

BRUSHTAIL POSSUM



Habitat Box Designs

Lifestyle Capital of Victoria

Brush-tail Possums are the largest possum species in Australia, with males weighing up to 4.5kg. They are a somewhat maligned creature, often due to its propensity to take up residence in the house roof. They often do this if there is a lack of suitable hollows in the local environment, so providing a habitat box may encourage them to move out. As generalists, in terms of diet, possums will feed on food scraps, pet food, leaves, fruits etc. so there is plenty to eat in the suburbs.

Female 'brushies' will carry their joeys until they joeys are at least half the size of the adult, so the box needs to be relatively large to accommodate two nearly full-grown possums. Males tend to live by themselves.



Brush-tail Possum (photo Credit: Daniela Parra (CC BY-NC 2.0))

General tips:

- Face away from prevailing winds
- Face them away from direct midday sun- north-east
- Ensure water proof with drainage and sealant
- Monitor your habitat box (from a distance as to not disturb the birds)- this data is useful for council and Birdlife
- Be aware of unwanted visitors moving in!
- Please resist feeding your new neighbours as it creates a dependency on artificial food sources

Materials

Material	Quantity (per box)
Timber	2000mm length, 400mm wide or greater, 18mm marine ply
	560mm x 70mm x 35mm treated pine for box mount
Screws	40 x 40mm treated pine screws
Gap sealer	To seal box eg. Silastic
Cup head bolts	1 bolt, nut and washer, recommend M8 ≥60mm (for attaching box to mount)
Coach / screws	2 coach screws M8 ≥90mm (for attaching box to tree). Can also use large treated pine screws of similar length (would need washers for TP screws)
Rubber Grommet	4 grommets, 2 per screw- allows for tree growth
Butt Hinge	1 butt hinge for lid of box
Gate hook and eye	1 gate hook and eye
Paint / timber seal	Acrylic paint or organic sealer to preserve box (eg Tung Oil)
Box lining	To insulate box - natural wood chips / shavings. Avoid treated wood

Equipment

Bench Saw	To cut timber lengths
Cordless Drill	For construction and installation
Jig saw or similar	For entrance hole – drill pilot hole (8mm bit) so jig saw blade can fit in
8mm drill bit	For drainage holes, for jig saw, fixing cup head bolts to box mount and coach bolts
Screwdriver / screwdriver bit	For box construction
3mm drill bit	Pilot holes for screws
22mm Spade Bit	To countersink nuts and washers into box mount
Socket wrench	Helpful to tighten cup head bolts into box mount / coach screws into pole / tree

Assembly

Prepare the Pieces

1. Cut the timber to the dimensions provided to make the pieces. **See Diagram Insert.**
N.B *Dimensions are for 18 mm ply and will need to be adjusted for other materials.*
2. Use a jig saw to cut the 100mm entrance hole towards the top of the box at the front– drill pilot hole (8mm bit) for jig saw blade to fit into first.
3. Drill (8mm drill bit) 4 drainage holes in the bottom piece.
4. To prepare for assembly- drill pilot holes (3mm drill bit) into ply to avoid splitting. 2 holes on short edge and 3 holes on long edge are recommended.
5. Mark and drill 1 pilot hole (8mm drill bit) on the back piece and the box mount. Countersink 1 bolt holes with 22mm spade bit into box mount pilot hole for the washers and nut. Add another 2 pilot holes (3mm drill bit) to box mount 40mm from each end.



Construction

6. Bolt the box mount to the side panel using cuphead bolts, nut and washer (cuphead on the inside of the box). Don't tighten it until you have determined the positioning of the box on the tree. It is recommended to attach on a 35-40 degree angle to help the possum move inside the box.
7. Prepare the joints with Silastic or similar sealant.
8. Screw the box edges together. Attach lid last, allowing 50mm overlap on each side, if mounting the box on an angle, ensure the hinge is "under" the box. Place the butt hinge to be evenly positioned in the middle, the hinge needs to be on the opposite side to the entrance hole. Attach gate hook on lid and eye, on the other side of box to fit snugly.
9. You can now paint or coat the outside of the box.
10. Add two handfuls of your insulation (e.g. wood chips etc.) to the box.

Installation

Note: Your box can be installed professionally by an arborist or wildlife expert. If you are using a ladder to install, follow manufacturer's safety instructions.

Brushtail possums like a habitat box that is 2.6-3m above the ground in a tree with leafy coverage and sturdy branches.

11. Select a suitable site for your habitat box. With the box mount against the tree, drill and mark the position of the holes on the tree.
12. Return box to the ground and drill 2 holes (8mm drill bit) for coach screws / timber screws (3mm bit) into the tree.
13. Attach box to tree with coach screws using the socket wrench (put grommets on screws before screwing into place). If using timber screws, place a washer between the screw head and the two grommets to ensure screw doesn't go through the grommets while drilling into the tree.
14. Congratulations- your nest box is ready for use!



Brushtail Possum family in habitat box (photo credit nestboxes.com.au)

Diagram

