

Bluebird Nest Box Construction

Design by Dick Lamster, Past President

Good birdhouse design is really important to determine which birds will use the houses and to the health of the nesting birds. The design included on this fact sheet has been field tested and can be used by Western Blue Birds, Tree Swallows, Violet-green Swallows, Black-capped Chickadees, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and House Wrens. Start with this design and later, if needed, adapt it because different locations may necessitate small changes.

Birdhouses do not have to look perfect or pretty – these are not the qualities birds look for in a good nesting site. However, a birdhouse is an artificial environment, so it needs to be built so it gives birds the best chance to build a successful nest. A well-constructed and maintained birdhouse should last for at least ten years.

Care of the Birdhouse – Caring for the Birds

- This design allows for easy cleaning. Birdhouses should be emptied and cleaned every October or November, after the birds are done nesting. The house has a hinged front to allow for easy cleaning. (See diagrams.)
- Use a small brush or “putty knife” to scrape the debris off the sides and bottom. If the house is really dirty, wipe it down with a brush dipped in a mild household bleach solution, 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. Leave the door open for a couple of days to get rid of the bleach smell. Do not use insecticides to clean out the houses in the fall. They are harmful to birds.
- If wasps are found, wait until the cold of early morning to manually remove them.
- Leave the houses in place for the winter so birds can roost in them during the bad weather.
- Keep records of arrival dates, nest building activities, incubation time for eggs, number of hatched birds and number that fledged. Move unsuccessful houses to a different location if they are not used for two years.

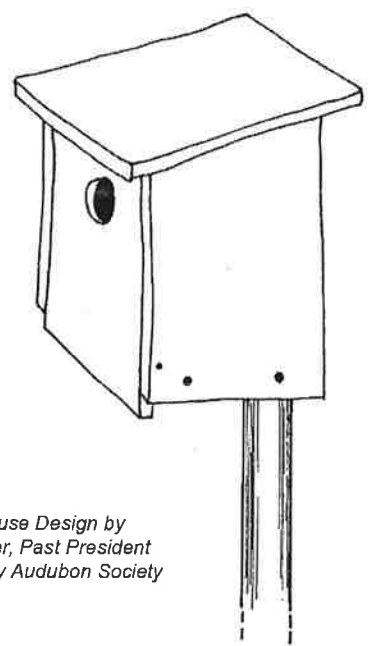
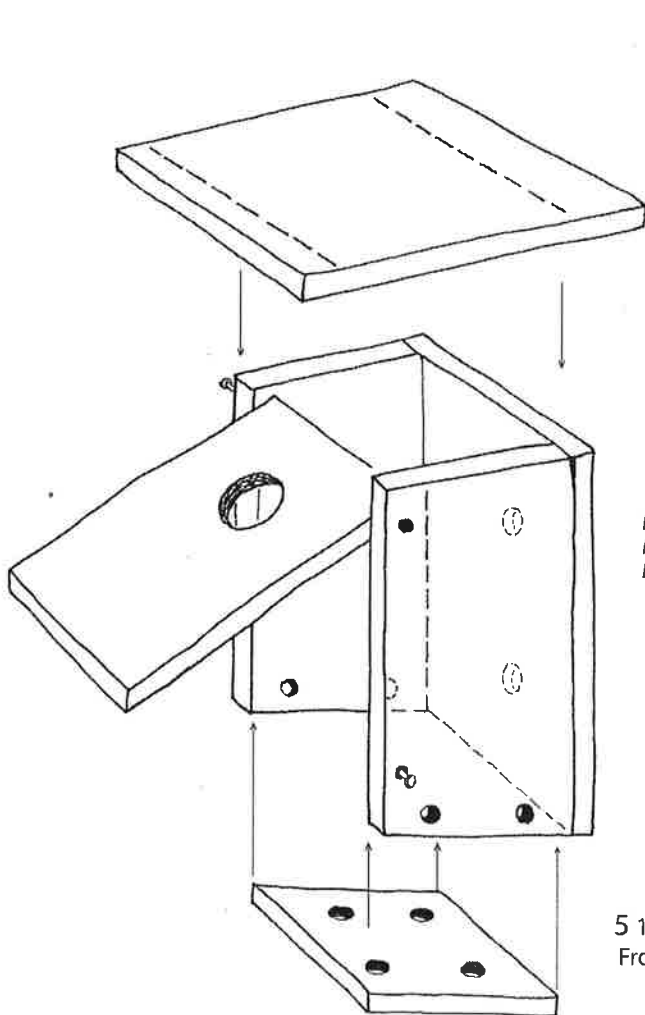
Building Specifics:

- Cedar wood works best because of its resistance to rot and insect infestation. But any other wood will work such as 5/8 -inch exterior plywood or T1-11. Avoid pressure-treated wood because of the arsenic content.
- Note the bottom and side sections: The ventilation holes allow for good air circulation and reduce heat for the nesting birds. The holes in the bottom provide drainage.
- Exact Hole Size: In the diagrams, pay special attention to the *exact* size of the entry hole. If it is not exact, Starlings or House Sparrows will nest in the house. These birds should never be encouraged!
- Rough up the inside of the front piece below the entry hole with a screwdriver. This surface will help the baby birds climb up to the hole from the nest.
- Do not paint or stain the house. It is unnecessary and possibly harmful to the birds. If paint must be used, use a water based exterior paint and allow it to dry for a full two weeks before putting it out for use.
- Glue may be harmful to birds. Use nails to construct the house.

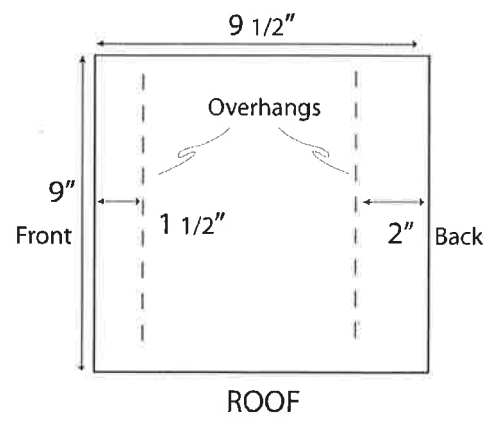
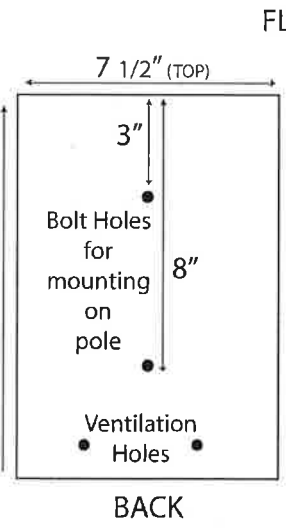
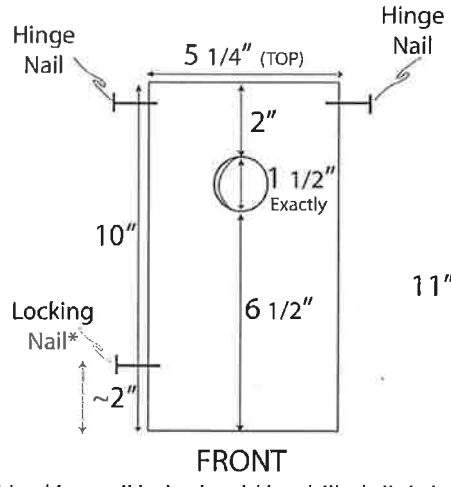
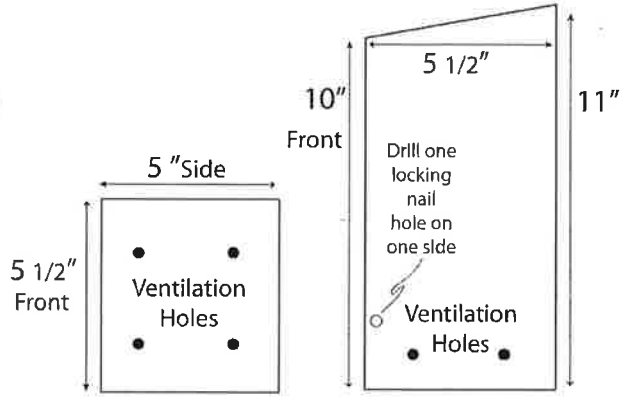
Mounting:

- Birdhouse placement: Exposure to sunlight can be 50-100%.
- Blue Birds like to be near open fields; Swallows prefer being near water but will also nest near an area that has an ample supply of insects.
- The birdhouse should be mounted on an 8 foot, galvanized, round, smooth-surfaced fence pole. The smooth surface helps deter cats, snakes, wood rats and raccoons from raiding or occupying the house.
- Drill holes in the pole to match the holes drilled in the back piece of the birdhouse (see diagrams). The house is attached to the pole with 2 - 3 inch by ¼ inch bolts, with washers. The mounted house should be about at eye level (five-six feet from the ground). Dig a hole and firmly place the pole into the ground about 2 ½ feet deep or drive it into the ground with a post driver.





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Dick Lamster, Past President
Lane County Audubon Society



* Locking nail hole should be drilled slightly larger than the nail so it can easily be pulled out for cleaning the bird house.

