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Create Your Own Backyard Bluebird Habitat



As cavity nesters, Bluebirds seek out nesting sites like tree hollows and stumps to build their nests. As humans actively remove these natural nesting sites, naturalists have encouraged people throughout the country to erect bluebird boxes which will help maintain and grow populations of bluebirds for generations to come. You can do this by:

- Increasing nest sites by erecting a proper nest box or creating a bluebird trail of many nest boxes.
- Monitor your nest boxes to identify and correct nesting problems to improve the bluebird's chance of survival.
- Keep records on your nest boxes and send the information to the Ohio Bluebird Society to help its research programs.

The Bluebird Nest Box

- A good bluebird nest box should be well ventilated, have watertight seams, contain drainage holes on the floor, be easy to monitor and be easy to clean.
- Cedar and Redwood are ideal, although Pine, plywood and other types of wood can be used. The outside of the boxes can be painted or stained. A light color is preferred to control heat.
- Treated lumber should not be used because of its chemical toxicity.
- Boxes for Eastern Bluebirds should have a round entrance hole of 1-1/2 inch to 1-9/16 inch (38 - 40mm).
- Oval holes measuring 1-3/8 inch X 2-1/4 inch may also be used for the Eastern Bluebird.

Where should a box be installed?

- Boxes can be installed in pairs about 18 to 20 feet apart or individually. The pairs of boxes should then be about 100 yards apart. Bluebirds are territorial; couples will not use boxes placed close together.
- The best location to install a box is in open grasslands away from woods/brush, houses, barns, tool-sheds and where there is short (chemical-free) grass.
- There should be a clean source of water nearby.
- If possible, face the box away from the prevailing winds and towards a tree or shrub which is within 100 feet of the box. Trees and shrubs provide a landing spot for the young bluebirds when they leave the box. This will keep them off the ground, away from predators.
- Do not face box opening toward open roads, a large pond or lake.

Providing a Water Source

Bluebirds love water and will drink and bathe in a bath year-round. A shallow bath, either on the ground or on a pedestal works great. Try to keep the water depth no more than 1.5 inches. All baths need to be kept away from low ground cover where cats and other animals lurk. You can also create bird ponds that are natural-looking mini-ponds built into the ground. Adding a waterfall or dripper that creates the sound of moving water will attract even more bluebirds.



Build Your Own Bluebird Nest Box



Materials:

- Lumber: cypress, white cedar, hemlock, or local weather-resistant wood with low toxicity
- One 1x10x11" (roof)
- Four 1x6x10" (front, sides, and back)
- Two 1x6x4" (floor and inner roof)
- One 2x2x9" (pole-mounting block)
- Exterior screws: twelve 1 5/8" (basic construction); two to six 1 1/4" (roof to inner roof); and two 2" (pole mounting block to back)
- Caulk or sealant (sealing between top and inner roof)
- One 2 1/2" galvanized nail (bent, latch nail)
- Mounting: One 1/2"x5' galvanized metal conduit, one 1/2"x4'-5' steel rebar (for stake), and one conduit coupler

Follow this link for detailed instructions on building your nest box:
<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-build-bluebird-nest-box>

Gardening for Bluebirds

As the bluebird's primary diet in the spring and summer consists of insects, it is critical not to spray insecticides or pesticides. In the winter months, bluebirds shift to a diet of berries and if you provide bluebirds with the right combination of helpful native plants, you'll be able to support and enjoy them all year long.



Blueberry



Flowering Dogwood



Viburnum

Beneficial plants for the bluebird habitat:

- Flowering Dogwood
- Holly
- Eastern Red Cedar
- Elderberry
- Viburnum
- Bayberry
- Blueberry
- Serviceberry

Plants that cause damage to the bluebird habitat:

- Russian and autumn olive
- English Ivy
- Barberry
- Boxwood
- Japanese Honeysuckle
- Multiflora Rose
- Porcelain Berry

Sources:

Ohio Bluebird Society, <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org>
Audobon, <https://www.audubon.org/>
Michigan Bluebird Society, <https://michiganbluebirds.org/>