



## **Guidelines for Siting Western Bluebird Nest Boxes**

When installing nest boxes for Western Bluebirds it is important to: 1. Select habitats most favorable for bluebird nesting and 2. place the nest box in the best location within those habitats.

### **HABITAT:**

The best locations in the Willamette Valley are open rural areas including grasslands, savannah-type habitats characterized by scattered trees and open spaces, meadows, and pasturelands. Bluebirds hunt for insects on the ground, so they require short vegetation to successfully hunt for food. Large mowed yards and areas along the edge of woodlands, orchards, and vineyards also provide good habitat for bluebirds. Cemeteries and golf courses that don't use pesticides and utility poles on rural roads can also be good locations for nest boxes. To reduce competition from other species, keep your nest box away from ponds, lakes, or streams, large brushy areas, and farm lots where domestic animals are fed. We do not advise putting up a nest box where there are outdoor cats. Cats are one of the biggest avian predators, and it is irresponsible to lure birds to nest where a known predator lives. It's best to avoid areas busy with human activity.

### **NEST BOX LOCATION:**

Mount your nest box 4 to 6 feet from the ground on a free-standing post, and position it for easy monitoring. Wooden posts may provide easy access to the box by ground predators, such as raccoons and snakes. Rubber Boa snakes are native to Oregon and are highly skilled at eating bird eggs. A more predator-proof post is a smooth, round pipe, such as EMT electrical conduit. Poles can be further protected by adding a baffle, such as a Kingston baffle, to the pole. Avoid using trees or solid fences as ground predators can easily climb these. Fence posts may be used if a stand-alone post is not possible.

Face the nest box opening away from the prevailing winds and preferably not towards the west where the afternoon summer sun will increase the temperature in the box. Try to face the opening 20-30 feet from a tree. During fledging, the parents will direct the fledglings to a nearby tree, where they will shelter together as they begin life outside their nest.

Positioning the nest box near overhead utility wires or a tall tree will give the parents a place to perch and defend the box from predators.

If you want to put up multiple boxes, place them at least 100 yards apart and preferably not in a direct line of sight. Like most songbirds, bluebirds are highly territorial during the breeding season and will defend their territory.

If bluebirds and swallows are competing for the same box, consider placing another box on the opposite side of same post or within 10-20 feet of first box. This will allow them to each claim a box, though it isn't always successful.