

What is the Colorado Bluebird Project?

This project operates under the guidance of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver. Its mission is to improve the vitality of bluebird populations throughout Colorado and to inform and educate the public about bluebirds.

What is a Bluebird?

Bluebirds are social migratory songbirds and one of the few North American birds that are mostly blue in color. There are three species of bluebirds but only two have been sighted in Castle Rock: Mountain Bluebird and Western Bluebird (Eastern Bluebird is found mostly in eastern Colorado). They are secondary cavity nesters, meaning they must rely on other species' used nesting cavities or artificial nest boxes. They feed mainly on insects but also wild fruit, berries and mealworms.



Mountain Bluebird



Western Bluebird

What is a Bluebird nest box?



A nest box is an artificial nesting cavity for bluebirds, but can also be used by Violet-green Swallows and Tree Swallows, usually made of untreated pine, redwood or cedar wood. The boxes are installed in late March, before the bluebirds return from winter migration, or remain in place through the winter. There are specifications for nest boxes designs provided by the North American Bluebird Society, which are designed with an overhang, a pivoting side or top for monitoring and cleaning, as well as specific features to keep out predators and other non-native bird species.

Why do we put up nest boxes?

Over the years, bluebird habitat has been cleared for development and natural nesting cavities (old trees and wooden fence posts) have been greatly reduced or replaced with metal posts. Even though these events led to a population decrease, providing artificial nest sites (bluebird nest boxes) is an important step to help bring back the bluebird. Nest boxes are placed within public open space areas either along fence lines or near existing trails creating a bluebird trail. Since placement of the boxes

in suitable habitat is one of the most important factors for attracting bluebirds, these boxes are placed in open grassland areas with scattered trees or shrubs and plenty of perch sites such as fence lines.

Why do we monitor nest boxes?

It is very important that bluebird nest boxes are actively monitored or checked at least once a week. Doing so increases the chances of success for bluebirds and provides important information to track population trends. Monitoring also identifies cases of blowfly parasitism or non-native and unwanted species, such as the House Sparrow, using the box. Monitoring occurs weekly beginning April 1st and ends in early August, after the nesting efforts have ended for the season.

How is the Town of Castle Rock involved in this Project?

In Castle Rock, this project is managed through the POST Partners Volunteer Program. The monitoring data sheets are submitted to NestWatch, managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, for the national database of bluebird populations. The Town has been involved with the Bluebird Project since 2007 and has grown to **almost 190 boxes** located at 32 different parks, trails, open space areas and schools around Castle Rock. Over the last ten years, over 4000 bluebirds and swallows have successfully fledged from our nest boxes.

How can I help?

Helping bluebirds is a great environmental, hands-on, citizen-science project that people of all ages can enjoy. Volunteers in Castle Rock are needed to help build, repair and install nest boxes. More importantly, volunteers are needed to monitor the nest boxes weekly during the spring and summer months (April – August) to collect important nesting data. Monitoring typically involves one-hour visits, often with off-trail hiking to access the boxes.

What if I am working to become an Eagle Scout?

Boy Scouts looking to earn their Eagle Scout rank are encouraged to participate in the Bluebird Project. Participation includes nest box construction and installation, as well as a minimum one-year commitment to monitor the boxes and collect nesting data. The location of the bluebird trail will be determined by Town staff, based on habitat, site availability and monitoring access.

For more information:

If you interested in learning more about the Colorado Bluebird Project and how you can help locally, please contact Barbara Spagnuolo, Natural Resource Specialist, at 720-733-2294 or bspagnuolo@crgov.com.



You can also check us out online at www.CRgov.com/bluebird