

EASTERN BLUEBIRD

Sialia sialis



Range

Bluebird populations experienced an alarming decline starting in the 1930's. This was caused by loss of habitat, pesticides and competition for nesting sites by introduced house sparrows and starlings. Efforts by concerned citizens have resulted in an increase in the number of bluebirds through birdhouses and habitat improvements.



Birds

EASTERN BLUEBIRD

Sialia sialis



Appearance

Length: 7 inches
Wing span: 12 inches
Weight: 1 1/4 ounce

Eastern bluebirds are small birds, blue above with rusty throats and chests and white bellies. Males have much brighter, deeper colors than females.

Behavior

Habit: Diurnal, omnivore, cavity nester

Diet: Insects and fruit

Breeding territory: 1 pair per 31 acres

Lifespan: Maximum 8-10 yrs, average 2 years, 50% mortality of first year birds.

Male bluebirds usually arrive at their territories first and defend them vigorously against other male bluebirds. When courting, male bluebirds sing to, feed and preen females and show them the nest sites that they have picked out. The females make the final decision on where they want to nest. Bluebirds catch insects on the ground or in low vegetation, usually swooping on them from a perch.

Habitat

Eastern Bluebirds breed in the eastern half of Texas, the U.S., Canada and Mexico. They prefer open woodlands, roadsides, farmlands and orchards. Bluebirds move to the southern end of their range during the winter.

Now You Know!

- Bluebirds often band together in groups of up to 100 during the winter.
- Young from the previous brood sometimes help raise the next batch of nestlings.
- Young bluebirds are born **altricial**, which means naked, eyes closed and helpless. They rely on their parents for warmth.

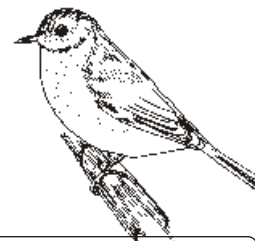
Life Cycle

Sexual maturity: One year

Mating season: February-July Bluebirds usually nest 2 or 3 times during a season.

Gestation: Eggs hatch in 12-14 days, young fledge 15-20 days after that.

No. Of young: 2-7, usually 4-5. Eggs are blue or occasionally white and 8/10 of an inch long.



Legend Has It ...

Bluebirds are native only to North America and have been cherished throughout Texas' history. Because of its sky blue feathers the Navajo Indians considered this bird sacred. This beautiful creature has long been considered the harbinger of spring and a symbol of happiness, love and hope.

Bluebirds & Man

Bluebirds have long been thought to be a lucky sign by humans. When bluebird numbers dropped 90% this century, concerned individuals worked to stop the decline. Research by ordinary citizens showed that properly designed and placed nest boxes that were carefully monitored could help to increase local populations of bluebirds. Many groups have organized "bluebird trails" where lines of bluebird houses are monitored and maintained. Information collected about nesting success, parasitism and predation have helped us better understand what bluebirds need to survive!