

# INTRODUCTION

Providing houses for cavity existing animals - especially birds - is a popular hobby for Pennsylvanians who enjoy wildlife around their homes. Building houses according to proper specifications, placing them in 'best' habitat, and maintaining the houses regularly can benefit both birds and mammals. However, if not built and placed properly, you might have no visitors at all.



*Young Gray Squirrel*

Natural cavities in trees will always be important homes for wildlife. But in some locations, intensive forest management, firewood cutting, fencerow removal, and the replacement of wood with metal fenceposts have reduced the supply of natural cavities. In these and similar situations, nest boxes can be helpful for many cavity nesting species.

Bird boxes are especially useful around fields and farmsteads where the limited number of natural cavities have, in most cases, been taken over by Starlings and House Sparrows. Nest boxes can be designed and placed so that use by these more aggressive species is minimized.

Although most people think of House Wrens, Eastern Bluebirds, Purple Martins, and Wood Ducks as the primary occupants of nest boxes, many other animals will occupy them. Bird houses are usually built to simulate a natural cavity in a tree. Such cavities in live or dead trees are used by 35 species of birds (see Table 1, page 5) and 21 kinds of mammals in Pennsylvania. Many other birds will also adapt to shelves and wooden nest platforms if they have the opportunity.

The house and platform instructions in this publication have been simplified. Right angle cuts are used. Most patterns are "one-board" houses, including those in Plans 1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15 and 16.

This booklet is divided into three sections according to the habitats involved. The first section includes houses and platforms appropriate for use in or near backyards, farmsteads, fence-rows, pastures, small woodlots of deciduous trees (hardwoods) and evergreen plantations. The second section includes houses and platforms for use in or near more extensive stands of deciduous and coniferous forest. The third section contains information for houses and platforms that can be used around lakes, rivers, marshes and other wetlands.

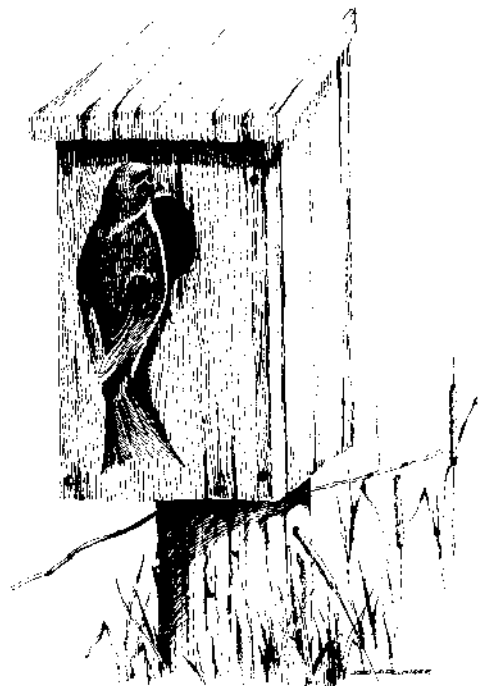
Please remember that placing and maintaining nest structures does not eliminate the need for preserving and managing wildlife habitat or preserving snags (dead trees) or live trees with cavities for wildlife (see page 4, Table 1). Building, placing and maintaining nest structures should be considered a technique for enhancing existing habitat and adding to our personal opportunities to see and enjoy wildlife.

The information presented here is for everyone, from children in nature classes to professional wildlife biologists. Included are directions on how to build 22 structures that will accommodate 41 species of wildlife.

There are many creative ways to use this information. It can be used in high school and middle school industrial arts classes, vocational agriculture classes, and in workshops or projects by conservation agencies, civic groups, sportsmen and youth organizations.

These houses can be built and sold as fund-raising projects, or be erected around hospitals and retirement homes.

Try building some bird houses as Christmas presents or birthday gifts. Watching life unfold at a robin nesting shelf or wren house can be a rewarding experience for your family and friends.



*Bluebird*