



**SWIFT**CONSERVATION  
KEEPING THE SKIES ALIVE [www.swift-conservation.org](http://www.swift-conservation.org)

## Swift Nest-boxes at Your School



Czech School children learning about Swifts & making nest boxes for them © BirdLife CZ & Gabriela Dobruská

*Congratulations! You want to help Swifts...*

### Why Swifts need our Help

Swifts arrive back in the UK from Africa in May and their exciting calls mean that Summer is here. Nesting through to August in buildings, in small holes in the eaves, gables or upper walls, feeding only on insects and spiders and living in cities, villages and towns, they fill the evenings with stunning aerobatic flight. They add immense excitement and life to any area. They have shared our buildings for over 2000 years, but new building techniques and materials and insulation of older buildings are preventing them from nesting. As buildings are replaced, insulated or repaired, Swifts find themselves excluded, and they are now declining fast. But we can stop this happening!



Children's drawings on a notice board about migration and pupils making a DIY Swift Nest Box © Gabriela Dobruská

## How you can help Swifts

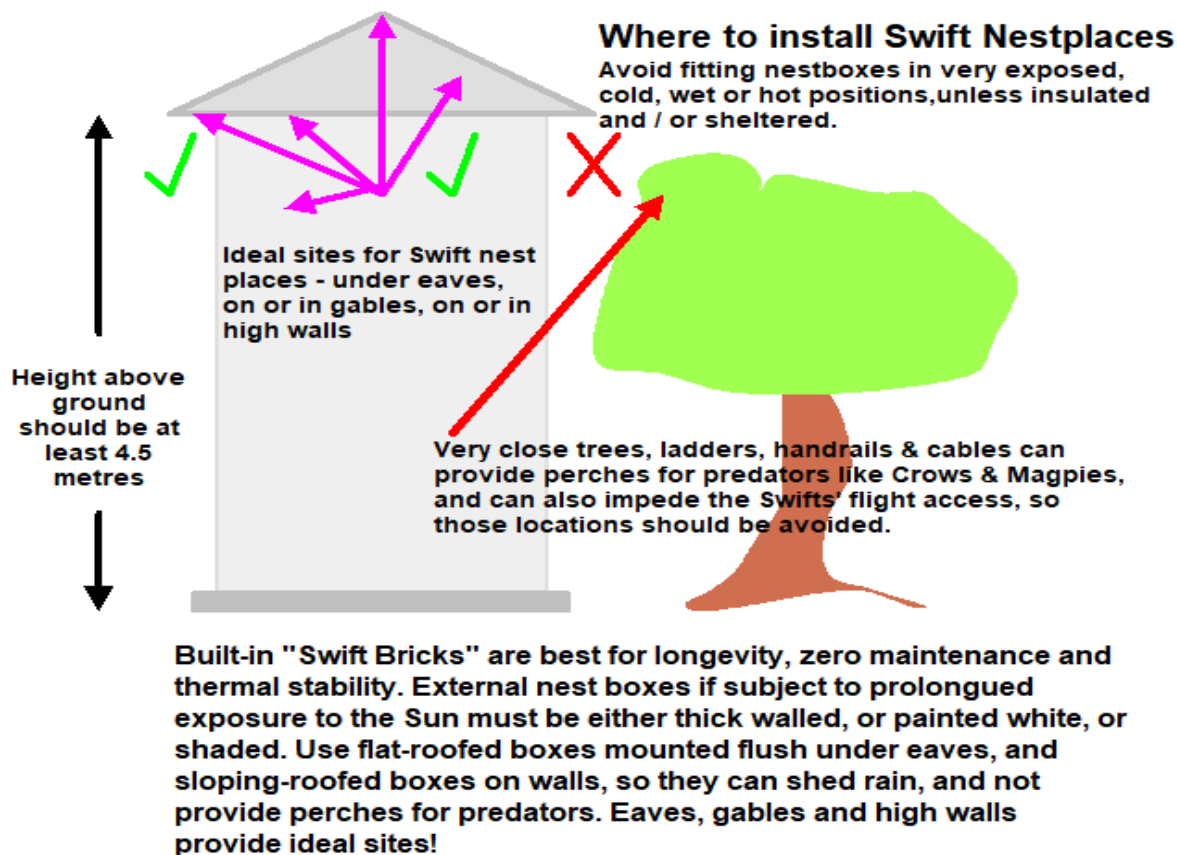
Installing simple nest boxes at your school will preserve inner-city Swift populations, enhance local biodiversity, and help you learn about migration, birds and the environment. Just like flowers and trees, Swifts will make us feel happier! Creating Swift nest places is not difficult. Using simple DIY carpentry skills you can make low cost Swift nest-boxes. Or you can buy ready-made boxes; see the **www.swift-conservation.org** "Shopping" page for details of types and suppliers. They cost from about £20 upwards, depending on type and materials used.

## Help is available

Ask us and we will help you. Contact **mail@swift-conservation.org**

## Choosing the site

Place nest boxes ideally just under the eaves, to give protection from rain, cold winds and sun. Boxes exposed to a lot of sun, for example those placed on walls, can be painted white, or shaded with a small roof. (Some are made of white materials for this reason). They should be sited at least 4.5 metres above ground, with clear adjacent airspace so the Swifts can access it in high-speed direct flight (they usually fly straight in to avoid the risk of predation). Make sure that predators (cats, crows, magpies, squirrels, and rats) do not have easy access to the nest (e.g. by climbing up creepers or flying in from nearby trees).



## Choosing the box

You can find a good range of Swift nest boxes illustrated and described below. More models are becoming available all the time as interest grows. Select the box that meets your needs, your budget, and your ability to fit it! Please remember that the longer-lasting the box and the better it is fitted, the better for your Swifts.

## Plywood

This economical upvc/plywood "Model 30 Swift Nest Box" is available from John Stimpson.

**E-mail = [j.stimpson1@btopenworld.com](mailto:j.stimpson1@btopenworld.com)**

It is well-proven and is light and easy to fit compared to cement boxes. The downside of plywood is a shorter life, but careful positioning and occasional external surface treatment should prolong it.



## Wood mixed with Concrete - "Woodcrete"

Several designs of Swift nest boxes from Schwegler are made from a cement mixture known as "Woodcrete". A mixture of cement and plant fibre, it is strong and long lasting. Such boxes have the potential to last a very long time, making them particularly attractive and cost effective. Opposite is a double Swift and Bat box, which also comes as a smaller single model.



A UK agent for these boxes is NHBS, but others like Gardenature supply them too.

## Surface Mounted

Several of the commercial designs can be surface fitted under eaves or onto walls. This type opposite is a strong and popular Woodcrete model from Schwegler. We have had success with this box at our project at London Zoo in Regent's Park, and it has also been used very successfully elsewhere. Similar boxes are on sale from Vivara-Pro.



## Do It Yourself

We show some D.I.Y designs for Swift nest boxes on our web site. Choose the one that suits your site and skills. These boxes are light compared to the concrete ones, and require much less effort to fit, but they will not last as long. Nonetheless they will, if well made, have a useful life span and are a valuable way of providing Swifts with nest places.



For a choice of DIY designs please see

<http://www.swift-conservation.org/Nestboxes&Attraction.htm#D.I.Y.>



## Involvement

We recommend involving the children in every stage of the project, as far as is possible within whatever constraints are in force.

Learning about Swifts

Surveying for sites

Designing the boxes, making drawings of Swifts, their nests, eggs & chicks

Drawing other birds

Studying migration and ecology

Analysing threats to wild birds' survival

Making nest boxes

Painting/varnishing nest boxes

Observing & recording the Swifts' activities

All may make suitable subjects for study & learning

Photo © Gabriela Dobruská



A young Swift in the nest as an adult comes in to land in the nest box: © Alain Georgy & Doug M Dodds

## Fitting the box

Use strong corrosion-resistant fixings appropriate to the wall material. If you have any doubts at all about your ability to fit the box, ask a professional to do it for you, or have a chat with the local Fire Brigade!



The Fire Brigade puts up Swift nest boxes at a Czech school Photo © Gabriela Dobruská and Swift nest boxes on a school in France Photo © Carolyn Knowlman

## Keeping safe

Before fixing or servicing your Swift nest box, make sure your working conditions are safe. Take special care when working at high level. Use appropriate personal protective equipment. Or better still, get an expert to do the job for you! Sometimes the local Fire Brigade will help.



A Swift brings a meal home to its chicks, its mouth is stuffed with flying insects it has caught in flight: © David Moreton

## Attracting the Swifts - using the Swift Calls CD & MP3

Occupation of the nest boxes can be speeded up if a recording of Swifts' attraction calls is played to prospecting birds. Recordings are available from us - see our web site's "Shopping!" page. Full instructions are supplied with the calls. Typical equipment needed is shown below.



## Maintenance

You don't need to clean out the boxes unless other species like Starlings or House Sparrows use them and stuff them with nest materials. Swifts nest naturally in holes and crevices for years on end, and rely on their old nest being there when they return so they can reuse it. However the integrity and fixing of the box needs to be assured regularly, either by close inspection or a check with binoculars.

## Building on success

If your box is successful, put up some more. Swifts usually nest in colonies, and they like a few neighbours. Indeed, a busy Swift colony will be a powerful attraction to other Swifts to come in and nest.

## CCTV

You may wish to fit CCTV to observe the lives of the birds. Use only wildlife-compatible cameras with infra-red lighting. They must only be fitted and adjusted outside the breeding season. If a camera fails while the birds are breeding, it should not be replaced until they have left the nest for good.

## Do's & Don'ts

Do give the birds' peace and quiet and every chance to breed

Do try and keep a diary of the birds' activity

Do try and put your CCTV pictures onto the Internet so others can share them

Do check the box each winter to make sure it is still sound and firmly fixed

If a bird falls from the nest and cannot fly, consult the Swift First Aid pages of our web site

<http://www.swift-conservation.org/SwiftFirstAid.htm>

Don't disturb the Swifts at any time - they will desert the nest

Don't allow creepers or plants to encroach on the nest. They will give access to predators

**Rorýsí škola**

**KDO JE RORÝSÍ?**  
Malý ptáček, ale výborný letoun. V létě letí honem, zpívá, v létě se dokonce i páří. Má dlouhý zobáček a 2 roky může žít na povrchu země!

**Na rozdíl od dřevěných dobk se s nimi nejedná o velkou vlnu, ale malou vlnu. Vlna dřevěných dobek je poškozená tímto poškozením - škodlivým stromem.**

**HNÍZDĚNÍ**  
Hnízdi ve tvářích pod střešními deskami, či ve větracích otvorech panelů. Kde jednou úspěšně vyhnědli, tam se opakuje znovu. Pokud o hnízdišti dříve přejde, musí se více ošklivě, než si můžete představit k hnízdišti.

**PROČ JE CHRÁNĚNÝ**  
Při rekonstrukcích domů často dochází k zanesení větších otvorů k hnízdišti. Jejich úbytek tak může být dramatický.

**RORÝSÍ A ZÁKON**  
Rorýs obecní je ochranný, zákonem chráněný druh. Od 20. dubna do 10. srpna, NESMÍ být jeho hnízdiště rušeno za žádných okolností!

**Je nutné si uvědomit, že pod jednou střešou s námi žijí i jiní obyvatelé. Nebudme k nim lhostejní!**

**podporuje hnízdiště rorýsů na své budově**  
**aktivně se podílí na ochraně přírody**  
**učí děti lásku k přírodě**

**JAK JSME SE STALI RORÝSÍ ŠKOLOU**  
Občasní, letadloví jsou rorýsi vystaveni, nás vedlo k myšlence kolonií v areálu naší školy nejen udržet, ale i rozšířit pomocí budů. Děti v přírodovědném kroužku vyráběly dřevěné. S jejich instalací nám pomohli šlechtí z ZH Brumů a SŽH Brumů.

**POMÁHÁME RORÝSŮM**  
Abychom zabránili zbytečnému strachu dětí mladších dětí o okna, instalujeme na ně UV samolepky. Pravidelně kontakt s rorýsy v nás vyvolal zájem o podrobnosti z jejich života. Začali jsme více spolupracovat s ČSO, a to nejen v rámci programu Rorýsí školy a jím ovlá.

**„Když jsme se naučili létat v povětří jako ptáci a potápět se jako ryby, zbylo už jen jít – naučit se žít na zemi jako lidé.“**  
(Giovanni Boccaccio)

**ČSO**  
**The Mitsubishi Corporation Fund for Europe and Africa**

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School Information board all about Swifts © Gabriela Dobruská

Enjoy your Swifts!

If you need more advice, please contact us at [mail@swift-conservation.org](mailto:mail@swift-conservation.org)

Edward Mayer

[www.swift-conservation.org](http://www.swift-conservation.org)