



Bluebird Nesting Box Information

MOUNTING AND LOCATION:

- Mount the Bluebird box in early spring. Males arrive in early March to check out houses. They nest in early May and may also have a second brood in early summer.
- Mount the box so that the bottom of the box is about 4 - 6 feet from the ground to deter predators. You should also put a cone shaped metal predator guard under the box to prevent snakes, raccoons, and other predators from getting up to the box. Another predator guard made out of wood (same size hole as box) should be attached to the front of the box. This will prevent some predators from reaching in the box and deter other birds from going in.
- The opening of the box should face away from the prevailing winds (South, East, or South-east). The opening should also be facing a tree or shrub within 25-50 feet for the fledglings to land on their first flight!
- Place boxes 100 yards from each other to minimize bluebird territory overlap. This distance can be reduced if there are trees/shrubs/landscape that break up the line of sight between the boxes
- Locate the box in an open area with short grass. They prefer short grass for its easier to see the insects on which they feed.
- Livestock can damage nesting boxes. The boxes should be located where it is out of reach or reinforced to prevent damage.
- Consider placing boxes in pairs, either back to back or within 4-6 feet of each other to encourage tree swallows and bluebirds to both nest. They will tolerate each other but not pairs of their same species.

MAINTENANCE:

- Check the box weekly, doing this will increase the chances of success. It's **IMPORTANT** to check for Blowfly larvae. Uncontrolled Blowfly larvae may weaken or possibly even kill the nestling Bluebirds. If you identify larvae in the nest, you should replace all nest material with dried lawn clippings in a shape (bowl) similar to that of the original nest. Just be careful to protect the nestlings from the sun/cold while doing this. Song birds have a poor sense of smell so don't be concerned about the handling of the birds.
- You will also want to replace the nest if it has been saturated following a rainfall.
- Weekly monitoring should stop after the chicks are about 12 days old, at that point any disturbance may cause them to leave the nest prematurely.
- Clean out all old nesting material after each brood (possibly twice per season). Also check them in late February to remove any unwanted winter guests (mice) so they are ready for the spring.
- Smooth the mounting post/pipe ever so often with fine grained sandpaper to prevent predators from climbing the pipe.

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- New York State Bluebird Society
<http://www.nysbs.org/>



Other Tips and Information

DO'S AND DONT'S:

- Do NOT stain the inside of the box or 2 inches around the opening. It's better to just leave the box in its natural wood state.
- Do NOT change the size of the opening, the opening must be a 1 1/2 inch hole.
- Do NOT install a perch on the outside of the box since this will invite other competition.
- Do NOT mount near a high traffic road or walkway.
- If staining, use a light colored stain since you don't want to overheat the box.

BREEDING:

- Early to mid March-Males arrive to check out the boxes
- End of March to Mid April-Females build the nest
- Mid April to Early May-Female lays eggs (one per day, up to five) and incubates them for approximately 13-14 days.
- Early May-Young hatch, young stay in the nest for approximately 17-18 days.
- End of May-Young leave the nest (clean out nesting material) parents will continue to feed and care for the fledglings outside the box
- End of May to early June-They may build a new nest and repeat the process.

OTHER TIPS:

- **TO PREVENT TREE SWALLOWS:** The best way is to locate a box for the Swallows 12-15 feet away from your Bluebird box. If you place the boxes too far apart Swallows will occupy both.
- **TO PREVENT SPARROWS:** Never allow them to use the box for a full season. Remove their nest each morning until they leave. You can also try using colored streamers that will blow in the wind, they won't scare the Bluebird but will deter a Sparrow.
- **TO PREVENT WRENS:** Keep the box well away from woodland and brushy areas. If this doesn't work set up an additional box for Wrens.
- **Mice** will sometimes build nests in the box for the winter and they must be removed each spring. To control mice, smooth the pipe or pole with fine grained sandpaper.
- **Remove Wasps** just as they begin their nests. Be very careful when doing this.
- **House Cats** can be vicious predators of Bluebirds. If your cat wears a collar, attach a small bell to their collar. If the box is located too near the ground cats can leap up to the entrance and kill the birds. If this is a problem, try raising the height of the box to just over 6 feet.
- New York State Bluebird Society <http://www.nysbs.org/>

