

How can you help?



Hampshire Swifts



Hampshire Swifts

There are many ways you can help our swifts:

- Count and survey swifts: we still don't know where most of our swifts nest. This information makes it much easier to protect them.
- Identify sites where nest boxes could be installed.
- Make and install nest boxes.
- Report developments which may be damaging swift nest sites.
- Help influence planning policy by writing to newspapers, your council and MP.



Please help our Swifts



Acknowledgements:

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Where do our Swifts go in winter?



Please help look after these unique
and stunning birds.

Join our Facebook group and
check our website for more
information and updates.

These beautiful and charismatic birds have
declined across Hampshire and the UK by more
than 60% over the past 20 years.

We can stop and reverse this decline.

www.hampshireswifts.co.uk



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Where do our swifts go in winter?



Swifts feed on airborne insects and spiders which are only available in warm weather so swifts can only live in the UK for a short period each year. But where do they go once the breeding season is over?

Swifts leave as soon as they have finished breeding. Newly fledged swifts can fly immediately and undertake the long route south without the help of their parents. In Hampshire, swifts which are still too young to breed leave at the end of July whereas breeding birds and their young leave from the end of July into August, with most having departed by mid-August. If you see swifts later than that they will be migrating south from more northerly parts of the UK and Europe.

Recently the migration route of swifts has been successfully followed by attaching geo-locators to swifts in the nest before they fledge. The map below shows the route taken by swift number A320.

As soon as A320 left on the 23rd July she flew to central Spain for a couple of days to refuel, then travelled all the way to West Africa in a single flight and spent a few days there. After that she covered huge distances, never landing, searching out good feeding areas across equatorial and southern Africa from August through to April. In April she started the return route with a mammoth 3 day

Step-by-step migration: on the wing with Swift A320

We follow one individual Swift, known as A320, tagged overnight on 21/22 July in 2010 at Fowlmere in Cambridgeshire.



flight across the Atlantic from Congo to Liberia followed by a 10 day period of feeding before crossing the Sahara desert and returning to breeding areas in Europe in time for good weather and a plentiful supply of insects.

In addition to good weather and food availability, swifts also need somewhere to breed. Swifts are very loyal to their breeding sites and always return to the same nest site. Unfortunately this is when problems may arise as swifts require gaps and holes in buildings to nest so they are vulnerable to house renovations such as new soffits, replacement of wood with plastic covers or cavity wall insulation which block up the access holes they need. If a swift nest site has been covered up or destroyed then the swifts probably won't breed that year.

Fortunately swifts will readily nest in artificial boxes or "swift bricks" which provide the spaces they need. By installing these on houses, churches or offices undergoing renovation we can minimise the effects of renovation work. In addition we can create new colonies of swifts by putting boxes or bricks up on our houses and churches to compensate for all the nest sites lost over the past few years. In this way we can halt and ultimately reverse the decline of this iconic bird.

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 Hampshire Swifts