Northern Flicker

Natural History

Unlike most other woodpecker species, Northern Flickers forage for ants and grubs on the ground, digging for them with their curved beak. Flickers have a 2" long barbed tongue that captures the ants. Other species of woodpeckers perch on tree trunks by resting on their tails. But, flickers sit upright on a tree branch, like passerine birds. Flickers use a "flap and glide" motion in flight which reveals a bright white rump patch. Though not attracted to bird feeders, they will come to bird baths.

Nesting Habitat

Nests are excavated in a tree trunk to form a 13"-16" deep cavity which contains 5-8 eggs. Flickers nest in orchards, grasslands, open woodlands or in town areas that have crop fields nearby. Avoid placing box near chemically treated lawns, as this will reduce or contaminate their food source.

Box Location

Install nest box along fencerows bordering crop fields and pastures.

Box Installation

Attach the box to a living or dead tree, or a pole or post that leans slightly forward towards the south and away from the prevailing wind. Leaning the box forward aids the parents in feeding the chicks and also aids the chicks when it is time to for them to climb out. Install box 10'-30' off the ground, and at least 330' away from other flicker nest boxes.

Flickers are attracted to wood shaving-filled boxes which they can then excavate. Excavation is part of their mating behavior. (Pet stores sell wood shavings. Avoid fine sawdust as it remains damp and is difficult for the birds to work with.) A hinged roof makes it easier for you to pack the box with wood shavings. Filled like this, the box simulates a dead tree with an easily excavated soft core. Yet because it is filled, it is less likely to be taken over by house sparrows and starlings. Replace wood shavings or chips by April 1rst every year.

Nest Box Dimensions

The entrance hole is a 2-1/2" diameter hole placed 18" above the floor. The box is 23" tall with a floor area of 6x 7- 1/2".

1x8 lumber is recommended. By creating horizontal ¼" deep saw cuts on all interior sides, the chicks have a "ladder" to climb up when they are ready to leave the nest box.

Modifications

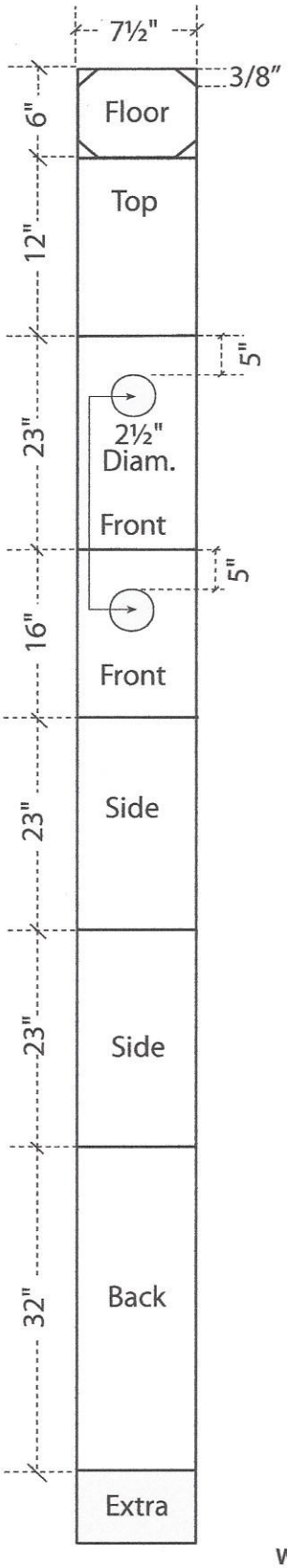
Mount the box on a pole and use a conical predator guard to keep squirrels from taking over the nest box.

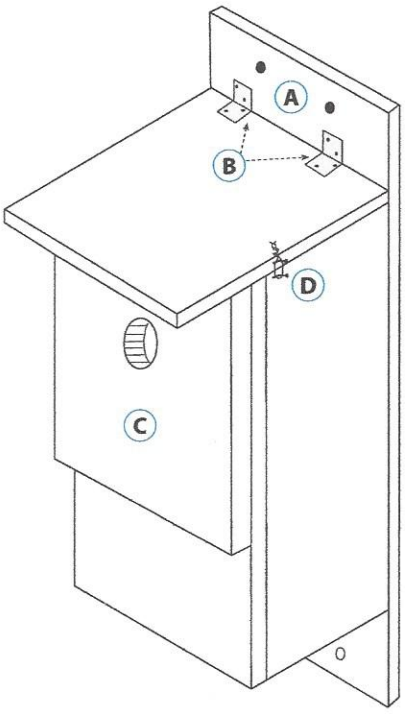
Primary -Sources

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Flicker/id
http://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/northern-flicker/
http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/newreportspublications/pamphlet/house.html#2j

Woodworking Projects for Backyard Wildlife

Flicker Nest Box





Materials

One 1"x 8"x 12' rough cedar board

Twenty 1-1/4" outdoor wood screws or

7 galvanized nails

Wire to keep box shut

Two galvanized hinges

A Holes for attaching box to a tree or post with nails, lag bolts, or wire.

B Galvanized hinges

C Attach smaller front to large one.

D Loop wire around nails to keep box shut

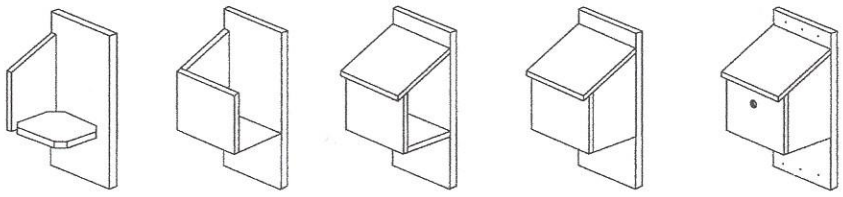
Tips on Mounting and Care of Flicker Nest Box

Fill box to the top with wood shavings (animal bedding can be purchased at a pet store). Fine sawdust is not recommended because it remains damp and is difficult for birds to work with. Pack-in the shavings to discourage starlings and sparrows from nesting in the box. Excavating a cavity is an essential part of the Flicker's mating behavior.

Tilt top of box forward about 15 degrees to make it easier for the adults to feed the young, and babies to climb to the hole.

When possible, face box to the south. Mount box 6' high or more and keep the flyway in front of the box open.

Assembly Sequence



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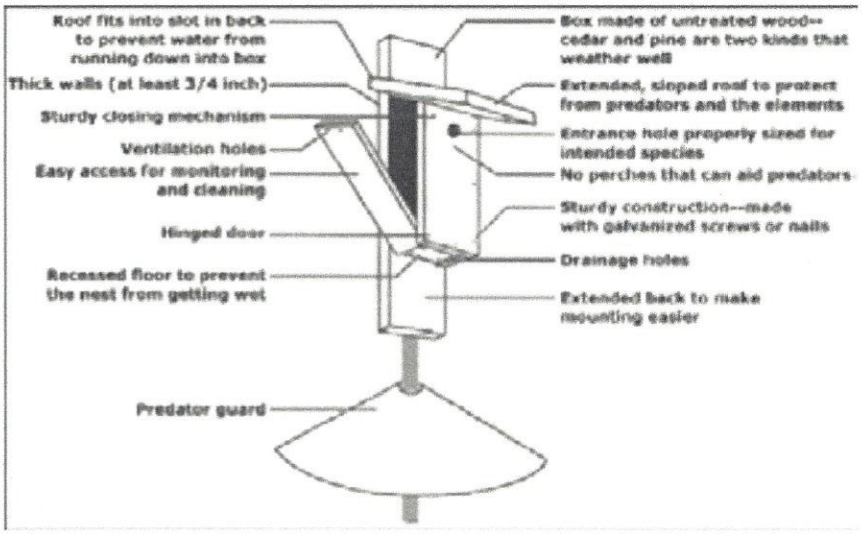
General Hints for All Nest Boxes

Local habitat is the primary factor determining which animals will utilize backyard nest boxes. Nest boxes can be substitute homes for cavity dwelling species that typically build their nests in tree trunks-like woodpeckers, squirrels, raccoons, some songbirds, and owls.



Materials: Nest boxes of untreated and unpainted wood are more attractive to birds and mammals and less toxic. Cedar, cypress, redwood, or pine are good choices. Nails, woodscrews and hinges must be rustproof. Painting boxes decreases the camouflage of the box, drawing in predators.

Perches: Perches on songbird houses create problems for our native species. Perches make it easier for predators to enter the box. Only non-native species of birds use perches, so boxes without perches are preferred.

Ease of exit: By adding rough or grooved interior walls to the nest box, fledglings and young animals can exit more easily when it is time.

Warm nest: By using lumber that is at least 3/4 of an inch thick, you provide insulation for young mammals and birds. Box should open from the side or top for maintenance and cleaning.

Dry nest: The interior of a nest box needs to be dry in order to keep young animals warm. A slightly slanted roof that overhangs the entrance hole keeps rain from entering the box. By constructing boxes with the floor recessed at least 1/4 inch up into the walls, water will not seep into the box floor. Drainage holes drilled in the floor allow animal waste and any other moisture to drain from the box. By cleaning out the box every year in fall, you prevent the bottom from rotting.

Critical nest box features: Make sure that your box incorporates features preferred by the particular species you hope to attract. These features include the double thick entrance hole size and extended roof to deter predators like squirrels. The height at which the box is posted, and the type of habitat surrounding the box need to need to match the desired species. Invest in a functional, rather than ornamental, nest box.

Tree care: Aluminum nails and screws are less damaging to trees when installing boxes on trees. Wiring boxes to trees can girdle and kill the tree.

Other nest box plans are available from:

1) Cornell Lab of Ornithology's website http:/ /nestwatch.org/ or http:/ /allaboutbirds.org.
2) http://www.wildlifehc.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Artificial-Nesting-Structures.pdf
3) http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/projects/index.html
4) http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/woodworkingforwildlife.cfm
5) http://www.csu.edu/cerc/researchreports/documents/WoodProjectsforIllinoisWildlife.pdf