



## **BARN OWL NEST BOX**

### **Installation and Management Instructions**

#### ***Introduction***

The barn owl (*Tyto alba*) is endangered within Ontario due to the species being at the northern limit of its range as a result of the being unable to tolerate severe winter temperatures. Specifically, within Ontario breeding sites are restricted to a 50 kilometer radius around the Great Lakes. The species has been slowly declining in this province over the last few decades. This decline is mainly a result of changes in farming practices (large scale corn and soybean monocultures and intensively managed horticultural crops), the loss of habitat such as meadows and wetlands, a decline in prey species and the loss of nesting sites such as cavity trees and old barn structures [1].

#### ***Nest Box Construction***

**Material:** As recommended by several sources, the ideal material for nest box construction is Eastern White Cedar and or Red Cedar due to its weather tolerance. Redwood is also ideal materials however plywood and other types of wood such as pine can be used as well.

**NOTE:** All lumber should not be treated due to its toxic content

**Material Thickness:** In using lumber that is at least  $\frac{3}{4}$ " (1.9cm), provides insulation for young birds.

**Design:** Nest boxes with either open from the side or top, varying on the design, which allows for accessibility for both cleaning and maintenance.

**Entrance Hole:** Round entrance hole between 6" wide × 12" high

## **Mounting a Barn Owl Nest Box**

- Nest boxes should be mounted 15 feet (4.57m) to 30 feet (9.14m) off the ground
- Boxes can be placed in a variety of structures, including barns, silos, granaries, grain elevators, and church steeples, or mounted on a free-standing pole.
- If installing multiple nest boxes ensure they are well spaced within in a minimum distance of 100 feet (30.48m) apart at a distance of 6 boxes per square mile

## ***Location and Placement***

**Habitat Preferences:** The location of a nest box is one of the most important considerations in not only attracting the barn owl, but also in optimizing their chances for successful nesting. Barn Owls require large areas of open land over which to hunt. This can either be marsh, grasslands, or mixed agricultural fields. For nesting and roosting, they prefer quiet cavities, either in trees or man-made structures such as barns or silos.

## ***Monitoring and Maintenance***

**Monitoring:** Check your nest box at two-week intervals is optimum

**NOTE:** Although it is not necessary to add nesting material as the owls will create their own nesting substrate from shredded pellets, adding a layer of fresh wood shavings about 3/4" deep to the nest box could encourage occupancy

**Maintenance:** Clean out the old nest materials when the owls are not nesting; December is generally a good time.

***Keep us informed on the success of the structure and share with us on our facebook page!***

## ***References & Further Information***

1. Government of Ontario. Barn Owl. Retrieved on August 12, 2016 from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/barn-owl>