



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CLIMATE WATCH PROJECT GATHERS DATA ON BLUEBIRDS: CITIZENS CAN HELP TOO

(Atlanta, Ga.) April 13, 2017 – Look closely at the nest boxes scattered around Atlanta parks, greenspaces, yards, and open fields and you are likely to see Eastern Bluebirds nesting. These cavity-nesting birds are found year-round in Georgia. To better understand how Eastern Bluebird populations are faring in Georgia and across the nation, Atlanta Audubon Society is participating in the National Audubon Society's Climate Watch Program.

The Climate Watch Program monitors certain bird species' responses to climate change. The 2014 Birds and Climate Change Report by National Audubon Society found that the majority of North American bird species would lose more than 50 percent of their current range by the year 2080 if current climate trends persist. Climate Watch volunteers throughout North America are observing and reporting birds where Audubon's climate models project they should be in the 2020s. Still in the pilot phase, Atlanta Audubon Society has been participating since the summer of 2016. The most recent survey period in January 2017, focused on bluebirds and nuthatches, two species groups that are widely spread across North America. The next Climate Watch Surveys will take place June 1 to 15.

Georgia residents who would like to support bluebird populations should consider building or purchasing a bluebird nest box to create habitat in their yard. Bluebirds are cavity nesters, meaning they prefer to build nests in a nest box or tree cavity. As these locations become scarcer due to human development, Eastern Bluebirds have become more dependent on humans to provide nesting places for them. Once a nest box is discovered by bluebirds, it is not uncommon to have two to three broods per nesting season in the same box.

While there are many designs, the North American Bluebird Society suggest bluebird nest boxes have an entrance hole measurement of 2 ¼" high by 1 3/8" wide, a box depth of 9", and a width and length of 5 ½". It is also helpful to have an easy open box for cleaning. There are numerous online sources of bluebird nest box plans for those who would like a do-it-yourself solution. In addition, pre-assembled nest boxes are available at area bird watching stores and some big box retailers.

Bluebirds prefer to nest at the edge of forests and fields, such as open woodlands or grassland areas from early March through early August each year. Birds can sometimes take several years before utilizing new nest boxes, and it is not uncommon for other species, such as Carolina Chickadees or Carolina Wrens, to use the boxes as well.

Homeowners with active nest boxes are encouraged to become citizen scientists and report on nest box use. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch program gathers information on nesting activity each spring and summer that scientists then use to determine bird populations. For detailed instructions on how to monitor nest boxes or to sign up for NestWatch, please visit <http://nestwatch.org/>.

For more information, visit www.AtlantaAudubon.org.

Please note: Two photos of Eastern Bluebirds on nest boxes along with an MS Word version of this press release are available for download at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y3l9s32oktcs94e/AADL4n1VHbxzzwGhN455VJ-fa?dl=0>

The mission of Atlanta Audubon Society is to protect Georgia's birds and their habitats through conservation, education, and advocacy.

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