

The black swift, a bird that does almost everything in flight



Figure 1. Mating in flight of Black Swifts (Apus apus). [Source: © Jean-François Cornuet with permission of the author]

The life of the swift is almost entirely aerial since the bird only lands for laying eggs, incubating and raising their young. As soon as the fledglings are out of the nest, its parents will lead a totally aerial life until the following spring. In the meantime, all the swift activities occur in the air: feeding, drinking, sleeping, mating, and even collecting some materials for the nest. Once emancipated, the young swifts will remain in the air without ever landing for two, three or even four years. Unique among flying vertebrates, the mastery of flight makes the notion of distance of little interest: it is estimated that a swift hunting to raise its young travels some 500 km per day and that an 18 year old swift will have travelled more than 6 million km in its lifetime.

- Video of Jean-François Cornuet [\[1\] "Tribute to the black swift"](#)

Notes & References

Cover image. Black Swift [Source: Royalty Free / Pixabay]

[\[1\]](#) Other videos on the flight behaviour of the Black Swift are available on [Jean-François Cornuet's Youtube channel](#).

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