

Nesting Boxes

Backyard habitat gets credit for recent increase in bluebird populations and other endangered species.



Photo courtesy of Roger Iverson

By Valeri Wade & Rachael Moore

Only a brave bird will explore a dark hole. If they have feet strong enough to cling to a tree trunk, they will be looking for just such a hole to raise their brood.

Nest boxes and natural holes are safer places to raise babies than open nests. They are insulated, sheltered from rain, and protected from predators.

Chickadees, wrens, nuthatches, bluebirds, woodpeckers, tree and violet-green swallows, kestrels, screech, barred and barn owls, and wood ducks are some of our local cavity dwellers.

In the process of beautifying their property, many people take down dead trees. This leads to intense competition for nest holes. Bird houses have been filling this void for decades.

A well-designed bird house can mean a successful new generation of birds.

Our native birds prefer boxes with no perch. They don't need it, and predators find it handy.

A quality bird box will be made out of solid wood with top ventilation and floor drainage. It should open easily so you can clean out the old nest, which will get rid of parasites.

Slot-front entrance designs and a deeper box can discourage non-native house sparrows, while slanted front panels can protect fledglings against starlings and cats. A "squirrel-guard" is a rigid collar often fitted over the entrance to prevent squirrels from enlarging the hole.

Autumn is the perfect time to site nesting boxes for upcoming spring; birds begin scouting now for new nesting sites, and they need time to find the house. Putting up a box for woodpeckers may prevent holes in your own house and provide a much needed winter roosting spot.

Although individual birds may use a nesting box as shelter during the cold months, putting up a dedicated winter roost can allow birds to group together and share their precious body heat. These boxes can also help vulnerable first-year birds make it through the lean season.

In the spring you can watch nature unfold - courting, nest building, food gathering, fledging, and parents teaching youngsters how to find food. If you have feeders nearby, "your babies" may return year after year.



Convertible Roost/Nest Box

Photo courtesy of Coveside Conservation

Mention this newsletter for 25% off "A Guide to Bird Homes" by Scott Shalaway. Includes guidelines for choosing, siting, taking care of, and building nest boxes.

New & Fun

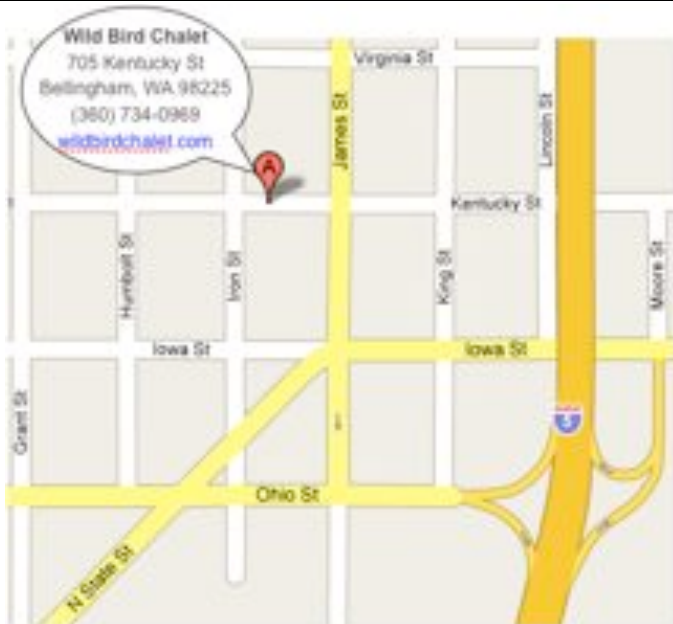
Fantastic buy on new "Fall Festival Blend." Highest quality seed. On sale until it's gone. \$14.99 for 25 pounds. Silver and enamel jewelry - each piece handmade. Starling-resistant Flicker Box gives these beauties a place to safely raise their babies.



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