

Bird houses will entice many kinds of birds to sing in your yard

It is not too early to think about putting up a bird house or nest shelf in the next month or two. Winter days are growing longer and resident birds will start getting ready to mate and nest.

Dozens of species of birds will use artificial nest boxes or shelves and may be enticed to set up residence in your yard. Bird houses or nest shelves can be made of simple materials or purchased at local retailers. First, you need to decide what kind of birds you want to attract. Then make or buy a bird house suited for that species. Each type of bird prefers a different type of nesting habitat.

Robins and phoebes will not nest in enclosed nest boxes. They prefer a sheltered platform or shelf.

Wrens, bluebirds and tree

swallows are commonly attracted to single unit, enclosed bird houses. Wrens prefer nest boxes close to shrub cover, whereas blue birds and tree swallows choose fairly open areas with few trees and shrubs and open area beyond that, such as along a fencerow.

No matter how simple or elaborate, the most important features are safety, the location of the birdhouse and the dimensions and shape of the house and entrance.

A good bird house has ventilation holes in the top and drainage holes in the bottom; doesn't have a perch by the entrance (perches encourage predators, such as cats); is easy to clean (bird houses should be thoroughly cleaned once a year to remove last year's nest materials and to prevent nest parasites).

Choose the position and location for each bird house carefully. Face the entrance hole to the north or east to prevent the birds from overheating if the summers are hot. Put no more than one house per tree for the same species of bird. Don't put bird houses near bird feeders.

Mount bird houses on metal poles rather than nailing them to trees or hanging them from limbs. Houses on metal poles are less vulnerable to predators.

Use no more than four nest boxes per acre for any one species of small bird such as wrens or chickadees and no more than one house per acre for any one kind of larger bird such as robins.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offers free information about building bird houses.

Write or call ODF&W Information and Education Division, P.O. Box 59, 2501 SW First Ave., Portland OR 97201; 503-872-5264, ext. 5528. Also,

check for books on bird houses at the public library, contact an Audubon group or your county OSU Extension Service office for more information.

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