

Quick Reference Guide to Cavity-Nesters

by Steve & Regina Garr

photos by Steve Garr

For more information, refer to the Missouri Bluebird Society Educational Brochure

Nests constructed mostly of grasses and/or pine straw



Eastern Bluebird

4-6 blue eggs . Will avg 2-3 nestings per season in Missouri.
See the MOBS Educational Brochure for more info!

Our favorite method to determine what species is using a particular nest box is to actually OBSERVE the bird at that box (nest building, incubating, or feeding its mate or babies). Time invested on the trail or at home to witness a bird at the nest box is well spent—and Fun!

Remember....a small percentage of Eastern Bluebird Eggs will be white instead of blue. In that case, the entire clutch should be white if all the eggs came from the same female.



Tree Swallows

Usually 6-7 white eggs, note feathers in nest, particularly white feathers. A nest box with a "fledgling ladder" is particularly important to this species, even for the adults.



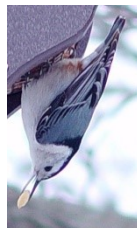
Tree Swallow Nest with Eggs

House Sparrows are a non-native species and since their introduction have proven to be a serious detriment to our native birds. It is our opinion that good stewardship dictates that House sparrows NOT be allowed to nest in man-made nesting boxes. House sparrows fill a nest box with grasses, weeds, paper, feathers and other materials and frequently weave a "tunnel" to the bottom of the nest. The longer the nest is permitted to progress, the more the house sparrows become bonded to the nest box.



Right:
Beginning of a House sparrow nest (this one contains a Blue Jay feather but almost any material is used)

Right: Adult male House Sparrow. Note black on throat and chest.



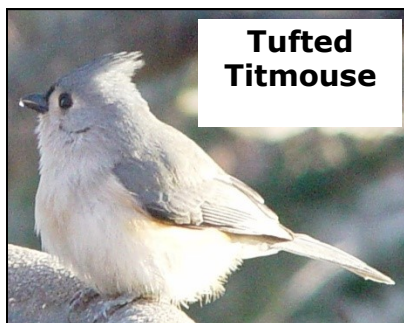
White-breasted Nuthatch (left) might also nest in man-made cavities. Their nest is typically made of shredded bark, fine grass, fur, hair. Their eggs are white with dark marks.

Nests constructed with Moss and varying amounts of fur and /or leaves



Chickadee
(nest and eggs below)

Generally 4-8 eggs (white with varying degrees of brown/reddish spots or speckles).



Tufted Titmouse

Remember to expect the unexpected when it comes to wildlife! Note the bluebird egg in the chickadee nest below.



Below: Chickadee Eggs viewed through Inspection Mirror



Tufted Titmouse Nest

Five to seven eggs, similar in appearance to Chickadee eggs but slightly larger.

A Prothonotary Warbler has a similar nest.



Carolina Wren



Other desirable native cavity-nesters which also use some moss to construct their nests: Carolina Wren and Prothonotary Warbler

(both of these species have eggs which are white or cream with brownish spots or blotches.) The Carolina Wren usually adds a roof above the nest often made with dried leaves and moss.



Prothonotary Warbler

Nests constructed mostly of Sticks and twigs:



House Wren



The Carolina Wren (Pictured above left) and the House Wren (pictured left) make very different types of nests. Also note that occasionally **Bewick's Wren** will nest in nest boxes. They too build with twigs, like House Wrens, but rarely stuff the box full as House Wrens often do and the Bewick's will often incorporate moss and grass into its nest. The Bewick's Wren and Carolina Wren are quite similar in appearance, but their nests are notably different.

A Note about the egg descriptions in this Guide: intentionally, we have NOT gone into great detail on egg description. We encourage you to identify a species using a box via the nest type + GENERAL egg appearance + observing the bird itself. PLEASE do not remove eggs from a box or handle them for the sole purpose of identification. Do not spend an inordinate amount of time at the box trying to make an identification based on egg appearance alone. *Steve & Regina Garr*