

Eastern bluebirds on the comeback



Photo courtesy of Jean Berg

An eastern bluebird sits on a branch.

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The eastern bluebird isn't uncommon here in Bella Vista, thanks in part to the Bella Vista Bluebird Society, which installs and monitors bluebird houses in the area.

According to the *Audubon Guide to North American Birds*, eastern bluebirds are the most widespread species of bluebird, though they were in decline until recent de-

cadecades, during which their population has grown, at least in part, because of birdhouses.

They typically live in open country, farm areas, roadside spaces and other semi-open areas and can be seen in Arkansas year-round.

Butch Tetzlaff, bird aficionado and proprietor of The Bluebird Shed, said he's a big fan of these vibrant blue and orange birds.

"Bluebirds are fascinat-

ing birds," he said.

They're extensively studied, he said, though it isn't well understood why some migrate and others do not.

According to the Audubon guide, bluebirds do a great deal of their foraging without touching the ground — they perch low and scan for insects, typically diving down and hovering while they pick up their snacks. They also catch some insects mid-air and feed on berries by perching near them or

making short, hovering flights amongst trees.

In addition to bugs, bluebirds have been known to eat small reptiles and amphibians.

Bluebirds are cavity nesters, typically nesting in hollow sections of a tree, an old woodpecker hole or a birdhouse.

Males sing and display to attract a mate, and eggs take 13 to 16 days to hatch. Young are typically ready to leave the nest after 18 or 19 days.