



Bluebird Trails

A bluebird trail is a series of bluebird-specific nest boxes spaced 100 yards or more apart from each other. The trail can be contained within an individual's property or involve the collective support of a community spanning across neighbors' yards or even over distances of hundreds of miles.

Provides: Shelter (for nesting and chick-rearing)

Supports: Bluebirds



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Keys to successfully establishing a bluebird trail include an understanding of bluebird nesting requirements, nest box placement and design, strategies for excluding competitors and patience!

Implementation Steps:

- 1 Picking the Perfect Spot** – Bluebirds prefer wide open spaces interspersed with clumps of trees or low shrubs (sparse woody vegetation). Bluebirds also require structures to perch on like a fence or tree branches. Avoid highly wooded areas as this habitat will attract nest-cavity competition.
- 2 Building the Nest Box** – There isn't one ultimate bluebird nest box design. Many designs exist and experience comparable levels of success. Regardless of the nest box design you use, here are some tips to keep in mind:
 - Use untreated wood (pressure-treated wood contains toxins) $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 in. in thickness to create a sufficiently insulated box. You may treat the outside of the wood to increase its longevity, but DO NOT paint the interior of the box.
 - The entry hole should be from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{5}{8}$ in. diameter, and positioned $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 in. from the floor of the nest box.
 - Make sure the nest box is built with an access point or door that can be locked.
 - Do NOT build a perch for your nest box. Bluebirds will not use them, but predators will.
 - Add texture or grooves to the interior front wall, below the entry hole, to help fledglings climb out.
 - Mount your box at a height that is convenient for monitoring and maintenance, anywhere between 5-15 ft. above ground level. We recommend you mount your nest box at least 5 ft. off the ground to avoid predation of your bluebird family.
 - Position the nest box opening so that it faces away from prevailing winds and direct sun exposure.

(Implementation Steps continued)

- 3 Monitoring** – It is important to monitor your nest box to ensure that it does not contain damaging parasites (like black flies), and has not been claimed by a non-bluebird pair.

For more monitoring information, please see “Other Resources”

Cleaning Nest Boxes

A bluebird nest will be a neatly constructed cup composed mostly of grass. Bluebirds can nest twice in a year and each clutch will typically contain 4-5 eggs. Eggs are pale blue or occasionally white. Nest boxes should be checked every 4-5 days until chicks are close to leaving (around 12 days old). In early spring (early March), before the male bluebirds have returned in search of a nesting site, and after each clutch, check your box and clean it out by removing any nesting material and scraping the droppings away.

Remember, be patient! It may take a few seasons before a bluebird family takes notice of your nest box.



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Other Resources:

- Visit the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) at www.nabluebirdsociety.org for these resources:
 - NABS Factsheet: *FAQs* pdf
 - NABS Factsheet: *Nestbox Recommendations* pdf
 - NABS Factsheet: *Monitoring Bluebird Nestboxes* pdf
 - NABS Factsheet: *Getting Started with Bluebirds* pdf
 - NABS Nest box plans:
www.nabluebirdsociety.org/nestboxes/nestboxplans.htm



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