

How we can help swifts

Thankfully, our swifts will adapt to nest boxes but they need some encouragement to start a new colony. Playing swift attraction calls makes swifts believe that a colony already exists.

With luck, passing swifts will hear the calls and explore the boxes with a view to breed the following year. These homeless swifts are called 'bangers'. This describes their behaviour at the nest sites when they fly up to potential sites and touch them with their bodies. If a nesting adult is inside, it will defend the site.

Swifts can become injured by telephone wires when trying to enter potential nest sites and end up on the ground. Young swifts can also fall out of their nest before fledging, or while fledging if they are not fully developed.

Finding a grounded swift

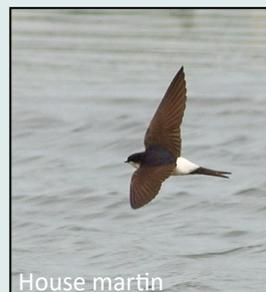
If you find a swift on the ground, never throw it in the air. It is likely to be injured or too young to fledge. It will need a specialist diet and help from a competent swift rehabilitator. It may also be very dehydrated. Contact us as soon as possible to give it a better chance of survival.

leeds.swifts@gmail.com

Swift, swallow or martin?



Swift



House martin



Swallow



Sand martin

Most people find it hard to separate swifts, swallows and martins. Forget wings and tails, the trick is to learn the difference between the upper body and underside of each species.

Swifts appear black all over. Their white chin is impossible to see in flight.

House martins appear all white underneath and blue-black on top with a white rump.

Sand martins appear all brown on top and cream below with a brown chin strap.

Swallows appear completely blue-black above with a white belly and a dark, russet head.



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Why swifts are declining

For many people, the common swift (*Apus apus*) epitomises the sound of summer with its screaming aerial displays. If you love to hear that sound you will have noticed that swifts are in serious decline in fact 53% of swifts vanished between 1995 and 2016.

This is because most swifts rely on human habitation for suitable nesting sites. They typically rear their young under roof tiles, in cracks and crevices under eaves and in old buildings, but nesting sites are being destroyed on a grand scale. Houses are re-roofed, plastic soffits and boards are installed and old buildings are demolished or refurbished. All too often a swift returns to the UK to find its nest site no longer available.

Swifts also face other challenges during migration and while they are in the UK. These include the effects of intensive farming and climate change. Dust storms in Africa, chaotic weather conditions during the breeding season and the overuse of insecticides can affect the abundance and diversity of insects available.

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Providing a home for swifts

I already have swifts

It's so fantastic to have swifts nesting at your house but we understand the problems that this can create when you need to do some essential repair work. There's no need to sacrifice your swift colony to get your home repaired. We can provide advice about the best way to manage your renovation work while ensuring your swifts can still enter their nest sites.

I used to have swifts

If you used to have swifts and they no longer visit your house then it's probably because you've had work done in the past. It may be possible to get them to come back by installing special swift boxes and playing attraction calls. Contact us for advice about where to site boxes and how to get the equipment you need.

I'd like to attract swifts

It may be possible to do this by installing special swift boxes and playing attraction calls. Contact us about finding the right boxes for your house and how to get the equipment you need.

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Other ways you can help

Help us to record swifts

We need help recording nest sites and screaming parties of swifts. Contact us to find out all the ways you can help each season.

Help raise awareness

Book a talk by Leeds swifts for your charity or community group to raise awareness of the plight of swifts. Our talk, The Swift Year, shares some amazing facts about swifts and provides rarely seen footage of swift behaviour in the nest.

Help to build boxes

To increase the number of boxes we can provide, we need people to help us build and store them outside the breeding season.

Help to install boxes

We install boxes and attraction calls to as many properties as we can but we need more people to help us in and around Leeds. We especially need willing volunteers with large ladders, cherry pickers or mobile scaffolding.

Help to change legislation

Swifts need their nests protecting outside the breeding season. Contact us to find out how you can try to change legislation.