

Swift Nest Boxes

Specification extract · Pages 56–59

What this document is

This is an extract of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) document “ACRES Co-operation Non-Productive Investments Specification”, Version 2.2, July 2026. It contains the pages covering the Swift Nest Boxes action (pages 56–59 of the full specification).

Because the specification runs each action straight into the next, the first and last pages of this extract may also show the end or beginning of a neighbouring action. The section for this action starts on page 56 (the printed page number matches the page number in the full document).

Always check the current version

DAFM updates the specification from time to time. The full document is the authoritative version and should be consulted before undertaking any work. It is available from:

Full specification (PDF, opens at this action):

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/f8e2ccf8/NPI_specifications_July_2026_2.pdf#page=56

ACRES NPI page on gov.ie:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/f5a48-agri-climate-rural-environment-scheme-acres/#non-productive-investments>

About this action on the ACRES CP website

<https://acresireland.ie/action-projects/npi-swift-nest-boxes/>

4. Allow birds permanent access to building during the breeding season via an open window or door.
5. In farm buildings, fix the nest box wooden board vertically to the wall or beam. If positioning the nest box close to the roof leave 6cm between the nest and the roof to allow adequate space to enter and exit the nest.
6. Swallow/House Martin nest boxes must be purchased, and the receipt must be retained by the participant. They can be purchased on the following link [BirdWatch Ireland ACRES](#) or contact the CP Teams who can advise on sourcing nest boxes.
7. Repair or replace damaged boxes as required throughout the remainder of the contract.
8. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once delivered in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional Guidance

- House Martin nest boxes erected outside buildings are ideally at least 4m off the ground. They should be located under the eaves where they will get some protection from wind, rain and direct sun.
- Do not install swallow boxes near direct artificial lights as they prefer dark, cosy corners.
- Allow birds permanent access to building during the breeding season via an open window or door or make a small opening minimum 50mm high and 200mm wider under eaves of the building.
- Farmers can participate in recording sightings of swallows here at [Ireland-Spring Alive](#)
- A video on the importance of buildings for supporting wildlife can be found on [BirdWatch Ireland](#).



Picture 2: Swallow Nestbox Birdwatch Ireland

Swift Boxes

Objective

Provide specialised nest boxes and lure/callers to encourage swifts to nest from April to August.

Background

Swifts feed on flying insects. Swifts visit Ireland from Africa; they arrive in April and depart in August. Swifts are dark brown all over with a pale throat. Swifts spend most of their lives airborne, in contrast to Swallows and Martins which frequently spend time perching on telegraph wires and fences - a swift will never be seen perched. Swifts nest in small gaps in buildings; under eaves or in cavities in walls. Swifts have one brood per year of 2 or 3 eggs. Swifts are endangered (red listed) because their population has declined by over 50% in the last 20 years. Swifts are difficult to monitor so it's unclear why their population is declining. Fewer flying insects due to habitat loss and climate change may be a factor. However, less nesting sites because of refurbishment of older building and modern building designs may also be contributing to their decline. Swifts use the same nest site every year. However, young Swifts or pairs displaced from nest sites will be seeking new nesting opportunities. Providing artificial nest boxes allows these young birds to find homes if natural nest sites are limited. Swifts are faithful to their nest sites, if they occupy a nest box, they are likely to do so for life. Boxes installed during the scheme should be made of long-life durable material and should be maintained after the end of the scheme. It is essential to install and operate a lure/caller to attract swifts to a newly installed nest box. The lure should be played between April and August each year, until such times as the boxes are all occupied by nesting pairs.

Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > or = 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- Swift nest boxes must be externally installed on outbuildings e.g. sheds, barns, stables in all parcels owned by CP participants.
- Swift boxes should not be located within 250m of a wind turbine.
- Swift boxes should not be located within 30m of major roads, such as motorways and busy national or regional roads due to risk of collision of birds with traffic.
- Boxes should not be installed close to opposing glass windows as there is an in-flight collision risk if the swifts can see through the building.
- Swift boxes must not be attached to historic archaeological structures, e.g. castles, churches, ringforts etc.
- Where Swift boxes are installed in the same parcel/farmyard as Barn Owl/Kestrel nest boxes, they should not be facing each other to reduce the risk of predation. Swift boxes should not be placed on the same building as a Barn Owl/ Kestrel box.

Requirements

1. Swift boxes must be new. They must not have been installed in a previous agricultural scheme (e.g. bird boxes in GLAS).
2. Swifts nest in colonies, so a minimum of three single-entry nest boxes or one triple entry nest box must be purchased and installed at each selected location.

3. Each point drawn on the GLAM map represents 3 Swift Boxes. Each group of swift boxes applied for are only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
4. The nest boxes must be purchased new and be manufactured from wood concrete (woodcrete), woodstone or cellular magnesia cement board. Swift boxes must be purchased, and the receipt must be retained by the participant.
5. Boxes should be installed under the roof eaves and at least 5m high on a sheltered, non-south-facing wall, with a clear flight path from the entrance. Ensure boxes are at least 40cm apart.
6. A lure/caller (wall mounted speakers emitting a call to attract unpaired swifts to the box locations) is required when installing nest boxes. Callers can be integrated into the box or purchased separately but must be installed as close as possible to the installed box(es). The caller must be operational (i.e. emitting sound and connected to an electricity supply) between the 1st of April and the 31st of August. A box and lure can be purchased on the following link [BirdWatch Ireland ACRES](#) but you are not limited to this supplier. Alternatively contact the CP Teams who can advise on sourcing nest boxes.
7. Repair or replace damaged boxes as required throughout the remainder of the contract.
8. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once delivered in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional Guidance

- Ensure proper safety procedures are adhered to during installation.
- There should be a clear flightpath in front of the nest box because the Swifts need to free-fall as they leave the nest.
- Situate swift nest boxes in shaded site away from full sun in Summer or artificial light.
- Swifts nest in colonies, so you need more than one nest box at your chosen location. You can purchase nest boxes with multiple cavities (that have a dividing wall between each nest area).
- The entrance hole should measure no larger than 29mm x 65mm, this is smaller than the standard European entry size (32mm x 65mm) due to the risk in Ireland, of Starlings gaining entry through the larger entrance.
- When operating the lure, the volume should be set to a normal bird call level. It should not cause disturbance to people or other wildlife in the area.
- Calls should be set on a timer or played at certain times of the day and not played on a 24hour loop. Recommended playing times are from dawn for approximately 3 to 6 hours and from 6pm to dark.
- BirdWatch Ireland's booklet on saving swifts with advice on installation of boxes can be accessed on the BirdWatch Ireland website, <https://birdwatchireland.ie/publications/saving-swifts-guide/>.
- Contact your local CP team for further information on ordering a nest box and caller. You can also find more information on <https://www.swiftconservation.ie> and contact Swift Conservation Ireland for further advice on nest boxes, lures and installation.

- Farmers can participate in recording sightings of swifts here at [Ireland-Spring Alive](#)
- A video on the importance of buildings for supporting wildlife can be found on [BirdWatch Ireland](#).



Picture 3: [Swift Conservation Ireland](#) Two swifts at nest box site – Copyright © Martin Leak

Wader Scrapes

Objective:

To create opportunities for waders to feed and to support aquatic insects through the creation of small, shallow, and often seasonal pools.

Background:

Small, seasonal pools support a wide range of invertebrates and provide feeding opportunities for waders and other bird species alike. Wader scrapes are shallow pools which can be created to increase the area of wet feature edge. They are typically located in naturally low-lying areas. Wet flushes occur when the water table is high and/or there is low soil permeability.

Site Suitability:

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is only available the following scorecard types: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Coastal, Peatland (restricted to cutover), Low Input Peat Grassland and Breeding Wader.
- Wader scrapes should not be located within 250m of a wind turbine.
- Wader scrapes should not be located within 30m of major roads, such as motorways and busy national or regional roads due to risk of collision of birds with traffic.
- Wader scrapes should not be located within 10m of watercourses as there is a risk during times of high rainfall or flooding of run off and water quality impacts.
- Do not locate wader scrapes within 30m of scrub, hedgerows, woodland or forestry which could provide cover for predators.