

Monitoring Your Bluebird Box

Nesting begins in early March and ends in August and you should monitor once a week.

Do not monitor in cold, wet, windy conditions

Observe box for mother to leave before opening. Talk as you approach the box and/or gently tap the side of the box, and slowly open. If mother does not leave the nest, close the door and check again next week.

Minimize the amount of time the box is open (should be less than 1 minute)

Two Weekly Bluebird Spreadsheets, have been prepared for your use:

The first one is for people who are familiar with spreadsheets and are able to insert extra lines when a second or third nesting occurs in that box.

The second one is complete with lines for 3 nestings in each box.

To download the spreadsheets, go to <https://tinyurl.com/bluebirdmonitoring> and record the following data:

1. Date
2. Status of nest box
3. Number of eggs/chicks
4. Species
5. Any other noteworthy observations

Recording the Data on your Spreadsheet

(There is a legend at the bottom of the spreadsheet that explains the symbols.)

Date of monitoring

In the nest column, indicate whether the box is empty (**leave blank**) or has a partial **P**, complete **C**, or occupied **O** (contains eggs or chicks) nest.

(Nest building takes 4 days to two weeks)

Record the number of eggs and/or chicks. Indicate the species with an X under the appropriate one. Once the chicks have fledged, change the X to the actual number of chicks that fledged in that box.

(Bluebirds lay one egg a day until they have 3 – 5 and then begin incubating).

Once the first egg is laid, sprinkle fire ant bait, such as Spectracide, at base of wooden or metal post and repeat weekly until chicks fledge (this protects the chicks from fire ants). *(Chicks hatch in 12 – 14 days)*

Observe chicks for vigor, parasite, injuries

(Make notation in comment section)

Do not inspect box if chicks are more than 12 days old (they will try to jump out of the box when you open the door and you will never catch them)

(Chicks fledge after 17 – 21 days)

Note: Your spreadsheet will automatically record the number of fledglings and species.

Clean out empty nests and any infertile eggs after birds fledge. Discard **away from nest box** to keep predators away.

(Bluebirds build a new nest for each brood and may have 3 broods per season).

Note: If the bird is nesting a second or third time, insert a new line to record those numbers on the first spreadsheet. The second spreadsheet already has extra lines for the second and third nesting.

When chicks fledge, they can't fly well at first and are very vulnerable to predators, like snakes, predatory birds like hawks, and cats.

(Keep cats indoors)

At the end of the season, consider relocating unused boxes:

- At least 100 yards from other bluebird boxes
- In a more open area, away from, but facing trees and shrubs