Guide for Bird Box Placement

Hershey’s Mill Nature Group

We frequently receive requests for information/help on placing a bird nest box near your residence. Hopefully the following information will assist you in selecting a box and making a decision on the proper placement of the box. As a reminder**, refer to your Village Rules/Regulations to make sure that you follow the proper procedure with regard to bird nest boxes**. Should you have additional questions or need more help in making your decision, please do not hesitate to contact us at hersheysmillnature@gmail.com.

Many cavity nesters (Bluebirds, Wrens, Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, etc.) will accept a nest box, build a nest, and raise a family. An important element in attracting birds (Bluebirds included) is providing the right habitat. “Even the best nest box will not attract Bluebirds if it is in the wrong place” (Stokes BlueBird Book).

### Nest Box Placement (From Cornell Nest Watch):

**WHEN TO PLACE BOXES**

Make sure that your boxes are installed well before the breeding season begins. Don’t be discouraged if birds don’t begin nesting in them immediately; sometime it takes time for the birds to discover them.

* In the south, place your nest boxes by February.
* In northern regions, place your nest boxes by mid to late March.

**WHERE TO PLACE NEST BOXES**

Because different species of birds prefer different kinds of nesting habitat, the vegetation surrounding your box will play a role in determining which species will nest in it. Remember: right box, right place. For example, Bluebird nest boxes for Bluebirds should be placed in open habitat. If you are looking to attract a variety of species to your nest boxes and have ample room, you might consider pairing your boxes. This involves placing boxes in pairs on poles 15 to 25 feet apart. Or, you can put two boxes back to back on a single pole. Birds such as Tree Swallows and Bluebirds will nest closely to one another, although they will drive away others of their own species. Pairing boxes has the advantage of allowing more birds of both species to coexist peacefully within the same habitat. Golf courses, cultivated fields, gardens, and yards are potentially good habitats for nest boxes. However, be aware that the use of pesticides and herbicides in these areas should be under the supervision/applied by professionals in accordance with regulated management practices. The indiscriminant or overuse of pesticides and herbicides may be harmful as they may decrease and sometimes eliminate the insect populations that are the primary food source for many cavity-nesting species.

**HOW TO PLACE YOUR NEST BOX**

Whichever method you choose to install your boxes, be sure that they are secure enough to withstand high winds and severe weather. The best way to put up small nest boxes is on free-standing metal poles or PVC pipes. These pipes or poles offer several advantages:

* Nest boxes can be mounted higher than when mounted on a fence post.
* Some predators find poles difficult to climb.
* Poles can be easily equipped with predator guards.
* If warranted, install [predator guards](http://nestwatch.org/learn/nest-box-resource-center/dealing-with-predators/) to protect from predators/competing avian species.

**From the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania**:

For Bluebirds, important/required habitat components consists of a complex of open grassy fields, either mown or of low growth, widely scattered trees, berry-producing shrubs and vines, snags, and perches in the form of trees, shrubs, utility wires, telephone poles, or fence posts. Frequently used grassy areas include meadows, pastures, yards, roadsides, power line rights-of-way, and farmlands. Mowed areas such as golf courses, large lawns, and grazed areas provide suitable habitat as well. Open grassy areas provide foraging habitat and nearby trees, snags or nest boxes serve as perching or possible nesting sites. Despite the rise in the Eastern Bluebird population, the largest threat to their future is the constant loss of nesting habitat. By protecting snags (dead or dying standing trees), putting up (and monitoring) nest boxes, and properly managing open grassy areas, residents can assist in the continued success of Eastern Bluebirds and other cavity nesters that rely on similar habitat.

Nest boxes should be placed 4-6 feet above ground on a wood or metal post and should be between 75 – 100 feet from bushy or wooded areas. Boxes should be at least 20 – 40 feet apart as long as there is some interruption in the line of sight between boxes. However on even ground with no buildings, large shrubs or large trees to interrupt the line of sight, the distance between boxes should be between 100 - 300 feet. Remember that the male Bluebird is VERY territorial and does not want another male nearby the nest box.

If predators such as raccoons or squirrels are of concern, appropriate measures should be taken to protect the nest opening.

A source of fresh, clean water for drinking and bathing is a plus; however, these must be properly maintained.

3/30/2021