

The Maidenhead and Cookham Swift Group



IS YOUR HOUSE OR OFFICE BUILDING SUITABLE FOR SWIFTS?

Can you see swifts over your house or office building?

Yes, 'screaming parties' of swifts flying at roof height as well as high up. You are near a nesting colony and you are very likely to attract swifts to a new box. Attractor calls will help swifts find your nesting places quickly (see below).

Yes, but only high up. With birds passing overhead, you should be able to attract them to your location with loud swift attractor calls (see below).

No, I've never seen swifts. If you don't see any swifts at all, it is still possible for them to find your location but you would need to be extra-persistent and determined to attract swifts, and play swift attractor calls loudly from April onwards, ideally all day. Swifts have been known to find new nesting sites 2-3 miles away. Be prepared to be patient – it may take a number of years. We are aiming to provide a 'chain' of new swift nesting sites in a Maidenhead-Marlow 'swift corridor', bringing them towards Cookham over time.

Is there a suitable wall and cavity space into which you could fit 'swift bricks'?

The entrance needs to be at least 5m off the ground. If there is no suitable internal space then you can fit swift boxes.

Is there a suitable wall where you could mount swift boxes ?

The best walls are north, west or east facing. South facing is acceptable too but boxes must be painted white and be placed under eaves so that they do not get too hot inside.

Is there room for at least two nesting places?

Swifts live in colonies and the expert advice is to have at least two nesting places for two pairs.

Is the flight path to the spot clear of obstacles, such as trees, poles, wires?

Stand back and look at the possible nest site. Can a bird arrive and leave without having to dodge any obstacle like wires and poles? Adult swifts fly at speed into the nest. Baby swifts leaving the nest fly in an arc down and then up and away. Any obstacle is a flight hazard and can bring down an inexperienced flyer.

Is the location safe from predator access?

You need to make sure the entrance and location are not vulnerable to predators including grey squirrels.

Can you play attraction calls to passing swifts?

By playing attraction calls, passing swifts think there are already swifts nesting at your house or building and come and investigate.

See http://www.swift-conservation.org/How_to_use_the_Swift_Calls_CDv4.pdf for detailed information.

There are sound files available from the Swift Group. You will need to play them on a sound system. This could be an amplifier with an SD card with calls on and a speaker. Play the calls out of a window as near the boxes as possible, as loudly as you reasonably can. Early morning without being anti-social (say 7.30am-9am) and mid evening (say 6pm-9pm) are best, but the more hours you play them the better, and the more months you play them the better. Swifts arrive in late April/early May and leave in August. At our house, we put swift boxes up in April, played swift calls from 7.30am to 9pm Monday to Friday from early May and got a nesting pair within three weeks (we have a nearby colony and regular screaming parties). If you don't play the calls, it could take several years for swifts to find your boxes.

More information:

The best and most comprehensive sources of information about giving swifts a home is <http://www.swift-conservation.org/> and <http://actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk/> .

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