

Climate Crisis Brief - June 2022



June Grimley Climate Crisis Brief - Swifts & Biodiversity Loss

With the increasing focus on the critical need to move rapidly towards sustainable lifestyles, we are being urged to rapidly reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, we are also being urged to reverse the decline and loss of ecosystems and biodiversity.

Biodiversity is the variety of all living things on Earth, and how they fit together in the web of life, providing our oxygen, water, food and countless other benefits, not to mention the functioning of our biosphere that is essential for life on our planet to continue!

But this can sound a bit scientific and remote from our day-to-day lives?

When we moved to Grimley eight years ago I was delighted when a pair of house martins nested above the burglar alarm box of our house. Throughout the summer it was a joy to see the sky above us, and the woodland and lakes behind, were filled with swirling diving swifts, house martins and some swallows feeding on the insects.

Last year no martin's nested on our house and the sky above us was empty! So far this year I have seen small numbers of martins and swifts transiting north, along with the odd swallow or two. And that appears to be it - repeat of last year?

What is going on? Swifts and house martins have suffered huge declines in recent years and [were added to the UK red list for endangered birds in December](#). Swift numbers alone have dropped 60 per cent over the last 25 years. The red list of Britain's most endangered birds has increased to 70 species with the swift, house martin, along with greenfinch and Bewick's swan added to the latest assessment.

The red list now accounts for more than a quarter of Britain's 245 bird species, almost double the 36 species given the status of "highest conservation concern" in the first review 25 years ago.

Swifts and house martins join other celebrated, but now critically endangered long-distance migrants such as the nightingale and cuckoo, whose populations are plummeting. This is due to a combination of factors:

- *Habitat loss ie intensive farming, removal of hedge rows, draining of land et cetera.

- *Disappearance of insect food sources. UK - there has been 60% decline in insects in the last 17 years! PS WE also need insects to pollinate our food crops for us to eat.

- *Global heating both in British breeding grounds and along migratory routes to sub-Saharan Africa. This year further exasperated by an extreme storm event Greece during their migration.

Government Action. IAW the 1992 UN Convention on Biodiversity the UK produced its first Biodiversity Action Plan to reverse species decline 28 years ago. Judge for yourself on progress!

So what might we do to reduce our negative impact on insects and biodiversity?
Our Garden.

- Avoid using pesticides and chemical fertilisers
- Grass - leave areas uncut until end of August
- Create a pond and or boggy area.
- Build a compost heap

Our Food

- Buy organic- which is pesticide and chemical fertiliser free
- Buy fresh seasonal local food - ask which farm it is from and how is it grown

This might cost more - but what is our planet worth?

Dave Stanley, *dave@sustainability.works*

Residents are welcome to join our Grimley Parish Council climate crisis working party.

The working party was set up by the parish council in late 2021 and consists of residents and parish councillors. The group works broadly within the remit of the climate declaration made by the parish council in 2008. The articles released by the group chair Cllr Dave Stanley are published at his own expense in the local parish magazine (and in the Worcester News (local newspaper)), are not voted upon by the councillors and are included on the parish council website in order to provoke thought and debate and encourage residents to educate themselves on the topics included.

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