

Create a high home for swifts



What you will need:

- exterior plywood, 1800 mm long x 150 mm wide x 12-18mm thick
- saw
- nails
- drill
- nails
- glue
- screws
- tall ladder
- drill
- raw plugs

Step by step guide

1 Choose a suitable location for your nest box. You need to place it high on the vertical wall of a building, ideally under the eaves, and it should be 5 m (15 feet) above the ground, with an unobstructed flight path in. Think of how a swift will approach the nest – it swoops down and then up to the nest site at speed, the upward ascent slowing it down to land.

It shouldn't be in direct sunlight, so an aspect between north and east is usually best.

2 Buy a box. If you have a suitable location, but are short on time or DIY skills, you can buy a ready-made swift box. (The entry hole should be 28 mm by 65 mm.)

3 Cut your exterior plywood. Cut all pieces and a rectangular hole into the front, shown in black. For plywood 12 mm thick, the hole should be 40 mm high and 77 mm wide, so that the actual hole size for swifts to get into the nest

box is 28 mm by 65 mm. If the wood is thicker, adjust the hole size accordingly.

4 Assemble your nest box. You can use nails, glue or screws on all parts, but make sure you use screws to attach the front so it can be removed to clean it out at a later date.

Ideally, attach a little wedge of wood just above the entrance to help shelter the entrance hole from the elements. You'll need the wedge to have a sloping top to stop predators perching there.

5 Putting up the box. Use the projections on the back plate of the box to screw firmly to the masonry of the house, just under the eaves. To be safe, avoid fixing it over doorways or walkways, just in case it falls.

When they're raising a family, birds are sensitive to disturbance and protected by law, so just watch from the ground or install a nestbox camera before the breeding season starts.

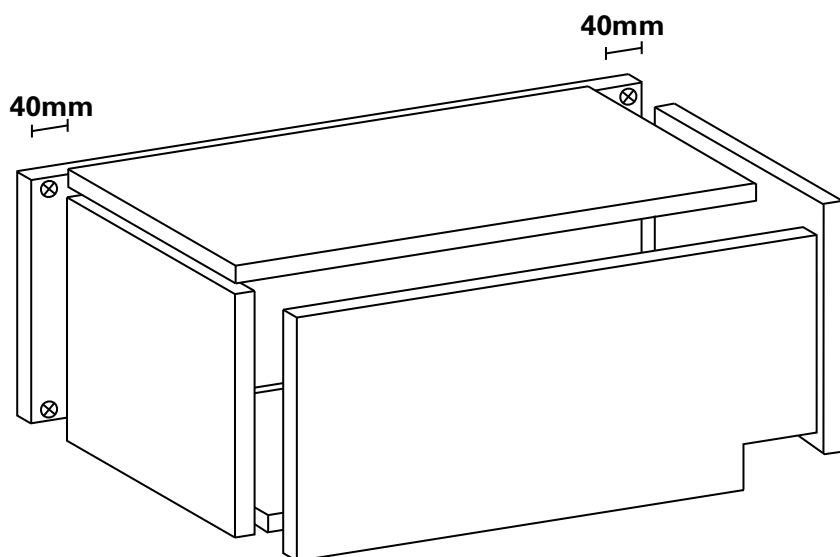
6 Build a nest out of bricks if you're renovating or building a house.

Some of the best nestboxes for swifts are large, specially-made 'swift bricks' that can actually be built into the fabric of the outer house wall. However, this can only really be done when you're building a new house or during major renovation work to an existing house. It should be done by someone qualified to do so.

7 Create a swift colony.

Swifts are gregarious birds that like to nest, feed and migrate in groups. They mate for life, and like to return to the same nesting site year after year. Fitting a swift nestbox is the best thing we can do to help these long-distance migrants. So if you have a building ideal for more than one box, go for it!

It can take swifts a number of years to find your nestbox. You can increase your chances of success by playing swift calls during May, in the morning and evening.



Measurements based on 12 mm thick wood.

