



SWIFT CONSERVATION

KEEPING THE SKIES ALIVE

www.swift-conservation.org

Swift Nest-boxes at Your Home



A Swift leaves its nest under pantiles near Lincoln: © Bill Ball

Congratulations!

You want to help Swifts...

Why Swifts need our Help

Swifts arrive back in the UK from Africa in May and their exciting calls mean that Summer is here. Nesting through to August in buildings, in small holes in the eaves, gables or upper walls, feeding only on insects and spiders and living in cities, villages and towns, they fill the evenings with stunning aerobatic flight. They add immense excitement and life to any area. They have shared our buildings for over 2000 years, but new building techniques and materials and insulation of older buildings are preventing them from nesting. As buildings are replaced, insulated or repaired, Swifts find themselves excluded, and they are now declining fast. But we can stop this happening!

How you can help Swifts

Installing simple nest boxes at your home will preserve inner-city Swift populations, enhance local biodiversity. Just like flowers and trees, Swifts will make us feel happier! Creating Swift nest places is not difficult. Using simple DIY carpentry skills you can make low cost Swift nest-boxes. Or you can buy ready-made boxes; see the www.swift-conservation.org "Shopping" page for details of types and suppliers. They cost from under £20 upwards, depending on type and materials used.

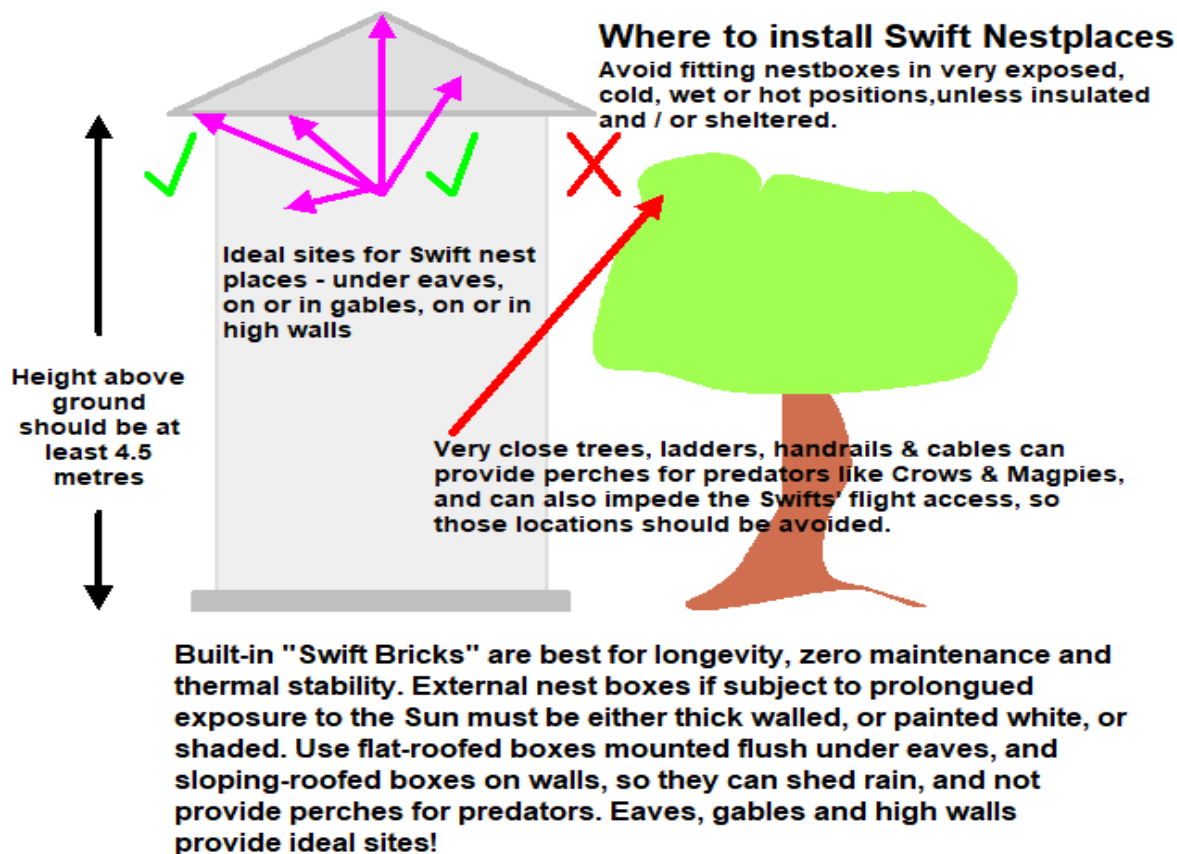
Help is available

Ask us and we will help you. Contact mail@swift-conservation.org

Choosing the site

Place nest boxes ideally just under the eaves, to give protection from rain, cold winds and sun. Boxes exposed to a lot of sun, for example those placed on walls, can be painted white, or shaded with a small roof. (Some are made of white materials for this reason). They should be sited at least 4.5 metres above

ground, with clear adjacent airspace so the Swifts can access it in high-speed direct flight (they usually fly straight in to avoid the risk of predation). Make sure that predators (cats, crows, magpies, squirrels, and rats) do not have easy access to the nest (e.g. by climbing up creepers or flying in from nearby trees).



Choosing the box

You can find a good range of Swift nest boxes illustrated and described below. Select the box that meets your needs, your budget, and your ability to fit it! Please remember that the longer lasting the box and the more soundly it is fitted, the better for your Swifts.

Plywood

This economical plywood "Zeist Type Swift Nest Box" is available from John Stimpson.

E-mail = j.stimpson1@btopenworld.com

It is well-proven and is light and easy to fit compared to cement boxes. The downside of plywood is a shorter life, but careful positioning and occasional external surface treatment should prolong it.



Recycled Plastic

A version of the Zeist box is available in strong recycled plastic plank from Filchris Recycled Materials Ltd.

E-mail = sales@filcris.co.uk

They will also make up bespoke nest boxes in the same material to your own design for sites where this is needed.



Concrete - "Woodcrete"

Several designs of Swift nest boxes from Schwegler are made from a cement mixture known as "Woodcrete". A mixture of cement and plant fibre, it is strong and long lasting. Such boxes have the potential to last a very long time, making them particularly attractive and cost effective. Opposite is a double Swift and Bat box, which also comes as a smaller single model.



The UK agent for these boxes is Jacobi Jayne
<http://www.jacobi-jayne.co.uk/nest-boxes-by-species/swift/>

Surface Mounted

Several of the commercial designs can be surface fitted under eaves or onto walls. This type opposite is a strong and popular Woodcrete model from Schwegler. We have had success with this box at our project at London Zoo in Regent's Park, and it has also been used very successfully elsewhere.



Do It Yourself

We show some D.I.Y designs for Swift nest boxes on our web site. Choose the one that suits your site and skills. These boxes are light compared to the concrete ones, and require much less effort to fit, but they will not last as long. Nonetheless they will, if well made, have a useful life span and are a valuable way of providing Swifts with nest places.



For a choice of designs please see
<http://www.swift-conservation.org/Nestboxes&Attraction.htm#D.I.Y.>



A Swift comes in to land in its nest: © Doug M Dodds

Fitting the box

Use strong corrosion-resistant fixings appropriate to the wall material. If you have any doubts at all about your ability to fit the box, ask a professional to do it for you.

Keeping safe

Before fixing or servicing your Swift nest box, make sure your working conditions are safe. Take special

care when working at high level. Use appropriate personal protective equipment.



A Swift brings a meal home to its chicks, its mouth is stuffed with flying insects it has caught in flight: © David Moreton

Attracting the Swifts - using the Swift Calls CD & MP3

Occupation of the nest boxes can be speeded up if a recording of Swifts' attraction calls is played to prospecting birds. Recordings are available from us - see our web site's "Shopping!" page. Full instructions are supplied with the calls.

Maintenance

You don't need to clean out the boxes unless other species use them. Swifts nest naturally in holes and crevices, without any cleaning, but the integrity and fixing of the box needs to be assured regularly.

Building on success

If your box is successful, put up some more. Swifts usually nest in colonies, and they like a few neighbours. Indeed, a busy Swift colony will be a powerful attraction to other Swifts to come in and nest.

CCTV

You may wish to fit CCTV to observe the lives of the birds. Use only wildlife-compatible cameras with infra-red lighting. They must only be fitted and adjusted outside the breeding season. If a camera fails while the birds are breeding, it should not be replaced until they have left the nest for good.

Do's & Don'ts

Do give the birds' peace and quiet and every chance to breed

Do try and keep a diary of the birds' activity

Do try and put your CCTV pictures onto the Internet so others can share them

Do check the box each winter to make sure it is still sound and firmly fixed

If a bird falls from the nest and cannot fly, consult the Swift First Aid pages of our web site

<http://www.swift-conservation.org/SwiftFirstAid.htm>

Don't stand and stare up at the nest box when the Swifts are around. It will put them off

Don't disturb the Swifts at any time - they will desert the nest

Don't allow creepers or plants to encroach on the nest. They will give access to predators

Enjoy your Swifts!

If you need more advice, please contact us at **mail@swift-conservation.org**

Edward Mayer

www.swift-conservation.org