



## Nestbox Installation Guidance

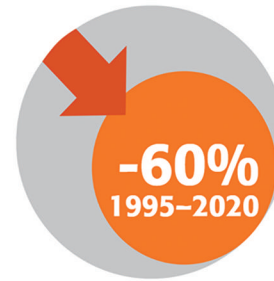


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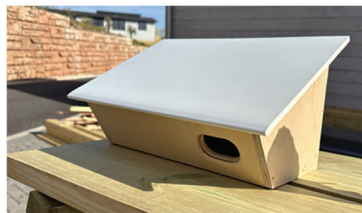
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### Common swift population decline

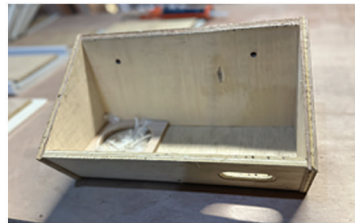
Swifts numbers have decreased by 60% over the past 20 years. Loss of nest sites due to our construction methods is one of the main causes. We use efficient methods to seal our buildings, restricting access for swifts.



### How can we help?



We can install nestboxes on our houses. Swift nestboxes are available in different designs, to suit the architecture of all building styles. They all have the same feature of an enclosed chamber, accessible by a hole on the front, or underneath. This chamber resembles the natural nest sites of swifts, essentially crevices in rock or tree decay columns.



Certain designs are to be fitted on external walls, whereas others are fitted within the walls (swift bricks) or inside the building, with a tunnel, leading to the nest chamber (see image on right). All of the designs can be purchased, or some can be made with relatively basic handtools.



### Swift nestbox designs



Impeccable designs - Made from gel coated fibreglass and available in all RAL colours

Action for Swifts 'S' Brick - Available to match your existing brickwork, can be retrofitted to built houses.



Schwegler 18 - This nest is made from woodcrete and will last for many years.

Schwegler 1A - Another woodcrete swift nest box, providing longevity.



Peak Boxes - Made from sealed plywood. Their other designs include apex and corner boxes.

## Things to consider when installing swift nestboxes. FAQ's

Q.. Are there any recommendations relating to the location?

A..The aspect is only relevant if there is direct **sunlight exposure**. Certain designs incorporate reflective surfaces and heat shields to reduce exposure to the sun. If you're uncertain, it is recommended to locate nestboxes in the shade between the hours of 9am-6pm. The photo on the right shows boxes on a south elevation but as can be seen, only the very tip of the access ramp is catching the sun throughout the day. The maximum temperature recorded at midday in these boxes was 31°C.



**Height** of boxes is a consideration. In excess of 3m is optimal, however I have witnessed occupied nestboxes at 2.5m from the ground. This is really only viable if there is a **clear flight** path. In a balanced approach, a clear flight path is as important as height and exposure considerations. Adult swifts can enter the nest chamber at a near horizontal approach (front entry boxes), if required. Prospecting juveniles require a greater clear space as do fledging chicks; both of which are less adept at clearing obstacles/exiting nestboxes. If you have any doubts about the location, please seek advice.



Q..Do the boxes require cleaning out at the end of the season?

A..Swifts are a particularly **low maintenance species**. They defecate away from the nest and consume the faeces of their young, as there are undigested nutrients in the discarded faecal sac. Swifts bring in a small amount of feathers and light grasses to line the nest cup; most of which degrades over winter.

If other species have been using the nestbox, such as sparrows, there may be a necessity for cleaning out the chamber as they have up to 4 broods and bring in nesting material each time. I have had swifts nesting on top of sparrow nests in a space that was 17cm deep originally, reduced to 4cm from all the nesting material! There have also been incidences of entanglement from the introduction of synthetic twines from sparrows, so it's worth a look outside the nesting season.

Q..Will any maintenance of the boxes be required?

A..The Devon Swift Project boxes are constructed from recycled plastic or marine grade plywood, secured with stainless steel fixings, adhesives, and sealed with 3 coats of sealant. Many manufacturers are using materials which provide great longevity and may only require a recoating of sealant every few years, if at all.

Q..How soon will the cabinets become occupied?

A..Swifts can take many years to repopulate an area. Likelihood of colonisation is increased if swifts are nesting nearby and young birds are actively prospecting. To increase colonisation likelihood, it is recommended to install an **acoustic lure** which is activated with a timer. A tiny speaker is placed inside the box, or as close as possible, and attracts swifts to the new nesting possibilities. The unit is volume controlled to ensure the sound blends in with ambient birdsong. It runs for a few hours per day, during May-August.

## General considerations: Installing nest boxes

- When choosing a location, allow for more boxes. Your colony may expand!
- Work with safety in mind. Some of the boxes are very heavy (woodcrete) or require two people to install.
- Only use quality materials, stainless steel fixings etc. to ensure the box stays in place, especially if swifts are nesting inside!
- Finally, if you do find a grounded swift, please follow the advice here:  
<http://www.swift-conservation.org/SwiftFirstAid>.



To find out more information or to enquire about one of our nestboxes, please contact Jerry at:

[info@devonswiftproject.co.uk](mailto:info@devonswiftproject.co.uk)

or visit the website at:

<https://devonswiftproject.co.uk/>



*Thanks for your interest in helping these amazing birds!*

