

Create Your Own Dove Nest Cones

submitted by Dick Haldeman, written by John Cowan

Mourning doves nest throughout California, particularly in the valley, foothill and desert areas. Poor weather conditions may cause natural dove nests to blow down or fall apart. Doves may also build their nests on man-made structures like window sills, which frequently get disturbed.

In order to increase the mourning dove's reproductive success and provide new nesting areas, California Department of Fish and Game biologist John Cowan designed an artificial nesting structure called a dove nest cone. The nest cone provides a sturdy base upon which doves can build their nests. The following information describes how to construct and install a dove nest cone. The rest is up to the doves.

WHERE TO PLACE THE DOVE NEST CONE

Mourning doves build their nests in the crotch of a tree, where one branch forks into two. Doves have been known to make nests in many kinds of trees and prefer to make their nests six to 18 feet above the ground to avoid predators. Doves also prefer to make nests where they have good visibility and easy escape routes.

Materials Needed—

- 1/4 inch or 3/8 inch galvanized wire mesh hardware cloth
- Tin snips or wire cutters
- Garden wire or four roofing nails



1. Cut a piece of hardware cloth with a pair of tin snips into a 12-inch square.



2. Then cut off the four corners so you make a circle.



3. Next cut out a wedge shaped piece (like a piece of pizza).



4. Overlap the edges from the missing piece so the wire forms a cone (you may find it easier to carry if you leave it flat).

two to four clutches per breeding season. It takes about a month for a pair of doves to raise one clutch. Eggs are white and about one inch long. Both male and females take turns incubating the eggs, which generally hatch in about two weeks.

Both male and female doves feed the newly hatched young "crop milk," a high-fat, high-protein substance produced by the adult dove's crop. About two weeks after hatching, the young dove is ready to "fledge" or leave the nest.

It is possible that the same breeding pair will reneest the following year in your dove nest cone. If not, the doves generally choose a spot near the first one. It is also possible that the young from one year to the next will return to nest in the same dove nest in which they were hatched. 🐾

Place your nest cones on a sturdy tree limb six to 18 feet above the ground. Make sure the cone is firmly anchored into place so that it will not blow off. Also, be sure the spot you choose is in an area with high visibility and sparse limb growth. Lastly, choose a spot where the doves can easily find nesting materials like small twigs and dry weeds, because doves will not search farther than 60 feet for nesting materials.



James Fong installing dove cones in trees.



Becca Stambach and James Fong

photos by Wendy Alexander

WHEN TO PLACE THE DOVE NEST CONE

It is best to install dove nest cones in February or March. Mourning doves begin nesting in March, and peak breeding season usually occurs in July. It takes between one to three days for a nesting pair to build the nest; the male brings the nesting materials to the female, who then builds the nest.

Doves typically lay two eggs per "clutch" and can lay



Hunter Canlis installing nesting cones.