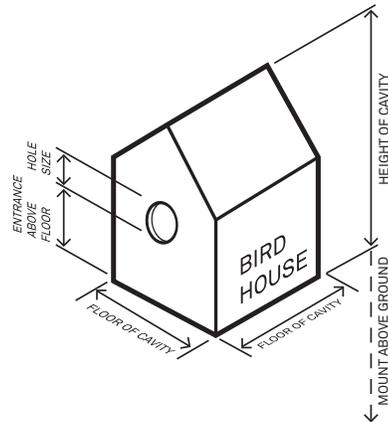


**Bird houses may be no larger than 20 x 20 x 20" and may not weigh more than 40 lbs.**

This diagram shows the bird house dimensions, corresponding to the Approximate House Specifications listed. We do not encourage this design, please be creative!

Species Information and Nesting Habitat adapted from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "All About Birds."

Go to [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org) for more information about all of the species. Click Get Involved to see their Citizen Science section.



### House Wren

#### SPECIES INFO

Bubbly and energetic, just like their songs. They hop quickly through tangles and low branches and, in spring and summer, frequently pause to deliver cheerful trilling songs.

#### NESTING HABITAT

Near trees, shrubs and gardens for cover and in partially sunlight spot. Backyards and city parks are perfect for House Wrens.

#### APPROXIMATE HOUSE SPECS

Hole size: 1 – 1 1/8"  
Floor of cavity: 4 x 4"  
Height of cavity: 6 – 8"  
Entrance above floor: 4 – 7"  
Mount 5 – 10' above ground;  
can be fixed or swinging

### American Kestrel

#### SPECIES INFO

Perhaps the most colorful raptor in the world, the American Kestrel is the most common falcon in North America.

#### NESTING HABITAT

Open fields and near grassy habitat where prey (grasshoppers, small rodents) may live.

#### APPROXIMATE HOUSE SPECS

Hole size: 3"  
Floor of cavity: 8 x 8"  
Height of cavity: 12 – 15"  
Entrance above floor: 9 – 12"  
Mount 10 – 50' above ground

### Wood Duck

#### SPECIES INFO

A colorful duck of wooded swamps and streambanks, the Wood Duck is one of only a few North American ducks that nest in trees. Many people consider it to be the most beautiful of all waterfowl.

#### NESTING HABITAT

Near wooded wetlands, river banks, or lake shores.

#### APPROXIMATE HOUSE SPECS

Hole size: 4"  
Floor of cavity: 10 x 8"  
Height of cavity: 20 – 24"  
Entrance above floor: 12 – 16"  
Mount 10 – 20' above ground

### Purple Martin

#### SPECIES INFO

The largest of the North American swallows, the Purple Martin is a popular tenant of backyard birdhouses. In fact, in much of the U.S., it has nested almost exclusively in nest boxes for more than 100 years.

#### NESTING HABITAT

Most open space possible, 30 – 150' away from buildings, preferably near water. Like to nest in groups, so "condos" are recommended.

#### APPROXIMATE HOUSE SPECS

Hole size: 2 1/8"  
Floor of cavity: 6 x 6 – 12"  
Height of cavity: 6 – 12"  
Entrance above floor: 1 to 2"  
8 – 12+ rooms, each with hole  
White paint  
Mount 10 – 15' above ground

### Black-Capped Chickadee

#### SPECIES INFO

A bird almost universally considered "cute" thanks to its oversized round head, tiny body, and curiosity about everything, including humans.

#### NESTING HABITAT

Near trees or woody shrubs, from forests and woodlots to residential neighborhoods and parks. They frequently nest in birch or alder trees.

#### APPROXIMATE HOUSE SPECS

*Cylindrical Shape*  
Hole size: 1 1/8"  
Diameter: 3"  
Height of cavity: 14"

#### *Box Shape*

Hole size: 1 1/8"  
Floor of cavity: 4 x 4"  
Height of cavity: 8 – 10"  
Entrance above floor: 6 – 8"  
Mount 4 – 15' above ground

### Downy Woodpecker

#### SPECIES INFO

The most common North American woodpecker, and also the woodpecker reported most frequently at bird feeders. Eats ants and beetles from the bark of trees.

#### NESTING HABITAT

Near wooded areas, in woodlots and parklands, particularly among deciduous trees, and brushy or weedy edges. They're also at home in orchards, city parks, backyards and vacant lots.

#### APPROXIMATE HOUSE SPECS

Hole size: 1 1/4"  
Floor of cavity: 4 x 4"  
Height of cavity: 8 – 10"  
Entrance above floor: 6 – 8"  
Mount 5 – 15' above ground

### Eastern Screech Owl

#### SPECIES INFO

Active at night, they eat a variety of small animals. Their trilling song, sometimes known as the Bounce Song, is used by members of a pair or a family to keep in contact.

#### NESTING HABITAT

In forested area, in a relatively secluded area.

#### APPROXIMATE HOUSE SPECS

Hole size: 3"  
Floor of cavity: 8 x 8"  
Height of cavity: 12 – 5"  
Entrance above floor: 9 – 12"  
Mount 12 – 20' above ground;  
in deep shade

### Tree Swallow

#### SPECIES INFO

A common swallow of marshes and open fields, the Tree Swallow is a ready inhabitant of nest boxes.

#### NESTING HABITAT

Open areas near water & fields, especially wooded swamps and shorelines.

#### APPROXIMATE HOUSE SPECS

Hole size: 3"  
Hole size: 1 1/2"  
Floor of cavity: 5 x 5"  
Height of cavity: 6 – 8"  
Entrance above floor: 4 – 6"  
Mount 5 – 15' above ground



## Bird House Design + Build Competition Construction Guidelines

Your bird house should serve as a safe, welcoming place for birds. Consider the following: Each bird species prefers a certain hole size and cavity space. See the suggested specifications laid out in the Bird Species Table.

- Materials should not be toxic or harmful to birds (e.g. pressure treated lumber, noxious paint, etc.).
- The house should survive Chicago's seasons — use weather-resistant materials, hardware, and design.
- Bird houses need to be cleaned out at least once a year, and sometimes nuisance species may need to be removed. The design should allow for access for maintenance.
- Avoid putting a perch outside the entry hole since it may just provide a place for a predator or nuisance species such as European Starling or House Sparrow. The exception is for Purple Martin houses, where perches are essential.
- Birds like to stay cool when nesting — avoid materials that will absorb unnecessary heat as your main building material — such as most metals (besides aluminum) and dark-colored materials.
- Birds like fresh air and a dry floor to hold their nest. Consider drainage and ventilation.
- Many of these bird houses will eventually be mounted. Consider leaving space for a mounting mechanism (e.g. hook or bracket), or incorporating one into your design.
- For the advanced builder: Some species of fledgling (baby) birds (like the Tree Swallow) may need help exiting the house. Consider adding a 'ladder', roughing the inside of the wall for traction, or tilting the inside wall slightly forward.
- Requirements: Bird houses may be no larger than 20 × 20 × 20". Bird houses may not weigh more than 40 lbs.



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**Suzanne Malec-McKenna**  
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Chicago Park District  
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