Wild TIMES for kids!

Home sweet Habitat

An eastern screech owl makes its home in the hollow of a tree.

Habitat is an animal's home, a place where it finds everything it needs to survive. Our homes have many things in common with wild animals' homes. Like us, birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish and insects all need four basic essentials to survive. We need food, water, shelter and space arranged so they are easy to access.

Look inside to discover what habitat means to New Hampshire's wildlife.

Change Happens

Changes in an animal's home are not all caused by humans. Many changes occur over time in a natural process called *succession*.

One example of the natural process called succession is when a forest fire started by lightning clears an area of trees, making way for the seeds of sun-loving grasses and shrubs to take root. As plant communities change and evolve, habitat is lost for some types of wildlife and gained for others. A red squirrel or blue jay would need to move when their forest habitat became grassland, while a bobolink or bluebird may find the new field a great place to live.

2 to 3 year old forest

Eventually, the forest will grow back if left alone. First, grasses and small shrubs grow in the sunlight. But, as those plants get taller, they start producing shade and changing the composition of the soil.

As those changes occur, other plants that are more shade-tolerant crowd out the plants that had first come in. This process continues slowly through the years until the forest has grown back. At each stage, as the composition of plants changes, so do the animals that live there.

A Forest Near You

As shown here, different species of wildlife and plants live in a forest as it grows through time. What kinds of wildlife live in a forest near you? To learn more, ***visit wildnh.com*** and under the Wildlife menu, click on "Habitats."

Be an Environmental DETECTIVE

Using all of our senses to observe our environment gives us clues as to how the plants and wildlife that live there interact and change. Being observant is more than just seeing. We have other senses we can also use. It isn't hard to tell when a skunk has been around! Our sense of hearing lets us know if a red-tailed hawk is defending its nest, or if a wood frog is calling from a nearby vernal pool. Our sense of touch warns us of sharp thorns.

By being observant and noticing changes over time, we can become aware of what is happening near our schools and homes. Some changes in the environment are natural and beneficial, while others indicate the health of the environment is in trouble. ***Try creating a record in your own journal***. Write down, draw or photograph what you see, hear and smell. Notice how the entries change over time.

A Natural Steward

Robert Durant

One man who was a keen observer of the natural world is the late Robert Durant. He was a retired schoolteacher from Lancaster, N.H., who loved being outdoors and observing the world around him. Mr. Durant walked the same two-mile stretch of trail near the Israel River every day for eight years. He recorded his observations in field journals and included photographs and drawings.

Mr. Durant's detailed accounts show how the plants and animals that lived near the river changed through the years. He noticed which populations grew, which ones got smaller, and which may have disappeared altogether. By reviewing his journals, biologists now have a clear window into the past. They can compare the changes that occurred during the years of his observations to what they find now in the same area. This information helps biologists assess the health of the environment and foresee future changes.

Robert Durant donated hundreds of his photos to the NH Fish and Game Department.

Garter snake

Question mark butterfly

Gray catbird

A Home for Bees

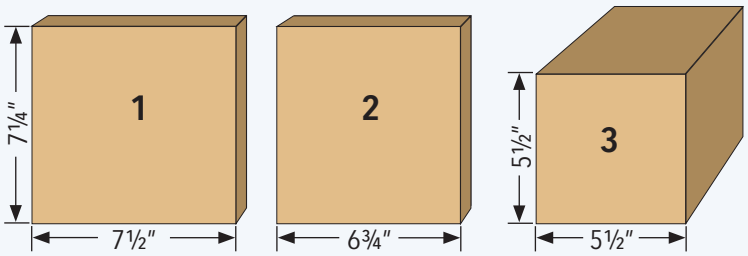
You can help New Hampshire's native solitary bees, like mason bees, that do not live in hives. Solitary bees make nests in tube-like cavities. As important pollinators, these bees need homes to nest in. With some help from an adult, use the plans below to build a simple bee box and provide a home for solitary bees!

MATERIALS:
- 1"x8" board*
- 6"x6" post*
- Twelve 1¼" finish nails

**All wood must be untreated lumber*

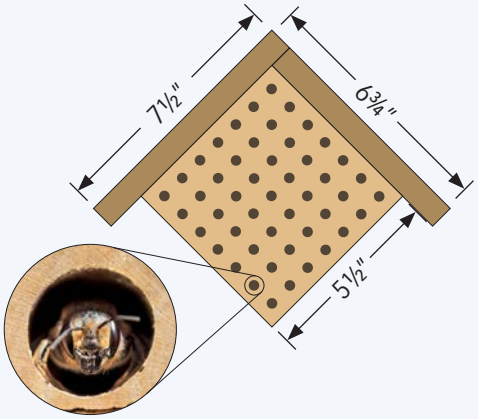
TOOLS:
- Hammer
- Electric drill
- 5/16" Drill bit
- Sandpaper

NOTE: The actual commercial standard lumber size of a 1"x8" board is 7¼" x ¾", and a 6"x6" post is 5½" x 5½".



From the board, cut two lengths: 7½" (1) and 6¾" (2). Cut a 5½" length from the post (3), creating a square block.
In the cut end of the block, use the 5/16" bit to drill several rows of holes 3½" deep and at least ¾" apart. Using sandpaper, smooth any rough edges on the holes and remove all sawdust. Using the illustrations below, assemble the bee box.

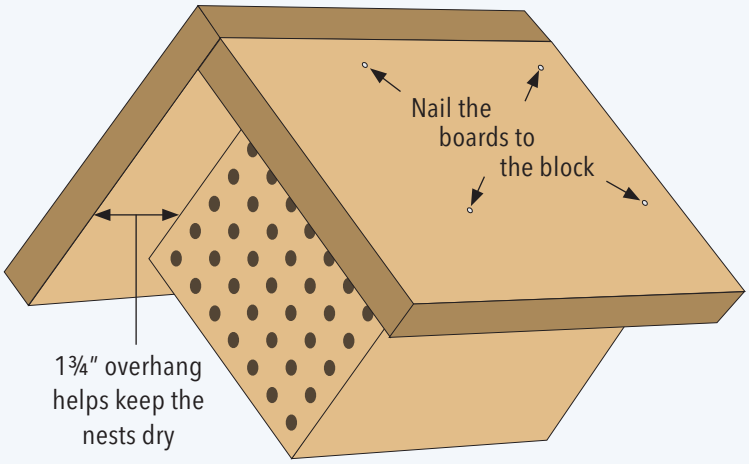
FRONT VIEW



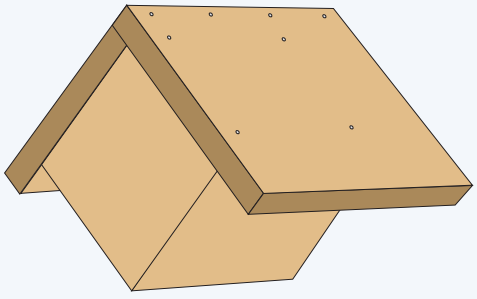
Mason bee

Leafcutter bee

FRONT / SIDE VIEW



BACK / SIDE VIEW



Set up your bee box between April and early June. Attach it to the southeast side of a fencepost, tree or building, at least three or four feet above the ground, so the sun can warm the bees in the morning. This bee box will attract mostly ***mason*** and ***leafcutter bees***. There are many websites with instructions for how to build dozens of different kinds of bee boxes to attract a variety of bees. For more information about wild bees in New Hampshire, visit ***nativebeesofnewengland.com***.

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