

SWIFT BOXES FOR SHAMLEY GREEN

If you feel despair at ever-changing global events and want to do something that makes just a tiny, but important, difference, or you **just want to ensure that the sound of approaching summer isn't only a story you tell your grandchildren**, please volunteer your eaves as a nesting box site to increase the density of the nesting options for swifts in Shamley Green. Swifts are gregarious, they like breeding next to other swifts in a concentrated area. Two swift boxes sited together will have far more positive impact than two on separate houses, so please consider if you'd be happy to have two or more.

Quick swift facts, swifts...

- were added to the **Red List** last year
- feed and sleep **on the wing**
- meet-up with their **life-partner** every summer to breed
- fly **7,000 miles** to the UK from Africa each summer to nest
- could **outfly you on the motorway** zooming past at almost 70mph
- were around at the time of **T-Rex** (not the singer...)

Q&A

Q I'm in, where do I sign?

A Click here to [Volunteer Your Eaves!](#)

Q How do I keep up to date with the Project's developments?

A Click here to join the [WhatsApp group](#)

Q How can I communicate with the Project lead?

A Contact Kate at theshamleygreenswiftproject@gmail.com

Q Would you like more detail?

A Yes, please. Read on for why we should help, and how we can make a difference as a village in more depth:

Q So what's the issue?

A Of all the challenges swifts face in their remarkable lives, none is so devastating to their sustained survival as **nesting habitat loss**. Declining air-borne insect numbers, storms caused by climate change which swifts must navigate en-route to the UK from Africa each summer, and changes in how we construct our buildings have all played their part. Swifts have remarkable geographic memories and every year return to the same nesting spot where they meet-up with their life breeding partner. Over time swifts have adapted to our changing landscape, but as previous nesting choices such as cracks in buildings, holes in soffits and facias, and crumbling stone walls are repaired or replaced, swifts seek nest sites in our increasingly urban areas. While well-kept, water-tight and insulated homes are good for the environment in so many ways, the lack of nooks and crevices, particularly under the eaves, significantly reduce nesting options for swifts. This is the critical intervention point where we can disrupt the cycle of decline and make meaningful change, but it will only work in areas where swifts arrive each summer. ShamleyGreen village is a known nesting area.

Q What's the project's goal?

A To enable swifts to continue nesting and breeding in our village by adding to the number and density of nesting options in Shamley Green. The ultimate outcome is to help stem the declining numbers of swifts, perhaps even helping to increase population numbers. In short, the project is all about putting up swift boxes in the right places throughout the village.

Q Are there any swift boxes in situ?

A Last year swift boxes were installed under the eaves of two houses in Shamley Green by knowledgeable volunteers from Hampshire Swifts in collaboration with Guildford Environmental Forum. This year there are House Sparrows in most boxes which is good news because sparrows are also on the Red List and need homes too, and swifts will see the sparrows darting in and out and fly down to investigate. If the swifts go on to take up residence the following year the sparrows are in an area with many other suitable nesting options. While these few boxes are great, they'll only make a real difference in reversing swift decline in our village when there's an increase in the number and density of nesting box numbers. Your household, school or business now enters stage right!

The purpose of this project is to gather a critical mass of interested households so that we can arrange a Shamley Green swift box installation project at scale this Autumn.

Q Can I volunteer my eaves?!

A Yes you can! If you feel despair at ever-changing global political developments and want to do something that makes a tiny but important positive impact, or you just want to ensure that the sound of approaching summer isn't only a story you tell your grandchildren, please volunteer your eaves as a suitable site for, ideally, two nesting boxes. Swifts are gregarious, they like breeding next to other swifts in a concentrated area. Two swift boxes sited together will have far more positive impact than two on separate houses, so please consider if you'd be happy to have two or more boxes.

Q What about the boxes design?

A Hampshire Swifts volunteers have designed specific boxes for the swifts that are functional, smart and can be adapted for most suitable locations. After your expression of interest, you'll be contacted with more specific questions about the walls of your house underneath your eaves. For example to check the type of wall material, whether there are wall-hung tiles, if you'd like the body of the box painted white rather than natural wood. This information is necessary because the team will make all the boxes for our Autumn installation and these boxes must be suited to the intended building.

Q What's the trigger point for installation?

A When 20 households express a clear interest for two boxes or more, in addition to WSG school, Hampshire Swifts have confirmed they have reserved an installation slot for Shamley Green this Autumn.

Q Why are you launching this project? And who are you?!

A I'm Kate and live in the village. I'm not a wildlife expert and I don't have a conservation background either, swifts are a personal interest of mine. Swifts are fascinating birds and their decline is dramatic and sad, but unusually there's a clear local intervention point that could make a real and lasting difference. I'm doing this on a voluntary basis and am raising awareness, garnering interest, and communicating with Sarah Davis of the Guildford Environmental Forum who collaborates with Hampshire Swifts to deliver this project.

Q Is there a cost?

A The **only cost is £35 for the materials for each box**. Essentially the £35 is a donation to cover the cost of the materials used for each specifically designed swift box. Installation will be by experienced volunteers from Hampshire Swifts who have successfully installed hundreds of boxes in nesting sites across Surrey and Hampshire. You would only pay on the agreed day of installation if you have a box installed. No profit is made and volunteers give their time freely. For example, last summer I paid £35 each for two swift boxes, the specially designed boxes which are suitable for swifts, but importantly not larger birds, were made and installed by Hampshire Swifts. Volunteers located the best place to site the boxes - based on several factors such as height of wall, direction wall faces, whether there are nearby ledges or foliage that predators could use to predate on the swifts -



and discussed siting options with me. We agreed on a suitable location under the eaves and the volunteers had the long ladders, tools and equipment to securely fix the boxes with a view to them staying in place for years to come. If no suitable location had been identified, or I didn't want boxes placed in the identified locations for aesthetic reasons, I wouldn't have paid and the boxes wouldn't have been placed. I think my boxes look smart, see if you agree and try to spot the nesting sparrow in the photo at the end.

Refs:

- Sarah Davis, Guildford Environmental Forum <http://www.guildfordenvironment.org.uk/the-swift-project/>
- RSPB <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/swift/>