

BRISTOL SWIFTS

Swift Box Design

One of the best ways to help swifts is to provide suitable nesting sites for them. Ideally these would be either internally built 'swift bricks' or holes put into the soffits of your roof – an alternative advice sheet is available for these options. However, swifts take quite readily to external nest boxes and can often be a more viable option for your home.

Tips before you start to install your own

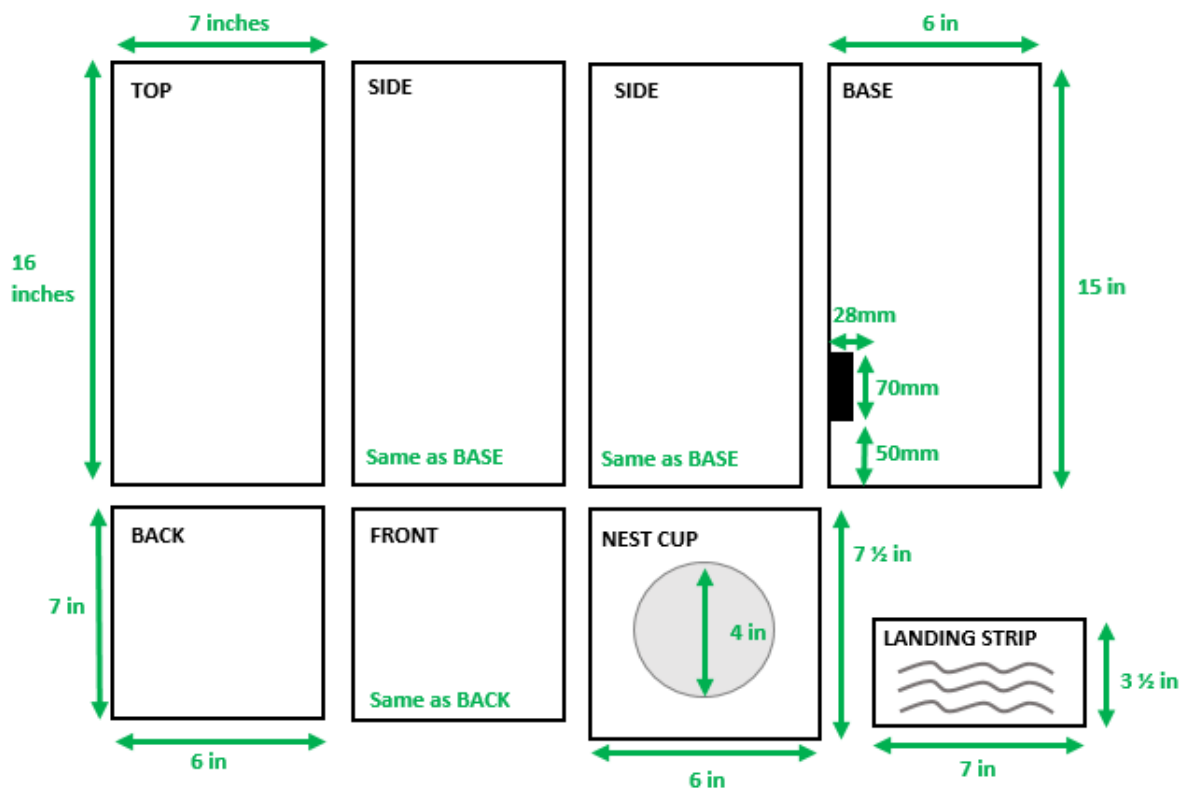
1. Do you have swifts or ones which fly overhead or nearby?
If you do then you are half way there. Unfortunately if you haven't then it could be difficult to attract swifts, but not impossible; see 'how to – attract swifts' advice sheet.
2. Do you know if and where you have swifts nesting already around your house?
If yes, try and install your new boxes as close to them as possible whilst leaving a gap of at least 0.5m between the entrance hole and new boxes. If no, try to find out using our 'how to – survey for swifts' advice sheet.

Swift box design

There are many swift box designs available online and it is hard to know which ones are the best. Here are three which have been tried and tested and have the highest occupancy rate. All boxes are designed to fit under soffits which are less than 205mm deep and can be adapted to suit most sized soffits. Each design costs less than £10 per box and each box design is suitable to be drawn **twice** on a piece of 12mm hardwood (marine) ply – size of sheet is given on drawings.

Glanville Single Box

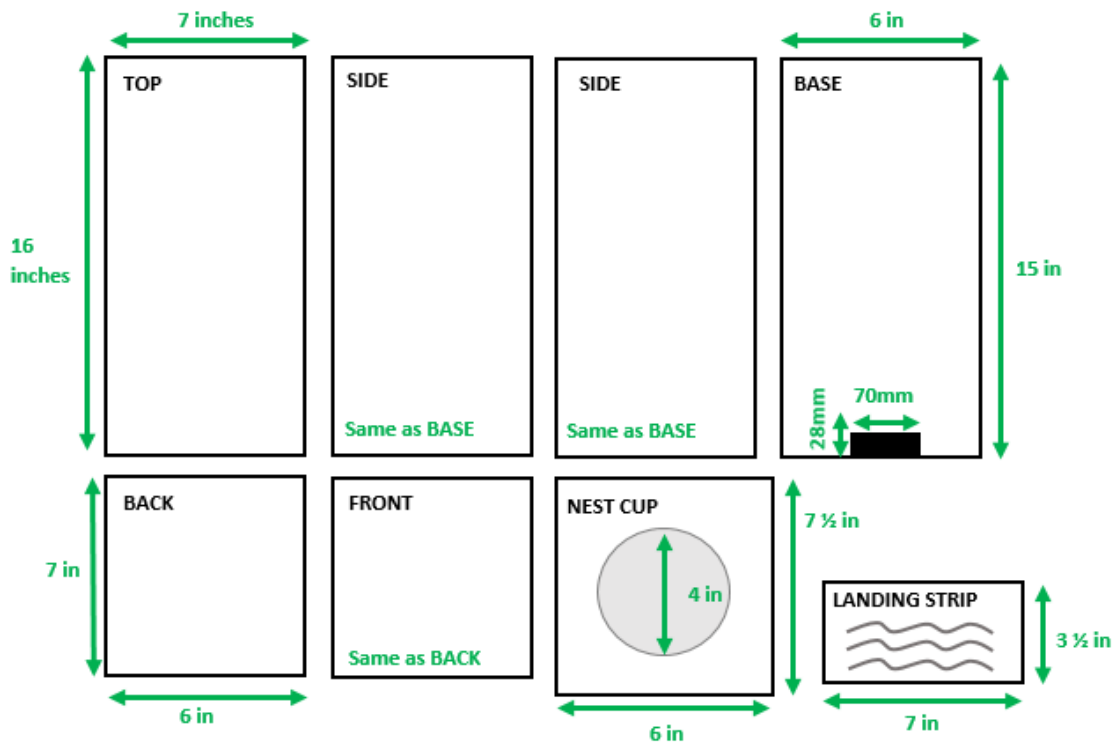
Use 1829mm x 607mm sheet of 12mm hardwood plywood



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Glanville Corner Box

Use 1829mm x 607mm sheet of 12mm hardwood plywood



Both these boxes share a similar design but with the entrance hole moved to match whether your box is for the gable end of your roof or mid-way along the soffit. Gable end (corner) boxes appear to



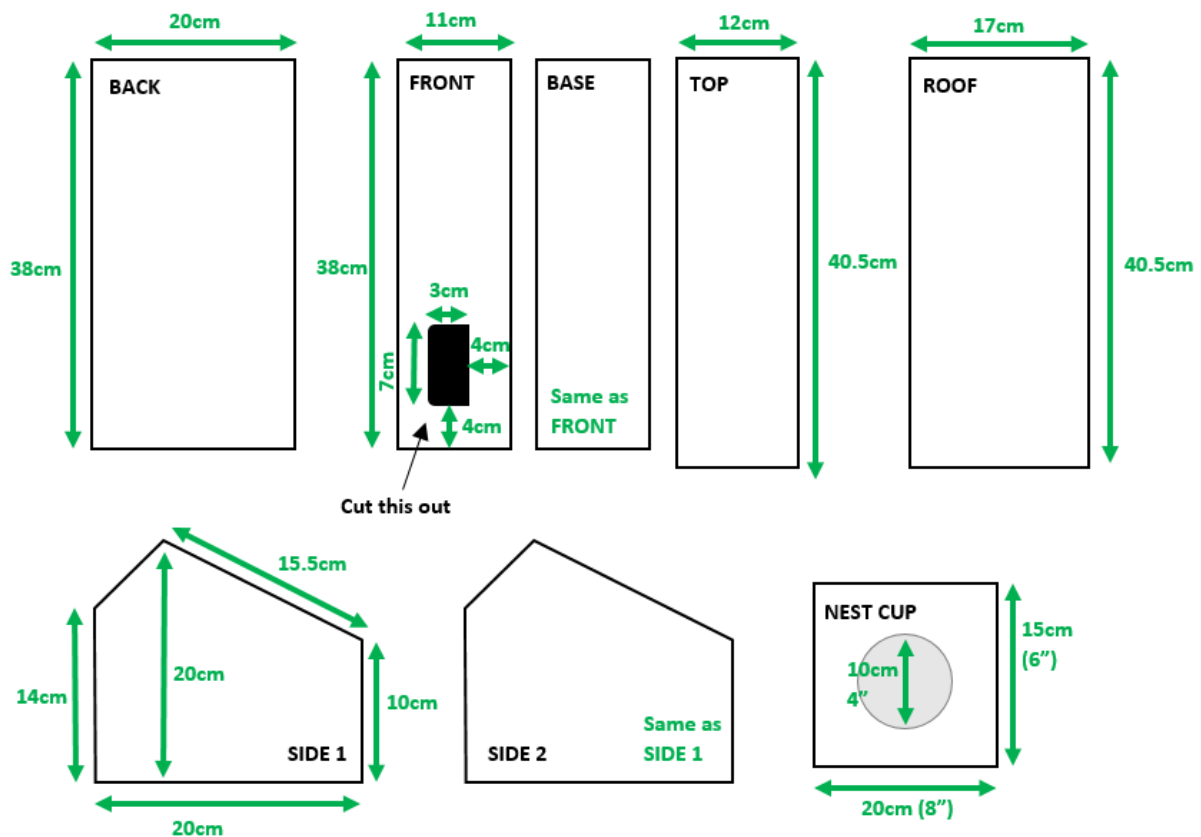
be the swift's preference with faster uptake than mid-soffit boxes although both designs are effective and used frequently.

Glanville Zeist Box design shown below is an alternative to the Glanville Single Box design above. Neither is more or less effective than the other, however, swifts are more likely to occupy a box whose entrance hole resembles the direction of any natural nest holes present on the building i.e. forward facing or gap underneath. The Glanville Zeist box is more suited to those swifts which have forward facing holes and fly directly into the nest entrance hole where as the Glanville Single Box is better suited to those which fly in underneath, momentarily land, and then climb in through the entrance hole. If you don't have swifts nesting on your house then don't worry too much, swifts are able to adapt.

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Glanville Zeist Box

Use 1220mm x 607mm sheet of 12mm hardwood plywood



Extra Tips

- Take your time drawing out the component parts on your plywood sheet. A mistake at this stage can make it very difficult to assemble later – see *appendix for suggested layouts*. Pre-drill any holes using a suitably sized Predrill Countersink before using any screws to avoid splitting the wood. The predrill should make a hole a bit smaller than your screw thread.
- Use 25mm galvanised screws to fasten the box together as they are the right length and resistant to rusting.
- Use 'No Nails' adhesive on each joint to improve strength and increase water resistance. Do not use on the roof otherwise you'll never be able to do any internal maintenance if needed.

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Adding a landing strip

These can be attached using a combination of 'No Nails' adhesive and a small square bracket attached to the back of the landing strip and into the base of the box. Add a few ribbed lines using the 'No Nails' adhesive just below the entrance hole on the landing strip – swifts appear to like to have this to grip onto as they climb into the box and helps give them confidence when investigating a new box.

Painting your box

External

Paint the external panels of your box any colour you like or to match the colour of your house to help your boxes blend in. Ideally stick to light colours, white or cream preferably, as these help reflect sunlight and help stop the boxes over heating during very sunny days.

It can also be worth painting a small black square at the base of the entrance hole which, for some unknown reason, seems to help swifts identify and locate entrance holes of new sites faster than those without.



Internal

A few experiments have taken place with painting the internal walls of boxes and have shown some evidence that swifts prefer a darkened box. Therefore, you can increase your chances of your box being used by painting the inside with brown/black emulsion paint. Avoid painting the nest cup which should remain paint free.



Creating the nest cup

Creating and positioning the nest cup can be a fiddly little job and as such there is a separate advice sheet for this. Please refer to the 'How to – make internal nest cups' advice sheet.



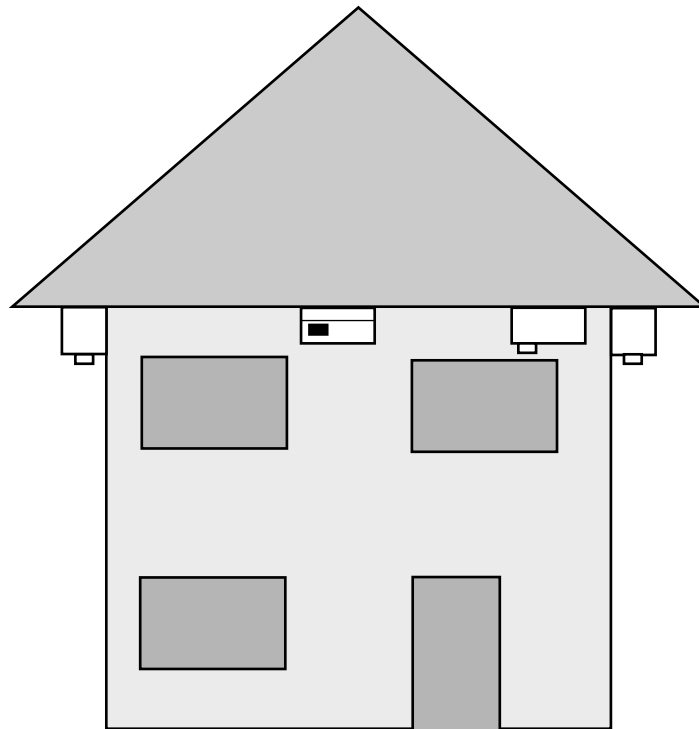
Where to place your box

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The nest box ideally should be at least 5 metres above the ground, although swifts have been known to nest as low as 1.5 metres. The nest box can be fitted to any aspect, however if fitted on the south side precaution should be taken to avoid the effects of the mid-day sun; painting it a light colour can help. Swifts also appear to have a preference for boxes positioned between two buildings with an alleyway between and boxes which are as close to the corners as possible.

The flight path into the nest box should be free from nearby obstacles such as trees or wires as this deters them from attempting to fly into a box. Finally a sound system located next to the nest box playing swift attraction calls really helps attract swifts. Play the calls as loud as you can without annoying your neighbours – read our ‘How to - attract swifts’ advice sheet.



The drawing above shows a Glanville Corner Box on each side at the gable ends, one Glanville Single Box and one Glanville Zeist Box along the soffit. These boxes have been depicted at the front of the house but are suitable for any side and positioned for your preference of aesthetic look if required.

How to install your box onto a building

You can install your box using 50mm corner brackets. Place one on either side of the box at the top of the box and then into the outside wall using wall plugs and a long screw (~50mm). For extra support you can place a third bracket underneath the box and fasten to the outside wall.

Take care when putting any box up and don't take any risks on a ladder – please read the Swift Conservation website '*Fitting nest box safety guidelines*' and Ladder Safety.

