

## ADVISORY INFORMATION – SAND MARTINS



Sand martins are summer visitors to Britain and Ireland. They appear in spring usually **from the middle of March** in order to breed. They then move south to sub-Saharan Africa for winter, with the last birds gone by early September.

### Key Points

- Sand martins will often use active quarry vertical faces, to nest between March and September.
- They will tunnel into sand even when it is being excavated and may even nest in heaps of loose sand.
- Sand martins and their active nests are fully protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- **Sand martin nests are protected from the moment birds begin tunnelling.**
- It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird. It is an offence to intentionally take, damage or destroy the eggs or nest of a sand martin while it is in use or being built.
- **Individual employees as well as companies can be prosecuted**
- Penalties can include **finances and imprisonment.**

### NESTING AND QUARRIES

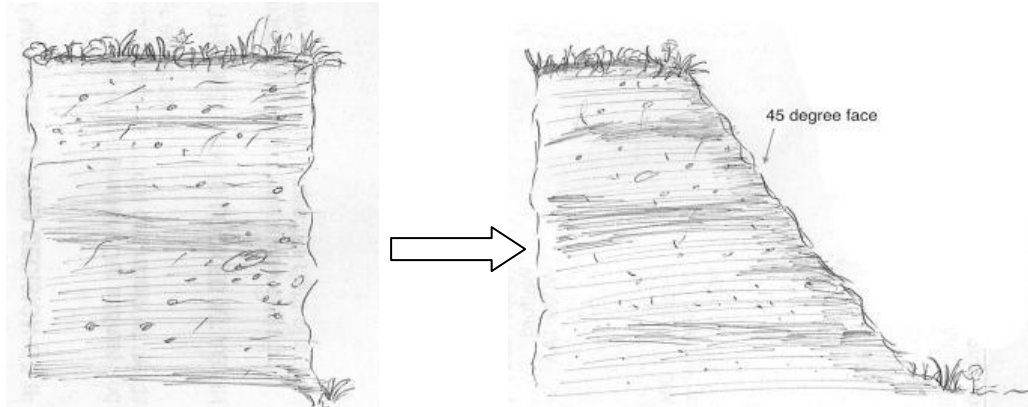
Sand martins nest in colonies from a few pairs to several hundreds, they dig nest tunnels in suitable sand faces or piles and raise up to three broods of youngsters in a year. They nest in deep tunnels which they excavate into vertical sand or earth faces. They are liable to collapsing and compression if vehicles move above a face.

If sand martins do colonise an operational area, then **all work must cease** on that face between March and September. It is advisable to have this confirmed by a suitable survey, if unsure contact the RSPB.

If there are exposed faces that will be worked upon during the breeding season it is advisable to make these uninviting to the sand martins before they arrive, no later than early March, so that operations may continue without interruption.

## Learning Points

- **Before** each nesting season - **identify non-operational areas where suitable vertical faces can be provided** to encourage sand martin colonisation.
- **Before** each nesting season – **provide suitable sloping batters to operational areas** where sand martin activity could hamper operations in order to make them less attractive for sand martins seeking nesting sites.



- Between March and April **regularly check all operational faces** for evidence of sand martin nests, particularly after quarry closures such as Easter.
- **Review** sand martin activity to ensure that the **risk of nesting sand martin disturbance is minimised**. Although there are no specific exclusion distance it is critical that activities do not pose a threat to the sand martins or their nests.
- In addition to the effect of excavation any review should consider the effect of passing machinery to ensure that it **does not cause damage through vibrations**.
- Clearly **demarcate** areas which should not be disturbed and **routinely monitor** activities, making changes to demarcated areas as necessary.
- Ensure that **all personnel are aware of the individual and company legal obligation** to prevent harm.

**Remember, all wild birds are protected by legislation making it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, its eggs or nests whilst in use or being built. These principles do apply to any species of wild bird at any quarry site.**

The RSPB is the UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and all wildlife, helping to create a better world for everyone ([www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)).