

Bluebird Basics from Texas Bluebird Society ... Nuts and Bolts

- Bluebirds are members of the Thrush family that includes bluebirds, robins, thrushes, and solitaires.
- All three bluebird species—the Eastern Bluebird, the Western Bluebird, and the Mountain Bluebird—can be found in Texas. Eastern Bluebirds both breed and winter in Texas, primarily in the eastern half, extending into eastern two-thirds. Both Western Bluebirds and Mountain Bluebirds migrate to and through Texas for winter. The Western Bluebird will nest in far West Texas, especially in the Davis Mountains and Guadalupe Mountains.
- Bluebirds travel in family groups in the winter but form pairs for nesting in spring. They begin looking in earnest for nesting sites as early as December. Bluebirds are secondary cavity nesters and are dependent on nature, on other birds such as woodpeckers, or on humans to provide them with nesting sites.
- Preferred habitat is somewhat open territory with nearby trees. Usually one-half acre is the minimum size needed per nesting pair. They are good neighbors with other species of cavity nesters such as chickadee, titmouse, and wren (Carolina and Bewick's).
- The male scouts out the territory, showing several nesting sites to the female. She chooses the site and builds the nest, usually of dried grass or pine needles.
- After mating, she will lay one egg per day (usually in the morning) until the clutch is complete. The number of eggs varies from three to seven, four or five being average.
- Incubation, by the female only, begins after all eggs have been laid. The female may delay incubation in early spring if weather is too cold. Eggs hatch after about 14 days of incubation.
- The young cannot regulate their body temperature when first hatched, so the female will brood the young to keep them warm for about 5 days.
- The young are fed insects by both the male and female adult birds. Each nestling may be fed as often as five times per hour. Growth is rapid, and the young are ready to leave the nest (fledge) in about 18 days.
- The young do not return to the nest after fledging. It is best to remove old nesting material after the young fledge. Bluebirds nest 1 – 4 times per season in Texas, usually beginning in March, (into August in some shaded nestboxes), and it is best to have a clean nestbox each time.
- The young fledglings are dependent on the adults for about a month after leaving the nest. The male takes a major role in teaching them to hunt for food and look out for predators.