

Using Purple Martin Tunnels to Reduce Predation of Tree Swallow Boxes and Gourds

One way to reduce nest predation in boxes and gourds is by increasing the distance from the entrance to the nest, making it more difficult for long-armed mammalian predators like raccoons and cats to reach their intended prey. Increasing box depth is one way to accomplish this. Another method is to use wire extensions such as Noel Guards, like the one below. However, **in our opinion Noel Guards are detrimental or even dangerous for Tree Swallows.** This species' long wings may hit or catch on the guard front as they try to land, causing injury. Clambering across the wire on their short legs is difficult and increases the time and effort they must spend trying to feed their young. Even worse, as nestlings approach fledging they may climb out into the guard to beg and in their awkwardness fall to the ground and die.



We believe a safer way to reduce predation is by increasing distance from entrance to nest using modified Purple Martin “tunnels” (below).



HOW TO MODIFY PURPLE MARTIN TUNNELS FOR USE ON TREE SWALLOW BOXES AND GOURDS

We use **Ultimate Clinger Tunnels (Item # UTC)** from **S&K Manufacturing** for both boxes and gourds. Boxes should be wood, side or top-opening, flat-fronted, with floors at least 5" x 5" or 12.7 cm x 12.7 cm. Gourds are S&K Bo9 and Bo11Plus.

Tools: jigsaw, pliers, screwdriver, utility knife, drill with 1-3/8", 1-1/2" or 1-9/16" bit.

Also: sandpaper, exterior grade Gorilla Glue or Super Glue.

For boxes only: round-head wood screws, washers.

Modifying an S&K UTC Tunnel

Step 1. Use pliers to gradually twist off the martin wing entrapment guard from inside tunnel. Smooth rough edges with sandpaper.



Step 2. Use jigsaw to cut off porch support. Sand cut edge.



Step 3. Drill round hole for Tree Swallow entrance 1-3/8" and sand edges smooth. If Eastern or Western Bluebirds may use the box or gourd make hole 1-1/2". If Mountain Bluebirds are possible make hole 1-9/16".



Step 4. Use jigsaw to cut Purple Martin porch into 2 pieces. Only one piece will be used to cover the martin entrance.



Step 5. Glue (use exterior grade only) saved porch piece over martin entrance.



Step 6. Insert traction piece into position on inside tunnel floor until it snaps in place.



The modified tunnel is now ready to mount on a box or gourd



**NEXT: HOW TO ATTACH MODIFIED TUNNELS
TO TREE SWALLOW BOXES AND GOURDS**

Attaching a Modified S&K Tunnel to a Box

Step 1. Use jigsaw to cut an opening 4-1/2" x 3-1/2" or 11.5 cm x 9 cm in the box front.



Step 2. Position modified tunnel with its lower inside surface level with the lower hole edge.



Step 3. Attach tunnel to box using round-headed screws and washers.



Attaching a Modified S&K Tunnel to an S&K Gourd

We attach modified tunnels to **S&K Purple Martin Gourds**, either **Model Bo Nine (Item #BO9)** or **Model Bo Eleven Plus (Item# BO11P)**.

Step 1. Use utility knife to remove original entrance section from gourd



Step 2. Attach modified tunnel to gourd using plastic plugs that come with the gourd.

