

Wood Thrush Nest Box Plans

Hylocichla mustelina

The Wood Thrush is legendary for its flute-like, ethereal song that defines the North American summer woods. While they aren't cavity nesters, building a specialized nesting shelf offers these interior-forest specialists a secure, flat foundation for their mud-bound nests, allowing you to host one of the continent's most celebrated songsters.

Nest Box Specifications

Entrance hole	Open Front (approx. 7.25 inches or 184 mm wide)
Floor dimensions	7.25 x 7 inches (184 x 178 mm)
Interior depth	8 inches (203 mm) side-wall height
Mount height	6-15 feet (1.8-4.5 m) above ground
Facing direction	North or Northeast to ensure the nest remains in deep shade and away from direct afternoon heat.

Place in a well-shaded area with a dense understory, preferably near a water source or damp ground where they gather mud. Avoid high-traffic areas; these birds prefer the quiet interior of a woodlot or a very mature, 'leafy' backyard corner.

Cut List

From a 1x8 x 6 ft

Panel	Dimensions	Qty	Notes
Back	7.25" x 16"	1	Provides a large surface area for mounting to a tree or post; drill pilot holes at top and bottom.
Floor	7.25" x 7"	1	Drill four 1/4" drainage holes; use a slight gap at the back for moisture runoff.
Sides	7.25" x 9"	2	Cut the top edge at a 15-degree angle to shed water forward away from the open front.

Roof	7.25" x 10"	1	Install with a 2-inch overhang at the front to protect the nest from heavy rain.
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This open-front design (nesting shelf) is optimized for 1x8 lumber. All panels are the same width (7.25") as the board, requiring only cross-cuts and one angled cut for the sides. Ensure the roof is the last piece cut to maximize the overhang based on your remaining scrap.

Materials & Construction

Wood: 3/4-inch (19 mm) untreated red cedar or cypress for superior rot resistance in damp forest environments.

Boards: A single 1x8 x 6' untreated cedar board provides enough material for the platform and a generous protective roof.

Hardware: 18x 1-5/8" stainless steel or galvanized deck screws, 2x 3" galvanized lag bolts for tree mounting, Exterior wood glue (optional)

Ventilation: The open-front design provides natural airflow; ensure the side walls have a 1/2-inch gap at the very top under the roof for additional heat escape.

Drainage: Drill four 3/8-inch holes in the floor panel corners to prevent the mud-base of the thrush nest from becoming waterlogged.

Predator guard: Since this is an open shelf, mount on a 4x4 post with a large 24-inch stovepipe baffle. If tree-mounting, ensure the shelf is far from 'ladder' branches that allow squirrels or raccoons easy access.

Materials Checklist

- 1x 1" x 8" x 6' cedar board
- 18x 1-5/8" galvanized deck screws
- 2x 3" galvanized lag bolts for mounting
- 80-grit sandpaper
- Drill and 1/8" pilot bit
- 1/4" or 3/8" drill bit for drainage
- Measuring tape and pencil
- Speed square
- Handsaw or miter saw
- Stovepipe baffle (if post mounting)
- Non-toxic exterior wood glue

Seasonal Timeline

Install: Early to mid-April in the South; late April to early May in the North and Midwest.

Nesting start: Nesting typically begins in early May in the Southeast and Midwest, extending into June in the Northeast and Canada. They often attempt two broods if the first is successful, continuing activity through July.

Clutch size: 3-4 eggs

Incubation: 12-14 days

Fledging: 12-15 days after hatching

Cleaning: Remove old nesting material in late autumn after the birds have migrated to Central America. Scrub the shelf with a weak bleach solution (1:10) to kill parasites.

Regional Considerations

Wood Thrushes breed throughout the Eastern United States and Southeast Canada, from the Atlantic coast west to the eastern Great Plains. They are most common in mature deciduous and mixed forests with a healthy leaf litter layer.

In the Southern US, nesting may start as early as mid-April, whereas in higher elevations of the Appalachians or the northern edge of their range, they may wait until late May for consistent insect availability.

The main threats are raccoons, Blue Jays, and Brown-headed Cowbirds. The shelf's deep roof protects against aerial predators, while a pole-mounted baffle is the best defense against climbing mammals.

Camera Placement

Because the Wood Thrush uses an open nesting shelf rather than a cavity, interior camera mounting is not an option. Instead, you should focus on a 'branch-mount' setup. Position a weatherproof, AI-powered camera like a Blink Outdoor or a high-definition trail camera on a neighboring branch or a separate post about 4 to 6 feet away from the shelf. This provides a wide-angle view of the parents arriving with food and mud.

Wood Thrushes are interior forest birds and are highly sensitive to sudden changes in their environment. Avoid cameras with bright white LEDs or status lights that blink; choose a model with 'No-Glow' or 'Black' Infrared (IR) for nighttime monitoring. This ensures the birds aren't spooked during the

vulnerable incubation phase.

Route any necessary power cables tightly along the underside of the mounting branch or down the back of the post using cable staples to prevent them from becoming a perch for predators or an obstruction for the birds. A side-on angle is usually superior to a top-down view for Wood Thrushes, as it allows you to see the unique speckled chests of the parents as they tend the nest.

Consider a camera with a high-quality microphone. The Wood Thrush's song is its most distinctive feature, and capturing the male singing from a nearby 'song perch' while the female is on the nest adds a significant layer to the observation experience.

Powering with a USB solar panel

Mount a 5V USB solar panel with a built-in battery 1-2 ft above the box on the same post, angled 30-45 degrees from vertical and facing south. Run the USB cable down the post inside split loom conduit (squirrels will chew unshielded wire), enter the box through the same grommeted hole as the camera cable, and seal with exterior silicone. Choose a panel with a 5-10 Ah battery buffer so the camera runs through cloudy days.

Common Problems & Solutions

Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism: Wood Thrushes are frequent hosts; ensure the shelf is placed in deeper woods rather than forest 'edges' where cowbirds are most active.

Nest falls off platform: Add a 1-inch tall 'toe kick' strip of wood across the front of the floor to act as a retaining wall for the mud nest.

Blue Jay or Crow predation: Mount the shelf under a dense canopy of leaves to provide natural overhead concealment from sharp-eyed corvids.

Shelf remains empty: Ensure the location is quiet and damp; Wood Thrushes require mud to build their nests and will avoid dry, noisy suburban yards.

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