

BIRD HOUSES AND MORE

Woodworking for Wildlife: Homes for Birds and Mammals. Carrol L. Henderson. 1984. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Box 7 Centennial Building, St. Paul. 48 pages. No charge (paper).

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has performed a valuable service by publishing this guide for building homes for animals. Plans are given for about two dozen structures, which can serve nearly twice that many species.

Not only bird houses are presented, but homes for mice, squirrels, raccoons, and bats — the latter deemed desirable because each can devour three to seven thousand mosquitoes in a night. Besides the usual bird house designs, plans are shown for nest baskets (for mourning doves and mallards), nest platforms (for great horned owls, common loons, herons, cormorants, osprey, Canada geese, and Forster's tern), and even nest tunnels (for burrowing owls).

In addition to showing plans, the booklet briefly describes each species, including habitats most likely to attract the bird or mammal. Species are grouped according to primary habitat type: 1) urban, woodlot, and other mixed open and woods; 2) extensive forest; and 3) in or near aquatic habitats.

The construction plans seem adequately detailed. A nice feature is a drawing that shows how a single board can be sawed to obtain the required pieces with a minimum of work. The steps involved in construction are listed in order.

Several of the designs are of modern vintage, and reflect insight gained from recent experiences in Minnesota and elsewhere.

Guidelines generally applicable for building the structures are provided early in the booklet. These include hinging a door or side for easy cleaning, drilling drain and ventilation holes, omitting perches (desired only by house sparrows and starlings), using galvanized nails, and providing an overhang to protect against wind-blown rain.

Artificial nests are becoming more important to a variety of wildlife species, as natural cavities are lost due to intensive lumbering, firewood cutting, and forest clearing. Structures described in this guide will be helpful in maintaining desired animal populations. They can be built by hobbyists, industrial art classes, youth groups, sportsmen's clubs, or interested citizens.

The publication was supported by donations to the nongame wildlife checkoff on Minnesota's income and property tax forms. Contributors can rest assured that their dollars were well spent.

Staff