



of potential harm done. You can prevent rain getting into the nest box, intervene with insect infestations, deter attacks from common predators, eliminate House Sparrow competition, and overcome a host of threats. Through proper nest box monitoring on a weekly schedule during the nesting season, the Bluebird landlord can often avert or mitigate these issues to protect the nest and result in a successful fledging of young Bluebirds.

One element of Bluebirding that is not required but can increase your interest and enjoyment of nest box monitoring is to keep records on the species using your boxes, the number of attempted versus successful nests, the number of eggs, hatchlings, and finally the number of birds fledged. This knowledge may help you determine what works best on your trail and is information that can be very useful to citizen science projects such as Cornell University's NestWatch program. VBS also keeps productivity records and would very much appreciate your data. VBS provides free, downloadable monitoring forms on our website.

*\*Some text was borrowed, with permission, from the North American Bluebird Society*

**Online membership form at:**

[virginiabluebirds.org/join-vbs](http://virginiabluebirds.org/join-vbs)

OR

Mail this form and your check to:

*Make check payable to VBS, do not send cash.*

The Virginia Bluebird Society  
726 William Street  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please be sure to include your email address, all newsletters are electronic.*

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE:**

New Membership     Renewal

Membership:  1yr - \$25     3yr - \$70

Sustaining:  1yr - \$60

Endowment:  1yr - \$100

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Additional Tax Deductible Contribution

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL



Virginia Bluebird Society is an affiliate member of the North American Bluebird Society. On behalf of NABS, we invite you to become a member.  
[www.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org)

 [www.virginiabluebirds.org](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org)

 [vbs@virginiabluebirds.org](mailto:vbs@virginiabluebirds.org)



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# THE VIRGINIA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

PROMOTING & PROTECTING BLUEBIRDS THROUGHOUT THE COMMONWEALTH



Photo by: Randy Streufert 2014



# WELCOME

## The Bluebird in North America

Bluebirds were once a common “country bird” in the United States. These birds flourish in open grassland spaces, and thus had benefited from clearing of the vast forest expanses during the settlement of the late 1700s. However, human activities subsequently began to have a negative impact on Bluebirds. One devastating change was the introduction of two nonnative cavity-nesting species – the House (or English) Sparrow and the European Starling – in the 1800s. These aggressive birds out-compete for cavities and even kill Bluebirds. Changes in farming practices, including mechanization, land consolidation, and the conversion of grasslands into row crops also contributed to a loss of nesting sites for Bluebirds.

Photo by: Doug Rogers



Finally, the widespread use of agricultural pesticides impacted the availability of insects needed to feed nestlings. As a result, by the 1940s–50s, Bluebird populations were plummeting and by the 1960s the Bluebird was becoming a rare species over much of the continent.

## Recovery of the Bluebird

Fortunately, in the 1960s–70s, individuals such as Dr. Lawrence Zeleny recognized the increasing rarity of Bluebirds and endeavored to save the species by providing fabricated nesting boxes designed just for the species. In 1978 Zeleny founded the North American Bluebird Society and was installed as its first president.

Inspired by the work of Dr. Zeleny, the Virginia Bluebird Society was formed by Anne Little, Julie Kutruff and others in 1996. Since then, hundreds of Bluebirders

have joined VBS to help the species thrive once again. More and more people started putting up nest boxes designed specifically for Bluebirds. The Bluebirding movement and provision of nest boxes also benefited other native cavity nesters like Chickadees, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, and Titmice. Bluebird populations have rebounded in many areas. But House Sparrow and European Starling threats remain. Bluebirds will always be heavily dependent upon man-made nest boxes and reliant upon your help!

Please help the Bluebird conservation effort by joining VBS and learning how to acquire, install and monitor your own Bluebird nest boxes. Become a valued team member that preserves these beautiful and charismatic birds.

## How to Become a “Bluebird Landlord”

Getting started with Bluebirding is not hard but does require understanding best practices which prevent unintended harm. There are three elements to successful Bluebirding. First locate proper habitat. There is little point in putting up a nest box in places where Bluebirds do not frequent. Bluebirds are primarily insectivores and thus prefer open areas with low-cut grass and a few trees interspersed. Typical examples of good Bluebird habitat are mowed grasslands, pastures, rural roadsides, open areas in parks, golf courses, orchards, vineyards, and cemeteries. This habitat provides Bluebirds with a ready supply of insects, spiders, larvae, and other invertebrates to feed their young.

The second element for success is to buy or build proper nest boxes and mount them in a manner that will assure

safety from predators. This will permit the Bluebirds to successfully complete a reproduction cycle. The VBS website provides plans for constructing a good nest box, including predator guards and appropriate mounting instructions.

Proper (i.e., safe) mounting is just as important as the correct nest box design. A proper mount is the most important element for keeping predators such as raccoons, snakes, and cats from getting to the box and preying on the eggs or the nestlings within. Mounting nest boxes on wooden poles, fence posts or trees is not recommended. If your area contains these types of predators, then a snake baffle and Noel guard are necessary regardless of what kind of pole is employed.

The third important element for successful Bluebirding is learning how to properly monitor your nest box(es). From the time a Bluebird pair “claims” a nest box and builds a nest, eggs are laid and then hatched, and the nestlings are finally fledged, many things can go wrong. Some hazards, such as very cold, dry, or hot weather cannot be avoided. But there are other challenges where you can deflect the amount

Photo by: Christine Boran

