

## **NESTING BOX FOR TREE SWALLOWS – SIX SONS FARM (in South-Central Wisconsin)**

This basic nesting box has one side that swings out, for checking the box contents and cleaning. All lumber is 1” lumber, which technically is about 0.75” thick. Rough cut lumber is best or at least lumber that is unfinished on one side (with the rough surface facing the box interior). The rough surface provides foothold for the young swallows when they are ready to leave the nest box, and for the adults to maneuver better during exits and entrances.

\*\*\*If rough cut lumber is not available: Prior to assembling box, make shallow horizontal kerf cuts or use a Dremel tool to create rough horizontal lines on the interior surface of the entry-hole side. This creates a “ladder” to help fledglings climb to exit the box. Best to do the same on other three interior sides, but not as critical.

Screws are used for assembly. (Screws create a stronger box, last longer than nails, and make replacement of parts easier.) The box is mounted to a metal pipe or unscalable pole with screw-in brackets. The pipe is attached to fenceposts in the same manner.

If available lumber is thicker or thinner than suggested, the inside length and width (i.e. the floor dimensions) should be a minimum of 5” x 5”.

The hinge for the swinging side is made with two aligned nails. Be careful that these nails are on the same line and perpendicular to the walls of the box, to ensure that the side will swing out fully. The swinging side is held in place with a nail (“keeper nail”) placed into an inclined drilled hole that goes through the front side and penetrates the swinging side. This hole should be drilled after the box is assembled.

Box pattern sourced from <https://blogs.cornell.edu/golondrinas/nest-box-design/>

### **GUIDELINES FOR SAFE TREE SWALLOW BOX PLACEMENT**

- Install boxes on metal pipes or unscalable poles, well out into open areas.
- Height of boxes should be between 6’-12’ off the ground. If attaching pipe/pole to fenceposts, make sure there’s at least 4-feet of unscalable pipe length between box and fencepost. This prevents ground predators from reaching the box.
- Box opening should face South-East.
- Space boxes about 100 feet apart.
- Keep boxes at least 150 feet away from water edges.
- Keep boxes at least 300 feet away from buildings.
- Keep boxes at least 150 feet from trees, bushes, and ditches.
- Keep boxes at least 75 feet from roads and trails.

It is believed that an adult Tree Swallow can consume up to 2,000 flying insects per day, with nesting families consuming up to 8,000 flying insects per day. Whatever the actual numbers, it has been a welcome relief to our grazing cattle (and us!) during peak fly season.

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