the duties of reproduction and the capture of insects for the sustenance of itself and its progeny. Immeasurably great indeed must be the amount of insect life destroyed by this bird; and as it feeds exclusively on perfect insects, it becomes a greater check to their undue preponderance than if they formed even a part of its diet in their larva state. I transcribe a note, as illustrative of this part of the bird's economy, made during my annual summer visit to Maidenhead and its neighbourhood:—"June 28. Took two very young Swifts, apparently hatched about four or five days previously; they were round, black, heavy-bodied nestlings, without feathers; their eyelids were much contracted, and their eyes but half open; no dilatation of the gape, as in the Swallows and Tits (*Hirundinidæ*, *Paridæ*) and many other young birds; weight, three-quarters of an ounce. July 8. Took from a neighbouring nest two young Swifts, considerably advanced in size and plumage; the entire body and tarsi were covered with dark-grey down; stub-feathers were appearing on the crown of the head, and the wing- and tail-feathers were much developed. July 12. Took two other neighbouring Swifts. The size and plumage of these were greatly advanced over those last mentioned; the whole of the head and body was covered with perfect feathers, resembling in colour those of the adult; the wings were considerably developed, and the birds would have flown in four or five days; weight two ounces." Now if all these were hatched about the same time, as they probably were, what a vast amount of insect life must have been taken by each young Swift between the 28th of June and the 12th of July! In this fortnight alone the young birds had increased in weight from three-quarters of an ounce to two ounces; and, bearing in mind that the adults as well as the young have to be sustained, we may form something like an estimate of the amount of insects destroyed by these birds during the summer months. From the earliest dawn to sundown, and even later, the Swift is constantly hawking in the air, through which its various journeys must, at the most moderate computation, amount to many hundreds of miles a day. It probably reposes for short intervals during the heat of the midday sun; but the time thus lost is made up by later evolutions in the evening, when the males scream and chase each other from place to place, at one moment over water or a lofty church spire, at the next over the tops of houses, darting, circling, and joyously pursuing and rivalling each other in the number and rapidity of their evolutions. When feeding their young, the parent birds dash into their dark recesses with the quickness of thought, going in and returning a hundred, nay, many hundred times a day. The structure of its tarsi and feet quite unfits the Swift for moving on the ground, whence its specific name of *apus* (footless), and, if once on a level surface, I question if it has the power of again rising in the air; but any slight inequality in the soil would enable the bird to effect its purpose. When roosting, or resting from the midday heat, the Swift retires to some lofty steeple or a more humble cottage roof, to the walls of which it clings with its curiously formed toes and hooked nails. From such places of rest, and on leaving the nest, it drops into the air, and, with a few strokes of its powerful wings, sweeps away with the utmost ease and grace.

That an individual pair annually return for many years to the same site is certain, marked birds having proved this fact over and over again. And wonderful, indeed, is the instinct which directs this bird to return repeatedly to the same breeding-place. Going to and fro is the province of the Swift: in winter it flies over African soil; in summer it dwells in the more invigorating climate of England and the continent of Europe, which latter countries may be considered its native home, for it is there that it procreates its kind.

The sites chosen for the purpose of nidification are much varied, cathedral spires, lofty towers, crevices in rocks, and the holes in lofty trees being alike resorted to; the eaves of church-roofs and the houses of the humble villagers are also much frequented by it; and the poorer the cottage, the more it appears to be preferred. The space between the rafters and the roof, to which admittance is gained by a broken tile or any interstice through which the bird can squeeze its lengthened body, is a situation for which it evinces a decided preference. Within such openings as these in the roof of the humble tenement, the Swift either constructs its own shallow, saucer-like nest of the straws, feathers, and other materials caught while floating in the air on a windy day, or appropriates those collected by the common Sparrow; whichever course is pursued, these light materials are agglutinated together with a viscous substance secreted by the salivary glands of the bird. I have even found fresh petals of the yellow buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) glued on the inner side of the walls, which the Swift must have taken while skimming over the mead. This thin crust of a nest is often placed near the entrance, but sometimes on a rafter under the ceiling, at the distance of a yard from the inlet. The eggs are of an oblong form, about an inch in length, and of a pinkish white; two is the normal number, but I have heard of three, and even four, being occasionally found in one nest.

The males and females are so closely alike in size and colour that, to be quite certain of the sex of any individual that may be shot, dissection must be resorted to. The young soon assume a plumage very like that of the adult, the only difference being that they have more white about the face, and that some of the darker feathers of the body are very narrowly fringed with grey.

The entire plumage, with the exception of a patch of dull white on the chin, is very dark brown, glossed with purple and green; irides dark brown; bill black; toes and claws blackish brown.