Nest box for the Red-rumped Parrot

Red-rumped Parrots are small (26cm), slender parrots. The adult male is bright green with a blue green head, a red rump and yellow shoulders and belly. The adult female is a duller olive-green with a green rump and faint yellow or light green scales on the belly. Red-rumped Parrots mate for life and breed from August to January, producing 4-5 white eggs that are incubated for 20 days, with chicks fledging at 4-5 weeks.

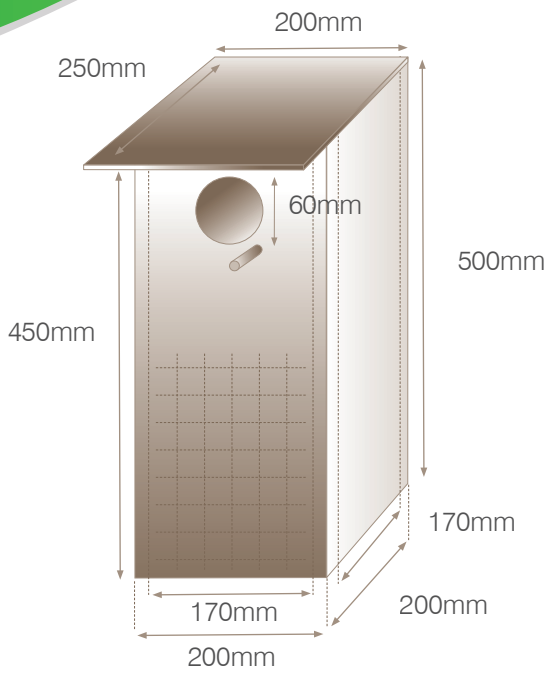

Male red-rumped parrot

Photos by K Vang & W Dabrowka


Female red-rumped parrot

Habitat Information

Red-rumped Parrots can be found in open grasslands or lightly timbered plains, as well as along watercourses and in mallee farmlands with access to water. Large grassy parks, golf courses and similar habitats in urban areas are also a favourite. However, it is important to remember that installing a nest box will be most successful if you provide habitat in your own garden that is suitable for the bird. Red-rumped Parrots prefer to feed on seeds and leaves of grasses, as well as seeds, fruits and flowers in trees. To provide good habitat for Red-rumped Parrots, try planting some native grasses.

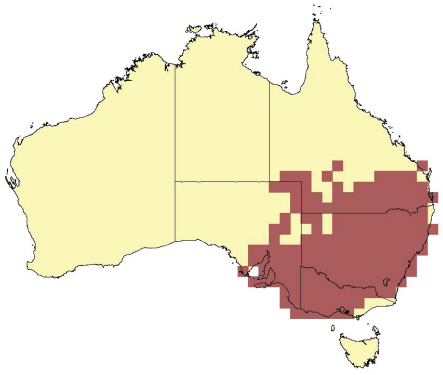


Shapes needed (based on 15mm thick timber)

- Top: rectangle 200mm x 250mm
- Sides: 2 x rectangles 170mm x 500mm (note: both pieces have to be cut to form a sloping edge for the roof)
- Front: rectangle 200mm x 450mm
- Back: rectangle 200mm x 500mm
- Base: square 170mm x 170mm

Special Notes

More than one nest box can be installed if you wish as more than one pair may nest in different boxes in one tree. Unless you see an introduced bird moving into the nest box, resist the urge to lift the lid and look inside. If you disturb the birds then they may abandon the nest box. Only open the lid to remove unwanted invaders.



Distribution of the Red-rumped Parrot

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Materials Needed

- Timber at least 15mm thick (for adequate insulation). If you use thicker timber, please adjust the dimensions of the nest box appropriately. It is best to use untreated recycled wood, such as off-cuts or plywood, or plantation-grown wood, rather than using unsustainably harvested timber. Never take hollow limbs or branches from the wild. (Note: if using plywood, use glue and nails to assemble your box)
- 5mm timber dowel for a perch (note: this is an optional addition)
- Wood glue (something odourless)
- Non-toxic paint or sealant
- Linseed oil
- Screws
- Stainless steel hinge (x 2)
- Hook latch and eye
- Wire mesh
- Metal staples
- For wire attachment (method 1): wire or vinyl-covered clothesline (ensure you have enough to fit snuggly around the tree) and a piece of garden hose
- For mounting strip attachment (method 2): A piece of timber 700mm long and 90mm wide (the mounting strip), plus another piece of timber (the spacer) between the mounting strip and the nest box (slighting smaller than the height of the nest box) + 100mm galvanised screws

Tools Needed

- Hole drill bit (for 70mm hole) and power drill
- Saw
- Hammer
- Screwdriver
- Stapler
- Safety glasses and dust mask
- Coarse sandpaper (or a rasp)
- Ladder

Construction

1. Cut out shapes

- Wearing safety glasses and a dust mask, use the saw to cut out all of the required shapes for the box.
- Label each panel with pencil (on the inside) so that you can keep track of each part.
- Paint the outside and edges of each panel with non-toxic paint or sealant. Leave the inside face of each panel raw.

2. Add features to the panels

- Front panel: use your hole drill bit to cut a hole 60mm in diameter. The hole should be in the middle of the panel, a couple of cm from the top.
- Front panel: staple a ladder made of wire mesh to the inside of the panel. This will allow the young birds to climb out of the box. Ensure there are no sharp edges.
- Front panel (optional): to fix a perch to the front of the nest box, drill a 5mm hole through the panel approximately 70mm below the nest box opening. Place wood glue in this hole and then insert the 5mm timber dowel from the outside of the panel until it is flush with the inside. Allow to dry.
- Side panels: Cut one end of each panel to form a slope for the roof to fit onto. To do this, put a mark 50mm down from the top on the front edge of each panel, and saw off this wedge of timber from the mark to the opposite top corner.
- Back panel (for attachment method 1 only): drill 2 small holes evenly spaced and approximately 1/3rd of the distance from the top of the panel. Feed the wire or vinyl covered clothesline through both holes from the inside of the back panel.
- Back panel (for attachment method 2 only): Place the spacer along the middle of the back panel (running top to bottom). Secure to the box with wood glue and screws from the inside. Attach the mounting strip to the spacer using the same method. Pre-drill a hole at the top and bottom of the mounting strip.
- Bottom panel: drill 5 small holes into the bottom panel for drainage.

3. Put the box together

- Glue the side panels to the outside edges of the bottom panel and secure with screws. Use at least 3 screws per panel face for the entire box. Repeat for the front and back panels.
- Use the hinges to attach the top panel to the back panel (fit one on either side of the backing mount). This will allow you to lift the lid to inspect the nest box.
- Fit a hook latch and eye to stop the lid from blowing open in a strong wind.

4. Final touches

- Ensure there are no protruding screws or staples.
- Use coarse sandpaper or a rasp to rough up the front panel of the box so that the birds can grip.
- Treat the outside of the box with linseed oil to help it last.

Installation

Ideally boxes should be installed on large, mature trees, close to or on the main trunk. Install the box as high as possible to prevent predation but low enough to be safely accessible for monitoring and maintenance.

For this species the ideal height for the box is 4-14 metres. Obviously many people will not possess the equipment necessary to be able to safely access these heights, and so we recommend that you place the box at the highest point you can comfortably access.

Choose a position for the nest box that:

- faces north or north-east and away from prevailing winds and night time lights
- has a limb on the opposite side of the trunk so the hose-covered wire will rest in the fork (for attachment method 1).
- Ensure that you use appropriate safety measures when installing the box. Never use a ladder alone and use a pulley system to raise the box to the installation location
- To limit cat and rat predation, try placing a smooth collar of metal or plastic around the base of the tree.

Attachment method 1:

Cut a length of garden hose that will fit almost the entire way around the tree. Cover one piece of the wire/clothesline at the back of the nest box with the garden hose, leaving a small piece of wire at the end uncovered and a short piece of wire/clothesline protruding from the other side of the box. Wrap the hose around the tree (sitting snuggly and in a fork). Twist, tightly knot or otherwise secure the wire/clothesline (make sure it won't work loose). The garden hose will not cut into the tree but adjust each year as the tree grows.

Attachment method 2:

- Use the 100mm galvanized screws to secure the box to the tree through the predrilled holes at the top and bottom of the mounting strip.
- If you remove the nest box, be sure to also remove the screws.

Maintenance

Regularly check your box to make sure that the intended species has not been driven from their nest by introduced birds, and always contact an apiarist if honeybees take over the nest. If introduced birds (like Common Mynas or Starlings) move in (though this opening may be too small), remove their nesting material and any eggs. You may need to repeat this more than once. If they are persistent, cover the hole for a while. You can also try a 'Myna baffle' that sometimes discourages Mynas from moving in but results for these have been mixed.

After the chicks have fledged and the adults have left the box, clean it out to prepare it for next year. Remember that trees grow in girth as well as height, and be sure to check the fixings on the box every year or two to adjust for growth.