

Hollows for homes

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Old trees (whether dead or alive) with hollows provide essential habitat for a broad range of Australian wildlife. Approximately 46 species of animals and 81 species of birds need hollows for shelter or breeding in NSW. The same tree hollow may be used by several species at different times of the year, and one animal may use several hollows in its lifetime. This means that if suitable hollows are not available for them to use, they may not survive in the area and could become locally extinct.

Tree hollows take a long time to form, and usually only occur in trees at least 100-200 years old. Widespread tree clearing has therefore resulted in a "housing shortage". There is a need to improve habitat for a wide range of important animal and bird species across the Murrumbidgee catchment.

What can you do?

There are several ways you can help to improve foraging and nesting sites:

- Keep existing vegetation on your property, especially hollow-bearing trees
- Revegetate areas with a mixture of native species, to allow for hollow-bearing and feed trees in the future
- Allow natural regeneration to occur
- Keep paddock trees on your property, as they act as great stopover points between sparse vegetation
- Add shrub and understory layers to existing vegetation where appropriate
- Install nest boxes, if you don't have hollow-bearing trees (see below).

To nest box or not to nest box, that is the question!

Given that it takes such a long time for hollows to form, intervention in the form of installing nesting boxes can provide a tool to mitigate the historic losses of the past in the short-term, and may induce hollow-using mammals and birds to return to an area. Since many of these are insect-eating, this encourages the return of natural pest control to revegetation areas.

However the success of nest boxes depends on a range of factors, including the number of natural hollows nearby, the rarity of the target species, competition from more common species and the design of the nest boxes.



Right: A nest box installed in a mature Yellow Box

If you intend to use nest boxes there are a few key lessons to follow:

Lesson No. 1. Nest boxes need to be monitored and maintained regularly. Sounds logical but how many nest box owners actually do it? The answer is: very few

Lesson No. 2. When deciding on the best location for your nest box, consider:

- Orientation: Nest boxes should be protected, with the entrance facing away from prevailing weather
- Flight paths: Most birds and micro bats prefer nest boxes to be placed in an open area, so that flight paths and observation perches are unobstructed
- Protection: Many mammals prefer nest boxes to be placed among dense foliage for protection against predators
- Shading: Nest boxes should be shaded from the midday sun.

Lesson No. 3. Choose the correct size and shape nest box for the wildlife in your area. If you decide to make your own there are numerous construction designs freely available online. The nest box design which MLI has used for squirrel gliders and sugar gliders is available at: <http://mli.org.au/projects/cpp/resources>.

New nest box project - Free nest boxes available!

Murrumbidgee Landcare is pleased to offer free nest boxes as part of the project "Provision of Hollows for Homes across the mid-Murrumbidgee". We have received funding for this project from the Riverina Local Land Services Community Grants Funds.

Landholders wishing to receive one or more free nest boxes are invited to complete and return the form below. For further information, contact Maddy Gorham (details at the bottom of this form).

Name: _____

Property name and address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I am interested in nest box/es to house (please tick one or more boxes to indicate your interest):

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Swift Parrot | Quantity_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Squirrel Glider | Quantity_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Micro Bats | Quantity_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Superb Parrot | Quantity_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | Quantity_____ |

If you selected other, please specify: _____

Please return this form to Maddy Gorham, Local Landcare Coordinator:

Address: PO Box 710 Wagga Wagga 2650

Email: mgorham@mli.org.au

Mob: 0429 458 717