

Our Feathered Friends- Feb. 20

Posted on Feb 21, Posted by [Ray Pope](#) Category [Our Feathered Friends](#)

I am so ready for this cold weather to move on and warm up a bit. While watching out the kitchen window, there was a streak of blue out in the backyard. My Bluebirds have returned and have been checking out their old haunts. Before you start your spring cleaning on your birdhouses, please protect yourselves from breathing in old dried bird droppings. Remember what it did to my health back in 2011. At the least, put on some kind of protection to prevent ingesting some kind of spores or other nasty bacteria. When I was in a coma for two weeks, it affected me with pneumonia, and other nerve damage, plus, I had to learn how to walk again.

Back to our Bluebirds, make sure that the house is constructed properly for what you are hoping to have as tenants. There are a lot of do-it-yourselfers out there, just rearing to use a saw and some nails and a hammer and show off their building skills just to make the perfect home for some nasty starlings. My first birdhouse, to me, was a masterpiece a home for four different birds all rolled into one. As luck would have it, really good luck in my boat, there were a pair of House Wrens that promptly moved in, the first nesting record in Wilson County for this species according to the late **William Senter**. Have you ever seen a preacher dance? He did a jig right in my own backyard.

Different species of birds have their own wants and needs when it comes to rearing their babies. Inside dimensions are pretty important, but there is always a little wiggle room. The most important feature of nesting boxes is the hole diameter. If you are building for Bluebirds, 1 and 1/2 inches is perfect for them and will keep starlings at bay. I have actually watched a starling trying its best to squeeze into a Bluebird box. I wanted to sneak up from behind and give it a shove, with some hard object such as a baseball bat. Coach **Woody Hunt** would approve of my swing, I'm pretty sure. Go Cumberland!

Inside dimensions used to be 5 inches square, but now most people will build with a 4 by 4-inch, in which I have never heard any complaints from our Bluebird friends. Depth of the entrance to the floor is usually between 6 to 8 inches. On returning Bluebirds, the best thing to do is to remove the old nest so that the babies in the next brood will not get too close to the entrance, as the parent birds will add new nesting material over the old nest. Do not add a perch to the nesting box, as that will encourage House Sparrows to try and take over.

Anthony Gray stopped for a visit back a couple of Saturdays ago to check out what was feeding here at home. I showed Bubba a whole basket of nesting material that I had removed from House Sparrows that tried nesting here. When you evict them, remove all the junk and throw it somewhere that they can't just fly down and put it back in the box.

I would like to thank my good friend **Ken Morgan** for the donation of four Bluebird boxes and an Owl nesting box that will find its way out to the Cedars of Lebanon State Park. Included is a picture of the nesting box, with my little friend from next door,

Aleia Fish

. The bird house looks great on its own, but her pretty smile adds to the scene. It's good to get children involved in some of the things that I love, so hopefully that won't die off when I'm gone.

We would love to hear from you as to what's lurking about in your neighborhood and at your feeders. You can reach **Karen Franklin** at [This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it](#) and write to me at 606 Fairview Ave., Lebanon, TN, 37087, or e-mail me at [This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it](#)

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