondents as have been visited by Swifts, and this is 26.5 % of the total of 1013 investigated nest boxes (Table 2). Unvisited (or probably unvisited) boxes were reported as being 745 (73.5 %) nest-boxes in 27 groups. Results of the enquiry also show that the nest-boxes were "found" by Swifts mainly (56% of them) in the 1st and 2nd seasons (Table 2).

Data were obtained for 25 cases (groups of nest boxes) concerning the proximity of the actual or former Swift nest colonies. Among 18 groups of visited nest-boxes 15 were located near (i.e. on the same or neighbouring building) existing Swift colonies and in 3 cases there were no Swift colonies in the vicinity. Among the 7 cases of unvisited nest-box groups the respective ratio was 3 versus 4.

Conclusions concerning material and the results above:

- The total of 1648 nest boxes reported as installed in 14 cities/towns during the period 2006-2009 demonstrates an effort aimed for protection of the Common Swift, a new phenomenon in Poland.
- The above data obtained by the method of enquiry are influenced by subjective factor: respondents represented different skill and intensity of their investigations.
- Swifts visited 26 of 53 nest-box groups, i.e. about 26.5% of nest-boxes investigated.
- Nest-boxes were "found" by Swifts mainly (56%) in the 1st and 2nd seasons after they were installed.
- Groups of nest-boxes situated near actual or former Swift colonies had a higher ratio of "finding" of the nest-boxes by the birds.

Cities/towns	nest-boxes (groups) investigated 2006-2009	nest-boxes (groups) investigated during				Authors of data
		1 season	2	3	4	
Poznań	381 (11)	0	304 (7)	77 (4)	0	A. Gatniejewski M. Grzeniewski, M. Luniak A. Mikołajewski, D. Zielińska A. Mokrzycka K. Walasz M. Grzeniewski K. Walasz Z. Brzozowska M. Grzeniewski M. Stefaniak not identified
Warszawa	298 (19)	73 (4)	220 (15)	3 (1)	11 (2)	
Oborniki Wlkp.	147 (4)	0	147 (4)	0	0	
Kraków	100 (10)	0	0	100 (10)	0	
Milanówek	62 (3)	55 (2)	7 (1)	0	0	
Wieliczka	8 (1)	0	8 (1)	0	0	
Szczecin	7 (2)	7 (2)	7 (2)	4 (1)	0	
Pruszków	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	0	0	
Wiśniew	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)	0	0	
Białystok	2 (1)	2 (1)	0	0	0	
Total	1013 (53)	145 (10)	701 (32)	184 (16)	11 (2)	

Table 1. Localities, number and period of investigations of nest-boxes, () – number of groups of nest-boxes.

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	Age of nest-boxes group				Total
	1 st season	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	
Total (100%) of nest-boxes investigated	135	687	180	11	1013
Nest-boxes visited by Common Swifts	32	220	15	1	268
% to all nest-boxes investigated	(24%)	(32%)	(8%)	(n = 11)	26.5%
Nest-boxes not visited by Common Swifts	103	467	165	10	745

Table 2. Visiting of nest boxes (N = 1013 – approximated numbers) by Common Swifts in relation to age of the group.



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