

QUIRREL DAMAGE TO NEST BOXES

A. WILDE, Box 1196, Hinton, Alberta

People operating a line of nest boxes for bluebirds, such as the Brandon Junior Birders, have frequently noted Red Squirrels taking over the boxes, in some cases causing such minor damage as enlarging the entrance hole. I have also seen a report of porcupines climbing fence posts and chewing up nest boxes that were partly built of plywood, probably because they were after the glue.¹ However, no one seems to have reported Red Squirrels gnawing the wood to the extent of destroying a box.

It is of interest, therefore, to report that in the summer of 1976, Red Squirrels destroyed 12 of 100 nest boxes on the Hinton Bluebird Trail (see photo). The front and the back panels of these boxes were made of plywood and the rest of flakeboard. The flakeboard was not affected, but the plywood was gnawed to the extent that the box was no longer useful. There were several other instances where the entrance hole was enlarged, but in those cases the boxes were still habitable. All the damaged boxes were adjacent to Lodgepole Pine stands where Red Squirrels were present, but none of the boxes show-



Damaged nest boxes

G. A. Wilde

ed any evidence of being occupied by squirrels. I believe that the glue in the plywood must have attracted them, and I recommend that anyone considering a nest box trail in forested lands should avoid areas of Red Squirrel habitation and the use of plywood in constructing nest boxes.

¹LANE, JOHN, and RANDY BAUMAN. 1972. Twelfth annual nestbox report of Brandon Junior Birders. Blue Jay 30: 226-227.



Squirrel

Larry A. Morgotch