



**Make a little room in your yard for a Brown-headed Nuthatch**

The Brown-headed Nuthatch, a southern bird born and bred, needs your help to find a good home. Because of urbanization and deforestation, these nuthatches are losing the pinewoods and dead trees they need for nest holes. These darlin' squeaky birds need more nest boxes now so we can all enjoy them for generations to come.

### *About the Brown-headed Nuthatch*

The Brown-headed Nuthatch is a small bird - just under 4" long - and sounds just like a rubber ducky squeaky toy. A quintessential Southern bird, with a home range from Virginia to east Texas, the nuthatch lives in old-growth pine or just about anywhere it can get its most important food - pine seeds. Nuthatches live in family groups with their grown babies (mostly male birds) sticking around to help out with the next brood. These birds are also smart little whippersnappers -- they use a piece of bark as a lever to pry up other bark to look for food. They also use bark as a pantry door to cover a seed cache.

### *Conservation Status*

Audubon, Partners in Flight, and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission consider the Brown-headed Nuthatch a responsibility species for North Carolina. No big surprise, but humans had a hand in their decline of 2.2% a year from 1966 to 1996. More-recent data are encouraging – nuthatches increased 1% a year from 2001 to 2011 – and humans can help keep nuthatches headed in the right direction. We know that putting up nest boxes in backyards worked to conserve the Eastern Bluebird and we know that adding nest boxes is a solution that will help our nuthatch friends thrive!

### *Nest Boxes*

There are two easy ways to provide a cozy little home for the nuthatch. First, any nest box design approved by the North American Bluebird Society will work very well for Brown-headed Nuthatches but it is important to make the opening smaller – ideally 1" or 1 1/8" diameter. Bird stores sell metal excluders that you can attach over the 1 1/2" hole on a standard bluebird box to make it ready for nuthatches. Or you can purchase a made-for-nuthatches nest box at bird stores or online. If you'd like to decorate the box, be sure to paint only the exterior with a light colored paint.

To invite both bluebirds and nuthatches to your yard (they make fine neighbors) you can put both a bluebird box (1 1/2" hole) and a nuthatch box (1" or 1 1/8" hole) no less than 30 feet apart. Nuthatches usually nest at least 100 yards from each other, but you can try to attract nuthatches and chickadees to your yard by placing small-hole boxes 20 yards apart.

[NC.Audubon.org/nuthatch](http://NC.Audubon.org/nuthatch)  
[#Home4Nuthatches](https://twitter.com/Home4Nuthatches)



## Installation

Nuthatches prefer semi-open habitat, but they are quite willing to nest in wooded and open areas – as long as there are pine trees nearby. You can put up your houses near the edge of woods, on existing trees or mounted on poles.

**Predator guards** - Predators will raid boxes mounted on trees or fence posts about 30% of the time so putting up a predator guard can really help keep snakes and mammals away from the eggs and babies. Predator guards are simple to make - a 2 foot piece of stovepipe, an inverted 2 foot wide funnel or a purchased 2 foot wide predator guard disc will all work. Look at a bird store or online to find reasonably priced solutions and do-it-yourself instructions.

**Poles** - Pipes make great nest box poles and all materials are easy to get at your favorite home improvement store. To put up TWO nest boxes, purchase:

- One 10 foot length of ½" diameter RIGID conduit (galvanized pipe)
- One 10 foot length of 1" EMT (electrical conduit) pipe
- Four 1" two-hole pipe straps
- Two 1" hose clamps.

Ask the store to cut both pipes in half to make 5' lengths. At home, pound the ½" pipe into the ground; this will be your base. When it feels steady enough to stand up to rain and wind, slip the 1" pipe over it. Then attach your nuthatch box with the pipe straps and put the hose clamp at the bottom to keep the box in place. Your box will stand at about 5' high. Stand back, dust off your hands, and watch the nuthatches move right in. *Note:* If you are putting up many nest boxes, you can cut the ½" pipe into 40" lengths so you get 3 sections out of each 10' pipe.

## Timing

Nuthatches begin building nests as early as December and usually lay 5-7 white-speckled-with-brown eggs once a year from March through early May, with babies leaving the nest by early June. But these little birds also roost in boxes all winter so putting up boxes any time helps our squeaky friends.

## Nest Box Maintenance

Nuthatches love to use the same home year after year. It is so much fun to see your little nuthatch return to the same cozy home you have provided! A good fall cleaning to remove all the old nest materials is a good idea. You can clean out the box starting in August so it is ready to be a protected winter roosting spot.

## Tell Us About Your New Neighbors

With your help 10,000 new Brown-headed Nuthatch homes will be put up in North Carolina by 2015. To keep track of how we are doing, we invite you to join in a few fun activities.

- Join the flock in conserving the Brown-headed Nuthatch by signing up at [nc.audubon.org/nuthatch](http://nc.audubon.org/nuthatch). We'll send you info and ideas for keeping your birds safe and thriving throughout the year.
- Ask your questions by emailing us at [nuthatch@audubon.org](mailto:nuthatch@audubon.org)
- Upload photos to our Facebook page - [facebook.com/audubonnc](https://facebook.com/audubonnc)
- Share with us on Twitter - @audubonnc and hashtag #Home4Nuthatches
- Instagram a photo and use the hashtag #Home4Nuthatches

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