Build it and they will come!



How to build a bird box for house sparrows

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Where have all the sparrows gone? It's hard to imagine that this once common British bird is in serious decline in some parts of the country, particularly in London. Nationally there has been a 50% fall in sparrow numbers since 1979.

Sparrows often nest under the eaves of houses but many modern houses are not 'sparrow friendly'. This bird box will help reverse the decline.

Sparrows are gregarious birds. This home made nest box uses 12mm exterior plywood and will accommodate up to three breeding pairs of house sparrows.

   

A cutting plan can be found and printed on the following page. Picture 1, above, shows what looks basically like a book rack, with 3 separate compartments. A roof overhang at the sides and front (picture 2) helps to help keep the interior dry. The small batten part way up the side gives the young birds a chance for a peek at the outside world before making that all important first flight. Waterproof wood glue and number 4 brass screws were used to secure the panels. The front is fixed with screws only, to enable the box to be cleaned out at the end of the season.

The 32 mm holes accommodate house sparrows, tree sparrows and nuthatches. Keep the hole near the roof to deter predators and drill a couple of small holes in the base of each compartment to keep the nest dry. Water-based wood stain can be used to

enhance and protect the nest box, but on the outside of the box only. Try also to keep any preservative away from the entrance hole. Fenceguard and Sadolin Classic are recommended by the manufacturers as being suitable products. Cuprinol TimberCare (for use on rough sawn timber) is also safe to birds when dry. Ideally fasten the box close to the eaves of the house. This would be the birds' natural choice of location. Try and use a direction between north and east to avoid strong sunlight. Try to get your nest boxes in position as early as possible, preferably at the beginning of January. Our blue tits started making exploratory visits in mid February. Each year on St. Valentine's Day – 14th February – the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) launches its National Nest Box Week,

with the aim of encouraging people to put up nest boxes to help breeding birds and other wildlife.

The plan layout for a typical nest box is shown below. Many decorative bird boxes are totally unsuitable for parent birds and their families. Bird boxes designed as an integral part of a bird table are unlikely to be occupied. It would be like living above a fast food take-away! Choose a quiet and undisturbed part of your garden for the completed box.

Building a sparrow nest box:

This 'sparrow terrace' bird box is suitable for up to 3 pairs of the (once common), house sparrow. Help to halt the decline in house sparrows by building the bird nesting box below.

