



Swift Boxes & Bricks

Swifts often return to the same nest each year. They usually nest in high, sheltered crevices and approach at speed, swooping down before rising up to the entrance, which helps them slow down and land safely. Because they enter their nest this way, the swift nest boxes must be installed with the following:

Installation Guidance

- ✔ Place it on the wall of a building, tightly under the eaves
- ✔ Install at least 5m above the ground
- ✔ Choose a shaded position, ideally facing north or east, to reduce the risk of overheating
- ✔ Avoid placing the box in strong direct sunlight, especially on hot south-facing walls.
- ✔ Keep the space below and in front of the box open, so swifts can approach at speed.
- ✔ Avoid enclosed courtyards, narrow spaces or areas blocked by trees, wires or nearby buildings.
- ✔ Fit the box according to its design, with the entrance hole correctly positioned. Most swift boxes need to be fitted horizontally, with the entrance on the bottom edge of the box (either left or right)

Best Practice

- 💡 Install multiple boxes in groups where possible as swifts are sociable birds that like to nest, feed and migrate in groups
- 💡 A swift caller system can be used during breeding season (May–July) to attract birds to the boxes.

Maintenance

Swift boxes usually need very little maintenance, as swifts make small nests and produce little waste. However, every few years check the fixings remain secure and for signs of possible decay.





House Sparrow Boxes

House Sparrows are sociable birds that nest in colonies, so boxes will often have multiple chambers. A nest box with an entrance hole of 32mm diameter works best for this species.

Installation Guidance

- ✓ Install at least 3 metres high above ground level, ideally under the eaves of a house or high on a wall
- ✓ Install north, north-east or east to avoid it getting too hot or wet
- ✓ Avoid installing in sun traps, such as south-facing walls
- ✓ Use next boxes with 32mm entrance holes
- ✓ Position away from predator access (such as cats), doorways and busy paths
- ✓ Install multiple boxes together (terraced design recommended) as Sparrows nest in colonies
- ✓ Where possible, place near shrubs or hedges for shelter





House Martin Nest Cups

House Martins are migratory birds that return to the UK from Africa to breed. They usually build cup-shaped mud nests under the eaves of buildings. Unlike Swallows, which use open cup nests, House Martins build enclosed nests with a small entrance near the top.

House Martins are colonial breeders and often nest in groups of 4-5 nests. Installing several nest cups together can help encourage them to use the site.

Installation Guidance

- ✓ Install nest cups high on a wall, directly under the eaves or soffit.
- ✓ Where possible, install nest cups near the roof apex.
- ✓ Position them at least 2 metres above ground level. The nest must be high enough for the birds to launch and fly away comfortably.
- ✓ North or east-facing walls are usually best, as they help protect nests from strong sun and heavy rain.
- ✓ Keep nest cups at least 0.5 metres away from doors, windows, vents, downpipes or vegetation that could give predators access.
- ✓ Fit the nest cup so the top board sits snugly against the eaves or soffit.
- ✓ Where possible, the sides should sit close to rafters or other solid edges to reduce exposure to weather and predators.
- ✓ Install nest cups in groups of at least four, where space allows.
- ✓ If installing a droppings board, place it at least 2 metres below the nest cups.

Maintenance

They can be **messy** so install a droppings board beneath nests and clean yearly





Swallow Nest Cups

Swallows naturally build open mud-and-straw nests on ledges, often inside buildings such as barns, stables, garages and outbuildings.

They prefer dark ledges, nooks and crannies, and are often found in cold roof voids or open-fronted structures. Open nest cups or bowls are best for Swallows because they mimic the shape of their natural nests.

Installation Guidance

- ✓ Install the nest cup inside an open-fronted structure or dark building, such as a barn, garage, stables, car port or log store.
- ✓ Make sure Swallows have permanent access to the outside throughout the breeding season, such as through an open door, window or other clear opening. The access opening should be at least 50mm high by 200mm wide.
- ✓ Place the nest cup high up in the rafters, at least 2 metres above the ground.
- ✓ Fix the cup firmly to a stable surface, such as a beam, rafter or wall.
- ✓ Allow at least 6cm of free space above the cup, so the birds can get in and out easily.
- ✓ Place individual cups at least 1 metre apart from each other
- ✓ Choose a sheltered position, protected from heavy rain, strong wind and regular disturbance.
- ✓ Keep a clear flight path to and from the nest.
- ✓ Avoid busy areas where people, pets or machinery may disturb the birds.

Best Practice

- 💡 Install the cup before Swallows return to the UK in spring, ideally by March or early April.
- 💡 Place it near areas where Swallows already feed or nest, such as farmland, pasture, gardens, stables, barns or places near water.
- 💡 Consider adding a small droppings board below the nest if it's above an area you want to keep clean.

Maintenance

Swallow nest cups usually require little or no maintenance. Check the cup and fixings outside the breeding season, ideally in autumn or winter. If a nest is occupied, leave it alone until the birds have fully finished breeding and left.



Robin Boxes

Robins naturally nest in holes, hollows and sheltered recesses, and will readily use a suitable open-fronted nest box. They can be very cautious around the nest and may avoid entering if they feel watched or disturbed. Concealment is more important than height when choosing where to place a Robin box.

Installation Guidance

- ✓ Use an open-fronted nest box.
- ✓ Install the box around 1–2 metres above ground level
- ✓ Place it in dense cover, such as ivy, climbing plants, hedges, dense shrubs
- ✓ Face the entrance north-east where possible, or choose another sheltered direction away from strong sun, wind and rain.
- ✓ Avoid obvious sun traps, such as south-facing walls.
- ✓ Keep the box away from busy areas, paths, seating areas and places where pets may disturb the nest.
- ✓ Do not place several Robin boxes close together, as Robins are territorial.

Maintenance

Check and clean the box outside the breeding season, ideally in autumn or winter. Do not disturb the box while it is being used for nesting.





Starling Boxes

Starlings are sociable birds and often spend much of the year in flocks. They naturally nest in holes and cavities, including gaps in buildings and mature trees, and will readily use suitable nest boxes, especially where natural nesting spaces are limited.

Installation Guidance

- ✓ Use a nest box with a 45mm entrance hole.
- ✓ Install the box at least 3 metres above the ground.
- ✓ Suitable locations include under the eaves of a house, on a mature tree, or on a building (integrated into the brickwork or externally mounted)
- ✓ Face the box north or east where possible, to help avoid strong sun and the wettest weather.
- ✓ Keep the box out of direct sunlight and avoid exposed, south-facing positions.
- ✓ Install Starling boxes in groups of at least two, with boxes placed at least 1 metre apart.
- ✓ Keep the box at least 0.5 metres away from doors, windows, vents, downpipes or vegetation that could help predators reach it.
- ✓ Make sure there is a clear flight path to the entrance.
- ✓ Avoid placing the box directly above doors, windows or well-used paths.
- ✓ Place boxes close to open feeding areas, such as lawns, grassland, pasture or gardens.

Maintenance

Check the box and fixings outside the breeding season, ideally in autumn or winter. Clean out old nesting material only when you are sure the box is not in use.





Barn Owl Nest Boxes

Barn Owls are birds of open countryside, especially farmland and rough grassland, where they can hunt small mammals such as voles, mice and rats. They naturally nest in tree hollows and farm buildings, particularly where these are close to suitable hunting habitat.

The best place for a Barn Owl nest box is usually inside a large building that the owl can enter at 3 metres or more above the ground.

Installation Guidance

- ✓ Inside a suitable building is usually the best option, such as a barn, agricultural building or large outbuilding. If there is no suitable building, a tree may be used.
- ✓ Pole-mounted boxes may be useful where no suitable building or tree is available.
- ✓ Avoid siting Barn Owl boxes within 1km of a busy road or motorway, as low-flying Barn Owls are vulnerable to traffic.
- ✓ Keep a clear flight path to the box entrance.

Mounting inside a building:

- ✓ Install the box as high as possible inside the building.
- ✓ Leave at least 450mm between the roof and the top of the box for roosting owls and owlets. If the building has a metal or asbestos roof, allow 975mm clearance where possible.
- ✓ Make sure the box entrance is visible to an owl entering the building.
- ✓ Ensure there are at least two permanent entrance and exit points to the building.
- ✓ Site the box where emerging fledglings can reach beams, ledges or other safe perching areas.
- ✓ Avoid placing the box where it will be exposed to sudden or irregular disturbance.

Mounting on a tree or outside a building:

- ✓ Fix the box to a suitable mature tree or building exterior
- ✓ Avoid using inside woodlands. Barn Owls are not woodland birds and usually need open hunting habitat nearby.
- ✓ Face the entrance east, north-east or south-east, away from the prevailing wind.
- ✓ The top fixing point should ideally be around 3–5 metres above the ground.
- ✓ Avoid placing the box above water-filled ditches or other hazards where young owls could fall.

Best Practice

- 💡 A second box within a few hundred metres can be useful, as paired Barn Owls do not always roost together outside the breeding period.
- 💡 A second box can also provide an alternative roost for the male during the breeding season.
- 💡 There is no need to add nesting material. Barn Owls do not build a typical nest; pellets and debris will gradually form a suitable surface for egg laying.