

Audubon Center & Sanctuary

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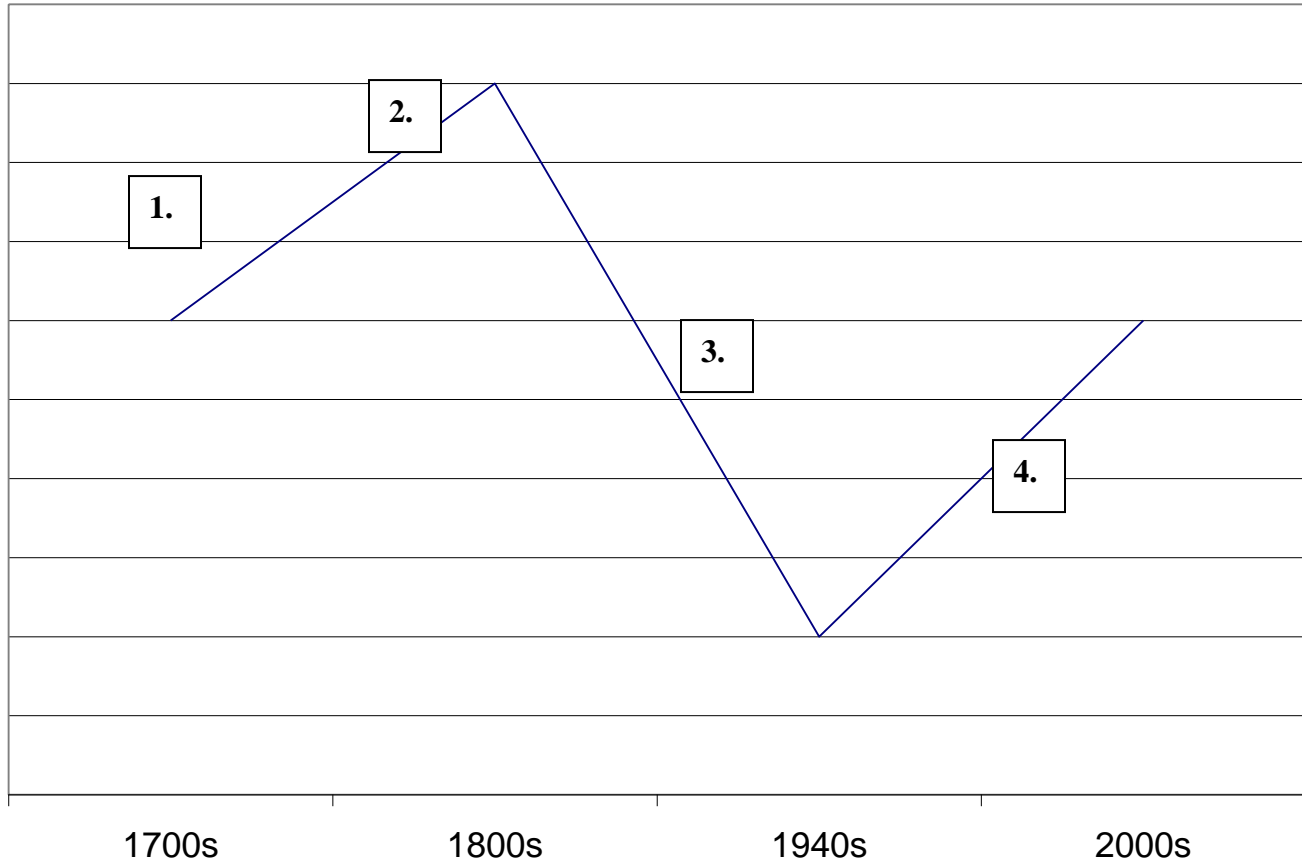
Web: www.jamestownaudubon.org



An Audubon naturalist
visited our class.

We learned about Bluebirds!

Bluebird Populations over the Years



Put these events in the right order. Write the letter of the event next to the number.

1. _____ a) People began putting out nest boxes.
2. _____ b) People cut **some** trees to build houses and make farm fields.
3. _____ c) People cut **lots** of trees – leaving almost no forest edges.
4. _____ d) There was a lot of forest across North America.

On the back, draw a bluebird or a nest box out in a field. Write a few facts about bluebirds.

Bluebirds: Background Information for Teachers

The Eastern Bluebird is the New York State bird.

All animal populations fluctuate over time. The causes can be natural or caused by people. Experts believe that the Eastern Bluebird population was at an all-time high in the mid-1800s. At this point, European settlers had cut a patchwork of fields across North America, but there were still plenty of “edge” habitats. The remaining, un-cut forest provided plenty of nest cavities for raising babies and the fields provided plenty of insects to feed the babies.

By the 1940s or so, most of the North American forest had been cut and land had been converted to farms, housing developments, and shopping and industrial areas. There were few natural cavities in which to build nests. The populations of Bluebirds and other cavity-nesting birds fell.

In addition, back in the 1800s, two non-native birds were brought to North America from Europe. Both the European Starling and the House Sparrow are cavity nesters which compete with our native birds for both food and nest sites.

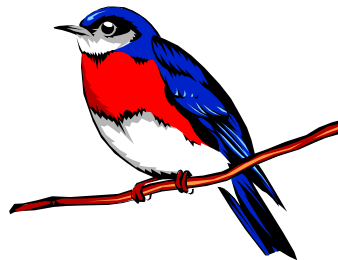
In the 1970s, a big push was made by Bluebird-lovers to put out nest boxes. Bird groups, scout groups, school groups all joined in the effort. Cavity nesters, such as the Eastern Bluebird are making a come-back.

Some facts that may be revealed during the bluebird game:

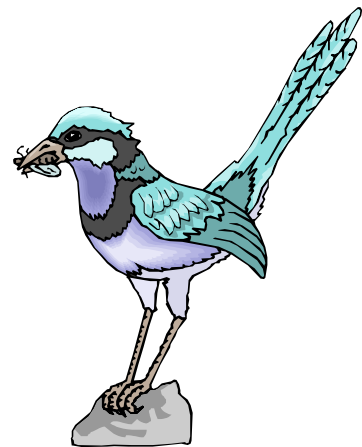
- Most Bluebirds migrate to warmer climates in the winter. A few may stick around, if they can find plenty of berries, or if people put out mealworms for them to eat.
- In spring, the males return first and scout out several possible nest sites. When the females arrive a couple of weeks later, they make the final decision.
- Nests are built from dry grasses. The mother will lay one egg each day until she has a “clutch” of 4-6 eggs. Then she will begin incubation. If you touch eggs and they feel cold, she has not begun incubation.
- Squirrels, chipmunks, snakes, and raccoons are all predators of birds and bird eggs. Foxes sometimes eat adult birds, if they can catch them.
- Blowfly larva can sometimes be found in nesting material. At night, the larva climb up through the nest material, attach to the bodies of the baby birds, and suck blood. Babies can tolerate one or two larva, but if there is a big infestation of larva, this can kill the babies.
- Native birds that compete with Bluebirds for nest cavities include chickadees, house wrens, titmice, and tree swallows.
- Male is a brighter blue than the female.
- Bluebirds eat mostly insects, especially in summer. They will switch to berries in winter. Insect protein is very important to babies!

Answer Key:

- 1 – d
- 2 – b
- 3 – c
- 4 – a



Not the same: Bluebird



Blue Jay