



Why House Sparrow Control is a Must for Bluebird Landlords

by Lynn Ward

The problem:

- House sparrows (HOSP) are invasive, aggressively compete for nest sites, even kill adult birds and hatchlings and destroy eggs.
- Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and Purple Martins are among the most vulnerable to HOSP.

House Sparrow Behavior

- Breed in early spring, ≤4 broods / season, 12- to 14-day incubation, 14 to 16 days to fledging (nesting cycle is similar to that of Bluebird).
- Male bonds to a nest site and won't leave; chirps loudly for mate. He builds the nest.
- Nest is bulky, messy, composed of grass, weeds, leaves, feathers, plastic bits, and garbage; it covers the next box floor to ceiling.

Ways to Discourage House Sparrows

- Place nest boxes in an open area. HOSP are attracted to buildings, sheds, and barns.
- Do not offer bread or inexpensive mixed bird seed.
- Use a Sparrow Spooker (hanging Mylar strips dangle from above the box and over the entrance).
- Use a Gilbertson PVC box (HOSP seem to be reluctant to nest in these).
- If a HOSP has claimed a nest box, plug the entrance hole for several days until it moves on.

Active control:

- Remove active HOSP nests.
- If eggs have been laid:
 - Pierce the eggs with a needle or pin and replace them,
 - Allow the female to incubate for a time, then remove the eggs.

Notes
