

DUCKS

Habitat Box Design



Lifestyle Capital of Victoria

There are at least four species of ducks in the Frankston area that use habitat boxes – Pacific Black Duck, Australian Wood Duck, Grey and Chestnut Teals. These ducks will nest in tree hollows, often over 10m up and away from water, with ducklings fluttering to the ground when hatched.

Duck habitat boxes are best installed in open areas or relatively close to dams and other wetlands rather than in suburban backyards. They can be mounted on trees or posts, around wetlands, if there are no trees. Ducks will only use the boxes during the breeding season, which varies between species. Other fauna wanting to use the box will be chased away if the ducks are wanting to nest, but these boxes need to be monitored at other times for invasive species.



Australian Wood Ducks (photo Credit: Ralph Green (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0))

Materials

Material	Quantity (per box)
Timber	2000mm x 350mm wide x 18mm marine ply
	700mm x 90mm x 45mm treated pine
Screws	50 x 40mm treated pine screws
Gap sealer	To seal box eg. Silastic
Cup head bolts	2 x bolts, nuts and washers, recommend M8 ≥60mm (for attaching box to mount)
Coach / screws	2 x 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 x grommets, 2 per screw
Butt Hinge	1 x 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)

NB. For mounting boxes where there are no trees, a treated pine / hardwood post will be required. Needs to be big enough to hold weight of box (2.1m or longer x 100mm diameter, at least)

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, 50mm from the bottom on the opposite side to where you will be attaching the box mount– drill pilot hole (8mm bit) for jig saw blade to fit into first.
3. Drill (8mm drill bit) 4 drainage holes.
4. To prepare for assembly- drill pilot holes (3mm drill bit) into ply to avoid splitting. 2 holes on short edge and 3 on long edge are recommended. Pilot holes are recommended for the entrance piece as well.
5. Mark and drill 2 pilot holes (8mm drill bit) on the side piece and the box mount. Countersink 2 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. Prepare the joints with Silastic or similar sealant.
7. Screw together the entrance piece, then screw onto front piece over the entrance hole. Screw the box edges together. Attach lid, allowing 25mm overlap each side, placing 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.
8. You can now paint or coat the outside of the box. Acrylic paint or an organic timber seal is preferable.
9. 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.

Ducks like a habitat box that is close to a water source and 1.5m off the ground.

10. Select a suitable site for your habitat box, then install post, if required, to at least 600mm below the ground (may need a bag of rapid set cement depending on soil type). Allow post to set before attaching box.
11. With the box mount against the tree or post, drill and mark the position of the holes on the tree.
12. 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.
13. Congratulations- your nest box is ready for use!



Australian Wood Duck (photo Credit: nestboxtales.com)

Diagram

