

BASIC EASTERN BLUEBIRD TRAIL BOX



Bluebirds are primarily insectivores and eat many insects considered by humans to be pests. Eastern bluebirds are commonly found inhabiting fields and open woodlands east of the Rocky Mountains. Bluebirds are strictly cavity nesters, and in the absence of natural nesting cavities, they require man-made nest boxes.

Chief competitors to bluebirds include the English house sparrow and the European starling. Nests of sparrows, starlings, and other competing species must be cleaned out of your bluebird house on a regular basis. Tree swallows often find bluebird houses to their liking as well, and this problem can be lessened by hanging two houses close to each other or back to back on a post.

For best success with your bluebird nest box, place it in an open area with scattered trees, particularly where low branches are available for bluebirds to perch on as they watch for insects. Heavy ground cover will interfere with their ability to find insects, and it's best to place nest boxes where insecticides are not used.

The best height for a bluebird nest box is 3' to 5' above the ground; placing the box lower makes predation easier, while placing it higher tends to attract more sparrows. The nest box should face a tree or shrub within roughly 50', allowing fledglings a perch safe from predators when they exit the nest. An optimal nest faces east, away from prevailing winds, to prevent rain from driving through the entrance hole.

MOUNTING YOUR TRAIL BOX

1. Put a screw or nail into a tree or post 3' to 5' high, leaving roughly 1/4" sticking out. Place the metal hanger at the rear of the nest box over the screw or nail. Place a second nail or screw at the bottom of the back panel of the nest box to hold it securely.
2. This nesting box is constructed of 0.75" thick, sustainably grown, eastern white pine in order to provide adequate insulation from heat. Most young birds that die in the nest do so because of inadequate insulation from heat. The wood of this box is custom-milled with a "rougher head" finish, which allows fledglings a foothold when they are ready to exit the nest. The box is neither painted nor stained.
3. Over time, the box will weather, darken, turn gray, and eventually blend right in with the environment. Birds prefer an inconspicuous nest box, so the most important thing you can do to preserve the long life of this nesting box is to clean it out after each nesting cycle. The side panel tilts out from the bottom for easy cleaning after the young have left the nest. A latch at the bottom secures the panel in place.
4. Should you wish to paint or stain, it is critical to only use water-based stain or paint. Oil-based paints and stains are toxic to birds. It is also important to stay away from dark colors that may cause the nest box to become too hot for nestlings. A light, seasonal, external coating of boiled linseed oil is a highly effective, non-toxic preservative.



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