



Building Songbird Boxes

Working With Wildlife

Number 16

Building songbird boxes is a simple, inexpensive way to attract songbirds to your property. This fact sheet discusses how to build, install, and maintain nest boxes successfully.

Why Build Songbird Boxes?

Properly constructed nest boxes can provide shelter in those areas negatively affected by urbanization and intensive management. By building boxes, you can insure the songbirds on your land a place to nest.



Before You Begin...

Bird species have different habitat needs. To be successful, you must first choose the species you want to attract and understand its food, water, and space requirements. Use the table on page 2 to find the proper dimensions of the nest box for the birds you want to attract. By simply changing dimensions and entrance hole sizes, you can furnish cool, dry, durable, easily-cleaned boxes for any of the small to medium-sized bird species in the table.

Materials for Songbird Boxes

To Build:

- ◆ Tape measure
- ◆ Hammer
- ◆ 1 1/2" to 1 3/4" galvanized nails
- ◆ Pencil or chalk for marking
- ◆ Saw
- ◆ Lumber

To Install:

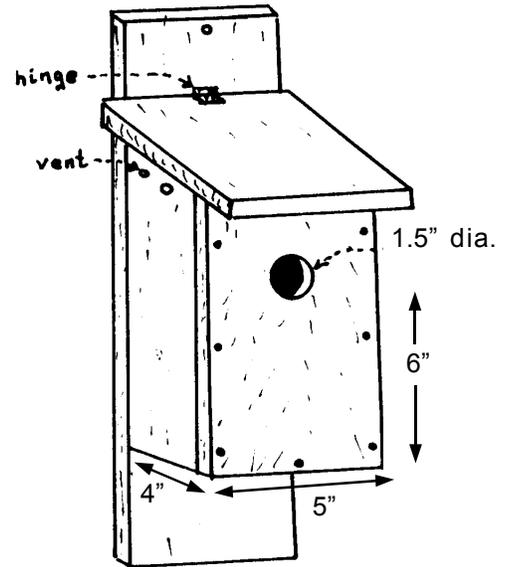
- ◆ Stepladder or extension ladder
- ◆ 3" galvanized nails, lag bolts, or crimped wire
- ◆ Sheet metal for predator guard

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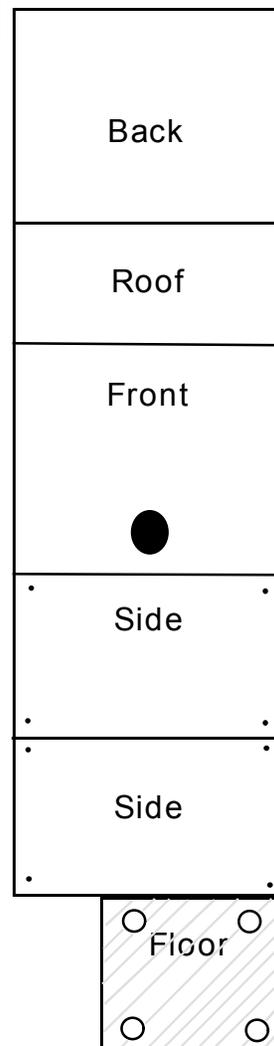
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Species	Floor of Box	Depth of Box	Hole Size	Hole Above Floor
Bluebird	4"x 4"	8"-12"	1 1/2"	6"-10"
Chickadee Titmouse Nuthatches	4"x 4"	9"	1 1/8" 1 1/4" 1 3/8"	7"
Carolina Wren House Wren Prothonotary Warbler	4"x 4"	6"-8"	1 1/2" 1-1 1/4" 1 3/8"	4"-6"
Great-Crested Flycatcher	6"x 6"	8"-10"	1 3/4"	6"-8"
Flickers	7"x 7"	16"-18"	2 1/2"	14"-16"



Helpful Construction Hints

- ◆ Boxes need at least four 1/4" holes in the bottom to allow water to drain. Several 1/4" holes in the sides will provide adequate ventilation.
- ◆ Use durable woods such as cedar, cypress, and pressure-treated pine.
- ◆ Allow for the width of the sawblade when marking and cutting a board.
- ◆ When using hardwood lumber, drill starter holes for the nails to avoid splitting boards.
- ◆ Avoid painting boxes or treating wood with a preservative. These boxes may absorb too much heat or give off toxic vapors.
- ◆ Hinge the roof or use a pivot nail on one side of the box to make periodic clean-up easier.



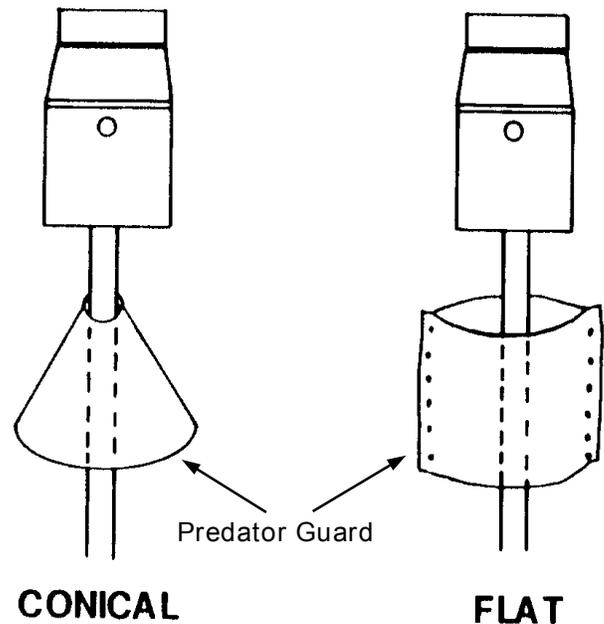
Cut-out diagram of songbird box

Installation and Maintenance Tips

- ◆ Install all boxes by late March or early April.
- ◆ Place the boxes 200 to 300 feet apart to account for the territorial nature of most species.
- ◆ Firmly attach boxes to posts, trees, or buildings. On live trees, use crimped wire or lag bolts that can be loosened as the tree grows.
- ◆ Place boxes where they'll receive some shade during the day. In pasture situations, place the box across the fence from nosy livestock!
- ◆ Clean out all boxes each year after the young have fledged.
- ◆ Inspect boxes regularly and consider adding predator guards if necessary.
- ◆ Always work in teams when using folding or extension ladders!

Songbird Box Placement

Species	Box Height	Placement
Carolina Wren House Wren Nuthatches Chickadee	5'-10'	Woodland clearings; edges
Bluebirds Flickers	6'	Open areas (fields, food plots, pastures)
Great-Crested Flycatcher	8'-20'	Forest interiors
Prothonotary Warbler	4'-12'	Wetland areas; over/facing water
Titmouse	5'-15'	Hardwood stands



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Cost share assistance may be available through the Stewardship Incentive Program for these practices. See your Wildlife Biologist, Forester, or Extension Agent for more information about the Forest Stewardship Program.

Suggested Readings:

Weber, W.J. 1982. Attracting Birds and Other Wildlife to Your Yard.
Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York.

Fazio, J.R. 1987. The Woodland Steward. 2nd edition.
The Woodland Press, Moscow, Idaho.

Other Wildlife Notes Available:

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| No. 1 - Endangered Species | No 14- Snags and Downed Logs |
| No. 2 - Eastern Gray Squirrel | No 15- Managing Edges for Wildlife |
| No. 3 - White-tailed Deer | No 16- Building Songbird Boxes |
| No. 4 - Songbirds | No 17- Woodland Wildlife Nest Boxes |
| No. 5 - Wild Turkey | No 18- Low Cost Habitat Improvements |
| No. 6 - Wood Duck | No 19- Pools for Amphibians |
| No. 7 - Cottontail Rabbit | No 20- Hummingbirds and Butterflies |
| No. 8 - Bobwhite Quail | No 21- Bats |
| No. 9 - Ruffed Grouse | No 22- Owls |
| No. 10 - Black Bear | No 23- Beaver Pond Management |
| No. 11 - Raccoon | No 24- Herbaceous Plants for Wildlife |
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