

Screech Owls in Suburbia

(see <http://ckcamp.smugmug.com/owls> for Photos and Videos)



This box in my front yard has been up and occupied since March, 2018 and is beginning to weather.

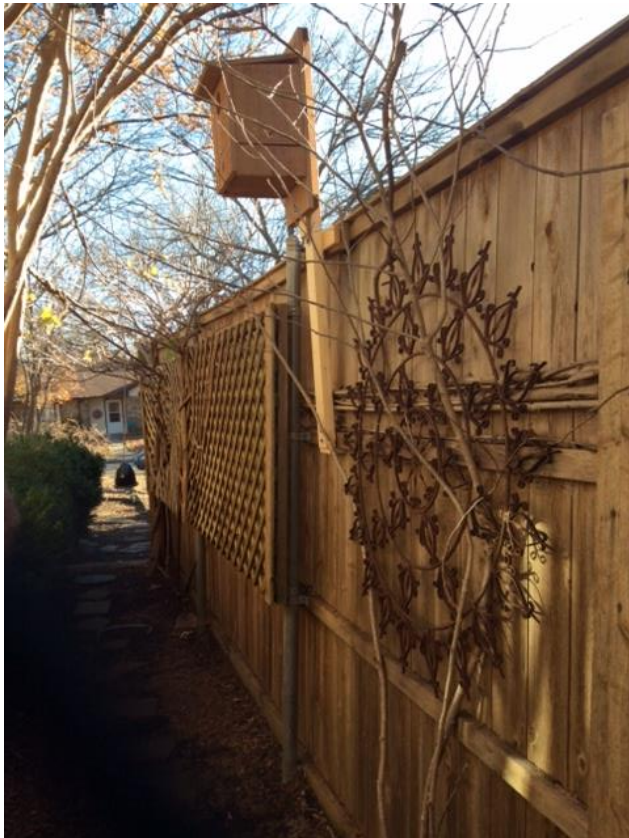
The wood is rough cedar (same as most Plano fences but 12-inches wide instead of 6 or 4).

The 3" hole (optimum for Screech Owls according to the Cornell University Ornithology Lab) is supposed to be 10-15 feet off the ground. This one is about 9 feet up but there's somebody in it anyway.

Multiple boxes can be put up, but they should be spaced at least 100 feet apart.

Screech Owls survive well in urban environments and are relatively un-caring about nest box placement. It's more or less *Build It and It Will Be Occupied*.

This one was occupied within an hour of it being up, but it replaced a Bluebird nest box which the owls were trying to use (way too small but a pair was trying anyway.)



The 2nd box is on the fence at the side of the house. The fence is a little bit bent so the board holding this nest box is shimmed at the top so that the board is vertical. Probably not necessary for the occupant, but it looks better to me. It's directly opposite a large kitchen window so we can see the occupant and he can see us.

That's an 8' fence, so the hole is about 10' up.

Nest boxes should be up well before nesting season (mid-March to mid-May).

If you hear a soft trill at night or in the evening (<http://crcamp.com/screechOwl1.mp3>, <http://crcamp.com/screechOwl1a.mp3>), or a horse in a tree (<http://crcamp.com/screechOwl2.mp3>), you've got action going.



The same box as before, but from about 30 feet away looking down the side yard from the front of the house.

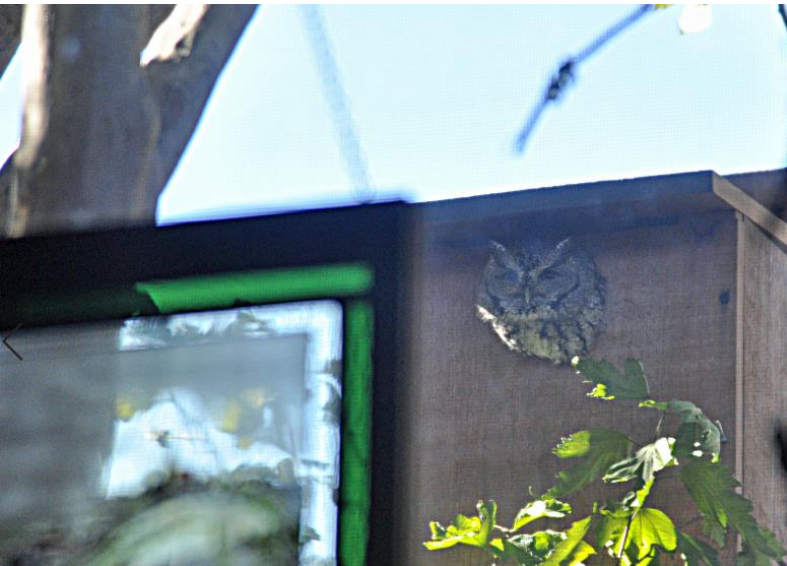
With the fence on one side, the house on the other, two Crepe Myrtles overgrown with Wisteria, this is a very secluded private nesting location.

You can *just* make out an owl head (as a dark blob) sticking out from the top of the nest box.

I can't get much nearer from outside or he'll fly out.

Screech Owls are only 6-8" tall with a wingspan about twice that and weighs about 6 ounces. They are *not* baby Horned Owls but are sometimes mistaken for them. Eastern screech owls have a varied diet. They eat many small mammals, especially rodents such as mice and voles. They eat a variety of insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish, tadpoles, earthworms, crustaceans, cockroaches and sometimes small birds (sparrows, finches).

They are opportunistic feeders, waiting in trees for prey to pass below and then pouncing on it from 6-10 off the ground.



The same scene from inside our house through the kitchen window. He (or she) is very aware, but unconcerned, of my wife and I walking around in the kitchen. We can get right up against the window and he doesn't care - But if we open the window, he's gone! An hour or so later, he's back.

The one seen is actually perched on the edge of the hole.

Eastern Screech-Owls build no nest, instead laying eggs on whatever debris is at the bottom of the nesting cavity - wood-chips, twigs, or the cast-off feathers and droppings from a previous year's nest.

Settling in, she makes a body-shaped depression where her eggs lie.

Use a couple of handfuls of hardwood or pine wood shavings or large mulch for the bottom of the box – *not* sawdust and *not* cedar. Boxes should *not* be painted and will weather to the same gray color that cedar picket fences do in a couple of years.



- View showing
- Back with Back braces at top and bottom
 - Front with 3" entry and overhanging sloped Roof
 - Non-door side (it really is slanted at the top although this angle doesn't show it well) and Roof with 3/8" spacer for ventilation



View showing recessed floor with corner cutouts for drainage



View of Door side with Door knob dowel, front hinge screw (front right top), protruding latching Pin (front right middle).

With latch pin removed, door pulls open. A couple of eyehooks could be used instead to secure the door from opening



View inside door with entrance hole and grooved fledging 'ladder' for the young to escape and mulch

The outside dimensions of the box are about 11-3/4" wide by 9-1/4" deep by 15" high and is mounted to a 12x24" board for fastening to a tree or post.

There is a door for checking for eggs, but it should not be used before eggs are laid or she may abandon the box (wait until late May to be sure). Once eggs are laid, checking on the nest might scare her off, but she'll come back.

Scratch on the side of the box and open door slowly when checking for eggs or chicks to give her a chance to vacate.

Ordering Information

The wood used is rough on one side and smooth on the other – You can specify which side is outside when you order the box.

Boxes are custom made to order and will take approximately one week.

Cost is \$70 with a \$35 deposit and the remaining \$35 due on completion.

Shipping is extra, but delivery in and around the Dallas Metroplex is free.

Boxes may be ordered from

Clyde R. Camp
 623 Hanover Dr.
 Allen, TX 75002
 972-727-3945 (leave message)
 c.camp@ieee.org