

Swift nest-box installation instructions

Planning your installation

When planning your installation, think how many boxes you may eventually want, then position the first one or two, adding more in future years when you have success. You need to get your boxes up by the end of April, or at the latest towards the end of May as the prospecting non-breeders arrive from then on

Location

Swifts are long-lived and highly nest-site-faithful birds, so it is essential that their nesting places are long lasting. It is important that the box is placed where it is not possible for the mid-day or afternoon sun to directly hit the box. Otherwise, the birds inside will suffer and may die from overheating. Although properly treated boxes are water-proof, it is also preferable that they are placed under eaves, not exposed to the weather. A south facing wall is OK, provided the eaves are wide enough to shelter the box from the sun. With the Zeist box, it is possible to fit a simple sunroof. There should be a clear flyway in front of the box which should be placed at a minimum of 4 metres high or, preferably, higher. It is preferable to avoid places with lots of telephone wires or power-lines – Swifts tend to collide with them. Your chances are improved if there are already Swifts breeding in the neighbourhood.

Installation

For boxes that fit under eaves (e.g. Zeist and Shoebox), position the box flush with the eaves.

It can be a good idea to place a nest concave in the box, at the opposite end to the entrance. Swifts invariably use it when provided. You can make your own out of papier-mâché, out of wood on a lathe, or buy budgy concaves from a petshop.

Playing the CD of Swift calls

In order to encourage Swifts to find your nest-boxes it is a good idea, nay essential, to regularly play the CD of Swift calls between about mid May to mid July. The nearer you can get the speakers to the entrances, the better, but it is also effective if you place them in a window, or on the ground, below the boxes. Almost any time of day can work, but early morning, or evening usually produces a better response. It may take 2 or 3 years before you are successful, but the end result is worth it. You can get the Swift CD [here](#)

Once you have your first pair of Swifts, the rest will follow, and you will get endless enjoyment from a 'black-arrow' display every day through the summer.

Dick Newell, March 2010