



HOW TO BUILD THE WOODSTONE SWIFT NEST BOX DEEP INTO CEMENT BLOCK WALLS

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General Information about the Swifts and Nest Boxes

What is a Swift?

- Swifts are a family of birds that look similar to Swallows and Martins
- The Common Swift is the only one of the Swift family that comes to Ireland to breed
- They arrive in Ireland late April/early May and leave in late August when the chicks have left the nest.
- They go to Africa for the winter months.
- The Swift is unique because they eat, drink and sleep on the wing
- They only land to breed between May and August each year so the rest of the year they are flying
- They feed on airborne insects such as midges, aphids and tiny spiders

Find out more about swifts at www.swiftconservation.ie and in the Swift Conservation Ireland booklet 'We are Swifts, We are in Trouble'.

Why does the Swift need our help?

- The Common Swift *Apus apus* is a Red-listed bird of conservation concern in Ireland
- The population has declined in abundance by close to 50% in the past 30 years
- This decline is mostly due to loss of 'traditional' nest sites
- The majority of the 'traditional' nest sites are in old buildings in our urban areas
- When these buildings are renovated/demolished the nest sites are lost and the swifts are homeless
- They come here in May to breed
- They do not breed in Africa – where they spend the winter months
- We can help recovery of the Swifts by providing permanent nest sites where they can breed

Why incorporate nest boxes in the wall of a building?

There are several reasons:

- a) to help recover the declining swift population**
- b) built-in nest boxes are the closest thing to the natural nest sites**
- c) built-in nest boxes will be there for the life of the building which is very important as the Swift is a long-lived bird and 100% faithful to its nest site**
- d) built-in nest boxes have proven to be very effective for attracting Swifts**

Are there any good examples of new buildings with built-in nest boxes?

Examples of several projects in County Mayo :

- 1) Town Hall in Westport where 4 triple cavity boxes were installed in 2014 giving 12 nest boxes. By 2018 all 12 nest boxes were occupied by Swifts.
- 2) New Swimming pool in Castlebar where 8 triple cavity boxes have been installed in the winter of 2017. Within 5 weeks of switching on the attraction calls in May 2018, Swifts were seen entering 7 of the 24 nest boxes. This is an extremely quick take up and seems to indicate that Swifts like built-in nest boxes. In 2019 Swifts were seen entering 10 of the nest boxes.

- 3) Mount St Michael Secondary School, Claremorris – 24 nest built-in in 2019 with 3 being occupied by Swifts in 2021.
- 4) Ballinrobe National School – 16 nest cavities built-in in 2020
- 5) Mary Robinson Centre, Ballina – 12 nest cavities built-in in 2021

How will the Swifts find the nest boxes?

It is essential to play attraction calls. The set-up of the call system can be tailored to suit the building e.g. in the Westport Town Hall the call system is set up in a waterproof box on the flat roof just above the nest boxes. For the Swimming Pool project waterproof speakers have been installed under the overhang of the roof with cabling running through to a maintenance room where the mini amplifier is powered.

SEE ANNEX 1 (page 14) for further information.

Will the birds leave any mess?

It is important to note that these are not messy birds and so **there will be no mess below the nest boxes**. However, the **correct nest entrance size must be used** (i.e. 29-30mm x 65mm maximum) which is ideal for Swifts but too small for a Starling to enter. It is important to use a hole that is too small for Starlings because a) they are aggressive to Swifts and b) they bring in sticks and other nest material which makes the nest box unusable for Swifts.

The Woodstone nest box is a sealed unit which is not an issue because the Swift has a compact nest and does not leave any mess and thus does not need to be cleaned out.

Below is a photo of the nest box project at the Town Hall in Westport which shows no mess on the walls or under the boxes. This project has been in place since 2015. All 8 of these nest boxes have been occupied by Swifts since 2017.

Picture 1. Westport Town Hall built-in boxes in June 2018 - no marks of bird droppings on the wall.



Picture 2. Westport Town Hall – Swifts looking into two of the nest box entrances (June 2018)



Which nest box model should be used ?

We recommend the Woodstone Build-in Swift Nest Box Deep by Vivara Pro – Stock Code 90135.

About the Woodstone Build-in Swift Nest Box Deep

Woodstone nest box products are made by VivaraPro. In 2012, following several years of research, development and trials, they launched the WoodStone® range.

They are made from a mix of concrete and responsibly sourced wood fibres.
According to VivaraPro this mix of materials provides:

- Excellent insulating properties which give a more consistent internal temperature
- A very durable exterior which makes the boxes resistant to all weather conditions
- They are breathable, avoiding problems with condensation

Pros :

- a) The nest compartment dimensions provide an adequate space for breeding Swifts
- b) The builders find it easy to work with because it is a similar size to a cement block
- c) It is readily available with delivery time usually in a matter of weeks
- d) Very cost effective

External Dimensions	Internal Dimensions
Length : 42cm	Length: 38cm
Depth : 15.5cm	Depth: 14cm
Height : 18cm	Height: 13cm

- Weight : 5.3kg
- Entrance hole dimensions : 60mm (W) x 29-30mm (H)

This nest box has a nest concave in the floor and ceiling of the box which means there is no risk of installing the nest box the wrong way up.



Where to buy the Woodstone Swift Nest Box Deep?

At the time of writing, there is NO supplier in Ireland but you can buy them from the following UK suppliers :

1) NHBS

NHBS in the UK but has an EU office in Germany which allows purchase in Euros.

We recommend phoning to request quotation including Irish VAT rate of 23% and shipping costs.

<https://www.nhbs.com/woodstone-build-in-swift-nest-box-deep>

NOTE : you need to select the EUR icon on the top right of the toolbar

(cost per box ex-VAT and delivery at time of writing is €31.08).

They usually deliver within a few weeks of payment of your order.

2) Wildcare

Wildcare in the UK but has an EU office in France which allows purchase in Euros.

We recommend phoning to request quotation including Irish VAT rate of 23% and shipping costs.

<https://www.wildcare.eu/10736-nichoir-martinets-encastrer.html>

NOTE : their EU website is in French but you can phone them using the UK phone number on their UK

website <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/10736-vivara-pro-woodstone-build-in.html>

(cost per box ex-VAT and delivery at time of writing is €26.12).

3) VivaraPro

VivaraPro are the manufacturers of the Woodstone Swift Nest Box Deep.- Stock Code 90135

They have a UK office and you can buy direct from them.

There is free delivery to Ireland for orders over €1,500 but orders between €500 to €1,499 there is a €75 pallet fee. Minimum order is €500 plus delivery.

NOTE : they cannot charge Irish VAT, therefore, you must ask for a quotation in Euros excluding VAT.

https://www.vivarapro.co.uk/quote/add?p_id=130&p_qty=1

You will then pay Irish VAT of 23% to the import agent prior to delivery. This item is exempt from customs duty (cost per box incl. VAT and delivery for order over €1,500 at time of writing is €32.00)

NOTE : You have to supply them with an EORI number which you can obtain from Irish Revenue

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/customs-traders-and-agents/customs-electronic-systems/eori-system.aspx>

They usually deliver within a few weeks of payment of your order.

Alternatively : Swift Conservation Ireland does usually hold a stock of these nest boxes and may be able to supply if there is an urgency to the project.

For enquiries email swiftconservationireland@gmail.com.

Installing the Woodstone Swift Nest Box Deep

Picture 3. The Woodstone 90135 nest box can easily be incorporated into a cement block wall



Picture 4. The block protrudes a few cms into the cavity but there is adequate room for insulation. The insulation in the cavity can simply continue behind the block, so there is no thermal bridge. If insulation has to be cut away, it is important to cut the insulation around the circumference of the block.



Picture 5a. View of cavity space at Ballinrobe NS, Co. Mayo



Picture 5b. Woodstone nest boxes incorporated in walls of Ballinrobe NS, Co. Mayo



Picture 5c. A piece of foam insulation is placed in the entrance hole to ensure the shape and size of the hole is protected during rendering process.

We want the entrance hole size to be retained as close as possible to its original size. The piece of foam must be removed once the rendering is complete



What is the ideal location for nest boxes being built into a wall?

- any aspect is ok N, S, E or W.
- **Minimum** 5 metres above ground level with a clear exit and entry path e.g. no flat roofed extension below the nests.
- **OPEN ASPECT** in front so that birds can get a direct flight in and out (these birds do not perch so must have direct flight path in and out) i.e. no large trees or high walls close to the building
- **NOT** directly under or close to spotlights **AND NOT** on a wall that would have floodlights shining onto it which would potentially blind birds entering or leaving the nest boxes in the evening. They will enter and leave nest sites in the near dark.
- **NOT** near flapping flags because birds could collide with these when leaving or approaching the nest site.

Can the nest boxes be placed one above the other?

NO - they must either be placed side by side or staggered (see photos below). This is so that the birds do not collide when approaching their nest site at speed – their usual approach speed is 30 miles per hour.

Picture 6. Boxes being installed in a row at Ballinrobe National School, Co. Mayo



Picture 7. This picture is of Ballinrobe National School rendered and ready for painting.



Picture 8. Ballinrobe National School pool wall finished with nest box entrance holes clearly visible in a horizontal row.



Picture 9. Mount St Michael project completed with entrances aligned and call system in place



Picture 10. Sancta Maria College in Louisburgh will speaker installed in soffit above nest boxes



ANNEX 1. ATTRACTION CALLS

An attraction call system must be used to help the Swifts locate the nest boxes and to ensure that the project is a success.

The call system is made up of a waterproof speaker that must be located near the nest boxes. A speaker cable runs from the speaker to an amplifier. The amplifier should be located in a storeroom, office or similar location where it can be accessed in May to switch on the calls and September to switch off the calls.

Where to locate the speaker and amplifier is particular to every project depending on the design of the building.

Picture 11. Westport Town Hall the call system was installed on the flat roof just above the nest boxes.

A special waterproof electric box was used for this purpose to house the plugs and amplifier.



Picture 12. At the Swimming Pool externally fitted speaker box

Water proof speakers have been installed on the exterior wall just above the nest boxes with cabling running to the amplifier located indoors next to a plug socket. The amplifier is located in a storeroom.



Picture 13. Mount St Michael Secondary School, waterproof speaker in fascia board above nest boxes. The amplifier is located in the Principal's office.

A water proof speaker was incorporated into the fascia board.



NPWS Lure Licence

Call systems and advice on how and where to locate them can be obtained from Swift Conservation Ireland by emailing swiftconservationireland@gmail.com

Attraction calls should be played under a lure licence from NPWS. For projects that are associated with Swift Conservation Ireland, the playing of attraction calls will be covered under their NPWS licence - full details of location of site and contact person must be supplied.

Acknowledgements :

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