

Natural Resource Preservation Brief #3

Eastern Bluebird Managment

Perhaps the greatest natural resource highlight of the battlefield is the presence of a healthy population of Eastern Bluebirds. Unfortunately, the survival of the Bluebird is very much in jeopardy throughout the eastern half of the United States. Antietam is the exception and not the rule.

The Bluebird's struggle is largely due to a loss of suitable breeding habitat. The Bluebird's are cavity-nesters. Urban sprawl and shift's to monoculture farms, has gradually reduced the amount of habitat available to the birds. In addition, the arrival of Sparrows and Starlings from Eruope has placed tremendous competitive press on the Bluebirds.

In 1979, the NPS agreed to allow the North American Bluebird Society to install 47 Bluebird boxes on parkland. By 1983 the number of boxes was increased to 60, with several of those on private property. Following is a list of the numbers of fledglings we have had thus far:

1979 - 117
1980 - 169
1981 - 147
1982 - 177
1983 - 137

The fluctuations in numbers, is due to a number of factors including competition with Sparrows, predation, numbers of boxes, and vandalism.

All maintenance of the boxes and monitoring is done on a volunteer basis under the direction of Mark Raabe of the North American Bluebird Society.

The Natural Resources Management Staff