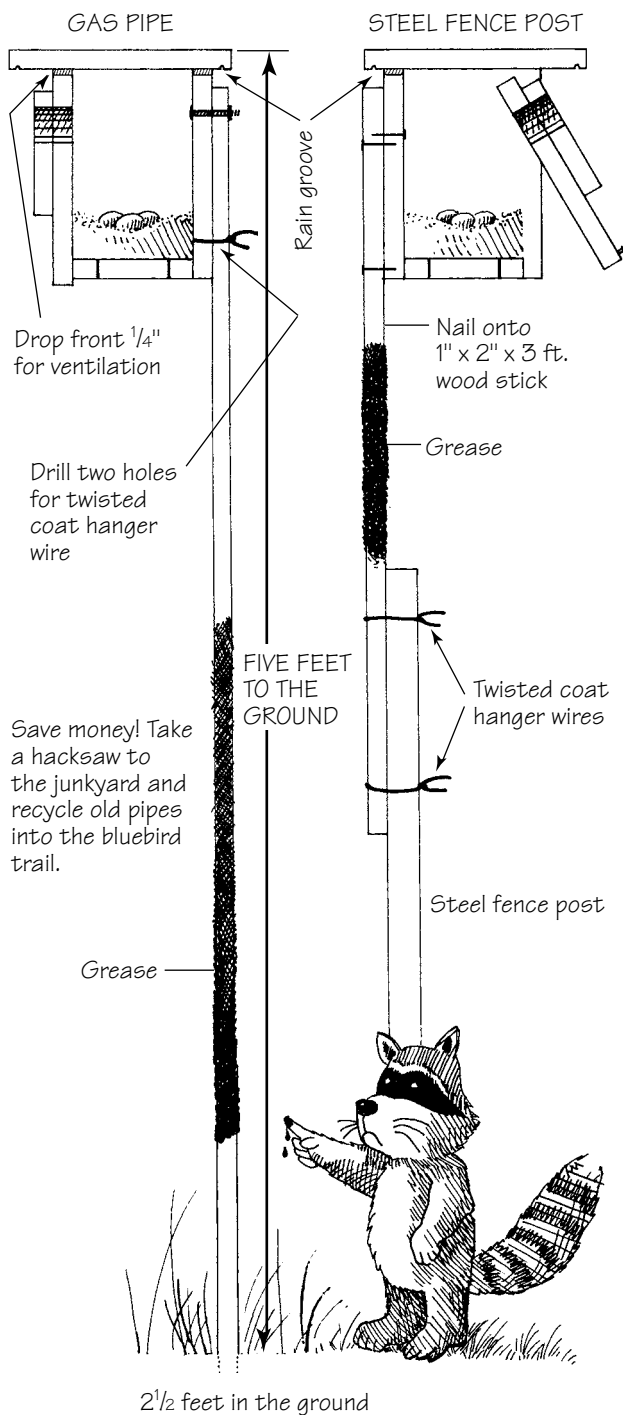
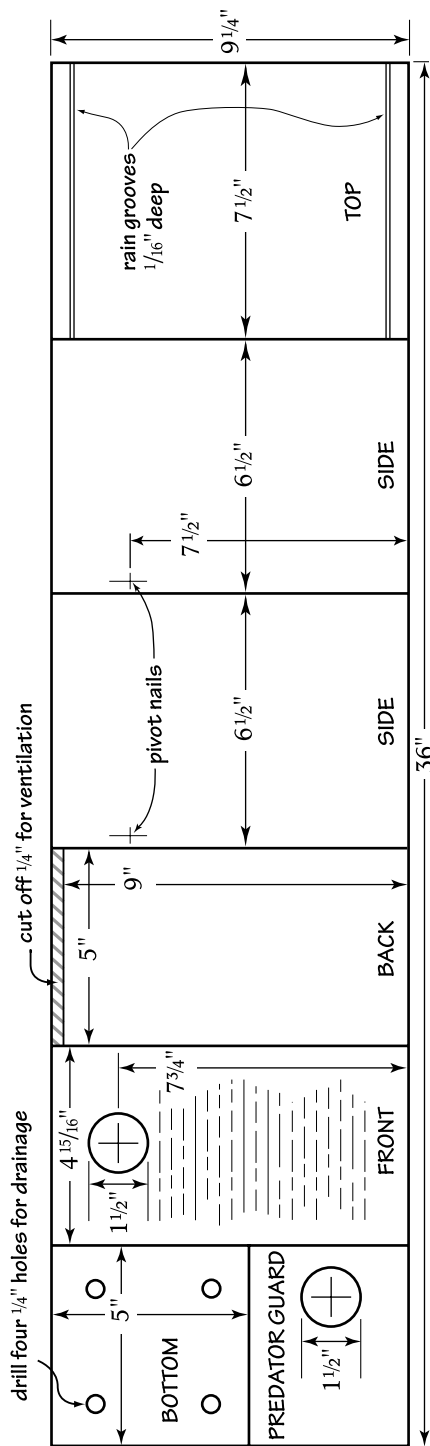


Mounts



Cuts



The predator guard is simply an extra piece of wood around the entrance hole. The added thickness makes it difficult for hot sunlight, rain, and intruding beaks to reach the nest. A 1/2" entrance hole will keep starlings out.

It takes only 3 feet of 1" x 10" white pine to make a bluebird nesting box. Because all cuts are straight, no special tools are needed. Stronger boxes are made by sawing boards so the wood grain is the same direction as the longest side of each piece. Use 1 1/2" galvanized box nails or deck screws.

Hints



Don't use white. Face the box opening to the southeast. Roughen the inside surface of the front piece so young birds can cling to it for feeding and to exercise their wings before their first flight. A surface can be roughened by sawing slots 1/8" deep, punching shallow holes with a screwdriver, tacking on a strip of 1/4" hardware cloth or gutter screen, or gluing on small scraps of wood.

Have all boxes ready by March 15 at the latest. Bluebirds nest as early as late March. As soon as a brood has left, clean out the old nest. This will improve chances of another nesting that same year and rid the box of parasites.

The Division of Wildlife's "Hit the Trail for Bluebirds" project and other bluebird management projects are funded by the "Do Something Wild!" state income tax checkoff. Please remember to donate a portion (or all) of your state income tax refund for endangered wildlife and wildlife diversity, and purchase a wildlife conservation license plate. You can also write a check to the Endangered Species and Wildlife Diversity Fund, ODNR Division of Wildlife, 2045 Morse Road, Bldg. G, Columbus, OH 43229-6693.

Hit the Trail



for

BLUE-BIRDS

HOW TO MAKE AND ENJOY YOUR OWN BLUEBIRD TRAIL

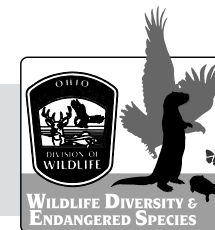


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Written Richard M. Tuttle
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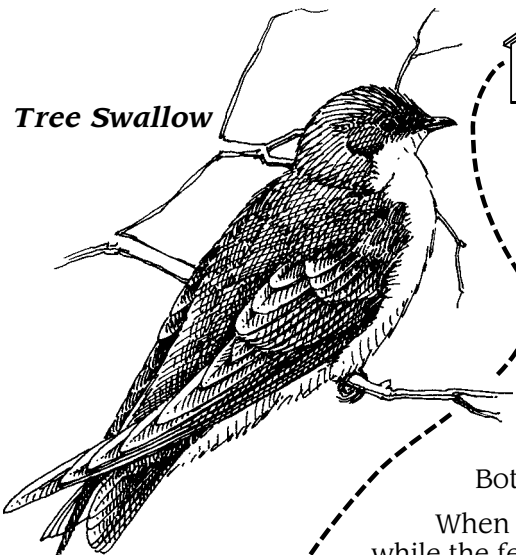
Ted Strickland, Governor • Sean D. Logan, Director
 David M. Graham, Chief



Funded by the "Do Something Wild!" state income tax checkoff and Wildlife license plate sales

The Trail

Tree Swallow



What is a Bluebird?

The Eastern bluebird is a sparrow-sized cousin of the robin. The male has a dark sky-blue back and a red-dish-earth chest. As in most birds, the female is duller in color.

Bluebirds raise two or three families of three to six insect-devouring young each year, from March through August. The female builds a neat, cup-shaped nest of grass. She lays one sky-blue egg each day for three to six days and incubates them for two weeks. Both adults feed the young for two and a half weeks.

When the young leave the nest the male teaches them to hunt, while the female takes a rest or builds a new nest.

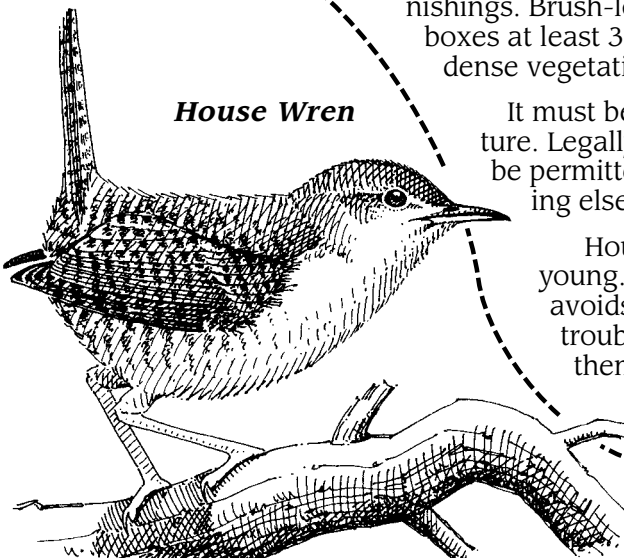
What is a Bluebird Trail?

A bluebird trail is five or more bluebird nesting boxes mounted on fence posts or pipes. The boxes are spaced from 100 to 200 yards apart on farms, parks, cemeteries, golf courses, or other areas with low or sparse vegetation. A "bluebirder" hits the trail every week or two to check the progress of the tenants.

Do Only Bluebirds Use the Boxes?

No. Other beneficial birds such as the house wren, tree swallow, Carolina and black-capped chickadees, white-breasted nuthatch, and tufted titmouse may take up residence on the trail. Boxes spaced 30 yards apart near ponds, lakes, or rivers will attract mosquito-eating tree swallows. Fiercely competitive wrens may evict prior tenants by puncturing their eggs and building a stick nest on top of their furnishings. Brush-loving wrens can be discouraged by placing nest boxes at least 30 yards from the nearest brush, shrub, or other dense vegetation.

House Wren



It must be recognized that competition is common in nature. Legally and ethically, the insect-harvesting wrens must be permitted to nest. Evicted tenants will set up housekeeping elsewhere along the bluebird trail.

House sparrows will destroy bluebird eggs and young. A bluebird trail that avoids buildings usually avoids house sparrows, too. However, if you're having trouble with house sparrows, you can legally remove them.

Do Bluebirds Have Enemies?

Yes. Raccoons, cats, opossums, gray foxes, and some snakes are climbing predators that love a snack of bluebird eggs or young.

A pipe mounting will stop the fox. Chassis grease liberally applied to the middle third of the pipe may stop the other climbers. Young raccoons may climb right through the grease, but once they reach the summit they will forget their pleading stomachs and concentrate frantically on removing slippery grease from matted fur. Grease will discourage deer mice and black ants from homesteading.

When grease is not acceptable, 24" sections of 7" galvanized stove pipe or 4"-6" PVC pipe capped with lids or hardware cloth hung below boxes act as baffles. Baffles 30" long will stop the longest rat snakes as well as all furry climbers.

Do Bluebirds Need Our Help?

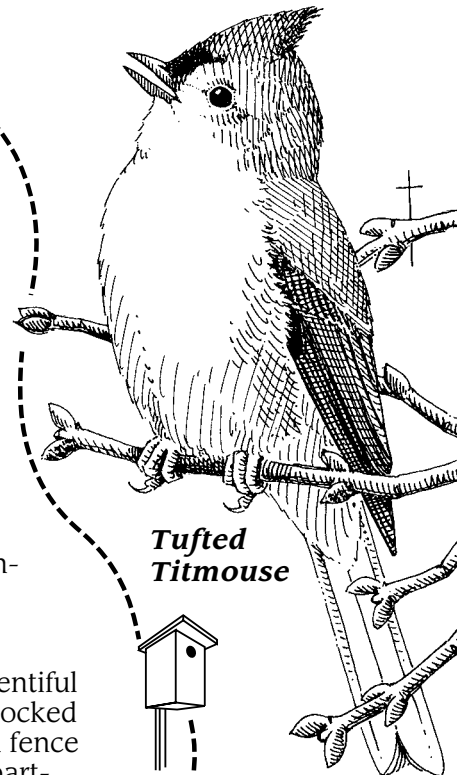
Yes. White-haired farmers can recall the song and flight of plentiful bluebirds in their youth. In bygone days, rural Ohio was a well stocked snack bar for woodpeckers which drilled into decaying trees and fence posts in their quest for insects. Bluebirds quickly occupied the apartments that woodpeckers whittled out two to twelve feet above the ground, and their populations flourished.

Today, fencerows have all but disappeared and orchard trees are pruned. The apartments that remain are usually occupied by the persistent and dominating European immigrants, the starling and house sparrow. Bluebird boxes are a much-needed housing project.

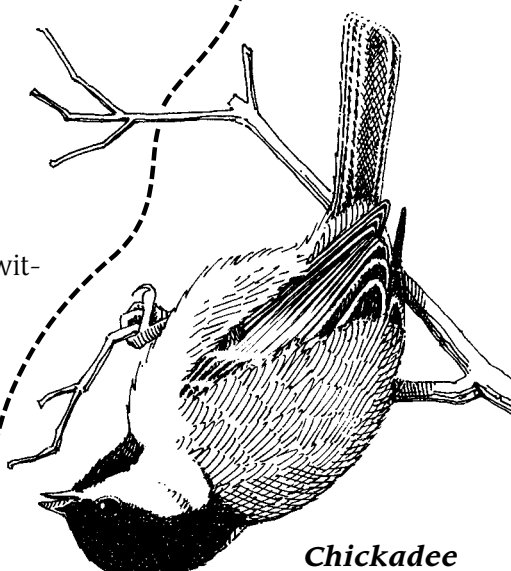
Boxes at eye level can be inspected with a penlight and mechanic's mirror . . . the comeback of the bluebird can be witnessed from the beginning.

Teachers and youth group leaders interested in participating in bluebird projects should contact the Division of Wildlife at 1-800-WILDLIFE. For more information about bluebirding, write: The Ohio Bluebird Society, 20680 Twp. Rd. 120, Senecaville, OH 43780.

Paint the outside of the box any earth-tone color.



Tufted Titmouse



Chickadee