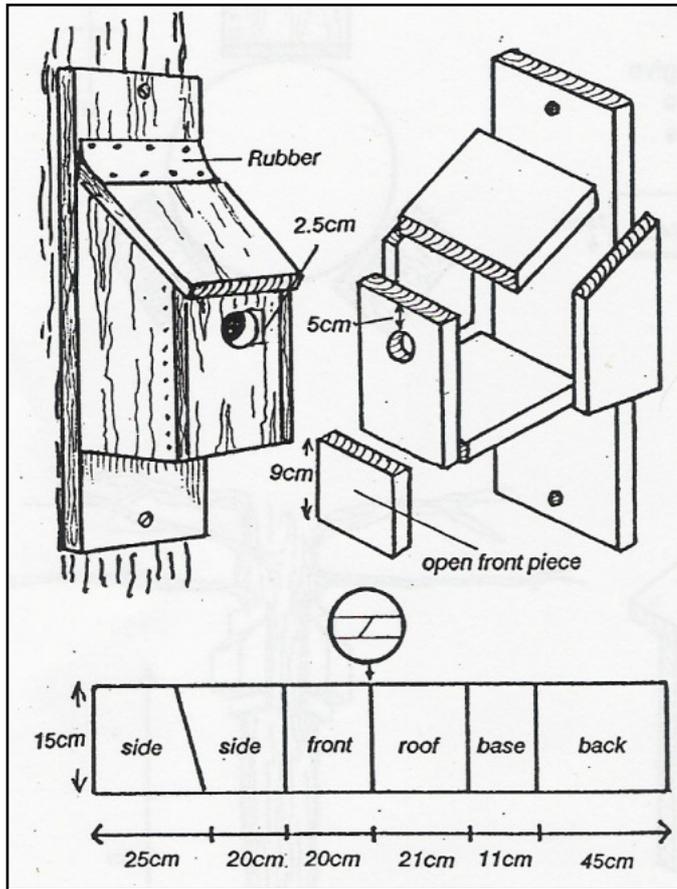


Helping birds and bats

Birds and bats suffer from a shortage of suitable nesting and roosting places as well as food. You can help them by providing boxes, and keep many birds alive through the winter with a well stocked bird table.

Bird boxes

There are all sorts of nest boxes, which cater for a wide variety of birds. The design illustrated is for a simple closed box to attract tits, sparrows or nuthatches. This can be easily modified into an open box for robins or flycatchers by cutting away part of the front panel. Vary the entry hole size according to the type of bird you want to attract.



Entry hole sizes:

- Blue tit = 25mm
- Tree sparrow = 28mm
- Nuthatch = 28-30mm
- Great tit = 25mm
- House sparrow = 29mm

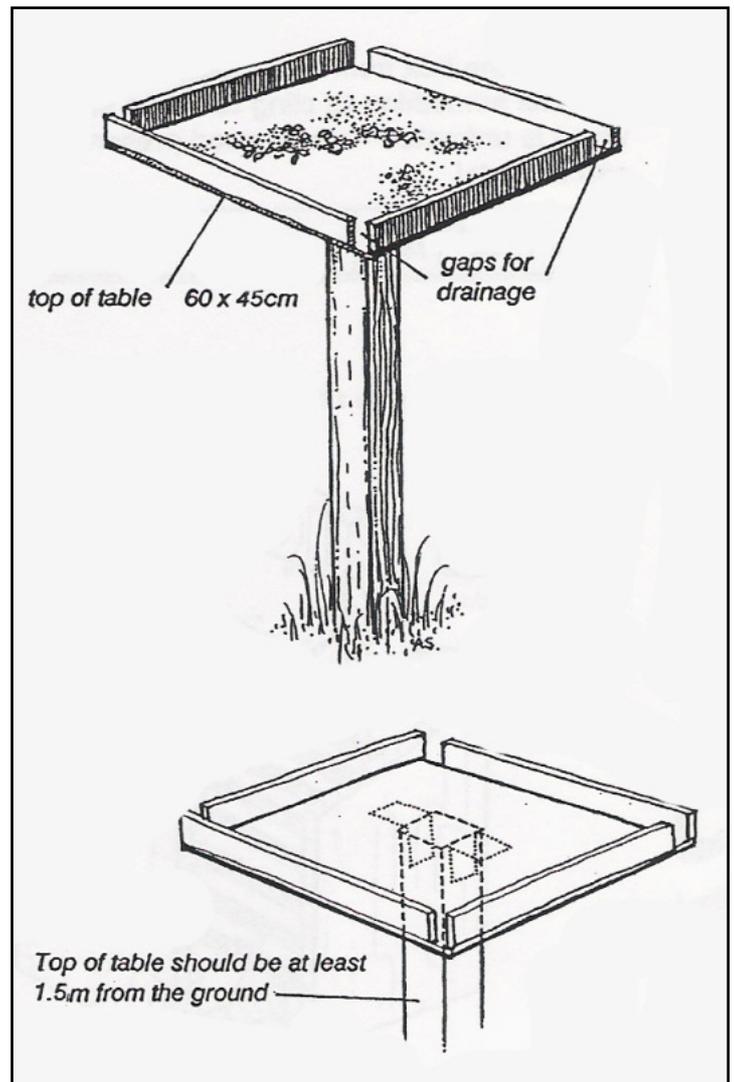
Site the box in a sheltered position on a tree or wall, facing north east to south east to avoid prevailing wet winds and the heat of the midday sun.

Make sure the box is at least two metres off the ground. It should be away from overhanging branches to stop cats getting into the nest.

Clean out the box after the birds have finished with it for the year to prevent a build-up of parasites. Wear gloves to empty out all the old nesting material.

Bird Tables

You can construct a simple table from exterior grade plywood attached to a pole with metal brackets.



A lip around the table will prevent food from blowing away, while the gaps in the corners allow drainage.

Make sure you site the table away from shrubs or branches if cats or squirrels are a problem. A roof is not essential, but it will keep the food in better condition for longer. Remember to provide a variety of food—corn or cereals will be good for house sparrows. Fat will attract insect eaters. Put out tempting treats such as peanuts for coal tits, sunflower seed for greenfinches and cheese for robins. Remember - clean the table occasionally.

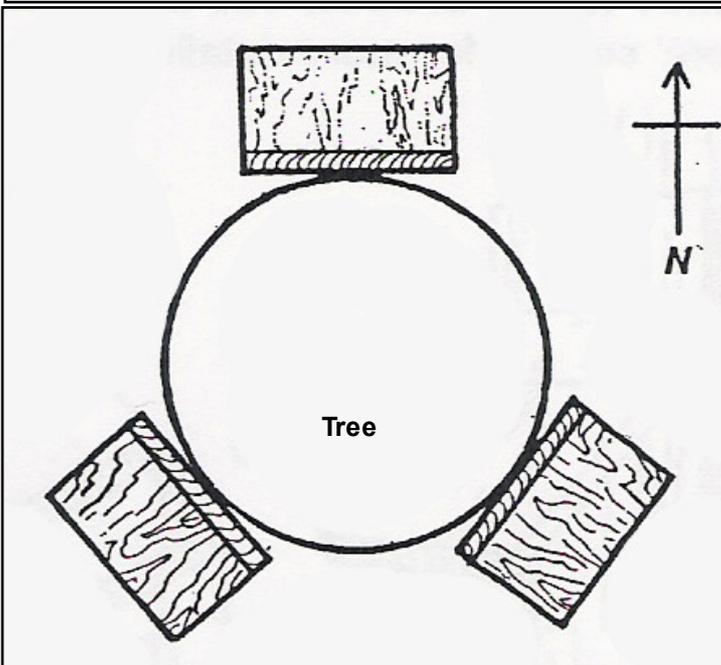
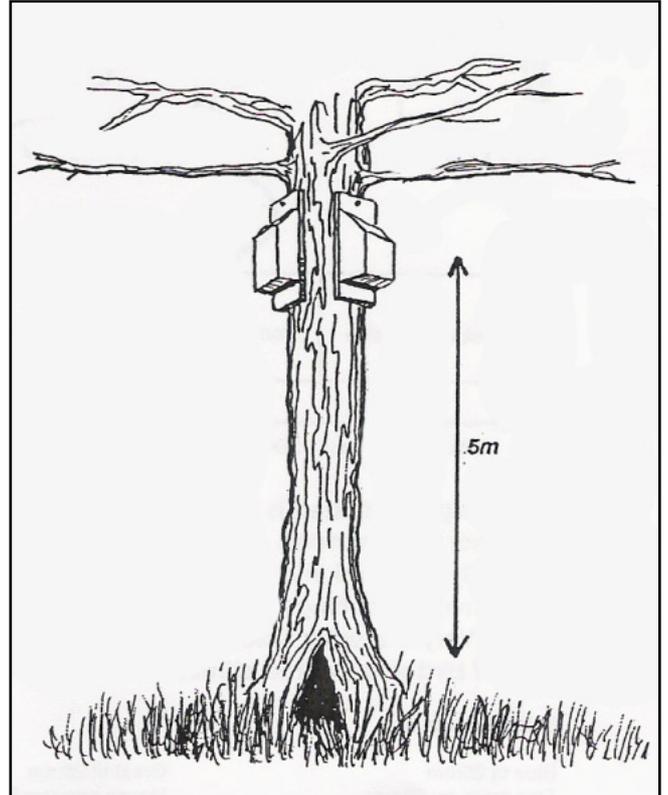
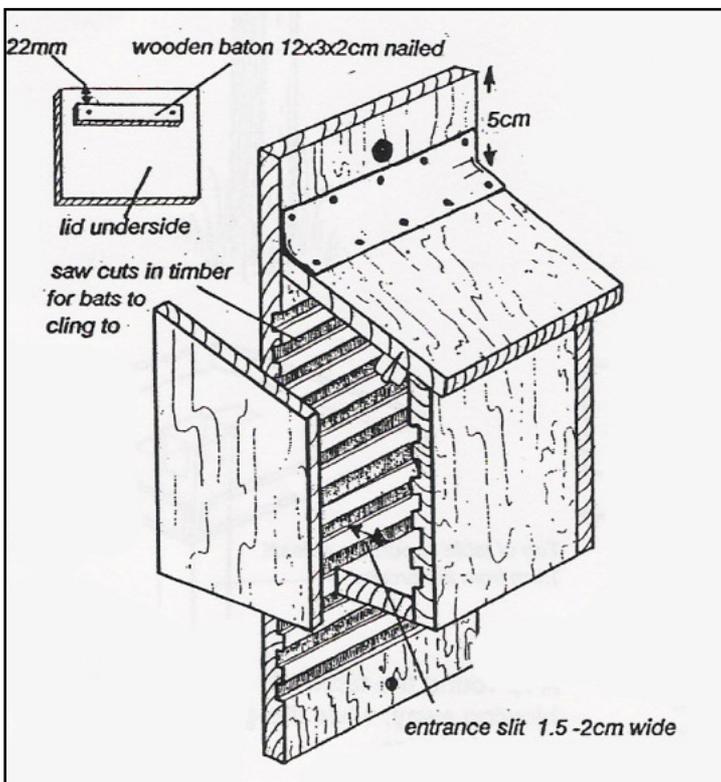
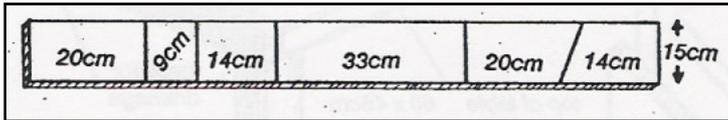
Bat boxes

As well as being one of the most threatened types of mammal in Britain, bats are also among the most misunderstood. Far from being nasty dangerous animals, they are attractive, small, furry insect eaters which need all the help they can get!

Bats need a range of roosting sites, including summer daytime roosts, winter hibernation ones and breeding sites. You can help them find a suitable roost by putting up a simple bat box.

Just follow these guidelines:

1. Make the box from rough sawn timber to give the bats something to cling to. Make sure the wood is untreated—many wood preservatives can kill bats.
2. The best place to position a bat box is on a tree. Place them in groups round the three sides of a tree - bats like to move from one box to another during the day and from season to season as temperatures change.



3. Put the boxes as high as possible above the ground to avoid predators - some species of bat such as noctule prefer roosts at least 5m off the ground.

4. Clear away surrounding branches to give them a clear flight path.

5. Boxes can also be located on buildings. A good position is under the eaves to protect them from bad weather.

Bats can take a while to investigate new premises, but if your box is not occupied within three years, try moving it. You can check if the box is being used by looking for crumbly brown or black droppings on the ground.

Important: It is illegal to disturb any bat when it is roosting, or to kill, injure or handle a bat without a licence. If your bat box is occupied or you find a sick or injured bat, contact your local Wildlife Trust or bat group.