Nest boxes

Many species of wildlife are dependent on tree hollows, including possums, gliders, antechinuses, bats, parrots, owls and other birds. In habitat that lacks natural tree hollows, nest boxes can be used to provide nesting and roosting sites and to help monitor wildlife.

Location and habitat

This information is relevant across Victoria.

General information

- Nest boxes are not a substitute for natural hollows – prioritise protecting and regenerating natural hollows
- Nest boxes provide temporary assistance for wildlife. Most will last around 10 years, while a natural hollow may last for 100 years
- Each species of wildlife has its own requirements for nest boxes, including dimension of box and entrance, placement, and nesting material
- Avoiding temperature extremes is key to nest box placement and construction
- Nest boxes are often used by introduced species such as bees, which may need to be monitored and removed
- Wildlife may not use nest boxes immediately, so patience is key
- Regular monitoring is essential to maintaining nest boxes and ensuring they are safe for wildlife

Methods

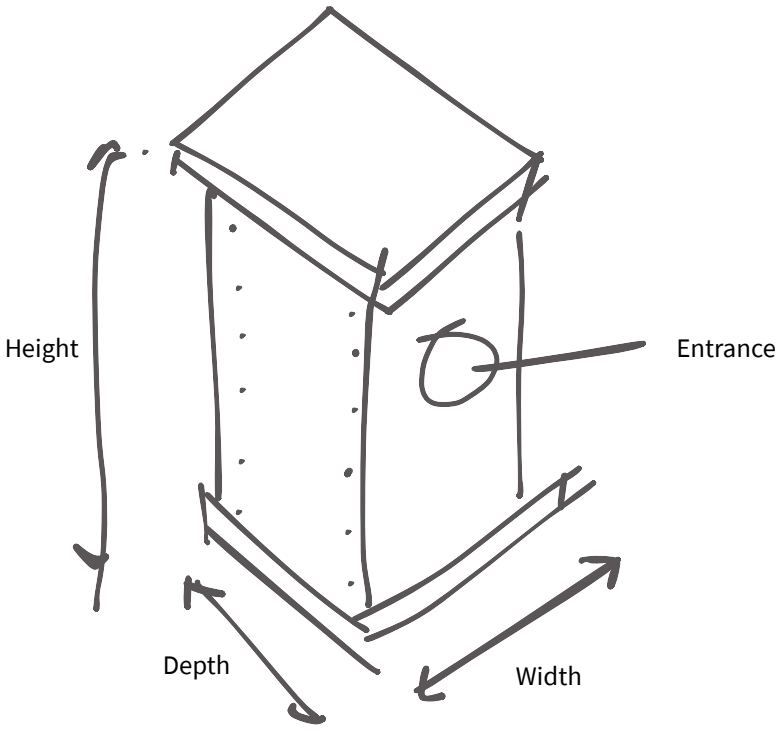
Design

- Design elements of nest boxes include:
    - Entrance hole size – should be only just large enough for the species you wish to attract
    - Lid – an overhanging lid can provide shelter from weather. A hinged lid can allow for monitoring
    - Depth – species such as cockatoos prefer deep, vertical hollows. Bats will use narrower nest boxes with entrances underneath the box
    - Nesting material such as wood shavings or shredded bark
- Artificial hollows can be sawn into live or dead trees to achieve more natural hollow conditions. Use an experienced arborist
- Each species has its own requirements. Choose nest box design based on species you wish to attract. Some common requirements are listed overleaf
- Use thick, untreated wood to provide insulation and construct box to avoid gaps for drafts
- Use rough sawn wood so wildlife can grip and climb
- Paint outside of box a dark colour with non-toxic paint

Placement

- Place nest boxes 3-5 metres high in trees
- Consider the aspect. Avoid positioning the nest box toward prevailing wind and rain. Placing the nest box so it faces the south east can avoid temperature extremes
- Consider the surrounding habitat and food and water sources
- Securely attach the nest box to tree. If using wire, thread through hose and add spring to protect tree and allow for growth. If using nails or screws, consider using spacers to allow tree growth.

Species	Height (mm)	Width (mm)	Depth (mm)	Entrance (mm)
Brush-tailed Possum	500	250	290	100-120
Ringtail Possum	400	240	200	70-80
Sugar Glider	400	240	200	32-35
Tuan	400	240	200	35-40
Rosellas	400	240	200	70.00
Red-rumped Parrot	400	190	170	60.00
Treecreepers/Owlet Nightjar	400	190	170	45-50
Ducks - Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal	500	250	290	100.00
Ducks - Black Duck	500	250	290	130.00



Maintenance and monitoring

- Nest boxes must be monitored regularly to ensure they are safe for wildlife and to avoid damage to the tree
- Minimise opening the lid of nest box to avoid disturbing wildlife
- A pole-mounted camera can be used to inspect inside nest boxes while minimising disturbance
- Monitor for pests such as bees and starlings which may need to be removed
- Record observations and placement of nest boxes to inform future management

Further information

If you have a conservation covenant, please consult with your Trust for Nature regional staff member to ensure land management activities are in line with your covenant deed.

For further advice and support, please contact Trust for Nature.

(03) 8631 5838

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Safety

Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when undertaking land management. Follow all label instructions on equipment and local regulations. Be mindful of weather conditions. Do not conduct land management on days of extreme or catastrophic fire danger or total fire ban.

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