Nest box information sheet No. 1

Tawny Owl *(strix aluco)*

Raptor Trust

Length:	37 - 39cm (14 - 16 ins)
Wingspan:	94 - 104cm (37 - 41 ins)
Weight:	0.3 - 0.58kg (11 oz - 1 lb 4 oz)
Habitat:	Deciduous and mixed woodland but will live in farmland, parks and even large gardens provided there are trees and prey. The Tawny usually nests in hollow trees.

The Tawny Owl (also known as the Hoot Owl and Brown Owl) is Britain's most numerous Bird of Prey with winter numbers estimated at about 350,000 individuals.

This is largely due to its nocturnal habits which have given it some protection from persecution. Also its size, physical dominance and ability to adapt to changing circumstances and to exploit new habitats such as urban parkland and even large gardens, have enabled it to sustain large numbers. It was relatively unaffected by pesticide poisoning and the only major problem that it has experienced lately is the loss of some nest sites following the spread of Dutch Elm disease.

Weighing up to 1 lb 4 oz and with a wingspan of up to 41 ins it is our largest mainland breeding Owl and has an extremely varied diet including rodents, birds taken from night roosts and invertebrates. Some Tawny Owls have been known to take fish, frogs and other amphibians by wading in the shallows.

Nesting & Breeding Habits

Tawny Owls don't build nests but use holes in trees, especially the hollow ends of large broken branches. Sometimes they will use the abandoned nests of other birds and even squirrel dreys. In areas with a good supply of prey but few trees, Tawnys will even nest on the ground.

Territories are established in the Autumn and courtship and breeding may start as early as February with the eggs taking between 28 and 30 days to hatch. The young may leave the nest as soon as 25 days after hatching and disperse among the branches to minimise the risk of the entire clutch being taken by a predator. Although the young fledge at about 5 weeks, the parents continue to feed them until they are about 4 months old at which point they are independent and leave to establish their own territory. However, Tawny Owls lead a fairly sedentary life and the young are unlikely to move more than 10km.

These large Owls can often be very aggressive in the defence of their nest sites and have even been known to attack humans if they feel threatened! It is advisable to consider this when choosing a location for an artificial nest box.

SAFETY NOTICE

Please remember that nest boxes are heavy !

Always take care when lifting them, especially on ladders or in trees. It's always a good idea to have someone to help you !

If you build a nest box, please tell us.

Send details to: The Raptor Trust
2, Pevensey House
The Street
Hempnall
Norfolk NR15 2LS

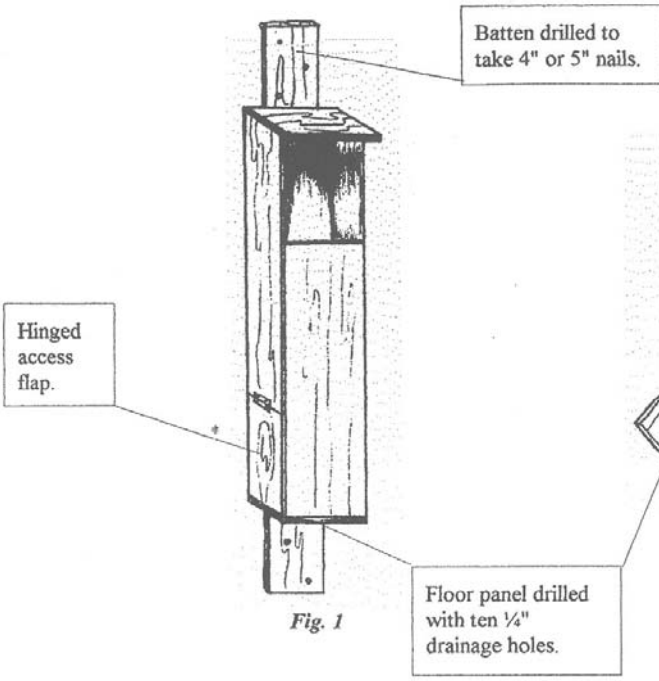

Fig. 1

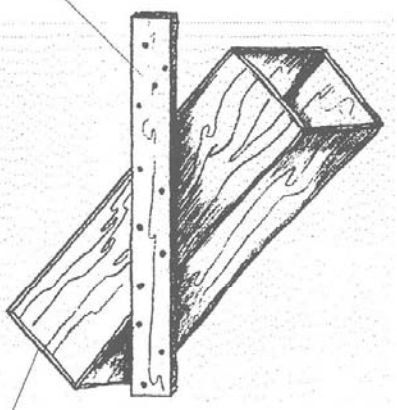

Fig. 2

Fig. 1 Front entry type

1 rear panel	36" x 10" x ½"
1 front panel	27" x 10" x ½"
2 side panels	36" x 10" x ½"
1 roof panel	14" x 10" x ½"
1 floor panel	10" x 11" x ½"
1 batten	55" x 4" x 1"

Fig. 2 Tube type

4 side panels	30" x 10" x ½"
1 floor panel	10" x 11" x ½"
1 batten	40" x 4" x 1"

This type is designed to simulate the hollow end of a broken branch.

Boxes should be made from exterior quality ply.

Boxes should be positioned in late Autumn to allow time to weather into their surroundings.

Position: Nest boxes should be sited in quiet locations at least 2.5m above ground level. The entrance should face south or south-east but the entrance should not face directly into the local prevailing wind.

Fixing methods: Either type can be nailed to a tree trunk by means of the batten although it is preferable to attach them with cable ties which prevent damaging the tree. Alternatively, the front entry type can be mounted with the batten fixed horizontally and wedged into the fork of the tree as shown in fig. 3. If you wish to make it more secure, nail one end only. This will allow for uneven tree growth and will prevent the batten or box from splitting.

Tube type boxes can be wired to the underside of branches. If this method is adopted, please staple the wire to the side of the box. This will prevent the box from slipping free.

Important: Please ensure that any timber treatment applied to the box is non-toxic to birds (most water-based preservatives are OK) and that no nails, screws or other sharp edges or points are left to protrude into the box or any part on which the birds may perch.

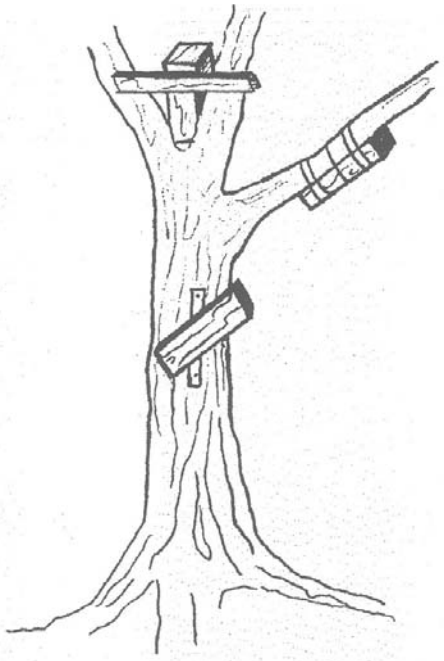

Fig. 3