

# Tools and Terminology

## ***Introduction***

Assemble a box or tote to use in the field with the following useful items. All other equipment is provided, e.g. nest boxes, feeding stations, and predator guards. The Glossary of Terms contains words used commonly by our volunteers.

## ***Tools of the Trade***

Binoculars	Binoculars are essential for viewing and identifying all birds using Prescott nest boxes.
Box tags, tacks	Prescott staples small aluminum strips on new nest boxes where you can inscribe the box number. Separate tags are available for older boxes without numbers and can be fastened with half-inch tacking nails. Pushpins or thumbtacks are good to carry along with you.
Candle stub	If you encounter wasps or yellow jackets nesting in a box, remove the nest in the morning when they are cold and inactive and rub the candle wax on the inside roof of the box to prevent reinfestation.
Dog biscuits	Treats may distract an overly protective or friendly dog that interferes with your visit.
Feeding station	Tack a lid from a cottage cheese carton to the top of the nest box to place mealworms in or use one of the specially developed feeding stations from our supply.
Field guide	Referring to a field guide helps with identification of all birds you see in the field.
Hand sanitizer, gloves	Available at most drug or office supply stores, liquid hand sanitizer or individually wrapped washing tissues are recommended for cleaning hands between boxes to prevent the spread of disease. Some monitors wear disposable gloves when checking boxes or disposing of dead birds.
Hand warmers	Your bander can supply hand warmers or you can purchase them at any store that carries sporting goods. Buy the smallest size to place under or on the side of the nest when you fear that nestlings are vulnerable to hypothermia in our cold wet spring weather.
Hole reducers	These are pre-drilled wood blocks with 1.5-inch holes available for nailing over nest box openings that have been widened by woodpeckers or chewed by other predators. Starlings often occupy boxes with enlarged openings.
Ice chest	A small ice chest with ice is useful in hot weather for storing mealworms, your lunch and water bottle, and for keeping adult dead bluebirds fresh for necropsy purposes.
Labels	Self-stick paper labels are used to write the date, box number, and your name on Ziploc bags for storage of dead adult birds in your cooler. Transfer birds to your home freezer.
Mask	When scraping out old nests, you may wish to wear a simple paper facemask to reduce dust inhalation.
Mirror	A small hand mirror or one mounted on a long handle (available at automotive supply stores) is recommended to view inside the nest and avoid pulling on the nest edge.
Nails	Galvanized four-inch nails are good for hanging nest boxes. Smaller common nails are good for securing the backboard of the box at the bottom to prevent it from swaying.
Notebook	A pocket-sized notebook is handy for recording special notes or listing items to take for the next visit. Most observations and route details regarding each nesting site should be written on your monitoring forms.

## Tools and Terminology

Nest	Ask your bander for an extra bluebird nest to keep in a clean plastic bag or keep one when you have a failed bluebird nest that is clean and fresh. You may need to use this as a temporary holding nest if nestlings are abandoned and have to be removed for adoption elsewhere. You may also have to replace a wet nest with a dry one. Adult birds accept replacement nests.
Paper towels	A roll of paper towels kept in a plastic bag is handy for hand cleaning.
Pens, pencils	A couple of pens or pencils are essential for record keeping in the field.
Plastic bags	Ziploc plastic bags are useful for storing dead birds. Take a couple old plastic bags for disposing of dead nestlings, sparrow nests, or other specimens in your home garbage can.
Pliers, hammer, scraper	When mounting or moving nest boxes, hammer and pliers are useful. A spackling-type spatula or ice scraper works well for cleaning nest boxes after a clutch has fledged.
Post-it notes	These are useful for leaving messages and your phone number for homeowners. PBRP provides business cards for your use too. Check with your bander.
Noel predator guards	Predator guards made of wire mesh are available for fastening to the front of nest boxes to prevent predation through the opening. Check with your bander for these supplies.
Pry bar	Sometimes called a wrecking bar or wonder bar, these long-handled prying tools are good for removing nails and nest boxes from posts and power poles.
Screwdrivers	Both Phillips and slot screwdrivers are useful as most nest boxes are constructed with Phillips screws, and some are fastened to posts and buildings with screws. Some monitors regularly carry portable electric screwdrivers.
Toothbrush	An old toothbrush is good for cleaning a dirty leg band when you have to record band numbers from dead nestlings or adults.
Tweezers	You may need to feed mealworms to nestlings using tweezers while in the field.
Wool hat or bag	Banders use a wool ski cap or similar bag for removing nestlings during banding. Keep one handy in case you have to remove cold or wet nestlings from a box and warm them or transport them to another nest box. Remember to line it with a clean paper towel before each use to prevent passing any disease among birds.

# Tools and Terminology

## ***Glossary of Terms***

Always try to use the proper terminology when discussing bluebirds and your activities.

Brood	Group of young birds hatched or cared for at one time (noun form); To sit on and keep nestlings warm (verb form)
Brood patch	Featherless area on the female's belly that provides direct skin contact to warm the eggs and nestlings
Competitors	Animals that use the same nesting cavities and resources as bluebirds, such as mice, swallows, wrens, chickadees, and nuthatches
Clutch	Total number of eggs laid by a female bird in one nesting attempt
Fecal sac	Pellet covered with a clean, tough, mucous membrane containing the excrement of nestling birds
Fledge	When nestlings leave the nest or cavity after reaching maturity
Fledgling	Young bird that has recently fledged
Hatch	To produce young from eggs
Hatchling	Newly hatched bird or nestling
Incubate	To hatch eggs by the warmth of the body
NABS	PBRP is an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society, a national organization
Nesting cycle	The period beginning with nest building, extending through egg laying and raising of young to independence; also called the breeding cycle
Nestling	Newly hatched bird, one still in the nest requiring brooding and frequent feeding
Pair bond	Association between two birds to produce young
PBRP	Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project of Oregon
Predators	Animals that attack bluebirds and kill nestlings and adults, such as raccoons, hawks, house sparrows, European starlings, and house cats.
Roost	Support birds rest on or customarily use for perching (noun form); To perch or settle down for rest (verb form)
Snag	Standing dead tree that may be used by cavity nesters
Synchronous hatching	Eggs hatching at the same time or nearly the same time, usually within one calendar day
Territory	Area of land defended by a pair of bluebirds for use as nesting and foraging habitat
Thermo-regulation	To maintain a constant body temperature as when brooding hatchlings
WEBL	The American Ornithological Union abbreviation for western bluebirds. The naming convention uses the first two letters from each word in the bird name as an acronym.