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How to Build Your Birdhouse

Endless Ideas and Easy to Follow Birdhouse Construction Plans

By Peter Wodehouse

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About the Author

Peter Wodehouse is passionate about birds because of the pleasure they freely give us, and other contributions they make to our well-being and the world around us.

He feels that, if he can do it, then building a few bird-houses and setting them up is not beyond the most ham-fisted tool user. We can all help redress in a small way the damage to birds' habitat that humans are causing at a rapidly increasing rate.

This hobby is one that all members of our family can share, just as they will share the rewards as the variety and number of birds around us increase when they take advantage of the newly available accommodation.

Gardeners will notice another benefit because more birds will mean fewer insects and other problems too. That means a better environment for us all.

Table of Contents

Please Read This First	2
Terms of Use	2
Disclaimer	2
About the Author	3
Table of Contents	4
1. Building a Birdhouse – An Overview	9
<i>History of Birdhouses</i>	9
Building Your Ideal Birdhouse	10
2. Why Build a Birdhouse	12
3. Types of Birdhouses	14
Common Birdhouses	14
4. Birdhouses for Different Species	16
<i>Robins</i>	17
<i>Chickadees, Nuthatches, and Titmice</i>	17
<i>Bluebirds</i>	17
<i>Wrens</i>	17
<i>Barn Swallows and Phoebes</i>	17
<i>Tree and Violet-green Swallows</i>	18
<i>Purple Martins</i>	18
<i>Woodpeckers</i>	18
<i>Flycatchers</i>	18
5. Materials Used for Building a Birdhouse	19
6. Tools Used to Build Your Birdhouse	21
<i>The Tools You Need</i>	21
7. General Specifications for Your Birdhouses	22
Specifications for Birdhouses in Inches	23

8. How to Build a Birdhouse	25
<i>Preferences of Your Winged Friends.....</i>	<i>25</i>
Necessary Precautions When Building Birdhouses	26
9. Tips for Building a Birdhouse	28
10. Build a Birdhouse from Scraps in Less Than an Hour.....	30
How to Build	30
11. Painting or Staining Your New Birdhouses.....	32
How to Paint Birdhouses.....	32
<i>Materials You Need.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Cautions When Painting Your Birdhouse.....</i>	<i>33</i>
How to Attract Birds to Birdhouses	34
12. Birdhouse Basics - What to Look for in a Birdhouse.....	35
13. Choosing the Right Birdhouse	36
14. Useful Tips for Placing Your Birdhouse.....	38
Tips for Placing your Birdhouse	38
15. How Many Birdhouses Should You Have?	40
16. How to Help Birds Make Their Own Nests	41
<i>Useful Nesting Materials</i>	<i>41</i>
17. Nesting Behavior of Different Birds	43
<i>American Kestrel (Falco sparverius).....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Ash-throated Flycatcher (Myiarchus cinerascens).....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Barn Owl (Tyto alba)</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Tufted Titmouse (Baeolophus bicolor).....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Violet-green Swallow (Tachycineta thalassina).....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Western Bluebird (Sialia mexicana).....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>White-breasted Nuthatch (Sitta carolinensis)</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Wood Duck (Aix sponsa).....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Purple Martin (Progne subis).....</i>	<i>44</i>

Black-capped Chickadee (Poecile atricapillus) 45

Chestnut-backed Chickadee (Poecile rufescens) 45

Eastern Bluebird (Sialia sialis) 45

Brown-headed Nuthatch (Sitta pusilla) 45

Carolina Chickadee (Poecile carolinensis) 46

Carolina Wren (Thryothorus ludovicianus) 46

Common Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula) 46

East and West Screech-Owls; Eastern - (Otus asio); Western - (Otus kennicottii) 46

Prothonotary Warbler (Protonotaria citrea) 47

Red-breasted Nuthatch (Sitta canadensis) 47

Tree Swallow (Tachycineta bicolor) 47

European Starling (Sturnus vulgaris) 47

Mountain Chickadee (Poecile gambeli) 47

House Wren (Troglodytes aedon) 48

Mountain Bluebird (Sialia currucoides) 48

Northern Flicker (Colaptes auratus) 48

Great Crested Flycatcher (Myiarchus crinitus) 48

Hooded Merganser (Lophodytes cucullatus) 48

House Sparrow (Passer domesticus) 49

18. Habitat Requirements for Cavity-Nesting Birds.....50

American kestrel 50

Ash-throated Flycatcher and Great Crested Flycatcher 50

Barn Owl 50

Black-capped chickadee and Carolina chickadees..... 50

Chestnut-backed chickadees and Mountain chickadees 51

Eastern Screech Owl and Western Screech owls 51

House Wrens 51

Brown-headed Nuthatch 51

Eastern Bluebird 51

Mountain Bluebird and Western Bluebird 51

Tree Swallow..... 52

Violet-green Swallows 52

19. How to Hang a Birdhouse.....53

20. Tips for Monitoring and Cleaning Nest Boxes	55
Monitoring and Cleaning Birdhouses	56
<i>Monitoring before the start of the season</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Seasonal Monitoring</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Monitoring after the Fledglings fly-off</i>	<i>56</i>
Cleaning the Birdhouses.....	57
21. Different Birdhouse Designs.....	58
Common Birdhouse Designs	58
<i>Purple Martin House</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Passerine Nest Box.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Wood Duck Nest box.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Wren Houses.....</i>	<i>59</i>
Essential Features of Your Birdhouses.....	59
22. Birdhouse Design Tips	61
23. Directions for Building a Birdhouse	63
Steps for Making a Birdhouse	63
<i>Essential Tips.....</i>	<i>63</i>
24. A Birdhouse for Beginners	66
25. Purple Martin Birdhouse.....	67
26. Milk Carton Birdhouse	69
<i>How to make a Milk Carton Birdhouse</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Directions</i>	<i>69</i>
27. Free Woodworking Birdhouse.....	70
28. Bluebird Birdhouse	71
<i>Directions</i>	<i>72</i>
29. Eastern Bluebird Birdhouse.....	74
30. Western and Mountain Bluebird Birdhouse.....	75

31. Traditional Cedar Birdhouse76
 Items Required:..... 78

32. Cedar Fence Picket Birdhouse80

33. Northern Flicker Birdhouse82

34. Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers Birdhouse.....83

35. Free Birdhouse Plan.....84
 Materials Required..... 84

36. Gourd Birdhouse86
 Materials Required To Build a Gourd House. 86
 Things to know when making a gourd nest - 87

37. Birdhouses Frequently Asked Questions.....89
 What is the ideal size of the Birdhouse entrance hole? 89
 Where can I find Cedar Fence Pickets?..... 89
 I want to paint my Birdhouse. Is it safe to do that? 89
 What can I use to hang my Birdhouse, apart from clothes hanger wire? 89
 Can I nail the Birdhouse in place instead of using screws? 89
 Why do advertisements read, 'Perch optional' only for display, do not use?' 89
 What is a 'Rubber Hose'? Is it similar to garden hose? 90
 At what height should I build Purple Martin's Birdhouse? 90
 What kind of roof should I make for the Purple Martin? 90
 I used no wire when I hung the Birdhouse. Can I do it now? And, if so - how? 90

Part-I: Introduction

1. Building a Birdhouse – An Overview

Building birdhouses is an excellent hobby that combines your ornithological interests with your skills in woodcrafts. You can make wooden birdhouses that help many different species of wild and domestic birds to nest and breed.

Many birdhouses are wooden but some are a mixture of wood and concrete.

Most birdhouses are cuboids with a sloping roof. Some have a special hinged top to make it easier to clean them when the occupants fly away. Some breeders also find those openings convenient to feed the young ones.



Boxes with open fronts or a hole at the front are very popular. Often, bird lovers create fancy birdhouses, some of them even resembling a human house or multi-storey apartments.

You can make birdhouses with gourds. Milk cartons are a simple and recyclable object that you could use for building your birdhouse. Some bird-watchers love to design highly detailed birdhouses and they make them from of the best possible materials.

It's up to you. You're the builder of this birdhouse!

History of Birdhouses

Building birdhouses has been a popular activity since the days of tribal settlements in Europe and North America. Native American tribes used to hang hollow gourds for purple martins to come and nest in. These tribes

reared purple martins to keep away turkey vultures, which would otherwise plunder the tribes' meat racks.

Since then, making birdhouses to provide birds with shelter has been a hobby with many bird-watchers for years.

Building Your Ideal Birdhouse

A Birdhouse needs to provide sufficient opening and ventilation for to give the birds' easy access while keeping them protected from predators and also providing you adequate access to clean after the young birds leave.

Sometimes, bird-watchers and breeders monitor movements of the birds they house. They need suitable openings to observe the birds in their house. The interior dimensions should also allow easy movements for the birds.

Birds vary greatly in sizes and the house(s) that you build should fit the needs of the type of birds you want to attract and help.

Wood is the best material for making birdhouses. The best types of wood are redwood and rough-cut cedar, which do not deteriorate when exposed to sun and rain.

The natural insulating properties of wood are far superior to other materials like metal and plastic that overheats and makes it stifling hot for the birds.

Many builders use pressure-treated lumber, but this is not very safe. The copper-arsenate chemical that is routinely applied to it could be toxic to the birds if not properly applied.

Your birdhouses should blend with the surrounding habitat to make the birds feel at home. You may mount the birdhouses on fence posts, tall trees or on poles that were specifically set up for the purpose. Whatever type of birdhouse you choose, you must provide adequate protection from predators. Sheet metal and aluminum plates can help to keep predators away from your birdhouse.

Although most birds nest in cavities in rock or trees in their natural habitats, they also love to nest in birdhouses. Birds that will use birdhouses include Buffleheads, American Kestrels, Common Barn Owls, Wood Ducks, Northern Saw-whet Owls, Eastern and Western Screech Owls, Northern Flickers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Barred Owls, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Purple Martins, House Sparrows, Bluebirds, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Mountain Chickadees, Black-capped Chickadees, Oat Titmice, House Wrens, Great Crested Flycatchers and many others.

You can build a birdhouse even within a limited space. You can build a birdhouse in a garage or shop, too.

2. Why Build a Birdhouse



Man is destroying increasing amounts of our planet's birds' natural habitat and building more concrete jungles.

Birdhouses are the best alternatives to natural features for providing nesting spaces for birds. There are many hundreds of bird species in America. Only a small percentage of these birds can now nest in natural cavities. So, many will welcome the opportunity of nesting in your birdhouses - especially

birds like wrens, bluebirds, chickadees, titmice and even wood ducks.

Industries pour out ever-greater amounts of various air pollutants. The use of pesticides in agricultural areas is affecting many different bird species. Many people want to do their bit by building birdhouses and inviting these winged guests to make their homes in birdhouses. The chirping and songs of birds help you wake up in a good mood, too.

Building birdhouses does not have to make a major dent in your pocket either. You can get great enjoyment from building them for your feathered friends.

Birdhouses should have adequate provision for easy cleaning. Cleaning the interiors of the houses regularly can help you provide safe habitation for the birds.

Making small holes in the roof and floor can allow smooth drainage. It also provides natural ventilation to birds. Use your imagination and creativity to make the birdhouses look more attractive. Iron poles and sheets can provide protection to birds from their enemies. You can suspend birdhouses from

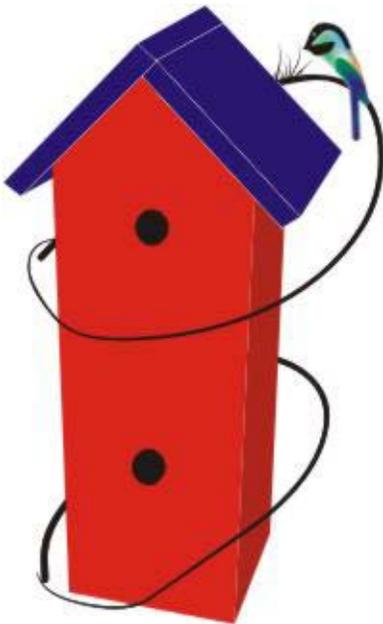
wires but you must use some method to keep them out of the jumping range of squirrels and cats.

Part-II: Birdhouses Types

3. Types of Birdhouses

There are many different types of birdhouses. You can get many birdhouses at the local shops or make them yourself with easily obtained materials.

However, the factor that will decide on which birdhouse you buy or build is the type of bird that you want to attract.



Every species of bird has special preferences about the type of nest or birdhouse that it will use. Tree swallows, wrens, and bluebirds prefer single unit, enclosed birdhouses. Bluebirds and tree swallows prefer open areas with fewer shrubs and trees while wrens prefer nesting in boxes close to shrubs. Phoebes and robins like a sheltered platform, rather than closed nest boxes.

Common Birdhouses

You can find the following birdhouses suit the typical nesting habits of different species of birds.

Single-unit nesting boxes are the most common type of birdhouse. Woodpeckers and great crested flycatchers are common birds that prefer such nesting places. Red-bellied woodpeckers require an entrance hole of more than two inches in diameter to accommodate their size. Woodpeckers

do not normally add any nesting materials to a box. Therefore, place a few inches of wood chips to provide a cushion for the eggs. The great crested flycatcher, however, will bring its own nesting material into the box.

Purple Martin houses are available in many different styles and sizes. Purple martins love nesting in colonies and mostly prefer such birdhouses to nesting in the wild. They also nest in artificial, or real, gourds where an entrance hole has been cut in them. You can put up plastic gourds, which are easier to clean than real ones, to attract purple martins. These houses also offer a cool interior for the birds.

Bluebirds and tree-swallows prefer birdhouses on poles in an open area. Bluebirds bring in pine needles or fine grasses for their nests. Tree swallows live in similar habitat with entrance holes of around one and half inch in diameter. This size prevents starlings from entering.

Place birdhouses along the edge of wooded areas to attract small birds like the tufted titmouse and black-capped chickadee.

Place your birdhouses under the roof eaves and on a deck to attract house wrens. They build nests in birdhouses that are placed within your house too.

4. Birdhouses for Different Species

Every bird species prefers a different type of birdhouse for nesting and breeding. You can attract specific species of birds by offering the type of environment and birdhouse that they prefer.

While attracting any specific species, you have to safeguard your birdhouses from being taken over by starlings and sparrows. A simple tactic is to place birdhouses within ten feet of the ground, as sparrows and starlings do not inhabit such houses.



Different categories of birds like Chickadees, Bluebirds, Titmice, Purple Martin, Swallows, Owls, Woodpeckers, Flycatchers, and many others love nesting in birdhouses. Additionally, you can provide them with food and water as major incentives. Hanging a wire cage with nesting materials like twigs, fiber scraps, wool, and feathers, can also attract these birds to your birdhouses.

Particular features in your birdhouses can attract particular species of birds. Some birds'

preferences include:

Robins

The common robin prefers the crotch of a tree. Place a nesting platform at a height of at least six feet under the shade of a porch or a tree trunk. A small mud puddle is a definite incentive as robins use mud to line their nests.

Chickadees, Nuthatches, and Titmice

These species share the same food habits and habitat. Chickadee houses should, ideally, be at eye level with an entrance of about one inch in diameter. Hang the houses from tree trunks. Sometimes, these birds stay in the courtyard all through the summer months if they are able to get sufficient peanuts.

[See Milk Carton Birdhouse Plans](#)

Bluebirds

Bluebirds prefer birdhouses on wooden fence posts or tree stumps at about three to five feet off the ground. These birds require an entrance hole with a diameter of an inch and a half. This can keep away starlings and house sparrows, which prey on all baby bluebirds and, sometimes, also on the adults. A metal predator guard can help keep away other predators like snakes and cats.

Wrens

Male wrens make many houses for their females to choose the most suitable one. So, you attract wrens by hanging many birdhouses on partly or dimly-lit tree branches. These birdhouses should have a horizontal slot of a minimum of one by two inches instead of a circular hole. This allows easy movement for the wrens. These birds prefer to stay close to your home. [See Milk Carton Plans.](#)

Barn Swallows and Phoebes

These birds prefer nesting in uncommon places such as above your front door or on the eaves of rooftops. Place your birdhouses in such places to attract these birds.

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