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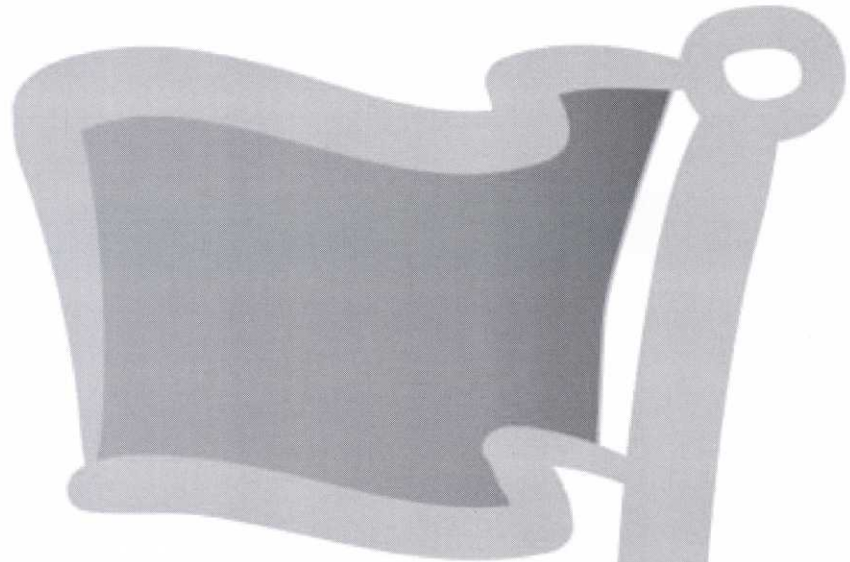
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## Bluebirds—

(Continued from Page 7)

Increased use of insecticides compounded the problems. House sparrows (formerly called English sparrows) and European starlings, introduced in the east, spread westward, usurping nesting cavities, but, worse, destroying adult bluebirds, nestlings and eggs. House sparrows remain the worst avian enemy of bluebirds, their populations bolstered by indiscriminate bird feeding and untended bluebird nestboxes.

Individuals in the U.S. and Canada began experimenting with bluebird trails – placing well-designed nestboxes in suitable habitat. In the late 1970s the North American Bluebird Society, based in Maryland, and the Minnesota Bluebird Recovery Program began offering nestbox plans and helpful information. The spread of regularly monitored bluebird nestboxes placed in proper habitat has markedly increased bluebird populations. A network of bluebird organizations now exists across North America, as “bluebirding” has become one of the few environmental causes in which individuals can actively participate, yielding positive results, personal pleasure and satisfaction.

### Habitat, Nesting and Rearing Young

Usually, bluebirds nest only in rural areas and in the outer suburban developments. House sparrows, starlings and wrens have driven them, and other song birds, from small towns and cities. The ideal habitat is free from under brush, wide open, but with a single tree, sapling, fence line, or overhead wire

where bluebirds can perch to observe the nestbox, field, pasture, meadow or gravel pit. They prefer open ground with sparse vegetation or short grass for feeding. A wooded area at least 200 feet from the nestbox will provide protection for the newly-fledged young bluebirds while keeping wren problems to a minimum. A single tree, sapling or artificial perch 100 feet from the nestbox can



serve the fledglings as a half-way stop on the way to the protective woods. It will also provide an observation post for the parents.


Existing fenceposts should not be used for mounting nestboxes. Fencelines can become predator highways (for raccoons, squirrels, weasels, cats and snakes). Do not place nestboxes on trees, power or telephone lines. The best mounting is a smooth metal pole, protected from climbing predators.


In the Upper Midwest, bluebirds arrive in March or early April. Nestboxes should be clean and ready in mid-March. (However, it is never too late. Bluebirds may reconstruct a failed nest or build a second nest in a new area, and, in fall,

(Continued on Page 14)



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## Bluebirds —

(Continued from Page 13)

migrating bluebirds will inspect nestboxes.)

Bluebirds will search diligently for days or weeks to find acceptable nesting sites. The male takes the initiative. A week or more may elapse between selection and actual start of nest building. The nest, built in 1-6 days, will be composed of thin grass or smooth weed stems, sometimes pine needles, made into nest cup shape. One egg is laid each day, with five the average. Eggs are usually light blue, occasionally white. Both adults feed the young in the nest for 16 to 22 days.

Young bluebirds, naked at hatching remain so for several days, and extremely susceptible to cold, are brooded by the female until 5-6 days old. They are fed small, soft insects every few minutes from dawn to dusk. By the twelfth day the nestlings are almost adult size; natal down is replaced by soft grey and blue juvenile plumage, with the typical thrush's spotted breast. They are now fed larger insects such as grasshoppers.

The fledglings can fly 100 feet or more from the nestbox directly to a high perch, and do not return to the nest. The empty nest will be a little flattened, but almost as immaculate as when it was built, for the adults remove fecal matter scrupulously.

The male parent usually takes over the care of the fledglings while the female starts a second nest, often in the same or a nearby nestbox. Older fledglings have been observed helping too feed the second brood! Infrequently, a third nesting may occur.

### It's Easy to Start a Bluebird Trail!

A bluebird trail is a series of nestboxes mounted on smooth metal pipes. A coat of car wax or silicone on the pipe will provide extra insurance. A light stain or paint may be applied outside of the nestbox, but do not use wood preservative or green-treated lumber. Where tree swallows may also be present, boxes may be placed in pairs: two boxes 10-15 feet apart, with 100-150 yards to the next pair of nestboxes. Boxes should be in the open areas with the entrance hole at least 5-6 feet above the ground, away from

(Continued on Page 19)

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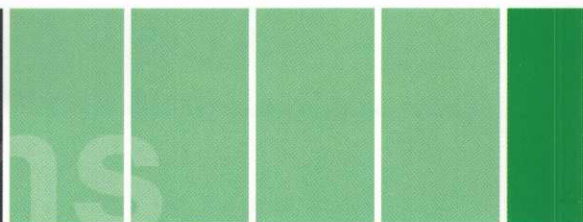
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W: 612-338-8788  
H: 651-407-9283. Posted September 5

## WANTED

Jacobsen 422 walking greensmowers. Prefer model with Honda engine.  
Contact Rob Adams  
The Ponds at Battle Creek  
(651) 266-1505. Posted August 12

## WANTED

Inexpensive, used walk-behind greens mower for a small, residential putting green.  
Contact: RUSS MELTON  
612-349-9842 or 651-407-9283

## FOR SALE

1974 Toro Parkmaster 7-gang/9-gang rough mower w/ spartan reel. Needs power steering unit, and some work on the reels.

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952-473-5811 or 612-290-5810  
r\_frederickson@msn.com  
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12 Toro LTC Satellites  
All in working condition.  
2 extra boards that go with them.  
Contact: Terry Negen  
The Crossings GC, Montevideo  
320-269-6828  
crossings@montegolf.com

## WANTED

Toro VT-4 Irrigation Clocks  
Contact: Bob McKinney  
Mendakota Country Club  
651-454-1441

## FOR SALE

Toro VT-II Central controller \$500  
Toro Network LTC Satellites 16 Stations 7-(\$1000 each)  
Toro VT-4 Satellites (7 complete + 4 extra clock faces, many extra parts) \$200 each

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## WANTED

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jstofferahn@legendsgc.com

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## WANTED

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Contact: Pete Grover or Tom Lundgren  
Katehaven GC  
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## WANTED

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Creeksbend Golf Club  
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## FOR SALE

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StoneRidge Golf Club  
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1999 68DL National Deluxe Mower with 50 hours on it. \$5,300 or make offer.  
Contact: RICHARD GEIKE  
Fritz's Resort  
218-568-8988



## Bluebirds—

(Continued from Page 14)

late afternoon sun, prevailing strong wind; and facing a tree or perch, not a roadway or highway. Avoid the danger of hitting underground utility wires by calling utility companies 48 hours before digging (in Minnesota call: 1-800-252-1166).

Nestboxes should be opened at least once a week from April 1 through August to remove undesirable tenants, to detect predation or wet nests, to remove the used nest as quickly as possible after fledging, and to keep accurate records on nests, eggs and young. However, the boxes should not be opened between the time the nestlings are 14 days old until after they have left the nestbox.

Unchecked nestboxes harboring house sparrows or wrens will do more to reduce bluebird populations than further them.

Proper placement of nestboxes and careful control of house sparrows and other predators should yield reasonable success with your bluebird trail, and with experience you should be able to send in increasingly enthusiastic reports.

### Recommended Bluebird Nestboxes

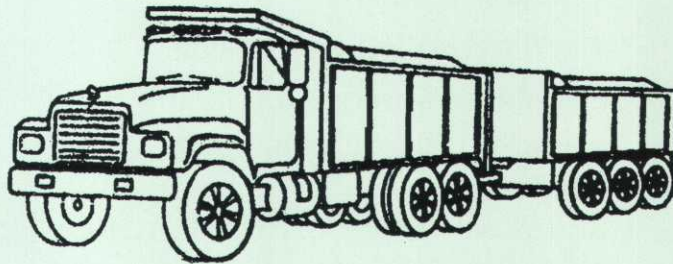
The bluebird recovery program was founded with the introduction of the Peterson nestbox, designed by the late Dick Peterson. The popularity of the Peterson box with its oval hole has spread across the nation. The oval hole provides easier entrance than a round hole. The large overhanging roof gives protection from sun and discourages climbing predators; the drop-down front provides easy access for quick checking, essential cleaning

between nestings, and use of sparrow traps. The narrow sloping floor (which should have no drain holes) helps discourage starlings from nesting, and reduces blowfly larvae. The inner roof and heavy wood construction provides insulation from both heat and cold. (Ventilation holes can be plugged or shuttered for the first nesting and during cold, wet weather.)

### Top Ten Tips in Bluebirding

1. Commit to checking the nestboxes at least once a week during the nesting season, keeping written records of the contents. If you can't do this, do not install nestboxes.
2. Select habitat in an open area with low ground cover, at least 200 feet from bushes. A single tree, overhead wires or a fence nearby can be used for a perch.
3. Check area for underground utilities before installing a smooth metal pipe in the ground, with nestbox entrance hole will be no lower than eye level.
4. Use a weather proof box which easily opens from side, top, or front with an entrance hole sized for bluebirds, facing a perch. Never mount on trees or fencelines.
5. Space a single nestbox (or a pair 10-15 feet apart) at 300-500 foot intervals.
6. Allow other native cavity nesters (chicadees, tree swallows, nuthatches) to nest.
7. Never allow house sparrows or starling to nest.
8. Check nestboxes at least weekly until nestlings are

(Continued on Page 24)



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