



For immediate use

Boxing clever!

Spring might seem a long way off but some birds will soon be prospecting for nest sites. The British Trust for Ornithology is urging people to put up a new nest box now and, by doing so, increase the chances of it being used come the spring. The Garden Ecology Team has produced a new leaflet, providing expert advice on how to build a nest box, where to erect it and how to look after it.

While spring may seem a long way off, a number of bird species will already be prospecting for potential nest sites. House Sparrows, for example, return to their breeding colonies in late autumn, with the female bird often roosting within the nest site throughout the winter months. Other birds, such as Wrens and Blue Tits, may also use boxes for roosting, so getting a box in place now could prove really valuable.

Vivienne Greenough, Nest Records Officer at the BTO, commented “*This new leaflet is packed full of useful information about providing nest boxes for birds in your garden. Many species of bird will take readily to nest boxes and so this leaflet offers simple designs that can be tailored to each. The leaflet also shows you where best to place your nest boxes for the comfort and safety of their occupants; it explains how to look after the boxes so that they will remain in use for years to come. Few garden delights are as simple and yet fascinating as erecting a nest box and watching it become home to a family of birds; this leaflet shows you just how to achieve that .*”

“*A number of species of conservation concern, like House Sparrow, Spotted Flycatcher and Starling, make use of nest boxes and are likely to benefit from ones that are well-constructed and carefully positioned. Not only do we want people to erect new boxes, we also want them to take an interest in how these boxes are used. Nest monitoring is one of the key methods by which we can gather information about changes in breeding success and laying dates, factors that might be influenced by, for example, a changing climate.*” said **Mike Toms, Head of Garden Ecology at the BTO**.

For your free Nest Box leaflet please call the BTO on 01842-750050, email gbw@bto.org or send an A5 SAE to Nest Box Leaflet, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, IP24 2PU.



Garden Ecology Team

Making your garden count!

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Notes for editors

1. ABOUT THE ORGANISATION:



BTO: The BTO is the UK's leading bird research organisation. Over 40,000 birdwatchers contribute to the BTO's surveys. They collect information that forms the basis of conservation action in the UK. The BTO maintains a staff of 100 at its offices in Norfolk and Stirling, who analyse and publicise the results of project work. The BTO's investigations are funded by government, industry and conservation organisations. www.bto.org

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF NEST MONITORING:

In order to assess the health of birds in our gardens, the BTO needs to know about their nesting activities, such as when they lay their eggs, how many they lay, and how many chicks survive to fledging. This information can be gathered by asking volunteers to monitor nest boxes in their gardens and report what they see to the BTO's free online survey, 'Nest Box Challenge'. Boxes are monitored by looking inside them and recording their contents at regular intervals.

By gathering information from gardens across the country each year, the BTO can look at the timing of nesting and the breeding success of the nation's garden birds and can also assess whether these things are changing over time. For example, BTO studies have revealed that many common birds now nest earlier in the year—a response to climate change.

3. TOP-TEN TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL NEST BOX:

1. Ensure your nest box has a hinged or removable lid to aid easy inspection and cleaning.
2. Treat your nest box with a water based wildlife friendly preservative to increase the longevity of the box.
3. Fix a horizontal or vertical batten to the back of the nest box to help prevent water from running down into it.
4. Do not site your nest box too close to bird feeders where the presence of large numbers of feeding birds may cause disturbance to any occupants.
5. Site your nest box in a place that will not make it easily accessible to predators.
6. For cleaning and monitoring purposes, place your nest box at a height where you can easily reach it.
7. When erecting your nest box, use screws instead of nails as these will last longer. Stainless steel/brass screws are ideal.
8. Ensure the nest box entrance faces away from prevailing wind, rain and direct sunlight.
9. To give additional shelter to the box entrance, angle the box slightly downwards.
10. Drill a few holes in the base of the box for drainage.

Contact information

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The BTO has a dedicated ISDN line for radio interviews, contact press@bto.org for details

Images of BIRDS and NEST BOXES are available upon request from images@bto.org