



HOUSE SPARROW NEST BOX

House Sparrow populations have been in decline since the mid-1980s, with this once familiar species now absent from many urban sites. The loss of suitable nest cavities appears to have played a role in this decline so the provision of one or more nest boxes (House Sparrows are colonial breeders) is something positive that you can do to help. A standard, small hole-fronted nest box, with an entrance hole of 32 mm diameter, works best for this species. House Sparrows may make two or three breeding attempts during the breeding season.

CONSTRUCTION

The use of FSC-approved timber, at least 15 mm in thickness, will give this nest box longevity. The cutting plan, overleaf, has been shown to be successful by BTO nest recorders working on the species. House Sparrows are colonial breeders and so you may find that erecting several boxes may work best – the boxes can even be placed together to form a terrace of nesting opportunities. Make sure that the roof is long enough to overlap the front panel and its entrance hole. Use screws and glue to make the joins.

Don't forget to drill drainage holes into the base and pre-drill holes in the back plate to allow attachment to a tree or building. It is important that the hinged roof can be opened easily for cleaning out the box at the end of the season – nest boxes should be cleaned out between 1 September and 31 January. Easy access also supports the all-important monitoring visits that provide very valuable information to the BTO Nest Records Scheme. We would welcome more records of House Sparrow but see note in the Monitoring section below.

Use a water-based preservative on the outside of the box and leave the inside bare. There is no need to add any lining to the box, though it has been suggested that placing a bit of straw or similar material poking out of the box may encourage use. Attach the box to the tree or a building, using aluminium nails for a tree in order to minimise risk to anyone in the future who cuts into the tree with a chainsaw.

PLACEMENT

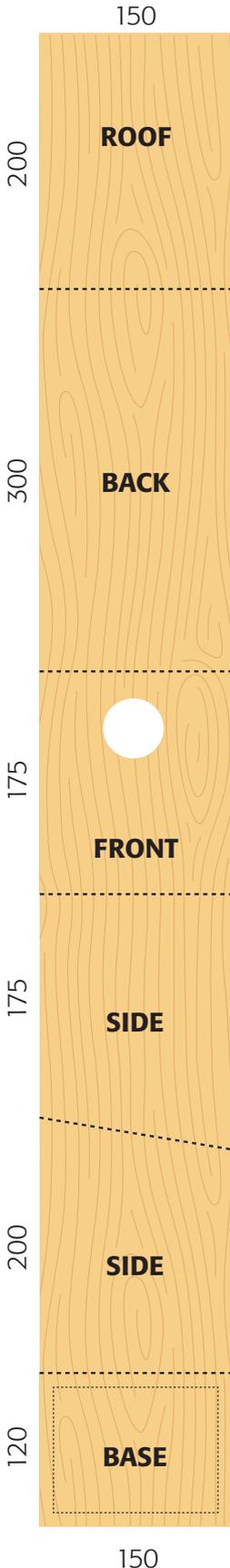
House Sparrow nest boxes are best placed so that the entrance hole is facing north-east and is sheltered from the prevailing wind and rain. Avoid obvious sun traps, such as south-facing walls. The box does not need to be positioned within cover. Position the box 6–7 feet off the ground, higher if you think there is the risk of disturbance. 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 350 or so House Sparrow nests are monitored annually by BTO volunteers, some of which form part of dedicated projects. We are keen to secure more information from a wider range of sites, particularly those in gardens and urban parks. House Sparrows appear to be sensitive to disturbance during the egg-laying and early part of the incubation period, suggesting that monitoring efforts should be targeted towards the latter stages of the breeding cycle.

HOUSE SPARROW NEST BOX – CUTTING PLAN

Plank size c. 150 x 1170 mm
All measurements are in mm



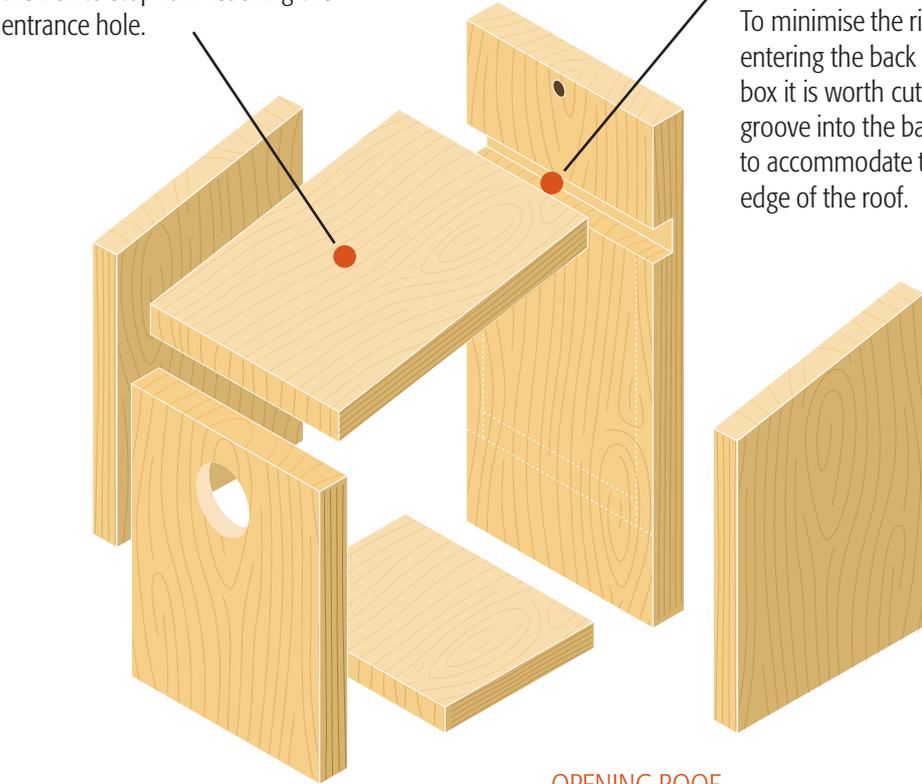
WEATHERPROOFING

Weatherproof the roof with water-based preservative and ensure it overlaps the front of the box to stop rain reaching the entrance hole.

32 mm diameter entrance hole for House Sparrow

ROOF JOINT

To minimise the risk of rain entering the back of the box it is worth cutting a groove into the back plate to accommodate the back edge of the roof.

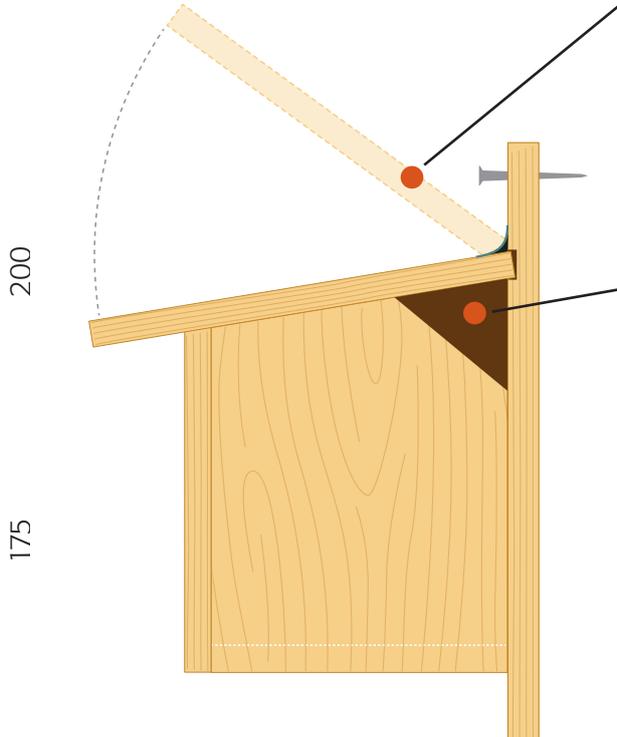


OPENING ROOF

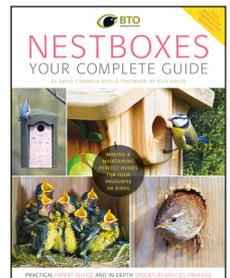
Fit a rubber hinge so that the roof can be lifted easily for cleaning and nest monitoring. Find out more about the BTO Nest Record Scheme on our website www.bto.org

ALTERNATIVE DESIGN

An alternative to the traditional round entrance hole is a simple triangular opening on the side of the box. Overhang the roof if you adopt this approach.



Get more information from our book 'Nestboxes: your complete guide'. Available from www.bto.org



House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Clutch size: 4–5 eggs

Incubation: c.12 days

Chicks fledge at: 14–15 days

Broods: 2–3 per year

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

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
E												
Y												