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Best birdhouses bask amid prizes

THE ACCENT'S on creativity for student woodworkers in the Best Birdhouse Builder contest, quickly becoming a popular part of the builders show.

Last year, nearly 1,200 young architects from suburban Detroit participated in the second annual contest.

This year, the contest again is sponsored by the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Builders Association of Southeast Michigan.

Designed to meet the Michigan state guidelines for math and science proficiency, the contest is open to all seventh- and eighth-grade students within the O&E circulation area.

In this contest, each student builds a birdhouse designed for a specific species of bird: house wren, bluebird, wood duck, barred owl, great crested flycatcher, American kestrel, American robin and tree swallow.

All birdhouses are judged on strict criteria because each species of bird is very choosy in selecting its home. The house must be perfect to attract the species it was designed for.

EACH STUDENT is supplied with information from a book entitled "Woodworking for Wildlife," by the

DNR. The book describes the habitat needs of each species and gives instructions on how to build the most suitable house for each species.

Participating schools each choose one seventh- and one eighth-grade winner. The more than 1,000 birdhouse entries will be on display in Birdhouse Garden at the builders show, located near the middle of the back of the builders show floor, next to the Cafeteria/Entertainment Area.

A panel of judges from the sponsoring organizations will select and announce winners from each grade level on Saturday, March 16.

The two first-place winners will each receive \$150 gift certificates. The two second-place winners will each receive \$100 gift certificates. The two third-place winners will each receive \$50 gift certificates.

Twenty-five honorable mentions will each receive \$25 gift certificates. All students whose birdhouses are on display at the builders show will receive a certificate of appreciation from the O&E and \$10 gift certificate to Harmony House.

Teachers of first-, second- and third-place winners will receive an evening for two at The Golden Mushroom, Southfield. A plaque commemorating the contest winners will be awarded to each participating school.

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