

Building a Barn Owl Nest Box: The Basics

A free factsheet on the key measurements

QUICK FACTS

- Entrance hole: about 130 x 130mm
- Entrance to floor: at least 450mm
- Floor area: about 0.4 square metres
- Mounting height: 10 to 16 feet up a tree

Check the location first

A nest box is only worth putting up where Barn Owls can actually find enough food. Look for rough, tussocky grassland nearby, ideally an acre or two, ignored by mowers and sprayers. No box will make up for a lack of hunting ground.

The key measurements

- **Entrance hole:** about 130 by 130 millimetres. Owlets are curious and clumsy, so think of the inside as a small room, not a birdhouse.
- **Entrance to floor:** at least 450 millimetres from the bottom of the hole to the floor, so growing owlets cannot tumble out before they can fly.
- **Floor area:** about 0.4 square metres is a good target, with an absolute minimum of 0.2.
- **Landing platform:** outside the entrance, at least 0.125 square metres, with a lip so owlets do not fall off.

Fitting it

- **Direction.** face it away from the prevailing wind and driving rain.
- **Height, in a tree.** about ten to sixteen feet up, roughly three to five metres.
- **Position.** quiet, dry, and away from busy roads and gardens.

A few extra touches

An upper roosting ledge above the nest area is worth adding, since the male often roosts up there by day. A few old pellets and some dry bark chippings on the floor make a new box feel like home straight away.

After it is up

Check inside once a year, outside the breeding season, and clear out old bedding and debris. Then be patient. A box can take months or even years to be found and used, and Barn Owls are creatures of habit, so a site that has been quiet for a long time can suddenly be discovered.

MY TIP

Walk your land at dusk before you build or buy a box, and look for rough, tussocky grass. If there is none nearby, start there first, since that is what the owls are actually looking for.