



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

Starting a Community Bluebird Trail: An Introduction (or refresher)

Agenda

01

Bluebird
overview

02

Benefits of
building a
bluebird trail

03

Monitoring
the Trail

04

Next steps

The Eastern Bluebird



Adult Male



Adult Female

NOT the Eastern Bluebird



“I see these birds
all the time and
they’re kinda mean
to other birds.”

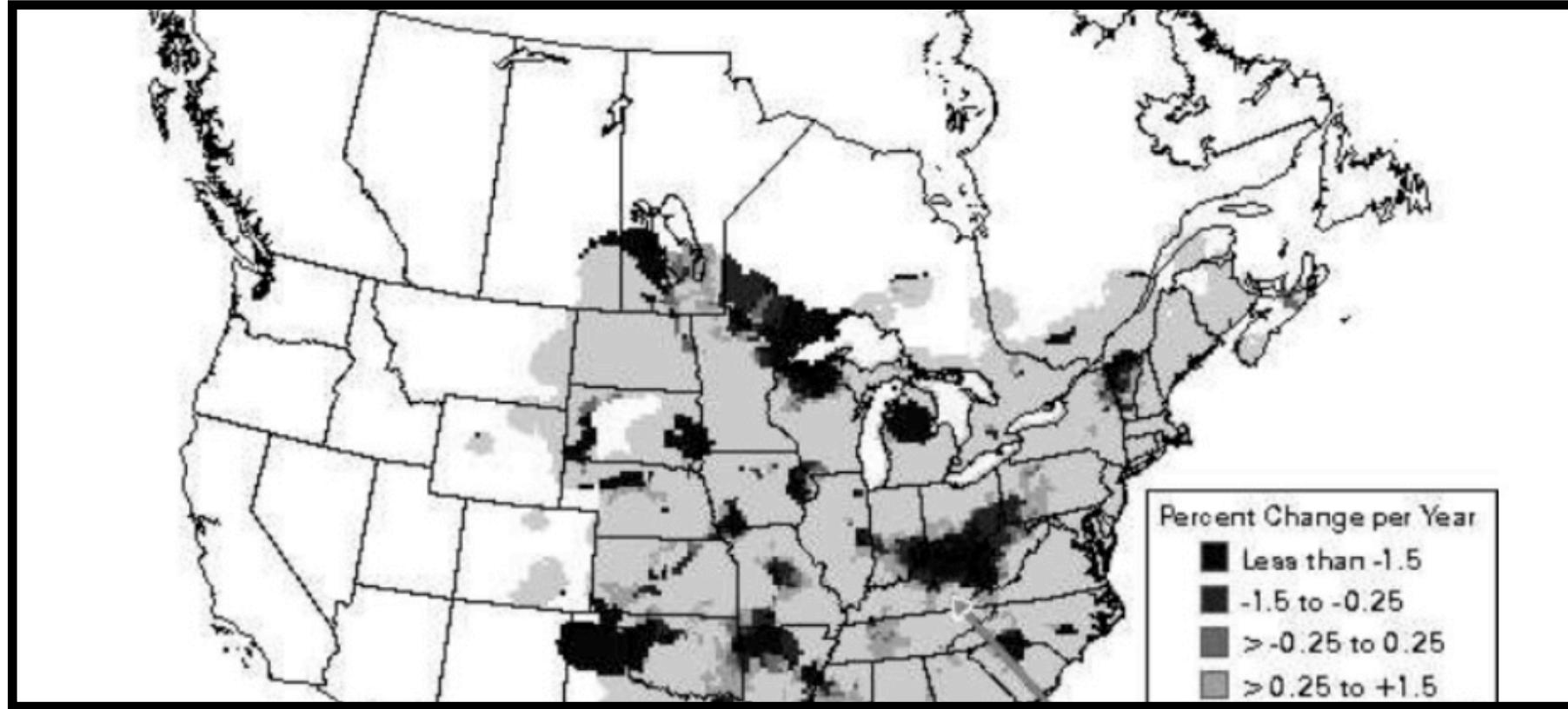
-My kids



Threats to the bluebird



- ▶ Predation
 - ▶ Domesticated cats
 - ▶ Raccoons
 - ▶ Black Rat Snakes
- ▶ Habitat Loss/Competition
 - ▶ European Starlings
 - ▶ House Sparrows
 - ▶ Development
 - ▶ Dead tree removal



10 years of Bluebird population decline

Research from University of Kentucky and North American Bluebird Society continue to support a statistically significant decline in Bluebird population along the Ohio River Valley, including Central Kentucky.

Benefits of building and maintaining a trail of bluebird boxes

1. Bluebirds respond well to nesting boxes
2. Beautiful color and year-round residents
3. Bugs. Bluebirds forage the ground for insects
4. Community interaction with the land and inhabitants
5. Opportunity to contribute to scientific research by participating in the Cornell Cavity Nesting Bird Study
6. Nesting Threats and risks are more easily mitigated with a managed habitat



Radio Remote on the Bluebird Trail in Franklin County, KY

Project Summary

Master Planning

- Identify locations for nestbox installation

Procurement of materials

- 40-50 nest boxes, poles, predator guards, use of utility vehicles

Installation

- Trail should be completed by early February 2023

Monitor/Maintain

- Weekly box monitoring during nesting

Educate

- Trail becomes a living classroom of successful conservation



Master Planning

- ▶ Open rural countryside and pastureland
- ▶ Space nesting boxes 50-200 feet from wooded or heavily brushy areas
- ▶ Boxes should be 125-150 yards from each other
- ▶ Entrance to box should be about five feet from ground
- ▶ Orient the box so the entrance is leeward to prevailing winds
- ▶ Avoid areas of heavy pesticide use
- ▶ High traffic areas should be avoided when possible
- ▶ Placement should consider cattle grazing areas, event spaces, obstructions to farm or mowing equipment, hiking/biking areas



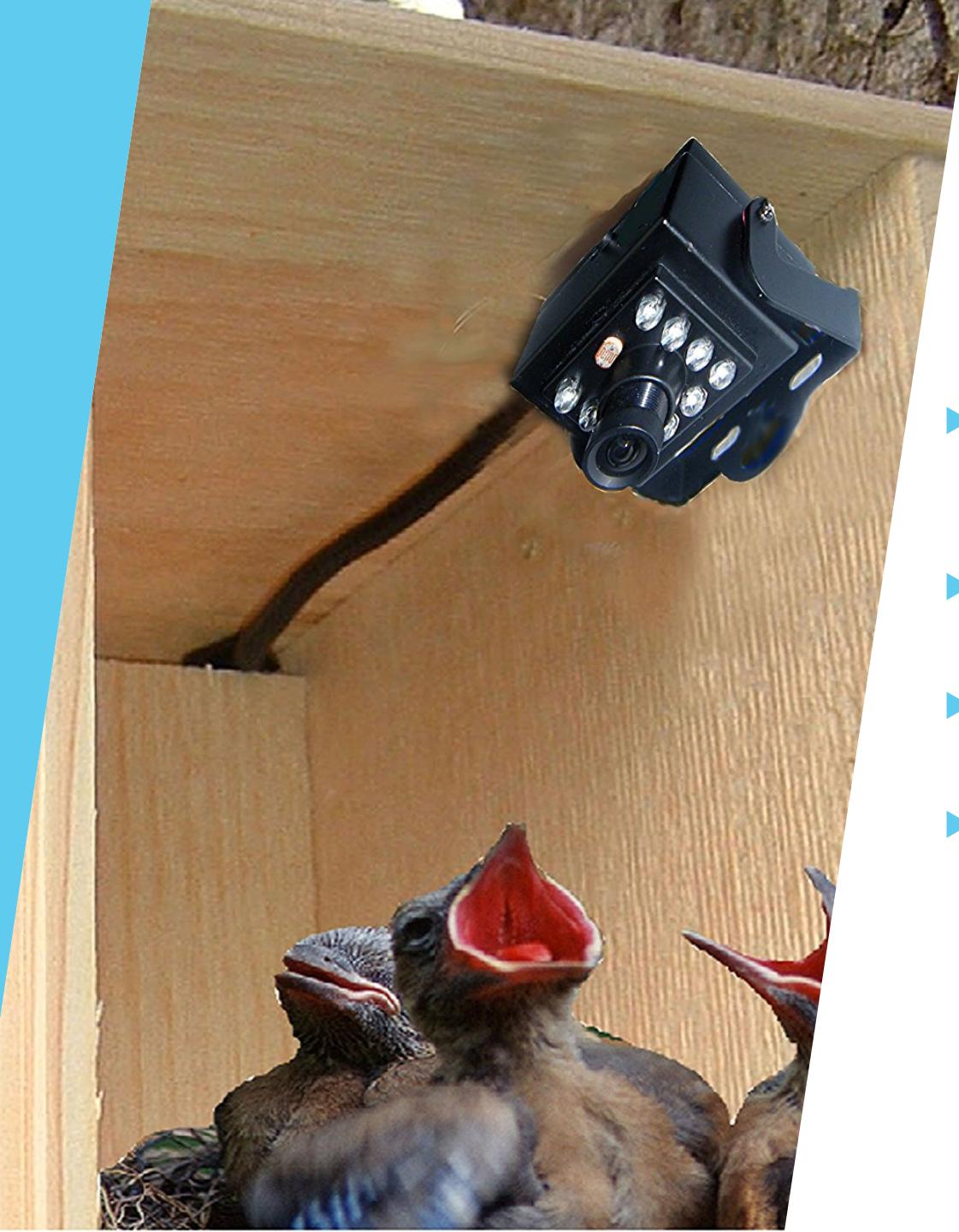
Materials

- ▶ Boxes can be purchased or built
- ▶ Predator guards/baffles installed on all boxes
- ▶ 5-gallon bucket to hold tools
- ▶ 3/4" metal conduit, 10' long (cut to 8')
- ▶ Soil probe
- ▶ Post driver
- ▶ Screwdriver, box mounting adapter
- ▶ Ivory soap or paraffin wax (helps prevent wasps)
- ▶ Mechanics mirror
- ▶ Wren Guards discourage House Wrens
- ▶ Tanglefoot or cinnamon to keep ants out of boxes
- ▶ Educational signage

Installation

- ▶ Bluebirds begin scouting nesting sites in February
- ▶ Installation should be complete by early February
- ▶ Fun Community event
- ▶ Trees and fence posts will work but are more prone to predation



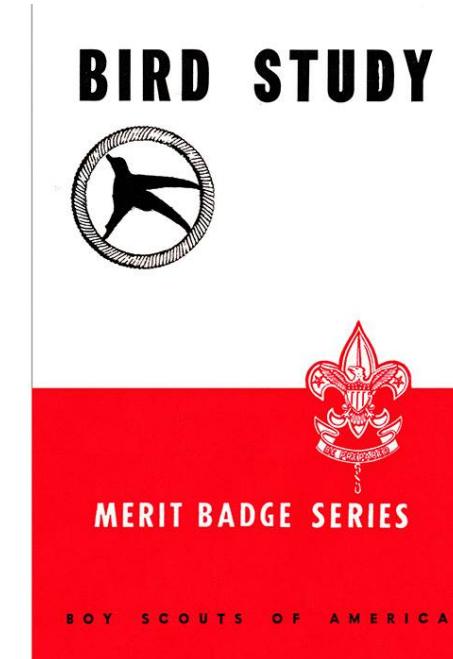


Monitor and Maintain

- ▶ During nesting season, weekly box check between Late March through August
- ▶ Collect brood data, notate instances of predation
- ▶ Add information to existing studies of cavity-nesting birds
- ▶ Repair damage from storms, predators, vandalism

Educate and Celebrate

- ▶ Signage near trailheads informs visitors and educates special groups on the successful conservation efforts
- ▶ With nest cams, public can monitor nesting activity with a live feed from nest camera
- ▶ Bird Bingo cards available via QR code encourage birding exploration
- ▶ Involve kids, parents to get involved with monitoring activities





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Thank you!