

# *How to Make a Simple Nest Box Retriever*



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## How to Make a Simple Nest Box Retriever

If you have hanging nest boxes, a question that you may have is how do you hang and retrieve the nest boxes? One answer is to use the simple retriever that consists of just 3 parts:

1. A 4 ½-5" long<sup>1</sup> ¼-5/16" diameter round screw hook. Preferably it is pointed on the hook end. (National Hardware N220-871 Screw Hook 5/16 By 4-1/2 Inch Zinc Plated Steel.)
2. A quality paint roller. Rollers with a sturdy handle having a rectangular shape at the roller end are preferable as they tend to have thicker walls. (Linzer Ever Grip Threaded End 9 in. W Metal/Plastic Regular Paint Roller.)
3. A painter's extension pole the length of which, when fully extended, will allow you to comfortably reach the highest branch from which you intend to hang a box. (Ettore 44016 REA-C-H Extension Pole, 16-Feet<sup>1</sup>)

To assemble the retriever:

1. If needed, sharpen the hook's curved end to make it pointed. You should also open the hook up slightly. Both of these actions will better enable getting the hook between the tree's branch and box's hanger wire.



2. Cut the handle off the paint roller while preserving as much of the handle as possible. Use a long rod to drive the cut off metal portion of the roller from the handle. Inspect the cut end for sharp edges and file smooth if needed.

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<sup>1</sup> The roof overhang determines the length of the hook needed. With the box hung on the retriever's hook and the pole vertical, the box should hang vertically. If it does not, you should consider using a longer hook.

1. File the pointed end of the hook smooth.
2. Drill a hole through the handle that is less in diameter than the hook's threaded end. Remember that you can always make the hole larger, but not smaller.
3. Fully screw the eye hook into the handle until it protrudes slightly on the opposite side.
4. The hook should not be too hard or too easy to turn. If it is too hard to turn, remove the hook, drill the hole in the handle slightly larger and reinsert the hook.
5. Screw the assembly onto the extension pole.



### ***Using the Retriever***

Usually it takes some practice before one becomes proficient at hanging and retrieving boxes. Unless you are already proficient in using the retriever, it is highly recommended that you first practice with an empty box instead of beginning with an occupied box. Once the box is occupied, its contents are in your hands... be careful not to drop the box.

The steps to hang a box especially for the first time include:

- Select a live branch that will easily support the box, and provide shade for the box at least at noon and during the hottest part of the day. All-day shade is preferable. If possible, hang the box so it will not migrate on the branch when it's windy. Hanging the box where a branch forks can ensure it holds its place. The position of the box should allow for unimpeded access by the birds and yourself.
- You may choose to re-form the box's hanger hook so that it better fits the branch and/or rotate the hanger so the box will face a different direction once hung.

## **Using the Retriever to hang a nest box**

At this point you may want to view a video of my hanging and retrieving a nest box. Either click the below link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDzjL9jtIs4>

or scan the QR code to access the video.



- The retriever's hook is to be inserted between the branch and box side of the hanger. Knowing this, turn the retriever's hook slightly to the left or right so it will be pointed away from the selected branch and towards the box side of the hanger. (See cover photo.)
- Important note: I prefer to hook the hanger such that when viewed from below, the hanger is on the left of the hook and the branch is on the right of the hook. Why? Because if the hook assembly (hook and roller handle) becomes loose it can be tightened by rotating the pole clockwise when viewed from below.
- With the extension pole collapsed and vertical, hang the box on the retriever's hook.
- Position yourself under the selected branch and rest the vertical retriever on the ground. The retriever now bears the weight of the box. You may choose to press the pole against your body for added stability.
- While keeping the retriever vertical, unlock the top section of the pole and lock it after extending it. One hand (right) holds the lower section and its fingers pinch the extending section ensuring it doesn't drop. The other hand (left) grasps and slowly extends the upper section. Here the action is extend, pinch, extend, pinch, repeating until the section is extended after which it is locked. Continue extending and locking additional sections until the target branch is almost reached.
- While keeping the pole vertical, lift the retriever off the ground moving the box's hook horizontally up and over the target branch and then lower the box to hang it.
- Once you are sure the box is safely hung, carefully remove the retriever's hook, place the retriever's end on the ground, and unlock, collapse and lock each section of the pole.

## **Using the Retriever to retrieve a nest box**

The steps to retrieve a box include:

- Look at the hanging nest box and note where it is hung because you will likely want to re-hang it in the same location.
- Observe the position of the box as you will want to position the retriever's hook between the box side of the hanger and branch.
- Turn the retriever's hook slightly to the left or right so it will be pointed away from the branch while between the hanger and branch. (See cover photo.)
- Position yourself under the box, extend the retriever locking each section until the box is almost within reach. You may choose to press the pole against your body for added stability.
- Slip the retriever's hook between the box's hanger and branch.
- Lift the retriever up to free the box, move the box away from the branch and carefully lower the box and retriever until the retriever rests on the ground. The retriever now bears the weight of the box. The box should remain upright due to its own weight.
- Unlock the lower section of the extension pole and lock it after collapsing it. One hand (right) holds the lower section and pinches the section being lowered ensuring it doesn't drop. The other hand (left) loosely grasps the section being lowered allowing it to slowly slip lower. Here the action is slip and pinch, slip and pinch, repeating until the section is collapsed after which it is locked. Continue collapsing and locking additional sections until the box is within reach.
- Remove the box from the hook while keeping it upright.

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<sup>i</sup> I have used numerous extension poles, but the *Ettore 44016 REA-C-H Extension Pole* best fits my needs. I prefer it because:

1. It is a 4 section pole which collapses to less than 5 feet and extends to 16 feet. Collapsed it stores easily and when standing on end it is a convenient height for those shorter in stature. Extended it allows me to reach boxes hung at heights of 22 feet.
2. Its locking mechanism allows the sections to be locked with a simple ¼ turn.



I have no connection with *Ettore* other than recommending and using the pole. I do not profit by doing so.