

# National Nest Box Week



St Valentine's Day marks the start of National Nest Box Week, 14–21 February, when people are encouraged to buy or build and erect new nest boxes for wild birds.

The scheme is run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

The aim is to provide nest sites for hole-nesting birds, because many of their natural sites, such as holes in trees, are less available, due to woods and hedgerows being 'tidied up' and old trees felled for health and safety reasons. Also, nest sites under the eaves of houses are becoming much rarer as new buildings are more effectively sealed and the soffits and bargeboards on older properties are being replaced with plastic, which prevents entry. The latter is one reason why house sparrows are declining in some parts of the country.

National Nest Box Week has been running since 1997 and there are now an estimated 5–6 million nest boxes in gardens in the UK. The most common garden birds to use boxes are blue and great tits. Starlings use boxes with larger holes. Robins and sometimes blackbirds will use open fronted boxes, while out in the countryside big boxes in woods and hedgerows are used extensively by barn owl, tawny owl, kestrel and jackdaw. House sparrows are a 'communal breeder' and prefer sparrow terraces – long boxes with several entrance holes to separate compartments so that a number of pairs can breed together. PW&HG has recently erected such a box at Plumpton Station.

You can find out more at <http://www.bto.org/nnbw/index.htm> and there is also a free information pack on buying and making nest boxes, where to erect them and much, much more that can be requested via the website or by ringing 0800 072 0130.

Why don't you have a go!

Tim Parmenter  
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