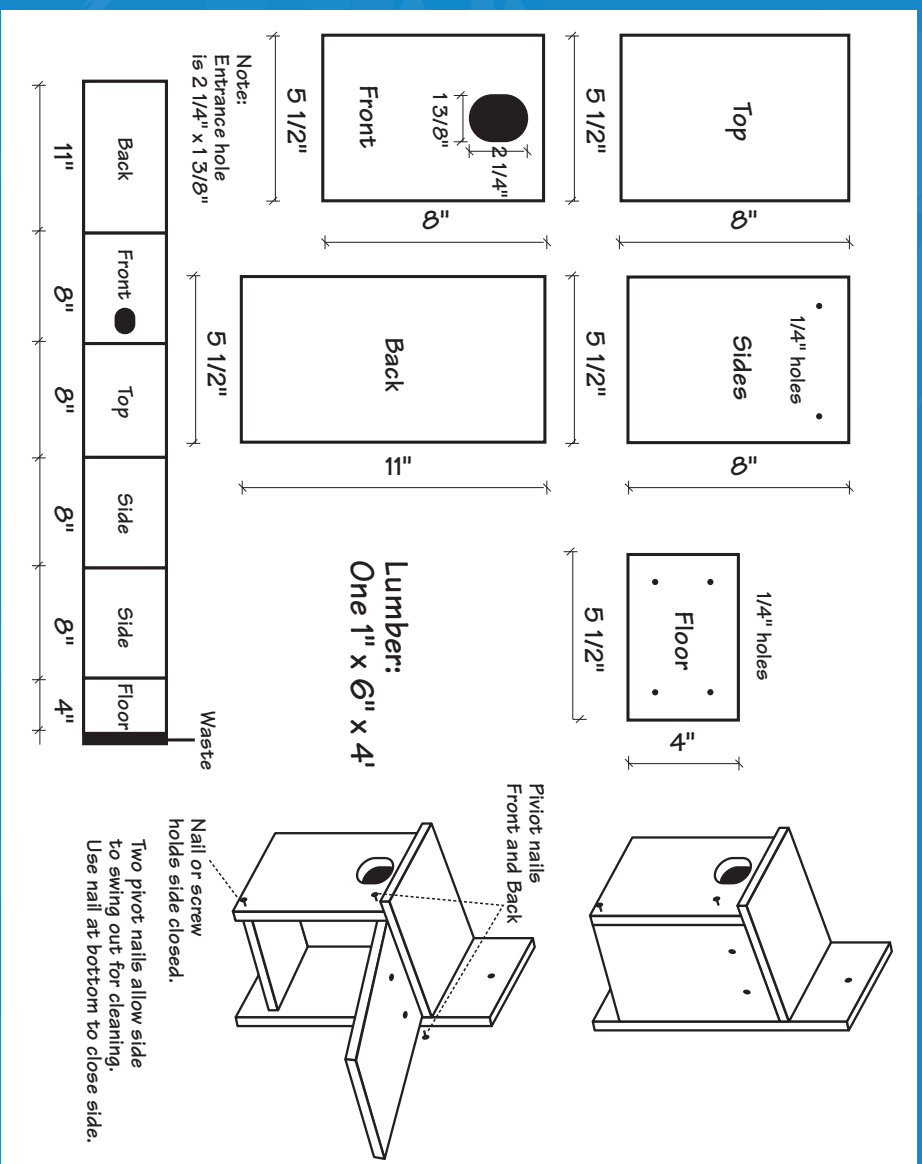
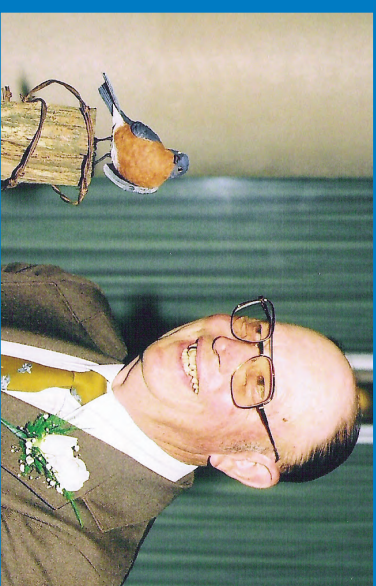


Bluebird Nest Box



*A contribution from the Chickadee Checkoffs,
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.*

Marvin Schwilling Memorial Bluebird Program



Marvin Schwilling was a long time employee of the Kansas wildlife agency. Starting work in Kansas in 1951, Marvin worked in several capacities as a research biologist, an area manager, and finally as the Endangered Species Specialist in the nongame program of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Involved in many organizations, most prominently the Kansas Ornithological Society, Marvin gained universal respect and admiration for his work and for his cooperative attitude. Some of his most passionate work was related to helping to establish Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes and trails throughout the state. He retired from the state in 1990 and continued work with birds, butterflies and moths until his abilities were lessened by a debilitating stroke. Marvin Schwilling passed in 2008 and the memorial fund created in his honor continues through this program to promote bluebird recovery in Kansas.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, and military or veteran status. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, 1020 S Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612-1327. 06/11

KANSAS

Bluebirds



Kansas Department of Wildlife,
Parks and Tourism
512 SE 25th Ave.
Pratt, KS 67124
Phone (620) 672-5911
Website: www.kdwp.tourism.state.ks.us
E-mail: ESS@ksoutdoors.com

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Kansas Bluebirds

Kansas Bluebird Priority

The Eastern Bluebird, with its brilliant blue and rust colors and melodic song, is a bird appreciated and enjoyed by all who get the chance to see or hear it. Unfortunately, many people, especially younger folks, have never seen a bluebird in the wild. Once abundant in Kansas, the number of these cavity nesting birds has declined dramatically since the middle part of the last century. This decline has resulted from a loss of natural nesting holes, increased pesticide use, and competition with the introduced House Sparrow and European Starling for nesting cavities. But, thanks to nest box placement efforts by many citizens and organizations, Eastern Bluebirds are on a comeback.

Biology and Management

Eastern Bluebirds begin arriving in Kansas by early March. While some over-winter in the state, this species is one of the earlier to return from the southern US to initiate breeding. The male bluebird, which is the most colorful of the pair, entices a female to a natural cavity or nest box. They look for open country with sparse trees or shrubs.

The female will have from 4-7 light blue to white eggs after building a grass-lined cup nest in the bottom of the nest box. She alone incubates the clutch. Hatching occurs in two weeks or a little longer. Female bluebirds are very tolerant of having the nest box opened for inspection and sometimes will stay on eggs during the disturbance. (However, boxes should not be disturbed if there is the possibility of young fledging within a couple of days.) Hatchlings are brooded for several days and fed by both sexes. After about 2 ½ weeks, the young fledge.

KANSAS Bluebird Nesting Record

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Location of nest box trail: County _____

Total number of bluebird nesting boxes monitored this year: _____

Date: _____

Species

| | Number of Nesting Attempts* | Number of Young Fledged** |
|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Eastern Bluebird | | |
| Tree Swallow | | |
| House Wren | | |
| Other Species | | |

* An "attempt" is a bird building a nest and laying at least one egg.

** A young bird has "fledged" if it leaves the nest on its own.

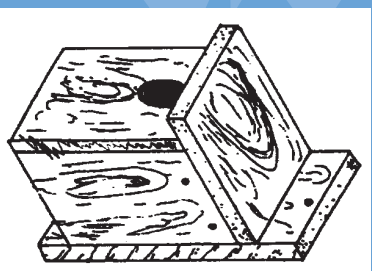
Please use the space above for additional comments and to describe any unusual observation. Mail completed form by Oct. 1 to the address below or submit online on the KDWP website under "Kansas Bluebirds" in the Other Services/Wildlife Diversity web pages.

**Kansas Department of Wildlife,
Parks and Tourism
KANSAS BLUEBIRDS**
512 SE 25th Ave.
Pratt, KS 67124

Nest boxes should be placed about 3-4 feet from the ground, facing any direction. It is not necessary to remove old bluebird nests unless they are very untidy. Wren nests composed of tightly packed twigs should be removed and discouraged from using bluebird boxes since the male House Wren will build several nests and since wrens can be quite territorial and competitive. Bluebirds may have up to three clutches per year and will re-nest as well from earlier failed attempts.

Bluebird Houses

The bluebird house plan shown in the accompanying diagram is a simple pattern which can be made from a 1" x 6" cedar board that is four feet long. Cedar is the preferred wood because it will last a long time. The house can be left unpainted or may be painted a light color that will reflect sunlight which reduces interior heat in the summer.



Pets

House Sparrow nests should be removed from bluebird boxes immediately. House Wrens, chickadees, nuthatches, Tufted Titmice, and Tree Swallows may also use the boxes. If these species begin to occupy too many of the boxes you can add more houses to the trail or double them at each site. To prevent predators like raccoons, opossums, and house cats from climbing the nest box poles, put tin around the pole at the base of the box up to 3 feet. Grease can be placed on metal poles to prevent predators and ants from climbing. Entry holes can also be extended with wire mesh or wooden columns to reduce predation.

Marvin Schwalling Memorial Bluebird Trails Program

By constructing bluebird trails, civic organizations, youth groups, and individuals can assist in efforts to help bluebird populations recover. Nest boxes provide bluebirds with nesting cavities and also give people a chance to remove the nests of undesirable competitors. Bluebird trails consist of boxes mounted on fence posts or pipes. Boxes should not be placed in heavily wooded areas. Boxes should be placed 100 yards or more apart because bluebirds are territorial. Bluebirds are not a typical backyard species, and will not usually nest near homes or buildings. Any organization may qualify to receive up to ten Bluebird boxes through the Marvin Schwalling Memorial Bluebird Program. The cooperator is required to place these boxes in appropriate habitat (open country with sparse trees), check them through the nesting season from March through July to evict house sparrows or other unwanted guests, and to report nesting success with the form on this brochure or on the listed website. Contact your district wildlife biologist or email the department at ESS@ksoutdoors.com



Three Bluebird Species

With its deep blue head and back and rusty colored chest, the Eastern Bluebird is the most common of the bluebird species. The similar Western Bluebird rarely occurs in the extreme Southwest corner of Kansas. The nearly all sky blue colored Mountain Bluebird is a winter resident in Kansas.