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Building Scientific Bird Houses For Fun And Profit

By MalaMaal.com

Building Scientific Bird Houses For Fun And Profit

Build and sell attractive standard model and custom birdhouses and bird feeders that are scientifically designed for specific species.

This business requires a wood shop and basic woodworking tools, paint, some basic knowledge of carpentry and birds, but not much else. It can be a very pleasant and uncomplicated but highly rewarding business.

To be effective, you need to know something about the birds in your area -- when they nest, what size houses, entry holes, whether one or more nest in the same area, and of course, how high off the ground they must be mounted.

If you aren't qualified bird-watchers don't worry -- you can only build one type of birdhouse at a time anyway and you can find out all you need to know about the bird's nesting needs at your local library.

As you learn new bird house patterns, you can study up on the birds -- one species at a time. When your houses are ready to sell, you will be able to tell your customers all about that particular bird, what it eats, needs, where to place and how to take care of the birds and their birdhouse.

You can start with a single pattern or blueprint. These are available from many sources (some are listed below), which will be for one bird species. You are free to alter the patterns and colors so long as you maintain the basics -- keep the entries large enough for the target bird, but too small for predators.

Provide cleverly disguised trap doors for cleaning, different styles of perches and roofs and of course, a variety of color combinations and/or designs.

There are enough variables to allow you to make your own style of birdhouse for any species and still retain the required features.

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Check with the local lumbar yards to find the best quality and prices on materials. You cannot use some types of treated lumbar due to its odor or even toxicity of the birds at close quarters, but you can use a silicone sealer like Thompson's (to prevent rapid weathering).

Let the lumbar yard know you can use odd-sized pieces (which should be considerably cheaper) and many kinds of scraps. A variety of woods will serve you nicely — then you can offer a variety of birdhouse models.

Arrange your working area to have separate places for sawing/sanding and painting operations. Experiment with building, assembling, painting and decorating techniques.

Make jigs and patterns for cutting out and fitting the pieces as close to assembly line fashion as possible. Cut out or buy stencils for decorative patterns (Dover has some nice, inexpensive ones – see Business Sources).

Build your birdhouses with hinged roofs or panels so they can be opened and cleaned each season – birdhouses that are not cleaned are seldom used again.

Commercially available, assembly line (most are put together with unfinished wood and staples) birdhouses and feeders start at about \$5 each, but they are very poor quality at that price.

They are made with obvious scraps, some of which will not hold up outside (e.g. inside grade plywood and paneling) – and unpainted or treated.

You can get a much better price with attractive scientifically designed and well colorfully decorated.

Commercial birdhouses seldom specify the type bird they are designed for — or how high it should be mounted. The reason is simple: they don't want to limit their sales!

You should start with the understanding that you cannot build and sell birdhouses as cheap as the discount stores. You can, however, offer better ones at nearly their price — and make good money.

Since your bird houses are scientifically built for a particular species of bird, you should provide a little info sheet with each house. tell a little about the bird, its habits and history, and how to get results with the bird house.

This info sheet should be no more than one standard sheet — perhaps an 8 x 11 sheet folded to make two inside pages, each 8 x 5 1/2. The cover could have a title and silhouette of the bird, the back, plain. You can have a little booklets printed inexpensively (see Business Sources section).

Since you need to find out a little about the bird anyway to build the correct birdhouse, you already have most of the information. This little gimmick alone can help you get a dollar or two more for each birdhouse!

You can market your birdhouses and feeders through ads, bulletin boards and posters that feed stores

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or pet shops allow you to post. You can sell them at flea markets, at a stand along the road, or advertise them in the paper.

Check with real estate agent for a vacant store and arrange to rent a show window until the store is leased.

Set up a display there for your birdhouses and have a sign that tells people where they can get them.

Take pictures, make up a scrapbook of your different models, add prices and offer to wholesale them to pet shops and stores, or arrange to place them on consignment.

You can even advertise in bird watcher.

If you want to be different or expand your business, offer do-it-yourself kits with assembly, directions and all the parts, nails, hinges, glue, stencils and possibly even paint.

These could be sold for about half the cost of a completed bird house. Your instructions would be included in a plastic bag, along with the same little info booklet mentioned above.

Other possible variations are to paint the birdhouses in patterns to match each other, or the customer's home; selling mounting and/or squirrel guards and other intruder accessories; mounting them, and custom designs (if you are artistically inclined, otherwise fancy stencils).

About the only problem area in this business would be to build too many birdhouses for unpopular birds (like sparrows).

If this is a consideration, it might be a good idea to build several models and see which ones sell best before going into mass production of any one model.

BUSINESS SOURCES

DOVER PUBLICATIONS, 31 E. 2nd St., Mineola, NY 11501, 516/294-7000. Discount books, including reference books (birdhouse patterns), stencil decorations and many types of bird books.

PUBLISHERS CENTRAL BUREAU, Box 1197, Newark, NJ 07102. Discount books, including reference.

MARSH FARMS, Box 7, Garden Grove, CA 92642. Birds, equipment and instructions books.

ZPS, Box 581, Libertyville, IL 60048-2556. Business card, letterhead stationery, etc. Will print your camera-ready logo or design, even whole card.

QUILL CORPORATION, 100 Schelter Rd., Lincolnshire, IL 60917-4700. Office supplies.

IVEY PRINTING, Box 761, Meridan, TX 76665. Write for price list.

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SWEDCO, Box 29, Mooresville, NC 28115. Three line rubber stamps. Write for free catalog.

NEBS, 500 Main St., Groton, MA 04171, 800/225-6380. Office supplies.

WALTER DRAKE, 4119 Drake Bldg., Colorado Springs, CO 80940. Short run business cards and other stationery products. No choice of color or style, but good quality.

OLYMPIA PRINTING, 1282 Monomoy, Aurora, IL 60506. Business cards and letterhead. Write for price list.

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Bird House Building

By William Teleo

Birds are great additions to your backyard. Putting up bird houses is an excellent way to attract them. However, not all birds opt to nest in bird houses. Birds differ in their habitat preferences and only cavity-dwellers are probably interested in the bird shelters in your backyard. As it is, these cavity-dwellers also have their own specifications about the kind of house they like. These are minor

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measurements or feature issues but they are important for the birds. However, there are general guidelines in building these houses.

First, it is important to identify the species of birds that visit your backyard. It is also necessary to distinguish which are the cavity-dwellers from the tree and burrow dwellers. Common cavity-dwellers are wrens, chickadees, bluebirds, and flickers. Choose one you like best and focus your bird house design on it. Even if the idea of building multiple bird houses appeal to you, refrain from doing so because birds are territorial animals.

Second, determine the required dimensions of your chosen bird. Forget asking the birds for these because you'll get no answers. Dimensions of bird houses include entrance-hole, height, depth, and floor size. Smaller birds like wren and chickadees usually prefer 4x4 floor size and a reasonable 8" depth. Consult a bird book or the internet for information regarding the measurements of your bird house.

Third, it is better to use untreated wood and lumber for bird houses. Aside from mimicking the birds' natural habitat, natural wood also minimizes risks of poisoning and overheating. Treated and processed wood like plywood contains preservatives like formaldehyde, which poses serious health hazards to your feathered friends. Lumber that is classified as pressure-treated often contain toxic chemicals which can poison the nesting birds. Paint is also a no-no. Chipping paint can be mistaken by the bird for food and eat it. Also, metals and plastics are not suitable for building avian shelters since they are both prone to overheating. You would want to provide the birds shelter, not an outdoor oven.

Fourth, in drafting or designing a plan for your bird houses, it is important to consider the birds' safety against the elements and predators. Slanted roofs are preferable so rain, dirt, and moisture would not collect on top and rot the wood. It is also preferable that the roofs extend over the sides and front. Perches are not really necessary since cavity-dwellers do not perch. Consider drainage and ventilation needs. Drill small holes on the floor but make sure that these are smaller than the bird's feet. These holes are also best placed on corners to help in draining water out in case of rain. Baby birds drown easily and a bit of collected rainwater in their shelter is enough to send them to their deaths. Aside from the relatively larger entrance holes, place ventilation holes along the house's walls or back. These let heat escape to keep the structure comfortably cool. Placing the bird house atop a pole is a good way to discourage predators like cats and raccoons.

Fifth, maintenance and cleanliness are also factors in bird house building. Unkempt bird houses are causes of diseases, according to experts. To help you in maintaining cleanliness in the bird house, add a backdoor. This way, you can easily remove unused nest and disinfect the vacated house. Droppings and other dirt also contribute to the contamination and cleaning these out limits risks of infecting other birds.

With these tips, you are on your way to designing and building your own bird houses. Help the birds by treating these houses as if you live there. Considering the birds' safety in your bird houses ensure you of longer years with your feathered friends.

For more valuable information on Bird Houses, please visit

<http://www.birdhousesbylaura.com>



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