

**BIRD HOUSES
BOYS CAN BUILD**

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Bird Houses Boys Can Build by Albert F. Siepert

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ALBERT F. SIEPERT

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BY

Frederick
ALBERT F. SIEPERT, B. S.

Assistant Professor of Manual Arts, Bradley Institute
Editor, Shop Problems Series (on tracing paper)
Editor, Shop Notes and Problems Department of
Manual Training Magazine



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FOREWORD.

Years ago a country boy heard or read that if a simple box having a hole of a certain size were set upon a post in March or early April it would not be long before bluebirds would be around to see if the place would do as a summer cottage. So he took an old paint keg such as white lead is sold in, nailed a cover across the top, cut an opening in the side and then placed it on a post ten or twelve feet high. Only a day or two passed before a soft call-note was heard, a flash of blue, and the songster had arrived. His mate came a few days later and the paint keg with its tenants became the center of interest in my life. A second brood was reared in midsummer and when the cool days of September came a fine flock left for the South. Each year the house was occupied until the post decayed and the paint keg fell down, but in memory the sad call-note is still heard when spring comes, for it is house hunting time once more, and the bluebirds are looking for the home they had known.

That boys elsewhere may know the joy of the companionship of birds, this little book is written. Birds will come and live near the houses of men whenever food and water are to be had, safety from enemies is given, and when homes are built for them to replace the shelters nature offered before men came with their cultivated fields and crowded cities. The following pages give pictures and drawings of houses that boys have built and in which birds have lived. These houses are planned for the species of birds that have become accustomed to civilization so that they will inhabit the houses put up for them.

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United States Department of Agriculture Bulletins; Figs. 20,
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ALBERT F. SIEPERT.

Peoria, Ill., March, 1916.

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BIRDS THAT LIVE IN NESTING BOXES.

Certain varieties of birds will nest in homes built for them if these houses are of the right shape and dimensions. Other birds may be just as desirable but do not build nests and rear their young in boy-made nesting boxes. We are therefore mainly concerned with the first group which select cavities in trees for their homes if nothing better is to be found.



FIG. 1. BLUE BIRDS, ADULTS AND YOUNG BIRD.

BLUEBIRD.

This bird may be found during the summer months in most of the states east of the Rocky Mountains, Figs. 1 and 59. It spends its winter in the southern states and southward, returning north in March and April. The principal items of food are grasshoppers, caterpillars and beetles. It should have a house measuring about 5" in length and width, inside measurements, and 8" or more in depth. The entrance hole should be $1\frac{1}{2}$ " in

diameter and placed near the top, so that the young birds cannot get out until strong enough to have some chance of escape from their enemies after they leave the nest. While authorities differ as to the need of cleaning after a season's use, it seems wise to provide the house with some device whereby the bottom may be removed for such purposes. Houses for this species are shown in Figs. 11, 21, 22 and 24.



FIG. 2.

ROBIN.

Robins usually announce the coming of spring when they return to their breeding grounds in the northern states, where they are general favorites, Figs. 2 and 60. The nest is usually built of mud and lined with grasses; placed in the fork of a tree or on some sheltered ledge. Robins take kindly to nesting shelves

put up for them and it is well to put up several since but one brood is reared in each nest built. This old nest should be removed after the young birds have gone. A simple shelf is shown in the lower left hand corner of the photograph, Fig. 24, as well as in Figs. 20 and 49.



FIG. 3.

CHICKADEE.

The chickadee is one of the brave little spirits who spends the entire winter with us, Fig. 3. We can be of considerable service to him during the cold weather by providing food shelters. During the summer months his home is usually found in