

LUCY'S WARBLER (*Leiothlypis luciae*)

Just four inches long and very active, Lucy's Warbler has been known in the past as the Desert Warbler and the Mesquite Warbler. Few birds are as intimately tied to a single tree species as Lucy's are to mesquite. Primarily gray with a rusty cap and rump Lucy's Warbler can be seen in early spring as it sings from the tops of mesquite trees: *whee-tee, whee-tee, whee-tee, wheet-tee, wheet*. Lucy's Warblers are one of only two cavity nesting warblers in North America and the only warbler to nest in the arid Sonoran Desert. Like many species, Lucy's has suffered from the continuing destruction of habitat. As mesquites are cut, rivers are developed, and groundwater is pumped to supply water to urban areas and agricultural use, life zones along waterways face drastic changes. Surveys reveal that populations have decreased across most of Lucy's range, though population increases have been documented in surrounding states.

HABITAT

Lucy's Warblers are found in mesquite bosques, and riparian areas with cottonwoods and willows. They are also readily found in urban and suburban areas especially where mesquite trees occur.

BEHAVIOR

Lucy's Warblers arrive in Arizona mid-March. Their peak nesting activity is April-May and wraps up by mid-June. Lucy's Warblers spend most of their time in tree canopies gleaning for small insects. They are attracted to moving water so consider a fountain or a drip for your yard.

NESTING FACTS

Lucy's Warblers were previously not known to use nestboxes. Tucson Audubon conducted multiple studies to develop a nestbox design they will readily use, which is what we share in this document. The triangle design mimics a natural Lucy's Warbler nest in peeling bark of mesquite trees. Lucy's likely raise two broods a year with 3-5 eggs per nest. They lay 1 egg per day and incubate them for about 15 days. After hatching the chicks take ~11 days to fledge the nest.



Lucy's Warbler by Francis Morgan



Lucy's Warbler Eggs by Carmen Christy



Lucy's Warbler nestlings in triangle box by Celeste Andresen



NESTBOX INSTALLATION

It's best to install your nestbox in or near mesquite trees for the highest chance of attracting a Lucy's Warbler family.

Always make sure you have a proper permission to install nestboxes outside your property.

We recommend putting up nestboxes by the end of February to have them ready for Lucy's Warbler migration back in March.

You can install it directly on the tree (best), or on a house or pole next to the tree.

Use outdoor grade screws of at least 3 inches long to account for nestbox thickness and bark thickness. This does not harm the tree, it simply scars over the screw. If using screws is not an option, you can use thick bailing wire and affix it so there isn't too much movement that may cause the eggs to fall out. Beware that wire may strangle a live tree branch.

Hang the box between 6 and 15 feet high, opting for higher of the range when there is foot traffic next to the box. For example, a backyard setting. Install it within smaller branches but without obstructing the exits. This provides concealment that these birds prefer.

MONITORING

Please register your new nestbox with us by following this link:

www.tucsonaudubon.org/LucyNestBoxRegister

This allows us to keep track of our nestbox distributions as well as success rates across their breeding range.

Additionally, consider submitting your nest observations on NestWatch

<https://nestwatch.org/nw/join/tucsonaudubon>

MAINTENANCE

We recommend cleaning out the old nest once a year around February to get ready for the new season. Use gloves to pinch the old nest and pull it out of the opening. This is also a good time to double check that the nestbox is still secured well by tugging on it. No need to add any nesting material to the box. The birds will bring in their desired material.

CONTACT US

If you get a nest or have any questions don't hesitate to reach out to us at nestbox@tucsonaudubon.org



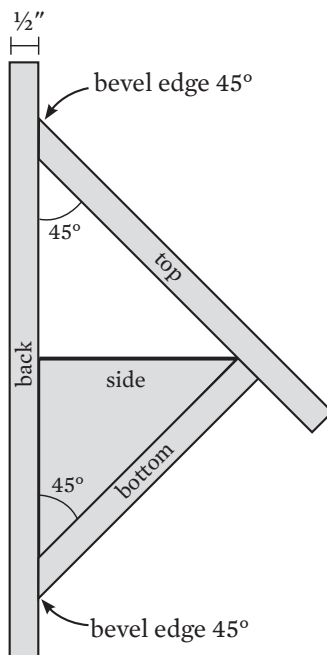
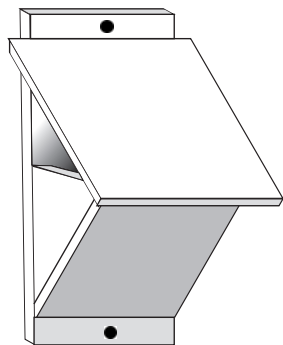
Photo by Paula Redinger



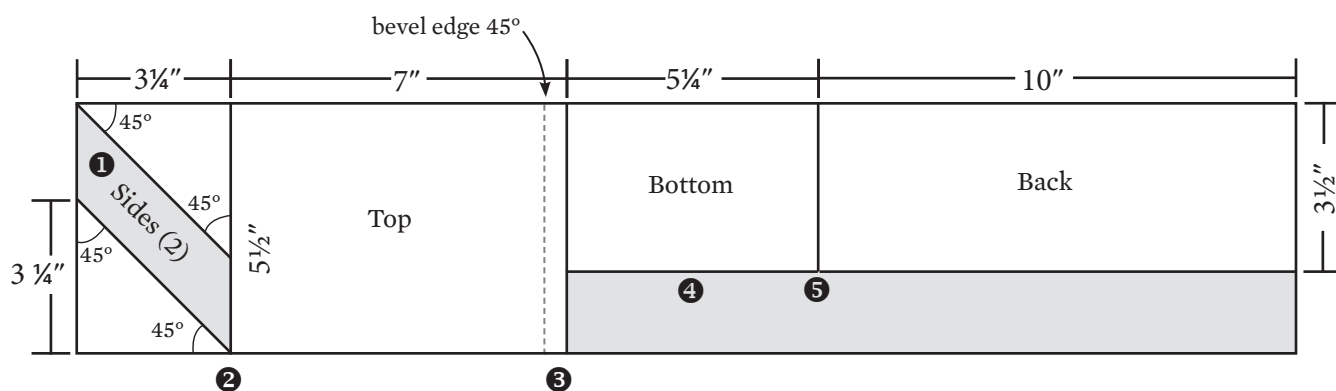
Lucy's Warbler Triangle Nest Box Plan

Materials:

- (1) 5½" × ½" × 2.5' or longer of untreated cedar board or fence picket
- 4D nails or ½" screws



Lucy's Warbler by Holly Faulkner



Instructions:

1. Start with sides (❶) and cut the 45° triangles first.
2. Make the second cut at the ❷ marker.
3. Set the saw blade at 45° and make the cut at the ❸ marker.
4. Return the blade to 90° and make the rip cut to shorten the sides of the back and bottom to 3½" (❹).
5. Cut at the ❺ marker.
6. To assemble, attach sides to bottom first, then to the back. Add the top last.

Notes:

- Use screws if possible and pre-drill holes to prevent splitting. If using nails or brads, also **glue edges**
- Leave enough room (~1") at the top and bottom of the back board for easy mounting.
- If making several boxes, consider using cedar fence pickets in both 5.5" and 3.5" widths.

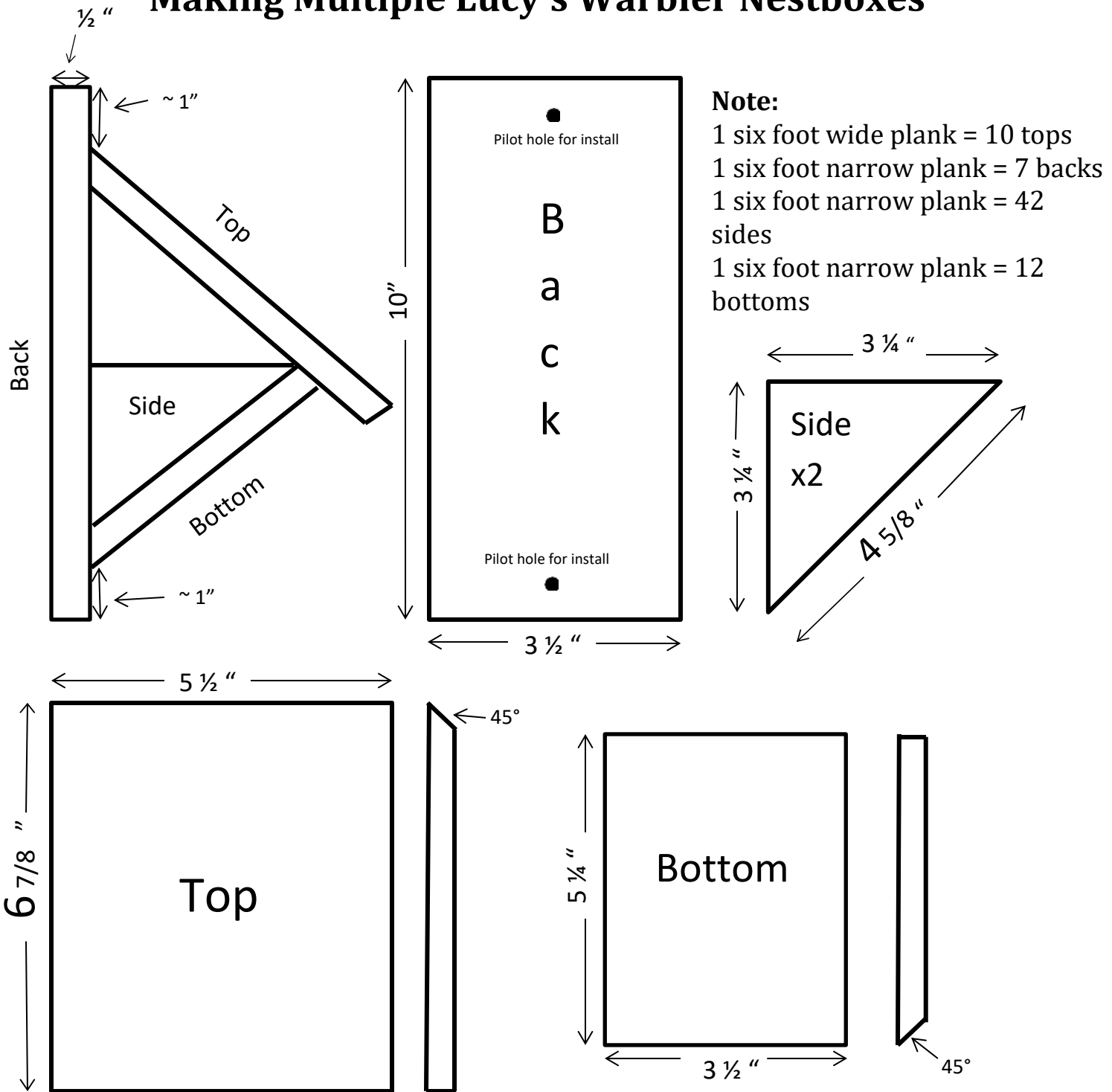
The Cornell Lab
NestWatch

Report your nesting birds to
NestWatch.org



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Making Multiple Lucy's Warbler Nestboxes



Materials:

Cedar Pickets

$\frac{1}{2}$ " x $3\frac{1}{2}$ "

$\frac{1}{2}$ " x $5\frac{1}{2}$ "

4D nails or screws

Outdoor wood glue

Notes:

All angles are 45 and 90 degrees

- If using nails or brads **please glue edges** using strong wood glue
- Leave enough room on top and bottom for easy mounting, add one pilot hole on top and one on bottom in that space.

