Bat roost box

Bats are important consumers of nocturnal insects and sometimes roost in extremely small places. Where hollows are not readily available, you can encourage their presence by providing a bat roost box. Bats prefer the entrance at the bottom, hence the alternative design.

Dimensions as shown. Use rough-sawn, untreated pine -20 mm in thickness, and roughen all internal surfaces with shallow, horizontal saw cuts. There must be a tight seal at all joints to avoid draughts.

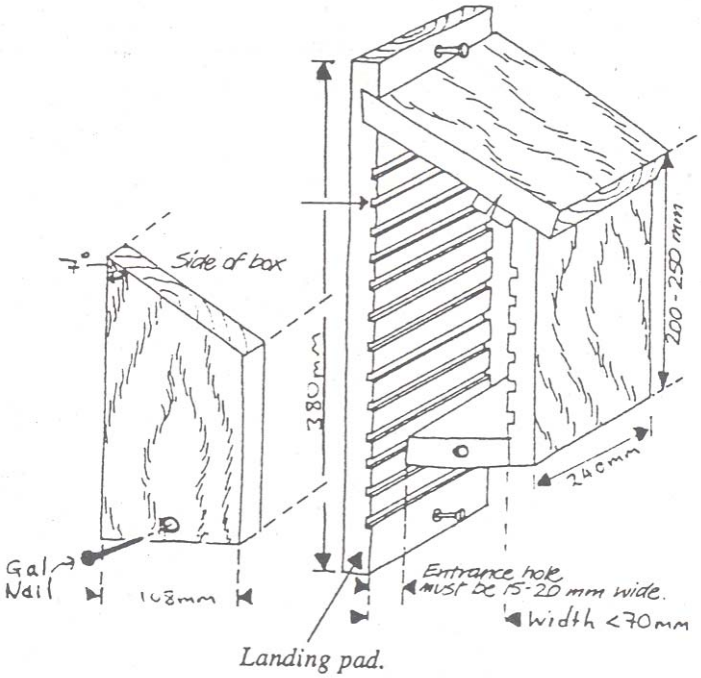
Install on tree, clear of branches, or on wall of building under eaves.

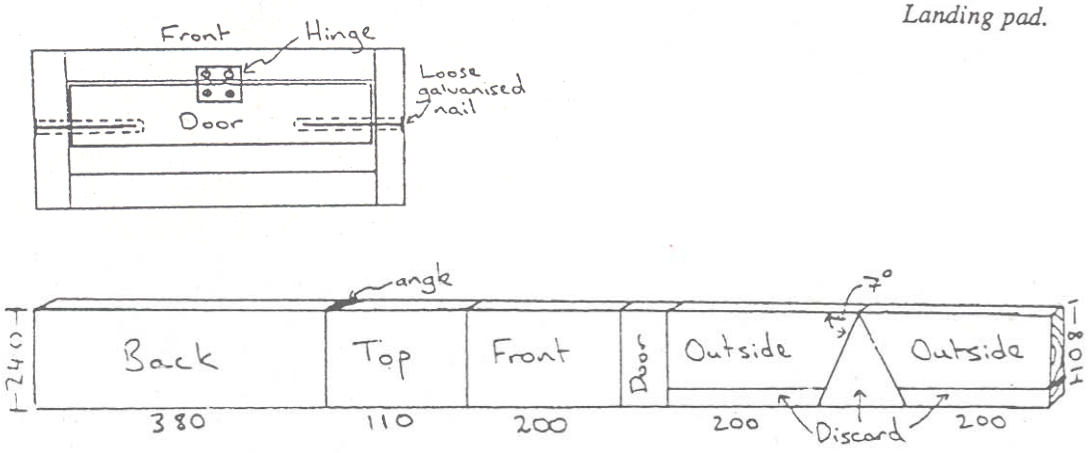
Do not open the box when it is occupied by bats. Watch at dust for their exit.

There are about nine species of bats in the south-west of Western Australia. They are all insectivorous and they all use trees for shelter. However different species find shelter in different places within trees. The design of nest boxes for bats must take this into account. There are two basic types; those that use hollows at the ends of branches or in trunks and those that use crevices. The latter includes species that live under strips of bark shedding from dead trees and, often, under paperbark.

The bats that use holes may adopt nest boxes designed for birds such as a standard nest box with smaller entrance hole, but the boxes can be made more appealing if canvas or hessian is tacked to the walls because bats use claws on their thumbs to climb "hand over hand" into a secure corner where they about-turn and hang using the curved claws of their feet. Remember, too, the bats must be able to climb back to the entrance before they can launch into the night air. Many of these bats fly in relatively open spaces in woodlands, along roads or over the tree tops. The boxes should be placed fairly high up and where flight access is uninterrupted; may be on the trunk of a tall tree, but avoid exposure to hot sun.

The box shown here is suitable for most bats that live in crevices or under bark but it is important to provide inner surfaces that the bats can climb and several sheets of hessian hung like curtains will imitate the insulated, secure crevices under bark or in a split tree trunk. Many of the species that will use it fly in or near dense undergrowth so the boxes should be placed near thickets. They need not be much more than a couple of metres off the ground so long as access is easy for a flying bat. Again avoid exposure to hot summer sun although the low winter sun can be advantageous.





A single bat box can be cut from a length of timber as shown above.

Published by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Perth.
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