

Bird and Bat Roosting Boxes

If you would like to improve biodiversity in your own garden why not consider installing bird boxes and bat boxes? Below you will find useful information on installing bird and bat boxes.

Choosing a Bat Box

There are a number of different styles of bat boxes now available at retail outlets and which one you choose depends on your budget but they all do a similar job.

However you may also wish to make your own. Choose wood that is rough sawn and untreated as bats cannot hang onto smooth surfaces and can be poisoned by timber treatments. It is best to score the backboard with lateral cuts allowing the bats some grip. Ensure that there are no draughts by fitting the box together without any gaps in the side. Choose wood that is rough sawn and untreated as bats cannot hang onto smooth surfaces and can be poisoned by timber treatments. It is best to score the backboard with lateral cuts allowing the bats some grip.

Bat boxes should be checked annually by a licensed bat worker to see if they are present. It is illegal for anyone without a licence to handle bats or disturb a roost site. You can contact your local bat group for advice. Details can be found on our [Helpful Contacts](#) page. When the box is empty it should be checked for leaks or damage and be cleaned of any droppings that have accumulated.

Choosing a Bird Box

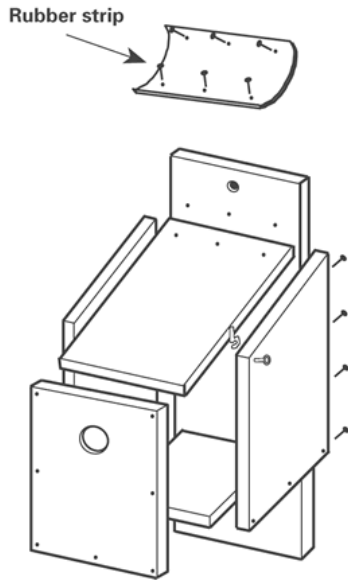
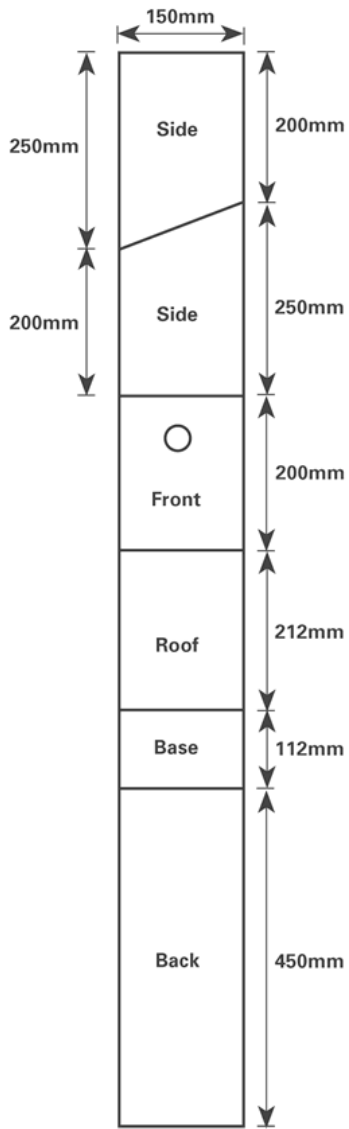
There are a variety of styles of bird nesting boxes available in the market place as well. The one that is right for you depends on where you live and the type of birds that you regularly see.

If you live near woodlands and in the countryside bigger nest boxes may be appropriate for birds such as Woodpeckers and Owls. This is especially important where you live by a plantation where there are few holes in trees or very few older trees.

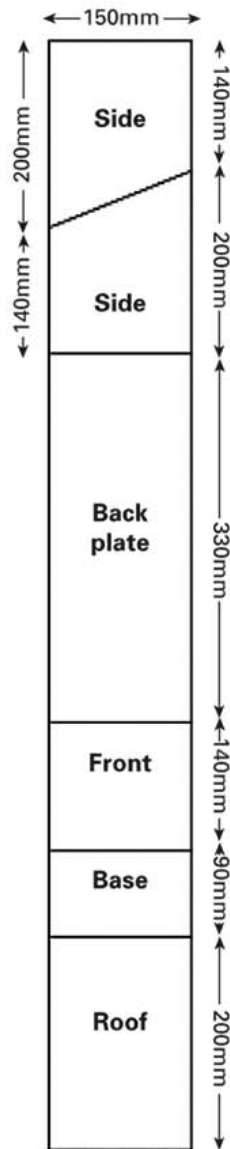
If you live in a more urban area and have a garden it would be more appropriate to have smaller boxes for more common garden visitors such as Blue tits, Coal tits, Green finches and Sparrows. These type of birds benefit greatly from nest boxes in areas where there may be plenty of food but very few nesting opportunities for them. If you do not have a garden it is also possible to attach these boxes to the walls of your house. Essentially you should keep a record of the birds that you see in your garden or near your house regularly. This will help you to choose the most appropriate box.

You can also build your own bird nesting box. When making your own ensure the entrance hole is positioned 125mm from the floor of the box. The diameter can vary from 25 mm for Coal, Marsh and Blue tits, 28 mm for Great tits and Tree sparrows and 32 mm for Nuthatches and House sparrows. The wood that you use should be at least 15mm thick. There are also many places you can buy appropriate nesting boxes. See below for more information.

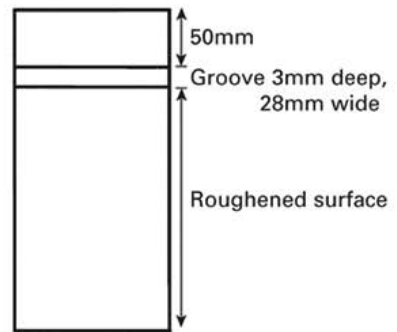
Remember to clean out your nest box after it has been used in October or November and pour hot water inside it to sanitise it. Do not use chemicals to clean it, as these will be harmful to your next brood. If you find any unhatched eggs you should only remove these between the 1st of August and the 31st of January as at any other time of the year this is illegal.



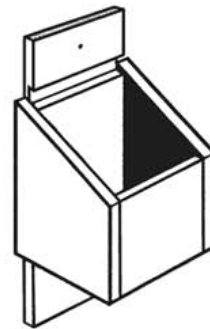
Bird Box



Back plate

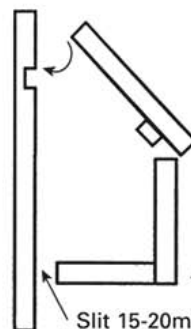
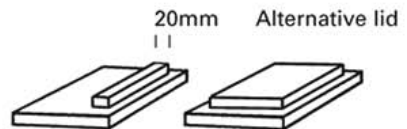


Bat Box



Screw side, back, front and base together to make draught-proof finish

Underside of lid



Press lid into top groove in back plate for a tight fit. Screw lid down to prevent people looking into the box and disturbing the bats.

Siting your Bird or Bat Box

BATS:

Once you have bought or made your box the best place to site them is where you see bats regularly, out of the way of strong wind but positioned where they can get sun for part of the day. As bats use roosts in winter for hibernating and in the summer as maternity roosts (where females gather to give birth to their young) your box may only get used at certain times of the year depending on its position. If it's in a less sunny, cool position then it is more likely it will be used as a winter hibernating roost and in a sunnier, warmer position to be used as a maternity roost.

To create a range of temperature variations you need to have two or three boxes facing in different directions. For warm temperatures boxes should face south, for cooler temperatures they should face east or west. Bat boxes should be located close to a linear vegetation feature such as a tree line or hedgerow as some bats use these for navigation and for avoiding detection by flying around in open areas. Ensure that there are no branches or obstacles in the way of the entrance to the box so providing a clear flight path.

Ensure your bat box is high enough to avoid disturbance by cats or vandals but not so high that you risk your own personal safety. Under the eaves of houses or around 5m on trees is the suggested height. You can place them on other structures such as poles, gazebos, garden walls and sheds but always ensure that they are high enough to avoid predators.

BIRDS:

The majority of boxes should be sited out of the way of cats or people at about 5m high. They require shade so should be situated facing between north and east directions avoiding strong sunlight and wet winds. The box should be tilted forward a little so that driving rain doesn't enter through the hole.

Placing boxes under the eaves of your house will attract House sparrows and starlings and it will also often deter the birds from nesting in your roof. Keep these away from areas where House martins or Swifts normally nest. Robins and Wrens are more likely to use open fronted boxes that are surrounded by vegetation. Open-fronted boxes for Robins and Wrens need to be low down and well hidden in vegetation.

PRECAUTIONS

- Children should always be supervised when handling tools.
- Always take care when fixing boxes to trees or houses. Do not go higher than you are comfortable with and ensure that your ladder is secure before climbing it.
- When fixing boxes to trees it is better to use a wire strap around the tree that should be covered with a rubber tube to avoid any damage. If you are using nails use aluminium alloys or copper, which won't damage saws, or chipping machinery if left in the tree. Domed or headless nails, not hammered all the way in, allow the tree to push the box off without splitting. Check the tree every 2 or 3 years to loosen the strap or re fix the box.

- Observe the law. Do not disturb any bats, birds or their roosts and nesting sites. This is illegal.

- [Wildlife Life and Countryside Act 1981](#)
- [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)

New Developments and Specialised Bricks

If you want to incorporate bat roosts or bird nests into your new development you can install bricks that have been moulded specially to allow bats and birds access into pitched roof spaces that are not intended for people to use (e.g. loft conversions). Alternatively, specially designed bricks, which can accommodate nests or roosts, can also be used and built into the external walls. This avoids issues later on of having a roost or nest in your roof space. These can be sourced from a variety of specialist suppliers. If you would like to view some examples of what these look like please click the link below. (Please note this link will take you to an external web site. This site is not endorsed by Midlothian Council).

- [Examples of specialised bricks](#)

Sources of Information

For more information on birds or bats contact:

- [Bat Conservation Trust](#)
- [The RSPB Scotland](#)
- Midlothian Council's Biodiversity Officer