

**Basics from the   
Texas Bluebird Society**

Attracting bluebirds

* Do not feed common mixed bird seed. The millet in mixed seed attracts non-native House Sparrows, which compete with native species. House Sparrows will break eggs and peck nestlings to death.
* Provide water features (e.g., bird baths, bird drips) and keep clean to prevent disease.
* Plant native trees, bushes, vines and grasses to attract insects (90–95% of the bluebird diet is insects).
* Plant native trees, bushes and vines that produce berries that bluebirds eat in winter.

Selecting nestbox

* Use a 1 1/2" nestbox entrance hole for Eastern Bluebirds and a 1 9/16" hole for Mountain/Western Bluebirds.
* To combat Texas heat, consider using a box that is somewhat larger, thicker and more ventilated than standard bluebird nestboxes (for a heat-resistant nestbox, go to [www.texasbluebirdsociety.org](http://www.texasbluebirdsociety.org) and click Building Plans).

Selecting a nestbox location

* Place in an open area overlooking short grass so birds can see insects on ground.
* If possible, the location should have shade from late afternoon sun.
* If possible, a small tree or shrub should be within 100 feet or so.
* In Texas, space nestboxes by at least 50 yards if you want each nestbox occupied by bluebirds.

Mounting and installing nestbox

* Do not mount on trees or wood posts (too easily accessible to predators).
* Consider mounting the nestbox on 3/4" EMT conduit using mounting brackets or screws through drilled holes. Pound a 4' segment of 5/8" rebar into the ground and place the conduit (with box attached) over the rebar.
* If feral or roaming cats are a concern, mount the box at least 7' high (top of box to ground).
* Register nestbox location at <www.nestwatch.org>.

Preventing predators

* Apply a wide ribbon of grease to deter fire ants and other predators (a ribbon of tree Tanglefoot is an option). This must periodically be refreshed to remain effective.
* Add a Kingston Predator Baffle (plans located on [www.texasbluebirdsociety.org](http://www.texasbluebirdsociety.org), under Building Plans) to deter predators that climb with claws.
* If snakes are a problem, add a 5' tube of 3" or 4" PVC and paint it with thin grease to deter them. Alternatively, add nursery netting above a Kingston Predator Baffle to snare them.
* Trap House Sparrows with a Van Ert Trap if sparrows persist after their nest and eggs are removed.
* To discourage wasps, rub the interior of the roof with a bar of Ivory soap.

Monitoring nestbox

* During nesting season (Feb–Sept), look inside nestbox and record observations once or twice each week (no less than once every 25 days to prevent House Sparrows from fledging).
* Knock and speak before opening. If mom does not leave nest, wait until next time.
* Be wary when opening nestbox in case something other than a bird is inside.
* Remove House Sparrow nests and eggs. If in doubt, contact someone with more expertise before removing because any egg other than a House Sparrow egg is that of a native bird.
* Record observations from each visit at <www.nestwatch.org> (TBS now uses NestWatch instead of the TransTexas Nestbox Network).

Maintaining nestbox

* Remove old nest and sweep clean after each nesting (dispose nest far from nestbox).
* If entrance hole is enlarged by woodpeckers or squirrels, attach a new block of wood with correctly sized hole.