



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Wildlife Enhancement Activity – Wildlife Structures

Wildlife Structures

Habitat loss is one of the leading causes of declines in wildlife populations. Often, the lack of suitable habitat can be partially offset by the establishment of artificial habitat structures.

Benefits

Artificial structures can be developed to enhance habitat for many species of wildlife including bluebirds, wood ducks, and bats. Artificial structures are only appropriate where a lack of natural structure occurs.

Criteria for Wildlife Structures

Preferred habitats vary according to species needs, but often include hayfields, pastures, large grassy patches, shrubby areas, marshes, grassy rights-of-way, and edges of woodlots, usually where disturbance factors (e.g., traffic, construction, etc.) are minimal.

Nest structures for bluebirds and wood ducks will be built in accordance with the details in **Idaho NRCS Biology TN-31 (Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mgt. Leaflet #1 for wood ducks, Leaflet #2 for bluebirds)**. Structure designs from commercial vendors can be eligible but will need to be reviewed by the NRCS Biologist for approval.

For bluebirds, maintain 2 bluebird houses per 10 acres of suitable habitat with a maximum of 80 acres per contract. For western bluebirds use the entrance hole size nest box design stated in Leaflet #2. For mountain bluebirds use hole size 1 9/16” and nest box design in Leaflet #2.

For wood ducks a prerequisite of suitable wetland habitat (as determined by NRCS) is needed for this enhancement. Maintain 1 wood duck nest box per 10 acres of suitable wetland habitat with a maximum of 80 acres per contract.

Bat boxes will be built in accordance with the details in **Idaho NRCS Biology TN-31 (Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mgt. Leaflet #5)**. **For bats, maintain one bat house per 80 acres with a maximum of 5 bat houses per contract. Bat houses can be clustered at one site.**

- Select species whose habitat you wish to improve
- Match species to available habitat
- Construct or buy structures that match species needs
- Build or buy sturdy structures
- Locate structures near preferred habitat



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Operation and Maintenance:

Structures will be maintained and monitored as described in Biology TN-31 (leaflets #1, #2 and # 5). Operator will complete yearly status review of the practice to track the use of the structures. A location map will be developed. For bird structures, the desirable habitat adjacent to the structures will be maintained as well.

References:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2004. Artificial Nesting Structures. Natural Resources Conservation Service and Wildlife Habitat Council Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Leaflet, Number. 20.

Ritter, R. 2000. Idaho Partners in Flight, Idaho Bird Conservation Plan, Version 1.0.

Ivey, G.L., and C.P. Herziger. 2006. Intermountain West Waterbird Conservation Plan, Version 1.2. A plan associated with the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas Initiative. Published by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Region, Portland, Oregon.

Sauer, J.R., J.E. Hines, and J. Fallon. 2005. The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966– 2005. Version 6.2.2006. USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD. <http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/> . Accessed January 3, 2007.

Idaho State Department of Fish and Game:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/cwcs/index.cfm?category=6>

Bat Conservation International 2007. Bats 101, Bat Conservation International, Austin, Texas.