



SWIFT CONSERVATION

KEEPING THE SKIES ALIVE

www.swift-conservation.org

How to use the Swift Calls CD or MP3

You need patience when trying to attract Swifts to a new nest place. Sometimes they respond immediately, sometimes it can take years to gain their interest.

Swifts usually look for breeding places in the area already established by another flock, so the best chance of success is when there are already Swifts breeding nearby.

These Swift calls are compilations of duets given by a breeding pair defending its nest place from other Swifts. Swifts searching for nest places are attracted by the duets to see if there is a vacant place for them.

Displaced Swifts look for nest places during May for places to breed in this year; in July juveniles yet to breed are looking for places to breed in next year.

They then stick with these nest places for the foreseeable future, but if they come back from Africa to find their nest gone, say because of re-roofing or demolition, then they will search frantically for another nest site.

To coincide with the periods when Swifts are looking for nest places, play the Swift Calls during May and July. To keep Swifts interested in a colony temporarily unavailable, say because of building work, play the Swift Calls during June too. While evicted Swifts will choose a new nest place upon arrival, juveniles will not choose one for use the following year until much later in the season.

Set your sound system's timer to play the calls at suitable times, ideally during periods of good weather. This will depend on what you and your neighbours can tolerate, but could be from first light for an hour or two, then from about 4pm to 6pm until it gets dark. This example would be ideal for an office, workplace or school environment as it would avoid irritating humans. Alternatively, play the duets for as long as is tolerable, (coinciding with the absence of people if their presence is a problem). If the weather is cold and wet, playing the duets will have no effect at all, so they can be stopped.

The loudspeakers should ideally be mounted inside the nest boxes, or else right next to them, and aimed upward. The volume level should be as loud as a real Swift's scream. If the call comes from inside the nest box it may be muffled. This is perfectly acceptable.

It is easy to see when the birds are looking for new nest sites. They fly directly to potential nest holes, pausing in mid-air, sometimes clinging briefly to the outer surface of the wall, or nest box, then falling away into a dive.

For more about the life of the Swift, including photographs, nest box designs, and information for architects, builders, planners, and vets, see our very informative web site.

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