

the nest is an excellent way to encourage prospecting birds to visit the boxes.

### How can you help?

#### Property owners

- *Local authorities* can include action for swifts in their local biodiversity action plans.
- *Owners/developers of large new buildings*, such as superstores and office blocks, can provide accommodation for swifts easily, cheaply and safely.
- *Housing associations* renovating properties that already have swifts can make access slots in closed soffits.
- *Parish church wardens* can use specially-designed swift boxes which fit between louvres or create access for swifts into the main part of the tower.
- *Individuals* can make or keep their properties swift-friendly by providing access to the eaves or installing nestboxes, and by becoming Swift Champions (see below).

#### Builders

- Read the CfS leaflet *Swifts and Domestic Properties*, which gives advice on how to maintain or create access for swifts when roofing work of any kind is undertaken.

#### Architects and planners

- Encourage property owners to incorporate swift-friendly access in their buildings.
- Disseminate information about swifts to your colleagues and fellow-professionals.
- Visit [http://www.swift.utigges.il.eu.org/hints\\_english.html](http://www.swift.utigges.il.eu.org/hints_english.html)

### Swift Champions

The RSPB and Concern for Swifts aim to create a network of 'Swift Champions'. These are individuals and local groups who can help build up a national inventory of swift colonies. Champions can also take action, or at least sound the alert, when colonies are threatened by development.

### Suppliers of swift nestboxes

*Jacobi Jayne* supply several designs of durable Schwegler woodcrete nestboxes, as well as a CD of swift calls at the nest. Tel 01227 714311; Email [enquiries@jacobijayne.com](mailto:enquiries@jacobijayne.com); [www.jacobijayne.com](http://www.jacobijayne.com)

*Jamie Wood Products* sell a simple, sturdy and inexpensive wooden box. Tel 01323 727291; Email [sales@birdtables.com](mailto:sales@birdtables.com); [www.birdtables.com](http://www.birdtables.com)  
*CJ Wildbird Foods Ltd* produce a wooden nestbox for external fitting, and a concrete-based 'build-in' box. Tel 0800 731 2820; [www.birdfood.co.uk](http://www.birdfood.co.uk)  
Email [Martin.George@birdfood.co.uk](mailto:Martin.George@birdfood.co.uk);

### The Concern for Swifts Group: who to contact

Detailed advice on all aspect of swifts is available from CfS or visit [www.concernforswifts.org.uk](http://www.concernforswifts.org.uk).

#### All general enquiries:

Jake Allsop Tel 01353 740540;  
[concernforswifts@aol.com](mailto:concernforswifts@aol.com)

#### Architectural questions

Julian Limentani Tel 01480 461101;  
[limentani@aol.com](mailto:limentani@aol.com)

#### Building issues (incl churches)

Bill Murrells Tel 01353 662762;  
[pammurrells@waitrose.com](mailto:pammurrells@waitrose.com)

#### Ringling/tile nestboxes

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#### Regional coordinators:

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[graham.c.m.roberts@btinternet.com](mailto:graham.c.m.roberts@btinternet.com)

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All other regions, please contact Jake Allsop

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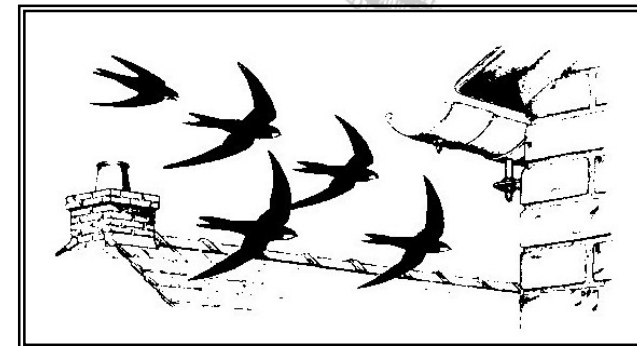
Concern for Swifts is supported by the RSPB and the BTO.

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Illustrations by Dan Powell.

# CONCERN FOR SWIFTS



**Modern building methods, building regulations, redevelopment of old buildings, and better maintenance are excluding swifts from their nesting places in roofs. They need help from property owners, architects and builders. In 1996, a group of individuals and organisations joined in a partnership known as 'Concern for Swifts' to promote conservation of nesting sites.**

**This leaflet shows how you can help these fascinating birds, whether during restoration work on existing buildings, or in the construction of new properties.**

### What are swifts?

Swifts are the black, sickle-winged birds that wheel at high speed around buildings during the summer. Although they superficially look like swallows and house martins, they are not related to these smaller birds. Swifts feed, sleep and even mate in the air and they remain airborne from the end of the breeding season in August until they return from Africa to breed again in early May.

As their natural cave and cliff nest sites are rare in Britain, they depend on buildings, nesting under the eaves, in ventilators or other available cavities. Typically, the gap that allows them access needs to be no more than 25-35mm deep and 65mm wide. Most nest sites are at least five metres above ground and all have a clear airspace outside the entrance hole to allow the birds to gather speed as they leave. Swifts nest in colonies. Contrary to popular belief, swifts rarely penetrate any further into the roof space than just inside the top of the outer wall. They are clean, leaving very little 'guano' or other evidence of their presence. Very little material is used for the nest, which is glued together with saliva. The birds lay two or three eggs, which hatch after three weeks. Adult swifts feed their chicks food balls containing 300 or more insects, up to twice an hour. The young are in the nest for four to six weeks before fledging. By mid-August, the birds are preparing to leave on their long journey to winter in Africa.

### Who wants swifts anyway?

Swifts are a familiar part of summer. It would be a great loss if the summer skies no longer played host to their aerial chasing and calling. While some

people don't notice the screaming parties round the rooftops on summer evenings, most people regard them as part of summer to be welcomed and enjoyed.

As old buildings are being renovated or pulled down, suitable nesting sites for swifts are becoming increasingly rare. We believe that action now, to protect existing nest sites and to provide new ones will help to ensure that swifts remain a common sight around our cathedrals, churches, villages and towns.

### What can we do to protect swift colonies?

It is important that as building work is carried out, swifts are not excluded from their traditional nesting sites. Everyone from individuals to local authorities can make a difference.

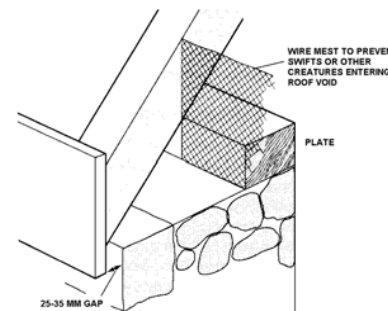
**Local authorities** can introduce pro-active policies to help swifts. Camden, Glasgow, North Cornwall, Norwich, Peterborough, Cherwell, Warrington and West Sussex have included information about swifts in best building practice, produced informative leaflets, included swifts in Local Biodiversity Action Plans and provided funding for swift nestboxes.

**Housing associations** can make provision for swifts when renovating properties. The Pilgrim Trust in Bedford provided access 'slots' at intervals when installing uPVC boxed soffits. The project was a great success. It had the full support of house owners, and resulted in a net increase in the number of nesting swifts.

**Concerned private individuals** often alert CFS to proposed demolition or conversion of old properties such as hospitals, mills and warehouses, so that representations can be made to the owners, developers, architects, builders and local planning authorities.

### Ways to create access

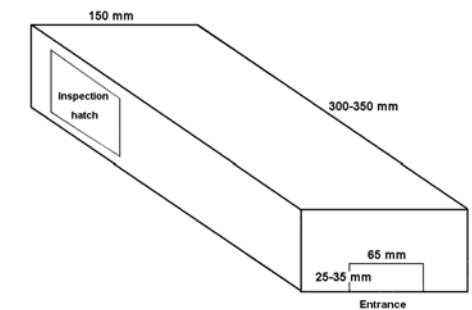
It is easy to provide swifts with access to the roof:



Further information can be found in our leaflet *Swifts and Domestic Properties* and by talking to Bill Murrells of Cfs.

### Nestboxes to encourage swifts to new sites

Where sites have already been lost, or where it is possible to encourage swifts to colonise new buildings, nestboxes have an important role to play. The simplest form of nestbox is one that can be placed in a wall cavity or inside the loft space, with just the purpose-built entrance hole visible. This is then a permanent fixture. Boxes can be mounted under the eaves or on a gable end, but are less satisfactory as they may need periodic maintenance. The design can be modified, as long as the nesting chamber is large enough. Swift nestboxes vary in size and design, depending on the space available to accommodate them. The drawing below illustrates one of the suitable designs, made of exterior quality plywood or similar. The dimensions are the minimum sizes, and the box can be made larger. Visit also <http://www.londons-swifts.org.uk/>



Concrete swift nesting bricks, designed to fit in with UK brick/block sizes, can be incorporated in the walls of new buildings as they are built. The bricks can be rendered or painted to match the surrounding brickwork. Consider 10-15 bricks per building. The environmental and educational benefits far outweigh the minimal cost.

Swifts nest at five or more metres above the ground. They need a clear flight path to the nest site, ie, with no obstruction from trees or adjacent buildings. Orientation is not critical as long as the nest entrance is protected from sun, rain and prevailing winds, and the cavity is dark. Playing a recording of swift calls at