

# Chip Notes



## *There's No Place Like Home*

### **Bluebird Nestboxes**

*Provide shelter and a great opportunity to enjoy the wonder of nature...*

Eastern Bluebirds spend their summers throughout the northeastern United States. Many backyard hobbyists wish they came to their birdfeeders, but they do not eat seeds. Instead their summer fare is insects and their winter choices are wild berries. The good news is that we can attract them to our properties by offering them a place to raise their families.

### **Bluebirds respond well to nestboxes for several reasons.**

They are secondary-cavity nesters meaning they utilize old woodpecker holes as nest sites. Decaying or dead trees are the choice of woodpeckers as they excavate a new cavity each year. People tend to view such trees as hazards and cut them down. Two non-native, introduced species, European Starlings and English Sparrows are also cavity nesters that compete aggressively with Eastern Bluebirds for available sites. By installing this nestbox, you provide another location where bluebirds can build a nest.



**Where a nestbox is located often determines which species will use it.** The ideal bluebird habitat is an expansive, open area of low vegetation with a scattering of trees and shrubs. Sound like a backyard? Indeed. However the size of the yard is important. Bluebirds tend to seek such spots in rural areas. They do not look for nest sites in cities or communities with small lot sizes. Those who live in rural regions, in housing complexes with large lawns, in exurbs and suburbs with larger lots are most likely to attract bluebirds. Placing boxes in brushy or wooded areas will most likely appeal to House Wrens or Black-capped Chickadees. Placing boxes near farm buildings and feedlots will likely be used by English Sparrows and European Starlings.

**Orientation is important.** Boxes should be pole or post mounted at a height of 5 feet (eye level). If raccoons and opossums are present, consider added a feeder baffle to the pole. Box entrance holes should be oriented away from prevailing winds and face a tree or shrub within 100 feet. This provides a landing site for fledgling's first flight. Leave 100 yards between boxes. If Tree Swallows are also present, boxes can be placed as close as 5 to 25 feet apart as these two species will coexist.

**Now let's review landlord responsibilities.** Boxes should be up by mid-March as this is when males return and begin seeking housing. Bluebirds typically raise two sets of offspring each season, so boxes can go up later as well. Check the boxes weekly. If you recognize the nest as belonging to English Sparrow remove it! When your bluebirds have finished raising their young and the box is empty, remove the old nest. They always build a new one, and if you do not do this housekeeping, they will build a new nest on top of the old one. This raises the eggs and young too close to the opening, giving predators a chance to reach in the opening! Bluebird eggs are light blue and typically number 4-5. Incubation lasts 12 to 14 days. Young remain in the nest 14 to 21 days prior to fledging.



Aspen Song® Bluebird  
Nestboxes Now Available!