



Putting up a bird box

Birds naturally tend to nest or roost in hollow trees and holes in trees. However in recent years most old and dying trees that offer the best nesting opportunities are being routinely cut down and removed. This is leaving birds with fewer places to nest and raise their young which is where you can help!

Specially constructed nest boxes are designed to imitate the holes and cavities in dead standing wood and offer birds and their young shelter and protection. These can shop bought or can be easily made at home.

Where to put a nest box

Everyone can put up a nest box, as even without a garden a safe nesting site can be created by fastening a box to the wall of your house or flat. There are one or two things to consider before going ahead though:

- Unless there are trees or buildings that can provide shade during the day, face the box to the north-east, as this will mean it avoids strong sunlight
- Don't position next boxes too closely together, as this can lead to aggressive behaviour and competition between birds



Blackbird in nest box - Credit Amy Lewis

- Boxes should be kept away from bird feeders, as the high levels of activity can disturb nesting pairs
- The box should be placed 1-3 metres from the ground, although certain species have specific height requirements for nesting - check before positioning if you want to attract a particular bird (BTO website provides good advice)
- Make sure that there is a clear flight path to the box

When to put up a nest box

Although most birds will not start building their nests until March nest boxes should ideally be put up as early as January so that birds can make exploratory visits to them. However, if you put your bird box up in the autumn you may attract winter roosters which may eventually use the box as a nest in the spring.

Building a nest box

There are some basic requirements to building your very own nest box:

- The wood of the box should ideally be 15mm thick for warmth (although 9mm ply is fine and easier to cut) and any weatherproof timber is suitable as long as it has not been pressure treated
- Rather than painting the box use a coat of linseed oil to



Building boxes - Credit YWT



stop the wood drying out; be careful about using wood preservatives as some can be poisonous to birds

- Use galvanised nails and screws as they last longer than ordinary nails
- Make sure to include small drainage holes in the base of the box to let liquid drain away
- The roof of the box should be angled downwards to allow rain water to run off
- A hinged lid is useful as it allows you to clean the box easily.

Buying a nest box?

Check out the wide variety of boxes as sold by Vine House Farm; their collection even includes camera bird boxes so that you can easily monitor any activity. With every purchase made XX% is donated to Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Visit www.vinehousefarm.co.uk/our-shop/Nest-Boxes to take a look.

Maintaining nest boxes

It is important to clean out your bird box once a year - the best time to do this is late October or November following the breeding season.

Remove any old nests, bedding and also dispose of any dead chicks or unhatched eggs as it is against the law to keep birds eggs. Wash the box out with boiling water as this kills off parasites and then clean it thoroughly with warm soapy water. It is essential that you do NOT disturb your nest box during the breeding season.

No birds?

If your box hasn't attracted birds one year, it doesn't mean it won't the next. However if your box hasn't been used for several years consider moving it to a new location.

If you don't want to put up a bird box you can still help by putting out odds and ends that birds can use to build their nests. Materials including feathers, wool, string and moss are all helpful during the spring months.


Find out more

If you would like to find out more about Yorkshire Wildlife Trust or how to become a member, plus more about the work we do for birds then contact us in the following ways:

A: 1 St George's Place, York, YO24 1GN

T: 01904 659570

E: info@ywt.org.uk

 @YorksWildlife

 YorkshireWildlifeTrust



Putting up a bird box - Credit Bernie Waddington