

MONCALIERI'S SWIFTS

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The nesting of three species of swift: common swift (*Apus apus*), pale swift (*Apus pallidus*) and alpine swift (*Tachymarptis melba*) in the city of Moncalieri has been attested for many centuries. Studies carried out on birds remains recovered at the castle and accumulated in a period ranging from 13th to 17th century have made it possible to highlight the presence of all the three species since the middle ages. In 1987, Cucco and Malacarne estimated the population of pallid swifts nesting in the church of Santa Maria della Scala at 76 pairs and again in 1989 the city was cited by Boano and Cucco as a nesting site for this species. In the case of the colony in question, most of the swifts nests are, as indicated by Cucco and Malacarne, inside the pontoon holes. On the facade of the church there are 119 cavities, while 146 are on the wall along Principessa Maria Clotilde street. Currently, however, these holes are closed by nets aimed at preventing the entry and nesting of pigeons which however prevent access also to swifts.

In the months of June and July 2023, a census was carried out of the swifts nesting in the colony using a variant of the utilising the capute-mark-recapture method. The population has been estimated in 12 nesting pairs, therefore 24 adult individuals are still present in the colony.

The presence of these pairs is partly due to the poor state of conservation of the nets positioned to block access to the holes, and partly to the great versatility of these animals which manage to slip in and nest even in inaccessible places that have never been closed. However, the number of nesting pairs remains small when compared with the number of cavities that would normally be available for nesting and with the number of animals that are observed flying near the colony every day.

The activity of the Exodomus association fits into this contest with the aim of making the cavities available again nesting of these animals by removing the nets currently present and replacing them with others bearing an entrance hole large enough to allow the entry of the swifts. The project allows the objective of reducing the cavities available for pigeons nesting while at the same time allowing the swifts to recolonize them. In subsequent years it will then be possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention by continuing the censuses of nesting pairs to observe how long and in what percentage the animals recolonize the site.