



# KESWICK SWIFTS

*Promoting & supporting the conservation of Swifts in the Keswick area*

## SWIFTS RESCUE TAXI SERVICE Some Basic Advice on What To Do

***Please read this in conjunction with the “Equipment list for volunteer drivers” document.***

If you're going out to rescue a Swift, you may want some basic guidance as to what to do. This document aims to offer that.

**Much more advice can be had from Kendal College's Animal Rescue Centre,  
01539 814 645 (open 10am – 4pm, Monday-Friday),  
or Sue Rowlands, Penrith Swifts, on 07913 775 442 or 01768 484 881.**

### **1. Keep yourself safe**

Avian flu has been recorded in various places, so it's a good idea to use gloves when you handle a grounded Swift.

They have sharp claws, too, and strong feet, so thicker but flexible gloves, such as clean gardening gloves, may be useful.

Wash your hands after handling a bird.

### **2. Keep your Swift safe**

Don't leave a grounded Swift unattended, out in the open. It will quickly fall prey to a cat, or predators; even to gulls and crows.

Pick it up carefully, and put it into a suitable box – eg. a well-ventilated shoe or boot box; keep that somewhere warm, quiet, and well away from disturbance by children or pets.

### **3. Attend to its basic needs for warmth and hydration**

Many grounded Swifts are chilled and dehydrated by the time they're found.

Put a bottle of warm water, wrapped in some soft material, at one end of the box you're keeping the bird in. If it wants to, it can get close to the bottle to take some warmth from it.

Get some water on a cotton bud or an artist's paintbrush, and wipe that carefully round the edge of the beak – but make sure you don't get water into the bird's nostrils.

**Don't** try to get water down its throat!

And **don't feed it** anything – that can be fatal! It's a job for specialist carers – and can wait.

#### 4. Assess the Swift's condition and needs

##### Is it injured?

This could be indicated by a trailing wing or other obvious injury.

The bird sadly isn't likely to recover from a serious injury, or from even a trivial cat bite (which will lead to serious infection) – take it to a vet and ask them to take deal with it.

##### Is it immature?

It may be obviously still a chick, unready for adult independence.

The Swift Conservation website has pictures of Swift chicks at various stages of development:

<https://www.swift-conservation.org/SwiftFirstAid.htm>

Or it may look fully grown, but not yet actually have reached full maturity.

Or it may be underdeveloped, perhaps by insufficient nutrition during a bad summer.

An important indication of this is its **weight** – to be able to take to the wing, a Swift needs to weigh about 40 grammes (1.4 ounces).

If it weighs less than this, it won't have the strength to take to the wing and keep aloft.

But if it weighs as much as 50 grammes (1¾ ounces) it is still immature, too heavy to fly, and needs a couple more weeks of development first.

In any of these cases, **contact Kendal College** to see if they can take it in for rehabbing; or contact **Sue Rowlands**.

**Wing length** is another important indicator of maturity.

To be ready for independence, both of a young Swift's wings need to measure at least 16 cm (6.3 inches) – see illustration below.



*This is where you measure Swift wing length.*

*From Swift Conservation's website,*

<https://www.swift-conservation.org/SwiftFirstAid.htm>

Again, if your bird's wings aren't yet sufficiently developed, **contact Kendal College or Sue Rowlands**.

If you need **help measuring weight or wing length**, contact **Jean Gilbert** on 07974 759 565 – she's a retired vet, and is willing to help if you can get your Swift to her in Keswick.

**If you are unsure about any of these things**, or anything else, **take some pictures** of your bird and **contact Kendal College or Sue Rowlands** without delay! Swifts' needs are not easily assessed, and they will be pleased to offer expert advice, and help if they can!

#### **5. If everything's looking good, your bird may be able to fly away, after a rest**

If your bird is uninjured, appears fully mature, and is of a good weight and wing length, it may be able to take to the wing again.

**First, though, let it rest, warm up and rehydrate!**

If and when it then starts to seem more lively, take your Swift, in its box, to a safe, open, grassy area such as a park or playing field.

Lift it out of the box, let it sit on your hand, and stretch your hand out at about shoulder height. Then just wait – **don't throw it!** – and if the bird is ready and able to fly off, eventually it will...



*A Swift called Rugby, rescued from Keswick in 2024, fully grown but severely underweight, found at the Rugby Club, grounded and being attacked by gulls, being released by Louise Bentley after several weeks of her devoted and highly expert care.*

#### **6. GOOD LUCK!**

**Remember – Don't Delay!**

**And if in any doubt, seek advice: from Kendal College, Sue Rowlands or, in the last resort, Nicki Baker (07942 144 109)**