

London's Swifts

Swift Nest Boxes for use in trees

Swifts will sometimes nest in trees, if they can find a suitable hole. In the wild these are usually very old and well rotted out Great Spotted Woodpecker holes, not common in managed forests. We can assist Swifts by providing robust weatherproof boxes at suitable sites. They can be made economically from sections of tree trunk, or else from exterior quality plywood. Two types are shown below.



Swift nestbox in Abernethy Forest
Photo © Richard Thaxton RSPB Scotland



Swift and nestboxes in Swedish Lapland
Photo © Arthur Leidgren

Tree boxes should be fitted so the Swifts can easily access them, with clear flight lines to the entrance. They must be sited at least 7 metres above the ground. They should be so strongly fixed they will only come down if the tree is toppled by a storm. They should also be easily and safely accessible and removable for maintenance. They can be made from:

1. drilled or hollowed out sections of tree trunk, or
2. sawn and nailed/screwed slabs of tree trunk, or
3. 12mm to 24mm exterior quality plywood,

All internal surfaces must be well roughened to permit the swifts to climb in and out.

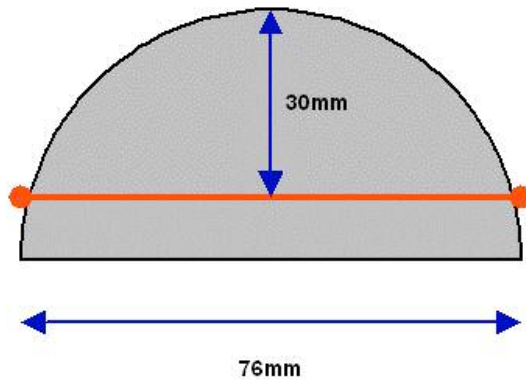
The diagrams below show two types and how they are made. Using the dimensions and guidance given, cut the timber and make up the boxes. For Type 1, drill or hollow out the logs, then cap them and fit a base.

An alternative, (easier to make than by hollowing or drilling out logs, though the resulting box is not so long lasting) is to cut logs vertically into four walls (see Type 2 below). Discarding the inner core, make up the box to look as much like an original piece of tree trunk as possible, and then fit a roof/lid and base. Or else make up this design in thick weatherproof plywood. The lid can be covered with roofing felt to give

it greater resistance to the weather. **NB the interior of the boxes should be left rough or else well grooved so the Swifts can get a grip to climb in and out.**

The entrance hole can be either a 50mm diameter round hole, or if Starlings are a problem, the special Starling resistant semi-lunar hole below may be useful.

A Starling-Proof Swift Nest Box Entrance Hole



INSTRUCTIONS

Draw a semi-circle 76mm wide at its base on the material making up the front of the nestbox, or covering the existing entry.

Measure down 30mm from the top of the semi-circle and mark a horizontal line across the circle (the red line).

Cut out the material between the red line and the top of the semi-circle. Do not cut below the red line.

Ensure accuracy, as the dimensions are critical to success.

nb: this drawing is not to scale.

Tree Nestboxes for Swifts

Internal Dimensions (Drawings not to scale)

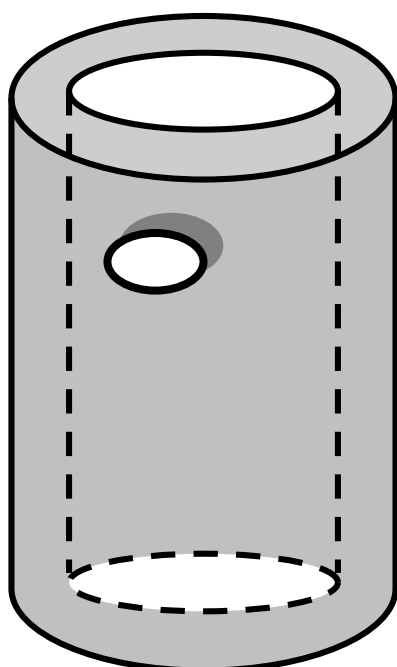
Total Internal depth = 55cm Internal dimensions 16cm x 16cm x 55cm

Height from floor to bottom of entrance hole = 40cm Entrance hole = 5cm diameter

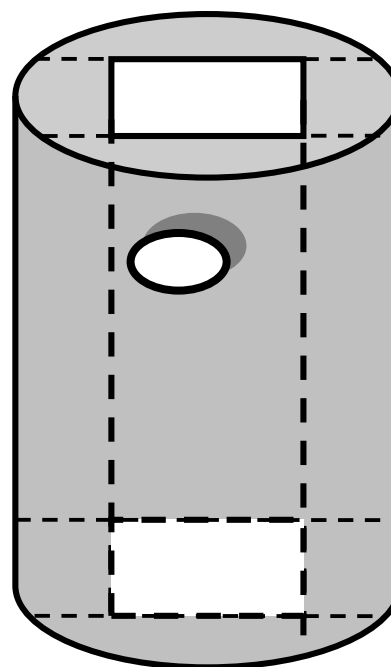
Height from top of entrance hole to roof = 10cm

Lid and base can be slices of tree trunk or slabs of timber or ply. Top may be covered with roofing felt.

Similar sized boxes may be made out of weather-proof plywood - see photograph above left.



Type 1. Box made from hollowed or drilled out section of tree trunk, with entrance hole. Base and lid have yet to be fitted.



Type 2. Box made from 4 sawn and screwed / nailed slabs of tree trunk, retaining the bark, with entrance hole. Base and have yet to be fitted.