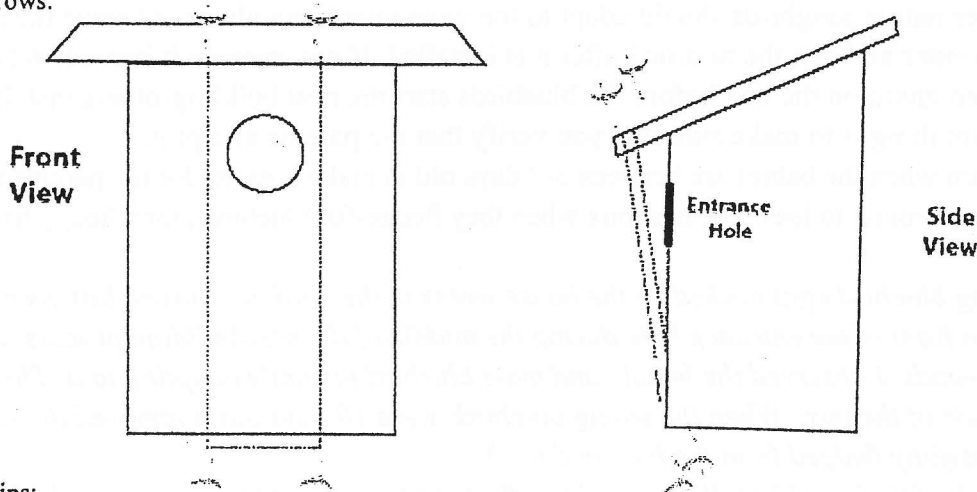


Using Monofilament Fishing Line to Deter House Sparrows

By Joan Watroba

Many people have been experimenting with this method using the diagram below with very good results. I have been using it with much success on my bluebird trails for the past 6 years. It was originally used on a 12 nest box trail that had many house sparrows attempting to use the nest boxes. After I installed the line, the house sparrows stopped using the nest boxes, yet the native songbird species like bluebirds, tree swallows, tufted titmice, black-capped chickadees, and house wrens adapted to it with ease and successfully fledged their young. I have used it on a variety of nest box styles, but always install in the same configuration.

Why this method may work-Bluebirds and many other native cavity-nesting birds are insect eaters, and they have keen eyesight. House sparrows are mostly seed eaters and their eyesight may not be able to see the line and they may be spooked if they hit it which may cause them to avoid the box. The few times that house sparrows have built a nest in a nest box with the line installed, they did not try to re-nest after the initial removal of their nests and eggs, so this method may be effective to reduce repeated nesting attempts of house sparrows.



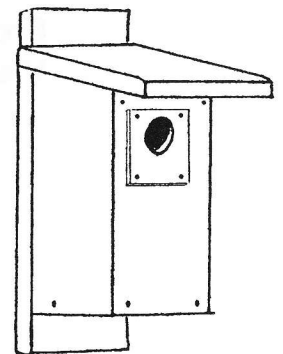
Installation Tips:

- Use 6 lb. test- clear or lightly- tinted monofilament fishing line
- Best to install the line before the house sparrows start using the nest box and become bonded to it
- Replace the line when it gets brittle, and discard the used line in your trash-never leave it in the field, as it can tangle wildlife
- The line should protrude in front of the nest box at an angle, so that from the side view, there is a space of at least 2 inches between the line and the front of the nest box.

Instructions:

1. Place 2 screws on the front of the nest box roof and 2 screws on the bottom front of the nest box spaced about 1 ¾ inches apart. (The goal is to have the line run as close to the sides of the entrance hole without covering the hole.)
2. Tie the line to the top left screw or screw eye, then bring it down and wind around the lower left screw, then wind around the lower right screw, then bring it up to the top right screw and leave about ½ inch of line that can then be wound around and fastened tightly to the top right screw.
3. To monitor top or front-opening boxes, reverse the installation instructions and then re-install the line after checking the box. For side- opening nest boxes, there is no need to remove the line to monitor the box.
4. Check the line during each trail visit to make sure that it is secured tightly and properly.

Note: If house sparrows are persistent and continue to enter the box after you install the monofilament line, you should utilize a more aggressive approach, such as trapping and eliminating them. House sparrows are a non-native species which are not protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Act. Another option is to reduce the size of the entrance hole by installing a hole restrictor plate. It is best to install a metal restrictor on the inside of the nest box so that it does not change the exterior appearance of the entrance hole. Even though these smaller entrance holes will also restrict bluebirds from using the box, you will be providing a nesting cavity for another native species. A 1 1/8" hole will allow black-capped chickadees or prothonotary warblers and a 1 1/4" hole will allow house wrens, tufted titmice, and white-breasted nuthatches. A final option is to remove the nest box and relocate it to a more suitable habitat.



Hole Reducer