

## *Paul Kilduff's Bluebirds*

My name is Paul Kilduff. I was born in 1949. My wife Mary and I live in a rowhouse in northeast Baltimore.

Mary started monitoring nestboxes at Oregon Ridge Park in Cockeysville in the early 90s, as a biology project to do with our homeschooling daughter. Occasionally I would tag along. I would ask questions sometimes, and Mary would try to answer them, and she would always say, "We have a couple books about this; you should read one." But I didn't.

Some of the boxes were in bad repair, and I asked the coordinator if I could fix them. She said, "Sure," so I went to the hardware store and got some lumber and jerry-rigged some repairs. I mentioned this to my brother, and he asked if I had used treated lumber. I said I thought I had. He said there were chemicals in treated lumber that might be incompatible with baby birds.

I realized that I had no idea what I was doing, and THAT was when I read the books! And, there was this new-fangled thing called "the internet" that everyone was suddenly using and I found a bluebird bulletin board and asked a couple of questions. I found out there were a lot of people monitoring nestboxes, and building and repairing them, and that they knew a lot that I didn't know, and they were willing to share their knowledge. I still communicate with some of these folks through a Yahoo group called bluebirdmonitors, or on the Bluebird-L group on Facebook.

Today, in addition to the boxes Mary and the rest of our incredible team of volunteers monitor at Oregon Ridge, we have boxes at Lake Montebello, near our house in Baltimore City, and we get bluebirds and Tree Swallows there. We also have a box in our House Sparrow-infested back yard with a 1-1/8" hole and we usually have at least one brood of either House Wrens or Carolina Chickadees.

I have kept on learning about native secondary cavity nesters and how to help provide breeding cavities for them. I have paid attention to people talking about nestbox construction, and I've tried to incorporate their good ideas into the boxes I build.

The links below represent my best interpretation of those ideas. The NABS-style (North American Bluebird Society) design is much larger than the original bluebird nestboxes from the early days, in order to give the nestlings enough room in the box to move around and stretch their wings before their first flight. The Peterson-style box is a harder box to build, but it seems to have a certain mysterious attraction for bluebirds, and when you're pairing boxes it's nice to have one NABS and one Pete. The Peterson-style box is bigger than Dick Peterson's original design, and has a round hole to exclude European Starlings. There is also a step-by-step guide to installing a nestbox using a stovepipe guard designed by Ron Kingston. Ron himself looked at the file and provided a couple of corrections. The Kingston guard is an economical and effective way to confound snakes and raccoons trying to get into a nestbox.

Like hundreds of others, I have worked hard to get good at building and installing nestboxes. I've tried to put everything I know into the three pdf links below.

- [First link is the NABS style nestbox.](#)
- [Second link is to the Peterson style nestbox.](#)
- [Third link is to the Ron Kingston predator guard.](#)