

WILDLIFE ACTIVITY PACKS

*A fun guide full of activities you can do at home
to get creative and learn about wildlife*



ACTIVITY 1

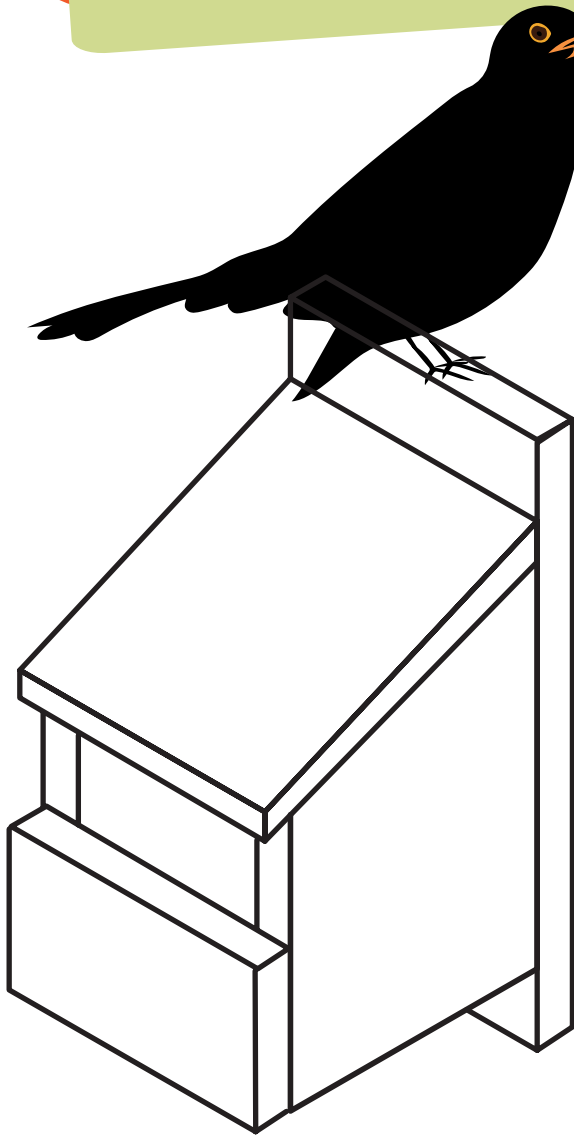
Design & build a bird box

For the
whole
family

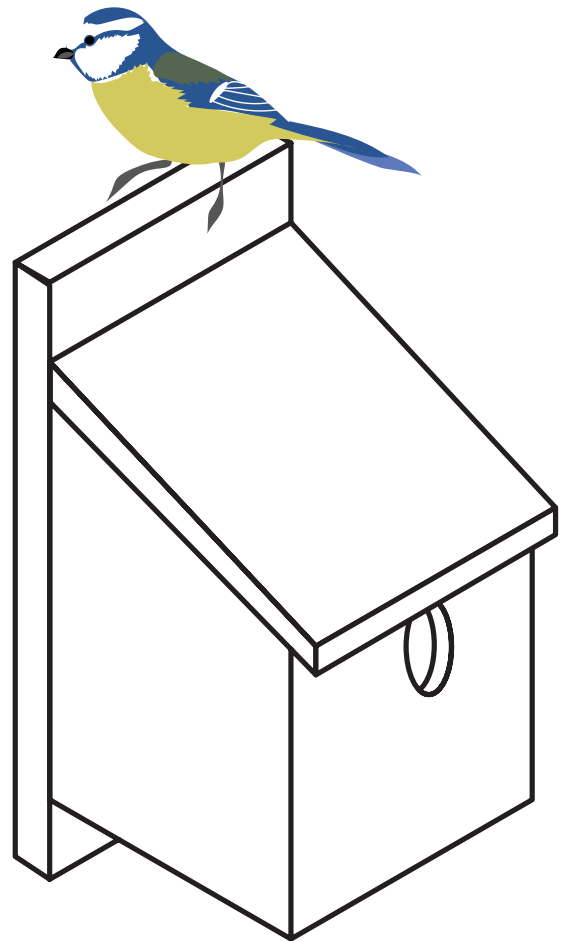
Bird boxes are a great way to help birds to nest in our gardens!
It is great fun to watch the parent birds pop in and out of the box in spring and eventually
to see tiny fluffy birds leave the nest.

Below are two blank designs of bird boxes for you to design your own!
On the following page are directions on how you and an adult can put your
design to life by making a bird box.

Alternatively, you can buy a bird box and paint it yourself but remember to use water-
based paint so as not to make the birds ill.



This bird box has a wide-open hole
for birds like robins and blackbirds.



This bird box has a small round hole
for birds like blue tits.

ACTIVITY 1

Design & build a bird box

For the
whole
family

You will need an adult to help and quite a few sharp tools so be extra careful.

MATERIALS:

- A plank of FSC wood 15cm x 1.4m long x 1.5-1.8cm thick and not pressure treated
- Pencil
- Tape measure
- Saw
- Nails and screws
- Strip of waterproof rubber
- Drill
- Optional: a hole saw/cutter for making 3.2cm holes
- Ladder
- Water based paint

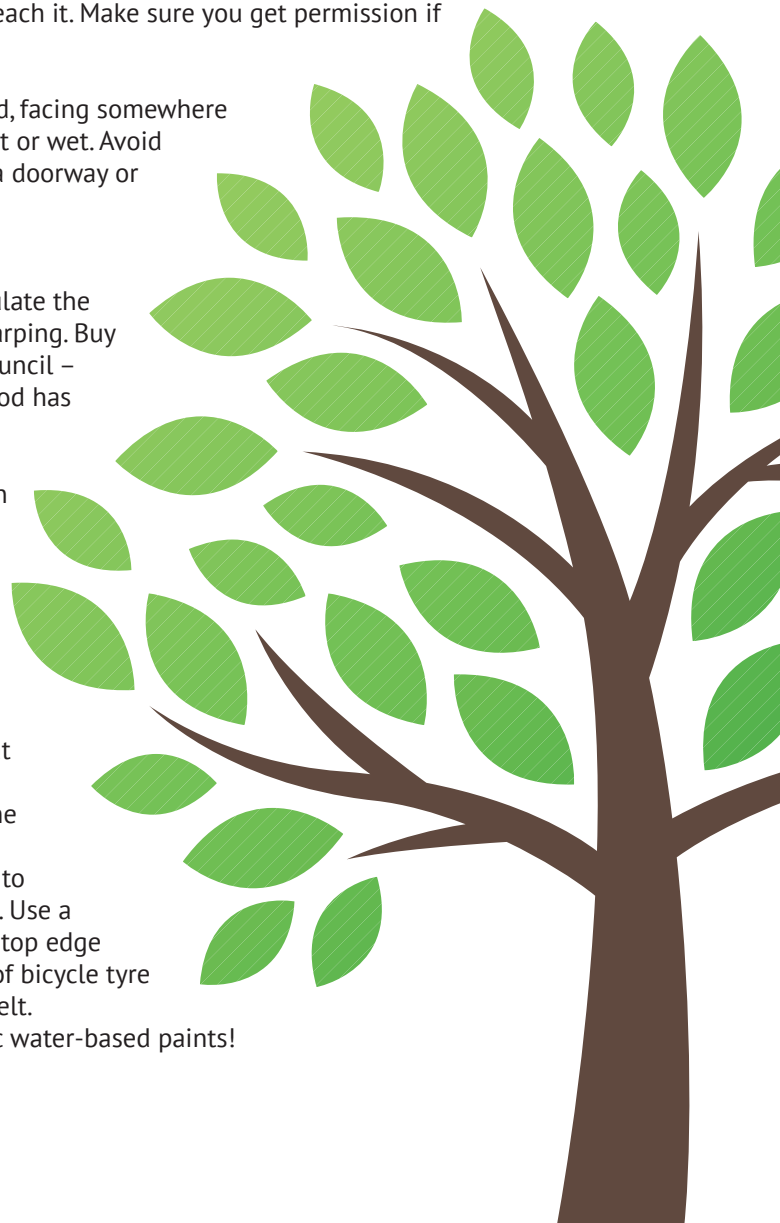
FINDING THE BEST SPOT:

First you will need to find the right bird-friendly spot for your box. Ideally, it will be under the eaves of your house or high on a wall, well away from curious cats or foxes! You can put your box on a tree or fence, just make sure cats can't reach it. Make sure you get permission if you need it.

The box should be least 3 metres from the ground, facing somewhere between north and east to avoid it getting too hot or wet. Avoid placing it in direct sunlight and don't put it over a doorway or well-used path.

INSTRUCTIONS:

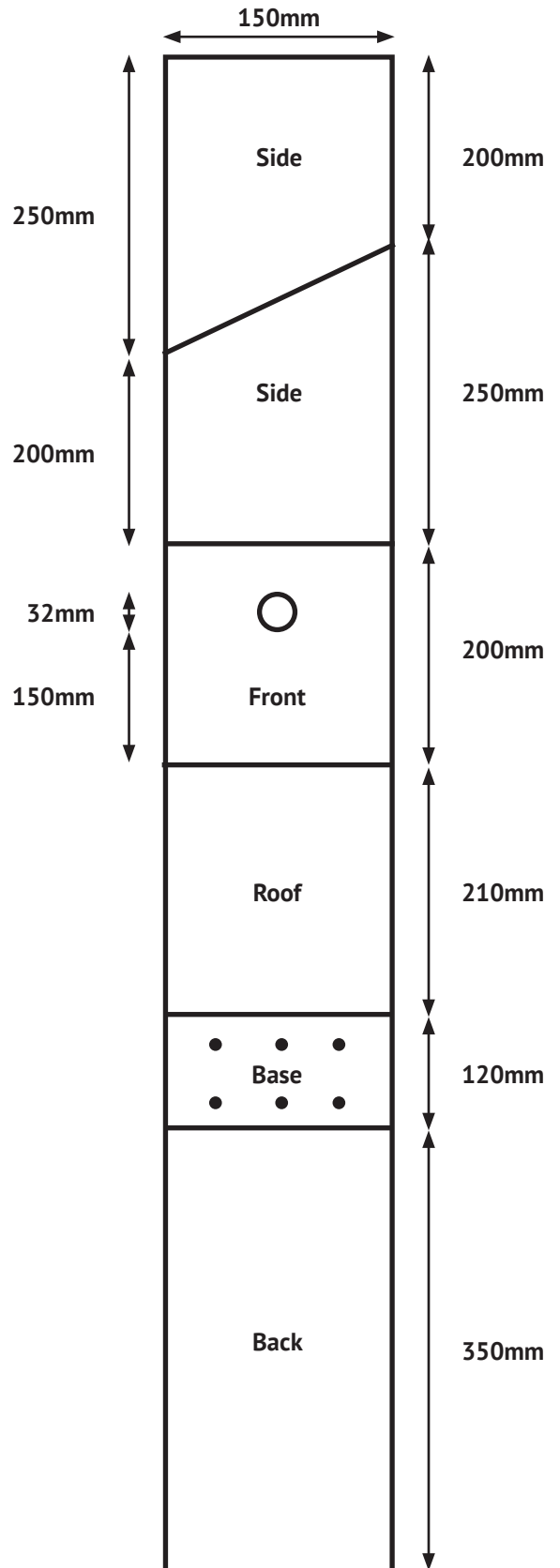
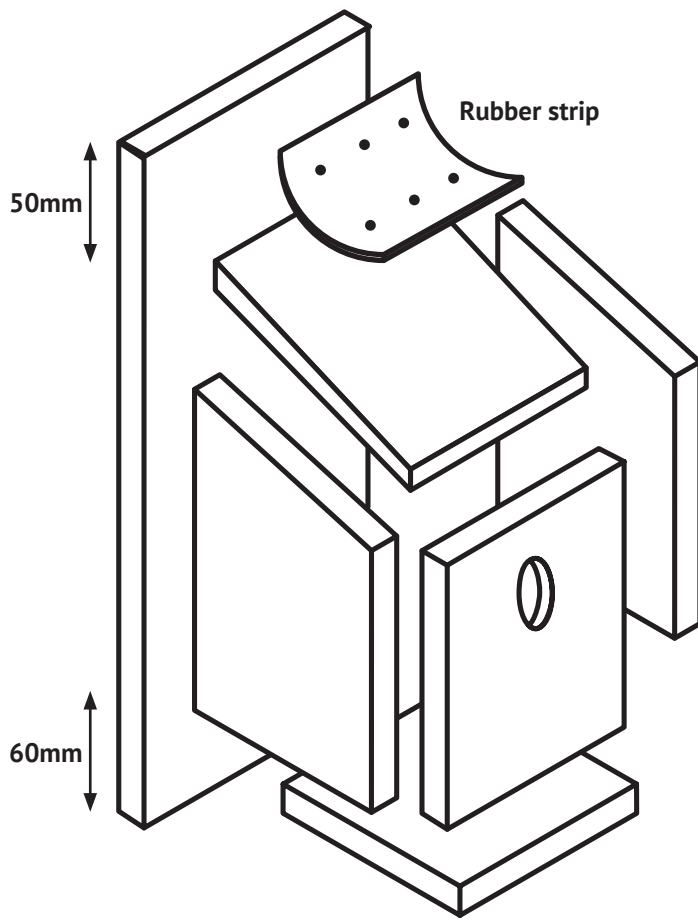
- 1 The thickness of the wood is important to insulate the box from cold and heat and to stop the box warping. Buy timber approved by the Forest Stewardship Council – look for the FSC logo so you know that the wood has been sustainably harvested.
- 2 Measure and cut your wood according to the diagram below. These dimensions are based on 15mm thick wood. If your wood is a different thickness, the dimensions of the base should be 150mm by 150mm minus 2 x thickness of the wood, i.e. if the wood is 18mm thick, the base should be 150mm x 114mm.
- 3 If you don't have the hole saw/cutter for making the 3.2cm round hole, you can use a jigsaw to cut a square or wedge-shaped hole at the top of the front.
- 4 Nail all the pieces, except the roof, together. The sides, back and front 'wrap around' the base.
- 5 Attach the roof. By using screws, you'll be able to get into the box at a later stage to clean it out. Use a waterproof strip to make a hinge between the top edge of the roof and the backing board. Try a piece of bicycle tyre inner tube, damp-proof membrane or roofing felt.
- 6 Decorate your box. Remember to use non-toxic water-based paints!



ACTIVITY 1

Design & build a bird box

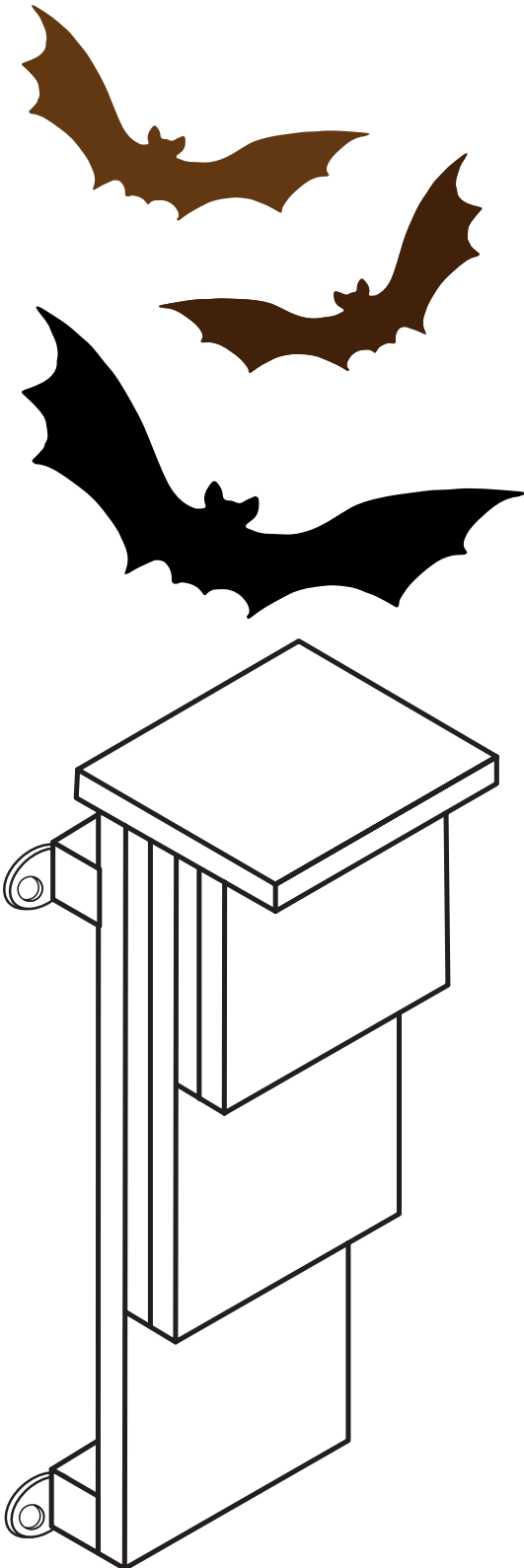
For the whole family



ACTIVITY 2

Build a bat box

For the
whole
family



Many people don't realise that bats live in lots of different places, from holes in trees, to rooves and in boxes just like birds!

Unfortunately, many old trees where bats naturally like to live have to be removed when they start to fall over and become dangerous, so bats don't have as many roosting places anymore. You can help them out by making a simple bat box to put on the side of your house or in an old tree in your garden.

MATERIALS:

- Untreated rough-sawn wood
240mm wide x 1.3m long x 20mm thick
- Ladder
- Drill
- Screws
- Saw
- Nails
- Brackets for attaching your bat box

INSTRUCTIONS:

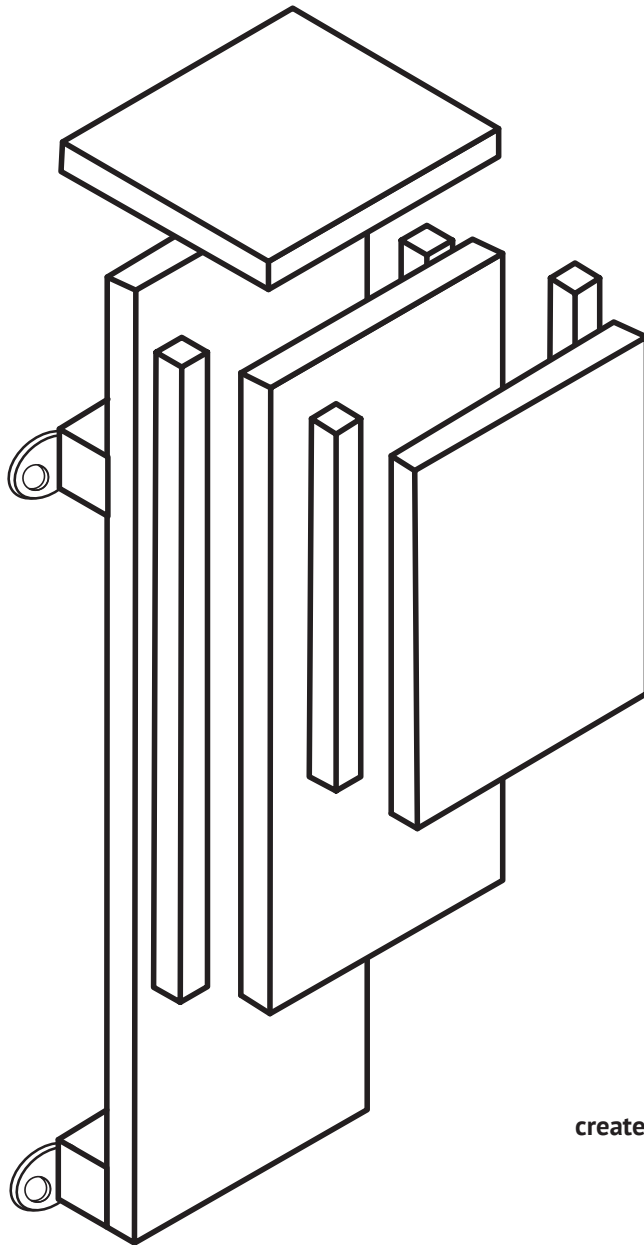
- 1 You'll need a sheet of timber 240mm wide by at least 1.3m long and 20mm thick to keep the bats insulated from too much cold and heat inside.
- 2 Mark the wood with a pencil, according to the diagram, and then cut it in to the sections.
- 3 Nail all the pieces together as shown in the diagram, making the joints as airtight as possible.
- 4 Choose your location. You could put it under the eaves of your house or, if you have a large garden, on the trunk of a mature tree. Ideally, look for a spot that is at least 3m (10 feet) from the ground, sheltered from strong winds and exposed to the sun for part of the day. Position your box so it faces between south-west and south-east. Make sure there is a clear flight line in.
- 5 Now put your bat box up using the brackets at the top and bottom of the box's backing plate and fix the bat box to the wall with screws or plugs. If you're fixing it to a tree, you can use adjustable ties so you don't cause any damage to the tree. If you don't have these, use timber screw bolts.

All bats and their homes are protected by law so it's important you don't disturb them. Watch and enjoy from a distance. If you don't see any bats going in or out, look out for their black droppings underneath the entrance. They are little dry pellets that crumble to dust. The most likely new residents will be pipistrelles - there are two very similar species which are widespread in villages and towns.

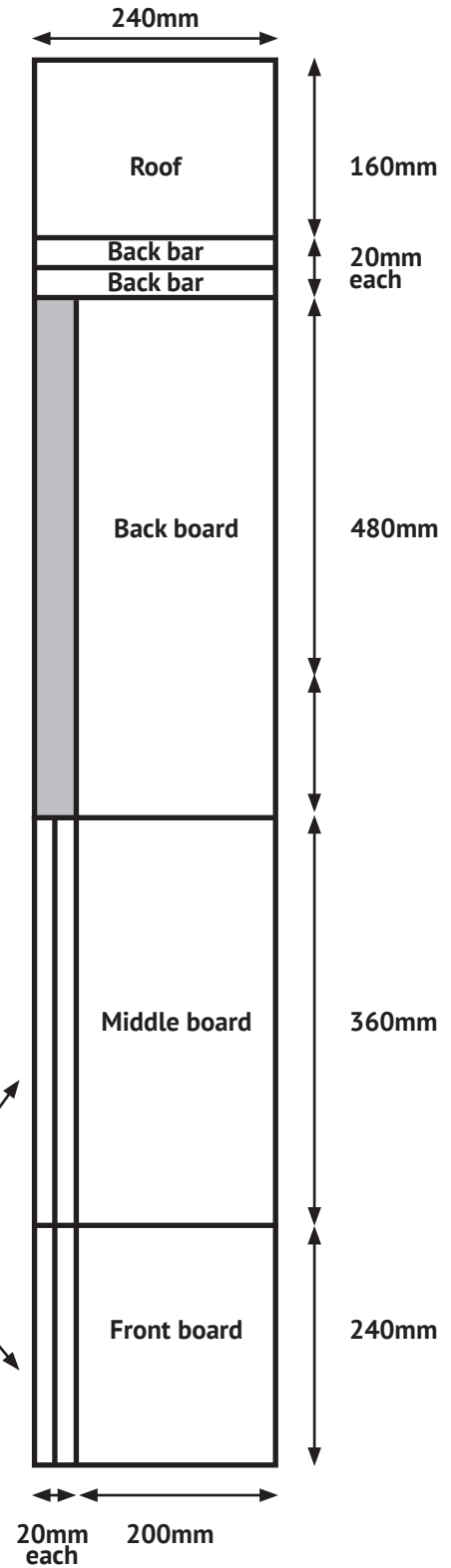
ACTIVITY 2

Build a bat box

For the whole family



Risers to create crevices



ACTIVITY 3

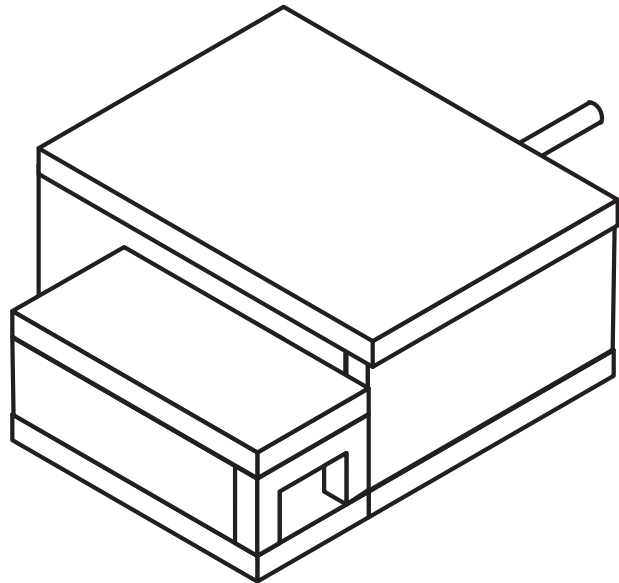
Build a hedgehog box

For the
whole
family

There are various styles of hedgehog box available but this will show you how to make a simple hedgehog house at home. All hedgehog houses should have a large compartment which is insulated from cold and extreme heat in the summer, with a smaller entrance corridor which will keep your hedgehogs safe from predators. This activity uses tools so you will need adult supervision.

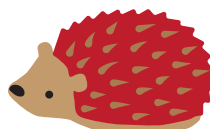
MATERIALS:

- Two sheets of FSC timber (from a sustainable source) exterior plywood, at least 1.5cm thick, and 60cm wide by 2m long
- Saw
- Hammer
- Nails or screws
- Short length of narrow drainpipe
- Hinge
- Dried leaves or hay (not straw as this can cause injuries)
- Drill



INSTRUCTIONS:

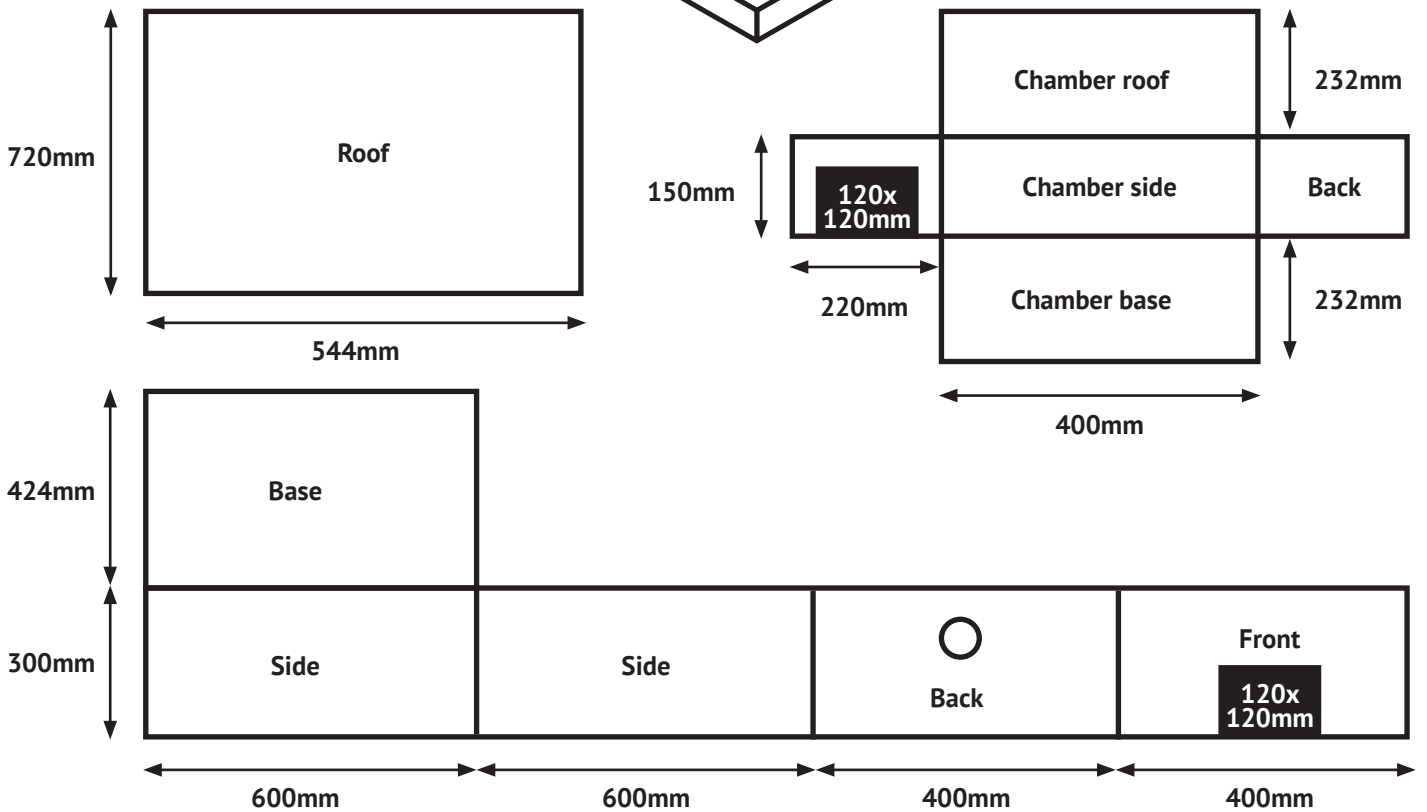
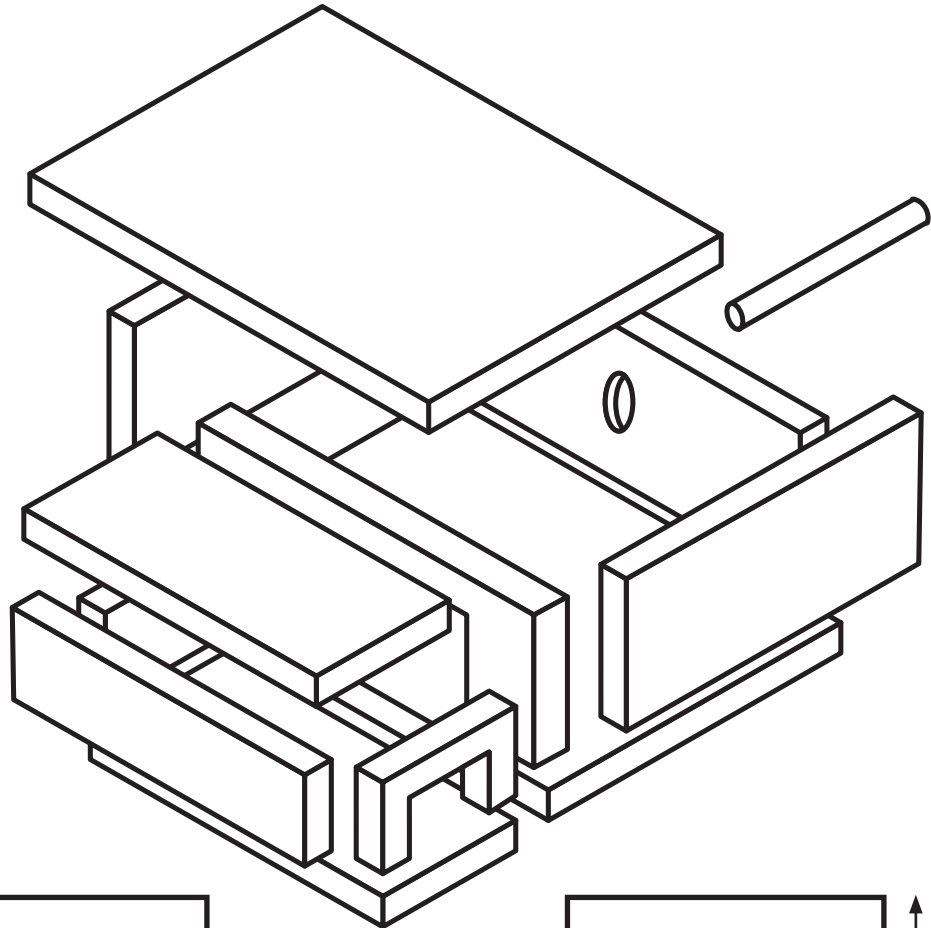
- 1 Cut out sections as shown on the diagram and drill a hole in the back to fit in your pipe (either use a specialist drill bit or make multiple holes and smooth with sandpaper).
- 2 Then nail all the pieces together except the roof.
- 3 Fill the chamber with a layer of dead, dry leaves. Hedgehogs prefer medium leaves such as oak or hazel (but any leaves will do).
- 4 Then screw the roof to the box with a hinge so that you can remove it in future to clean the box out. Place the narrow drainpipe in the hole at the back for ventilation.
- 5 Now place the box where you want it to go but bear in mind that the box needs to be out of direct sunlight and the front entrance should be out of the wind.
- 6 Now cover, either with soil then leaves and twigs or just put the box under a pile of leaves and twigs with the entrance of the tunnel sticking out. Be careful to avoid getting too much leaf litter in the drainpipe. Hedgehogs love boxes under dense hedges or under bushes too and they like linear features so place the entrance along a fence or hedge and they are likely to find it very quickly.



ACTIVITY 3

Build a hedgehog box

For the whole family



ACTIVITY 4

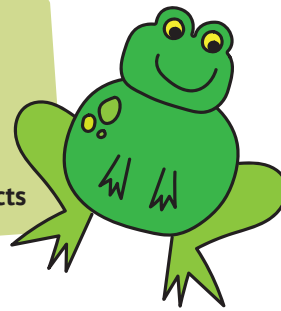
Make a toad abode

Age
10 - 15

Although it's called a Toad Abode, this wildlife home will help provide shelter for all kinds of wildlife in the garden. Unfortunately, Common Toad numbers are in decline due to loss of habitat. By making our gardens more wildlife friendly, we can help wildlife find new ways to live around people.

Materials:

- A medium sized terracotta pot
- A spade or trowel
- A ruler
- Leaves, moss, woodchip and other natural objects



INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Find a shady, cool spot to put your toad abode in – under a bush where it is out of the way is perfect. It doesn't have to be near water as toads and other amphibians spend most of their time out of the pond hiding in cool shady spaces.
- 2 Dig a hole 10cm deep and as long as your pot. Where possible, put it facing North to South to avoid the worst of the weather.
- 3 Tip the pot into the hole on its side so it is half buried. The mouth of the pot should face South (away from strong wind and rain).
- 4 Half fill the pot with leaves, moss and the wood chip and scatter more around the outside of the pot.



ACTIVITY 5

Make a bug mug

Age
10 and
under

Bug mugs are a great way to use old chipped or cracked mugs and provide homes for insects in the garden! Bug mugs and other bug houses are great for solitary bees, who unlike bumble bees, aren't big and fluffy and they don't have hives where they live together.

MATERIALS:

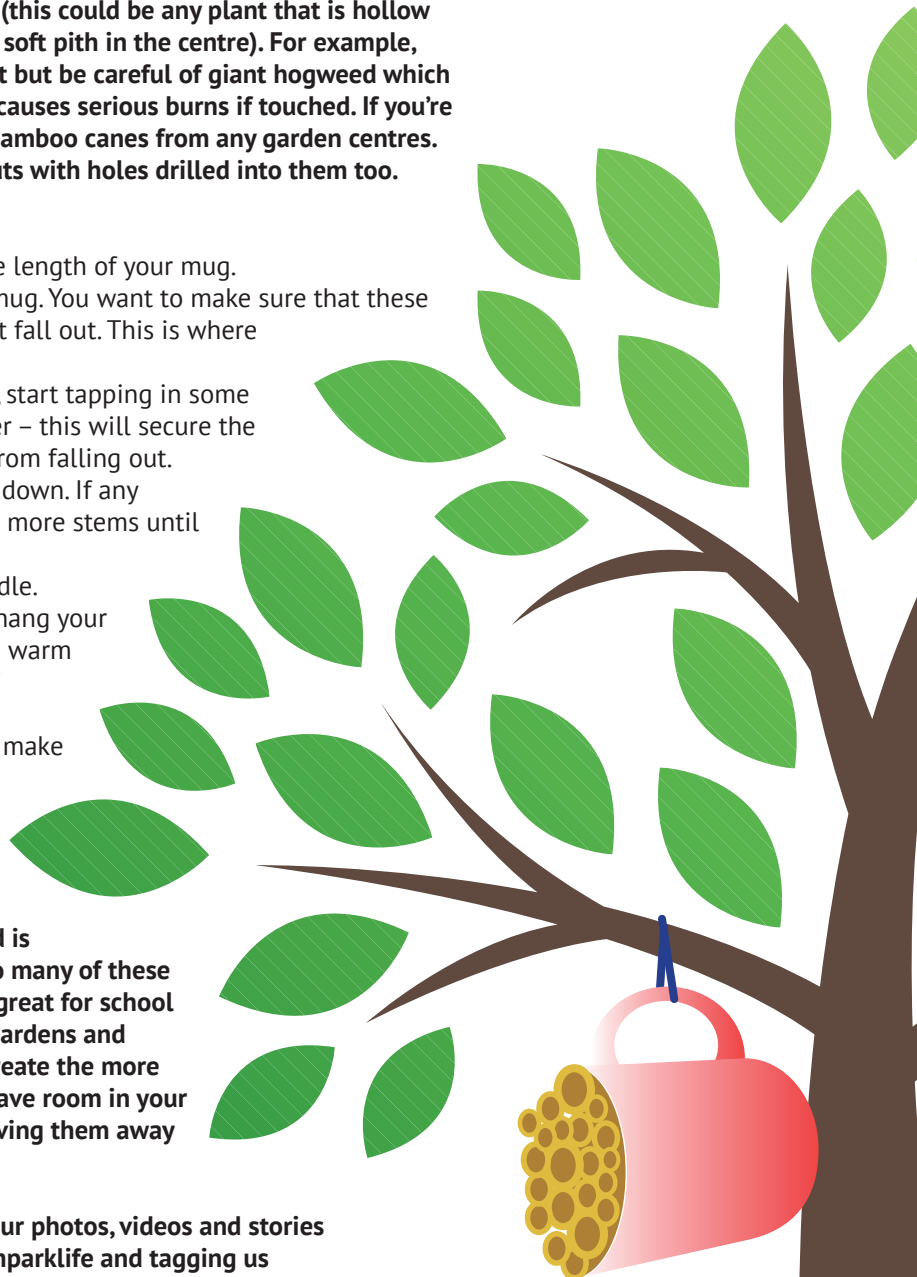
- String
- A small hammer
- A mug (it can be metal or china, but try and avoid plastic if you can)
- Some hollow stems of various sizes (this could be any plant that is hollow or pithy as the bees can remove the soft pith in the centre). For example, bamboo, bramble or reed are perfect but be careful of giant hogweed which is very large with hollow stems but causes serious burns if touched. If you're unsure of what to use you can buy bamboo canes from any garden centres. You could also use small wood offcuts with holes drilled into them too.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Cut your hollow stems down to the length of your mug.
- 2 Start putting your stems into the mug. You want to make sure that these are in really tight so that they can't fall out. This is where the hammer comes in.
- 3 Once your stems are in quite tight, start tapping in some stems in between with the hammer – this will secure the stems in place and prevent them from falling out.
- 4 Test your mug by tipping it upside down. If any canes start to slip out, tap in some more stems until they are firmly in.
- 5 Then tie some string onto the handle.
- 6 Find a sunny south facing spot to hang your bug mug! These must be placed in warm south or south east facing parts of the garden to attract bees. If your garden is quite shady you can still make a bug mug and they will also be great for overwintering insects like ladybirds, woodlice and lacewings.

This is a great activity for all ages and is really simple to do. You can't have too many of these bug mugs in your garden so they are great for school projects, nursing homes, community gardens and allotments. The more bug mugs we create the more we are helping wildlife. If you don't have room in your garden, consider making some and giving them away as presents.

If you have made a bug mug, share your photos, videos and stories with us by using the hashtag #Ipswichparklife and tagging us @ipswichgov.



ACTIVITY 6

Wildlife homes tips

For the
whole
family

Making wildlife homes is a great way to entice wildlife into your garden. But it is important to think about what sort of box you will need, as well as where you will put your box to make sure it is suitable for the wildlife.

TOP TIP 1:

Different birds like different styles of box. For example, blackbirds like an open fronted box, blue tits like boxes with small holes, sparrow nest boxes have multiple chambers with multiple holes, whilst swift boxes have a longer thinner hole for the birds to enter. (Swift boxes and sparrow boxes will need to be placed high up as these species usually nest in the eaves of houses.)

TOP TIP 2:

Bird boxes should be facing between North and East to avoid strong sunlight and overheating or wet windy weather.

TOP TIP 3:

You should also make sure that your bird box is not accessible to predators like cats and put a metal plate on the front to protect from squirrels and woodpeckers.

TOP TIP 4:

Bird boxes should be placed between 2 and 4 meters high and close to a bush or tree so the parent birds can access the box and the fledglings will have somewhere to aim for when they make their first flight. Try and avoid putting this too close to the top of a fence though in case a cat can reach into the box.

TOP TIP 5:

If you are attaching the box to a tree or near a bush, try and clear around the entrance to make sure that here is a clear flight path to the box.

TOP TIP 6:

If you make the box yourself, try and weatherproof it by putting some flashing on the top and tilting the box down slightly so the box doesn't fill with water. Many boxes will have a small slot in the bottom to allow water to drain through.

TOP TIP 7:

For bird boxes being placed in the eaves or houses for swifts, sparrows or starlings, you can place several boxes quite close together as these are communal birds.

TOP TIP 8:

Birds like robins and blue tits will not like to nest too close to other birds of the same species so keep your boxes further apart for these birds.

TOP TIP 9:

If you place lots of different boxes in your garden, you may get several different species nesting all at once.

TOP TIP 10:

It is important not to place your nest box too close to your bird feeding station, as birds rarely like to nest right next to their feeding area.

TOP TIP 11:

If you are painting your bird box, use a water-based paint as some paints can be harmful to birds.



ACTIVITY 6

Wildlife homes tips

For the
whole
family

BAT BOXES

TOP TIP 1:

Bat Boxes should be made from untreated wood, i.e. wood which has not been pressure-treated with chemicals. Bats are sensitive to smells and some chemicals can be harmful to them.

TOP TIP 2:

Make your box from rough-sawn wood (rather than smooth, planed wood). If your wood feels too smooth, roughen it by dragging the teeth of a saw across the surface – this helps bats to grip inside the bat box.

TOP TIP 3:

Bats hate draughts so make sure your box is nice and cosy with no gaps and in a North or South East or West Facing direction. If you are placing your boxes on a tree, you could put three together with one facing North, one South East and one South West to provide optimal opportunities.

TOP TIP 4:

Bats prefer bat boxes with more than one compartment and one that is as large as possible – a deep box makes bats feel safe and keeps the air temperature more constant.

TOP TIP 5:

You can place a bat box on either a tree or a house but make sure that it is high. Although bats can roost as low as 1m from the ground they prefer higher homes.



ACTIVITY 6

Wildlife homes tips

For the
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HEDGEHOG BOXES AND FEEDING STATIONS

TOP TIP 1:

if you want to avoid cats, foxes or other wildlife getting to the food or into your hedgehog box, add a tunnel into the box using a piece of drainpipe. Make sure it is at least 10cm in diameter and check regularly to make sure no chubby hedgehogs have got stuck inside.

TOP TIP 2:

Add a lid to your box or feeding station so you can quietly take a sneak peek to see if it is being used or not.

TOP TIP 3:

If you don't have many leaves in your garden, take a small bag with you and borrow some from in the street or your local park (but remember not to take too much as the wildlife at the park needs leaves too) or you can use hay to create a cosy nest.

TOP TIP 4:

Place your box or feeding station along a fence or hedge. Hedgehogs like to snuffle along linear features so they will find your box faster that way.

TOP TIP 5:

Put a brick on top of your box to stop foxes or badgers flipping it over and eating all the food.

TOP TIP 6:

Try to keep your hedgehog nest box in a sheltered place where it won't get too hot in summer and too wet and windy in winter.

