



## Monitoring Bluebird Nest Boxes

By Mary Roen

2008 is my 21<sup>st</sup> year of monitoring a Bluebird trail. Over the years I have made many mistakes, and have become a lot smarter. This is partly due to my own learning, but largely due to advice from other Blue birders, especially at Bluebird conferences and the Cornell list serv, Bluebird-L.

It seemed I was always missing some important tool or supply when I did my weekly trail monitoring. At first I was walking my trail, so it meant a trip back to the house to get what I needed. I got a little smarter and carried a nylon bag with some supplies, but it seemed I was always digging to the bottom, or emptying out all the contents to get what I needed. I finally hit on a system that has worked for



me for several years now. I use a small plastic toolbox that you can get at almost any hardware or discount store. I put the following supplies in the toolbox:

1. Wren guard to minimize predation from house wrens once Bluebirds lay at least 1 egg
2. Van Ert in box trap for house sparrows (It is very important to learn to use this correctly)
3. Hole reducer (1 1/8") when Chickadees use the nest box. (Keeps larger birds from taking over the nest box)
4. Ruler for miscellaneous measurements
5. Vinyl glove for sanitary removal of old nests
6. Monitoring notebook and pen to record what I see each week
7. Cordless screwdriver with extra bit (It is amazing how many I have lost!)
8. 3 inch plastic putty knife for cleaning out the nest box
9. Channel-lock pliers for pulling up the rebar if I choose to move the box
10. Mechanic's mirror to see in the nest when I monitor.
11. Pliers that can be used in numerous ways
12. Felt marker to number my nest boxes
13. Earplugs for protection when I pound in rebar when moving nest boxes. I use the plastic bag holding them to put old nests in, after the nestlings fledged. Old nests at the box can attract predators.
14. Band-Aids for mishaps (I never said I was perfect!)
15. Sunglasses
16. Wood screws for attaching the wren guards or hole restrictors
17. Extra hose clamps for attaching the baffles to the pole



18. Extra box mounts
19. Miscellaneous screws
20. Duct tape. (What can't you fix with duct tape?)

I now monitor the nest boxes on our property with a 4-wheeler, and the boxes on family and neighbor's properties by car. With my toolbox of supplies, I have not had to make trips back home for things I am missing. I want my monitoring time to be enjoyable, as it is one of my favorite hobbies. Over the years I have learned to monitor 'smarter not harder" and that makes for a much more enjoyable experience.

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information on  
bluebirds**