

How can I find out more about Swifts?

There's lots of information to be found by searching "swift" on the RSPB website at: www.rspb.org.uk
Further information and advice can also be found from the following:
Action for Swifts: www.actionforswifts.blogspot.com
Swift Conservation: www.swift-conservation.org

How else can I help Swifts?

Providing a nest box is a great way to help Swifts. There are also many other ways in which you can help in your neighbourhood:

You can submit sightings of nesting Swifts to RSPB SwiftMapper (www.swiftmapper.org.uk). SwiftMapper is building a picture of where Swifts are nesting across the UK. You can also submit records for nest boxes to SwiftMapper, and tell us whether or not they are being used by Swifts each year. SwiftMapper provides a free-to-use self-help database of Swift nest locations across the UK, allowing anyone interested in Swift conservation – individuals, local conservation groups, planning authorities, consultant ecologists working with developers, etc – to focus efforts to protect existing Swifts nests and to provide new nest sites, towards the very best areas.

Local volunteer Swift conservation groups, collectively called the Swift Local Network have established themselves across the country and are very proactive in helping Swifts in their respective areas.

Information about the groups can be found here:
www.actionforswifts.blogspot.com

You can also get in touch with your nearest RSPB Local Group, to see if they are already involved with any Swift conservation projects.



Swift Nest Box



Revised 2023

The RSPB – rspb.org.uk

UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL.
Telephone 01767 680551

Northern Ireland Headquarters, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast,
BT8 7QT. Telephone 028 9049 1547

Scotland Headquarters, 2 Lochside View, Edinburgh Park,
Edinburgh EH12 9DH. Telephone 0131 317 4100

Wales Headquarters, Sutherland House, Castlebridge,
Cowbridge Road East. Cardiff CF11 9AB.
Telephone 029 2035 3000

Illustration by Mike Langman

Information about your Swift nest box and Swifts

Thank you for purchasing this RSPB Swift nest box. It has been designed in conjunction with Action for Swifts – a voluntary organisation working solely for the conservation of Swifts.

Why help Swifts?

The Swift is probably the quintessential 'urban bird' inextricably linked to sharing our homes, usually nesting in the eaves of houses, commercial buildings, church towers and other historic buildings.

Swift numbers have declined steadily in recent decades; they are on the UK Red List of birds of highest conservation concern, and they need our help. The cause of their decline is not fully understood, however many of their nest sites have been lost due to building renovation or demolition, while new buildings typically do not provide many nesting opportunities for Swifts.

It is likely the loss of suitable nest sites is a major problem for Swifts and is something we can all act to help address. By purchasing this nest box you are making a commitment to provide Swifts with somewhere safe to nest.

Box design and features

The box has been designed with a pitched roof. This makes it easier to fit beneath even the narrowest of eaves. It allows rain to run off and prevents predators from perching on the roof.

The entrance hole is small enough to deter Starlings from colonising the box. Starlings are also in decline and need of help, but can be provided for with our RSPB Apex Starling nest box (R405836), preferably secured to a tree.

The Swift nest box contains a nest cup which provides the Swifts with a nesting structure and stops their eggs from rolling about. Swifts prefer to occupy nest boxes that contain a nest cup, compared to those without.

This nest box has been handcrafted by UK joiners, using FSC® Certified Timber (FSC certificate no. TT-COC-003511).

Locating the box

Swift nest boxes can be placed on any aspect of a building, but it is important to avoid locations receiving full, direct sunlight for most of the day, to avoid chicks overheating. East, West or North aspects are all fine. If the box must face South, please ensure it is shaded from the summer sun (May to July inclusive) under wide eaves, or equivalent.

Also:

- Avoid placing above doors and windows.
- Allow a minimum 5m clear drop beneath and in front of the box.
- Maintain a clear flight path to the nest by locating away from large mature trees and shrubs or those likely to become large in the future.
- Fix the box to the wall, tightly beneath the eaves of the house.
- If you can obtain them, you may place a few breast feathers (eg: chicken) or down feathers (eg: from an old pillow or quilt) inside the box. This is believed to further encourage an investigating swift (see diagram 1).

Diagram 1:

A few down or breast feathers help encourage birds to nest.



Legal

Please note that the RSPB's usual guarantees relating to workmanship and materials apply to this product and your statutory rights are unaffected. You are responsible for properly and safely installing this product and periodically checking it remains secure.

Maintenance

Nest boxes used by Swifts do not require the cleaning and maintenance required by some other species. However, every few years check the fixings remain secure and for signs of possible decay.

How many boxes?

Swifts are colonial birds and would benefit from multiple boxes. It is generally recommended to install 2-4 or more boxes. You may start with one or two and add to them as birds begin to move in.

When will they nest?

Swifts are long-lived birds, much longer than swallows or martins. They usually don't start breeding until they are 3 years old. Young birds are on the lookout for suitable nest sites in the years before they start to breed. Therefore, it might take some time for a new Swift box to be discovered, and then used for breeding by Swifts. But once established at a nest site, breeding adult Swifts are likely to return to the same site year after year. So, your nest box is a long-term investment for Swifts' futures! In the meantime, other birds such as House sparrows might use the nest box. This is not a bad thing as sparrows need help and their presence is known to attract Swifts to look for nests.

You can make it easier for Swifts to find a nest box by playing Swift calls near the box, for instance using an MP3 player and placing a mini speaker close to the box.

Information on how to do this may be found at:
www.actionforswifts.blogspot.com

Ready to use MP3 Players can also be purchased from:
www.swift-conservation.org/Shopping!.htm