H O L L O W L O G
H O M E S

Hollow

Hollow Log Homes eNewsletter, Spring 2012 edition

Number of boxes since April 1999:16430

A Quarterly Newsletter concerning hollow dependent fauna and nest boxes **1st September 2012**

Useful Links

frogs.org.au

Species Profile

Green Frog

Litoria caerulea

What is the True cost of a nest box: there are several factors that you need to take into account when planning a nest box project. The individual price of the box is just one of these.

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SOME HOLLOW LOG HOMES STATISTICS

Hollow Log Homes, nest boxes for wildlife since 1999,

TOTAL NUMBER
of nest boxes to date: **16430**
Total number of boxes audited from 2001-September2012: 4594
Average habitation rate across all audited boxes from 2001 to present **77.36%**
Average rate of Boxes with animals present in 2012 34.3%
Sites audited 2012 to date: 10
Boxes audted 2012 to date: 269

List of Photos used in this Newsletter

Page 1; **top**: Australian Owlet night-jar *Aegotheles cristatus*, sharing a nest box with two green tree frogs *Litoria caerulea*, This nest box has also previously been used by Squirrel gliders, evident by the bed of eucalyptus leaves.

Centre: This Rear entry glider box contained seven Green tree frogs *Litoria caerulea.*

Bottom, Green tree frog *Litoria caerulea* inside a pardalote nest box.

Page 2: **Left**, Green tree Frog *Litoria caerulea* at entrance hole of glider nest box installed on a pole

Centre: Short eared Possum *Trichosurus caninus*

Right: Striated Pardalotes *Pardalotus* nesting in a box installed on the side of our house.

Species Profile

Green Tree Frog

Litoria caerulea

Probably one of our most recognizable frogs. They are found to be locally common in many places across the shaded area, usually green but can also be light brown.

The most common frog to be found sheltering in downpipes and toilets. This is one of three species of frog we have recorded using nest boxes, often cohabiting with other species. We have recoded them using the following box types; pardalote, boobook owl, glider, both front and rear entry, possum, bat and small parrot. Species we have found them in cohabitation with are; owlet night jars, emerald spotted tree frog, possums, micro bats and geckos. We have also found them using boxes that have been recently used by gliders but do not know if they stay in the box when the gliders return.

The eggs are laid in large clumps on the surface of the water and gradually sink to the bottom. Tadpoles are very large, dark green or dark grey.

What is the true cost of a nest box?

In costing a project using nest boxes it is important to take into account several factors. These factors are, what species are you targeting within your project area, quality of the nest box, attachment methods of the nest box, placement of the nest box and installation method, current, reliable and up to date research.

Target species; Nest boxes do not attract wildlife, the animals have to be in the area. It is no good thinking that you would like to encourage squirrel gliders into an area and will do this by putting up a few nest boxes for this species. Food source and linked corridors of vegetation are what allows species move through and inhabit an area and then if there are available hollows they may stay in the area. Another important factor is what other species are in the area and are they more likely to use the nest box than the target species. For example on Kangaroo Island many nest boxes were put up for vulnerable Glossy black cockatoos as they were in the area but needed more places to breed. Little thought was initially given to the fact that there were also common brushtail possums in the area which were happy to take over the glossy black boxes. It is important that even though there may be an abundance of a certain species such as possums, if you do not cater for them as well as the other species they will most likely move into the larger boxes. In the case of some species we can tailor the boxes so that the target species are if not the only ones to use the box then certainly the most likely species. Factors such as entrance hole size and placement, play an important role here. For example, rear entry boxes while used occasionally by birds are far more likely to be inhabited by mammals. Birds find entrance holes by eyesight, they simply see a dark hole and will go to investigate. Arboreal and scantorial mammals find the boxes by literally bumping into them while climbing a tree. Less is know about how micro bats find their roost hollows but it is possible that the use of echolocation tells them that a cavity is close by which they then investigate. At Hollow Log Homes while we do name our boxes for certain species, and each box is only named and put on the market when there is proven success with that target species. The names of the boxes are more for convenience of identification. In our small parrot box for instance we have not only had the smaller parrots such as pale headed rosella and lorrikeets we have also recorded Owlet night jars, tree creepers, sugar and squirrel gliders, phascogales, antechinus, melomies, tree frogs, tree snakes and micro bats. There have also been several cases where brushtail possums have lifted the lid to enter the box. However we can say that the majority of species recorded using this type of box are the small parrots.

Quality of the materials used and workmanship: This is another important factor in determining your costing on a project. If you install a nest box that requires maintenance or even replacement after a couple of years then you need to build this factor into your costs. There are many cheap nest boxes on the market however many of them are poorly built using inferior materials. If you need to replace your nest box after 4 or 5 years then this is a cost that needs to be taken into account, not just the cost of the box itself but also the labour in removing and replacing the box. Your nest box should last at least 10 years out in the elements, without the need for adjustments or repair. It Is false economy to put up inferior quality boxes only to have to replace them in a couple of years.

Attachment method; our method of attachment we named the Habisure system. This is based on the way buckets are placed in rubber trees where it is imperative that the flow of sap (rubber) is not impeded. This system has several advantages over other systems we have seen. The tree can grow 900mm in diameter before any adjustment is needed. In most cases this will be well over 10 years. If the box does need to be moved for any reason it is quick and easy to do using this system, (even with animals in the box). No tools are needed to install the box so it is safer and quicker than any other system.

Installation method and placement of the box: here there are several important factors to take into account. Is the box going to be checked for habitation from time to time, if so then it is imperative that this is relatively easy to do? If boxes are installed too high in the tree using tree climbers or an elevated work platform then every time you want to check the box you will be up for the cost of these expensive method.

Our preferred method of installing the nest box is to use our specially adapted ladder. This is quick, effective and safe and when the time comes to check the boxes it can be done easily without any fuss. For the larger boxes we do use an EWP but this also restricts where the boxes can go as this piece of equipment is limited in its access.

Current Research; There is some great research into hollow dependent fauna within in Australia and much of this can help when designing a nest box project, however it is important to make sure that you are using current and reliable research, especially where nest boxes are concerned. For example a paper that was written in 2002 is already 10 years old and there has probably been more research done in the past 10 years into hollow dependent fauna than there was in the 30 years before that.

In short when designing a nest box project the following check list may be of Help

1. Are the nest boxes proven to work with the targeted species?
2. Will the nest boxes last out in the elements for at least 10 years?
3. Are there other species in the project area that may use the nest boxes if so do I need to cater for them?
4. Is the installation method nonintrusive on the tree and safe and easy to use?
5. Once installed are the nest boxes relatively easy to check? (Eg not too high, opening lid)
6. If the boxes need to be relocated for any reason, can the whole box including the attachment method be safely removed from the tree?
7. Is the research you are using up to date, some examples of **out dated** research are:
   -Carpet under the lid of the nest box (this does **not** stop feral bees colonizing a box)
   -Baffles to deter lintroduced mynahs (**no** type of baffle will deter these birds)
   -Parrots need a ladder of some sort inside the box for the young to get out. (this is not only unnecessary it can be **fatal** if the baby birds become entangled if wire or shade mesh if used)

One final point worth a mention is the **Chain of Custodianship** of any timber used. The product used to make the nesting boxes must come from sustainable, ethical sources. If your supplier cannot guarantee this then look for one who can.