# Rangers create artificial mud pools to aid nesting birds amid heatwave drought



As the impact of climate change becomes more palpable, the delicate balance of nature faces unprecedented challenges. Recent hot spells have left many regions struggling with water shortages, a situation exacerbating difficulties for local wildlife, particularly nesting birds. In response, conservation efforts have seen rangers resorting to innovative techniques to support these vulnerable species. One such initiative involves creating artificial pools of mud by filling potholes with water and adding soil, effectively crafting mud pies essential for birds like house martins and swallows as they seek to build their nests.

Mr Jones, a ranger involved in these efforts, elaborated on the necessity of this intervention. He noted that while natural sources of mud persist, birds are compelled to travel longer distances to access them, which consumes vital stored energy. This is particularly critical during the nesting season, when the energy-efficient retrieval of nesting materials can significantly impact their reproductive success. “They need mud, and with climate change and everything like that, we need to help them,” he stated. Such proactive measures not only assist birds but also benefit other creatures, such as stoats and weasels, that thrive in these enhanced habitats.

The public plays a crucial role in supporting local wildlife during such periods of drought. Conservation groups like the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) have called on community members to contribute by creating mud-filled habitats. Suggestions include placing wet mud in shallow containers or establishing damp patches in gardens, which can provide essential resources for birds seeking nesting materials. “Every little helps,” Mr Jones remarked, encouraging individuals to aid wildlife in their own backyards. This simple alteration in how we manage our gardens can yield significant benefits, fostering biodiversity and assisting in the resilience of local ecosystems.

The importance of mud goes beyond the immediate needs of nesting birds; it serves critical roles within various ecosystems. According to the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, mud is not only a nest-building material but also functions as a food source and a protective carbon store. This multifaceted utility highlights how nurturing mud within our landscapes can contribute to broader ecological stability.

Migratory birds like swifts and house martins, accustomed to building their nests with mud, are particularly disadvantaged during extended dry spells. The need for accessible mud becomes an urgent matter as these birds return for the breeding season. Nest construction is intensive work, and without adequate materials, their ability to reproduce effectively is hampered. Therefore, collaborative effort from communities could transform this situation, safeguarding these avian populations for generations to come.

In conclusion, while climate change poses numerous challenges to our wildlife, practical, community-driven initiatives can play a vital role in mitigating its effects. As Mr Jones emphasised, creating simple mud sources in gardens not only supports birds' immediate needs but can enhance the overall diversity of life in our natural surroundings. The call to action is clear: as stewards of the environment, we can contribute meaningfully to the wellbeing of local wildlife by taking small, thoughtful steps in our own spaces.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cvg5q4w249do), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/05/mud-water-to-help-nesting-migrating-birds-during-uk-heatwave-rspb-aoe)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cvg5q4w249do), [[5]](https://www.wwt.org.uk/news-and-stories/news/mud-glorious-mud)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/rspb-england/posts/mud-glorious-mud), [[4]](https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/kids-corner/help-backyard-birds-by-providing-safe-materials-for-making-their-nests), [[5]](https://www.wwt.org.uk/news-and-stories/news/mud-glorious-mud)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.colorado.edu/asmagazine-archive/node/1826), [[7]](https://gardens.si.edu/exhibitions/traveling/habitat/urban-mud-scrape-nests/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cvg5q4w249do), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/05/mud-water-to-help-nesting-migrating-birds-during-uk-heatwave-rspb-aoe)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cvg5q4w249do> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/rspb-england/posts/mud-glorious-mud> - The RSPB urges the public to provide damp mud for birds like house martins and swallows, which are struggling to find enough mud for nest building due to dry conditions. Suggestions include placing wet mud in shallow containers or creating damp patches in gardens to assist these birds during the breeding season.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/05/mud-water-to-help-nesting-migrating-birds-during-uk-heatwave-rspb-aoe> - The RSPB encourages people to create mud pies and provide fresh water to help migratory birds such as house martins, swifts, and swallows build their nests during a UK heatwave. This assistance is vital as the dry weather makes it challenging for these birds to find suitable nesting materials.
4. <https://www.sacramentoaudubon.org/kids-corner/help-backyard-birds-by-providing-safe-materials-for-making-their-nests> - The Sacramento Audubon Society advises offering natural, untreated materials like twigs, leaves, dried grass clippings, and mud to assist nesting birds. They recommend adding water to bare spots in gardens to create mud for birds that use it in nest construction, such as barn and cliff swallows.
5. <https://www.wwt.org.uk/news-and-stories/news/mud-glorious-mud> - The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust highlights the importance of mud in ecosystems, noting its role as a food source, protection, and carbon store. They mention that birds like swallows and house martins use mud to build their nests, and that mud is crucial for various wildlife.
6. <https://www.colorado.edu/asmagazine-archive/node/1826> - An article from the University of Colorado Boulder describes how cliff swallows gather mud to build their nests. They collect mud pellets from puddles, streams, or lakes, and construct their nests on vertical surfaces, such as cliffs or the eaves of buildings.
7. <https://gardens.si.edu/exhibitions/traveling/habitat/urban-mud-scrape-nests/> - The Smithsonian Gardens discusses how birds, including barn swallows and cliff swallows, use mud to build their nests. They gather mud pellets and combine them with other materials like grass and feathers to create durable nests on vertical surfaces.