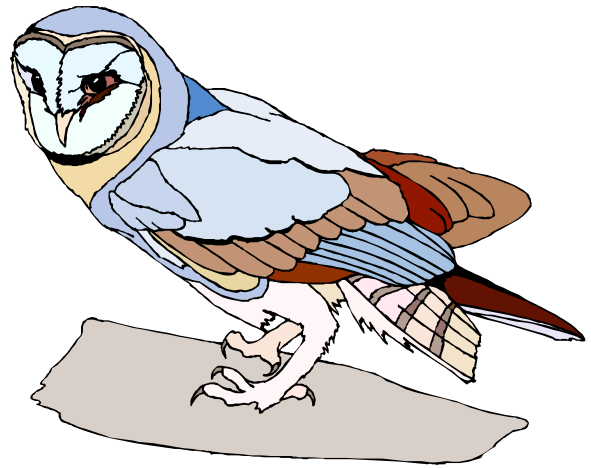


How to Build a Better Mouse Trap *Or* Building a Barn Owl Nesting Box



Barn owls are extremely efficient predators of rodents, and in this respect may be very beneficial to man. As dedicated food providers for their young, a pair of adult barn owls may be responsible for the destruction of more than 1,500 rodents over the course of a year. For this reason, they are desirable to have around.

Unlike many woodland owl species, barn owls often nest in man-made structures, frequently roosting in barns, silos, pump houses, pole sheds, belfries, and church steeples; however, they are anything but fastidious housekeepers. Their nesting sites resemble a rodent graveyard, being littered with regurgitated bones and fur. In addition, their roosts are characteristically "whitewashed" with owl excrement. By placing nesting boxes in proper locations, the desired presence of barn owls may be maintained without the accompanying mess.

Materials Needed

One 4'X4' sheet 5/8" Exterior CRX plywood
 One 6' length of 1"X12" pine board
 One 16' length of 4"X4" pressure treated post
 One box of #6 1 5/8" galvanized screws

Figure 1 Cuts for 4'X4' Plywood

Cut front and back panel, and top of box out of plywood sheeting according to the dimensions displayed in **Figure 1**.

Although nails can be used for box construction, exterior wood screws (#6) provide for a sturdier end product. Use a 1/8" drill equipped with a countersink to create holes for screws.

Cut the two ends and base from the 1"X12" pine board (**Figure 2**). The dimensions used were selected to maximize nesting box volume while minimizing the number of cuts and waste. Drill a minimum of 10 drainage holes (1/2" diameter) in the base board to provide adequate drainage.

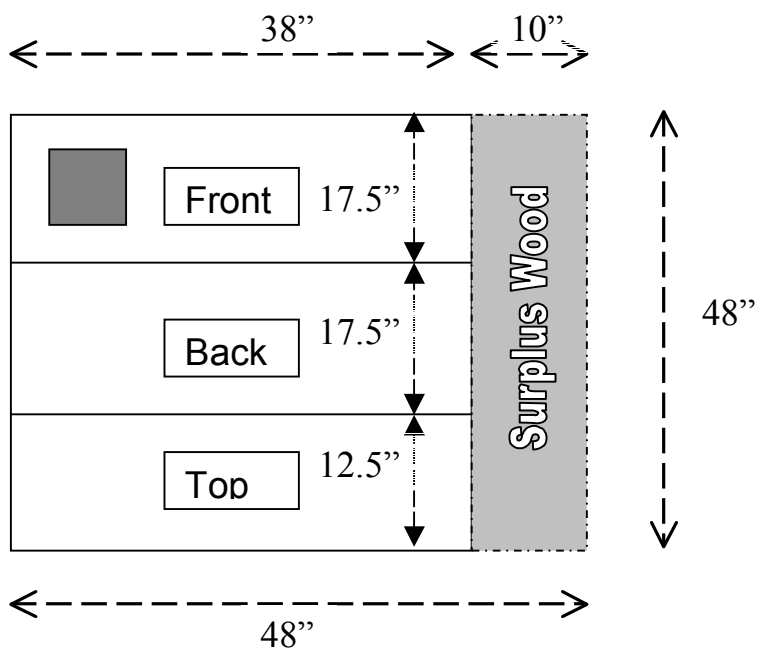
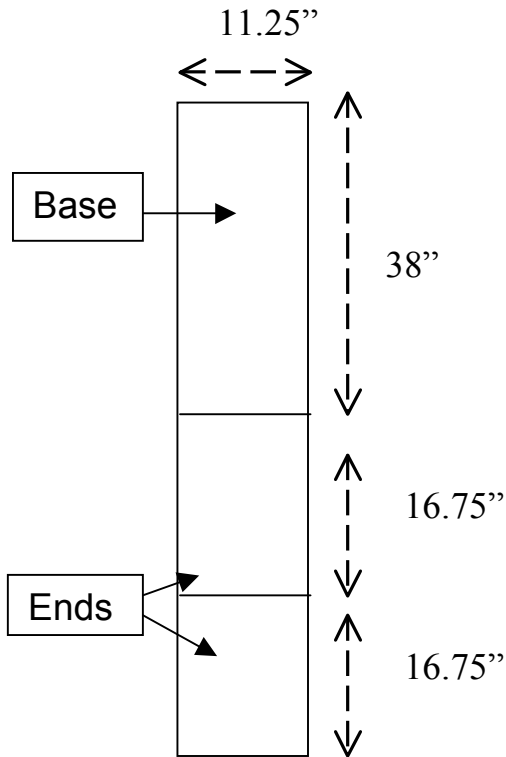
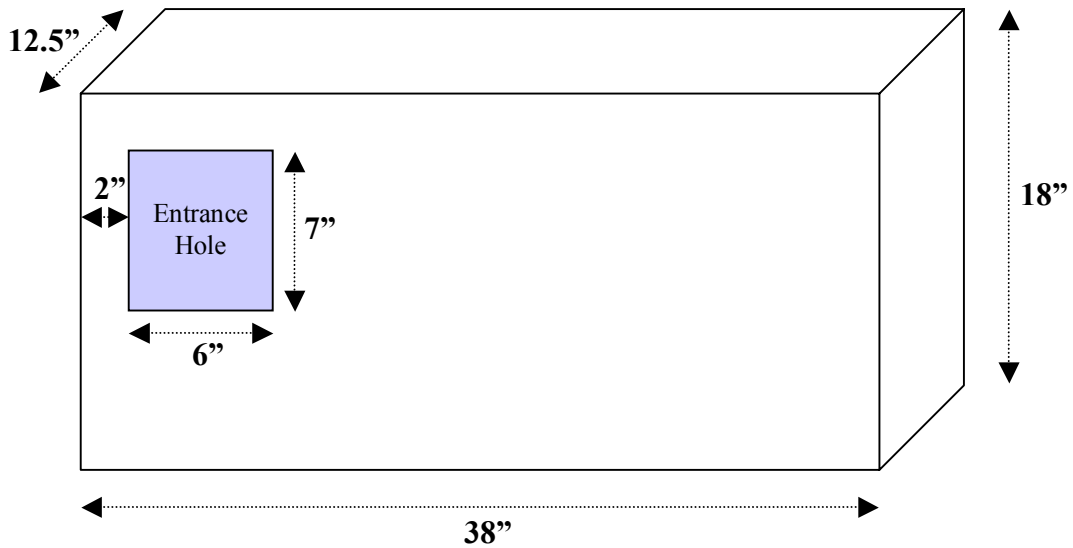


Figure 2 Cuts for 6' pine board



An entrance hole, 6"(W) X 7 "(H), should be cut from the front plywood panel. The left edge of this hole should be located 2" from the left end of the panel and the bottom of the entrance should be 7" from the base (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Box Construction



Installation Tips

- ◆ Face entrance hole to the north if possible to minimize the amount of sunlight entering the box.
- ◆ Position the box in an open field or on the edge of open terrain so that owls may glide freely in and out of the box.
- ◆ If positioned on a post, secure the post with anchors to minimize sway or lean.
- ◆ The owls nest on top of the degraded pellet debris that accumulates within the boxes. The residual rodent fur and molted owl feathers provide excellent insulation for incubating eggs. When excess debris builds up, the owls will push the material out of the box entrance to make more room for themselves. Therefore, it is usually not necessary to periodically clean out the boxes.
- ◆ Nesting boxes can be positioned across rafters in pole sheds, hung in silos, or mounted on support beams on barn walls. If mounted on the inside of a barn wall, a hole can be cut to the outside and the wall can be substituted for the front panel.

Building a Barn Owl Nesting Box

Prepared by: *Richard N. Raid and Sharon L. Bennett, University of Florida, IF AS, Everglades Research and Education Center, 3200 East Palm Beach Road, Belle Glade, Florida 33430. Phone: 561-993-1564.*

For more information please contact Dr. Raid at the above phone number, or e-mail mr@mail.ifas.ufl.edu.

**UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA**
IFAS EXTENSION