

ATTRACTING SWIFTS

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

Swifts live in colonies and birds coming up to sexual maturity will look for breeding places already established by other Swifts, so the best way to attract them to a new nest site is to play Swifts calls.

The simplest way of doing this is to use an MP3 player with a Swift calls CD. The Swift Calls CD in MP3 format can be purchased from the following web site – www.swift-conservation.org. The MP3 player must be placed as close to the nest as possible; in an open window or on a fence.

Swifts look for new sites in two phases. In May and June they are looking for sites for this year, in June and July they are looking for sites for next year.

You can play the Swift calls CD throughout the three-month long nesting season. In the UK this starts at the end of April to about mid May, depending on the weather, and usually ends in August. If this is not feasible, then play the CD from the beginning of May to the end of June, then again for the last two weeks of July, to coincide with the peaks of nest seeking activity.

Ideally you should play the Swift calls from dawn for 3 to 6 hours and then from 6.00pm until it gets dark but, if you can't tolerate that length of time, play the duets from about 6.30am to 11am which is the peak time for nest-seeking activity by Swifts. If you don't play the calls every day it doesn't matter – just as often as you can. Please note that if the weather is cold and wet, playing the duets will have no effect at all. Swifts only look for new nest places in fine weather.

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, then falling away again from the apex of their flight into a looping dive.

For more information about the life of the Swift, including articles, statistics, photographs, nest box designs, and information for enthusiasts, architects, builders, planners, vets and teachers, see this information packed website:

www.swift-conservation.org

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