

Late nesting of Common swift *Apus apus* in the Carnic Alps (North-eastern Italy)

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In Italy, the Common swift *Apus apus* is a regular migratory and irregular wintering species and widely distributed as a breeder (Brichetti & Fracasso 2007). Egg-laying takes place from the beginning of May to mid-June, rarely in April or July. Incubation lasts 20-21 days, although in the case of bad weather even more than 27 days (Pazzuconi 1997). Rearing of the pulli lasts on average 42.5 (37-56) days, with pulli in the nest until the end of August in Britain and Ireland (Cramp 1985). In Switzerland, hatching can take place also on the twenty-seventh day and even after the thirtieth with the last young in the nest until September 2 (departure of young and of adults with replacement broods) (Genton & Jacquat 2014). In Bulgaria, the breeding period is between May and July (Nankinov *et al.* 1997), and only in two cases pulli were observed in the nest at the beginning of October (Stoyanov & Shurulinkov 2003).

On 1 September 2016, a Common swift pullus with an apparent age of 12-14 days was found on the ground in Amaro (Carnic Alps, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 300 m a.s.l.). The bird was in a sector of the historical centre of the village located along mountain slopes and characterized by buildings generally less than 12 m high.

This report is unusual. In the past, the Common swift abandoned the breeding areas in the extreme eastern Alps by early-mid August, while in the last few decades most of the departures appear to be anticipated to the end of July, although it is possible to observe the species even in September thanks to latecomers or, more probably, to individuals migrating from more northern areas. In the present case, egg-laying most likely occurred between the end of July and the first days of August, when Common swifts usually depart.

It can be supposed that we are dealing with a replacement brood, although this should have occurred much earlier given also the tendency to anticipate egg-laying (cf. e.g. Rubolini *et al.* 2007). Moreover, if the nesting had been successful, the newly fledged young would have had to undertake the migration in the last days of September or even in October, and they would have found themselves in the Alpine zone, far from the areas normally frequented in that period.

The peculiarity of the reported find is also confirmed by the fact that no such late nestings have been reported in other areas of the Alpine arch (Mezzavilla 1989, Niederfriniger *et al.* 1998, Caula *et al.* 2005, Pedrini *et al.* 2005, Bionda & Bordignon 2006), with the exception of Valle d'Aosta where in a single case the young were still being fed in the nest on 1 September (Bocca & Maffei 1997).

Although in recent decades the Common swift has maintained a stable presence at the macroarea level in the extreme eastern Alps (Rassati 2016), it has undergone a contraction (Rassati 2011) that has been strong in some urban areas, sometimes leading to disappearance of the taxon as a breeder. One of the main factors contributing to this decline is the renovation of buildings and/or the use of new construction techniques which have eliminated the breeding sites. This has also involved historical buildings where colonies had been known for over a century (Rassati 1997, Rassati *E. pers. comm.*). This factor has had a particular impact in the northern sector of Friuli because of the reconstruction after the 1976 earthquake, a factor that should be taken into consideration in tender specifications, unlike what has happened thus far.

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