Selwyn the Swift

Knitting pattern

Original base pattern by Jackie Jeffery
Swift adaptations by Josella Hunt

Difficulty: Intermediate

This pattern has been adapted from the Soaring Swallow knitting pattern by Jackie Jeffery, who has very kindly donated the pattern to be used for community groups to create Selwyn the Swift!

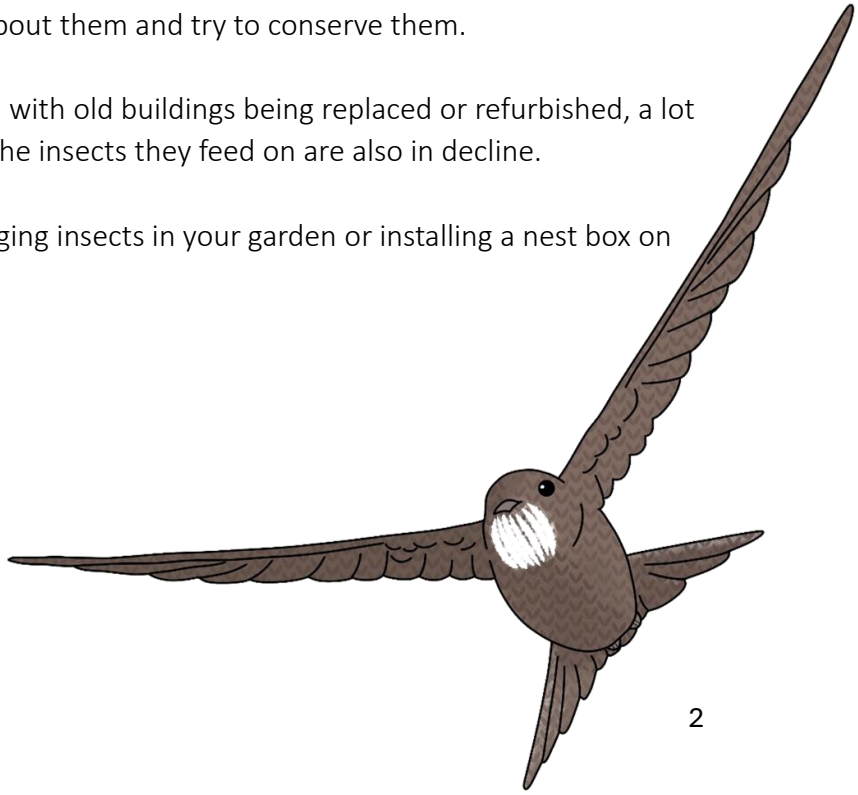
Due to the small parts, Selwyn should not be given to babies and small children.

If you want to make a swallow as well as a swift, the original pattern can be bought here:

https://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/soaring-swallow

All about swifts

- Swifts fly to the UK to breed each summer from Africa, they are here for only three months before flying back. That's a round trip of nearly 7,000 miles!
- They are the fastest birds in level flight and can reach speeds of 69pmh!
- The spend almost their whole lives on the wing and only land to enter their nests. They can eat, sleep, drink, mate and bathe while flying!
- Swifts are dark brown all over, with a small pale patch on their throat. They are very sociable birds and can be seen in groups swooping low over rooftops and calling to each other with their high pitched 'screams'.
- Swifts are on the UK red list as their numbers have declined by 68% since 1995, so it is important to raise awareness about them and try to conserve them.
- Swifts nest in our buildings, and with old buildings being replaced or refurbished, a lot of nesting sites are being lost. The insects they feed on are also in decline.
- You can help swifts by encouraging insects in your garden or installing a nest box on your house!



Materials and Equipment Needed

Overall:

- Dark brown DK yarn – two 50g balls or a 100g ball wound into two balls
- Small amount of white yarn for the chin
- Small amount of grey DK yarn for the beak and feet
- Small amount of bright yarn for marking where eyes will go
- 3mm straight knitting needles
- Black 9mm safety eyes
- Felt to stiffen wings
- Yarn needle for assembly
- Toy stuffing

Yarn:

In the pictures Selwyn has been knitted with Sirdar Haworth Tweed in 'Bronte Bronze' – but any DK dark brown yarn would work. The colour of a swift really lends themselves to being knitted with undyed natural yarns but also feel free to experiment with making a colourful swift!

Eyes:

The swift in the pictures uses black 9mm safety eyes, but if you do not have these then the eyes can also be embroidered on with black yarn.

Felt for wings:

You can get varying thicknesses of felt depending on how stiff you want the wings to be, it also helps them hold their shape. If your felt is not thick enough to hold the shape of the wings, you could stitch multiple layers together.

Notes:

Due to the nature of the small parts in the eyes, Selwyn should not be given to babies and small children.

Please tag us @NPTwildlife or @Neath Port Talbot Local Nature Partnership and use the hashtag #selwyntheswift to show us your makes!

If you spot any errors in the pattern please email biodiversity@npt.gov.uk

Abbreviations

CO-cast on

COff – cast off

k – knit

p – purl

inc – increase

kfb – make one by knitting in the front and back of the same stitch

pfb – make one by purling in the front and back of the same stitch

skpo – decrease one by slipping the first stitch, knitting the second stitch and passing the slipped stitch over the knitted stitch

k2tog – decrease one by knitting two stitches together

IM – insert marker – use a small length of bright yarn between stitches to mark where the eyes will go

LHS – left hand side

RHS – right hand side

RS – right side

WS – wrong side

W&T – wrap and turn

rem – remaining

dec – decrease

p2tog – decrease one by purling two stitches together

Method

Selwyn is made of separately knitted pieces that are stitched together, using mattress stitch. The constituents are: a body and head in one piece, two wings made of two pieces each, a tail made of two pieces.

Head and Body

Make one, using DK yarn **held double** on 3mm needles.

Row	Instructions	Stitches
Cast on	Cast on 6 stitches	6
Row 1 (RS)	k across	6
Row 2 (WS)	p across	6
Row 3	kfb, k4, kfb	8
Row 4	p across	8
Row 5	k across	8
Row 6	p across	8
Row 7	k across	8
Row 8	p1, pfb, p4, pfb, p1	10
Row 9	k across	10
Row 10	p across	10
Row 11	k1, kfb, k6, kfb, k1	12
Row 12	p across	12
Row 13	k1, kfb, k8, kfb, k1	14
Row 14	p across	14
Row 15	k1, kfb, k10, kfb, k1	16
Row 16	p across	16
Row 17	k across	16
Row 18	p across	16
Row 19	k across	16
Row 20	p1, pfb, p12, pfb, p1	18
Row 21	k1, kfb, k14, kfb, k1	20
Row 22	p across	20
Row 23	k across	20
Row 24	p1, pfb, p16, pfb, p1	22
Row 25	k across	22
Row 26	p1, pfb, p18, pfb, p1	24
Row 27	k1, kfb, k20, kfb, k1	26
Row 28	p across	26
Row 29	k across	26
Row 30	p across	26
Row 31	k across	26
Row 32	p1, pfb, p22, pfb, p1	28
Row 33	k1, kfb, k24, kfb, k1	30
Row 34	p across	30

Row 35	k across	30
Row 36	p across	30
Row 37	k across	30
Row 38	p across	30
Row 39	k across	30
Row 40	p across	30
Row 41	k across	30
Row 42	p across	30
Row 44	k1, skpo, k24, k2tog, k1	28
Row 45	p3, p2tog, p3, p2tog, p8, p2tog, p3, p2tog, p3	24
Row 46	k7, kfb, k8, kfb, k7	26
Row 47	p1, pfb, p22, pfb, p1	28
Row 48	k across	28
Row 49	p across	28
Row 50	k1, skpo, k22, k2tog, k1	26
Row 51	p across	26
Row 52	k1, skpo, k5, IM, k10, IM, k5, k2tog, k1	24
Row 53	p across	24
Row 54	k1, skpo, k18, k2tog, k1	22
Row 55	p1, p2tog, p16, p2tog, p1	20
Row 56	k1, skpo, k3, skpo, k4, k2tog, k3, k2tog, k1	16
Row 57	p1, p2tog, p2tog, p1, p2tog, p2tog, p1, p2tog, p2tog, p1	10
Cut yarn leaving a long tail of at least 12 inches, thread onto a yarn needle and pass the tail through the stitches, tighten and secure.		

Wings

Make two of each wing type, using a **single strand of yarn** on 3mm needles.

Row	Instructions		Stitches
CO	Cast on 50 stitches		50
	Left wing (make 2)	Right wing (make 2)	
Row 1	k across	p across	50
Row 2	p across	k across	50
Row 3	k across	p across	50
Row 4	p across	k across	50
Row 5	k across	p across	50
Row 6	p across	k across	50
Below you will begin to work short rows, then wrapping and turning. When you meet the wrapped stitch from the previous short row, work the wrap and the stitch together.			
Row 7	k 15, W&T	p15, W&T	15
Row 8	p across the 15	k across the 15	15
Row 9	k24, W&T	p24 W&T	24
Row 10	p across the 24	k across the 24	24
Row 11	k30, W&T	P30, W&T	30
Row 12	p across the 30	k across the 30	30

Row 13	k36, W&T	p36, W&T	36
Row 14	p across the 36	k across the 36	36
Row 15	k42, W&T	p42, W&T	42
Row 16	p across the 42	k across the 42	42
Row 17	k45, W&T	p45, W&T	45
Row 18	p across the 45	k across the 45	45
End of short row shaping. From now on work in complete rows.			
Row 19	k48, k2tog	p48, p2tog	49
Row 20	COff4 in p, p to end	COff4 in k, k to end	45
Row 21	k25, (k2tog, k1) rep until 2 st from end, k2tog	p25, (p2tog, p1) rep until 2 st from end, p2tog	38
COff	COff in p, cut yarn and pass through remaining st. Tighten and secure.	COff in k, cut yarn and pass through remaining st. Tighten and secure.	
Cut yarn leaving a long tail of at least 12 inches use when assembling the wings.			

Tail

Make two of these, **holding the yarn double**.

Row	Instructions	Stitches
CO	Cast on 9 stitches	9
Row 1	k across	9
Row 2	p across	9
Row 3	k1, k2tog, k4, kfb, k1	9
Row 4	p across	9
Row 5	k1, k2tog, k4, kfb, k1	9
Row 6	p across	9
Row 7	k1, k2tog, k4, kfb, k1	9
Row 8	p across	9
Row 9	k1, k2tog, k4, kfb, k1	9
Row 10	p across	9
COff	COff in k	

Beak

Make one with a **single strand** of dark grey DK yarn on 3mm needles.

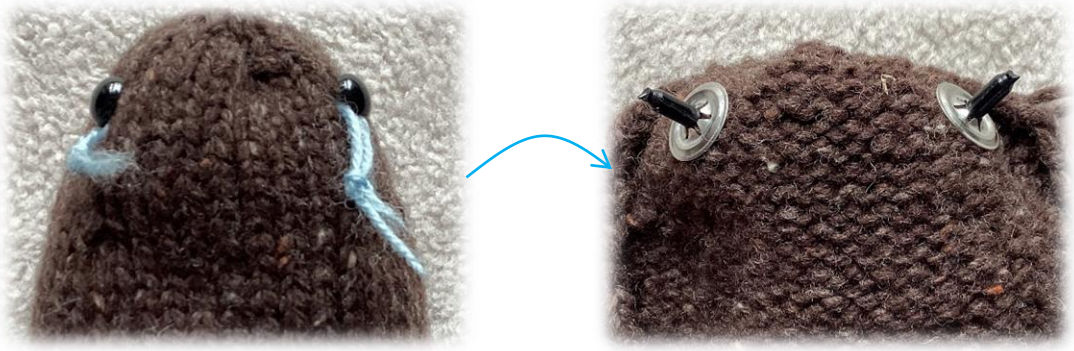
Row	Instructions	Stitches
CO	Cast on 4 stitches	4
Row 1 (RS)	k across	4
Row 2	p1, p2tog, p1	3
Row 3	skpo, k1	2
Row 4	p2tog	1
Cut yarn, pass through single stitch and secure.		

Assembly

At this point you should have the following as pictured below:

Body

- Insert the eyes where the yarn markers are, double check you are happy with the positioning. Remove the yarn markers and place the backs on the safety eyes.

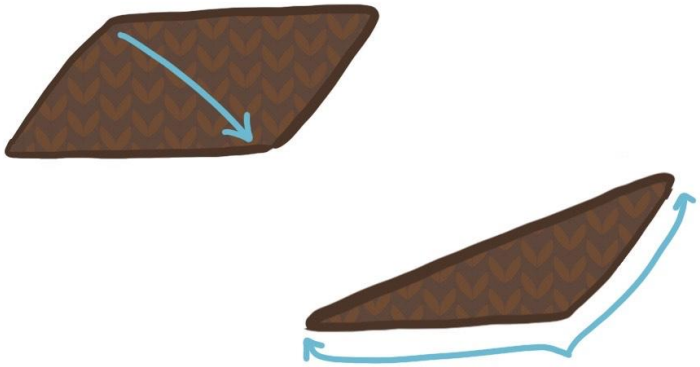


- Join the two edges of the body, start stitching both the tail and head sections together using mattress stitch. Leave a gap in the middle for stuffing.
- Firmly stuff the two ends of the swift, then gradually close up the gap with mattress stitch, stuffing as you go.
- Finally seal up the body with mattress stitch once stuffed, tie off and weave in the ends.

Selywn at this point should look like this:

Tail

- The two tail pieces should look like parallelograms.
- Fold them in half as pictured and stitch along the two edges using mattress stitch.
- Position the tail pieces on the body as pictured and attach using mattress stitch.
- Tie off and weave in the shorter end, leaving a longer end free to attach it to the body.

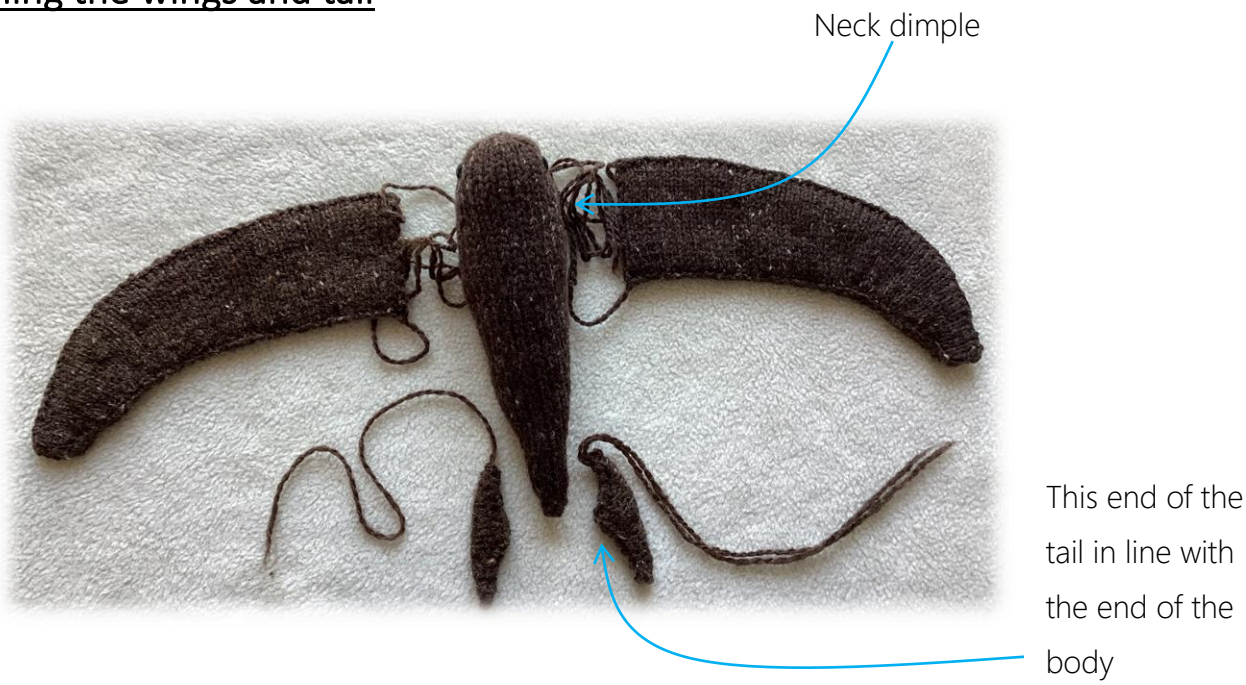


Wings

- The wings are assembled by placing a left-hand and a right-hand piece wrong sides together (sides with the purl of the stockinette facing each other).
- Using mattress stitch, stitch around the edge of the wing, leaving where the wing will join the body open.
- Tie off and weave in ends, but if you want, to leave one of the long strands at the base of the wing for attaching it later.
- At this point if you want the wing to be a bit more rigid you can add your felt – cut out two pieces of felt by drawing round the wing and cutting inside the line by a few mm. This bit can be a bit trial and error but once you have one piece right keep the template. I haven't included one in this pattern because every yarn and every person's knitting tension is different. You can stitch multiple layers of felt together if you want the wings to be more rigid.

- Insert the felt wings into the knitted wings, stitch along the edge of the wing to seal the felt in, leave an end of yarn free to attach it to the body

Attaching the wings and tail



- On Selwyn's body you should be able to see a little dip where the decreases for the neck were. This is where I pin the top of the wing, and from a side view pin it so it's level with the eye on each side. Stitch each wing in place and weave in ends.
- Line up the tail pieces so that they are right at the end of the body. Pin them to check the positioning, stitch both in place and weave in ends.

Selwyn should now look like this:

Feet

- Embroider little feet on the underside of the body using simple stitches as pictured.
- Weave in ends

Beak

- Stitch the beak on as pictured
- Swifts have big mouths! So if you like stitch on a couple of mouth openings each side of the main beak like I have in the picture.
- Tie off and weave in ends.

Throat patch

- The white throat patch is stitched on with simple stitches like the feet are. White yarn works well but you could also use white embroidery thread if that is all you have.
- Tie off and weave in ends.