

## THE BLUEBIRD PROGRAM AT TYLER ARBORETUM, LIMA, PA.

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In the late nineteen sixties, I noticed two or three pairs of Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) nesting in tree cavities located at the edges of large fields. Later, about 1970, I observed three or four gourds with nesting entrances hanging from low tree branches in the same area. Bluebirds were using these gourds as nest locations. I never did learn who was responsible for placing the gourds, but an idea was planted which resulted in the implementation of a Bluebird nest box program.

I secured six DVOG Bluebird boxes and nailed them on the trunks of trees about six feet above ground level. Within a year all of the boxes were occupied. In the late summer, I cleaned the boxes and replaced one box destroyed by vandals. I did this through 1973 when I turned the maintenance program over to William Kent who is an active member of the Tyler Arboretum. Mr. Kent not only built many boxes and maintained them, but he improved on their construction as well. He arranged for the front of the box to be hinged so that cleaning and censusing could be facilitated. The front was secured by a wood screw. Mr. Kent built about thirty boxes and placed them on metal poles about four feet from the ground. He experimented with various placements in an extensive open field to determine an arrangement that would give maximum usage. They were taken down in the fall for cleaning and storage. The metal poles were left in place. Mr. Kent was assisted by Bob Bodine (DVOG) who has kept records of the Bluebird nesting success. Sample data are presented in the following chart. Numbers reflect two broods in a season.

	1974	1976	1979
Number of nesting pairs	2	6	9
Number of eggs laid	11	54	52
Number of chicks fledged	11	26	40
Number of boxes in use	2	6	9
Number of boxes erected	28	21	18

### General Information:

Predators: None except House Wrens which were routed out in 1976 and gave no more trouble. Black snakes were prevented from reaching boxes by attaching a metal collar on the pole.

Vandalism: Two boxes destroyed.

Nesting Period: April 5 - July 28.

Other species nesting in same boxes: Carolina Chickadee.

Boxes affixed to tree trunks eight to twelve feet above ground remain in place all the year around. These provide winter shelter for Bluebirds which breed to the North and arrive in late autumn or early winter.

This program has been successful in increasing the Bluebird population at Tyler Arboretum. It is thought that the maximum number of breeding pairs may have been reached for this area (there were nine breeding pairs in 1979). In any event, the growth to the present population has been most encouraging.

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