

On The Green

FOR THE BIRDS

Birdhouse plans are big savers for the maintenance budget

By TERRY BUCHEN

There are some excellent hidden benefits to joining the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, and our club just re-upped its membership. It's the best \$100 a year our club has ever spent.

The Audubon Society of New York operates this program nationwide in conjunction with the U.S. Golf Association Green Section, and one of its not-so-obvious benefits is public relations. The society sends press releases to media and others you want to receive them in your community.

This has immensely helped superintendents' public relations efforts, especially in environmentally sensitive communities. Even clubs or courses that like to keep a low profile have used the press releases to great benefit. Probably the best use of Audubon press releases has been by grow-in superintendents in local

newspapers, township newsletters, etc., to keep the general public "happy" about new golf course developments.

Another membership benefit is the blueprints the society furnishes to members to build bird houses, nesting shelves and nesting boxes in-house with their maintenance staffs. We built 50 of these structures last winter and saved our club about 75 percent of what it would have cost to buy them from the usual sources.

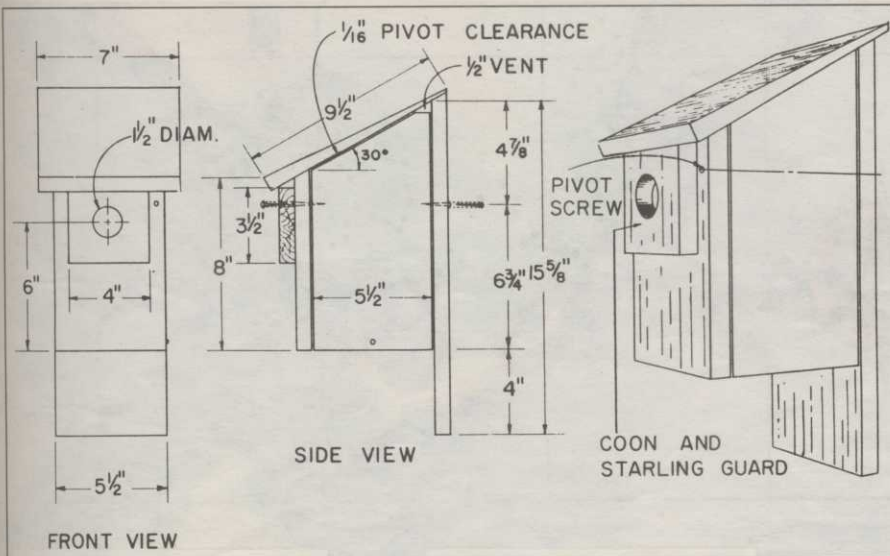
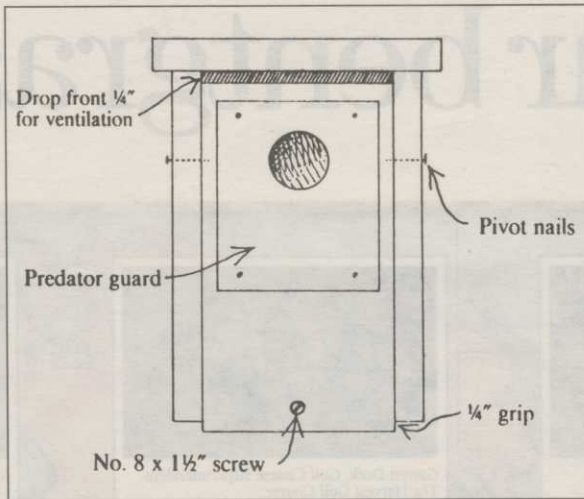
Here are a few sample blueprints that we used and we hope others can use.

There are now more than 1,500 member golf courses in the Audubon program. Joining helps the environment—and public relations.

Interested superintendents may contact Green Section agronomists nationwide, or the Audubon Society of New York at 131 Rarick Road, Selkirk, N.Y. 12158; telephone 518-767-9051. They will send an invoice and/or brochure.

BLUEBIRD HOUSE HINTS

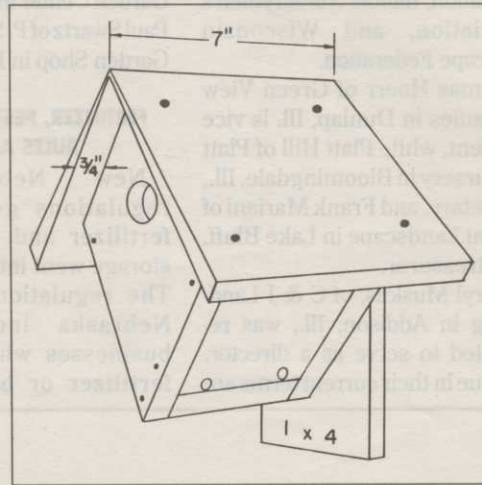
Paint the outside of the box any dull color. Don't use white. Face the box opening to the southeast. Roughen the inside surface of the front piece so young birds can cling to it for feeding and to exercise their wings before their first flight. A rough surface can be made by sawing slots 1/8 inch deep, punching shallow holes with a screwdriver, tacking a strip of 1/4-inch hardware cloth, or glueing small scraps of wood.



TREE SWALLOW SPECIALTIES

Tree swallows, like wrens and bluebirds, are attracted to single-unit, enclosed houses. The three do prefer different habitats and locations in which to nest and rear their young. Tree swallows feed on the wing and seek open agricultural fields and meadows or treeless and shrubless wild areas as their nesting places. A nest box must be placed in the open on a fence post or special box. This graceful swallow doesn't care much about the height of its nest cavity, provided the above requirements are met. Swallow boxes are best placed five to six feet above ground. Spacing of boxes is necessary because birds space themselves naturally during the nesting periods.

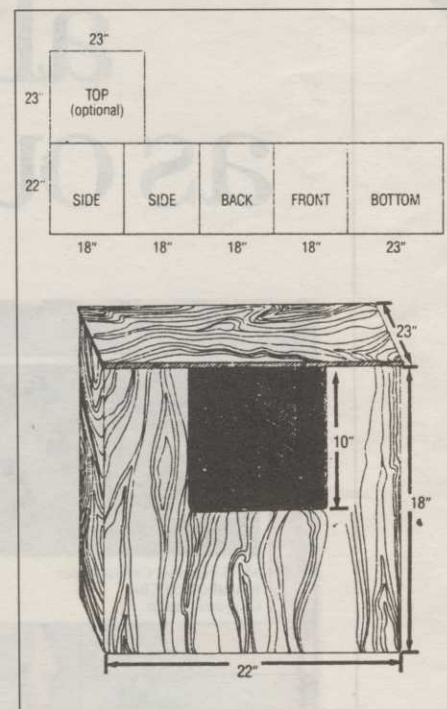
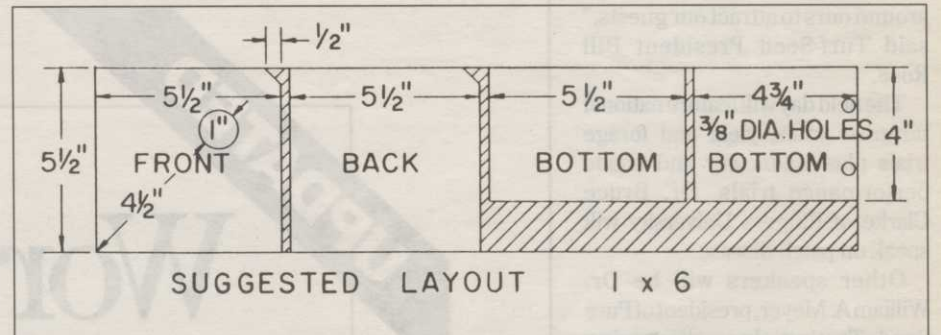
Drawings and information are from the Audubon Society of New York and University of Wisconsin-Extension



WREN HOUSE TIPS

Wrens are attracted to single-unit, enclosed bird houses. To attract house wrens, place the box very close to or actually in the cover of a bush or small tree. Wrens seek the shade and protection of thick bushes, where mated pairs find nesting materials and food for themselves and their young. The box may be placed three to 10 feet from the ground. If cover is available, wrens will nest as high as 15 feet from the ground.

The wren builds the bulk of its nest of stick. You can encourage wrens to use your box by placing nesting material near the boxes.



BECKONING BARN OWLS

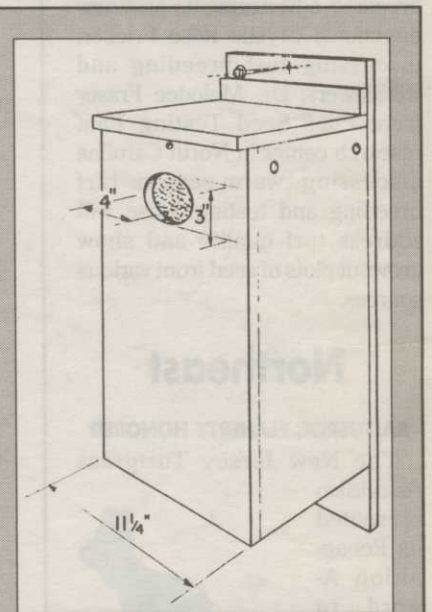
The barn owl is one of the most skilled hunters of all raptors. It has been determined that one pair of barn owls and their young can consume 25,000 mice a year.

If you are to encourage them to nest, discontinue use of rodenticides. Study the above diagram, then fasten the sides to the front. The back and bottom are attached afterward. Put the top on after the box is installed.

Since barn owls do not bring nest materials to their nests, cover the bottom with one or two inches of wood shavings or pine straw. Do not paint the inside of the box.

Make sure no nails protrude from the wood. Barn owls prefer to nest in buildings, so face the box into the barn or building. Secure the box onto a stud and install it as high as possible to lessen human disturbance and help to protect the owls from snakes, raccoons and cats.

The nest box will also work when wired high in a large tree placed away from prevailing winds. When outside, it can be made inaccessible to owl predators by placing a 30-inch-high metal sleeve around the tree.



JUST DUCKY FOR WOOD DUCKS

Though wood ducks normally nest in hollow trees around marshes, lakes and streams, they readily move into manmade structures. Attach them to sturdy poles set four to six feet or more above the high-water level. When placed in a tree, the house should be eight to 30 feet high. The house must be plainly visible and the entrance hole not obstructed. Try to keep it vertical. Any slant must be forward. Three to four inches of coarse sawdust or shavings should be placed in the house. Evict any birds or squirrels who try to occupy the houses.

