



BARN OWL BOX INSTALLATION INFORMATION

allaboutowls.org



Purpose

- The goal of this informational sheet is to provide information on choosing a successful and safe location to attract owls to nest as part of an integrated pest management system. All About Owls is providing general installation instructions only. We do not approve any particular owl nesting box design.

Picking a location to install your owl box

- Choose a site close to fields, marshes and other open spaces and at least 50' away from human habitation. Barn Owls can be noisy, so we recommend keeping the box at least 100' away from any bedroom windows. When installing an owl box, consider disturbances near the box that may happen during the breeding season. Barn Owls have a 10-month breeding season that lasts December through September, and they will often have two clutches of young in a single season. Never assume that the boxes may be empty during the 10-month breeding season, as any disturbance near the box can cause the nest to fail. Tree trimming and weed whacking nearby should only be done from late-September to mid-November to prevent disturbing the birds' nesting season.
- Avoid installing near bodies of water (swimming pool, lake, pond, stream). Keep boxes at least 100' away. If there is a pool on property, please use a pool cover or net when not in use. (<https://katchakid.com>) If a pool cover is not possible, please consider adding ramps to help wildlife climb out of a pool. (<https://froglog.us>)
- Angle the box to face the entrance hole about 45 degrees toward a mature tree and about 45 degrees toward open space. Avoid facing the box opening in a South-westernly direction to prevent the hot afternoon sun from beating directly inside the box, which can cause the young owls to overheat.

Tree Installation versus Post Installation

- Owl boxes can be installed below the tree canopy on mature trees with straight trunks. There should be no low branches below the tree canopy or below the box. The boxes should be installed as level as possible.

- Boxes can be installed on posts as well, but they must be in shade or partial shade and within 30' of a mature tree. We recommend using a 4"x4"x12' redwood post for smaller boxes, and a 4"x6"x12' redwood post for larger/ heavier boxes. Either post type should be set in concrete at a depth of 3' in the ground.

Tips for nesting owl safety

- Boxes should be installed at a height of 9-10' from the ground to the bottom of the box. This allows the box to be reachable by ladder for maintenance or potential rescue.
- **SHADE IS VITAL** for owl safety. Similar to the effect of leaving a dog in a hot car, nest boxes can turn into ovens without adequate shade and owlets can quickly succumb to the heat. Excessive temperatures within a nestbox can cause the death of all the owlets.
- Paint your box with a light, water-based color to preserve the wood and reflect heat. Apply paint to only the outside of the box.
- If the box is installed in a location where it is partially exposed to the sun, adding a sunroof and/or side panels might be necessary to better reflect the heat.
- To prevent predators like raccoons and bobcats from reaching the box, add 3' wide flashing starting at 1' above the ground for both tree and post installation. No perches should be installed anywhere on the exterior of the box.

Box maintenance

- Owl box management and maintenance is an ongoing responsibility which requires annual care and dedication. Nesting Barn Owls will have 5-7 chicks on average, and failure to clean out the nest box completely can cause the box to be too crowded, overheat, and/ or fall from the box or post.
- Owl boxes require an annual cleaning which can only be done between mid-September to mid-November. During the cleaning process, the box should be checked for damage as well as sharp edges or exposed fasteners that may cause injury to the owls. All required repairs need to be made in the same timeframe as the box cleaning.
- Avoid disturbing the box at any other time of year when breeding season is in progress. There is no need to put bedding inside the box.

The danger of rodenticides (rat poison)

- By means of secondary poisoning, all rodenticides can be fatal for any animal that eats a rodent who has ingested rat poison. Owls are particularly at risk!
- Before installing an owl box, it is important to remove all poison from your property. Set up safe rodent control methods that include exclusion, prevention, and trapping methods. Encourage your neighbors to participate in a community effort of not using rat poison. The owls foraging range can extend to 4 square miles, so the birds are at risk from any poisons used in the community. More resources on non-toxic rodent control are available on our website (allaboutowls.org)

Please contact us with any questions

- Our goal at All About Owls is to prevent the use of rodenticides, and to provide advice and information regarding any owl-related questions and concerns.
- If you have any questions about the placement or installation of an owl box, or any concerns about the safety of an owl, please email us at learnallaboutowls@gmail.com

Thank you for your help in protecting our native wildlife!