

Your New Flicker Nest Box

The City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program is happy to provide you with this flicker nest box. These boxes are intended for businesses and homeowners who are experiencing damage from flickers excavating holes in their buildings. They are not intended for people hoping to attract flickers to their area. These boxes were built by volunteers.

Mounting

1. Mount your nest box on a tree or pole near your house. It can also be mounted over the holes flickers have drilled in the building.
2. Mount the box on a solid surface at least six feet off the ground. It can be placed as high as 30 feet off the ground.
3. Secure the box using 4-inch long screws in the pre-drilled holes at top and bottom of box.
4. If starlings or squirrels displace the flickers, nail a thin piece of wood over the opening. The flickers can re-excavate, but the starlings and squirrels cannot.
5. If starlings persist, consider mounting a second nest box nearby. This may give the flickers a chance for a successful nesting season.



European starling

Maintenance

Maintenance is an important part of owning a flicker nest box.

1. Resist looking inside the nest box during the nesting season. If nests are approached or opened the flickers may not return to the nest.
2. Flickers in Colorado usually raise one brood per year. Fledglings leave the nest in mid to late July and don't return to it. Monitor the box to ensure the birds are gone, then use the screw hook on the front or side of the box to open the panel and remove soiled wood shavings. Cover the entrance hole with a piece of wood to prevent starlings taking up residence.
3. In late winter or early spring, pack the nest box with wood shavings all the way to the top. Flickers like to excavate and this activity may increase their fidelity to the nest and protect it from intruders. The same flickers will return to a successful nesting site in subsequent years.



Northern flicker

See reverse for fun flicker facts

Understanding Northern Flickers

Spring Serenade

Every spring, the rapid-fire, high-pitched *kwik-kwik-kwik* of northern flickers announce their quest for mates and a nesting place. These woodpeckers also insist on drumming on hollow trees, telephone poles, or your metal gutters and chimney flashing. The louder, the better!

Your House

Flickers explore many trees and wooden structures to find a place to nest. Buildings sound hollow -- a good places to nest. When the bird drills into a building, it soon discovers there is no "bottom" and therefore not a place for the precious eggs. The bird moves over a few feet, drumming in an exploratory way, finds another wonderful-sounding hollow place and excavates another hole. Flickers can cause considerable damage to buildings.

Read CSU Cooperative Extension's *Preventing Woodpecker Damage*, Bulletin # 6.516, at www.ext.colostate.edu for tips on deterring flickers. Remember, flickers are protected by strict federal and state laws. *Only non-lethal tactics may be used to exclude flickers.*

Family Life

Flickers mate for life. Initially, the male does most of the cavity excavation but the female soon joins in. The female lays five to eight eggs, one egg per day. The parents never leave the nest untended after the

eggs are laid. If the flickers have successfully laid eggs, starlings and squirrels probably can't take over the nest.

Both sexes incubate the eggs and feed the young. As they grow, the female's attentiveness diminishes and the male's increases. The nestlings make a buzzing sound when something approaches the nest. Researchers think this sound resembles a swarm of bees and may be a predator deterrent.

After a month, the parents coax the young out of the nest by withholding food and calling to them. The young birds depend on the parents for food and protection for several more weeks. Look for them feeding together in family groups.



Homes for Many

Flickers excavate cavities in trees to use for nesting. House wrens, chickadees and eastern screech owls may use flicker holes for their own dens or nests. However, in most urban areas non-native starlings take over the cavities.

Flickers Love Ants!

Flickers are beneficial to humans because they love to eat ants. They eat more ants than any other bird in North America. Look for them on the ground pecking in anthills. They also eat worms, acorns, nuts and grains, and insect larvae in the bark of trees.

See reverse for flicker nest box information