

Give a bird a home



BTO

Looking out for birds

Although you may erect a nest box at any time of the year, February is the month when the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) organises National Nest Box Week. This event traditionally runs from St. Valentine's Day i.e. from 14th February to 21st February. If you would like to put up a nest box, the following advice should help.

Why should I have a nest box in my garden?

Natural nesting sites are fast disappearing as modern housing and insulating practices do not provide nesting cavities for birds to utilise. Putting up a nest box helps to compensate for this.

Where can I site a nest box?

Ensure that you choose a site which shelters the nest box from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight. A north-east facing position is often recommended. Use galvanised wire to attach a nest box to a tree and ensure the box is slightly angled downwards to avoid the rain getting in. Never site a nest box near a feeding station as this disturbs nesting pairs.

What type of box should I use?

This depends on what species of bird you wish to encourage. If you would like Blue Tits, use a box with a 25mm hole. If you would prefer to have Great Tits, use a hole with a 28mm diameter. Both nests should be 1 to 5m above the ground and there should be a clear flight path to the entrance.

If you want to encourage House Sparrows, you will need a box with a 32mm diameter hole, but be aware, they are colonial nesting birds and one nest box alone may not work. Specially designed House Sparrow boxes can be purchased which will allow a number of this species to use them.

Robins prefer an open-fronted nest box which should be placed 100mm high. They nest in dense vegetation, so ideally, site the box on a fence which has a good covering of foliage.

How can I stop predators?

It may be helpful to fix a metal plate around the hole to deter squirrels. To stop Great Spotted Woodpeckers gaining access by drilling in to the nest box, woodcrete nest boxes are recommended. Do not have external perches on a nest box as this can encourage predators.

When is the best time to clean out a nest box?

Bird Protection law allows you to clean out a nest box from 1 August to 31 January. However some birds, e.g. House Sparrows may have 2 to 3 broods a year so it is best to wait until the end of October, but do check first as there may also be birds starting to roost. Ensure you wear surgical gloves and a dust mask to protect you from the risk of respiratory disease

caused by possible fungi. Destroy dead eggs and immediately put all the nesting material in to a plastic bag, and seal before disposal.

Having a nest box in your garden can be a pleasurable and rewarding experience so I do encourage you to put one up in your garden. If you find birds are not using the nest box, be patient, and if after three years it is not used, re-site it elsewhere. Further information and instructions on how to construct a nest box may be obtained from [here](#).

Jean Parrott

Jean is a voluntary Ambassador for the BTO Garden BirdWatch scheme in Nott's. If you would like more information about Garden BirdWatch, please get in touch with her on 07704809741 or jpbirds@talktalk.net .



Photo by Christine M Matthews



Photo by David Waistell