



Swift Caller Guidance

Consistently playing Swift calls is a highly effective way to encourage Swifts to your boxes. Swifts nest in colonies and are naturally attracted to the calls of their own kind. Playing their calls will make your boxes seem like an existing colony, which will make them much more inclined to investigate your property. Swifts will pinpoint the sound, so placing the speaker as close as possible to your boxes or even inside is successful, but not essential – a nearby windowsill will suffice. Swifts will probably prospect your property in areas they are 'hardwired' to look, such as under eaves and in any obvious holes in the masonry. Spend time watching the Swifts and their behaviour if they do visit, you will gain an insight to their preferences.

Swifts arrive in waves every year. The **first wave** arrives in early May, consisting of breeding adults that already have a nest site. They will go straight to their nest, wait for their partner to arrive, then their breeding season will commence. These birds will not respond to callers. There will be Swifts that are displaced after their nest sites have been blocked off or demolished since the previous summer. Some displaced birds will find another nest site, but this is rare. Playing calls from early May is very unlikely to yield any results.

The **second wave** are the ones you are after. These birds arrive at the end of May and into the middle of June. These are non-breeders of around 2-3 years old that are looking for their own nest and a mate. Once they have found a nest site, they will build the nest ready for the following year with material found on the wing. A pair attracted in this wave will bond for life and return to the nest to breed the following year. They will roost in the box together, possibly into August before they return to Africa for winter. It is important not to clean out your box after each season as they make their nest ahead of time!

The **third wave** are yearling birds that come to the UK to investigate colonies. They may prospect your boxes and even roost but won't start to build a nest until the following year.

The best times to play your calls are from **6am to 11am** and from **8pm to 10pm**. It is a good idea to install a timer so the amplifier comes on when required and can even incorporate 15- or 30-minute pauses. You may find a peak time that Swifts visit each day. If you see Swifts at any other time, it is worth playing the calls. Swifts only tend to prospect in fine weather.

Play your calls **as loud as you are comfortable with** to help them reach further. However, do not risk upsetting the neighbours!

Swifts are extremely faithful to their nest sites. If you are lucky enough to attract a pair, do not move your box. If you need to carry out repairs and the box must be moved, ensure it is in exactly the same place when reinstalled.

If you have any questions at all, do get in touch.

Good Luck!

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