



BARN OWL NEST BOX

The Barn Owl is a species of open country, favouring lowland habitats such as farmland and young plantation woodland. Populations have recovered somewhat from an earlier period of decline and have benefited from the erection of nest boxes and appropriate habitat management. Barn Owl is listed on Schedule One of the Wildlife & Countryside Act and so receives additional protection during the breeding season; a Schedule One licence is required to visit the nest of this species.

CONSTRUCTION

The use of FSC-approved WBP plywood or marine plywood, of 12 mm thickness, should give this nest box good longevity. The cutting plan, overleaf, is for a design that is fairly easy to construct and is for use indoors. More complex designs may be found on the Internet, some of which are designed for particular locations, such as for mounting on a tree or a telegraph pole. The sides, top and base of the box can be attached directly to one another but the use of 20 mm batons provides greater rigidity. Use screws and waterproof glue to make the joins. The entrance hole should be 150 mm in diameter.

Note that the access door on the side of the box can be made in a different manner if preferred, for example being made using a second layer of wood, with the door fitting over a smaller entrance hole beneath in order to ease opening. If you use this approach attach a baton above the door, sealed with glue, to prevent water entering the box. Attach a bolt to the door and hinges to allow access for monitoring and to clean out the box at the end of the season. Don't forget to drill drainage holes into the base. Use a water-based preservative on the outside of the box and leave the inside bare. Add a layer of large sawdust chippings (an inch or so deep) to the box to form a scrape into which the eggs can be laid. If attaching any box to a tree use aluminium nails to minimise risk to anyone in the future who cuts into the tree with a chainsaw.

PLACEMENT

Barn Owl nest boxes are best placed within suitable farmland habitat, either in a suitable hedgerow tree or on a farm building. This box has been designed for placement inside a building, where it can be attached to a roof beam, wall or suitable ledge. Generally a box placed c. 3.5–5 m above the ground is suitable. Position the box entrance so that it is away from the prevailing wind (generally this means avoiding the west or south-west). You are responsible for your own safety, so assess the risks and take care when building the box, fixing it into position and when monitoring.

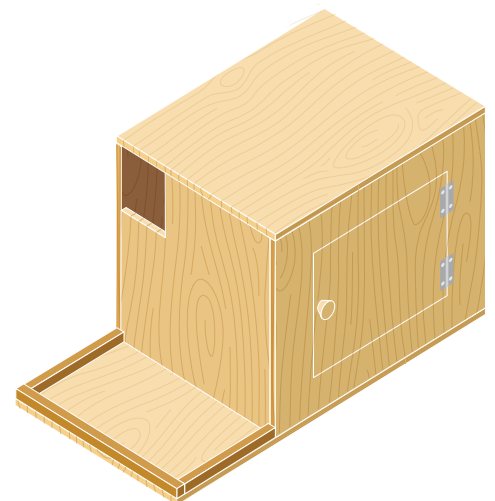
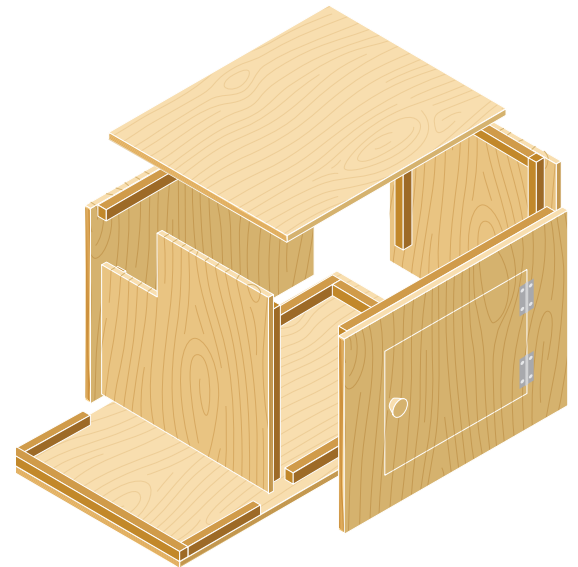
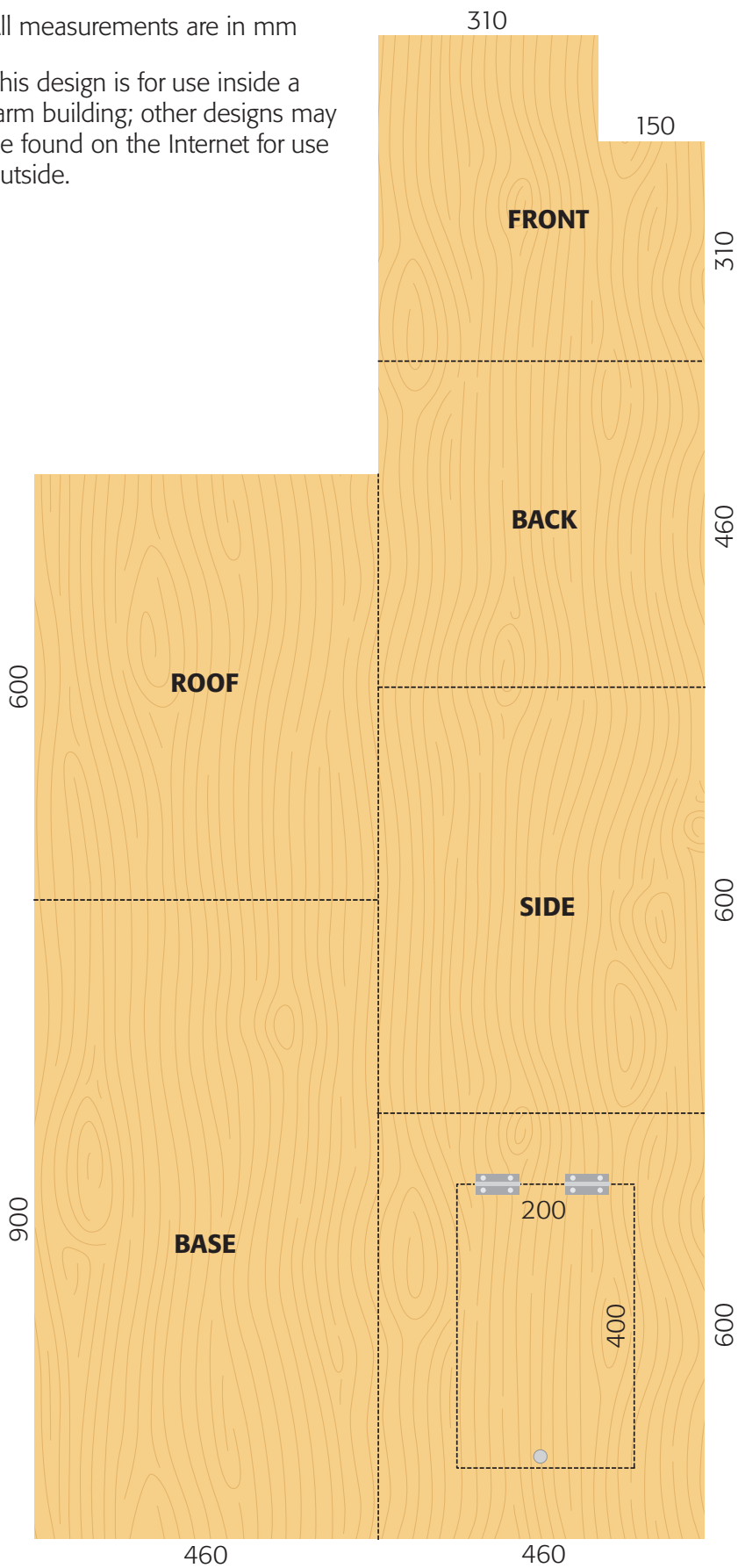
MONITORING

Some 2,500 Barn Owl nests are monitored annually by BTO volunteers, representing perhaps one in five of all nesting attempts made by the species in Britain and Ireland. Nest inspections should only be carried out by surveyors who hold a Schedule One licence for the species. There is some evidence that Barn Owls may be sensitive to disturbance during the early stages of nesting, so special care should be taken. As with monitoring other owls, wear goggles and head protection when visiting nests. A detailed monitoring protocol for this species is being developed by the BTO as part of Project Owl.

BARN OWL NEST BOX – CUTTING PLAN

All measurements are in mm

This design is for use inside a farm building; other designs may be found on the Internet for use outside.



Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Clutch size: 4–6 eggs

Incubation: 32 days

Chicks fledge at: 53–61 days

Broods: 1–2 per year

Seasonality of nests with eggs (E) and young (y), derived from Nest Record Scheme data.

