

## How You Can Help Bluebirds

- Build bluebird nestboxes and donate them to the BRSS Eastern Bluebird Project. Get nestbox plans at [nabluebirdsociety.org/nestboxplans](http://nabluebirdsociety.org/nestboxplans).
- Volunteer to monitor a bluebird trail. This involves checking on several nestboxes weekly from April through July.
- Golfers are especially needed to monitor nestboxes on golf courses.
- If your work or recreation site has several acres of open, mowed grass, get permission for BRSS Audubon to locate nestboxes on the property.
- Schedule an Eastern Bluebird Program for your organization so members learn how to help.
- Student and scout groups can schedule programs to build nestboxes from kits we supply.
- Plant berry-producing native trees and shrubs. Berries are a critical bluebird food source in severe cold weather. Get Westchester County native plant lists at [nativeplantcenter.org](http://nativeplantcenter.org).
- Don't use pesticides on your property. They kill insects which are the bluebirds' food supply. Plus, you can poison the bluebirds.
- Don't cut down dead and dying trees unless for safety reasons. Decaying trees provide many nesting cavities and insects.
- Donate \$30 to BRSS Audubon to pay for the cost of placing one nestbox.

To  
Volunteer to help  
Schedule a program  
Get more information

Contact  
**Sandy Morrissey**  
(914)391-3695  
[sandym@cloud9.net](mailto:sandym@cloud9.net)

## A Big Thanks to our Supporters

### Properties that give us permission to place nestboxes



Cemeteries



Golf Courses



Corporations



Passive Parks



College Campuses



Institutions

### Nestbox Builders

Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, school ecology clubs, women's groups, church groups and other organizations



### Bluebird Nestbox Trail Monitors



## About BRSS Audubon Society

Founded in 1947, we are a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. We serve over 600 members in lower Westchester County, NY, in the communities of Bronxville, Eastchester, Edgemont, Hartsdale, Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Pelham, Scarsdale, and Tuckahoe.

# Eastern Bluebird Project



Helping Bring Back  
New York's State Bird

Bronx River -  
Sound Shore  
Audubon  
Society

PO Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583  
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[brssaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:brssaudubon@gmail.com)



*The Eastern Bluebird is the State Bird of New York.*

## Our Mission

Increase the population of Eastern Bluebirds by placing and monitoring nestboxes in as many bluebird habitat locations as possible. Educate the public about bluebird ecology and teach that actions by individuals have the power to directly effect the survival of a species. We hope all New Yorkers will have a chance to see their State Bird.

### Why Bluebirds Need Our Help

From the late 1800s into the mid 1900s, the Eastern Bluebird population suffered a serious decline.

**Loss of Habitat.** With increased industry, people moved to cities, and farms reverted to forests or were developed into housing or commercial properties. The Eastern Bluebird lost its required open habitat.

**Loss of Nesting Sites.** The introduction of the house sparrow in 1850 and the European starling in 1890 caused major trouble. Rising populations of these adaptive, aggressive, non-native birds commandeered nest sites, leaving the bluebirds homeless.



*House sparrows are Public Enemy #1 for bluebirds.*

**Other factors.** Fencing material changed from wood to plastic and metal. Rotting fence posts once supplied abundant nesting cavities. Pesticide use, particularly in orchards, poisoned bluebirds. With invention of power tools, an increased removal of dead trees eliminated cavities.

**Grim Statistics.** By the late 1960s, it is estimated that the bluebird's population declined by 90%. It was placed on New York State's and National Audubon Society's *Species of Special Concern* list.

**Recovery.** Fortunately, by the 1970s bluebird enthusiasts began major efforts to reversed this trend by building and mounting thousands of bluebird nestboxes. Now bluebirds are returning.

### Bluebirds and their Behavior

Henry David Thoreau once described the bluebird as "carrying the sky on its back." The Eastern Bluebird male is bright blue, with a reddish-orange breast and white belly.

The female is similarly colored, but duller blue on the back. It's a small bird—7 inches—about the size of a sparrow.

**Habitat.** Bluebirds need open areas with low or mowed grass and a few scattered trees and shrubs. Golf courses, cemeteries, passive parks, university campuses and institutional grounds are good bluebird habitat in Westchester.

**Food.** They are primarily insect eaters but also consume berries, especially in winter when insects are not available.

**Nesting Cycle.** Bluebirds are cavity nesting birds and readily use human-made nestboxes. They begin as early as March and may have two or three broods. The female lays one egg a day until she has her desired clutch size—usually four or five eggs. Incubation lasts 12—14 days. After nestlings hatch, both parents feed insects to the nestlings. They grow



*Both parents feed the nestlings insects.*

rapidly and fledge from the nest in 16—22 days. The parents will look after them for several weeks. The female often begins a second family. The young of first brood sometimes help feed the second family.



*Nestlings know what to do—eat!*

**Migration.** Most migrate during the winter, but just south enough to have a good food supply. A few remain all winter.

### How BRSS is Helping Bluebirds

Because of our program, we now have nesting bluebirds where they were absent for over 25 years.

**Providing Nestboxes.** We placed over 300 nestboxes in over 50 locations in Westchester County since 1998. Most importantly, these nestboxes are monitored by volunteers to prevent use by non-native birds.

**Educating the Public.** BRSS Audubon involves students, scouts and other interested groups in building the nestboxes, monitoring them, and helping with banding. Plus, we offer a bluebird slide presentation that teaches about the bluebird and important ecological lessons learned. We promote environmental stewardship for the future of all species.



*White Plains HS student with nestboxes destined for Burke Rehabilitation Hospital. We had 3 nesting pairs of bluebirds in these boxes first year placed.*