

Activity

Create a high home for Swifts

Set up a nestbox to give summer-visiting Swifts a place to nest and breed year after year.

5 min read



Swifts come back to the same nest year after year. They like high, deep crevices for nesting, but the loss of many old buildings and the filling in and mending of roof spaces are shutting Swifts out of their favourite sites.

Their numbers have declined dramatically and they're now on the UK Red list of Birds of Conservation Concern. But you can help. Fix a wooden Swift nestbox to the outside of your home to give them somewhere to nest.

You can buy a ready-made box from our RSPB shop or if you fancy a bit of DIY, here's how to make a Swift nestbox.



How to make a home for Swifts

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Instructions	What you'll need
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Estimated time: 3-4 hours

Season: Autumn, Winter, Spring

Skill level: Advanced

Instructions

Where to put a Swift box

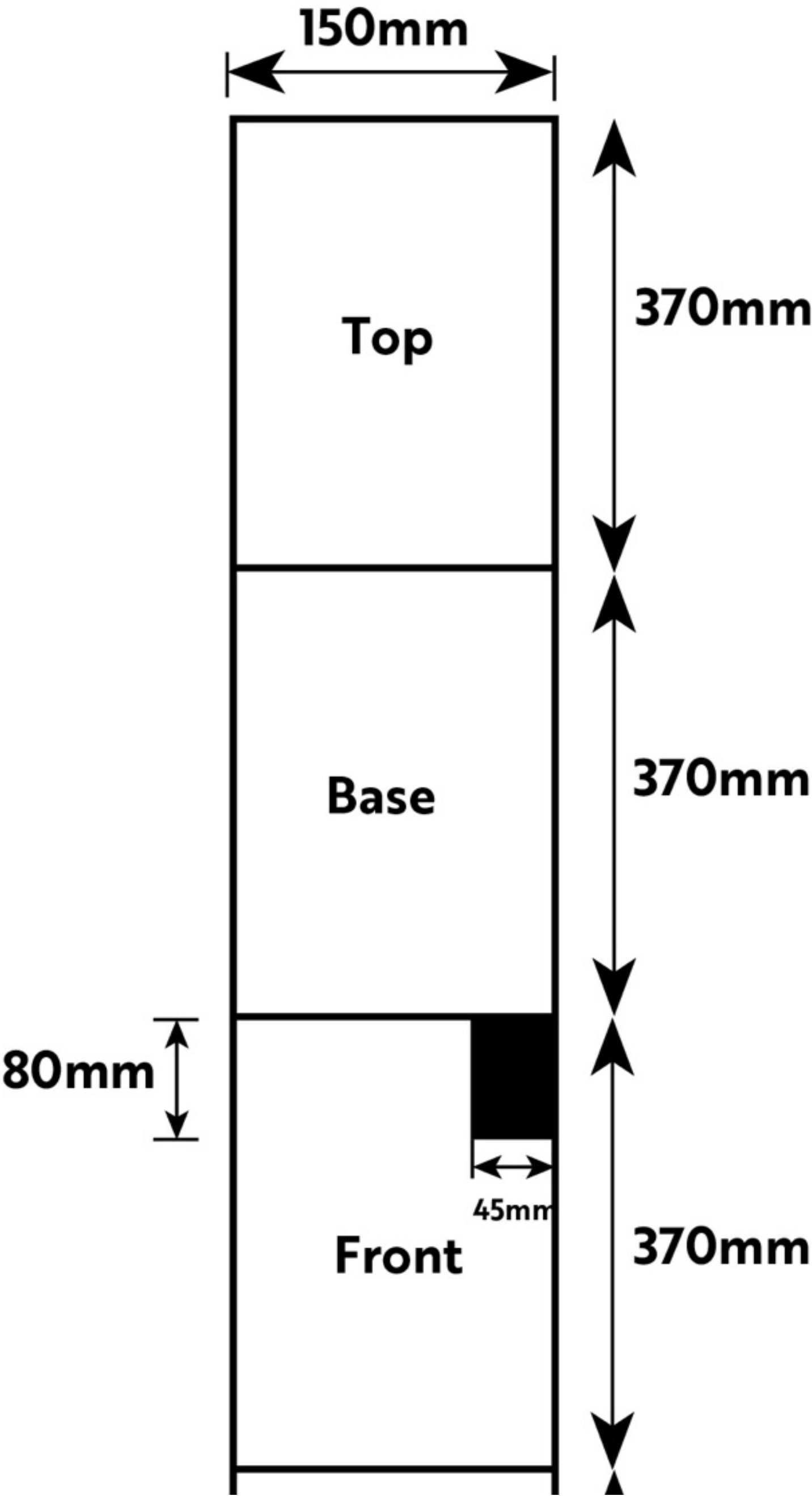
First you'll need to check you have a suitable spot for your nestbox. Place it on the wall of a building, tightly under the eaves (where the roof hangs over the walls). It should be at least 5m (16 feet) above the ground and easy for Swifts to fly into. Think of how a Swift will approach the nest – it flies down and then up to the nest site at speed, the upward swoop helps it slow down to land. The box shouldn't be in direct sunlight, so place it on a wall that faces north, east or somewhere in between. (Note: If you are having major renovation works done, you can use a special Swift brick. These fit into the fabric of the outer house wall. However, it should only be done by a qualified builder.)

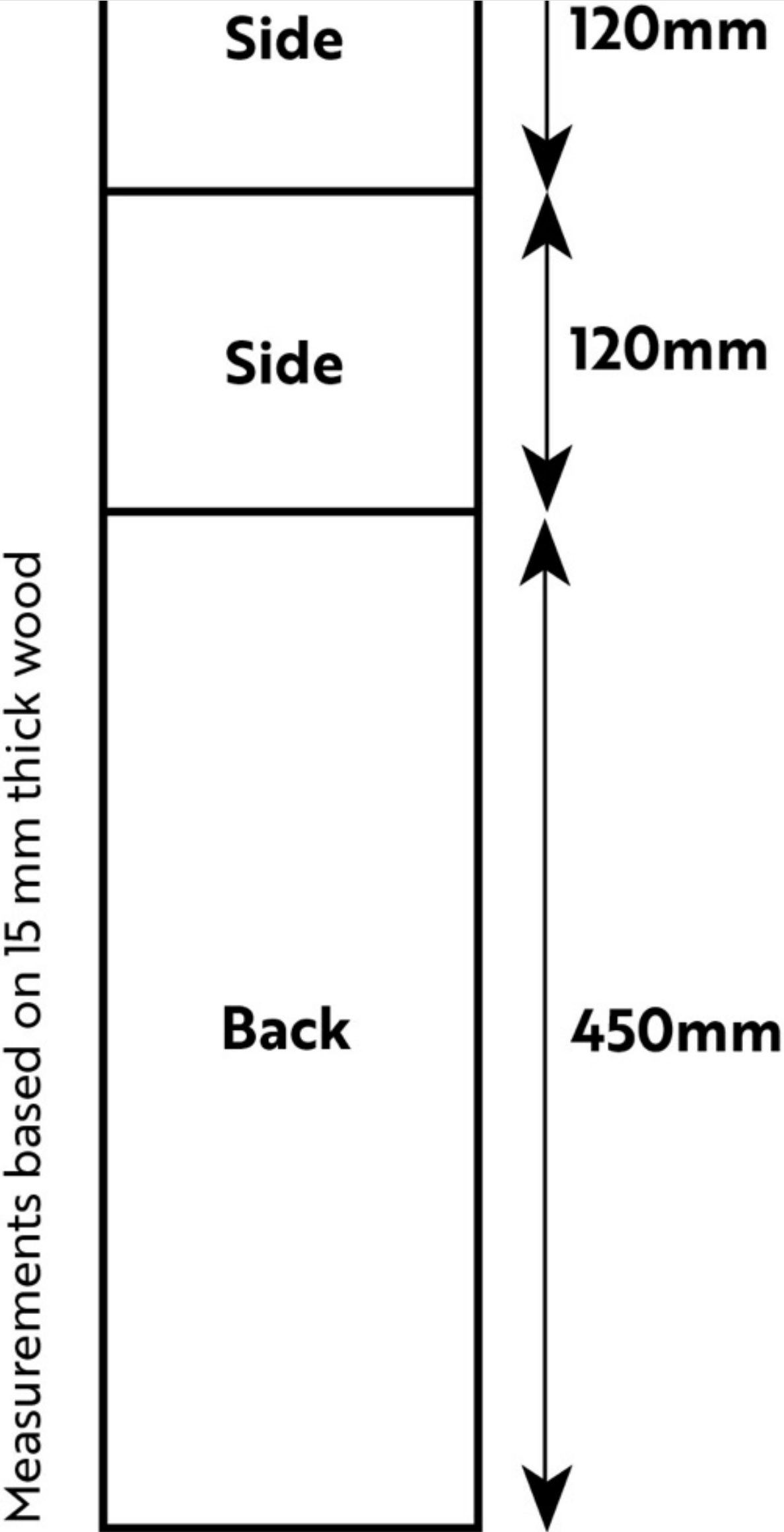


Swift nestbox plans – make your own

Measure out the pieces of your exterior plywood according to our diagram. Cut all the pieces, including the rectangular hole into the front, shown in black. For plywood 15mm thick, the hole should be cut 45mm high and 80mm wide.

Note: Plywood comes in different thicknesses, so you will need to adjust the size of the rectangular entry hole you cut according to the wood thickness you are using.





help shelter it from the elements. The wedge will need to be sloping to prevent predators from perching on it.

Putting up your Swift box

Use the projections on the backplate of the box to screw it firmly to the masonry of the house, tightly under the eaves. Avoid fixing it over any doors or windows.



Attracting Swifts to your nestbox

It’s not guaranteed that Swifts will find your box, but you can boost the chances by playing taped Swift calls via loudspeaker during the breeding season (May-July).

If you do manage to attract them, remember Swifts are sensitive to disturbance and protected by law, so watch the nestbox from the ground or install a camera inside before the breeding season starts.

Create a Swift colony

Swifts are sociable birds that like to nest, feed and migrate in groups. They mate for life and like to return to the same nesting site year after year. So if you have space, why not put up a number of boxes, near each other?

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