

# Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science

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Volume 20 | Annual Issue

Article 36

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1913

## Nest Boxes for Woodpeckers

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### Recommended Citation

Pellett, Frank C. (1913) "Nest Boxes for Woodpeckers," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 20(1), 305-306.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol20/iss1/36>

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## NEST BOXES FOR WOODPECKERS.\*

BY FRANK C. PELLETT.

An editorial in one of the well known magazines devoted to ornithology, several years ago, which suggested that it would probably be necessary to devise expensive machinery to bore out cavities in natural wood in imitation of those made by woodpeckers themselves, in order to attract these birds, first led me to attempt to supply their requirements.

As far as I could learn woodpeckers had never been known to occupy such boxes in America up to that time. I did not learn of the successful boxes in Germany until after my own had been occupied and believed that I was working in an unexplored field.

After giving the matter some study it became apparent that the reason that birds which supply no nesting material had not occupied boxes was because of the fact that the construction was such that there was nothing to supply the purpose of a nest. The fact that woodpeckers frequently make holes in the cornice of buildings or gate posts indicates that they would as readily occupy them if they could be made to serve the purpose. In boring out cavities in the natural wood the birds leave chips in the bottom on which to lay the eggs. During the season of 1909 a pair of redheaded woodpeckers appropriated the home of a pair of bluebirds in an old rabbit trap placed on a pole. They remained about for some time and the eagerness with which they took possession led me to think that all that would be necessary to meet their requirements would be the addition of some chips. Accordingly the following season several boxes were made of six and eight-inch lumber, varying in length from eighteen to twenty-four inches and placed in similar positions. The boxes were closed at both ends, a hole about the size the birds would require was made near one end and several inches of ground cork placed in the other. While the boxes were not round inside, the cavity was deep and conditions were approximately such as the birds would provide for themselves. A pair of flickers immediately took possession of one of these boxes but was dislodged by a pair of sparrow hawks. The little

\*See Bird Love—March, April, 1911.

hawks do not provide nesting material and the box fitted their needs as well. They reared a family of four successfully. The flickers soon took up their abode in another of the boxes near at hand where they reared their family. Flickers have occupied these boxes and reared their families each year since so that there is no longer any question that the boxes are readily received and that the acceptance was not a mere chance not likely to be repeated. In addition to the flickers the sparrow hawks and redheaded woodpeckers already mentioned have also reared their families with equal success, though not so frequently.

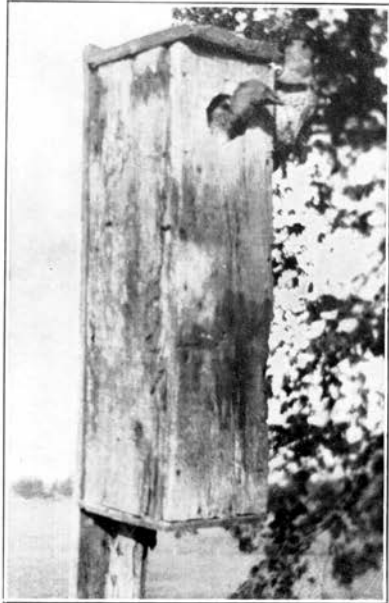
Our home is situated in a grove of native trees where ideal conditions exist for nesting places for these birds and they have not occupied the boxes for lack of suitable natural nesting places but because the boxes supplied their requirements equally well. While the boxes have been in use other families have occupied cavities in the trees in the usual manner. Old lumber has been used in every case to give the natural appearance as much as possible. As yet I have not tried the experiment of painted houses for these birds, but I doubt very much whether such boxes would be occupied. About sixteen feet from the ground seems to be the most favored height. Boxes a few feet lower have not been occupied. One box on a cedar pole at the edge of the grove has furnished a home for three successive families, while another similar one a few rods from the grove but near an apple tree has never been occupied. Boxes nailed well up to the side of a tree, or at the top of a broken tree trunk have been readily used. The most popular box is one about six inches square and two feet deep with six inches of cork in the bottom. The cavity between the hole and the cork is a little over twelve inches. The entrance hole is about four inches below the top of the box.

It is apparent that woodpeckers' requirements as to nesting sites are not difficult to meet. The cork or chips to supply the nest is the most essential thing and it remains to be seen whether they will not occupy almost any kind of box supplying this requirement.

Pellett: Nest Boxes for Woodpeckers



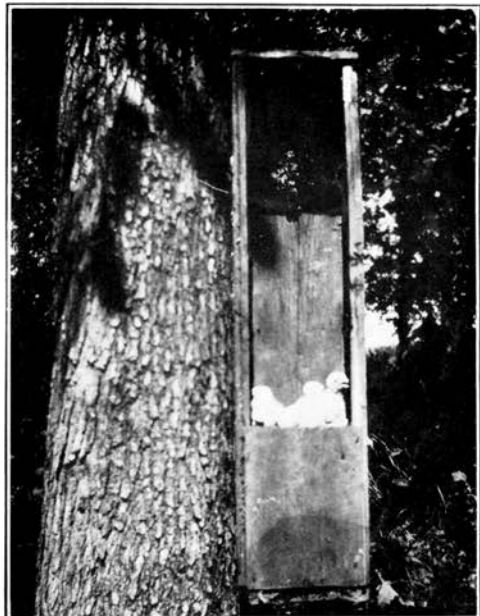
The most popular box.



Feeding the young.



Four of a family of seven young woodpecker's reared in this box.



Interior of box showing young sparrow hawks.