

Nest Boxes for Native Birds

Placing a nest box (also known as a bird house) in your lawn is a simple way to attract birds that usually nest in tree cavities created by woodpeckers or other causes. Nearly all birds that nest in boxes will do so only because the box resembles that species' preferred dimensions of a naturally occurring tree cavity. Knowing which bird species use tree cavities, and the type of nest box they prefer, is the first step in successfully attracting cavity nesting birds to your backyard.



COMMON CAVITY NESTING BIRDS

Below is a short list of cavity nesting birds that are commonly attracted to nesting boxes. Each species has its own preferences in box design, size, and placement as well as a habitat type they typically utilize. Therefore considerations must be made regarding the type of habitat your backyard resembles before buying or constructing a nesting box. As an example, it may not be worthwhile to place a box for wood ducks in your backyard if you don't have a swamp, tree covered pond, or lake on or adjacent to your property.

American Kestrel
Black-capped Chickadee
Carolina Wren
Eastern Bluebird
Eastern Screech-Owl
House Wren

Prothonotary Warbler
Purple Martin
Tufted Titmouse
Tree Swallow
Wood Duck

BASIC FEATURES

Whether you're buying a nest box or planning to build your own, you will discover an assortment of designs that that will rival the diversity of the birds you're trying to attract. To provide the best nest box for your birds, here are some design elements a good nest box should have:

Made of untreated wood	Recessed floor
Overhanging, sloped roof	Drainage in the floor
Access to the interior for monitoring and cleaning	Ventilation holes near the roof
	No outside perches

MONITORING A NEST BOX

Nest boxes should be monitored on a regular basis, especially in early spring and throughout the breeding season. Unmonitored nest boxes can quickly fall into disrepair or become nesting sites for invasive House Sparrows and European Starlings. At a bare minimum, it is necessary to empty, clean, and repair your nesting box before and after the nesting season for the targeted bird species as well as prevent successful nesting attempts of house sparrows and starlings.

Detailed monitoring of nest boxes are optional but contribute to growing volumes of data and knowledge related to the breeding success of common and uncommon bird species. Project NestWatch is one of many programs anyone can contribute to. The Nature Center is an annual participant of Project NestWatch.

RESOURCES

All About Birds (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology) www.allaboutbirds.org/
-A complete resource for bird ID, attracting birds, and bird-related science

National Wildlife Federation www.nwf.org/How-to-Help/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx
-Lots of information about creating backyard habitats, including setting up nesting boxes

North American Bluebird Society www.nabluebirdsociety.org/
-Fact sheets about bluebirds and nesting boxes

Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/wildlife/ndblinds/
-Plans for constructing a variety of nest boxes, nest platforms, and bird feeders

Ohio Bluebird Society www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org/
-The Ohio chapter of the North American Bluebird Society

Project NestWatch nestwatch.org/
-Citizen science project for monitoring bird nests in addition to information about nest boxes

