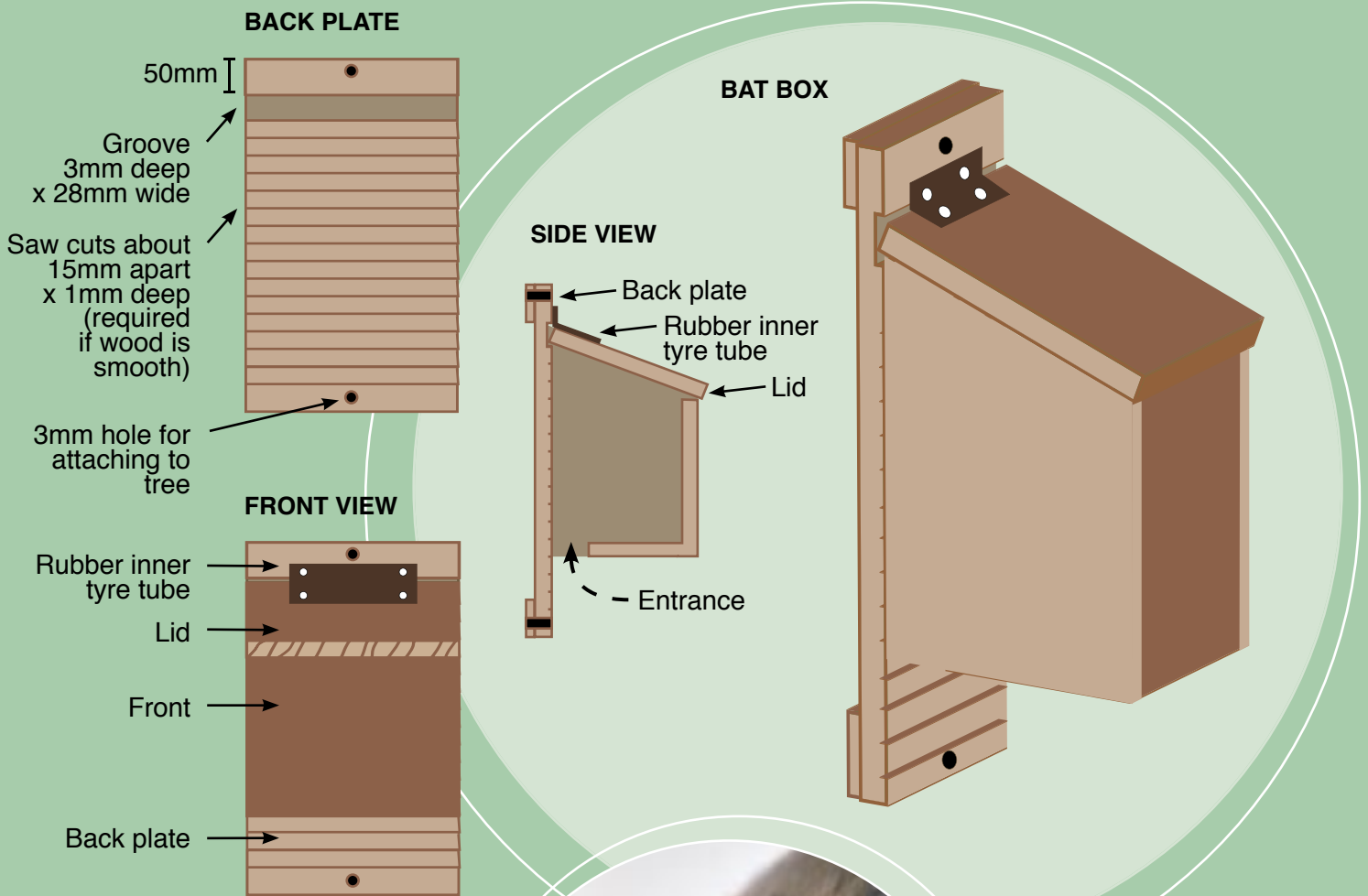


# Wildlife Gardening

WG 003

2004

## CREATING AN ANIMAL REFUGE



### BAT BOXES

Largely due to man's activities, Northern Ireland is one of the least wooded countries in Europe and this means that there are few natural places for bats to live. They have had to adapt by living in man made structures. If you have bats in your area, you can put up bat boxes to try to help them find a good safe spot to roost. There are some important differences between a bat box and a bird box. Firstly, the siting of a bat box is different. Put it as high up as you can, ideally 5m or higher. It is usually better to put up pairs of boxes as the bats may move between the two, say if the first gets too hot or too cold. Position them towards the south-east and south-west if possible and make sure the access is clear. Also, the box must be made from untreated timber as bats have been shown to be



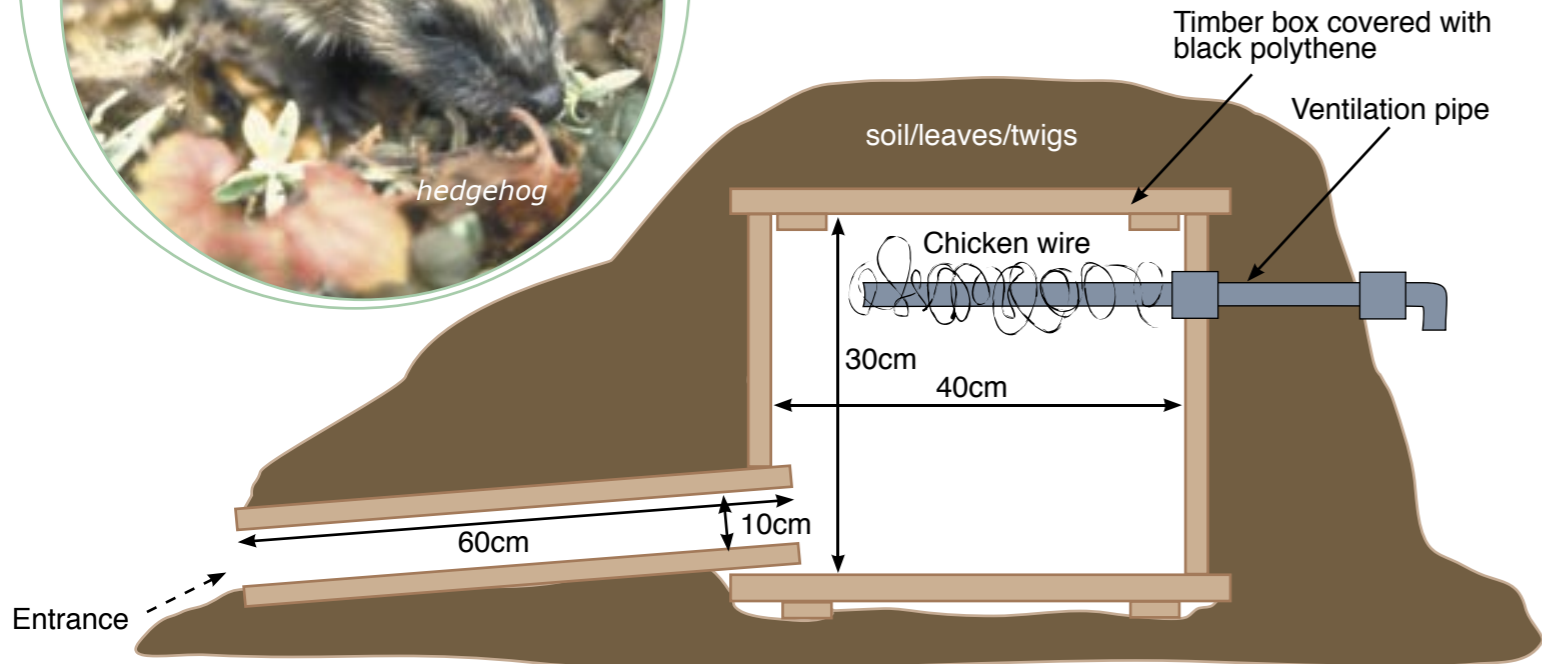
*leisler's bat*

particularly sensitive to wood preservatives. The entrance hole is on the underneath of the box and is just a narrow slit. This makes it difficult for birds to use it. The diagrams show some proven designs. You must also remember that bats are protected under Northern Ireland law.

If you do get bats in your box, contact the Northern Ireland Bat Group via the Ulster Museum (tel: (028) 9038 3000) and tell them about your bats. You will get expert advice and they will identify the bats for you. You are not allowed to disturb the bats, so don't look into the boxes. You can see if you have bats at dusk when they leave the box to hunt.



### BOX FOR HIBERNATING OR NESTING HEDGEHOGS



### HEDGEHOG HOMES

Hedgehogs are rarely seen during the day as they are hiding away in dry sheltered spots sleeping. A good spot is difficult to find for an urban hedgehog, so a wildlife gardener can help. A simple wooden box made from untreated timber and waterproofed by covering it with a plastic sheet is an example. The entrance should be at least 10-12cms and to keep the box less draughty, be extended into a small tunnel. If lined with straw or leaves, it would form a nice snug little home. If it is too well insulated, there may have to be a ventilation pipe. You could incorporate it into your logpile. If you are really successful, you may even get hedgehogs to breed or hibernate in the home.

If you do not want to make it yourself, there are designs available for purchase recommended by the British Hedgehog Preservation Society. Their address is Knowbury House, Knowbury, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 3LQ.

Try not to disturb the animals if your hedgehog home is in use. Stay up a little late at night and watch them forage in your garden. Watch your slug population being kept in check, but remember, do not use slug pellets as the hedgehogs will also suffer. There are biological methods of slug control that are not dangerous for hedgehogs. Organic gardening suppliers should be able to provide these or contact the

Henry Doubleday Research Association at Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry CV8 3LG.

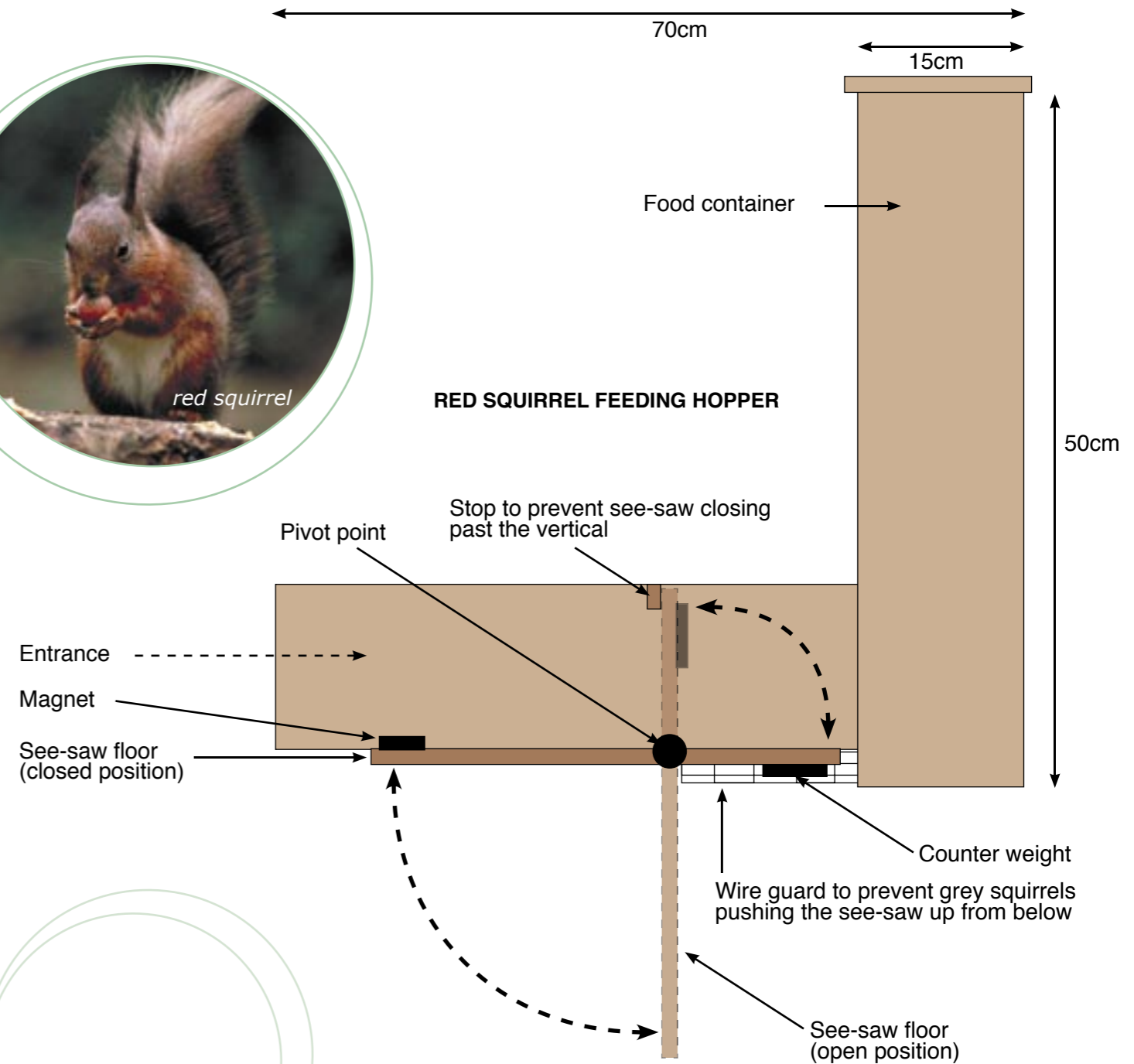
If you want to feed your hedgehogs as well, a saucer of bread and milk is the traditional food. Some wildbird food stockists and local pet shops also sell special hedgehog food mixtures. They consist of dried meat and insects, berries, nuts, fruit, cereals and honey and should be served along with a bowl of water.

### BADGER FOOD

If you are very lucky, you may get badgers coming into your garden. If you do, you may like to put some food out for them near to the house for a better view. It is possible to purchase special badger food mixes from wildbird food stockists made from split and chipped peanuts, micronized maize and locust beans. Peanuts and raisins mixed with honey is also said to be popular. Do not encourage badgers into your garden however if it means that they are going to have to cross dangerous roads.



### RED SQUIRREL FEEDING HOPPER



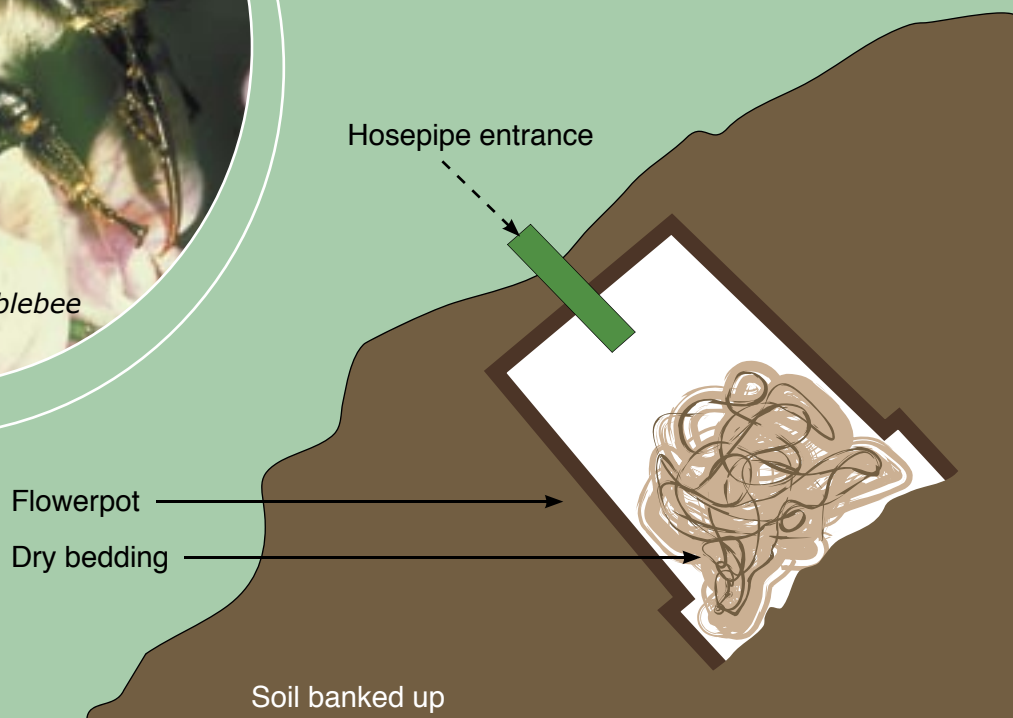
### RED SQUIRREL FEEDING HOPPERS

Red squirrels are seriously under threat. Grey squirrels however are not, are increasing and could be partly responsible for the decline of the reds. If you are extremely lucky and do have red squirrels in your garden, you can buy a feeding hopper recommended by the Forestry Commission that only reds can use and thus help them in their struggle for survival. The hopper is based on the fact that greys are larger and heavier than reds. There is a small trapdoor in the entrance to the hopper and the grey will be too heavy for this trapdoor and fall out of the hopper. There are also special feeding mixes for the red squirrel made from yellow maize, wheat, peanuts and sunflower seed. The feeding hoppers are available from:  
Alpe Thermo Products, 24 Willsbridge Hill, Willsbridge, Bristol BS15 6EY.





## SECTION THROUGH BUMBLEBEE NEST



## BUMBLEBEE HOMES

Bumblebees do not nest in hives like honey bees, instead they nest deep in thick grass, mounds of earth or maybe even in a compost heap. If your garden is large enough, have a wild area where you leave the vegetation to grow wild. Alternatively, you can easily make a nesting site for them. An upturned flowerpot larger than 20cms set at an angle in a south facing bank of earth, filled with furniture stuffing (not cotton wool) with a hosepipe acting as an entrance tube is an example. In early spring, look out for the queens (the only bumblebees that survive the winter) searching for a new nest.

## FOR FURTHER READING

- Creating A Wildlife Garden** – *Bob and Liz Gibbons*. 1992. Hamlyn.  
**How To Make a Wildlife Garden** – *Chris Baines*. 1985. Elm Tree Books.  
**Wildlife Gardening** – *Fran Hill*. 1988. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.  
**Wildflower Gardening** - *Michael Jefferson-Brown*. 1992. Cassell.  
**The National Trust Book of Wildflower Gardening** *John Stevens*. 1987. Dorling Kindersley.  
**The Joy of Wildlife Gardening** – *Geoffrey Smith*. 1989. Rspb.  
**Bats** – *Phil Richardson*. 1985. Whittit Books.

- Bats in the Garden** – *Shirley Thompson*. 1989. School Garden Company.  
**Squirrels** – *Jessica Holm*. 1987. Whittit Books.  
**Red Squirrel Supplementary Food Hopper** – *Henry Pepper*. 1993 Forestry Commission Research Information note 235.  
**Hedgehogs** – *Pat Morris*. 1983. Whittit Books.  
**Badgers** – *Michael Clark*. 1988. Whittit Books.

## MORE INFORMATION ???

For further information on this topic or on any other Environment issue contact:-

Environment & Heritage Service  
 Corporate Communications  
 Commonwealth House  
 35 Castle Street  
 BELFAST BT1 1GU  
 Tel: (028) 9054 6533  
 Web: [www.ehsni.gov.uk/education/factsheets.shtml](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/education/factsheets.shtml)

Or contact the Warden at any Country Park or Countryside Centre.



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**Environment**  
[www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk)



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