

NEWSLETTER
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CROOKED CREEK ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

www.crookedcreekelc.org

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BLUE BIRDS

Bluebird boxes should be cleaned before the onset of winter, well after the young have fledged the nest, and again in early February to remove any nesting material from overwintering mice. Most boxes have a latch or removable side panel for easy human access, while still excluding predators. Especially after the young fledge during the breeding season in spring and summer, you should remove nesting material completely from the site to reduce predation and prevent the attraction of parasites. Bluebirds will not renest a box that has leftover nesting material, so it is important to remember to clean each house after each brood fledges, or at least over the winter. Never take down boxes for the winter as they provide shelter from the harsh weather and roosting habitat for overwintering birds like nuthatches and woodpeckers, as well as any bluebirds that stay in the area for the winter.

- Winter is also a great time to make any repairs on boxes when they are not in use. Replace any broken or split wood pieces to prevent rain and the cold from entering the box. If squirrels have chewed the entrance hole, attach a metal guard (found at any birding store) or attach a 1.5" thick wood block with a 1.5" entrance



hole over the diameter of the hole. The entrance should not be larger than 1.5" to prevent the use of boxes by starlings.

Bluebirds are one of our earlier nesters and will return to Pennsylvania in late February or early March. Bluebirds require cavities for nesting, but cannot construct their own, so maintaining bluebird boxes is important to their survival. Grasslands and large open areas near forest edges, especially fallow farm fields and meadows, are the best places for bluebird boxes. Place boxes at least 100 yards apart since bluebirds are very territorial, and keep them away from any kind of brush and cover.

Bluebird boxes are available for purchase from the Game Commission or any birding store, or you can even build some yourself. Make sure to get bluebird boxes out by late winter so they are ready for the new spring arrivals in late February! .

By Amy Carrozzino

Meet the Newest Member of the ELC Team **JUGHEAD**



Jughead has only one responsibility, and that is to get the birds used to a figure sitting in the courtyard. The idea is that then we can switch in some students, or visitors to the ELC, letting them experience the birds landing on them as they feed.

Come out and meet Jughead in person!

**"The Best Kept Secret In
Armstrong County"**

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