

WILD YOUR SPACE

Wild your school
Rewild your children

Bird Nesting Boxes

As a charity focused on the importance of nature restoration, we talk a lot about wildlife habitat loss, and therefore the importance of rectifying this man made problem as quickly as possible. The significant loss of our beloved native woodland (and, more recently our traditional hedgerows) is a key example and mean that our feathered friends can really struggle when it is time to find somewhere to build a nest a raise their young. It takes time to replace well established trees, but many species of birds in the Scottish Borders need our help right now – that's where nesting boxes come in.



There can be few better ways for children to enjoy helping and learning about nature than building, siting and monitoring a nesting box (or, ideally, several nesting boxes). With some well thought out preparation and planning you could soon be welcoming several species (including House Sparrows, Blue Tits, Starlings, Robins, Pied Wagtails, Wrens, Swifts and more) to your school playground area. Ultimately the size of your nesting box, and the size and shape of the entrance, will determine



what species you are likely to attract – so, all the more reason to put up a decent variety, which should be well spaced out and not grouped together.

Nesting boxes can be sited on buildings (which nowadays are otherwise rarely welcoming to nesting birds), trees, posts, etc. Ideally they should be in quiet areas and as far away from busy paths and noisy play areas as possible, and facing somewhere between North and East (keeping them out of direct sunlight). The perfect height is anywhere between 3 metres and 5 metres with a clear flight path and well away from predators (especially cats and squirrels) and, if possible, tilt them slightly forwards to reduce the chance of rain water getting in. Birds are more likely to be attracted to nesting boxes which have food and water sources close-by, so if you are already growing a good range of native wild plants and flowers, you are also far more likely to see birds return in good numbers.

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Autumn is a good time of year to put up new nesting boxes, as this will give the birds time to get used to seeing them, well before they start any nest building activities, and it is not unusual for birds to use them to shelter in during the winter months. Don't be disappointed if it takes a year or two before they see any regular use, but obviously the more boxes you put up the higher your chance of some quick successes.

One important factor that is all too often overlooked – all nesting boxes should be cleaned once a year, to remove any harmful parasites. This should be done between September and January if you are completely sure that the birds are no longer using the nest. It is not unusual to find eggs that have sadly not hatched, and these must be disposed of during this same 4 month window. Clear instructions on how to clean bird boxes (and feeders) can be found here - How to clean nestboxes and bird feeders | The Wildlife Trusts

[wildlifetrusts.org/actions/
how-clean-nestboxes-and-bird-feeders](https://wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-clean-nestboxes-and-bird-feeders)

It is important to note that all wild birds in the UK are protected by law (under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981), meaning that it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird. The law also covers their eggs and nest while they are in use – therefore activities such as hedge-cutting should be avoided during nesting season (typically spring and summer).

All observations of bird nests (and nesting boxes) must be done from a good distance, as any disturbance can result in a nest being abandoned – even with eggs and/or young chicks.

For absolutely everything else you need with regards to buying (if you'd rather not build your own), building and installing bird nesting boxes, look no further than the incredible RSPB Website!

Here is the page for how to build a nesting box - How to Build a nestbox: DIY nestbox Plans

[rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/
what-you-can-do/activities/
build-a-birdbox](https://rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/build-a-birdbox)

BUT PLEASE ALSO check out the Activity Hub on their website - Wildlife Garden Activities | Nature on your Doorstep!

[rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/
what-you-can-do/activities](https://rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities)

The website is packed full of ideas and activities, and has been developed with schoolchildren and teachers very much in mind. All their incredible activities will benefit local wildlife, increase biodiversity and provide children with increased understanding and enthusiasm to do more good. SEE Wild Challenge for schools

[rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/
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wild-challenge/wild-challenge-for-schools](https://rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/wild-challenge/wild-challenge-for-schools)



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