



No, it's not a UFO – It's a House Martin Tower!

Helping house martins - Providing important food and habitat

This BCP Council project, supported by The Parks Foundation, has been funded by Canford Environmental and ARCH with the construction being undertaken by constructed by Wildlife Windows.

Helping house martins

To help secure the long-term future for house martins in the area, two house martin towers have recently been installed – one at Canford Heath and one at the Hoburne estate in Christchurch, with a third planned for Verity Park.

A house martin tower is a place for these amazing birds to rest and to build their nest cups undisturbed.

At Canford Heath, birds fly to the heath from the nearby colony to collect the mud to build their nests. The heathland here is also a rich habitat which supports a whole range of insects and so gives the house martins the best chance to be able to provide for their chicks.

The Hoburne location was chosen because there is a good population of house martins in the area, and the tower will help support the birds with additional space to nest.

Have you seen a house martin?

These birds – which are glossy black on top and white underneath with a forked tail – are summer visitors to the UK. They arrive here in April after making the epic 3000-mile journey from Africa and they stay until October. While here, they breed and raise their chicks.

House martins usually build their nests under the eaves of buildings – which is how they get their name. They tend to nest in colonies, building their nests out of mud which they collect from streams and ponds. It takes approximately 1,000 small balls of clay for a house martin pair to make their nest cup. The females lay 4-5 eggs, spending 3 weeks feeding their chicks before they take their first flight. The birds will return to the same nesting site each year and will often re-use their nest.

Unfortunately, the population of house martins has declined. This is largely due to habitat loss, a reduction in insect populations – their food – and a lack of suitable nesting sites. If a house martin does choose to nest on your house, it's important not to disturb them.