



How to make your nestbox for a bird



HEIDELBERGCEMENT



spring alive



Swift Rundun

Habitat and Ecology

The Swift is a medium-sized bird with long aerodynamic wings, specialised for life in the sky. In fact, it spends all its life flying, only returning to land to breed. Its broad mouth allows it to feed on insects and spiders while in flight.

It is a long-distance migrant, wintering in sub-Saharan Africa and is widespread and common across European countries.

Breeding in Malta

Swifts can be seen from mid-March to mid-November in both rural and urban areas. Swifts breed regularly in the urban areas such as Sliema, Paceville and San Gwann as well as in the crevices at Mellieħa Church and at St. Paul's Cathedral at Mdina.

Breeding behaviour

Swifts nest mainly in buildings but have also been known to use rock crevices. They build a nest cup from small pieces of vegetal matter and feathers.

Where you can install the nest box?

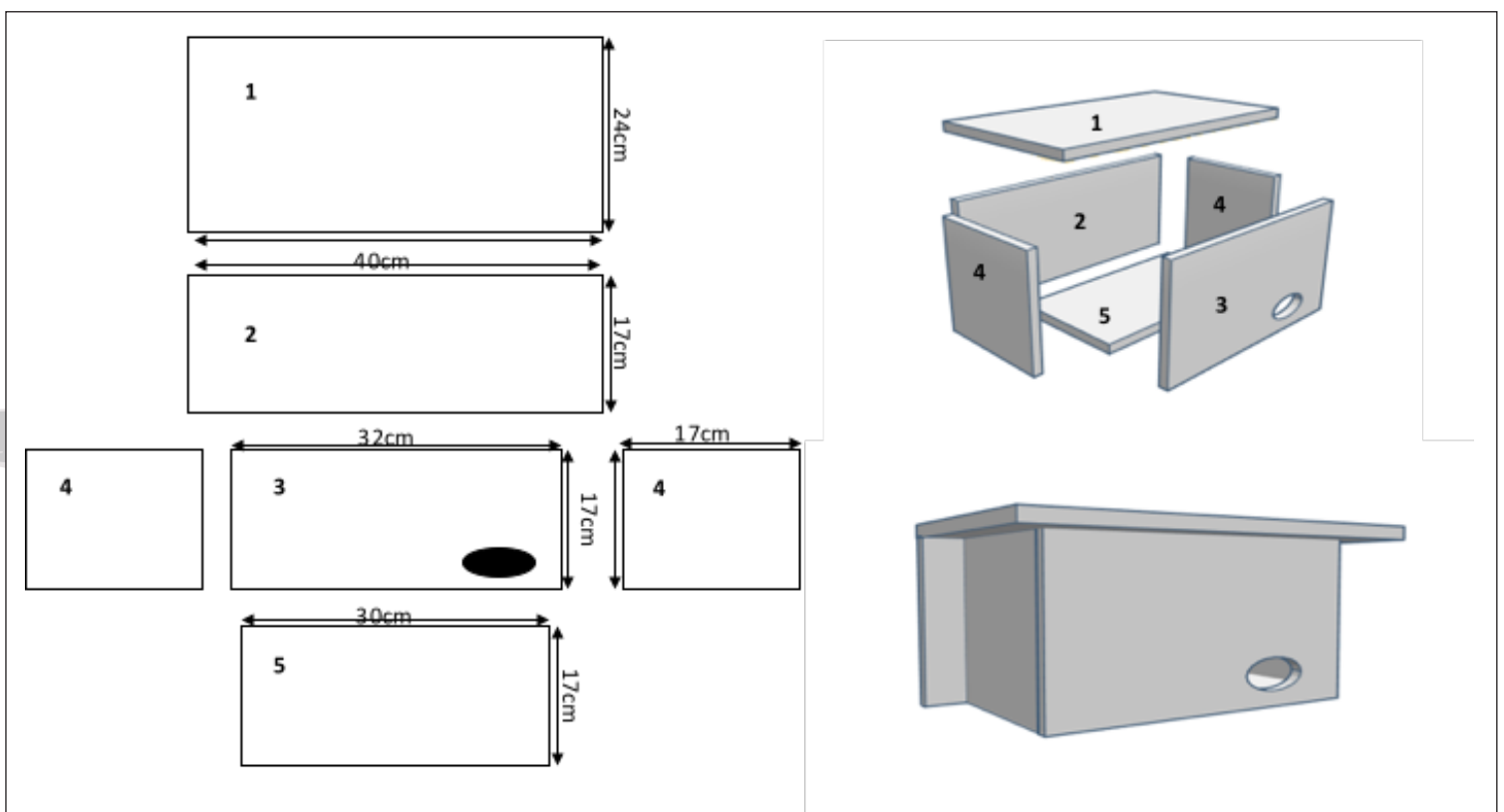
Ideally placed in a high location with a clear front, such as a tall building. The box should be placed under the eaves, approximately 5m above the ground.

Illustration Victor Falzon

How to make your Swift Nest Box

Materials

- Wood plank of at least 15mm thick to provide enough insulation - ideally marine plywood
- Nails or screws, preferably galvanised to protect from rust
- Woodworking materials: saw, hammer, sand paper and drill



Spotted Flycatcher

Rżanzarell Tat-Tikek

Habitat and Ecology

As the name suggests, the Spotted Flycatcher is insectivorous, feeding mainly on flying insects. It is a migrant species that arrives in Malta in springtime and a small population stay for breeding between mid-May and mid-August. In early October, adults and juveniles leave the breeding areas and depart to winter in sub-Saharan Africa.

Breeding in Malta

The Spotted Flycatcher inhabits almost any open woodland or timbered area in Europe. For breeding, it is well adapted to man-made habitats including parks and gardens, as well as deciduous and coniferous woodland. In Malta, a very small breeding population has been recorded since 1971. This species prefers to breed in wooded parks and large gardens with mature trees, especially Italian Cypress and Aleppo Pine. It is mostly confined to Buskett and the large cemetery at L-Addolorata, but recently it is showing a gradual spreading along the mainland Malta.

Breeding behaviour

In the early stages of breeding the male establishes his territory, calling frequently to attract a female. The nest consists of a shallow cup of dry grass lined with feathers, hairs, fibres, and leaves. This species normally lays three to four eggs. The female incubates the eggs, while the male keeps a lookout. Incubation lasts 11-15 days. After



Illustration Victor Falzon

hatching, the female feeds the young with insects brought in by the male. Later, both birds bring food to the young. After 12-14 days the young leave the nest, but they are accompanied and fed by at least one parent for up to three weeks. Pairs normally breed twice in a season.

Where you can install the nest box?

The nest box should be placed in wooded parks and gardens, attached to mature trees with a clear outlook and ideally hidden in vegetation. The recommended height for the nest box would be 2-5m above ground so it is protected against wind.

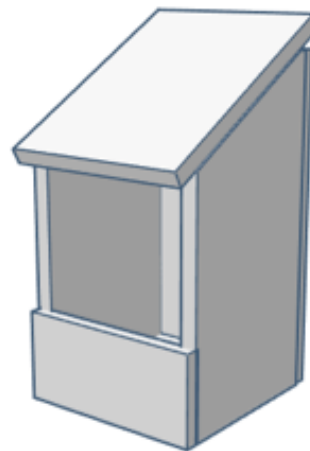
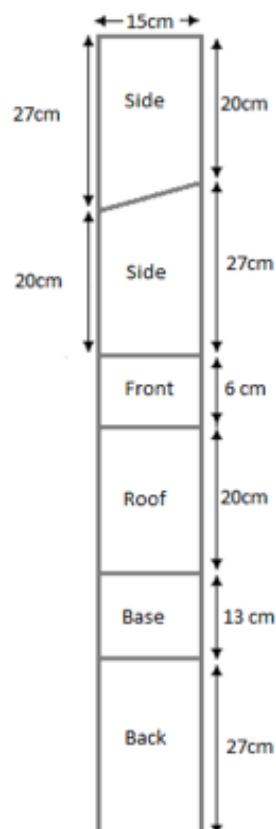
How to make your Spotted Flycatcher Nest Box

Materials

- Wood plank of at least 15mm thick to provide enough insulation - ideally marine plywood
- Nails or screws, preferably galvanised to protect from rust
- Woodworking materials: saw, hammer, sand paper and drill

Construction

1. Use the diagram below to mark and cut the wood
2. Attach all the pieces with nails or screws
3. Add some drainage holes in the base to avoid the box getting damp inside
4. Apply water-based wood preservatives - only do this to the outside of the box and never around the entrance. Make sure the box dries and airs thoroughly before putting it up.



Tree Sparrow

Rżan Gaħgah

Habitat and ecology

The Tree Sparrow is a resident species in Malta, normally breeding between March and August, feeding mainly of plant material, seeds and small invertebrates.

Breeding in Malta

This species nests in scattered pairs or in small colonies. It often breeds in rural areas, preferably in isolated old buildings, bastions, and quarries. Water reservoirs, valleys and springs are also good as long as suitable nesting sites are available.

The Maltese breeding population is mostly concentrated in the largely rural west and northwest of the island, with a scattered presence in Gozo and Comino. In the last years, the breeding population has decrease, not only in Malta but in all Europe. The main problem the Tree Sparrow faces in Malta is competition for nesting sites with the larger, more abundant and more aggressive Spanish Sparrow. Another important threat is the loss of nesting sites due to restoration of old buildings and fortifications.

Breeding behaviour

The breeding season normally lasts from March to August. Both sexes help in the nest construction. The nest is constructed of dried grass and rootlets, lined with feathers and animal fur, normally built in small holes or cavities in walls of old farmhouses and fortifications. This species typically lays four to six eggs, which both sexes



incubate. Incubation last 12-14 days and both parents tend the young, which fledges around 13-14 days old. Two or three broods are raised in a season.

Where you can install the nest box?

It is suggested to install two or more sets of boxes together, so the birds can set up colonies. The nest box should be placed in rural areas, attached to trees. The preferable height for the nest box is 2–5m above ground, so it is always protected against predominant wind. The Tree Sparrow is a very shy species and rarely enters in the nesting hole if there are humans nearby, so the nest box should be installed in a quiet place.

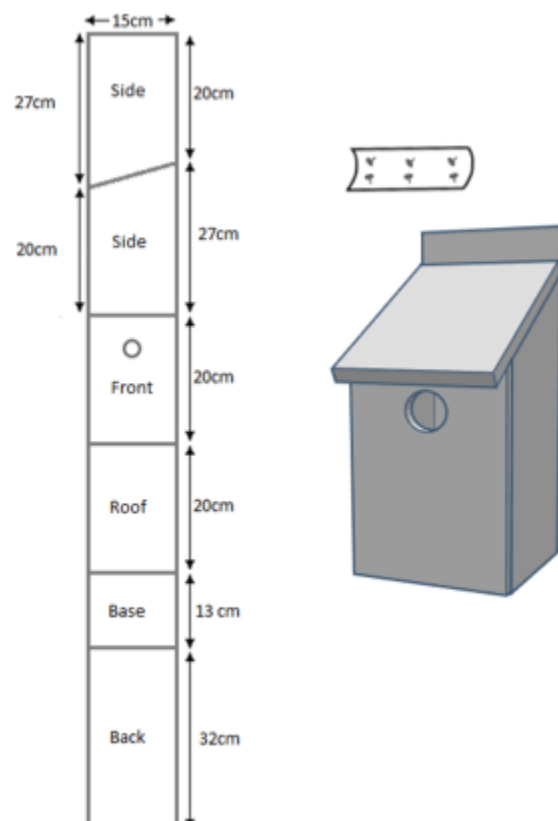
How to make your Tree Sparrow Nest Box

Materials

- Wood plank of at least 15mm thick to provide enough insulation - ideally marine plywood
- Nails or screws, preferably galvanised to protect from rust
- Leather or rubber strip
- Woodworking materials: saw, hammer, sand paper and drill

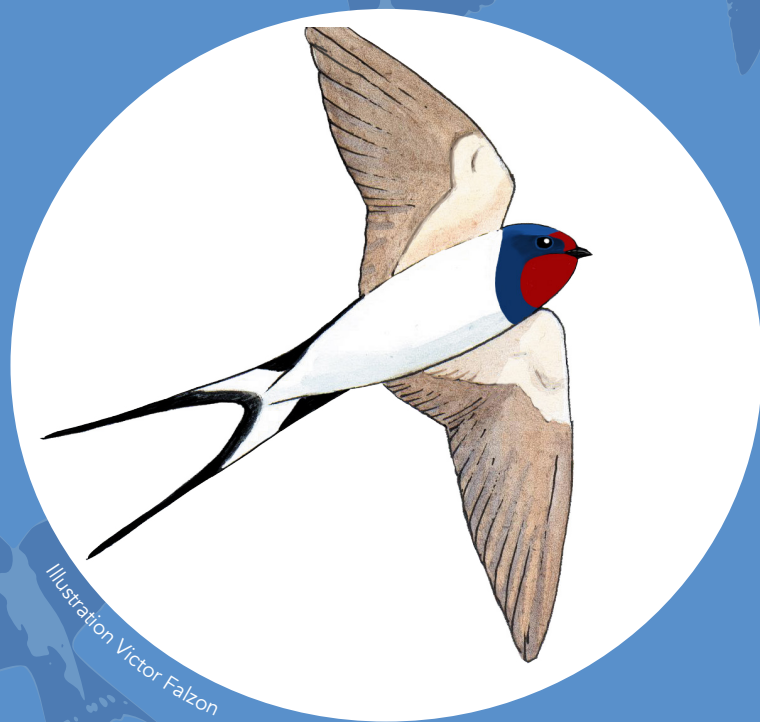
Construction

1. Use the diagram below to mark and cut the wood.
2. Attach all the pieces, except the roof, with nails or screws. To hinge the roof we will use the piece of rubber or leather and some nails, which will allow us open and clean out the box in autumn.
3. Add some drainage holes in the base to avoid the box getting damp inside.
4. Apply water-based wood preservatives - only to the outside of the box and never around the entrance hole. Make sure the box dries and airs thoroughly before putting it up.



Barn Swallow

Huttafa



Habitat and ecology

Barn Swallows are small birds often seen in large numbers perching on wires, occasionally with other species such as House Martins. In autumn they migrate to the south of Africa, crossing the Sahara Desert, then fly back to Europe to breed in spring. These birds fly low, catching insects in flight.

This species is widespread and common across European countries.

Breeding in Malta

Barn Swallows are very common spring and autumn migrant. Can be seen from March to May and September to October, with breeding birds also present in the summer. The breeding population of Barn Swallows has grown over the last few years. The largest breeding population can be found in Xaghra, Gozo.

Breeding behaviour

Barn Swallows make their nest in a cup shape using mud. They often breed in abandoned buildings in rural areas.

Where you can install the nest box?

The nest box can be placed under eaves on the porch or garage or any high location protected from sun, rain and wind. Place away from active doorways or busy places and out of reach of cats. Nest boxes should also have a source of mud nearby and approximately 10cm from the roof.

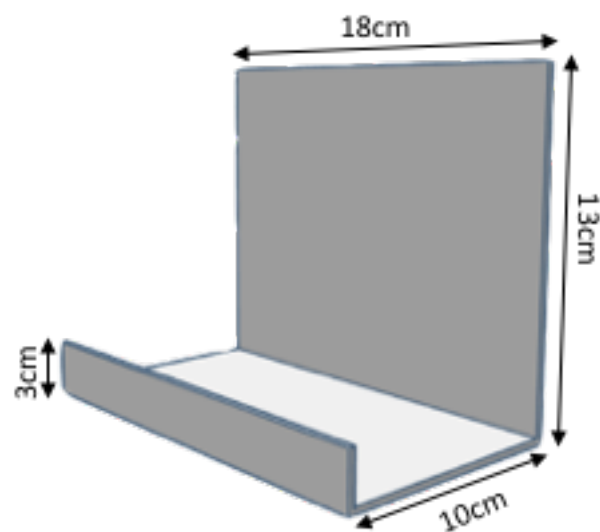
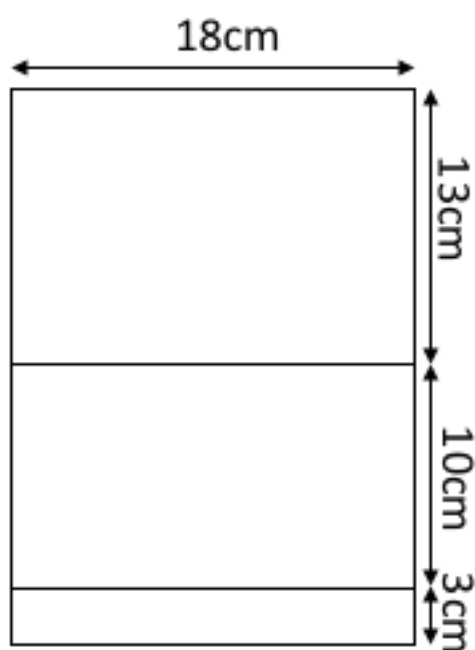
How to make your Barn Swallow Nest Box

Materials

- Wood plank of at least 15mm thick to provide enough insulation - ideally marine plywood
- Nails or screws, preferably galvanised to protect from rust
- Woodworking materials: saw, hammer, sand paper and drill

Construction

1. Use the diagram below to mark and cut the wood
2. Attach all the pieces with nails or screws
3. Apply water-based wood preservatives – only to the outside of the box. Make sure the box dries and airs thoroughly before putting it up.



Monitoring and maintenance of your Nest Box

Monitoring

It can take a while before birds get comfortable with the nest boxes and move in so check every six months for signs of activity. If there are no birds in that moment, you can look for other signs such as feathers, nest material, or scratches which will show you that someone has occupied it!

If your nest box is occupied:

- Minimise disturbance
- Do not approach the nest and observe from a distance using binoculars
- Contact us and let us know who is inhabiting your nest box!

Email: info@birdlifemalta.org
Telephone: (+356) 2134764 5/6

Maintenance and cleaning

Nest boxes need to be checked and cleaned annually. Bird nests are usually infested with various parasites that will remain if not cleaned which can become an easy way diseases to spread. The perfect time for cleaning is October, as the breeding season is finished and the nest box will be ready before winter, allowing it to be used as a roost site during cold nights.

Cleaning procedure:

- Remove the nest box and check the outside. If you find loosened nails, replace them with new ones.
- Open the nest box and remove all the nesting material. Use a small brush to remove debris from the corners.
- Pour boiling water inside the nest box to kill any parasites remaining. Never use pesticides or detergents.
- Leave the box with the lid off to dry naturally.
- Re-hang the nest box in the same location it was previously installed.
- Check that plants are not encroaching on the nest box surroundings, giving easy access to predators.



HEIDELBERGCEMENT

