

March 2018

Greetings from Stiles Thomas!

As you requested, here is an article from a 1959 issue of Organic Gardening and Farming that includes my Eastern Bluebird nesting box instructions. The other text is a bit of a trip as well.

I hope that you enjoy the article and, if you build the nest box, that you get some lovely tenants.

Best wishes,

**Stiles Thomas
Allendale, New Jersey**

Multiply your land's value and beauty. For a more colorful, bug-free and cheerful homestead here are . . .

5 Ways to Attract Birds

DONALD HEINTZELMAN AND THOMAS POWELL

A GARDEN WITHOUT BIRDS is about as incomplete as a garden without flowers. Most of us are aware of the value of the birds—what they offer in the way of pleasure and, more practically speaking, insect control. The big question is how to attract these feathered creatures to our home grounds. To help you answer that question, here are five of the most effective ways to have birds visit your property.

Off to A Start with Baths and Boxes

One of the best methods of inducing birds to a specific area is to construct a bird bath, such as a shallow pool about two feet in diameter and about two inches deep. Most birds love to splash in a pool, especially many of the common songbirds as the catbird, indigo bunting, robin, Maryland yellow-throat and cardinal.

Another excellent method is to construct bird boxes and place them at various locations throughout the area where you want more birds. Bluebirds, house wrens, tree swallows, chickadees and flickers are some species which will use nest boxes for breeding. (Some birds—Baltimore

orioles, cardinals and catbirds, for example—normally build their nests in trees, shrubs or on the ground and will not use nest boxes regardless of where they're placed).

Don't place the boxes too close together, since nesting birds defend a well-defined area around their nests known as a nesting territory. No other bird of the same species is permitted to come into that territory. Thus, if two bluebird boxes were placed in a tree, only one would be used by a bluebird, although the other might be used by a bird of a different species.

Housing Project for Bluebirds

Stiles Thomas, an insurance broker of Allendale, N. J., is the manager of what is probably the most unusual housing project you'd find anywhere. His "tenants" are bluebirds, and they pay "rent" to every gardener and farmer for miles around—not in money, but in vast numbers of harmful insects they consume every year.

A bluebird, Mr. Thomas will tell you, is indeed a valuable creature. Approximately three-quarters of its diet is crop-destroying insects.

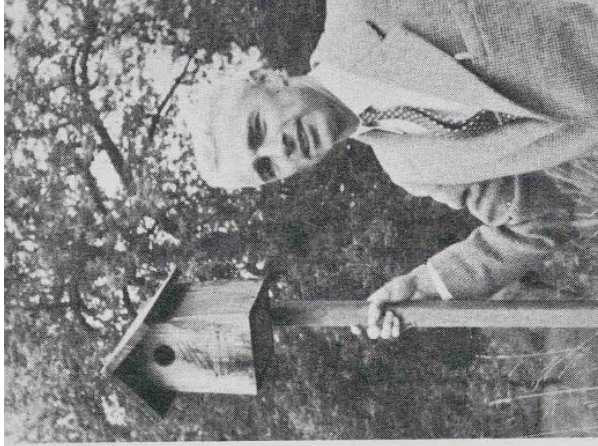
A recent study by the Fish and Wildlife Service showed that blue-

birds consume grasshoppers, caterpillars, beetles, chinch bugs, corn borers and numerous other harmful insects in almost incredible amounts. Even better, they relish insect eggs and larvae, making them efficient preventers of insect attacks.

As far as the one-quarter vegetable portion of their diet is concerned, you won't find any garden, orchard or farm crops in bluebirds' gullets. When insects are not plentiful, they eat wild berries and weed seeds.

Stiles Thomas' bluebird project started nine years ago, when he noticed how few bluebirds were around, compared to their numbers in his boyhood. He made a study of the subject, and his findings showed the birds were in serious trouble.

Modern farming and suburban growth were rapidly breaking up the old farms that provided homes for bluebirds. No longer could they find the old rail fences, dead trees and hollow limbs which supplied such fine nesting holes. Farmers were turning to wire fences and clean cultivation, and pruning out every dead or hollow branch in their woodlots and orchards. Often whole farms were vanishing, under the pressure of real estate and industrial developments. What



Mr. Thomas with one of the bluebird houses that has had great success in northern New Jersey in encouraging and attracting these birds to settle there in increasing numbers.

few natural nesting sites were left were being grabbed up by aggressive starlings, house wrens and English sparrows.

With no suitable housing, no eggs were laid—and no eggs meant a vanishing race. Mr. Thomas set to work immediately designing and building special houses for bluebirds.

His first ones attracted no bluebirds, however. "I put the boxes too high up, gave them the wrong exposure, and set them in the woods instead of out in the open—all mistakes," he says.

As soon as he corrected these errors, success crowned his efforts. In the 1957 and 1958 seasons, for example, his houses resulted in a total of 315 bluebirds being raised to maturity.

This year he has over 100 houses spotted around northern New Jersey. He keeps a careful record of the number of birds and broods, visiting the houses once a week. Many of them are set on posts in people's back-

FOODS EATEN BY BIRDS

To attract the woodpeckers and creepers, use animal food entirely, as suet, chopped pork, and meat. For the finches or seed eaters, vegetable food must be used. Some birds, such as the chickadees and blue jays, will eat both.

Suet: Suet or beef-fat is eaten by Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Chickadees, Blue Jays, Brown Creepers, and others.

Sunflower Seed: Eaten by Chickadees, Nuthatches, Blue Jays, Evening Grosbeaks, and Crossbills.

Hemp: This is a favorite with nearly all seed-eating birds.

Millet: Second only to hemp with the seed-eaters.

Cracked Corn: Eaten by Junco and Tree Sparrows.

Chaff: Attractive to Buntings and Horned Larks.

Salt: Crossbills and Siskins enjoy its taste.

Bread crumbs, chick-feed, nuts, dog biscuits, and canary seed are also popular foods.

—Roger Peterson
National Audubon Society

yards, where the birds' cheerful singing regales the residents all spring and summer.

Mr. Thomas' bluebird box is a simple affair, made usually of apple box or orange crate ends. Its inside dimensions are 5 by 5 by 8 inches tall. The entrance hole, 1½ inches in diameter (small enough to exclude starlings), is cut 5½ inches above the floor.

He provides ventilation by leaving a small space under the eaves. One side is hinged on pins so it can be opened for cleaning the box and evicting unwanted tenants. The peaked roof overhangs the front of

the house to keep rain from getting in the entrance hole, and drainage holes are drilled in the floor.

"I place my boxes on pipes or posts, in open, sunny spots, no more than six feet above the ground. A south or southeast exposure is best. Bluebirds like privacy, so I put the houses at least 300 feet apart. They can be stained to blend them into their surroundings. I've found that putting them only three feet above the ground will keep out English sparrows, who don't like to nest so low."

Every February and March he cleans out the boxes and makes any necessary repairs. Sometimes the boxes are not occupied until June, but many bluebird pairs breed twice each year, producing four or five eggs each time.

Much of his inspiration, Stiles Thomas reports, came from America's original "Bluebird Man," Dr. T. E. Musselman of Quincy, Ill. Back in 1930, Dr. Musselman built the first bluebird route with 25 boxes. Today, there are over 1,000 boxes along the roads around Quincy.

"T. E.," as his friends call him, is a biologist with a consuming interest in conservation. As a young man coming home from college, he surveyed the county and found only three bluebird nests. A few years before, he had seen that many nests in a single orchard.

By measuring the dimensions of a bluebird nesting hole in a dead willow limb, he worked out the correct proportions for a house. Of his first 25 boxes, every one produced a crop of young bluebirds.

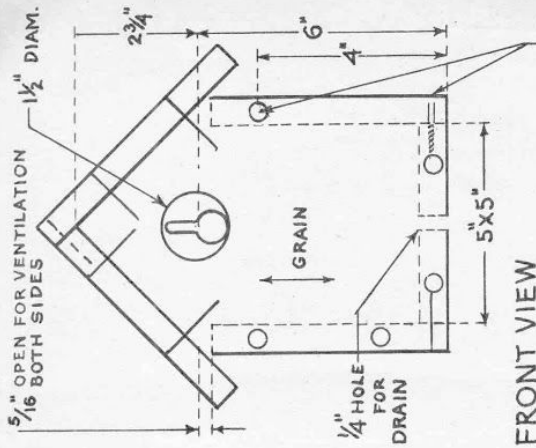
T. E. promptly became a crusader. Some of his bluebird trails are now over 60 miles long. Future Farmers, 4H Clubs, Boy Scout troops, biology classes, garden clubs and other organizations cooperate in his project. Wood and other materials for the houses are donated by local factories and stores. Quincy has become a

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Organic Gardening and Farming

A STILES THOMAS HOUSE FOR BLUEBIRDS

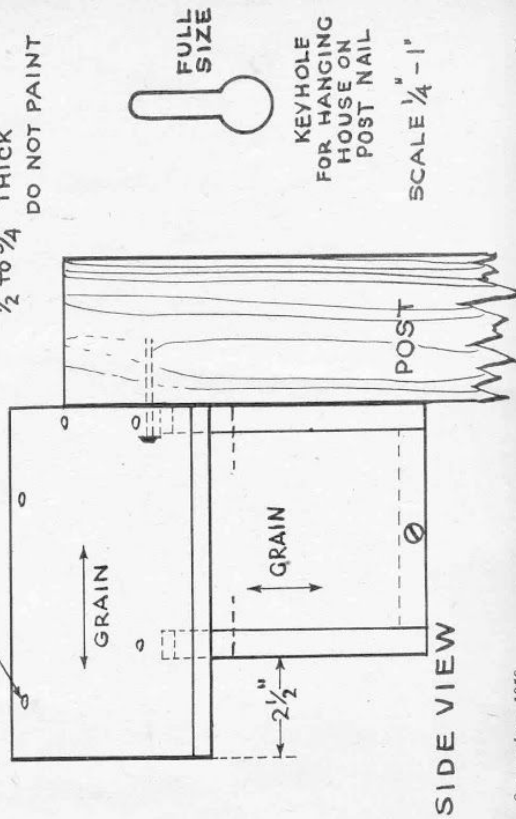
Mr. Thomas reports great success with this type of birdhouse in New Jersey. It is included here for this reason and also because of its simplicity. Before building houses, check the dimensions and the directions on the opposite page. Also be sure not to place them too high or in the open; the birds prefer a woody and secluded setting.



PIVOT NAILS & SCREWS FOR OPENING THIS SIDE OF HOUSE TO CLEAN IT AND TO EVICT ENGLISH SPARROWS

FRONT VIEW

MATERIAL - SOFTWOOD
MAY BE MADE FROM FRUIT BOX ENDS
1/2" to 3/4" THICK
DO NOT PAINT



FULL SIZE

KEYHOLE FOR HANGING HOUSE ON POST NAIL

SCALE 1/4" = 1"

SIDE VIEW

