

**Project:** Nest Boxes for Youth Groups

**Purpose:**

To provide youth groups in and around the Western Newfoundland Model Forest with an opportunity to participate in an educational activity and help provide nesting habitat for a variety of cavity nesting species.

Over 120 bird species nest in Newfoundland each year. Of these, about 15 to 20 species, ranging in size from swallows to ducks, are cavity nesters. That is, they nest in cavities in decayed trees or stumps. Generally, it is woodpeckers and chickadees that excavate these cavities. These birds make new holes each year, leaving the old ones for other species. Natural nest sites have been disappearing as a result of logging for commercial and domestic uses. As well, many people feel that these dead trees, called snags, are hazardous and of no value to anyone. As a result, there is intense competition for nest holes, with declines occurring in local populations of cavity-nesting species in recent years. By providing nest boxes in appropriate areas, we can help reverse this trend. Building nest boxes can be both an enjoyable and educational experience for those involved in youth groups.

**Collaborators:**

A variety of organizations are offering their assistance for this program. In addition to the Western Newfoundland Model Forest and the Canadian Forest Service, these include:

- Ducks Unlimited (Chris Baldwin)
- Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures (Mike Cahill)
- Wildlife Division (Joe Brazil, Kathy Knox, Wally Skinner)
- Memorial University of Newfoundland (Dr. Bill Montevecchi)

**Potential Collaborators:**

- Gros Morne National Park (Hank Deichmann)
- Natural History Society

The individuals from these organizations have indicated their willingness to aid the youth groups by providing information and in giving presentations to the groups on a particular species. In addition, these groups will be given information on the locations of the boxes and their updated status.

**Requirements of the Group to be Funded:**

The groups will agree to carry out certain activities in return for receiving funding for their nest box project. These requirements include:

1. Having a person knowledgeable in the species chosen give a talk to the group on that species' habitat requirements, general biology, and its need for artificial nesting structures.
2. Build and place the nesting structures.
3. Record the locations of the nest boxes on both the data sheet and on a map. This information will be sent in to the Model Forest office and distributed to the appropriate agencies.
4. Periodically inspect the boxes to determine if repairs are needed and to determine if they are being utilized. This information will be recorded on the data sheet and sent in to the Model Forest Office for distribution to appropriate agencies.

**Data Collection:**

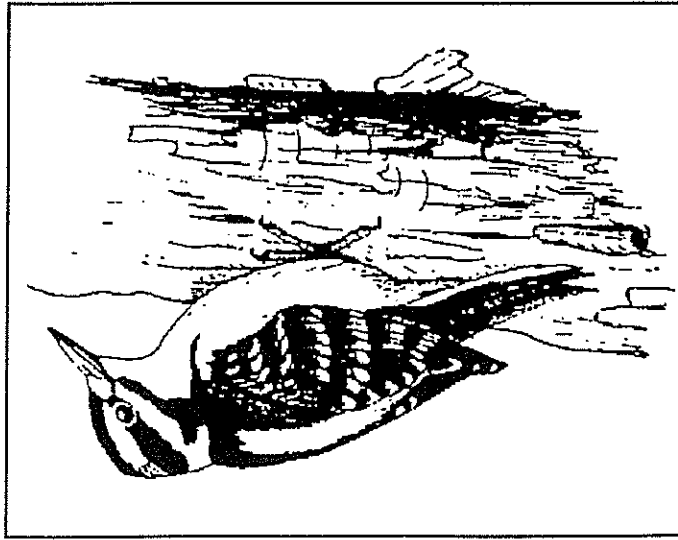
Information on the nest box location and the periodic inspections will be recorded on data sheets supplied to the groups. This information will be collected at the Model Forest office by Brian Bonnell and then distributed to appropriate agencies (i.e. information on ducks will be sent to Ducks Unlimited and Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures). If additional groups become interested in the information (e.g. Canadian Wildlife Service), then the information will also be passed along to them.

**Funding:**

Funding to the youth groups will be on a per box basis. The price per box has been estimated from the cost of materials to construct it. The following represents this breakdown for a variety of species:

Chickadee, Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker	\$3.00 / box
Tree Swallow, House Sparrow, Hairy Woodpecker, Starling	\$3.50
Northern Flicker, Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker	\$5.00
Boreal Owls	\$10.00
Duck Boxes	\$12.00
Goose Platform	\$90.00

# Lending a Hand to Cavity Nesting Species:



Downy Woodpecker

## Developing a Nest Box Program for Youth

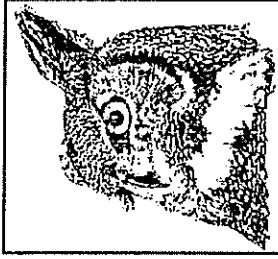
### What Are Nest Boxes?

Nest boxes are artificial nesting structures which are utilized by birds and other species in areas where few natural ones are available. In effect, a simple bird house is a type of nest box.

### Why Build Nest Boxes?

Over 120 bird species nest in Newfoundland each year. Of these, about 15 to 20 species, ranging in size from swallows to ducks, are cavity nesters. That is, they nest in cavities in decayed trees or stumps. Generally, it is woodpeckers and chickadees that excavate these cavities. These

birds make new holes each year, leaving the old ones for other species. Natural nest sites have been disappearing as a result of logging for commercial and domestic uses. As well, many people feel that these dead trees, called snags, are hazardous and of no value to anyone. As a result, there is intense competition for nest holes, with declines occurring in local populations of cavity-nesting species in recent years. By providing nest boxes in appropriate areas, we can help reverse this trend. Building nest boxes can be both an enjoyable and educational experience for those involved in youth groups.



Owl

### Cavity Nesting Species:

There are a variety of cavity nesting species that breed in Newfoundland. In fact, there are close to twenty such species. These include:

- Black-capped Chickadee
- Boreal Chickadee
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Three-toed Woodpecker
- Black-backed Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Great Horned Owl
- Northern Hawk Owl
- Short-eared Owl
- Boreal Owl
- Brown Creeper
- Wood Duck
- Merganser
- Goldeneye
- European Starling
- Tree Swallow

### Starting a Nest Box Program:

Nesting boxes for Boreal Owls and Goldeneyes have been successful in Newfoundland. Species such as chickadees, starlings, and swallows regularly use

backyard bird houses (also nest boxes).

There are several factors to consider when choosing a species to build nest boxes for: group resources, group objectives, species habitat locations.

Some cavity nesters, such as ducks, require the structures to be placed along rivers and marshes. This entails the use of boats or canoes. Things like this need to be considered when choosing a species along with other factors such as why your group is getting involved in this project and what resources are available to your group. For example, building a simple backyard bird house for chickadees or a feeder may fulfill your objectives. If you are looking for something more challenging, then choosing an owl or duck species would be appropriate.

#### **Education:**

Once a species has been chosen, the next course of action is to have the group become informed about that particular species. This can be achieved through having someone knowledgeable in the species chosen to give a talk to the group on its habitat requirements and its need for nesting structures. This person could also provide some insights into where to place the boxes once completed. A few resource people are listed below:

**Ducks:**  
Chris Baldwin  
Ducks Unlimited  
Corner Brook, Newfoundland  
(709) 634-8154

Mike Cahill  
Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
(709) 729-2548

**Owls, Bats and Songbirds:**  
Joe Brazil  
Wildlife Division  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
(709) 729-3773  
Kathy Knox  
Wildlife Division  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
(709) 729-2544

**Owls:**  
Dr. Bill Montecchi  
Memorial University of  
Newfoundland  
Department of Psychology  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
(709) 737-7673  
**Songbirds:**  
Wally Skinner  
Wildlife Division  
Pasadena, Newfoundland  
(709) 686-2071

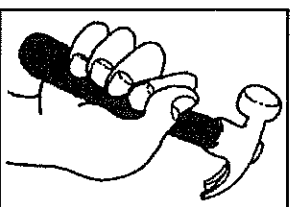
Natural History Society  
Corner Brook, Newfoundland

**Materials and Methods:**  
This is very dependent upon the species

chosen. Nest box sizes for your species can be obtained from a variety of sources including:

- Canadian Wildlife Service. 1991. *Nest Boxes*. Cat. No. CW66-48/1991E
- Canadian Wildlife Federation. 1990. *Build a Bat House and Recycle for the Birds*.
- Bancroft, Bob and May. *Building for Wildlife: Nest Boxes*. NS Conservation.
- Sibley, Hi. 1991. *Birdhouses, Feeders You Can Make*. South Holland, Il: The Goodheart-Willcox Company, Inc.

You do not need the best and most expensive materials to construct the box, afterall, the birds normally use a hole in a tree. Leftovers from other projects (ends of pine boards, plywood pieces, old barn boards, rough sawn lumber, and other scraps) are just as good as new lumber. Slabwood leftovers from a saw mill as well as sections of hollow logs will also work.



#### **Record Keeping:**

It is a good idea for your group to record the locations of your nest boxes and check them regularly and report back to the appropriate agencies on their status.



# Western Newfoundland Model Forest Nest Box Program

## **Why Build Nesting Boxes?**

Over 120 bird species nest in Newfoundland each year. Of these, about 15 to 20 species, ranging in size from wrens to ducks, are cavity nesters. That is, they nest in cavities in decayed trees or stumps. Generally, it is woodpeckers and chickadees that excavate these cavities. These birds make new holes each year, leaving the old ones for other species. Natural nest sites have been disappearing as a result of logging for commercial and domestic uses. As well, many people feel that these dead trees, called snags, are hazardous and of no value to anyone. As a result, there is intense competition for nest holes, with declines occurring in local populations of cavity-nesting species in recent years. By providing nest boxes in appropriate areas, we can help reverse this trend.

## **Who Can Build Nest Boxes?**

Anyone can build a nest box. A simple bird house in your backyard is a nesting structure. As well, this can be an enjoyable and educational experience for those involved in youth groups.

## **How Do You Get Funding?**

Funding for a nesting box program within a youth group is available from a variety of sources. However, the Western Newfoundland Model Forest has put aside some funds to provide youth groups with an opportunity to participate in a nest box program.

## **What Are The Requirements For Funding?**

The requirements are few, and all lead to a better program and an educational experience for both leaders and youth.

Firstly, we recommend that you contact a variety of people to determine what species to build nest boxes for and some appropriate areas to place these boxes.

At the same time, it would be a good idea to have someone knowledgeable in the species chosen to give a talk to the group on its habitat requirements and its needs for nesting structures.

The Western Newfoundland Model Forest would like your group to record the locations of your nest boxes and check them yearly and report back to the appropriate agencies on their status.

## **For Further Information, Contact:**

Brian Bonnell  
Model Forest Coordinator  
Natural Resources Canada - Forestry  
89 West Valley Road  
Corner Brook, NF  
A2H 2X4  
(709) 637-4300

# Nest Box Program Application Sheet

Western Newfoundland Model Forest Inc.

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Youth in Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Cavity Nesting Species Chosen: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Boxes Planning to Construct: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Timetable: Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Construction: \_\_\_\_\_

Placement: \_\_\_\_\_

Why does your group wish to undertake this type of project:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please return form to:

Western Newfoundland Model Forest Inc.  
attn: Brian Bonnell  
89 West Valley Road  
Corner Brook, Newfoundland  
A2H 2X4  
(709) 637-4300 (709) 634-0255 (fax)



