



The Gilbertson PVC nestbox is made from white 4-inch-diameter PVC sewer and drain (S&D) pipe. The walls are barely more than 1/16 inch thick and will be slightly less heat resistant than the heavier walls of Schedule 40 PVC pipe. Steve Gilbertson uses the thinner-walled PVC because it is more flexible, and flexibility is what makes his unique box-opening method work.

Two small holes opposite each other at the top of the PVC box fit over two pins attached to the wooden roof. To open the box, the monitor squeezes the box at its top until it comes free from the pins. The box - looking like an open tin can - is then free to be moved wherever needed. The roof remains attached to the conduit/rebar mount that Gilbertson designed with this box in mind.

Having the box detach from the roof is very handy. It is easy to look inside the box or position it so that the lighting is perfect for photography. A lot of times, the parent will stay on the nest when you open the box. Old nests can be dumped with a flick of the wrist. The entire box can easily be exchanged if desired.

The disadvantage of Gilbertson's box-opening system is the same as that of top-opening wooden boxes - because you have to reach in from the top, you can't get at the bottom of the nest when there are eggs or nestlings in it. So you can't monitor for blowflies or easily change a wet or soiled nest.

The roof and floor of the Gilbertson PVC box are both made of wood. The 7 1/4"-by-9-inch roof has enough overhang to provide good protection from rain and sun. The box is only 4 1/2" inches deep from the bottom of the entrance hole to the floor. This lack of depth helps to discourage house sparrows.

Gilbertson finishes his box by streaking dark stain on the white PVC to give it an attractive birch tree look. Inside, he stains the white walls brown so the incubating female will find it comfortably dark. The small amount of stain on the outside will not cause the box to overheat. Ventilation holes are provided along the top edge of the pipe.



An experimental front-opening box made of PVC pipe was developed in the late 1990s by Frank Navratil, Sr., of North Riverside, Illinois. His Bluebird Buoy PVC nestbox has another clever innovation. A long section of the pipe remains below the nestbox cavity to serve as a predator guard. The guard and box slide over the mounting.

Description and photo from *The Bluebird Monitor's Guide*, ©2001 Harper Collins, by permission of Steve Gilbertson and Keith Kridler.

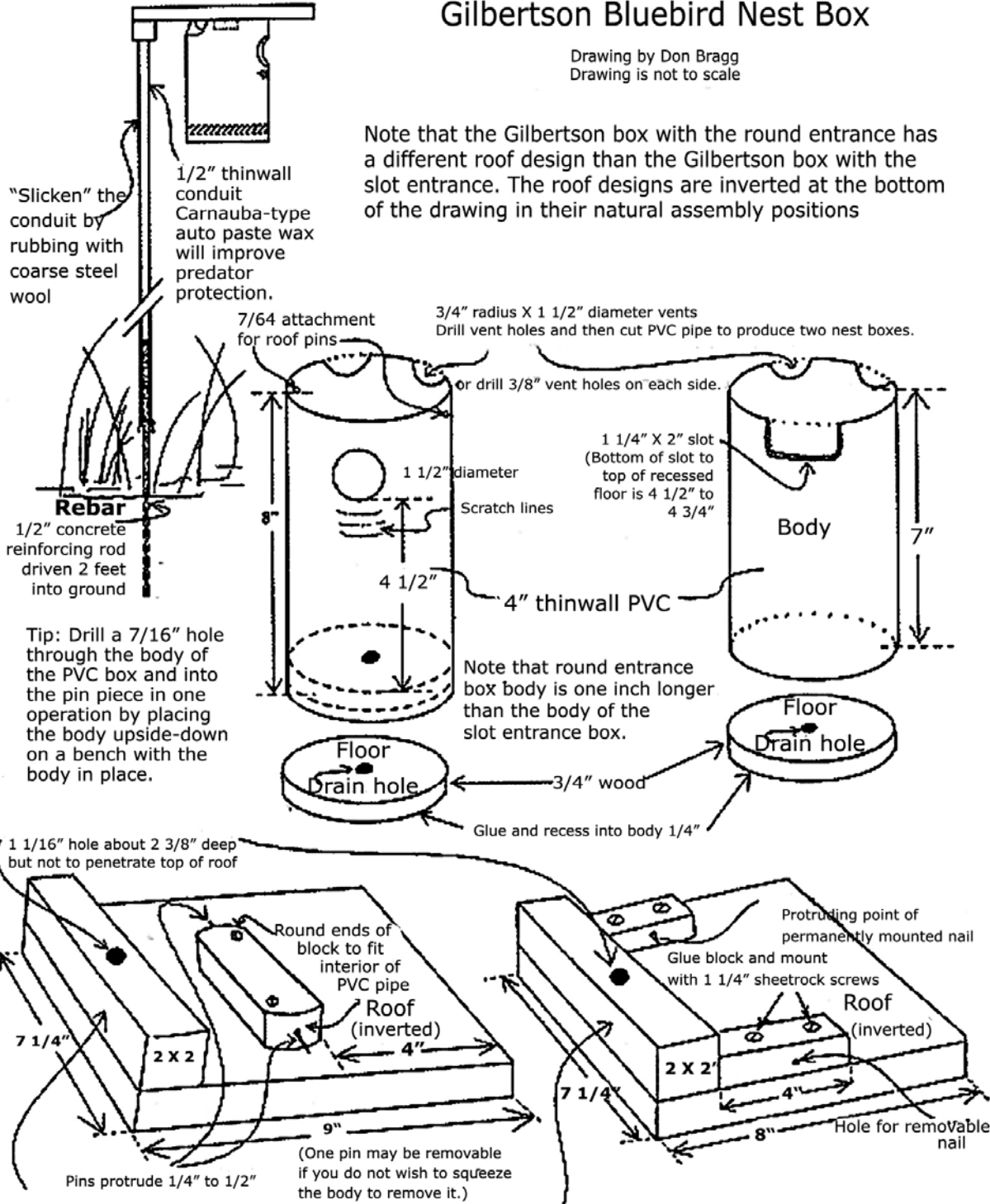
Note: Steve Gilbertson relayed to a NYSBS member when discussing this box that he feels the top opening Gilbertson box has an advantage in that the box can be easily removed from the roof and then carried far from the nestbox site to dump its contents. This may help prevent predation. It also allows the monitor to protect himself from possible exposure to numerous diseases, real or imagined, such as hanta virus and avian borne diseases as the box can be cleaned out close to the ground which prevents the monitor from inhaling the dust from the box.

For more information contact Marsha Smith, Corresponding Secretary, NYSBS at: 607-844-8238 or email marsh18@frontiernet.net, or visit us at www.NYSBS.org.

Gilbertson Bluebird Nest Box

Drawing by Don Bragg
Drawing is not to scale

Note that the Gilbertson box with the round entrance has a different roof design than the Gilbertson box with the slot entrance. The roof designs are inverted at the bottom of the drawing in their natural assembly positions



Fasten 2" X 2" end support from top using 1 1/2" screws and exterior glue

Roof designed for squeeze opening attachment to round entrance PVC nest box

Roof with removable pin designed for slot entrance PVC nest box

Plans by Steve Gilbertson, courtesy North American Bluebird Society website, www.NABS.org