

Birds of Woking

Woking and Surrey has a wide range of birds, resident and migratory and some of these species need help today and ongoing. There is a shortage of natural nesting sites, which is thought to be one of the major factors behind the decline of some of our once most-common birds.

Modern building standards are possibly limiting opportunities for some nesting birds and this leaflet is written to provide ideas that will help residents to identify possible new nesting sites with some more general advice.

In recent times in Woking there have been three outstanding bird programmes – the Woking Environment Action (WE Act) [Operation Owl Project](#) providing and maintaining over 40 specialised Owl nest boxes, the [Woking Peregrine Project](#), to care for and observe a pair of these amazing raptors, that nest in the centre of Woking and the [Swifts in Woking](#) Project to help these protected birds who arrive each summer from Africa to raise their young.

Will you be part of a garden or wider project?

Guidance in creating habitat with nesting opportunities.

We hope to provide new nest sites through adding to your garden or existing buildings and to encourage developers whether private and corporate to add to the design of new buildings.

A Swift in flight



Swifts can fly 500 miles a day to feed on airborne insects. They eat, sleep and can even mate on the wing.

A Swift nest box



Nestboxes are best put up during the autumn. Many birds will enter nestboxes during the autumn and winter, looking for a suitable place to roost or perhaps to feed. They often use the same boxes for nesting the following spring. Tits will not seriously investigate nesting sites until February or March.

The recommended direction to face a nest box is between **north** and **east**, as this will provide natural protection from direct sunlight, wind and rain, creating a more suitable and a safe environment for growing birds. The box can also be tilted marginally forward to allow any rain to run clear of the entrance.

Two boxes close together may be occupied by the same species if they are at the edge of adjoining territories and there is plenty of natural food. While this readily happens in the countryside, it is rare in gardens, where you normally can only expect one nesting pair of any one species. By putting up different types of boxes, several species can be attracted.

The exceptions to this are House and Tree sparrows and House Martins, which are congregation nesters.

For sparrows, bird boxes with more than one opening can be used – sometimes these are called terrace nesting boxes.



Fixing your nestbox with nails may damage trees. It is better to attach it either with a nylon bolt or with wire around the trunk or branch. Use a piece of hose or section of car tyre around the wire to prevent damage to the tree. Trees grow in girth as well as height, and please check the fixing every two or three years.

The entrance hole size depends on the species you hope to attract:

- 25 mm for blue, coal and marsh tits
- 28 mm for great tits, tree sparrows and pied flycatchers
- 32 mm for house sparrows and nuthatches
- 45 mm for starlings.

Open-fronted boxes for robins and wrens need to be low down, below 2m, well hidden in vegetation. Those for spotted flycatchers need to be 2-4m high, sheltered by vegetation but with a clear outlook. Woodpecker boxes need to be 3-5m high on a tree trunk with a clear flight path and away from disturbance.



The small box with 100 mm high open-front may attract robins or pied wagtails. A wren would need a 140 mm high front panel, while spotted flycatchers prefer a low 60 mm front to the box.

Read more at

RSPB www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife

British Trust for Ornithology, The BTO – Looking out for Birds. Their website, www.bto.org, has ID video clips and much more.

Surrey Bird Club, <https://surreybirdclub.org.uk>, for Field meetings, Research, Conservation and Education.

Books of interest:

Attracting Birds to your garden – Stephen Moss and David Cottridge 1981 Published by New Holland.

Birds of Surrey – Jeffery Wheatley available from the Surrey Bird Club – surreybirdclub.org.uk.

Please feel free to share or photocopy this leaflet, we hope that you will help Woking Borough be an example of back garden wildlife habitat improvement and conservation.

This leaflet is produced by Woking Environment Action, a group of local volunteers engaged in addressing environment issues, and who work on and with local conservation initiatives. Find out more on our website at <https://wokingla21.wordpress.com/>

Natural Woking is a programme run by Woking Borough Council to adapt and increase biodiversity and green space in our urban centres and surrounds, villages and countryside. See www.woking.gov.uk/naturalwoking