

WESTERN BLUEBIRD HATCHING SCHEDULE CONTINUED

DAY 9

Feathers are now out of the sheath on the head, spine, wing and vent areas. Lower leg is now about 1" long.

DAY 10

Nestling appears to have a smooth outline. Tail feathers and sheaths of the primary and secondary wing feathers elongate. Only about 1mm of feathers are unsheathed, however.

DAY 11

Primaries of the wing are now 2mm exposed from the sheath. Bare skin is still exposed between the spinal and femoral tracts, and in the mid-vent area. Nestlings are now becoming active, and resist being turned on their backs for examination.

DAY 13

Primaries are now exposed 7-10 mm from the sheath. Blue color is evident on the tail and wing feathers. Legs have reached adult length, (27-28mm). Birds are bright eyed and active.

DAY 14

Nestlings appear sleeker. They have reached their maximum weight. They are active and nervous when handled. **WARNING!! DO NOT OPEN THE NESTBOX AFTER THIS DATE. THE NESTLINGS MAY FLEDGE PREMATURELY!!**

FLEDGING

Western Bluebirds fledge anywhere from 19 to 23 days after hatching. They leave the nest one after the other, flying only a short distance to a tree or shrub. If they land on the ground, the adults lead them to cover. The parents return to the nest several times to see that all the young have fledged. The fledglings beg for food, and are fed occasionally. At first, the young will observe prey, but not attempt to eat it. After a day or two they will seize the prey, but usually discard it. By the third day out of the nest they can consume prey and within 10 days they have mastered self feeding, thoroughly preparing the food by removing the wings of insects before consuming them. In 35 to 45 days they are independent of the parents, but remain with them throughout the summer and fall.

