

## **7th International Swift Conference, Trieste 2024**

### **Promoting nesting sites in buildings for common swift (*Apus apus*) in World Heritage cities: the case study of Toledo (Spain)**

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Common swifts (*Apus apus*) are representative birds of our cities, an example of adaptation to urban environments and very beneficial to humans in controlling insects. They spend their reproductive period in central Spain during May-August, nesting in small cracks and cavities in walls and historic buildings, which are very abundant in World Heritage cities, like Toledo (central Spain). Loss of nest sites of swifts are a particular concern because swifts are site loyal, adults returning to the exact nesting site year on year. For their conservation, it would be appropriate to avoid the restoration of buildings during the breeding season of the species, and to preserve and/or provide cavities in the roofs or walls. Controlling the hollows of buildings (with an adequate size) allows to fight against other birds that are not protected, or that are not as attractive or beneficial like the feral pigeons. However, studies on the efficacy of such measures remain scarce. In this study we present several initiatives for preserving nest sites for common swifts in the walls of the city of Toledo, as well as in one convent and in a restored building. We evaluated the occupancy of the nest sites by swifts one year after the wall and building renovations. Institutions and architects must be made aware of the possibility of making our urban environments more sustainable, especially those in such emblematic places as World Heritage cities. We encourage the use of traditional materials with low environmental impact that respects heritage and biodiversity.