



UPPER RIVER TORRENS  
LANDCARE GROUP

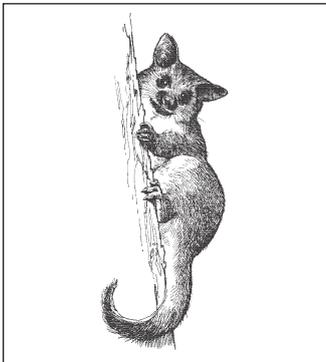
# Data Sheet

# Native Animal

# Nest Boxes

*The aim of this fact sheet is to tell you:*

- why nest boxes are needed;
- which native animals use them;
- how to make nest boxes;
- where to put them;
- how to find out who has moved in; and
- how to discourage pests.



*Trichosurus vulpecula*

## Why native animals need artificial nest boxes

The following native animals depend on the hollows of trees (alive, dead or dying) for shelter and for nesting places:

- 17% (119 species) of native birds
- 42% (95 species) of native mammals including bats
- 35% of arboreal reptiles
- Many invertebrates

However, land clearance for residential areas, farming, and firewood harvesting has left very little native vegetation in South Australia. Refer to Figure 1 (green shaded area) and Appendix 2 for the map of the Native Vegetation Cover (2020) to show the extent of remnant vegetation remaining in the Mount Lofty Ranges. But what about all those trees you and your friends have been planting I hear you ask ... well unfortunately it can take from 60 to 140 years for trees to form hollows.



Figure 1

**That doesn't mean tree planting isn't important: it still increases biodiversity by providing lots of food and protection for native animals; helps reduce salinity; and trees act as a 'sink' for greenhouse gas emissions.**

The good news is that studies have shown that bats, parrots and possums will use artificial nesting boxes, or hollow logs, when they are placed in areas where natural hollows are scarce or absent.

## What you can do...

- Build or buy a nest box to place on your property.
- Join a monitoring program to learn more about the native animals in your area.
- Think about any firewood you collect and whether it might be better used as wildlife habitat.
- If you own a property, plant your own woodlot: it will be cheaper to stay warm and you'll also help the environment by reducing the energy (fuel etc) it takes to get other wood supplies to your fireplace.
- Recycle - find and burn old fence posts, off-cuts, and any discarded wood that your council or neighbour may not want.
- Keep dams, rivers and creeks clean, they are an important source of drinking water for native animals.
- Eliminate or minimise the use of pesticides as they may be toxic to native animals.

## Who is your new neighbour?

Hundreds of birds and mammals can make a home in a nest box, but it depends on which type of box you choose. Kookaburras, for example, prefer a horizontal nest box. Here are some of the animals you might find moving in near you:

**Birds:** *Adelaide Rosella, Crimson Rosella, Swift, Rainbow Lorikeet, Barn-owl, Sacred Kingfisher, Welcome Swallow.*

**Mammals:** *Bats, Pygmy possums, Brushtail possums, Sugar Gliders, Phascogales.*

## How to make a nest box

Following are a number of templates for bat and bird boxes.

### Bird box construction tips

- Use permapine to construct the boxes, it is rot- and termite-proof, weathers well, and reduces the demand for hardwoods.
- Pre-drill holes before nailing to stop wood panels splitting.
- Use galvanised nails with flat heads (iron nails rust).
- Make joints as weatherproof as possible.
- Leather or rubber straps can be used for the hinges.
- The roof should slope slightly to allow rain to run off.
- Drill a few small drainage holes in the floor.
- Do not bother about a perch (they attract pest birds).
- Secure the box to the tree using wire inside a hose.
- Adjust the wire around the trunk every few years to prevent ringbarking the tree.
- For the Striated Pardalote (see Box A) a 3cm diameter plastic tube (about 10cm long) can be used as an entrance hole to discourage other birds. Tie a twig at the end of the tube to act as a perch.
- For Tree Creepers (see Box B) the entrance hole should be 5-8cm in diameter.
- For Rosellas and Possums (see Box C) the entrance hole should be 7-10cm diameter.
- See "The Nestbox Book" by Jim Grant, Gould League (1997) for further advice.

### Bat box construction tips

As above and,

- Ensure the roof is fixed.
- Drill a 30mm hole in the bottom door to enable inspection by video camera. On the inside fix a thin black rubber sheet which the video camera can push aside.
- Partially drill a screw on the outside of the bottom door to act as a handle.
- Use pivot nails for the bottom door to act as a hinge.

### Placement of boxes

- Boxes can be placed on trees, poles, buildings or houses at least four metres from the ground.
- Boxes should be placed where predators (cats and rats) cannot get to them.
- Boxes should be placed so as to avoid any bad weather ie, on the east, north (or NE, SE) sides of the tree.
- Natural shade cover above the box may also be useful.

### Anybody home?

**Resist the temptation to open nest boxes once they are in place.**

It is best to watch for any signs of life in your box from a distance, as too much disturbance might frighten the animal off. If close inspection is needed, try to plan a time when the parent animals have left for feeding.

Get in touch with the Upper River Torrens Landcare Group to find out about monitoring programs for bats. (Contacts at end of Data Sheet.)

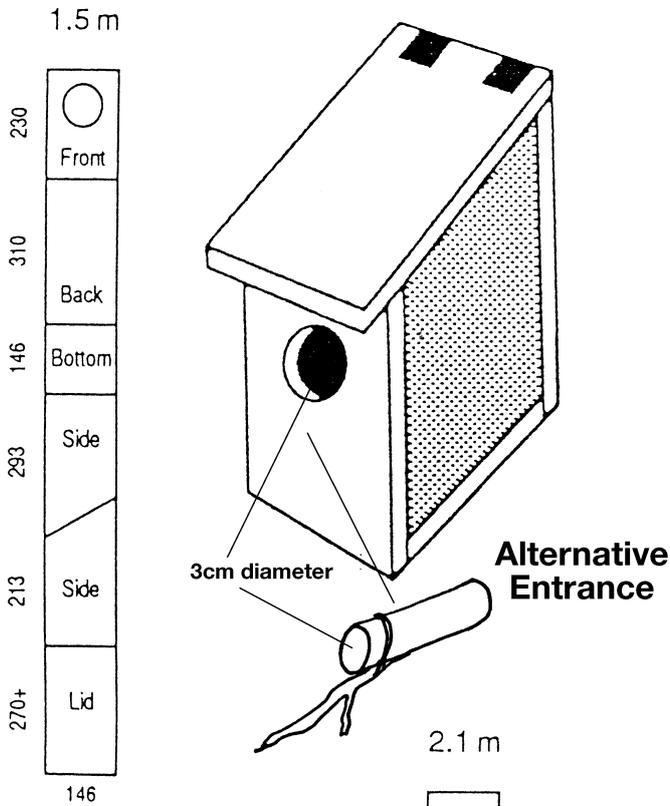
### Unwanted house guests

Pest species such as sparrows, European starlings and Indian mynas can be a nuisance if they decide to move into your nest boxes at the expense of native species. If this is the case there are ways of getting them to move out:

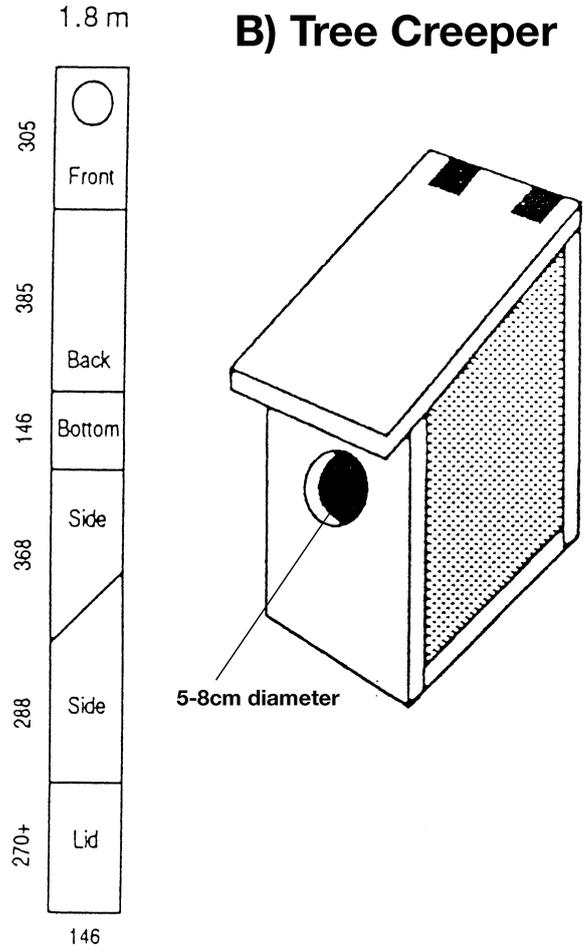
- Remove the nesting material of your unwanted tenants daily.
- Erect nest boxes after pest species have begun nesting.
- Temporarily block the entrance hole until the unwanted birds find another home.

# Bird Box Cutting Guide

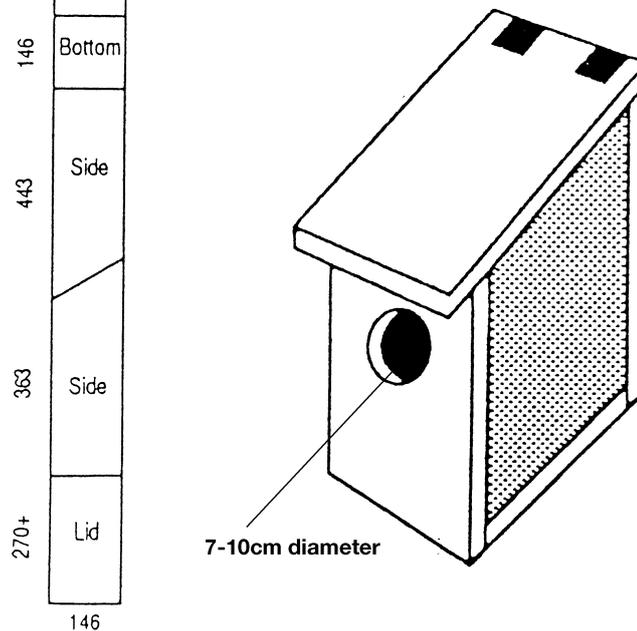
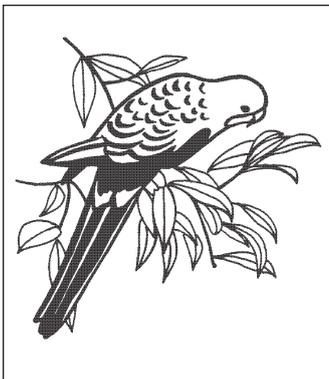
## A) Striated Pardalote



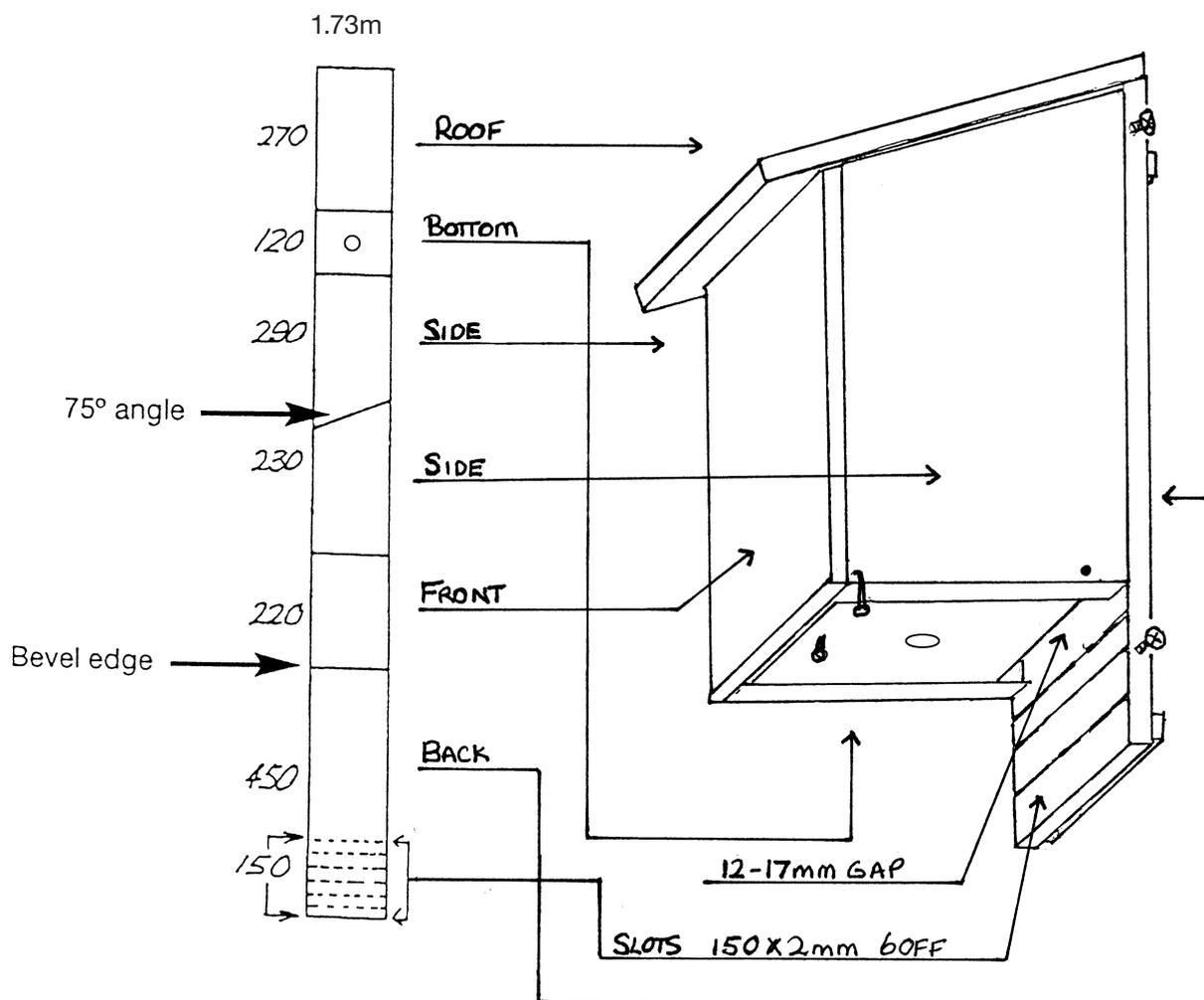
## B) Tree Creeper



## C) Rosella or Possum



# Bat Box Cutting Guide



## Contacts:

URLTG: <http://www.torrenslandcare.org/>

SA Museum: <https://www.samuseumsa.gov.au/>

Fauna Nature: <https://faunature.com.au/>

Contact your Local Men's Shed as occasionally they are involved in native animal nest box making projects.

Please write to URLTG after the box has been in place for six months.

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## References:

**Bird Observers Club** (1986), *Nest Boxes for Australian Birds*, pamphlet.

**Gibbons P. & Lindenmayer D.** (2002), *Tree Hollows and Wildlife Conservation in Australia*, CSIRO.

**Gould League** (1997), *The Nestbox Book*.

**Healesville Sanctuary**, *Home is a Hole*, Education Service pamphlet.