



# BCT Stewardship Journal: September 2025

## Bluebird Boxes: What Makes a Box a Home

When out walking BCT's trails, you may have noticed the small triangle-like wooden boxes perched on poles situated along the outskirts of open fields and meadows. Did you know that these birdhouses are specifically crafted and placed to attract bluebirds? Bluebirds are actually recognized as a conservation success. Once a species in rapid decline is now making a comeback thanks to conservation efforts. One of these efforts is the increasing popularity of installing strategic bluebird boxes in open space areas and backyard spaces.

Last spring, I had the chance to participate in a bluebird box workshop at the [Wildlands Trust Stewardship Training Center](#). The class gave me a whole new appreciation for the craftsmanship and care that goes behind the creation of each box. I came out of the class with a greater understanding of not just woodworking but also how particular these little birds can be and the importance of including each feature in the design.

There are many different styles of bluebird boxes however the two most well-known are the [standard rectangular box design \(NABS\)](#) and the [Peterson-style box](#). BCT has a mix of both on our properties, however we have more of the Peterson-style box due to its slightly more preferred design. BCT volunteer extraordinaire, Steve Petruska, is our birdbox master who has built most of the boxes on BCT land and spearheads the monitoring of the boxes. Avid birders such as Steve have learned what specific conditions the birds prefer over time which is why you will see that some of our boxes differ from others in design. Overall, you will see much of the same features from box to box. It is important to include each of the following details, as recommended by the [North American Bluebird Society \(NABS\)](#) when constructing a bluebird box for the most success:



*BCT volunteer Steve Petruska repairing and monitoring bluebird boxes at BCT's Merchant property.*



*Katie and her finished NABS bluebird box*

- Use natural, uncoated wood such as cedar or redwood which are durable and rot resistant
- Make a corner opening in the bottom of the box to allow drainage and facilitate ventilation. Cross ventilation is also encouraged.
- Never include an under-the-hole perch, which encourages predators and other nonnative birds
- Ensure the roof provides sufficient overhang beyond the box entrance to protect from the elements. It is recommended to have the front panel face slightly downwards at an angle to further protect the entryway
- The nest box should have watertight construction at all seams.
- Include one hinged, side panel that opens for easy monitoring and cleaning.
- Nestboxes should have a round entrance hole measuring 1½" in diameter, or a 1⅜" x 2¼" vertical oval hole, or a 1⅝" to 13/16" horizontal slot
- The box should be mounted about five feet from the ground on a pole in open fields and 50-200 ft away from brushy and wooded areas.

The fall and winter are a great time to install a bluebird box in your backyard (if conditions are favorable) so that the birds have an opportunity to find them come the start of nesting season around March. If you are interested in joining BCT's birdbox monitoring program, please reach out to Katie at [katie@brewsterconservationtrust.org](mailto:katie@brewsterconservationtrust.org). For more information on the Eastern Bluebird, check out the [NABS website](#) which offers further information and research on Bluebird preferences, box-constructing, and conservation efforts.