

Maintaining Spring Habitats for Eastern Bluebirds

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AUBURN UNIVERSITY, Ala.— All across Alabama, the Eastern Bluebird’s striking color and soothing call make it a friendly visitor to backyards throughout every season.

Alabama Extension agent [Lynn Dickinson](#) said, “Bluebirds are considered harbingers of spring, and their willingness to nest in open, human modified habitats makes them popular among birder and non-birders alike.”

To keep the bluebirds visiting this spring, maintaining healthy, open habitats is the first step.



Identifying Eastern Bluebirds

In order to prepare proper habitats for these birds, it is important to know how identify them.

Male Eastern Bluebird

Overall, it is often hard to miss the bright blue color of the adult male’s body. In contrast to the bright blue exterior, the lower body is a yellowish-brown color. The belly is a stark white shade while the breast is often a rust red. The male has a fairly straight bill that is broader than it is deep at the base. Compared to its rather large head and short neck, the male has a long tail comprised of 12 broad, rounded feathers.

Female Eastern Bluebird

The general build of the adult female is similar to the male, although the female’s colors are not as vibrant.

Open Habitats

The Eastern Bluebirds are social, family-oriented birds. Their habitats should emulate these characteristics as well. Bluebirds prefer an open habitat over a forested or dense bushy area.

Maintain Open Habitat Conditions

Previous open habitats that have been without management for several years can quickly become unsuitable for bluebirds. As soon as any woody vegetation invades the site, it will become unfit for the birds.

Management for open spaces include mowing grassy fields to prevent new woody growth.

“All vegetation management activities should be conducted late in the growing season to minimize the disturbance to bluebirds and other wildlife species using open habitats,” Dickinson said.

Providing Perches in Open Habitats

While bluebirds do prefer open spaces, they need perches to hunt and display from. Natural perches are abundant along the edges of large open areas like clear-cuts, pastures and fields. However, the interiors of these open spaces often lack perches.

“Adding perch sites to open habitats with few existing perches can improve habitat quality,” Dickinson said. “Installing garden stakes, fence posts or tree limbs stuck into the ground make beneficial artificial perches to an open area.”

Nest Boxes

Simple to make yet immensely valuable, building bluebird nest boxes is an enjoyable activity for people of all ages. These nest boxes increase the availability of suitable nest sites as well as cut down on the competition to find a suitable nesting spot. Simple nest box instructions can be found [here](#).

To keep the birdwatching steady this spring, prepare and maintain the perfect habitat for Eastern Bluebirds.

More Information

For more information on Eastern Bluebirds, their habitats or nest boxes, visit the Alabama Extension website, www.aces.edu.