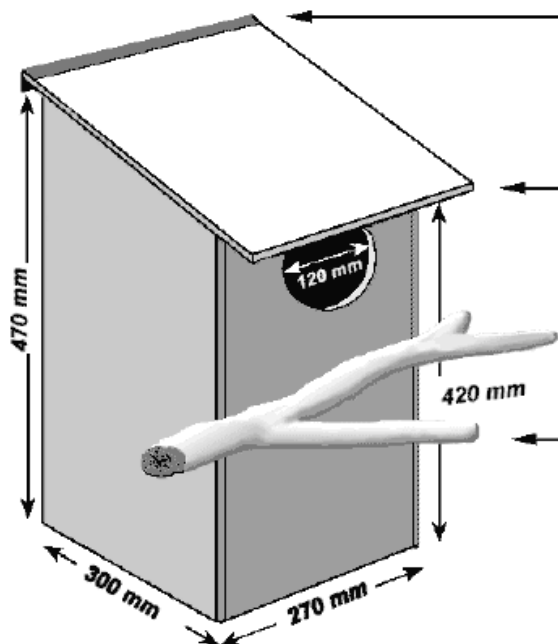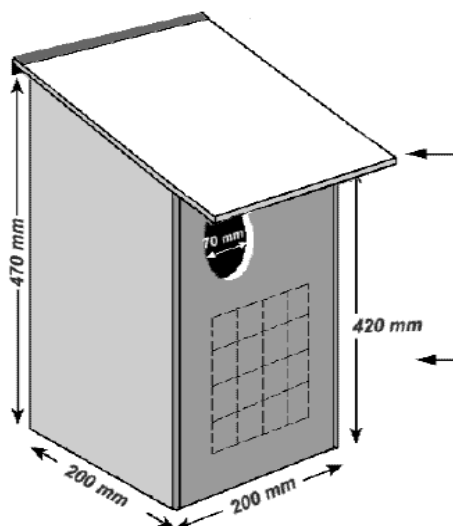# Possum Box Designs

Common Brushtail Possum

The top edge of the roof should be weather sealed with a folded strip of sheet metal, aluminium angle or a rubber flap. (An old rubber inner tube is OK)

To stop rain getting in, eaves should overhang by 110mm to 120mm. The entry hole (which doesn't have to be round) should be located directly under it and be between 110mm to 120mm wide.

A sturdy length of branch screwed firmly to the front of the box is an optional extra that will help the possum enter and exit more easily.

Drill four holes (approx 5 mm) through the floor near each corner, to allow any water that might get in to drain out.
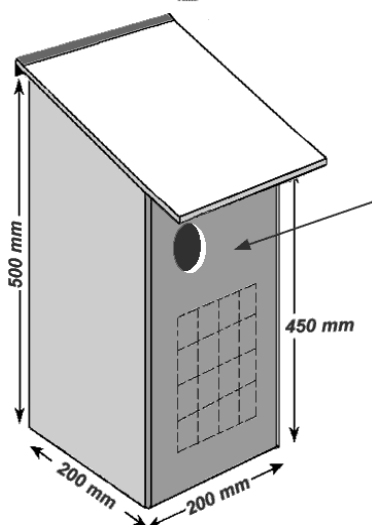
Ringtail Possum Box

Is basically the same design as the brush tail box. It is slightly narrower and the entrance hole is only 80mm wide.

Remember it can be helpful to construct the box so that the top can be opened up for inspection.

This picture does not show the branch, as above, so that we can remind you to include some mesh on the inside under the entry hole, to allow juvenile possums to climb up to the entry. This 'ladder' may be included in all possum box constructions. However, we still suggest adding the branch to help possums 'get a grip' on their way in.

Sugar Glider Box

Although the sugar glider is one of the smaller possums, its nestbox is quite large.

However the entry hole (which would probably be a little higher up than this diagram illustrates) is only 40 mm wide.

Once again, we suggest adding a baffle, a branch fastened to the exterior, and a mesh, or other device that will allow juvenile gliders to climb up to the entrance hole.

Building a possum box is a great way to keep wildlife close - without having them move into your roof!. You can buy ready-made boxes, but we have provided some basic dimensions for those who want to make up their own boxes. These are similar to the plans provided by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the designs suggested by the Gould League of Victoria. There are boxes for various possums and birds. We have included designs for brush-tails, ringtails, and sugar gliders. For other plans, we suggest buying the 'Nest Box Book' which is published by the Gould League of Victoria.

Some construction tips that apply to all possum boxes.

Materials
You can use any timber you like to make a possum box (except chipboard, which disintegrates rapidly outdoors). 12mm ply untreated pine is excellent.

Fastenings
Use screws and glue to hold the construction together. They will last longer and hold greater weight than nails
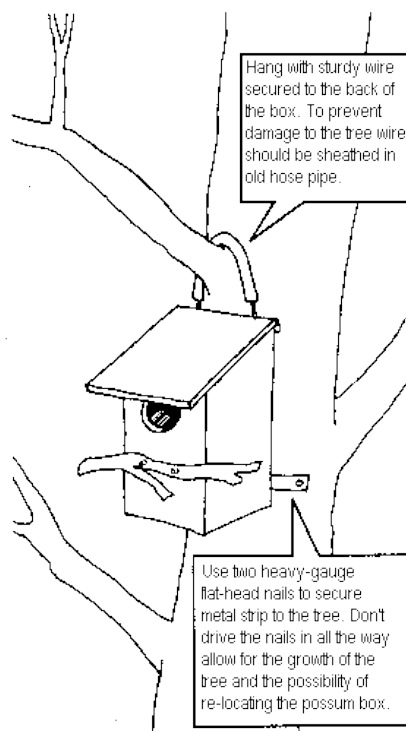
Box Tops
While it is not essential, it is best if you can arrange the top so it can be opened for inspection, but latched closed for protection. I fasten the back of the lid to the back with an old inner tube, which provides 'hinge' and a weatherproof seal.

Box Bottoms
The bottom of the box should fit inside the four sides, and be screwed in from the side. This gives greater strength than if flush with the walls, and screwed in from the bottom. Drill at least four 5-7mm holes near the corners to allow any water that might get in to drain out.

Finish
The wood does not have to be smooth as possums are used to roughing it. However, a good coat of sealant and/or UV resistant paint on the exterior will help the box last years longer. Be sure to seal the edges, as that is where the water gets in and damages the box. Choose a colour that blends in with the surrounding bush. (Dark browns and greens work well) Nesting material isn't essential but a few handfuls of dead leaves would provide comfort and insulation.

Hang with sturdy wire secured to the back of the box. To prevent damage to the tree wire should be sheathed in old hose pipe.

Use two heavy-gauge flat-head nails to secure metal strip to the tree. Don't drive the nails in all the way allow for the growth of the tree and the possibility of re-locating the possum box.

Stairs
We suggest attaching some wire mesh (no sharp edges), or other device on the inside AND outside of the box under the hole to help juveniles climb up to the exit. Alternatively, a small branch fastened flush to the outside of the box, under the entrance hole will give the possum something to grab onto while entering and exiting his home.

Attachment to the tree
Possum boxes should be attached to the tree trunk in two places for security. You may well have to improvise to suit the tree, but use materials that are not going to perish or be gnawed by the possums. A loop of wire or chain over an overhanging branch is a good option for the top. Sheathing this in an old hose helps to protect the tree. The bottom can be attached using a flexible metal strip approximately 30 mm from the bottom of the box, and nailed to the tree with a couple of heavy gauge flat head nails. Don't drive these nails in all the way, allow for the growth of the tree and the possibility of relocating the possum box in the future.

Placement
Ideally, the box should be at least 4 meters from the ground, to provide protection from pests, and a bit of privacy! The box should face away from prevailing winds, and should **not** face towards the afternoon sun. (If you can avoid westerly and easterly aspects, and still avoid the prevailing wind direction, you are on a winner!)

Timing
Don't let the possum near his new home until the paint smell has disappeared. If you are trying to attract a possum, you can put some fruit in the box - but remember to take it out before it goes off!! Few good homes will remain empty for long if there are possums in the area.