

Birdhouse & Nesting Chart

By placing birdhouses in backyards, people can help provide valuable nesting sites and attract a greater variety of birds. Different birds prefer different sizes of the hole (or opening) as well as how high that hole is from the birdhouse floor. Here, we identify Massachusetts birds that use birdhouses as well as birdhouse species-specific information.

Species	Floor Size*	Height (front)*	Hole Diam.*	Height to Hole*	Mounting Height (ft)	Habitat	Comments
House Wren	4 x 4	7	1	5	5-10	Old fields and thickets	
Carolina Wren	4 x 4	7	1 1/2 round, or 2 1/2 x 5 slot	5	5-10	Old fields and thickets	
Black-capped Chickadee	4 x 4	9	1 1/8	7	5-15	Open woods and edges	Add 3" of wood chips
Tufted Titmouse	4 x 4	9	1 1/4	7	5-15	Woods and edges	Add 3" of wood chips
White-breasted Nuthatch	4 x 4	9	1 1/4	7	5-15	Woods and edges	Add 3" of wood chips
House Finch	5 x 5	8	1 1/2	6	5-10	Backyards and porches	Also nests in hanging plants
Eastern Bluebird	4 x 4	10	1 1/2 diameter (round), or 2 1/4 high x 1 3/8 wide (oval)	8	4-6	Open land with scattered trees	
Tree Swallow	5 x 5	7	1 3/8	5	5-6	Open land near water	Escape ladder inside front**
Downy Woodpecker	4 x 4	9	1 3/8	7	5-20	Forest openings and edges	Fill box with wood chips
Hairy/Red-headed Woodpecker	6 x 6	12	2	10	8-20	Forest openings and edges	Fill box with wood chips
Northern Flicker	7 x 7	17	2 1/2	15	6-12	Forest openings and edges	Fill box with wood chips

Species	Floor Size*	Height (front)*	Hole Diam.*	Height to Hole*	Mounting Height (ft)	Habitat	Comments
American Kestrel	8 x 8	16	3	13	10-30	Open land with scattered trees	Add 3" wood chips
Eastern Screech-Owl	8 x 8	16	3	13	10-30	Farmland, orchards, woods	Add 3" wood chips
Barred Owl	4 x 14	26	7	23	15-30	Mature bottomland forest	Add 3" wood chips
Wood Duck	12 x 12	22	4 wide x 3 high	17	3 (over water) 30 (over land)	Wooded swamps, bottomland	Add 3" wood chips and escape ladder inside front

Multispecies Birdhouses

Chickadee, nuthatch, wrens, and Downy Woodpecker	4 x 4	8	1 1/4	6	4-20	see above	Add wood chips
Bluebird, Tree Swallow, Carolina Wren	5 x 5	8	1 1/2	6	5	see above	
Hairy and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Saw-whet Owl	6 x 6	11	2 1/2	9	15-20	see above	Add wood chips
Flicker/screech-owl/kestrel	8 x 8	16	3	13	12-20	see above	Add wood chips

Open Nesters

American Robin	6 x 8	8			6-15	Backyards and porches	Place on side of building under an overhang
Eastern Phoebe	6 x 6	6			8-12	Backyards and porches	Place on side of building under an overhang
Barn Swallow	6 x 6	6			8-12	Open areas and farmland	Place on side of building under an overhang

* Measurements in inches; floor size and height are INSIDE dimensions

** Escape ladder consists of grooves carved into inside of front panel, or hardware cloth stapled under hole inside box

Sources: Shalaway (1995); Terres (1994); Pistorius (1981); Cornell Lab of Ornithology (2023)