

Swift Facts

- Swifts have declined by 75% in the past 30 years. They are on the **Red list** of Birds of Conservation Concern.
- Swifts migrate 3,400 miles from Africa every spring, often flying non-stop to get here and even sleeping on the wing. They can spend an astonishing 10 months of the year in flight without landing.
- They are also the fastest birds in level flight, with an impressive top speed of 69mph.
- Because they rely on insect food, Swifts can only live in the UK for a short period each year, when the weather is at its best and when the days are at their longest.
- Swifts migrate south to Africa in early August once they have finished breeding, returning again at the beginning of May.
- Swifts are plain sooty brown, with a white throat, but in flight against the sky they appear black. They have curved wings and a forked tail.
- The drop in swift numbers has been caused largely by a lack of available natural nesting sites. Swifts like to nest in roofs, cracks and cavities in churches, homes and farm buildings, but modern places, and those that have undergone renovations, do not provide this.
- To help swifts, you can install swift boxes or swift bricks.
- Swifts like to nest high up, so boxes should be installed under the eaves of the house or on a suitable farm building, consisting of two storeys or more.
- Another option to encourage swifts to nest is by installing swift bricks into walls of new or existing buildings. There are ongoing campaigns, by Hampshire Swifts among others, to have it made a legal requirement for builders to install swift bricks in all new homes being built.

Did you know?

Swifts are not related to swallows or martins, but to hummingbirds.

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