

Nest Boxes

Adult Assistance

Why nest boxes?

A number of small local birds are cavity nesters. They do not build a nest but rather line a cavity with suitable material. Without a cavity they can not raise a family. There are fewer and fewer natural cavities available and the competition for them is fierce.

Who needs a nest box?

Tree swallows, wrens, nuthatches, chick-a-dees, woodpeckers, bluebirds, (indigenous species), starlings and house sparrows (invasive species) are all looking for cavities. Providing proper boxes ease the competition and helps birds survive. Learn what sort of habitat your yard offers and which birds might live there at <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/right-bird-right-house/> Once you know which bird could live in your yard You will know who to build a nest box for.

What makes a good box?

A good fit, right size entrance and proper floor space. Sturdy construction with rough surfaces inside and out is important. Good ventilation, drainage and easy access for seasonal cleaning keep the box healthy.

Where and when

will depend on your intended guest. Remember to think about possible predators, squirrels, chipmunks, racoons, larger birds, and even snakes when choosing a location. Consider protection from heavy winds, rain and the hot sun as well. Learning your guest's nesting season will help you put the nest box at the right time. Too early invite invasive species and too late is just that, too late.

See the pattern below

Tip: Many cavity nesters like white fluffy feathers to line their nest. It is fun to watch them swoop in to pick them off your lawn.

How to build a nest box?

There are lots of Plans and ideas - this site has great plans and straight forward instructions. <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/right-bird-right-house/> . It is important to use rough cut lumber. The rough surface provides a purchase for the young birds when they are ready to leave the nest box and for the adults in their hundreds of visits to the box. Nails or screws may be used. Nails are a lot cheaper, but screws last longer and make repairs simpler.



Simple All Purpose Nest Box

The nesting box pattern suggested on the next page is a simple all purpose nest box with a side that swings out to facilitate seasonal cleaning. Dimensions assume using 1 inch lumber which is really about 0.75 in thick (1.9 cm). If the available lumber is thicker (or thinner) the inside floor dimensions should be 13 x 13 cm (or 5 x 5 in).

The box can be mounted on a tree, fence post, or pole by threading wire through the holes drilled in the back, or by screwing the box directly onto the support.

The hinge for the swinging side is made with two aligned nails. Be careful that these nails are on the same line and perpendicular to the walls of the box insuring that the side will swing out fully. The swinging side is held in place with a nail (keeper nail) placed into an inclined drilled hole that goes through the front side and penetrates the swinging side. This hole should be drilled after the box is assembled. Once the "keeper" nail is installed, it is difficult to tell that the box is designed to open at all.

The simple design leaves this box a bit drafty. It is suggested to make the top wider and longer to improve protection from weather and predators. It may be helpful during cold windy and rainy spells to block the ventilations openings on the upper sides.

There are lots of ways to dress up a nest box and make it charming. Home improvements should improve safety for the birds living there while deterring predators.

This deluxe box for tree swallows, features feeding holes that can be opened to prevent one nestling from monopolizing the food supply, It is also waterproofed on all outer surfaces except front with candle wax, first rubbed on and then melted in with a heat gun.

<http://www.treeswallowprojects.com/buildbox.html>



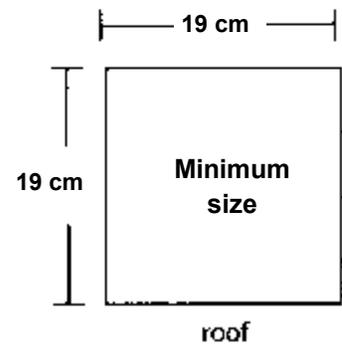
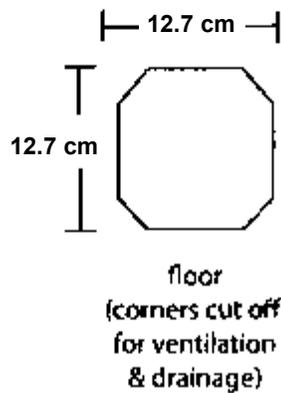
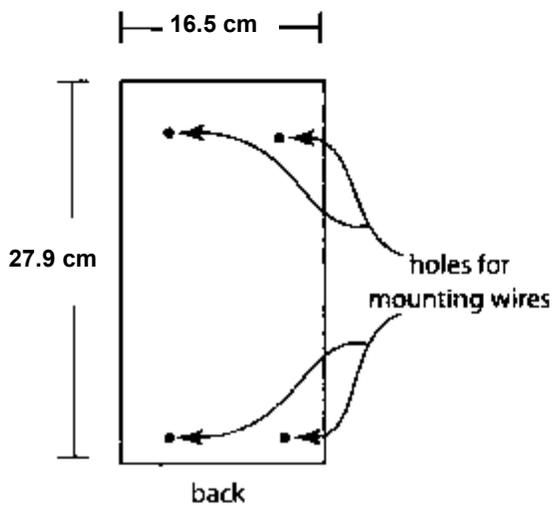
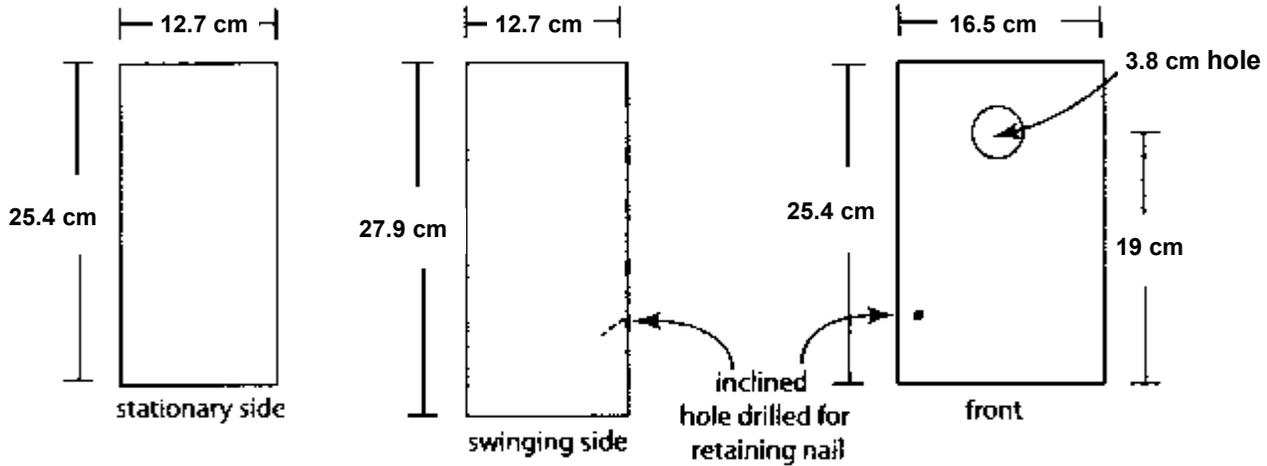
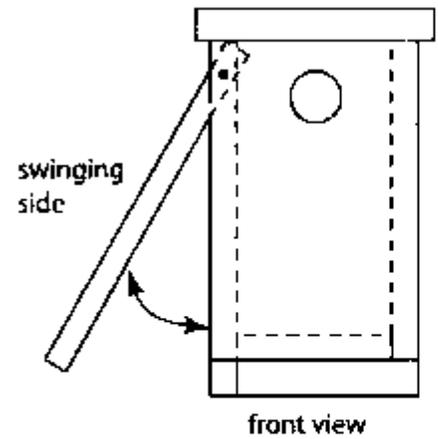
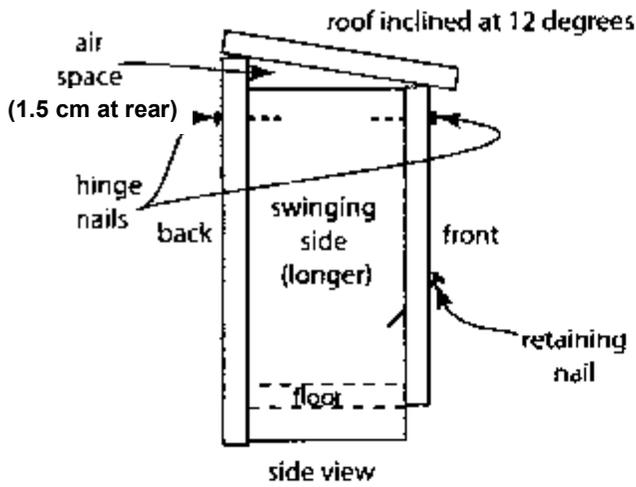
<https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/project-nestwatch/>



When there are few options, cavity nesters can be quite creative (or desperate) in choosing a nest site. They will use owl or wood duck boxes, mailboxes, drain pipes and often tiny, flimsy, decorative boxes. Compromising results in fewer chicks surviving. Very large or open boxes do not offer protection from predators. A box that is too small is unhealthy for the nestlings and can seriously damage the adults flight feathers.



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Making the roof wider and longer will offer better protection from weather and predators.