



WELCOME!

The FFA Mission
FFA makes a positive difference
in the lives of students by developing
their potential for premier
leadership, personal growth and career
success through agricultural education.

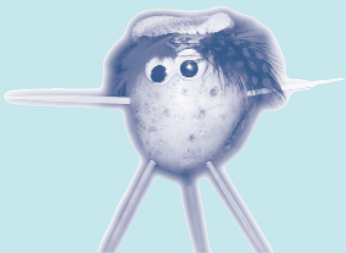
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FFA Homepage: www.ffa.org

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FALL 2000

PAL to PAL

A Newsletter for FFA Advisors and PALS Mentors

Enhancing the Environment

IN MILLERSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, students involved in the PALS Program are lending a helping hand not only to their elementary counterparts, but also to their environment.

Environmental science is one of the four main subject areas in this agricultural education program. By working with community partners, the PALS developed and implemented several activities focused on wildlife and providing necessary habitat.

As in many eastern states, Pennsylvania has been experiencing a significant drop in Eastern Bluebird habitat since the 1970s. These small, brightly colored birds nest in, among other things, wooden fence posts. As wooden posts are replaced with metal

posts, the birds lose nesting habitat. The PALS decided to act.

Bluebird Boxes

Hal Korber, a wildlife information specialist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, was instrumental in the process. Korber taught the elementary and high school PALS about the Eastern Bluebird's plight and provided kits from which they could build bluebird boxes. He even provided cordless screwdrivers and drills, hammers and safety glasses to help with assembly! Each pair of PALS constructed a bluebird box as part of the lesson. The elementary students took the boxes home and were encouraged to put them up in appropriate locations.

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ACTIVITIES

Look for more ideas in the PALS Activity Handbook.

Woodcrafts for Wildlife

OBJECTIVE:

High school students work with their elementary PALS to construct shelters for local wildlife. During the process, they'll learn basic carpentry skills including measuring, cutting, fastening and following instructions. They'll also learn how to work cooperatively as well as learn that they can play an important role in helping local wildlife.



INSTRUCTIONS:

Organize participants into pairs. Each pair should gather the needed supplies and begin measuring and marking their lumber. The high school PAL should wear safety glasses while cutting the lumber. The elementary students should observe the cutting process.

(Consider having the high school students measure and cut the lumber before the elementary PALS arrive.)

When the lumber has been cut, each pair of PALS should work together to assemble the pieces into a bluebird box. Care should be taken to prevent injuries during assembly. Also, once the cutting is completed, older students should play the role of "helper" and let the younger students assemble the boxes. When the box has been assembled, the pair may paint it. If so, it is important to choose a light-colored paint so the house won't overheat in the sunshine.

When the boxes have been completed, the elementary students should be encouraged to take them home and place them in an appropriate spot. Box placement is important. Farmlands and other large, open spaces are good bluebird habitat.

Students should place boxes in meadows, old fields, pastures, country yards, along fence lines between fields, or along wide rights-of-way (by highways, power lines, etc.). It is best if grass and weeds are short or sparse. There should be power lines, fence posts or scattered trees in the grassy areas to provide feeding perches.

Boxes should be placed 4 to 6 feet above the ground. The entrance hole should face north, northeast or east, to prevent sunlight from shining into the hole and overheating the box interior. Houses placed too close to buildings, streams and non-forested wetlands often draw unwanted competition and predation (house cats, house sparrows, raccoons, tree swallows). If this happens, move the box to a new location.

SUPPLIES:

Each pair will need the following items:

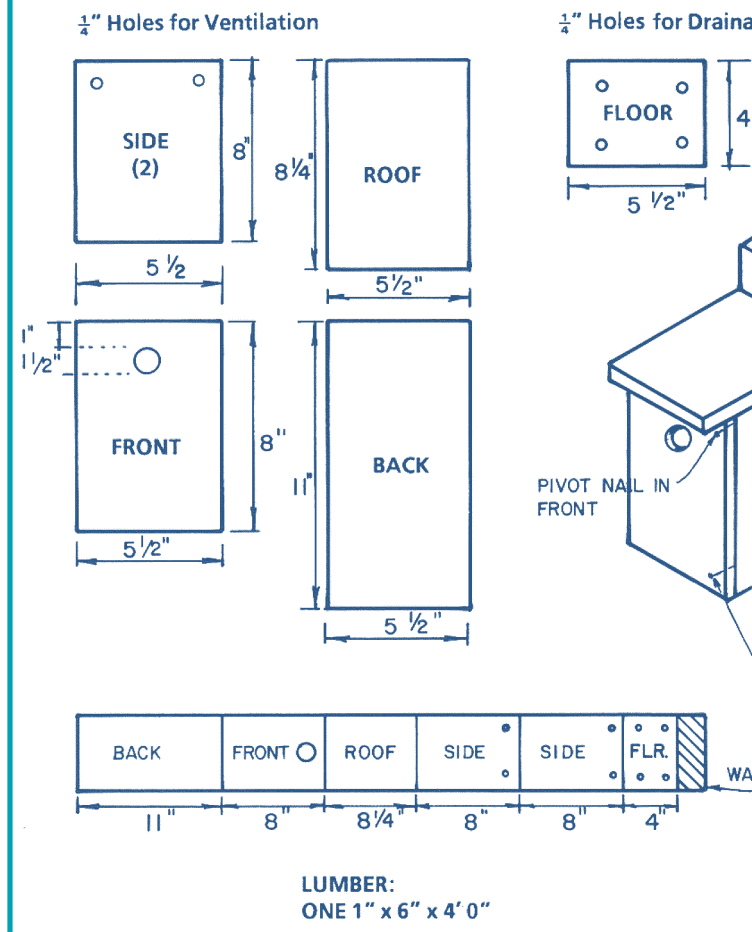
- ONE 1" X 6" X 4' PIECE OF LUMBER
- 1.75" GALVANIZED SIDING OR ALUMINUM NAILS
- ONE 1.5" WOOD SCREW WITH WASHER
- COPY OF INSTRUCTIONS/DIAGRAM (ENLARGE 160% TO FIT ON A 11X8.5 SHEET)
- LIGHT-COLORED EXTERIOR LATEX PAINT*

EQUIPMENT:

The following items can be shared by multiple pairs:

- MEASURING TAPE
- T-SQUARE OR RULER
- PENCIL
- SAFETY GLASSES/GOGGLES
- WOOD SAW
- DRILL WITH A .25" BIT AND A 1.25" BIT
- HAMMER
- SCREWDRIVER
- PAINT BRUSH*
- PAINT CLEAN-UP ITEMS*

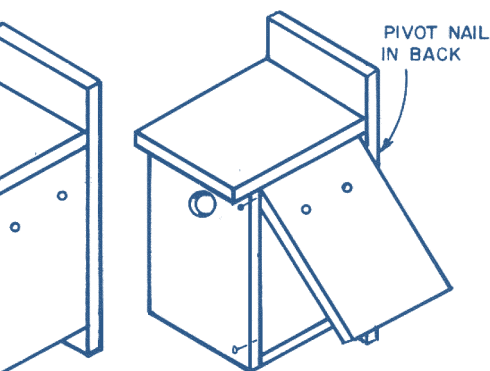
*optional



Houses should be installed and ready for occupancy by mid-March. Generally, they should be checked at least once every two weeks from late March until mid-August. In September, old nests should be removed and the box covered with a plastic leaf bag and taped shut to prevent mice from coming in over the winter. In March, the bag should be removed and the box is again ready for bluebirds.

Note: the plans presented here are for bluebird boxes and are courtesy of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Contact your local wildlife agency for information regarding the need for these boxes in your area or for plans for other items needed to support local wildlife.

NOTE: ENTRANCE HOLE DIAMETER IS $1\frac{1}{4}$ "



PIVOT NAIL
IN BACK

NAIL OR SCREW HOLDS SIDE CLOSED.

TWO "PIVOT" NAILS ALLOW SIDE TO SWING
OUT FOR CLEANING.

USE ONE NAIL AT BOTTOM TO CLOSE SIDE.



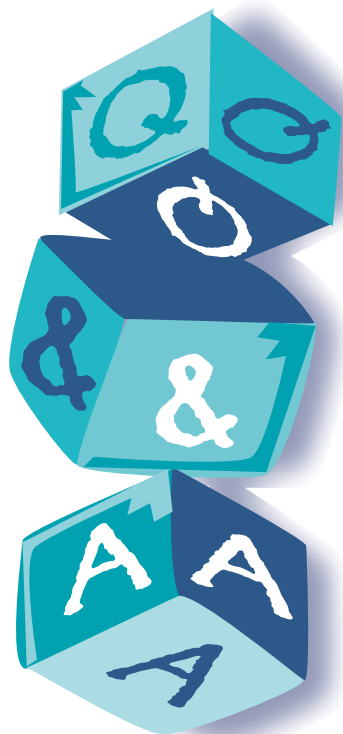
PALS Mentoring Conference

YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS THE SEVENTH ANNUAL PALS Mentoring Conference, which will be held during the 73rd National FFA Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. About 540 elementary students from the Louisville area and southern Indiana schools will be paired with FFA members from across the country. During the conference, high school students will be paired with elementary students and each pair will conduct an agricultural activity plus participate in team-building exercises. In addition to lots of fun, the conference will give FFA members a chance to discover new ideas and develop hands-on skills for use in their local PALS programs.

Make sure your FFA chapter sends several representatives to be a part of this informative and inspiring event! All FFA chapters, advisors, state staff, school administrators and sponsors are invited to participate. The PALS Mentoring Conference will take place Wednesday, October 25, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. To register, volunteer or for more information, contact Becky Meyer at the National FFA Organization via e-mail at bmeyer@ffa.org or phone at 317-802-4262.

The PALS Conference is sponsored by Fifth Third Bank of Kentucky, Inc. as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. Kraft Foods, Inc. provides lunch for all of the participants.





Q IN GENERAL, DOES AGRICULTURE HELP OR HURT WILDLIFE?

A As an industry, agriculture does a lot to support wildlife. In fact, farmers and ranchers provide 75 percent of the nation's wildlife habitat. As of May 1, 2000, farmers had enrolled 31.4 million acres of their land in the Conservation Reserve Program to protect the environment and provide habitat for wildlife.

Deer, elk and other large game often feed on farm fields during the lean winter months. In some areas, particularly in the west, farmers and ranchers have been known

to provide hay to wildlife during times of heavy snow when feed isn't available.

Under a U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative, farmers, ranchers and other landowners have pledged to install two million miles of conservation buffers by 2002. Agricultural producers who install buffers can improve soil, air and water quality; enhance wildlife habitat; restore biodiversity; and create scenic landscapes.

For more information on agriculture and the environment, click on www.fb.org.

Sources: American Farm Bureau Federation, Natural Resources Conservation Service

ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"The students really got into it," says MeeCee Baker, agriculture teacher. "They enjoyed working with their hands and creating something that would be used by wildlife."

Multiple Skills

Through this simple activity, the students learned about bluebirds and the role the students can play in protecting wildlife. In addition, they developed teamwork and basic carpentry skills, all within the PALS framework.

Korber says many state wildlife agencies have similar programs where they provide expertise and, sometimes, materials for students to use in developing habitat for different species in a given area. He encourages FFA chapters to contact their state wildlife agency as well as other wildlife organizations,

such as Ducks Unlimited, to find out what is available and how different elements might fit into each program.

Do Your Homework

A little research can go a long way toward pointing people in the right direction, Korber cautions. The best intentions in the world don't work very well if the projects aren't well designed. For instance, different species have different house and entrance-hole-size requirements. While house sizes can vary somewhat, hole sizes can be critical. A 1.5" diameter hole will admit a bluebird, but exclude the slightly larger starling, for example. For more ideas on how your FFA chapter or PALS Program can enhance the environment, see the activities in this newsletter.



PAL to PAL is the newsletter of PALS (Partners in Active Learning Support), the National FFA Mentoring Program.

The Agricultural Education Mission

Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems.

Produced by the National FFA Organization in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education as a service to state and local agricultural education agencies. The National FFA Organization affirms its belief in the value of all human beings and seeks diversity in its membership, leadership and staff as an equal opportunity employer.

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\$25 for Your PALS Program!

We pay \$25 for each idea we publish! If you have an activity idea to share with other PALS programs, send it to *PAL to PAL*, National FFA Organization, P.O. Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960. We hope to hear from you!

National FFA Organization

6060 FFA Drive
P.O. Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960
FFA Homepage: www.ffa.org

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Additional Ideas

There are lots of fun ways to teach young people about the environment and their role in protecting it. Here are just a couple.

TRACKING ACTIVITY

Choose a large animal, such as an elk, deer or bear, then teach students a lesson about that animal. Cover things like habitat requirements, feeding habits and track shapes. At the conclusion of the message, older students can play the role of the large animal in a nearby park or wooded area and have elementary students "track" them.

PHOTOSYNTHESIS

Develop a basic lesson on photosynthesis to teach students how plants convert sunlight into energy sources people and animals can use. Afterwards, go outside and collect a variety of different leaves. Then, back in the classroom, press each leaf between two sheets of waxed paper with an iron, trim the edges, attach string and use as window hangings.

You'll find lots of other lesson ideas in the *PALS Activity Handbook*, available through the National FFA Organization. For more information or to order, call 1-888-332-2668.