

r Madness



matches the bird's lifestyle. Not only do they feed on the wing, they also bathe, mate and sleep while flying! However, the speed that they are travelling at is somewhat deceptive, and Swifts are far from being the fastest flyers of the British bird world. They may 'only' be cruising at around 25 mph, but don't let that put you off marvelling at these incredible birds' aerial dexterity!

The mid-summer madness of Oban's Swifts reaches a conclusion in late July or early August, when the local population is boosted by newly-fledged juveniles. Watch, of an evening, as screaming



parties, totalling between 30 and 50 birds, patrol the skies over the town. These noisy groups come together as one, and spiral ever upwards, until it is almost impossible to see them in the twilight. And, then they are gone...

By the following evening, only a few stragglers may remain, as the town's Swifts will have completed the first stage of their annual late summer pilgrimage back to Africa. The skies over town are suddenly hushed of the noise of these incredible migrants, and will remain so for the next nine months.

We think of Swifts as British birds, but they only spend around three months of every year in this country. In reality, when they depart Oban's airspace in early August, perhaps they are going home.