

## **Article for Soliciting Volunteers for Bluebird Trails**

*(You can attach your own name like: \_\_\_\_\_ Gets a Bluebird Trail or New BB Trail at \_\_\_\_\_ Needs Your Help)*

The Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS) with the help of local representative, \_\_\_\_\_, who is county coordinator of \_\_\_\_\_ county will be establishing a bluebird trail at \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ Virginia. This location offers prime open habitat for bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds. The initial plan is to make the trail \_\_\_\_\_ boxes with raccoon guards and snake guards to protect the nests from predation.

Volunteer monitors will be needed to help check the trail to gather information for VBS on which boxes are being used, how many eggs have been laid, hatched and the number of chicks fledged. Volunteers also clean out boxes between nestings and monitor to make sure that non-native English house sparrows do not take over the boxes. House sparrows and starlings are one of the prime reasons that bluebirds numbers have decreased over the years because these non-native birds kill bluebirds and their young and rob them of places to nest in the wild. Monitoring allows us to control sparrow use of our man-made boxes as well as gather valuable data about the activities of native birds.

*(optional paragraph)*

Bluebirds are highly tolerant of human activity around their nest boxes and it does not deter them to have people open and check their nest boxes. This presents a perfect opportunity to see the bluebirds cycle from nest to eggs to young. It is especially great to share this with children to cultivate their interest in nature. If you have boxes in your yard, you should take an active role in monitoring the activities that happen in and around the box. It is especially important to be responsible and not let house sparrows reproduce in your boxes.

If you are interested in Volunteering to help with the trail at \_\_\_\_\_ please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. All volunteers must be able to go out to the trail at least once a month for 2-3 hours to check the trail between the months of April and August. Volunteers will be trained before the nesting season and organized into a monitoring team of up to 4 people or couples to take care of the trail. All equipment necessary for monitoring will be provided to the volunteers.

For more information on bluebirds check out the Virginia Bluebird Society's web page at [www.virginiabluebirds.org](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org) or call (703) 978-6609. The Bluebird Book by Donald and Lillian Stokes, The Bluebird Monitor's Guide from Cornell Labs, and Bluebird Trails edited by Dorene Scriven are all excellent references on bluebirds and how to monitor boxes or trails.