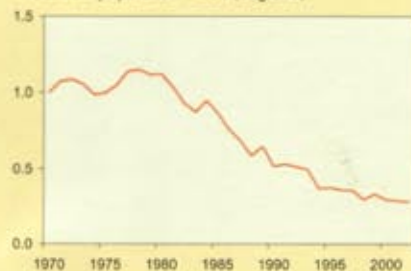


# Starling — *Sturnus vulgaris*

<b>Nestbox</b>	Medium hole-entrance box, 45 mm diameter hole
<b>Distribution/status</b>	Present everywhere except remote mountainous areas. Red
<b>Siting</b>	Height above 2.5 m on tree trunks or buildings
<b>Nest</b>	A heap of plant material, lined with feathers, moss and wool. In traditional sites the nest may be many layers deep
<b>Eggs</b>	4-7; light blue
<b>Density</b>	Can nest colonially; boxes may be in adjacent trees or close together on buildings
<b>Incubation</b>	12-14 days, by both sexes
<b>Nestling</b>	20-22 days
<b>Broods</b>	1-2



CBC/BBS population index (England)



The British breeding population of Starlings has declined by over 50% in the last 25 years and the species is now on the Red List. The apparent abundance of the species on farmland and in gardens in winter is due to an influx of migrant birds from north-eastern Europe. In spite of their aggressive behaviour and association with mankind, Starlings are sensitive to disturbance at the nest.

Starlings will nest at any height where there is a suitable cavity but prefer higher sites and so boxes should be placed at 2.5 m or higher. Because of their gregarious nature they will happily nest near to each other so several boxes may be placed close together — on adjacent trees for instance. Make sure there is a clear, direct flight path to the nest entrance. Boxes placed on balconies of high-rise buildings could be used by Starlings.

The nest is usually an untidy layer of dried grass lined with fur, moss or feathers. The fresh green leaves which they add to the nest before laying eggs deter parasites. Starlings

may rear a second brood in the same nest site with little additional nest building on top of the old and will often re-use the site year after year, adding new material to the previous years' decaying nest. To prevent this unhealthy accumulation of material, boxes should be cleaned at the end of the season after the second brood has fledged.

Single Starling eggs are often found abandoned below an active nest. This is likely to be a result of a female laying an egg in the nest of another Starling pair and the owners rejecting it.



Egg laying  
Incubation  
Nestlings



# Medium hole-entrance nestboxes

46

## Construction

Medium hole-entrance boxes are similar to the small hole design but, because of their larger size, will be heavier. Some design features will therefore become relatively more important. Nails and mounting methods will need to be stronger and more care must be taken to ensure safety of the tree, box and nestboxer when siting these boxes.

## Drainage

Drainage is important. Even if the joints of the floor are not watertight, the wood may swell in wet weather preventing water from draining out. To avoid this, drill 5 holes of 3 mm diameter in the box base.

## Entrance size and shape

If you are making only a handful of these boxes and the expense of a hole saw or large wood twist bit is not justified, the round hole can be substituted with a square or triangular hole cut in the top of the box front using a saw. A hole 45 mm square will give access to both Starlings and Great Spotted Woodpeckers.

## Materials and cutting diagram

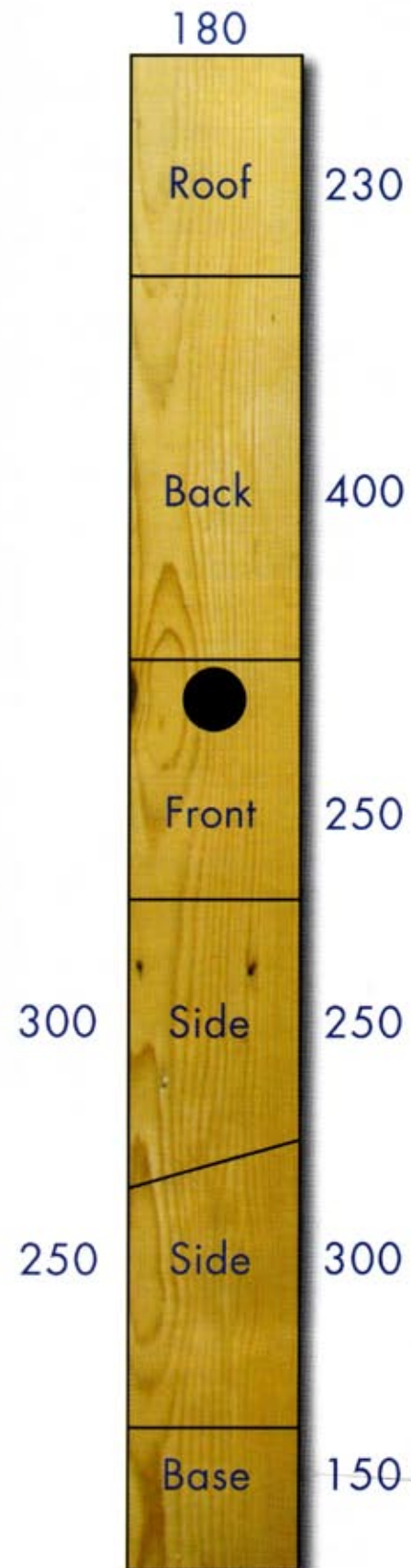
The cutting diagram gives dimensions for a typical medium box made from a single rough-cut timber plank. Using exterior-quality plywood sheeting instead will produce lighter boxes and may allow dimensions to be altered more easily to suit particular circumstances.

## Filled boxes

As Great Spotted Woodpeckers need to excavate their own nesting cavity, boxes must be stuffed with suitable material such as birch taken from a dead, fallen tree, soft enough to be sliced with a knife in order to fit snugly inside the box. Alternatively, expanded polystyrene blocks can be used for stuffing. (For the sake of the environment, use only discarded polystyrene.)

## Other species

Although these boxes are not intended for smaller birds, do not be surprised if other species, such as Great Tits, use them.



Plank size  
180 mm x 1580 mm  
(All dimensions in millimetres)