

Predator Baffles:

Easy, Inexpensive, and Effective

Every pole supporting a bird house should have a predator baffle on it. Otherwise, pole-climbing predators, such as snakes, raccoons, or squirrels, can make an easy meal of your birds, their eggs, or young. Below are plans for making an effective baffle.

How to Make This Baffle: Materials needed: hardware cloth (1/4" mesh), machine screws with nuts, hanger iron (two 7" strips), duct tape, and a section of galvanized stovepipe that will measure 24" long by 7" in diameter when assembled.

With tin snips, cut the hardware cloth into a circle 8 inches in diameter. Place it over the stovepipe, bending the edges down so that it will fit snugly into the pipe, about an inch down from the top (A). Close any gaps between the hardware cloth and the stovepipe, so snakes can't squeeze through.

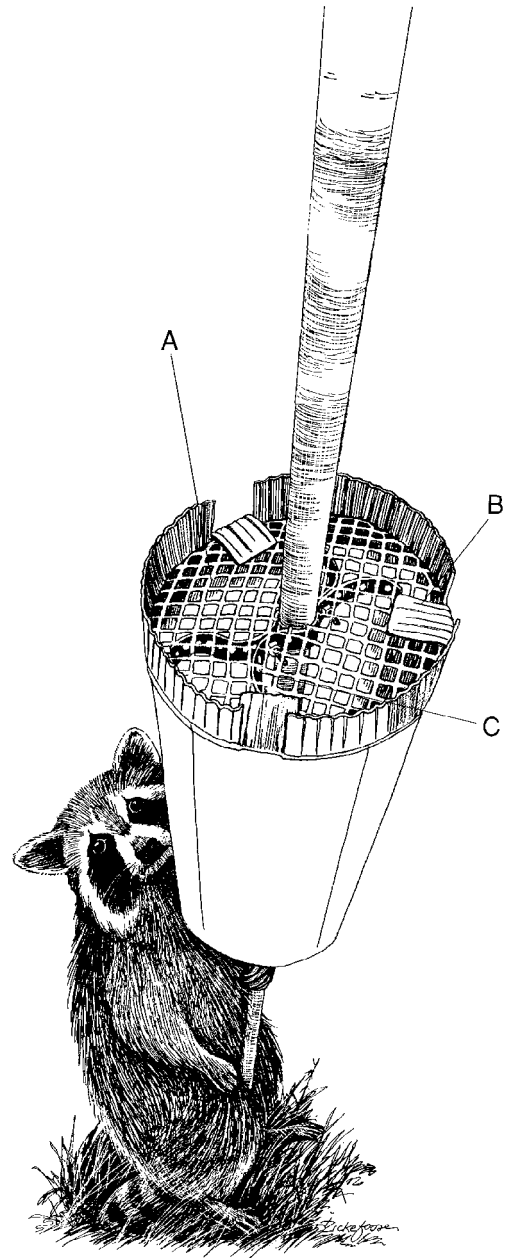
Next, use tin snips to cut three tabs (B) in the top of the stovepipe. Bend these over the hardware cloth. Cut a small hole in the middle of the cloth to allow the assembly to slip over the box mounting pipe.

Bolt the two strips of hanger iron (C) securely on either side of the mounting pipe, and bend them to support the hardware cloth. Duct tape wrapped around the pole helps hold the hanger iron in place. Slip the assembled baffle over the hanger iron bracket, and mount the baffle at least four feet off the ground. The baffle should wobble a little, which further discourages climbing predators. Instructions and artwork reprinted by permission from [Enjoying Purple Martins More](#) by Richard Wolinski, published by Bird Watcher's Digest Press. Bird Watcher's Digest is an excellent bimonthly birding magazine.

A Landlord Testimonial: Carla McRee of Lockhart, TX, reported that her homemade stovepipe guard stopped a six-foot chicken snake. "Two seasons ago I lost several nestlings and an adult to fire ants. Now I use a sticky substance called 'Tanglefoot' smeared on the poles, and it works very well. The Tanglefoot is so sticky that it made me nervous that a bird might become stuck, so I applied it under the stovepipe predator baffle (from [Enjoying Purple Martins More](#)), which worked great. AND the baffles WORK!!! We have 4-6 foot long chicken snakes around here. It was possible to see where the snakes had tried to climb the pole due to the smearing of the Tanglefoot; also good information that sticky stuff does NOT deter the snakes and that the baffles are a MUST! We watched one 6-footer slither away (hungry) from one pole (I was dancing and doing cartwheels in the yard!)"

The PMCA Pole Guards are made of stainless steel that lasts a lifetime and looks good; (wax annually for best results). Hardware is also rustproof stainless steel. Two-foot-long, 8-inch diameter aluminum baffle is suspended from an adjustable hanging bracket and collar that fits any round metal pole with a diameter between 3/4" to 2&3/8". Also available for 2" and 3" square poles.

Adjustable Pole Guards can be installed without removing the martin housing from the pole or pipe. Installation instructions are illustrated with step by step photos, so it's quick and easy to install. Quick Release Pole Guards are also offered and highly recommended for quicker and easier nest checks since these guards can be removed in seconds. So you can make one or buy one, but be sure you have a guard on every bluebird and martin pole!



A martin's-eye-view of a raccoon and the stovepipe baffle pole mount. The slick metal baffle wobbles on the pole preventing the raccoon from climbing to the box. The mesh inside the baffle keeps snakes from slithering up the pole.

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