

Save a chickadee or 6 or 8

By Pat Ready, WB Editor

Gary Gaard told me once that you can sometimes tell when a chickadee has chosen one of your nest boxes even before she begins bringing nesting material to it. They pick at the bottom of the box removing little chips of wood. On one of my trails I noticed this in a box in late April. So I added a reducer to the front of that box to prevent larger cavity nesters from stealing it from mama chickadee. I cut mine from scrap cedar with a 1-1/8 inch diameter hole to go over the larger hole for bluebirds etc.

In late April or so Tree Swallows will begin nesting and they will take over the chickadee's nest and push eggs down and nest over it booting the chickadee out. Bluebirds and house sparrows may do the same.

The reducer gives the little chickadee an advantage — with a little help from a friend. The larger birds can't get into the box with the smaller entrance. After the chickadees fledge (5-8 on average) in mid-late June remove the reducer so swallows or bluebirds can use the box.

Some bird specialty stores sell entrance hole reducer/protectors made from metal that could be used as well.



Above: The beginnings of a chickadee nest.



Left: A completed chickadee nest, lined with animal fur.



Above: A nest box with a reducer added to prevent larger birds from forcing the chickadee out.