

Nestbox Information and FAQ

We promote safe installation of nestboxes in the desert Southwest by putting them up in shade and with north-east sun exposure. Like most birds, cavity-nesters are suffering from habitat loss which includes suitable breeding cavities in trees, snags and cacti. By providing them with nestboxes we can decrease competition among cavity nesting species.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1) Do nestboxes get too hot in Arizona to be used safely?

We have conducted studies to ensure safest mounting methods: tree shade and facing north or east to avoid harsh afternoon sun.

- 2) Why should I put a nestbox in my yard?

Urbanization is an ever-rising problem for birds because their habitat is destroyed and cavity-bearing trees and cacti are removed. By putting a nestbox in your yard you provide more options for the birds and decrease competition for good breeding areas.

- 3) Where should I place my nestbox?

North or east side of tree under leaf shade recommended. Boxes can also be put onto a pole or side of building, also north or east to avoid harsh afternoon sun. Kestrel and Owl boxes must have clear flight path into the box. Install your nestbox out of foot traffic area as parents will become agitated if approached.

Please see our main Nestbox page www.tucsonaudubon.org/nestbox for more species-specific information on installation.

- 4) When should I put up my nestbox?

By beginning of March preferably, but it's never too late for next season! More time for them to discover it.

For Screech-owls and Kestrels fall is the ideal time to put up a nestbox.

- 5) How high should I put my nestbox?

Small and medium boxes should be put up 6-10 feet up. Largest boxes (owl and kestrel) should be put up 8-15 feet up from the bottom of the nestbox.

6) Should I put anything in my nestboxes?

Don't put anything in the small and medium boxes. Those species bring in their own nesting material.

Kestrels and owls do not make a nest so a 2-3 inch layer of wood shavings (not dust) should be put on the bottom of the nestbox.

7) Do I have to use screws?

A couple screws will not harm the tree as a scar is formed around them in tree tissue.

They provide the sturdiest support. If screws are not an option, bailing wire can be used but must be secured well enough to avoid movement.

8) Should I paint it?

No need. Paint may be toxic and dark colors may absorb more heat. If paint is used it's the water-based non-toxic kind and only on the outside. Naked wood is best and holds up well in the elements.

9) Should I have a predator and prey nestboxes in the same yard?

Not recommended, unless yard is large enough to place them at least 60 feet apart.

10) Can I have both an owl and a kestrel box in same yard and both get used?

They will most likely fight over territory and only one will get used.

11) Should I check inside the nestbox?

Check nestboxes periodically until you find evidence of nesting material then leave birds mostly in peace. Check <http://www.nestwatch.org> for best practices on nestbox monitoring.

12) Should I leave old nests in the nestbox?

Clean out old nests during winter to prevent parasite accumulation in the box. Replace wood shavings in kestrel and owl boxes.

Please email nestbox@tucsonaudubon.org with any questions!