

Give a swallow a home!

As I write this in early April a few swallows have already been seen, mostly passing through, but soon our local birds will arrive. "Old hands" who have bred before will go straight back to their barn/shed/nissan hut or wherever it was that they bred successfully last time. But it may no longer be there. The barn may have been "converted" to a des. res, the shed may be locked up and secured with no access points and the Nissan hut may have been knocked down. In Wales, swallows are still doing quite well on the whole – all they need is insects, mud and somewhere to breed. In parts of the UK all of these things are in short supply so swallows are having a hard time, but here the first two are no problem. But suitable sites in which to breed are reducing in number all the time. And there is fierce competition for suitable barns and sheds. So please, have a look at your sheds, outbuildings and barns and see if you can do anything to make them "swallow friendly". They just need access quite high up (a window, a gap over the top of a door or a purpose built hole which is big enough for them to fly through) and something to fix their nest to – a little ledge or shelf high up under the roof. It may take some time for swallows to find your perfect swallow home, but once they do they will be back regular as clockwork year after year and they will grace your telephone wires with happy twittering all summer.

As a footnote to show you how desperate swallows can be, we saw a nest a few years ago inside the large industrial building used by the Tile and Bathroom Discount Centre at Honeyborough. When we saw the nest the adults were happily feeding young. Amazingly, they had managed to get to that stage even though there was no access between the building and the outside world between 6:00 pm and 9:00 am. I wonder if the young birds fledged successfully?

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