



Information provided below is from the Maine NRCS 'Structures for Wildlife Job Sheet'.

DESCRIPTION & HABITAT

The male bluebird has a bright blue back and rusty breast. Females have a duller, gray-blue back and lighter rust colored breast. Their ideal habitat is open fields and pastures. They can be seen perching on tree snags and wooden fence posts. Bluebirds have also adapted to suburban areas such as golf courses, cemeteries, and highway right-of-ways. The bluebird's diet consists primarily of grasshoppers, caterpillars, and other insects.

NEST BOXES

Bluebirds will readily nest in artificial nesting structures. The following house plan can be built from a 1" x 6" x 6' piece of appropriate lumber. Floor dimensions should be 4" x 5 ½" and walls should be 8 ¾" high. The entrance hole should have a diameter of 1½" placed 6" above the floor.

Bluebirds are territorial and require about 1½ acres per pair. Boxes should be placed at least 100 yards apart in open areas with woods nearby. The best mounting is to a metal pole to prevent damage from predators. The box should be placed 5-6 feet above ground. Face the nest box toward open ground and toward the south or southeast where possible. Bluebird territories are established in March, so have boxes ready by that time.



If both tree swallows and bluebirds are found in your area with only tree swallows using the boxes, erect boxes in pairs. That is, place a second box on a nearby post approximately 5-15 feet apart to allow both species to coexist. Different species don't mind nesting next to each other so if tree swallows are repelling the bluebirds this approach should help. The next pair of boxes should be placed at least 100 yards away.

Old nest material should be removed from the box as soon as the young have left the nest. This increases the chance of a second brood being raised in the same box. If starlings or sparrows try to nest in the boxes, remove their nests. Houses should be inspected and cleaned during February each year, making sure the drain holes in the floor are open. Considering bluebirds are insectivorous, use of insecticides in their territory should be limited.

Predator guards should be installed to limit predation. Cone style guards are the most effective. Deeper or taller nest boxes and/or hole guards are options to further limit predation. A hole guard can be created by using another small piece of wood drilled out for the same 1 ½" diameter hole. This is then installed over the existing hole in the nest box making it more difficult for a racoon or other predator to reach into the box. Hole guards can also be used to re-establish the correct hole size if woodpeckers or squirrels have enlarged the hole of the nest box.

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Eastern Bluebird Nest Box

