



Nest Boxes

A decision making guide
for installing nest boxes



City of
Ipswich



About this guide

This guide has been developed with the aim to assist individuals, community groups and organisations with deciding whether building and installing nest boxes is an appropriate solution to assist wildlife.

It is important to understand that there are ecological complexities that come with nest boxes, both positive and negative. The individual, community group or organisation installing the nest box have the responsibility to continue to monitor and maintain the nest box over time.

There are many ways to assist wildlife. If a nest box is not suitable to your situation, see '**alternatives for assisting wildlife**' for a list of other ways you can support wildlife.

Habitat Trees and Hollows

Tree hollows are cavities that form in trees as they age. Naturally, tree hollows provide critical habitat for wildlife. Hollows provide refuge from the weather and predators, a secure place to eat and sleep, and safe sites for raising young.

In South East Queensland, 134 species of wildlife have been identified as dependent on hollows for survival. Good habitat supporting a diverse wildlife population may have three to 10 hollow bearing trees per hectare, each with as many as 30 hollows of varying sizes.

Hollows are an integral component of the ecosystem and it can take 80 to 350+ years, depending on the species, to provide hollows to meet the needs of the full range of fauna.

Standing stags or dead trees are also an important source of hollows, and the retention of stags is important to meet the habitat needs of wildlife.

There also needs to be sufficient fallen hollows to support ground fauna. Taking hollow logs and fallen branches from an area to increase habitat or nesting sites in another area is not recommended as this will result in a reduction of habitat at the original site.

The loss of mature hollow bearing trees through logging, clearing for grazing and, development or safety concerns has led to a deficit of hollows in some areas.

Habitat/Nest Boxes

Habitat/Nest boxes are a way of supplementing the shortfall in natural hollows and should not be considered a replacement for natural hollows. The provision of boxes should achieve beneficial outcomes by supporting the less common and threatened native species. Wildlife does not select hollows at random; factors such as entrance size and shape, depth, degree of insulation, and location greatly affect when or if a hollow is used.

There is no 'one size fits all' box.

Habitat/nest boxes need to vary in size and shape to reflect the target species or range of species likely to be encountered in an area. It is crucial to know what species inhabit an area.

The use of habitat/nest boxes should be targeted toward less common and threatened species, rather than feral, common, or opportunistic species that may already be competing strongly for hollows.

This information can come from a combination of sources, such as the recorded information by Ipswich City Council, records of wildlife species, and personal observations of what species are in the general area.

Use the following '**Decision Flowchart**' to determine whether you, your community group or organisation should proceed with building and installing nest boxes.

Follow these five steps and corresponding flowchart questions, to determine whether you, your group or organisation should proceed with building and installing nest boxes.



STEP
01

Scoping



STEP
02

**Site
Selection**



STEP
03

**Nest Box
Selection**



STEP
04

**Tree
Selection**

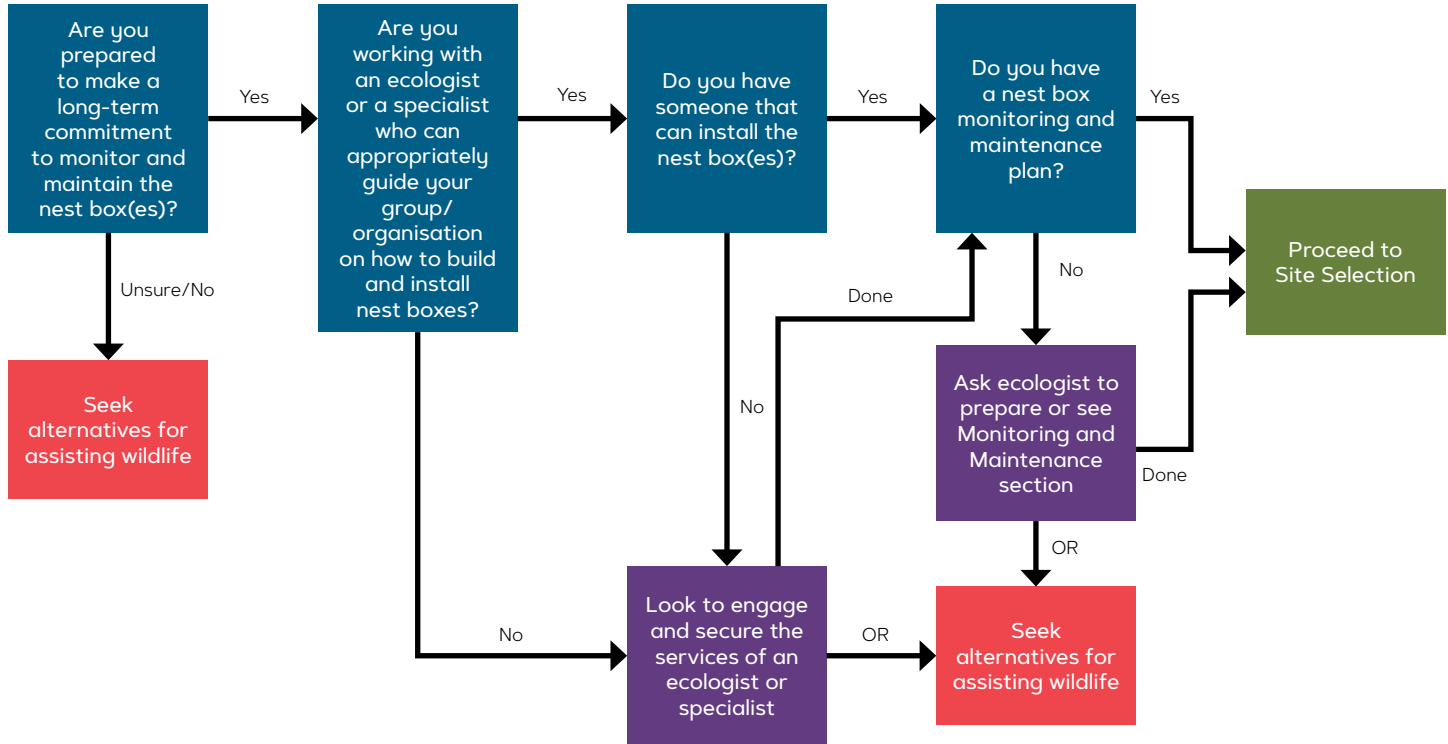


STEP
05

**Monitoring
and
Maintenance**

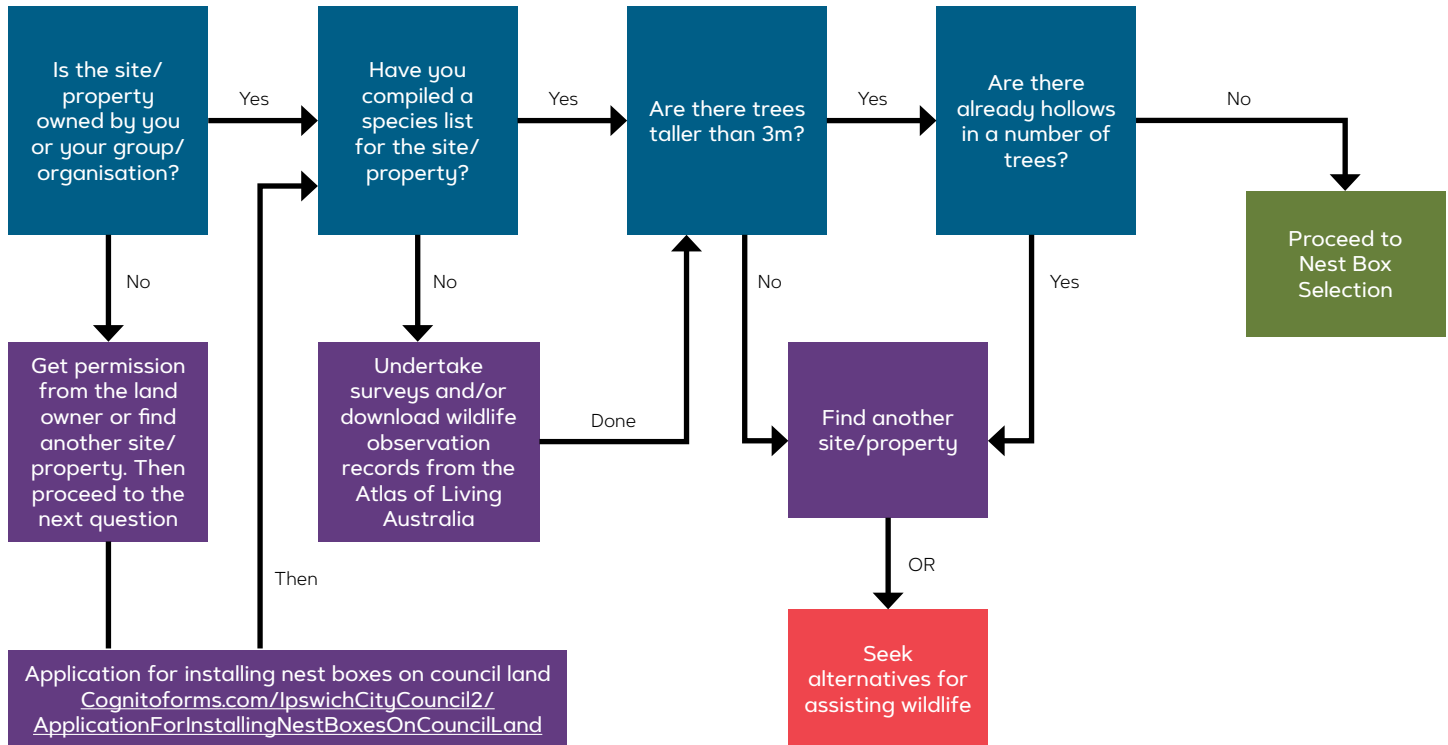


Step 01: Scoping



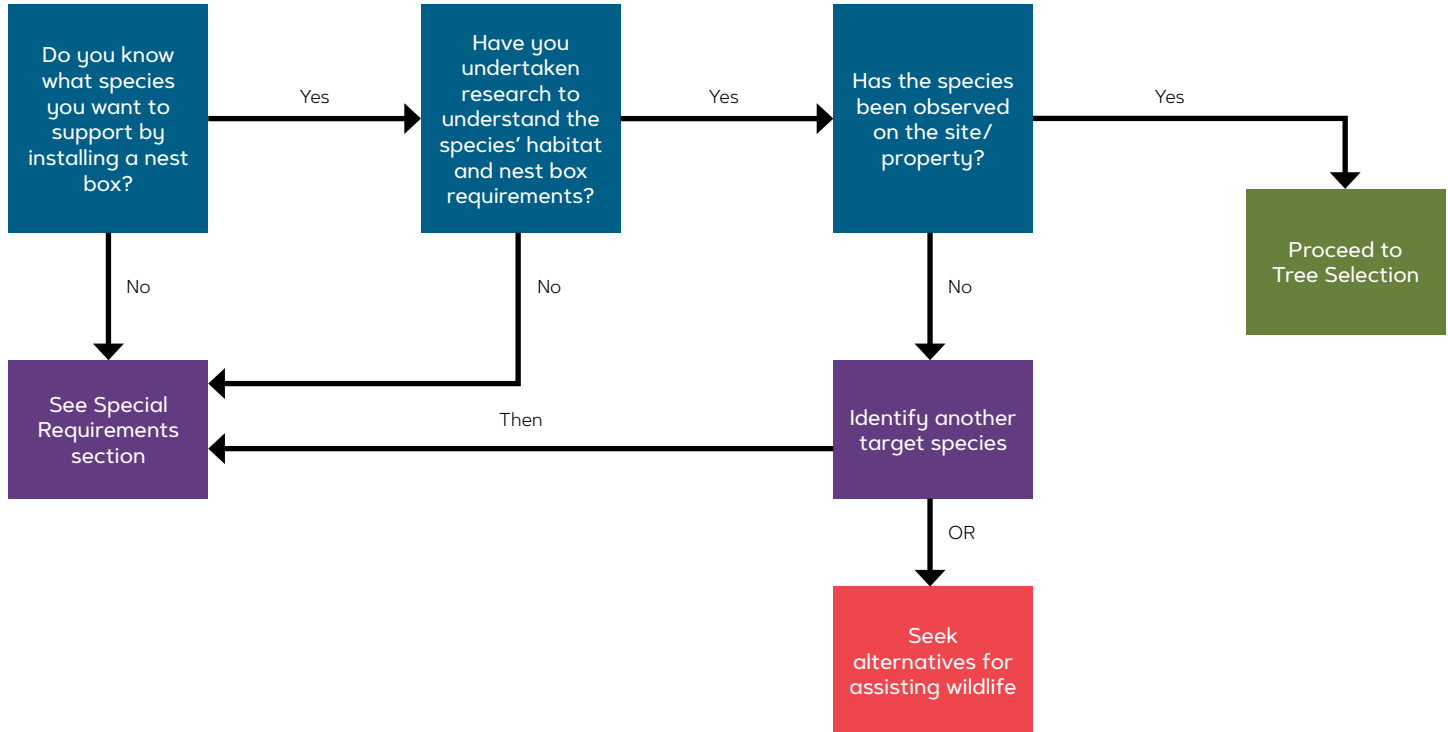


Step 02: Site Selection



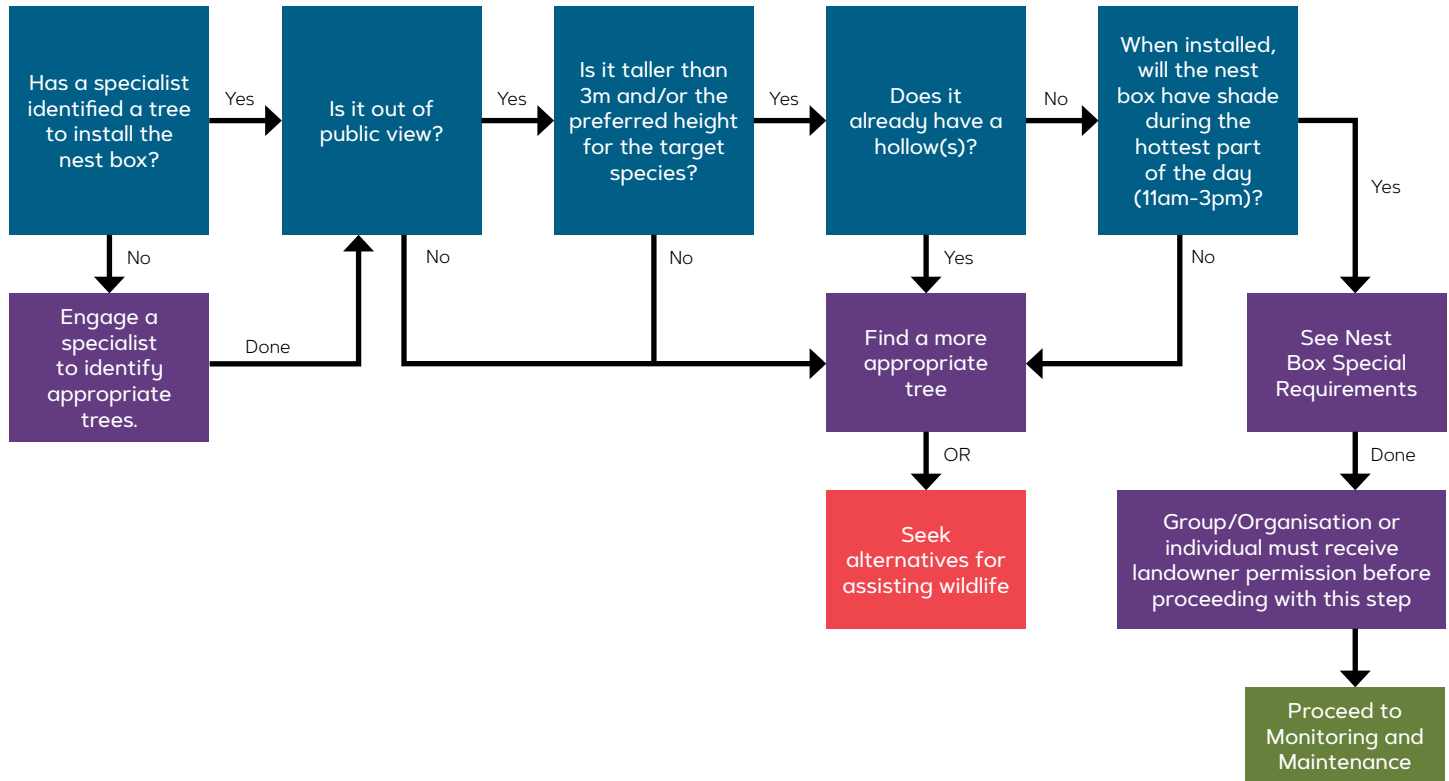


Step 03: Nest Box Selection



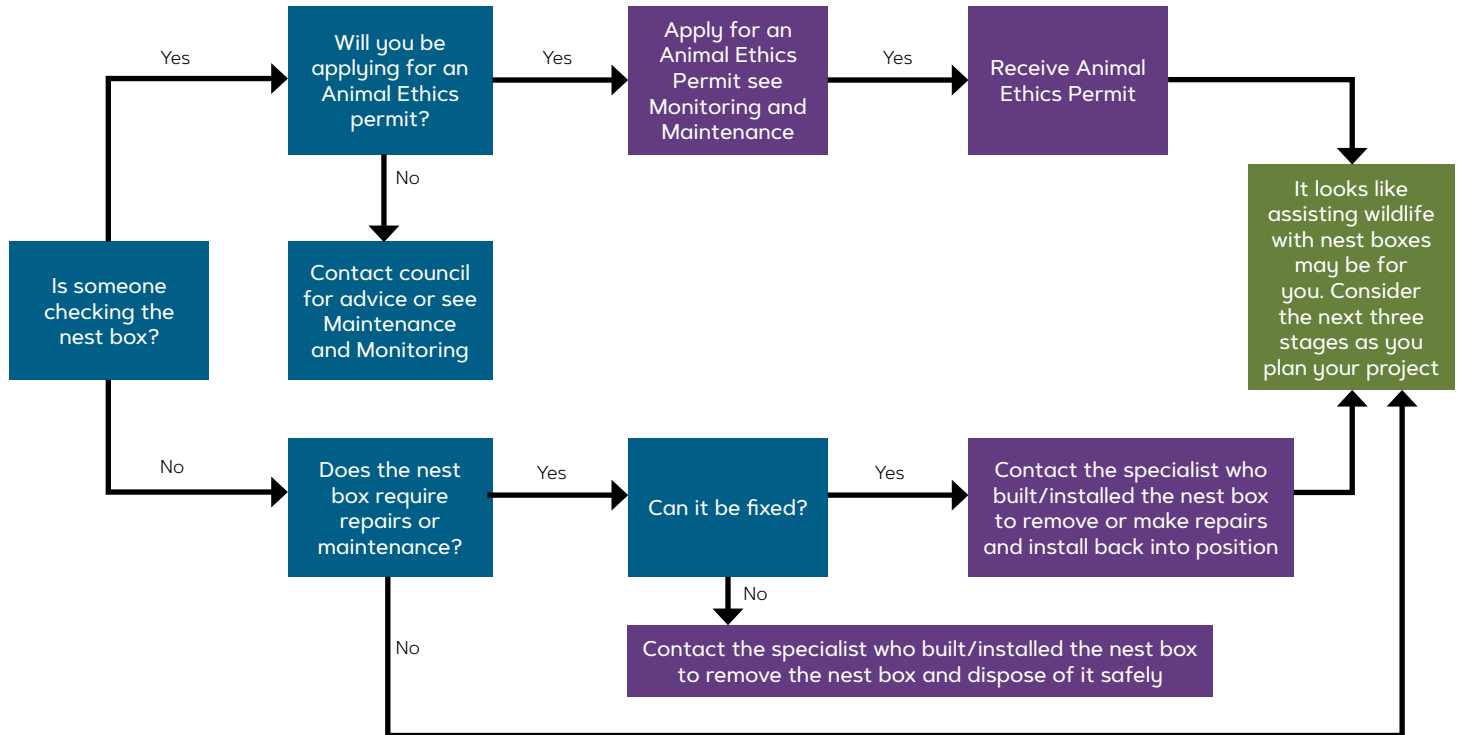


Step 04: Tree Selection





Step 05: Monitoring and Maintenance



If the decision flowchart indicates that you should proceed with nest boxes, these are the three key stages that need to be considered.



**Special
Requirements**



Installation



**Monitoring and
Maintenance**



Special Requirements



To understand the presence and absence of your target species you can;

- Check Atlas of Living Australia (Ala.org.au) for the presence of wildlife
- Check for scats, tracks and other traces or
- Undertake a permitted wildlife survey of the area

Make sure the construction method and design features suit the target species and local weather conditions.

It is recommended to seek professional advice from a reputable wildlife or nest box building organisation. Only nest boxes constructed and installed by approved companies are permitted on Council land.

Some species may prefer their hollow to be horizontal, rather than vertical (e.g. kookaburra and lorikeet).

Others may require hollows directly on the ground, partially buried, or partially to totally submerged (e.g. reptiles, amphibians, mammals and fish). Platforms may be required for birds of prey (e.g. owls, falcons).

Natural Predators

Being eaten is part of the natural process. Native predators should not be excluded from habitat/nest boxes unless they are a threat to an endangered species or unbalancing the natural process.



Installation

- Avoid installing in areas where human disturbance is likely or where there is a lot of unnatural light (e.g. near a streetlight).
- Install in a tree species preferred by the targeted animal.
- The location of the box can be critical. A north-east to south-east aspect appears to be preferred by most species. Boxes should be at a height to meet the species needs and out of reach of human hands in order to avoid vandalism and potential predators (e.g. cats). They should be given protection from weather, including wind, rain, cold and direct heat from the sun.
- Where tree canopy is diminished (e.g. after a bushfire), place the nest box on the eastern side of the tree, that way the tree trunk will provide protection from the afternoon sun.
- Untrained persons are prohibited from installing nest boxes in public places, a trained professional with relevant liability and insurance documents will be considered by Council during the assessment of an application.





Monitoring and Maintenance

- It is important that you develop a nest box monitoring and maintenance plan. Please ensure you are familiar with the monitoring activities which require an Animal Ethics Permit issued by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
 - For any monitoring using a camera and light pole, an Animal Ethics Permit is required which can be found here: [Business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/health/welfare/science/ethics/daf](https://business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/animal/health/welfare/science/ethics/daf)
 - Submit the approved permit as part of your application, if this activity occurs on Council land
 - If you are not applying for an Animal Ethics Permit and depending on the extent of your project, Council Officers might in some cases have resourcing to support the monitoring of your nest boxes on Council land or for members of the Landholder Conservation Partnerships Program
- You can register your group's monitoring program here Ala.org.au/category/citizen-science
- Ideally you should have a routine maintenance schedule to inspect and repair, fill cracks and ensure the nest box is still securely attached. If a nest box needs to be repaired, make sure there are no inhabitants before undertaking repairs or removing the nest box.
- If a pest species begins to inhabit the nest box(es), review whether you should continue with nest boxes or if another type of nest box will be more suitable.



Nest boxes are not always a suitable solution for supporting wildlife.

Here are six alternatives for assisting native wildlife:

1. Join [Habitat Gardens, Land for Wildlife or Bushcare](#)
2. Record what animals visit your property and upload sightings to [iNaturalist](#)
3. Record and map the location of hollows and submit to council's Natural Environment and Land Management Branch
4. Visit the council [Nursery](#) for advice on native plants
5. Plan and undertake weeding on your property or as part of a bush care working bee to reduce the spread of weeds and to assist native plants. For more information visit ipswich.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/227558/WeedsOfIpswich.pdf
6. Protect native wildlife from pets. This may include keeping your dog on a leash when walking through or near bushland as well as confining your cat to your property.

