

Monitoring a Bluebird Route

FAQs



What is Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project (PBRP)?

PBRP is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the recovery and preservation of the Western Bluebird, a native bird on the Sensitive Species List by the OR Dept. of Fish & Wildlife.

Why does PBRP monitor nest boxes?

PBRP nest boxes provide nesting sites for Western Bluebirds, but boxes must be cared for and monitored. Volunteers monitor the nest boxes so that 1) they are maintained, and 2) the nesting activity in the boxes can be observed and recorded.

Where are the nest boxes?

The majority of PBRP nest boxes are in Clackamas, Washington, and Yamhill Counties with a limited number in Multnomah and Marion Counties. Western Bluebirds are not city or suburban birds; they live and nest in open, rural country. We have boxes on private properties, vineyards, public right-of-ways, and a few public spaces like cemeteries and golf courses where pesticides are not used.

What is involved in monitoring?

Volunteers are assigned to specific routes for which they are responsible for the breeding season, typically April-August. They begin the season by visiting all their nest boxes, cleaning out debris from winter roosting, performing needed maintenance, and preparing the box for nesting. Monitors visit boxes weekly, observing any activity around the box; e.g., birds will typically pair up and "house hunt" before claiming a nesting site. Monitors record their observations of nesting, e.g., # nest attempts, eggs, hatchlings, fledglings, etc., and report regularly to their team leaders. In Aug. or Sept., monitors submit an End of Season report, and the data is entered into the PBRP database. A summary of the collected data is published annually in the fall newsletter.

How much time is involved?

The time spent monitoring varies widely depending on how many boxes are on a given route, distance between box locations, the time of year (e.g., spring and fall cleanings take more time), and the activity going on. In general monitors spend approximately 4 hours per week, but again, this may vary.

How physically demanding is monitoring?

All our nest boxes are in country or rural settings. Monitors should expect to walk moderate distances, frequently on uneven ground. Boxes mounted on power poles along roadways may require safely navigating a roadside ditch. Private property locations may require operating gates. Early spring weather often means cold wind, rain, and mud; summer brings sun and heat. Monitor safety is **very important**; potential volunteers should understand our fieldwork is in rural locations, not parks with paved pathways.

Do I need special tools?

During training, new volunteers will be shown a variety of helpful tools. Most are readily available at low cost; there is no need for highly specialized equipment. Monitors often find they already have things that can be used.

How is a new monitor trained?

A new monitor will be assigned to a specific route and experienced team leader. The team leader is responsible for orienting the volunteer to the route of boxes and private property owners. Detailed instructions on how to monitor safely will be provided by the team leader, usually in the field. The team leader also maintains contact with the monitor during the season to answer questions, provide guidance, or help as needed.

What else should I know?

Western Bluebirds are friendly, delightful birds to observe. The first nest, the first blue egg – it never gets old. Monitors are always seeing something new.