Bluebird Nest Box
Instructions

The eastern bluebird, once a common songbird of the eastern half of the United States, has experienced a 90% decline in population over its range in the past 50 years. The reasons it has declined include habitat loss, decrease in natural nesting sites, and competition from the introduced European starling and English (house) sparrow. Installing and monitoring nest boxes in proper habitat can help BRING BACK THE BLUEBIRDS. Here is some information that will prove useful in your own efforts to help this beautiful bird.

**WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?**
The male bluebird has a bright blue back, a rusty red breast and a white belly. The Female has similar colors, but is much duller. Both are about 7 inches long, about the Size of a large sparrow.

**WHAT'S THEIR HABITAT?**
Eastern bluebirds like open areas of short grass with scattered trees, including lawns, meadows, fallow fields, pastures, orchards (if they are not sprayed with pesticides), golf courses, etc.

**WHAT DO THEY EAT?**
During spring and summer, their favorite foods include grasshoppers, beetles, caterpillars and other insects. In winter they eat wild fruits including, multiflora rose, flowering dogwood sumac, and bittersweet.

Bluebirds search for food from perches that allow them to scan the ground for prey.

**THE NESTING CYCLE**
Bluebirds begin returning to their nesting Areas in mid-March, and soon begin looking for a place to nest. They build their nests in old woodpecker holes, if nest boxes are not available, but there are not enough old woodpecker holes.

Bluebirds build a bowl-shaped nest entirely of fine grass. They lay 3-6 blue eggs (7% of bluebird eggs are white). One egg is laid per day. Incubation does not begin until all the eggs have been laid. The eggs hatch in 12-16 days. The young remain in the nest 16-19 days. The female begins a second nest 7-10 days after the first brood leaves the nest. Bluebirds may nest two or three times in a season.

**BLUEBIRD NESTBOX INFORMATION**

**PLACEMENT:** Nest boxes should be placed in a suitable area (grassy area with scattered trees) by mid-March. DO NOT place near thick shrub growth, facing roads, in the woods or near buildings. (buildings attract house sparrows). To minimize competition with house sparrows, boxes should be placed at least 200 yards from the nearest building. If boxes are installed near buildings, they should be checked every three days, and sparrow nests removed.

It is best to install each nest box on a smooth metal post (3/4 inch water pipe or electrical conduit) at a height of about five feet above the ground and within 100 feet of a tree. The entrance hole should face a tree so that young birds taking their first flight can reach it easily. Young birds that fledge to the ground are vulnerable to predators. Nest boxes can be installed singly, or in pairs fifteen feet apart. Pairing boxes further reduces competition from other birds.
MAINTENANCE: Check your nest box(s) in November and February for needed repairs. Remove old bird, wasp and mouse nests, and repaint if necessary. A light colored, exterior house paint should be used to avoid over heating during hot summer weather. White paint should not be used as it attracts house sparrows.

MONITORING: You may check your nest boxes once a week from April to mid-August. Adults will not desert their eggs or young even if you briefly open the box and look inside. You should avoid opening the boxes before the first egg is laid and when the young are 12-19 days old. At this age the young may fledge earlier than they are supposed to and may not survive.

WHAT OTHER KINDS OF BIRDS WILL USE YOUR NEST BOX?

House Sparrows: Bluebird nest boxes cannot be made sparrow proof. House sparrows build large, bulky nests of coarse grass, paper and other litter. They often fill the nest box right to the top. They are a foreign invader and are not protected by law. You may remove their nests as soon as they are discovered. They may attempt to nest several times before they give up. Sparrow eggs are white to greenish white, speckled with grays and browns.

Laws protect all other birds that may use the bluebird boxes. They are beneficial, native birds. Their nests should be left undisturbed.

Tree Swallows: With an iridescent blue-green head and back and a white underside, the tree swallow captures its food on the wing. It will put on an aerial show from dawn to dusk. Its nest is a neat bowl of fine grass lined with feathers. Its eggs are pure white.

House Wren: A tiny brown bird with a short, erect tail, the house wren fills the summer air with its bubbling song. It builds its nest of sticks and will often fill the nest box to the top. Nest boxes that attract wrens are probably placed too close to brushy areas and should be moved to a better site. Wrens do not tolerate other kinds of birds nesting too close to them. They will often sneak into neighboring nest boxes and destroy the eggs while the adult birds are gone. Wren eggs are reddish brown.

Black-capped Chickadee: Named for their distinct black head cap, these tiny birds occasionally use nest boxes. They build their nests of animal hair, mosses and other fine materials. They are not aggressive and are sometimes chased away by bluebirds. Chickadee eggs are white, dotted with reddish-brown.

Tufted Titmouse: This slightly large cousin of the chickadee has a gray back, head crest and chestnut sides. Its nest is made of decomposing leaves, animal hair and other fine materials. Titmouse eggs are white and unevenly sprinkled with reddish-brown.

In fall and winter, deer mice may occasionally use the nest boxes. In addition to bird nesting material, they will add cattail and thistle down, paper and other insulating materials. Mouse nests should be removed before the bluebirds arrive in spring.
1. Nail **BACK** to **RIGHT SIDE**. Keep bottom edges flush.

2. Nail **FRONT** to **RIGHT SIDE**.

3. Insert and nail base into position ¼” above the bottom. Wood grain flows between front and back.

4. Nail **LEFT SIDE** (Door) into place, keeping All pieces flush at the bottom.

5. Nail **PREDATOR GUARD** to **FRONT** with 1 ¼” nails.

6. Nail on **TOP**. Make sure overhang distances are correct.

7. Drill Screw hole through **LEFT SIDE** and into base. Insert screw.

8. Stain or paint box (outside only).

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**MATERIALS**

- 1 ¾” dry wall or 6d coated nails (15);
- 1 ¼” dry wall or coated nails (4)
- 1 # 8 x 1 ¾” flathead wood screw;
- paint, hammer, drill, bits, paint brush.

**REMEMBER**

- * Keep all edges flush (even)
- * Leave ¼” air space between top and sides.
- * Recess base ¼” from bottom.
- * Make sure TOP is lined up properly.
- * Make sure nails don’t protrude into box.