

Bird Nests

Birds have to lay eggs to reproduce. They need to lay these eggs in a safe, comfortable environment, not just for their own protection but also for their eggs, and the young chicks when the eggs hatch.

There are many different types of birds so it is not surprising that there are many different types of nests. What a nest looks like will depend on such things as the size of the bird, where it lives and what materials are available. An eagle is not going to fit into a bird box in the back of your garden, while a little robin is not going to fly to the top of a mountain ledge to build its nest.



Courtesy of Tibor Dulikovich, CC-BY-SA 3.0

A platform nest is normally flat and built on a tree top.



Courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Some birds make burrow nests in the earth.



Courtesy of Arplingstone

Flamingos build mound nests out of mud, and these can be as high 1ft.



Courtesy of Lohleeh, CC-A-SA 2.0

A cup nest is the typical nest that comes to mind.



Courtesy of Meegs, CC-A-SA 2.0 Generic

A scrape nest can just be a shallow hollow.



Courtesy of Meegs, CC-A-SA 2.0 Generic

The spherical nest has a narrow opening at the top.



Courtesy of USGS

Pendant nests are sac-like and usually hang from tree branches.



Courtesy of US Fish & Wildlife Service

Some don't build nests, just laying eggs directly onto rock ledges.



A cavity nest in a tree is a ready-made home.

Watching from a Distance

It is really important not to touch or go near a nest. It may cause distress to the birds, attract predators or cause the parents to abandon the eggs. Even if the nest is empty, it might still be in use and by touching it, you leave your scent. On its return to the nest, a bird will smell this scent and may leave the nest for good. If you want to observe a nest, keep a distance and keep yourself hidden.



Giving the Birds a Helping Hand

Humans can provide a suitable place for some birds to build a nest. A bird box provides birds with a safe, warm and dry environment. If a bird chooses to nest in the box, it will line it with suitable materials, such as twigs, feather and grass, before it lays its eggs.

Birds that can be attracted to these types of bird boxes are: Blue Tits, Great Tits, Robins, Wrens and Spotted Flycatchers. Nest boxes should be located in a quiet corner of the garden, away from disturbance and the possible threat from pets. It is best not to place a nest box near a feeding table, as the activity from the feeding birds will disturb the nesting birds. Some nest boxes can be set up with video cameras, allowing you to see what's going on inside.

