



# Driftless Prairies: Native Ecosystems

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# Spring Cleaning

As I was drinking my coffee, I noticed a pair of Eastern Bluebirds checking out one of the bluebird nest boxes near our house. They're back!!! That means it's time to get our bluebird trail ready for the 2014 nesting season.

Preparing the boxes is a fairly simple process, but with 26 boxes spread over two miles it takes some time. I check the boxes to make sure they are all in good shape, making any necessary repairs, cleaning them out, and making sure they are facing east to protect them from the cold northerly spring winds. Usually repairs are very minor, but I found one box that had been run over by our local electrical cooperative maintenance truck – grrrr. In the picture, I am adjusting the height of the predator guard and cleaning out the boxes.



I remove the nest and clean out the boxes at the end of summer when the bluebirds are done nesting. Although some bluebirders open the doors on the nest boxes throughout the winter, I leave them closed; this provides a refuge for birds that are here during the winter. I am always pleased to see that many of the boxes showed signs of being used over the winter. One had a layer of berry seeds on the floor!

During the nesting season we monitor the boxes on a weekly basis, sending the results to [BRAW](#). It's a lot of work, but also a lot of fun and it's healthy too as I ride my bike to check the boxes.

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