

Swallow Nestbox



Providing houses for cavity nesting birds is a popular hobby for many British Columbians who enjoy wildlife around their homes. More than 60 species of birds (including the woodpeckers) in British Columbia alone nest in tree cavities. Nestboxes are becoming increasingly important as the availability of natural cavities in *Wildlife Trees* (dead trees) is decreasing rapidly. Please remember that placing and maintaining these nest structures does not eliminate the need for preserving and managing wildlife habitat or preserving wildlife trees for wildlife. The use of nestboxes should be considered a technique for enhancing existing habitat and/or adding to our personal opportunities to see and enjoy wildlife. The placement of nestboxes in a backyard or apartment provides a wonderful opportunity to observe nesting birds.

- 1) Make sure the nestbox is in working condition (ie. door locked).
- 2) Choose a site for the nestbox, remembering that different types of birds live in different habitats (see below).
- 3) Erect the nestbox with 2 - 2¼ inch screws.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

- all houses should be firmly attached to a support post, tree, or building. Only wrens will use boxes suspended under a branch or eave (helps to deter House Sparrows).
- if attaching to a live tree, the hanging screws should be loosened to allow for growth.
- a wood preservative may be used on the outside of the box only (linseed oil works well). **Do NOT** use green copper-based wood preservative or creosote.
- to avoid territorial conflicts, space nest boxes at least 20 feet apart, if possible.
- sometimes undesired animals (mice, House Sparrows, bees, wasps) may take up residence. If not acceptable, remove the nests or put up other nestboxes for the desired wildlife species. Sparrows nests may require repeated removal.
- at the end of the summer, the nestbox should be cleaned thoroughly. You may wish to leave the box up all year since some birds will use it as a roost during cold spells. If left open all year, remember to clean again in the spring because of parasites.
- to clean, remove nest material and wash thoroughly with soap and water, rinse well.
- keep records of nesting behaviour and dates (ie. fledging time). There are many good bird books available which will help explain this behaviour.

Possible Vancouver Island Tenants That Might Use This Nestbox:

- Violet-green Swallow
- Tree Swallow
- Bewick's Wren
- House Wren
- House Sparrow
- Winter Wren

Habitat: Swallows prefer suburban or rural locations with open fields or open areas near water. A great spot is on the side of a building, just under the eaves where the roof peaks. Other good locations for swallows include trees, telephone poles, or posts with unobstructed access to the entrance hole. Wrens require open areas with a mixture of trees and dense shrubbery, or brush piles.

Height: 4 to 20 feet up on a building, tree or post, in a visible location, if possible.

Nest Materials to Provide (hung near nestbox in mesh sack or loose): Straw, grasses, hair (horse hair works well) and lots of feathers for swallows; small twigs of about 2-3 mm in diameter and grasses for Wrens.