

Guide to Choosing a Nest Box Kit

Yellowhead County has 3 types of nesting boxes available. See the descriptions below to help you choose which one is best for your property.



Chickadee Nest Box:

This nest box is a good choice for any property type. Even hamlet residents could have success with this type of nest box especially if your backyard is up against a wooded area. These boxes are ok to place on a building, post, pole, or tree.

There are 4 types of chickadees that can be spotted in Alberta. Black-capped Chickadees are the most common, but Boreal Chickadees and Mountain Chickadees are also regularly occurring, Chestnut-backed Chickadees are rare visitors.

In Yellowhead County we are most likely to encounter the Black-capped Chickadee. Black-capped Chickadees live in forests, orchards, and other areas with lots of trees, including many urban areas.

Why they Matter to Us

- Black-capped Chickadees are the most widespread bird species across Canada. The most recent surveys suggest that numbers are increasing. However, it is worth our while to encourage and protect the hardy Black-capped Chickadee for the large part it plays in naturally controlling insect pests and enlivening our forests with its song and movements, even in winter.

<https://www.hww.ca/en/wildlife/birds/chickadee.html>

Tree Swallow Nest Box:

This nest box is a good choice for residents who have open agricultural land, like hay fields and pastures. Especially land that is near wetlands or waterbodies. This box is best to place on a stand-alone pole or fence post. They need a lot of room to fly in and out of the box so an open area with fewer trees is best.

Despite their name, Tree Swallows prefer open areas like agricultural fields or wetlands. They get their name from their tendency to nest in tree cavities. This protects their young from predation. They like to be near wet or open areas because wetlands produce much of their preferred food.

Why they Matter to Us

- Tree Swallows eat mosquitoes and other flying insects.
- Tree Swallows are in steep decline (49% from 1966 to 2014.) Like other insectivores, this is due to insecticide use, habitat loss, and climate change.
- Due to their visibility, Tree Swallows act as an indicator of environmental harm.

<https://www.ealt.ca/species-spotlight-list/tree-swallow>

Saw-Whet Owl Nest Box:

This nest box is a good choice for residents that have lots of mature treed land. This box needs to be attached to a living tree in an area with lots of trees and cover.

This species prefers to reside in mature forests, nesting in deciduous trees and roosting in conifer trees for protection. Despite this preference, this species has been found nesting in other habitats including coniferous swamps, disturbed forests and riverside forests like Edmonton's River Valley. The Northern Saw-whet Owl will also nest in nest boxes successfully.

Why They Matter to Us

- Saw-whet Owls are excellent rodent hunters and help keep rodent populations down.
- Since these owls can nest in boxes, we can observe them and learn more about their behavior.
- This species is very secretive, so little is understood about the population trends. There probably has been a decline due to forest habitat loss.

<https://www.ealt.ca/species-spotlight-list/northern-saw-whet-owl>

Why Build a Nest Box? Several species of birds are cavity nesters, meaning that they nest in holes in large trees. Some of these species are primary excavators, such as the Pileated Woodpecker, which excavates a new hole in a tree each year. Other species of birds and mammals are secondary cavity users, meaning that they will use a natural cavity caused by disease or fire, or one created by a woodpecker.

The loss of many natural areas, and practices of removing dead standing trees (also called snags), has resulted in fewer available nesting spots for many species. Fortunately, some bird species will also nest in wood boxes, or other types of artificial structures. Bird boxes are simple to make and are a practical way to contribute to wildlife conservation, even in your own backyard. Please keep in mind that the design, size, and entrance hole size are important and will determine which species might use your nest box – Edmonton Area Land Trust <https://www.ealt.ca/nest-boxes>