



SPECIES

Photos: pau.artigas, Norman Crowson

Common swift (*Apus apus*)

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All about the common swift

- Can survive (and thrive) in a range of different habitats including farmland, forests, open plains, parklands, and even brownfield sites and urban areas.
- In wilder areas, common swifts breed in holes in caves or hollows of trees.
- In the UK, they mostly nest in towns and villages in holes in walls or under the eaves of houses. They favour old buildings, rarely nesting in buildings constructed after the year 2000.

Why do common swifts need our help?

Common swifts are struggling to find and maintain suitable nest sites.

How can we help?

- Homeowners can help by providing artificial nests. Provide suitable nesting locations for them such as a special nest box or a 'swift brick'.
- Avoid disturbing existing nests by not working on walls or roofs near nesting common swifts during the May to August breeding season.
- Avoid using insecticides and pesticides.
- Get wild! Grow a 'wild lawn' to provide insects for them to feed on.
- Raise awareness concerning the common swifts' decline and learn how to differentiate between swifts and martins!

- The RSPB have launched a national project called **Swift Cities** in order to stop the declining numbers of common swifts in the UK. Swift Cities work with local people to raise awareness, track populations through citizen surveys, and to provide habitat in new developments. Following the success of the first Swift Cities, in Belfast and Oxford, the RSPB aims to launch more Swift Cities all around the UK – so watch this space!

DID YOU KNOW? The common swift's closest genetic relations are the hummingbirds; they are not related to swallows or house martins.

How do I monitor and record?

- Observe and record the arrival and departure dates of swifts. After one month of them being present, record the number of nests that are occupied. Towards the end of June and again at the end of July record the number of occupied nests and the number of young birds fledged in each nest.
- All observations need to be carried out from ground level to avoid disturbing the nesting birds.
- Enter records into iRecord.

Learn more

- rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/create-a-high-home-for-swifts/
- rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/safeguarding-species/swiftmapper/case-studies/oxford-swift-city/
- Contact an A Rocha UK naturalist at naturalist@arocha.org