

Swallow Nest Boxes

Objective

Provide specialised nest boxes for Swallows or House Martins to nest from March to September and to contribute to farmyard biodiversity.

Background

A common summer visitor from southern Africa from March to September. Swallows often nest inside barns, sheds and other buildings, and they forage over grazed pastures. House Martins typically nest on the outside of a building, under the eaves. Both species can produce more than two or even three clutches of 4 to 5 eggs per year. Their nest is made from mud interwoven with grasses and can be reused every season. Chicks fledge after a few weeks and are fed for another week.

Swallows and House Martins have an amber conservation status due to declines in their numbers. This is likely to be due to factors such as fewer flying insects on their breeding grounds as a result of agricultural intensification and climate change. Climate change is also likely to be causing less favourable weather conditions on the breeding grounds and on migration routes. There are less available nesting sites.

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.
- Swallow nest boxes should be installed inside outbuildings e.g. sheds, barns, stables and House Martin nest boxes should be installed on the outside of buildings.
- Swallow/House Martin boxes should not be located within 250m of a wind turbine.
- Both Swallow/House Martin nest 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.
- Nest boxes should not be attached to historic archaeological structures, e.g. castles, churches, ringforts etc.
- Where 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.
- Swallow boxes should not be placed in the same building as a Barn Owl/ Kestrel box.

Requirements

1. A minimum number of three nest boxes must be purchased and installed.
2. Each point drawn on the GLAM map represents 3 Swallow/House Martin nest boxes. Each three boxes applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the ACRES contract.

3. Nest boxes must be located at least 2m from the ground (preferably higher) to prevent disturbance and to keep out of reach from cats.
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.

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