



Nest Boxes: FAQ

Provide a safe place for wild birds to lay eggs and raise young.

Why should I get one?

Nest boxes provide valuable habitat for cavity-nesting birds. Nest box residents will reward you with great bird-watching opportunities... even pest control!

Where should I put my nest box?

Anywhere that is out of reach of common predators, like cats and snakes, is generally a good spot. Nest boxes can be mounted with hardware on poles or fences, or simply hung from a tall shepherd's hook or overhang.

When will I see occupancy?

Have your boxes mounted by early spring for mating pairs to investigate in time for nesting season. Some birds will take to it right away, while others are more cautious. Be patient!



We're your best nest box bet!

With our experienced staff always ready to help, we make finding the right nest box easy.

Raven Tree is proud to carry a wide range of nest boxes for common backyard species as well as hard-to-find boxes designed for kestrels, barn owls, wood ducks, and more. We can help you choose the best box for your needs from our local and USA-made selection, or build your own from one of our pre-cut kits. We even offer on-site consulting—ask us for details!



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WILD BIRD & NATURE SHOP



Nest Boxes 101



Choose the right nest
box for your
backyard birds

So You Want To Get A Nest Box...

Choosing the right one for your needs

Providing nest boxes for wild birds is an easy and rewarding way to support our local wildlife. There are a few things to consider when choosing your next nest box, including species desired, current bird traffic, and box design.

First, you should determine if there are any species you would like to attract or deter from using your nest box. If you'd love to house swallows but fear starlings moving in instead, look for a box with an elongated opening that is too narrow for larger birds to use. Similarly, seek out specialty boxes for birds of prey or waterfowl, as each species has unique needs in terms of size, design, and even placement.

When it comes to placement, you'll want to consider spacing requirements. Some birds have larger territories and won't tolerate boxes too close in proximity, though many are fairly easy-going.

It also helps to monitor your future nest box location for a few days/weeks to see what kinds of birds already frequent that area. If your backyard is teeming with mountain chickadees, boxes with 1 1/8" entrance holes are most likely to be readily occupied. A box designed for bluebirds, meanwhile, might remain empty, or be taken over by other more common species. Knowing who you can expect will help you choose the best box for your yard.

When it comes to design, there are three main factors to consider in any nest box:

Protected from the elements. To keep nest sites safe and dry, boxes made with sloped roofs and sturdy materials are best. Look for drainage holes, too, to prevent any water from getting trapped inside.

Removable base for cleaning. A good nest box should have a removable base or similar feature for easy cleaning. It is important to clean out nest boxes from year to year to prevent harmful pests from taking up residence. It also helps reduce the potential spread of disease from resident to resident. Late fall is the best time to clean boxes.

No perch. Yes, really! Birds can enter and exit properly-sized holes without using a perch, but many predators depend on it. Snakes, for example, find perches particularly helpful for accessing tempting eggs and hatchlings. Choose a box without a perch for a safer nesting site.



Tree Swallow Feeds Nestling,
credit: CornellLabs/Jim Paris

Local Species

Not all of our local birds will nest in boxes. Tree and shrub nesters require green habitat (which you can also provide!) and will typically not use man-made nest sites. Cavity-nesters are those that like holes in old trees/utility poles or roof overhangs. These are the birds that will utilize nest boxes.

Here are some of the species that may nest in boxes here in our neck of the woods, followed by their preferred entrance hole size:

- House Wren 1"
- Mountain Chickadee 1 1/8"
- White-breasted Nuthatch
(less common occupant) 1 1/4"
- Tree Swallow; Violet-green Swallow 1 3/8"
- Western Bluebird 1 1/2"
- Northern Flicker 2 1/2"
- American Kestrel; Northern Saw-Whet Owl; Western Screech Owl 3"
- Wood Duck 3" high x 4" wide
- Barn Swallow; American Robin; Scrub Jay *prefer shelf*