HOW TO BUILD AN OWL NEST BOX V.2

These instructions include amendments regarding construction of the inspection hatch and deployment of the owl box made since this brochure was first produced in 2002. These amendments were made on 28th July 2004.

1. Square nest box

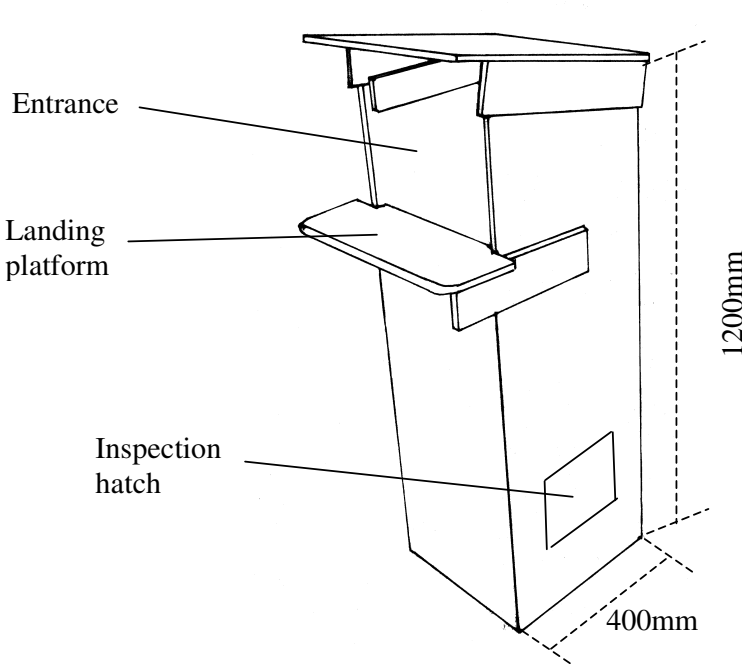

Fig. 1. Square owl nest box

Square Box - Materials

- 1, 1200mm x 1600mm sheet 12mm structural ply (walls)
- 1, 1100 x 400mm sheet, 9mm hardwood ply (roof, floor, landing platform and inspection hatch)
- c. 2L exterior house paint
- 50mm timber tri quad
- 40mm plastic rectangular mould
- 3.2m, 30 x 40mm timber for internal floor and roof bracing
- 4 timber pieces for bracing midway up walls
- two pieces of scrap timber to brace landing platform
- Galvanised screws
- 3 x 12 mm polycarbonate casement clips and screws, and spacers as required to fit clip over inspection hatch.
- Nails or hex head screws, and builders strap sufficient to wrap twice around box and tree.

Square Box - Instructions

Step 1. Cut 12mm ply into four pieces (400mm x 1200mm).
Step 2. Cut 310mm off one of the pieces for an entrance.
Step 2. Cut 9mm hardwood ply into a 400mm sided square for the base.
Step 3. Fit walls to base and secure with internal bracing (base, middle and top).
Step 4. Cut and fit landing platform (see Figs. 1 & 3)
Step 5. Cut and fit 9mm hardwood ply roof. Have roof overlap entrance by about 100 – 150mm.
Step 6. Fit fixtures to landing platform (see Fig. 3)
Step 7. Drill drainage holes in floor.
Step 8. Cut inspection hole and fit hatch (see Figs 1 & 4), using casement clips to secure into place. Note: if not securing the round cut out of wall to the inner side of the inspection hatch, a minimum of four clips are required.
Step 9. Paint all exterior surfaces with at least two coats of exterior paint.

2. Hexagonal nest box

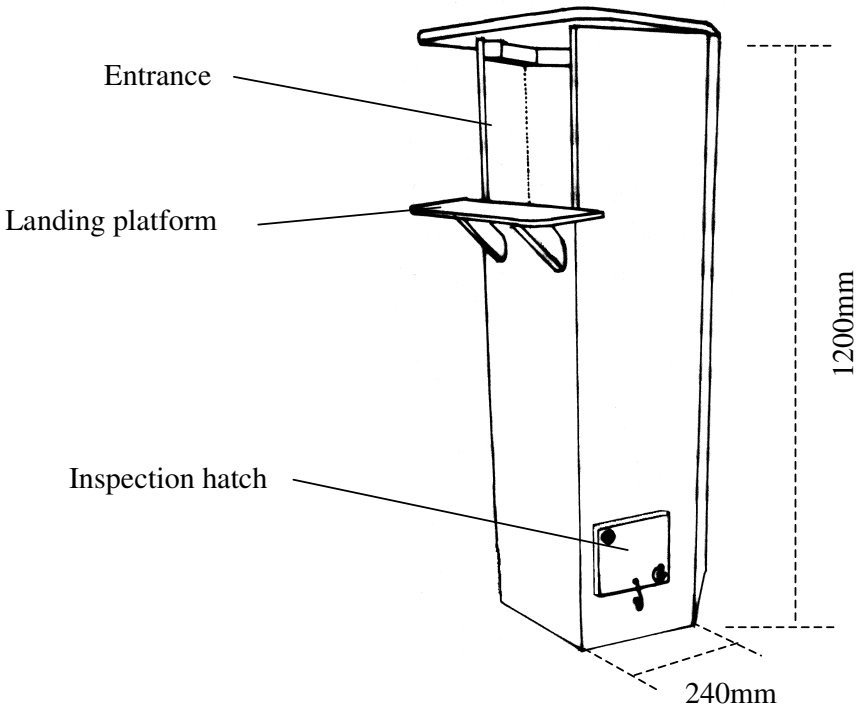

Fig. 2. Hexagonal owl nest box.

Hexagonal Box - Materials

- 1, 1440mm x 1200mm sheet, 12mm structural ply (walls)
- 1, 1130mm x 430mm sheet, 9mm hardwood ply (roof, floor, landing platform and inspection hatch)
- c. 2L exterior house paint
- 300mm timber tri quad
- 385mm plastic rectangular mould

- 2.64m, 30 x 40mm timber for base and roof bracing
- 6 timber pieces for bracing midway up walls
- two pieces of scrap timber to brace landing platform
- Galvanised screws
- 3 x 12 mm polycarbonate casement clips and screws, and spacers as required to fit clip over inspection hatch.
- Nails or hex head screws, and builders strap sufficient to wrap twice around box and tree.

Hexagonal Box - Instructions

Step 1. Cut 12mm ply into six pieces (310mm x 1200mm), note that the long edges of each piece of ply should be cut with a 60^0 edge to allow for the hexagonal shape of the box.
Step 2. Cut 9mm hardwood ply into a 240mm sided hexagon (see Fig. 5)
Step 3. Fit walls to base and secure with internal bracing (see Fig. 6)
Step 4. Cut and fit landing pad (see Figs 2 & 3)
Step 5. Cut and fit roof (see Fig 7)
Steps 6-9. as for rectangular owl box (above).

General - Important points of note

- It is important to ensure that the interior of the owl box remains as dry as possible through diversion of rain water by the moulded square rod placed across the entrance of the owl box (Fig. 3) and through correct siting of the owl box (see below – **Mounting owl boxes**).
- Make sure that there are no internal traps for young owls to get caught in. If you follow the designs above this will not be a problem however if cleats are used for internal bracing, the spaces formed by these must be filled with some material.
- Construct the owl box with the rough side of ply facing inwards. This assists the owls in leaving the nest box. Horizontal strips of timber maybe affixed inside the box to help out to clamber out. Be careful not to create any internal structures in which owl toes or claws can get caught.
- It is important to provide about 10cm of material in the base of the box, upon which eggs can be brooded. Use the material from tree termite nests if possible. If this is not available (do not knock down trees to obtain this material) use peanut husks.
- Do not paint the interior surfaces of the owl box.
- In choosing a paint colour, choose a light colour that blends into the bush. This will help keep the owl box cool and will avoid unwanted attention from vandals.
- If using scraps of plyboard to construct your owl box, the walls maybe made up of smaller pieces but seal gaps so that no water can get into the box.

General Instructions - Mounting owl boxes
Use the following guidelines to ensure that your owl nest box operates efficiently (see Fig 8).

- Where ever possible, locate nest box away from roads and barbed wire fences. Fledglings are vulnerable to road strikes and can get caught on fences.
- Face the entrance of the owl nest box away from prevailing weather to ensure that the brood chamber remains dry and chicks have a greater survival rate.
- If possible, situate the owl box with a branch within several metres in front of the entrance, owls appreciate being able to perch in front of the box.
- Use builders strap to secure owl boxes into trees by running the strapping below the landing platform. The builders strap should not take the full weight of the box. Instead attempt to position box in a fork or in such a way that the tree takes most of the weight.
- Do not run builders strap right around the tree. When the tree grows this will pull the owl box apart. It maybe necessary to use a second run of builders strapping to stabilise the owl box.
- Do not nail/screw the builders strap to the owl box, nail/screw into tree only. Sharp ends of fasteners which protrude into the box are a danger to owls.

Ordering a nest box
If you would like to order a nest box, please contact the Barron River Catchment Group on 40918130 (Scott Burnett) or 40484748 (Jane Page). At the time of production of this information sheet, owl boxes are available at cost price, for $50 each.

Acknowledgements
This instruction sheet was developed from an information sheet produced by the Herbert River Catchment Coordinating Committee and John Young. John Young provided additional comments on this information sheet.

Figures

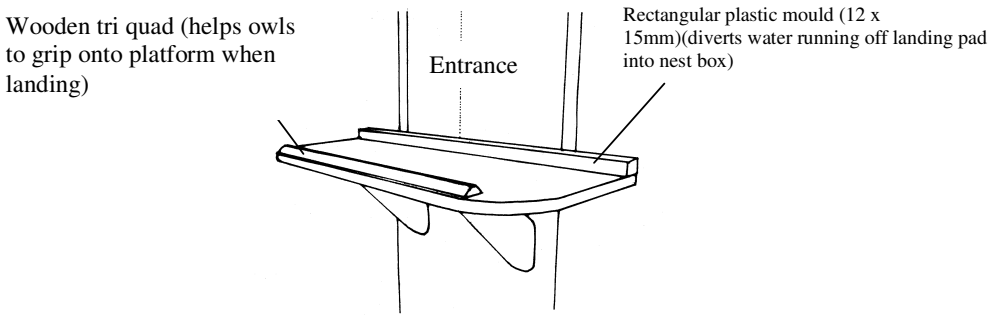

Fig. 3. Landing platform and fittings at entrance to hexagonal nest box.

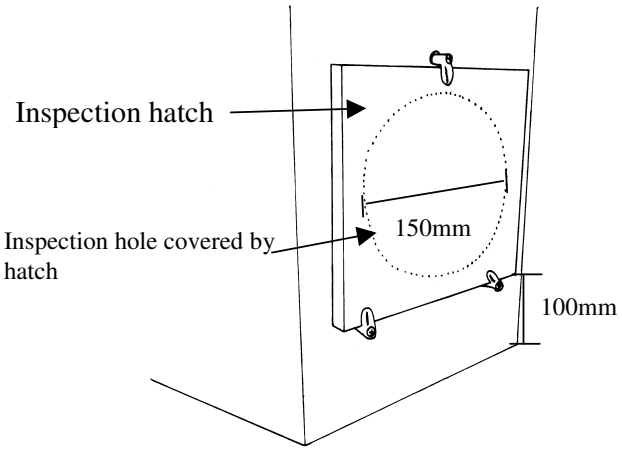

Fig 4. Inspection hatch.

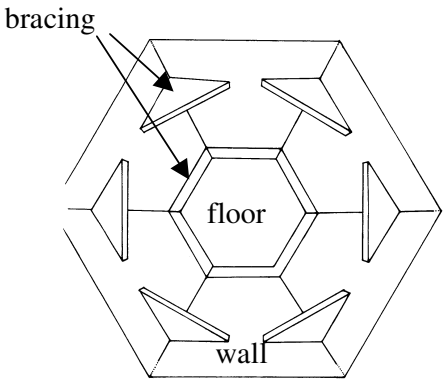

Fig. 6. Transverse section through hexagonal nest box showing bracing at base and halfway up box. Note top bracing (not illustrated) as per base.

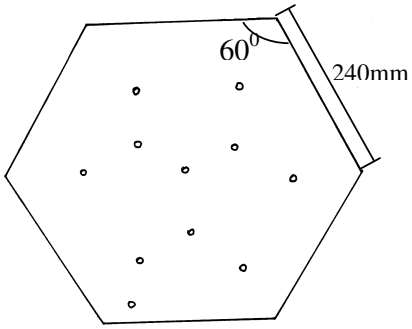

Fig. 5. Floor of hexagonal nest box

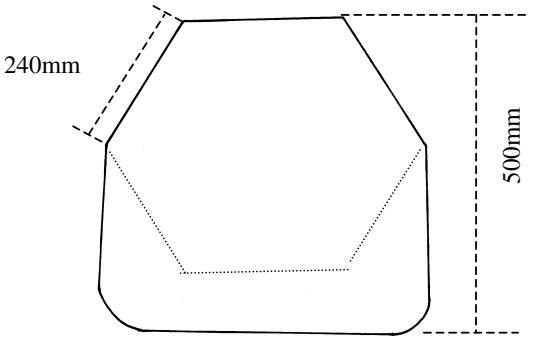

Fig. 7. Roof of hexagon nest box, top view.

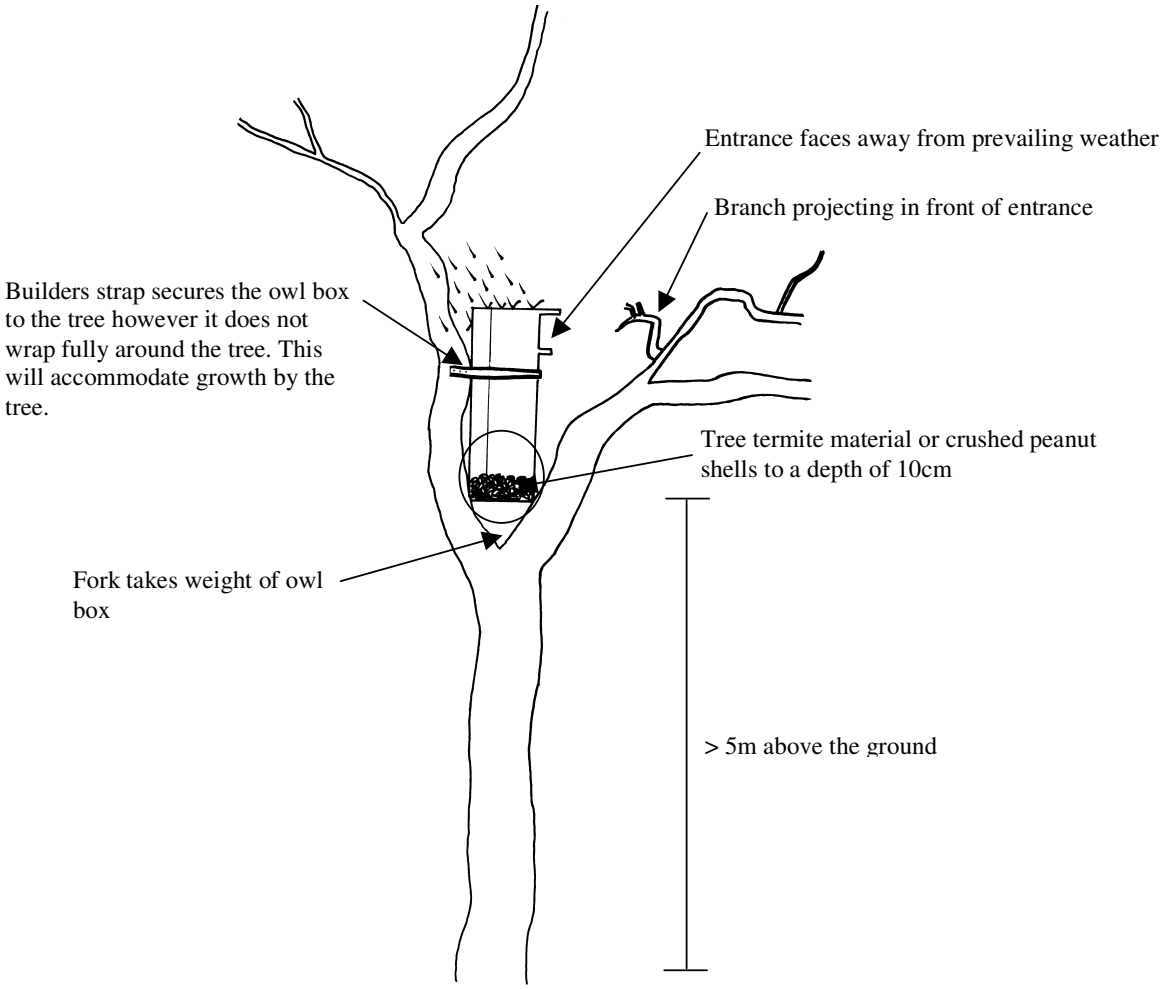

Fig. 8. Owl nest box mounted in a tree and illustrating key points for successful installation