

# Bird house ornament

Kurt Hertzog shows how to turn a bird house ornament

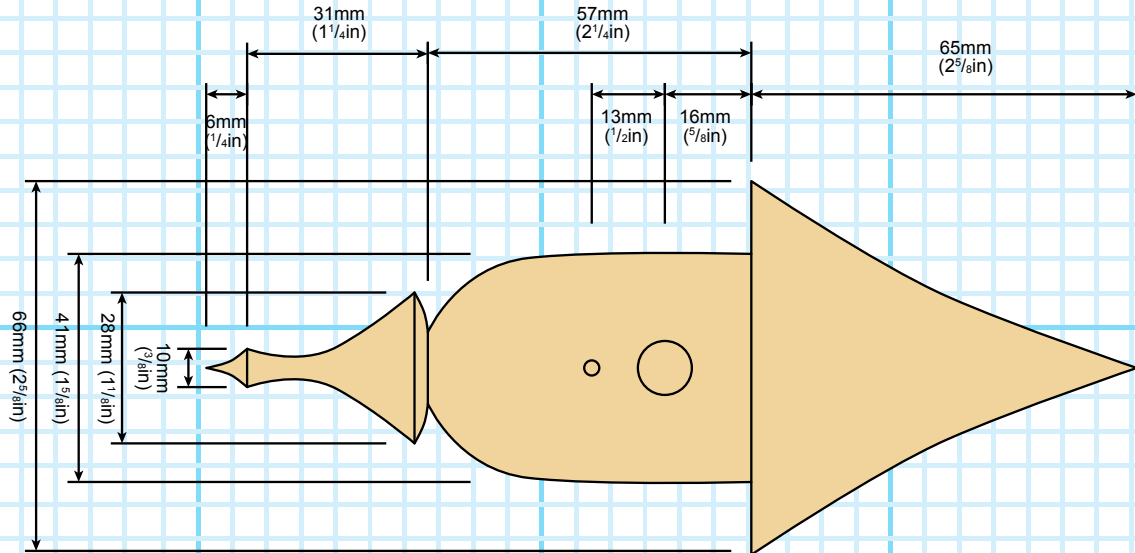


**As a continuation of the hanging ornament projects, this month we'll turn the traditional bird house ornament complete with its own resident. We'll use a paper bird, available in craft stores in various colours and sizes, to live in our house.** In order to make this ornament light enough to hang on a tree or stand, we'll hollow it as well. I've picked sizes for the project but feel free to scale it up or down based on your own needs. The concept of the ornament is the important part. This will work for a wide variety of designs. You can mix and match species or alternate materials as desired. There are many

opportunities for additional enhancements of the bird house parts by using painting, piercing, pyrography, carving and more. Let the component parts be the start of your creation. You can also integrate a glued-in finial from the technique in last issue's project. This allows you to create longer and more delicate finials as well as have an interchangeability capability. You can turn finials until you arrive at one that suits your body and roof design and then commit to gluing it in. Merge these projects as building blocks.

## TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- PPE & RPE
- Spindle gouge
- Spindle roughing gouge
- Narrow parting tool
- Ring tool, round nose scraper, or round carbide cutter for hollowing
- Chuck with mid-size jaws and spigot jaws
- Drill chuck
- 35mm Forstner bit
- 10mm drill
- 3mm drill
- Brass screw eye
- 5 minute epoxy adhesive
- Abrasives from 150 to 320 grit
- Wipe-On Polyurethane finish
- Thick viscosity Cyanoacrylate adhesive
- Accelerator for Ca adhesive
- Hanging material of choice such as string, yarn, monofilament, or fine wire
- Paper bird decoration (floral decorations) from craft store
- Timbers of your choice.

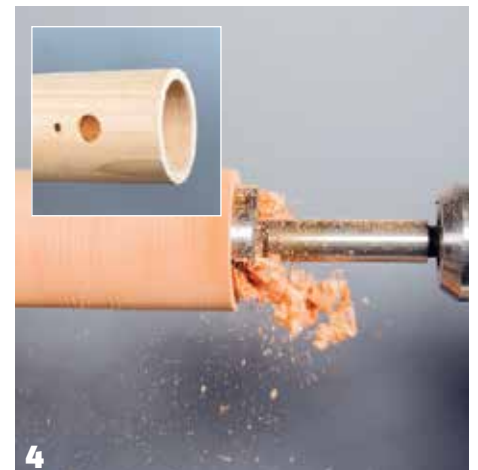
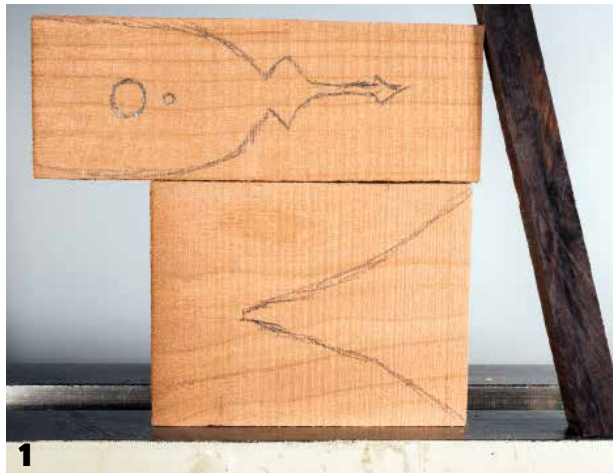


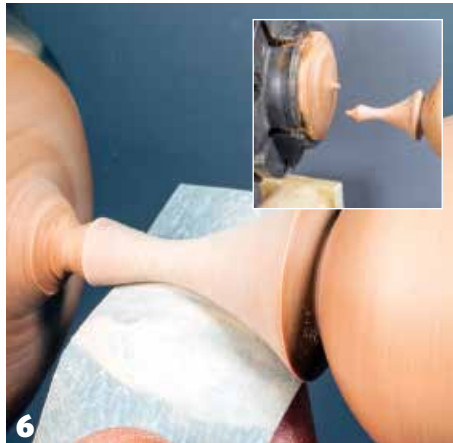
**1** Select the stock. The roof and the body can be the same or different species – I prefer to use timbers that will hold detail well. I am using a piece of cherry (*Prunus* spp.) for this project, but of course you can use what timber you choose. Use perch material of dense wood and straight grain. I chose purpleheart (*Peltogyne* spp.) for contrast. Lay out the bird and perch hole, spacing them for a pleasing appearance directly in line with each other.

**2** While you have flats, drill both of the holes in the locations you've marked. Drill halfway through the block with each hole. The bird hole is 10mm and the perch hole is 3mm. A pistol drill will also work.

**3** Mount the body between centres and round the shape. The project used 40mm for the body diameter but scale yours as desired. Plan any changes based on your roof diameter allowing for overhang. The project roof diameter is 63mm. Turn a spigot on the bottom end of the body. Be certain you cut it on the correct end. The spigot should allow for the shoulder to mount on the jaws with clearance at the bottom of the chuck.

**4** Mount the body in the chuck. Hollow with a 35mm Forstner bit. Adjust size if you have changed body diameter. The body can be also hollowed with a round-nose scraper, ring tool, or carbide cutting tool. Hollow to slightly below the perch hole. Clean up and face the open end of the body to be flat using a spindle gouge. Sand the outside of the body, working through the grits to your desired finish.





**5** While the body shape is securely mounted in the chuck, make any changes you wish, being cautious of the hollowing already done. You can mark the bottom of the hollowing if needed. Remove stock to shape the finial while still leaving support to sand. The lower finial can be any length you find pleasing. A good starting point is a finial length of  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the finished body length. Remember that some of the body length will be shrouded by the roof overhang.

**6** Sand the finial through the grits, faring your work into the already sanded body. Sand at a slow speed, letting the abrasive do the work. Clean the debris between grits and sand to your final finish. Use a skew chisel or detail gouge to thin the finial to the point of parting off. Support the body with one hand as you part it off or use the tail centre with a pencil in a drill chuck.

**7** Mount the roof blank between centres to round the stock. Put a spigot at one end for mounting in the chuck. After mounting the roof blank in the chuck, face off the end using your spindle gouge. Use the spindle gouge to create the roof overhang. The undercut can be slightly concave-contoured or straight walled since it won't be seen. Start with a slight undercut. It can be deepened after checking the look.

**8** Using the completed body, place it into the roof overhang to check the appearance. There is no special measurement for this. Deepen the undercut until you have a pleasing relationship between the roof overhang, the bird hole, and body overall.

**9** Use a narrow parting tool to cut the channel for the body gluing. Create a slip fit then deepen for a good glue sidewall. Leave the gluing channel shoulder intact as you hollow. A round-nose scraper will work well here.

**10** Bring the tail centre up for support. Begin shaping the roof using your spindle gouge to progressively taper the roof. Remove stock only as needed for access. Keeping the extra mass will reduce the vibration. Continue to work towards the headstock.

**11** Continue to shape the roof. The overall roof height will be based on the contour you cut. Make it concave to achieve the overall length you wish. Progress until nearly complete. Sand through the grits to prep the surface for finishing.

**12** Check the look of the finished ornament by placing the body into the slip-fit gluing channel. Return the tail centre and alter the contour for a taller or shorter roof if needed. Part off the roof and hand-sand the tip.

**Top tip**

- Not only do these ornaments make great tree decorations, you can buy multi-branch wire hangers to display them at other times of the year.



13 Mount your perch stock in the chuck exposing about 50mm or so. Make sure the piece is nice and stable as this section will be turned thin. Use the parting tool to round and reduce the diameter over a short length. This will be the end of the perch that will be glued into the body. Turn the perch diameter progressively smaller until you achieve a slip-fit into the perch hole on the body. You can measure this but it is very easy to use the body hole to test the diameter. Test the fit only while the lathe is switched off.



14 After completing the glue-in diameter, turn the shoulder that presses to the ornament body. Size it to be pleasing to the ornament size. Complete the perch with the narrow parting tool in small steps toward the headstock and part off. You can create a different shape of perch if you choose.

15 Use the wipe-on polyurethane, or finish of your choice, and apply finish to the ornament parts as the instructions direct. Thread the screw eye into roof. Here is where you hope you left enough thickness so it does not split. Use a pin to create a start point. Go slowly and carefully to avoid breaking the brass shaft.



16 Apply a small amount of epoxy to the inside of the perch hole with a toothpick. Insert the perch. Place four small dots of epoxy on the side wall of the glue channel and insert the body positioning for appearance.

17 After gluing, set the assembly aside to allow for full curing. I use a small glass as a curing rest. Pick the colour and size bird you will use for the ornament. Different colours will complement different species.

18 Wet the perch with cyanoacrylate (CA) accelerator. Place a dot of thick CA on the bottom of the bird and position it as desired on the perch. Hold in place while the CA sets – which will happen quickly. Use hanging material of your choice.



## Other options

The same project can be made using other woods – walnut and chestnut, for example. The roof could also be made slightly convex with some detail groove rather than a concave contour. ●

**LEFT:** An example using white oak. After hollowing, the side walls were pierced. Rather than a perch outside for the bird, a perch and the bird were assembled inside so it resembled a caged bird.  
**CENTRE:** A different shaped ornament constructed from a blank created from cut-offs of glue-ups of different species.  
**RIGHT:** Another example of an ornament that has had the roof pyrographed and coloured with alcohol dyes. The body is a pierced brown chicken eggshell. If you can pierce eggshell, timber is easy.

