

# Creating Safe Nest Boxes

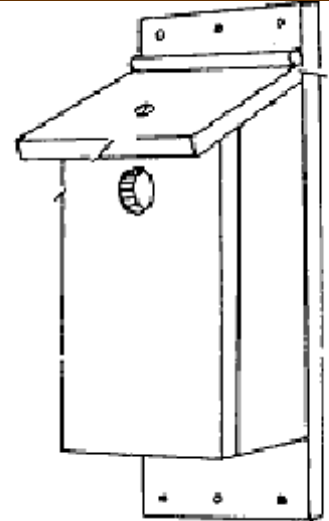
Many birds such as woodpeckers, owls, swallows, bluebirds, and some ducks rely upon nest cavities (holes) in trees. Secondary cavity nesting species, such as bluebirds, swallows, chickadees, rely on holes created by woodpeckers. Today, cavities are limited due to competition from starlings and lack of standing dead trees. Nest boxes, if managed and constructed properly can provide valuable cavities for many songbirds.

When constructing and placing nest boxes for songbirds it is important not to be doing more harm than help. Know what birds you are trying to attract and always think about:

- Design
- Placement
- Predation
- Monitoring



Western Bluebird, common nest box inhabitant



Nest Box Drawing

## How You Can Create Safe Nest Boxes:

- **Design:** The size and shape of a nest box is important for keeping the occupants safe. To exclude starlings and house sparrows, entrance holes should be less than 1 1/8" in diameter. Boxes should also be approximately 14" tall with the hole near the top, this prevents predators from reaching the eggs through the hole!
- **Placement:** Nest boxes should be at least 100 yards away from livestock feeding areas to reduce competition from House Sparrows. Boxes should also be at least 100 yards from each other. Entrance holes should face north, east or south to avoid the hot afternoon sun. Don't place nest boxes in areas with outdoor cats or where pesticides are sprayed.
- **Predation:** Install a Noel predator guard (see resources below) on the nest box post to prevent predators from climbing to the nest box hole. Do not use nest boxes with perches as these make places for jays and House Sparrows to sit before entering the box.
- **Monitoring:** Know what is using your nest box! Always monitor the box and contribute your data to the scientific community through your local Audubon or the Cornell Birdhouse Network.



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**Additional Resources:** North American Bluebird Society ([www.media.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.media.nabluebirdsociety.org)), Cornell Birdhouse Network (<http://birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse>), Noel Predator Guard design plan (<http://birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/bhbasics/nestboxplans.htm>), "The Birder's Handbook" by Ehrlick, P.R., et al., PRBO Conservation Science ([www.prbo.org](http://www.prbo.org))