

Nest Box Attributes by Larry Jordan

These nest boxes or birdhouses have been made with redwood and will last for years. I have some that are over 25 years old. They will naturally turn to gray as they age. They have also been built with exterior screws to make tight joints that will last longer than any birdhouse built with nails. If they ever get loose, they can easily be re-tightened.

There are several requirements that need to be met for building or buying a good, safe, long lasting birdhouse:

- Redwood, Cedar or Cypress $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wooden boards make the best material
- Never use pressure treated wood, it is toxic to birds
- Always make or buy a birdhouse for the specific species you want to attract
- Drainage holes in the bottom of the box are necessary
- The bottom of the box should be recessed to prevent deterioration
- Vents to provide ventilation should be present near the peak of the roof
- The roof should overhang by at least two inches on the front and one inch on the sides to prevent rain from entering and help deter predators
- A porthole protector should be installed on the front of the entrance hole to deter predators and keep other birds from enlarging the entrance hole
- Perches should **never** be used on any birdhouse, if you have a birdhouse with a perch, remove it.
- Interior walls should not be painted or stained
- The top, side, or front of the box must open to allow monitoring and cleaning

Monitoring nest boxes is imperative to successful breeding outcomes. Not only that, checking on the little chicks as they grow and watching the interaction of the parents with their young is the most exciting part of birding!

Nest boxes should be checked at least once a week to determine when the eggs will hatch. Once the eggs hatch, the nest should be monitored for another 12 days to make sure there are no problems. Don't open the box once the chicks are 13 days old to prevent premature fledging. Watch the nest box from a distance with binoculars after day 13. As the chicks get closer to fledging, you will see them near the entrance hole waiting to be fed. Depending on the species, they will fledge around 16 to 21 days after hatching.

For more information on building and monitoring nest boxes go to:

<http://www.thebirdersreport.com/resources/nest-box-birdhouse-plans>

You can find lots of information and see some great bird photos on my blog:

www.TheBirdersReport.com