



## Summer 2018, 6th edition of the Festival Swifts & Fun

Mauro Ferri

Association for Monumenti vivi, Festival dei rondoni – Swifts & Fun

Yes! Six Editions! In late 2012 in Carmagnola we met in few friends to share informations about our works on swifts and we were so pleased of the results of the meeting to decide to start sharing with more people our infos adding also the <energetic joy> announced by the screaming parties of our favorite birds along our streets. So here's the insight, to organize events combining helpful infos with pleasure: SWIFTS & FUN in FESTIVAL. This is how was born in late June 2013 the famed <dinner under the three species of swifts> in a little piazza of Saluzzo downtown (CN), followed by a workshop in Carmagnola (TO) and by the visit to the large interspecies colony of the Castle of Turin, our first "Living Monument">. The 3 events attracted ca. 40 people from half of Italy and also from Belgium, Switzerland and Germany. Since then, every year, in June, our little group of friends renovated the initiative by enlarging the circle of swifts fans. We insisted on maintaining the initial spirit of an initiative to raise awareness of local people for the destiny of swifts in buildings, anvinte and modern ones, recommending the local groups to tie relations with any other group locally interested to call public administrations, on public opinion and private owners, to preserve active colonies of swifts on buildings. The <citizen science> for the awareness started increased year after year. In 2014 the Festival Swifts & Fun was done by 12 local events. In 2015 the events were 34, of which 1 in Belgium, 1 in the Republic of S. Marino and 8 in Switzerland. In 2016 there were 38 events, of which 18 in Switzerland and 1 in Belgium. In 2017, the initiatives rose to 80, of which 1 in Spain, 2 in Belgium, 17 in Switzerland and of course 60 in Italy. The <campaign> of 2018 was set up from the 5th International Swift Conference in Tel Aviv (IL) and its cultural trips in Israel and Jordan; at the end of the Conference a group of us agreed to share the initiatives for the awareness for the swifts: in England and Ireland the swifts fans focused on an <awareness week>, in Belgium on <Swifts without borders> and in Italy and Switzerland always on <Swifts Festival - Swifts & Fun> with the new purpose to make every effort to stay in touch with <Swifts without borders> sharing as much as possible on internet and on Facebook, in order to offer the widest possible access to the initiatives carried out in the Countries as possible. The result was a very wide frame of activities that took place in 9 Countries: Israel, Spain, France, Holland, United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy, for a total of over 200 events of which over 60 in the United Kingdom and 60 in Switzerland, 30 in Belgium and a 40 in Italy. Since 2014, the website [www.festivaldeirondoni.info](http://www.festivaldeirondoni.info) offers panoramas and details of initiatives and their results and from 2016 a Group is active on Facebook updating and sharing regularly posts, pictures and videos, and this year the Group is called <Festival dei Rondoni 2018>, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/888105881297791/>. But beyond the quantitative dimension, the true success is above all the increasing of facts to save swifts colonies or fitting buildings with artificial nest boxes for new colonie. After the 2016 seminar in the beautiful setting of the Civic Museum of Natural Sciences of Piacenza, in Italy started to be well understood how dangerous were the prevoius twenty year or so on, dominated by pigeon-phobic campaigns and works on buildings were the cavities of roofs and walls were accurately sealed, mostly in Springtime and Summer, not only burying alive swifts and many other small species, insectivores (bats, lizards, geckos, small passeriformi ...) and not (jackdaws, kestrels, owls, owls, ...) but mainly closing for ever the access for next generations of wildlife. The spirit of the Festival Swifts & Fun suggest that there is no alternative to local events for awareness acted by local groups that have to work to safeguard the existing colonies and oppose the pigeon-phobic <bad practises>. In this perspective the Association for Living Monuments was set to promote the registration of the existing colonies of swifts on buildings in the Data Base of Ornitho.it with the <Protocol for registering Living Monument: unfortunately not few people still they take perplexity and resistance regarding the opportunity to register the colonies in a public Data Base and it is a real shame also because the operation is very easy and in real time when using a mobile phone adopting the App NaturaList for Android and IOS. Actually circa 150 swifts colonies are identified and recorded in "living monuments" with notes about the address, images and data on the size of the colony, the exploited architectural features, the likely threats and other colonial or important species present. But more than other 300 are registered as <swift colonies> with only a criptic Long/Lat data. It seems incredible, but not a few people are perplexed on the goodness of a given public domain Data Base, easily accessible and usable to demonstrate the need for conservation. We are in fact a complicated Country and it is hard to understand that a public data is in itself a guarantee against projects and construction works badly designed and badly managed by designer and owner until now saying the arbitrary <I did not know>. In this regard, it will be useful the next circulation of a guidelines about the synergic use between the generic



safeguards granted by the Law 157/1992 (Game and Wildlife) and the articles 544 bis and 544 ter, introduced in the Penal Code by Law 189 of 20 July 2004 to protect the citizen sentiment for animals killed and mistreated. Well, anyway the good news of the last season are many. Many awareness events were done but also many concrete interventions in buildings under works, with selective reductions and/or restoration of cavities, changes of tiles, assembly of nest boxes, restorations of ancient swifts and sparrows towers; more, effective censuses of colonies in downtowns were well planned, organized and implemented by as many as 29 associations and local groups to which they joined a group of 15 owners and contractors. And the latter is an important innovation: some designers and contractors are now taking action and are committed to the active protection of biodiversity in ancient and modern buildings and to them worth to recommend: avoid do-it-yourself, contact ornithologists expert in swifts in buildings and do use only methods validated by testing. In this regard, the section <downloadable documents> of the web site [www.festivaldeirondoni.info](http://www.festivaldeirondoni.info) do offers a rigorous selection of papers and documents related to documented cases and good practises, helpful to offer a specific answer to each specific case.

Finally, it worth well to reiterate some concepts on the <Festival-Swifts & Fun> and on his function and purposes. The Festival is an initiative for awareness for swifts and is not intended to became an association. Its logo is an intellectual property, yes, but it is only a vehicle to stimulate local synergies among all people of good will. And the groups, associations and local delegations of the various associations are the real protagonists who can overturn the local situation in favor of the swifts. The use of the Festival logo is free but is required in exchange to share with us your events program and we will upload your programs in the website and on the Group on Facebook: to do it is very easy, by writing to [rondonecomune@gmail.com](mailto:rondonecomune@gmail.com). The standard event for the Festival must be suitable to sensitize local public opinion, calling to verify local concrete cases of consolidated and/or threatened swifts colonies: it is not essential to gather dozens of people each time, but is important to stay in touch with local media and groups that can guarantee continuity (schools, teachers, students, civil servants and technicians of public administrations, designers, contractors and professionals). Frankly it is not known which kind of event has been the most fruitful, among the many of these six years, but it should be noted that the enthusiasm of the driving group is an essential element and it should not be underestimated the enthusiasm, very contagious, of the screaming parties of swifts around the nests in late June and early July (in Italy); actually the bird screaming around the nests in a building are fundamental elements to offer also to the general public the right feeling. In 2018 it was decided to further expand the period suitable for the <Festival> which in 2013 was a weekend at the end of June, as in the United Kingdom generally is a week. In 2018, many have realized that the peak of the period of the swifts <visitors> or <bangers> in Italy can start in mid-June and can last until early July, not to neglect the cities with colonies of pallid swifts that offer opportunities to call for events also in late July. The energy and enthusiasm that can communicate the swifts <visitors, bangers> must be well understood to involve more and more people every year in the protection of swifts and to ensure each year more chances for the protection of the biodiversity in ancient or modern buildings, public or private, translating into good practice a concept that until now was understood and shared only among specialists.

Meanwhile, a warm thanks to the swifts fans of the other Countries for having also coordinated with us, and special thanks to the associations of Canton Ticino and Canton Grigioni (Swiss) that have joined and strengthened the programs of other groups in a wide area of <Italian Language>, from North to South, trough many Italian regions.

So see you all again in 2019, with many important news.

[rondonecomune@gmail.com](mailto:rondonecomune@gmail.com)

Attached, some images from events in Italy and abroad





## Some pics from:

- [www.festivaldeirondoni.info](http://www.festivaldeirondoni.info)
- [www.monumentivivi.it](http://www.monumentivivi.it)
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/888105881297791/>

