



BLUEBIRD

JOURNAL OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY



WINTER 2017–2018
VOL. 40 No. 1



Kurt Bauschardt

Contents

Winter Message to Our Affiliate Organizations - *Kevin Corwin* 1

From the President - *Bernie Daniel* 2

From the Managing Editor - *Scott W. Gillihan* 4

Letters to *Bluebird* 5

NABS Website Gets a Redesign - *Kathy Kremnitzer* 5

Meet NABS Webmaster, Cherie Layton 6

Fostering American Kestrel Nestlings - *Penny Brandau* 7

Parasite Strikes Eastern Bluebirds - *Sandy Morrissey* 10

Bring Back the Bluebirds Project – 5 Years Later - *Valentin Schaefer and Alina Fisher* 12

Thoughts of Michael - *Kathy Kremnitzer* 14

Bluebird Observation Feeder - *Chuck Burilla* 16

Mozart's Starling 18

The Western Bluebird Conservation Project: A Great Success - *Dessie Sieburth*..... 20

Screech Owls are Short Lived - *Leo Hollein* 23

NABS Life Members 26

Bluebirds Everywhere 27

Research Review - *Scott W. Gillihan* 28

Affiliates of the North American Bluebird Society 30

Cover illustration: dreamstime.com/stevenrussellsmithphotos

Table of Contents photo: Kurt Bauschardt calls this image "Directional Nuthatch." It was taken one winter a few years ago near Edmonton, Alberta. You can see more of Kurt's images at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kurt-b/>. Published here under the Creative Commons license.



BLUEBIRD

Bluebird/Sialia (ISSN 0890-7021) is published quarterly by North American Bluebird Society, Inc., P.O. Box 7844, Bloomington, IN 47407

Printed by Sutherland Companies
Montezuma, IA

Managing Editor: Scott Gillihan
nabseditor@gmail.com

Subscription is included with membership in NABS. Write for information about bulk quantities. Make checks and money orders payable to NABS in U.S. funds.

Issues are dated Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter and appear approximately on the 15th day of January, April, July, and October. Submissions are accepted continuously and published as space and editorial constraints allow.

Letters to the editor and articles in this publication express the opinions and/or positions of the authors. Submissions may be edited for length and content. Published articles do not necessarily represent the opinions and positions of the Officers, Directors, or other representatives of NABS.

General questions may be addressed to info@nabluebirdsociety.org or call **513-300-8714** between noon and 8 p.m. EST. Please leave a message if no answer, or text any time. Visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NorthAmericanBluebirdSociety/>

The North American Bluebird Society, Inc. is a non-profit education, conservation and research organization that promotes the recovery of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting bird species in North America.

www.nabluebirdsociety.org

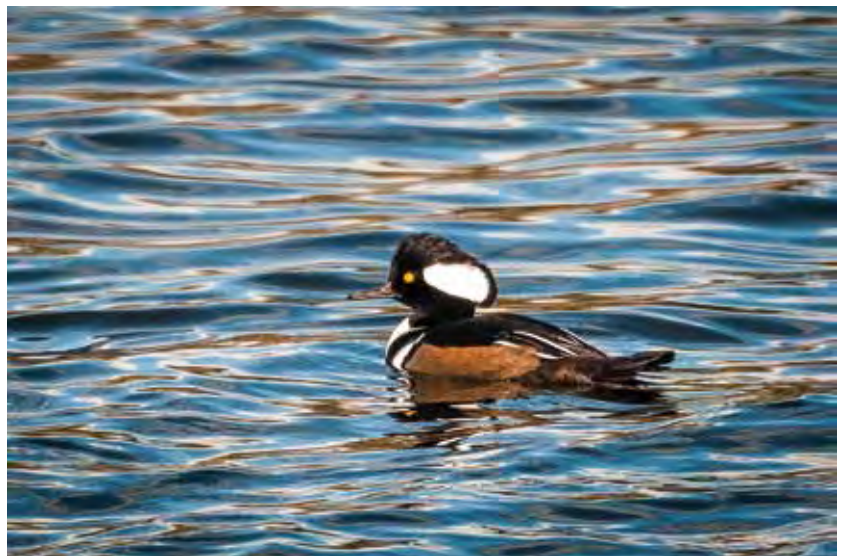
Winter Message to Our Affiliate Organizations

Kevin Corwin

Hello Fellow Bluebirders!

My name is Kevin Corwin and I would like to introduce myself to you and your NABS Affiliate organizations as your new Affiliates Relations representative on the NABS Board of Directors. I know I have some pretty big shoes to fill—my predecessor Phil Berry worked hard over the past seven years to develop a strong relationship with all of you and I will strive to build upon the work he has done.

I will not be doing this alone. We will identify regional Affiliates coordinators at NABS who will be working with you in a more intimate way than we ever could before. We have already started to lay groundwork to improve and expand our communications with you. Over the past summer and autumn we surveyed all the Affiliates to get a deeper understanding of who you are, what you do, what you need and what we can do to help you achieve your goals. We really appreciate the time and energy you all put into responding to us. Your ideas and concerns will guide us as we sift through the mountain of data we collected and transform it into information we can use to better understand you. Thanks!



This handsome male Hooded Merganser was photographed at Beaumaris Lake in Edmonton, Alberta, by Darren Kirby. [Flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/darrenkirby/) Creative Commons license.

From the President

Bernie Daniel

Winter! Yes, I admit that it starts and ends every year, but unless you feed bluebirds, perhaps winter is the least attractive season for many of us at least? Years ago I used to ski downhill and cross country, too, so that was reason to look forward to the snowy time of each year. Lately snow cover in many places has been variable and unpredictable. So far winter 2017 is proceeding very much like last year and many parts of the continent are experiencing weather similar to last year—i.e., seasonably mild. Good for bluebirds—but also good for ticks and bad for ash trees.

For starters, thanks to the heroic efforts of NABS Secretary, Kathy Kremnitzer (with help from a few of our Board members), the Society has a new website on the Internet! The address remains the same (www.nabluebirdsociety.org) but the content is totally new or refreshed. Please take the time to log on and look it over. There are some new things that we think you will appreciate. We fully expect that there will be some glitches such as links not working, etc.—if you find an issue, letting us know about it would be helpful. We expect that additional information and features (e.g., a “bluebird calendar”) will be added to the website over the next year. This was a big accomplishment, something that we had listed as “high priority” in our NABS Development Conference last February, so we are very gratified with this success. We hope our membership will find it useful.

A second big change that has recently happened is NABS Director Kevin Corwin (Colorado) has agreed to serve as NABS First Vice-President for Affiliate relations. As VP for Affiliate relations Kevin will be instrumental in leading our continuing effort to establish working relationships with our Affiliate organizations. We now have an NABS officer who is a Mountain Bluebirder too!

And speaking of Affiliates another priority goal that we highlighted at the NABS Development conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, was to create closer working relationships with the NABS Affiliates. To begin this process we endeavored to make a “person to person” contact, via phone, to conduct a survey with a representative of each of our 61 NABS Affiliate organizations. This survey has been completed and we now have some preliminary analysis of the results.

An update of the Affiliated organizations with valid contact information can be found on pages 30–32 in this Journal and on the NABS website.

The information from these surveys has been most interesting and it demonstrates what a great group of partner organizations we have in our Affiliates. For example, while our Affiliate organizations range in size from only a few members to over a thousand we estimate that the combined membership of all these organizations is approximately 12,000 members! That’s an impressive number of individuals working each spring and summer on behalf of bluebirds across the continent. Over two-thirds (or about 40 or more) of the Affiliate organizations hold regular meetings, have a board and/or officers, and support a website or produce a newsletter (or both!). About the same number of Affiliates collect nestbox productivity data from their members’ trails and some of them report it to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology NestWatch program. Over half of the NABS Affiliates hold some kind of an annual conference for their members and nearly all provide workshops and support for trail management. Many of our Affiliate organizations also conduct research programs to support their efforts. Some have ongoing research on the effectiveness of different nestbox styles, for example, one affiliate is doing research on the effectiveness of pairing nestboxes. It is clear that NABS has some impressive partners who are also committed to our common mission to support bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting species.

NABS believes that the Affiliate survey was an important step; however, it is really just the **first step** for developing programs that will permit NABS and all of the Affiliate organizations to work more closely and cooperatively together. We think the next step is to develop regular and reliable communications. So, in the coming year we will be building regional teams in NABS that will serve to facilitate outreach to the Affiliates. These regional contacts will be coordinated by the NABS First VP for Affiliate Relations. In addition we hope to set up software that will permit periodic electronic communications between NABS and the Affiliates. Finally, we will be looking into finding other, perhaps new, services that Affiliates might need and that NABS might be able to assist with. For example sometime next year we hope to support a “Bluebird Calendar” on the NABS website

that would permit any Affiliate organization to post news of events that might be of interest to wider audiences. Perhaps we will also be able to create an “Affiliate’s Page” on the NABS website?

In addition, the members of the NABS Board have resolved to try to attend the various annual conferences and events held by the Affiliates across the Continent. So the Affiliate survey was a beginning to what we hope will be the start of a concrete and productive interaction with Affiliate organizations.

Talking for a moment about where the rubber meets the road. The development of our relations with the Affiliates, the new website, fact sheets, and almost all other projects or endeavors that NABS takes on fall to our Board of Directors. Thus, let me stress once again we urgently need more members to step up and serve on our Board. If you truly want NABS to survive it is not enough just to read *Bluebird*. Simply put, we need more of you—our members—to volunteer a bit of your time to help NABS. In particular, it is especially important that we start **now** to develop the future leadership teams for NABS. We know that the problems that bluebirds and cavity-nesting species will be facing will not be diminishing over time. On the contrary, challenges to cavity-nesting species are likely to be increasing. Thus, we not only should plan on continuing our efforts to help our blue friends—on the contrary we need to be thinking about **upping our game!**

One other thing. You do not need to be on the Board of Directors to join one of our standing NABS committees—you need only be a member in good standing. So please consider giving some of your time and talents to our good cause!



Bernie Daniel with one of his Ohio wood boxes.

Lastly, in the past two years we have increased presence on the NABS Board of individuals who work with Western and Mountain Bluebirds. That said I know that there is room for additional participation from bluebirders working in the western parts of North America on our Board (actually there is room for everyone). But it is true that the issues faced, and strategies employed, by a Mountain Bluebird with over 100 nestboxes on a trail that might stretch across an entire county are very different from those of a typical Eastern Bluebird with a 20-box trail in a municipal park, for example. Both perform equally important missions so all issues need to be addressed within NABS. So, do not be shy, please step up and join the NABS leadership team!

– Bernie



“I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says ‘Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.’” – Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*

From the Managing Editor

Scott W. Gillihan

Winter here in New Mexico means the smell of cedar burning in fireplaces, snow on the mesas, and large numbers of Western Bluebirds in the lowlands. A quiet walk along the river on a brisk morning is made all the more pleasant by the gentle *chrrs* of the many Western Bluebirds that have migrated down from the high country to overwinter in town. Here they subsist on insects (our winters are mild enough that at least some bugs remain active), juniper "berries" (actually a seed cone with fleshy scales), and various true berries including those of New Mexico privet and ornamental trees and shrubs. For me, winter means bluebirds!

CORRECTION: The article that appeared in the Fall issue (p. 22) about Floyd Van Ert mistakenly listed him as a WWII veteran—although he served in the army, Floyd was not a WWII veteran. We apologize for the error.

My thanks to Jim Semelroth (Southern California Bluebird Club) and all of the writers and photographers who contributed material to this issue, and to the sponsors and advertisers—it was a tight squeeze to fit it all in! As always, my thanks to the members of NABS, for their hard work and dedication to the conservation of bluebirds and other cavity nesters, and for their stewardship of our natural resources.

Please send any photos, articles, or ideas to me at NABSeditor@gmail.com or 5405 Villa View Dr., Farmington, NM 87402.



Officials of the North American Bluebird Society, Inc.

Officers

President - Bernie Daniel (OH)

1st VP for Affiliate Relations - Kevin Corwin (CO)

2nd VP for Community Relations - Jim Burke (NC)

Secretary - Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Treasurer - Jim Engelbrecht (NY)

Board of Directors

Jane Brockway (MT)

Jim Burke (NC)

Vicki Butler (CA)

Kevin Corwin (CO)

Bernie Daniel (OH)

Jim Engelbrecht (NY)

Stan Fisher (MD)

Allen Jackson (NJ)

Chuck James (TN)

Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Schuyler "Sky" Rector (GA)

Linda Schamberger (NY)

John Schuster (CA)

Bet Zimmerman Smith (CT)

Del Straub (MT)

Committees (chairperson listed first)

Executive Committee

Bernie Daniel (OH)

Kevin Corwin (CO)

Jim Burke (NC)

Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Jim Engelbrecht (NY)

Awards Committee

Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Greg Beavers (IN)

Development Committee

Bernie Daniel (OH)

Jim Burke (NC)

Allen Jackson (NJ)

Chuck James (TN)

Kevin Corwin (CO)

Del Straub (MT)

Stan Fisher (MD)

Education Committee

Bernie Daniel, PhD (OH)

John Schuster (CA)

Bet Zimmerman Smith (CT)

Chuck James (TN)

Allen Jackson (NJ)

Facebook Committee

Linda Schamberger (NY)

Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Finance Committee

Jim Engelbrecht (NY)

Greg Beavers (IN)

Bernie Daniel (OH)

Del Straub (MT)

Kevin Corwin (CO)

Grants Committee

Bernie Daniel (OH)

Greg Beavers (IN)

Vicki Butler (CA)

Stan Fisher (MD)

Nancy Pearson (NY)

Bet Zimmerman Smith (CT)

Hotline Committee

Bernie Daniel (OH)

Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Journal Advisory Committee

Vicki Butler (CA)

Bernie Daniel (OH)

Del Straub (MT)

Allen Jackson (NJ)

Membership Committee

Jim Burke (NC)

Chuck James (TN)

Nestbox Committee

Stan Fisher (MD)

Allen Jackson (NJ)

Kevin Berner (NY)

Bernie Daniel (OH)

Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Myrna Pearman (AB)

John Schuster (CA)

Bet Zimmerman Smith (CT)

Nominating Committee

Vicki Butler (CA)

Jane Brockway (MT)

Speakers Bureau

Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Website Committee

Kathy Kremnitzer (MD)

Bet Zimmerman Smith (CT)

Webmaster

Cherie Layton (NY)

Bluebird Managing Editor

Scott W. Gillihan (NM)

Letters to *Bluebird*

To the Editor:

I noticed in the Fall (2017) issue of *Bluebird* several letters and articles were dealing with the issue of House Sparrows, different nestboxes, trapping, etc.

Nobody mentioned what is probably the most sparrow-resistant nestbox available—the Gilbertson (birch look-alike) PVC nestbox.

Designed and built by Steve Gilbertson of Minnesota for many years, the Gilbertson PVC is a proven success story. Steve passed the torch to me in the fall of 2008 and the nestbox is readily available.

While it may not be the nestbox for everybody, many, many bluebirders have success stories using this nestbox all over the Midwest and East as well.

If interested please call Bird Houses & More in Middlebury, Indiana.

Melvin Lehman
Middlebury, IN
574-825- 8739

NABS Website Gets a Redesign

Kathy Kremnitzer

The NABS website has been in existence for many years and has provided tons of helpful information to bluebird enthusiasts throughout North America and beyond. However, it became clear to the Board of Directors that the site was badly in need of updating. After several months of discussion, in May of 2017 the board voted to move forward with the project of a website redesign. I was asked by NABS president, Bernie Daniel, to “get the ball rolling,” which I proceeded to do.

Many years ago, I was an active participant in the online bluebird forum at Bluebird Nut Cafe and I became acquainted with its creator and administrator, Cherie Layton. Cherie is an avid bluebird who lives in New York and her bluebird forum was (and still is) a great resource of bluebird information and interaction. Through this forum, I became aware of her skills as a web designer and computer aficionado. Since I knew that she had recently completed a redesign of the New York State Bluebird Society’s

website, I took a look at her work and decided to see if she would be interested in helping with the NABS project. Cher agreed to consider becoming involved and, in July of 2017, the project began in earnest.

Nearly all of the content on the old NABS web site had to be made current. While the old site held lots of useful information in the way of Fact Sheets, Nestbox Plans, etc., much of the other content had not been updated in many years. We worked over the next few months to update the Speaker list, the Affiliate listings, Sponsors, etc. Cher presented some refreshing options for the general theme of the page and, finally, after much collaboration, the new site was launched in early November 2017. In addition to bluebird resources and information, the site now features a slideshow of bluebird photographs contributed by bluebird enthusiasts posting on the NABS Facebook page, the Eastern Bluebird Landlord Facebook page, and from other avid bluebird photographers. There is also a News feature on the



new site that links visitors directly to the news feed on the NABS Facebook page so that those folks who aren't Facebook participants can see what the fuss is all about!

I would like to thank Cherie for her dedication to the project, which turned out to be a breath of fresh air for NABS. The site is easy to navigate, looks amazing, and still presents a plethora of bluebird information

and resources. I'd also like to thank NABS board member Bet Zimmerman Smith for lending her advice and expertise to the project. It was a privilege to work with both of these talented women.

I hope you will take some time to visit our new site at www.nabluebirdsociety.org. The address is the same, but the look is all new! Let us know what you think!

Meet NABS Webmaster, Cherie Layton

Cherie has been an avid backyard bluebird enthusiast and landlord for the past 17 years. Originally from the Capital District of New York state, in 1992 she and her family built a home in the country and moved to New York's Finger Lakes region. In her new rural surroundings, Cherie began to take an interest in the various wild birds that visited her backyard. Around the year 2000 she installed a heated birdbath. "Being born and raised in a medium-sized city, I'd never seen a bluebird before in my life," she says. "One icy cold day that winter, I looked out of my kitchen window and saw about a dozen bluebirds sitting in a circle on the rim of the new birdbath! From that point on, I was done for! I was so excited that I could hardly contain myself!" That spring, her husband helped her to install a nestbox on their property but there were no takers except for a persistent house wren. The following year a bluebird pair attempted to nest but the male was found dead near the box before the pair could raise a family.

A couple of years earlier, a family friend had set Cherie and her family up with their very first computer and, after her encounter with the bluebirds, she began to do research to learn everything she could about them. She also learned ways to improve the initial set-up of her nestbox.



Her dual interest in computers and bluebirds would eventually lead to the creation of the informational website, Bluebirdnut.com, which was soon followed by the bluebird discussion forum Bluebirdnutcafe.com. The forum has had a number of changes over the years, but Cherie relates, "I'm pleased to say that BluebirdNutCafe has grown into a very friendly, relaxed place for both new bluebirders and old pros to come and share their love of bluebirds and to exchange information, stories, and photos."

In 2005, Cherie designed a new type of starling-proof bluebird feeder, which has had several variations since its first appearance. The feeder is now commercially manufactured by Erva Tools in Chicago, Illinois. In 2006, a commercial site (TMBStudios.com) was added to her family of websites, devoted to the sale of wild bird supplies and related items.

Cherie is a member of the New York State Bluebird Society and also serves as their Coordinator for Cayuga County. In addition, she serves as layout artist for the organization's newsletter, *Bluebird News*, and is also the webmaster for the NYSBS.org website.

When not involved in working on these sites, Cherie is busy with the web and graphic design business she started with her son. She also serves as office administrator for her husband's piano tuning and restoration business. She is a volunteer minister and Bible teacher, as is her husband and her two grown children who share their Cayuga County home.

Membership Renewal

Is this your last Journal? Please check your mailing label for membership expiration date.

If renewing through PayPal, remember you can use either your credit card or your PayPal account.

Fostering American Kestrel Nestlings

Penny Brandau

My husband, Fritz, and I have been bluebird trail monitors for many years and have also monitored a successful American Kestrel box for the past three years in Lorain County, Ohio. We volunteer with the Black River Audubon Society's bluebird and kestrel programs. This year we had the privilege of being part of a multi-organizational attempt to save some orphan kestrel nestlings from life in a rehab center by placing them into an active kestrel nest and monitoring the outcome closely to see the benefits or deterrents of fostering. Our program had done no kestrel fostering before so this was unfamiliar territory to all of us.

Many organizations worked together to enable this idea to become a reality. Lorain County Community College (LCCC) has partnered with Black River Audubon Society to create a meadow preserve where the kestrel box was erected three years ago (and where 15 kestrels have now fledged). Larry Wilson is the program coordinator for the kestrel program. Master bird bander Gary Fowler has banded all the kestrel chicks from the LCCC kestrel nestbox in 2015, 2016, and 2017. Tim Jasinski, a Wildlife Rehabilitation Specialist of Lake Erie Nature and Science Center assisted in banding all the kestrels and provided the vision and link between the orphan kestrel nestlings from the Ohio Bird Sanctuary and the potential of fostering some of their young kestrels into the active Black River Audubon Society kestrel nest at LCCC.

On April 18, 2017, Fritz and I checked the kestrel box at LCCC and found it to be still empty although we saw a pair of kestrels near the box, sitting on power lines as they had done in the prior two years when nesting. Our next visit to monitor the box was on April 26 and we were excited to find four kestrel eggs nestled in the protective bed of wood shavings we

had placed in the box in February. Subsequent visits on May 2 and May 18 showed a complete clutch of five eggs but unfortunately only two of these eggs had hatched on May 28. Anticipated hatch date was May 27 so we made another brief visit on June 2 to find that there were still only two kestrel chicks and three unhatched eggs in the box.

Larry Wilson contacted Tim Jasinski to arrange for banding the two female kestrel nestlings in the LCCC kestrel box and another check was made on June 10 to confirm that there were still only two to band. Photos taken of the two chicks were compared to photos in a resource book titled *A Photographic Timeline of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary's American Kestrel Nestlings* and the chicks were aged at approximately 13 days old. This corresponded closely with the timeline of the first egg and observed hatch date. Ideal banding age of kestrels according to Master Bander Gary Fowler is around 18–22 days because that is when you can more easily distinguish male from female. The LCCC female kestrel pair was about 17–18 days old on June 14 when they were banded. Tim Jasinski assisted with the banding and observers/helpers were Larry Wilson, Arlene Ryan, Fritz and me, and several others.

Tim Jasinski knew that the LCCC kestrel nest had only two nestlings and he wondered if it would be possible to successfully place orphaned kestrel chicks of similar ages into the LCCC nest so that they would be cared for by their own species and fledge into the wild. He was aware of at least seven kestrel nestlings which were being raised by wildlife rehab specialists. Wouldn't it be wonderful if some of these could be raised by adults of their own species and given a chance to live freely? We were willing to accept two or three foster kestrels into the LCCC nest. The parents had successfully raised five young last year and the



year before and were experienced parents. The ages of the young kestrel orphans were similar and the habitat was ideal.

I talked to kestrel expert Dick Tuttle of Delaware County, Ohio, regarding the fostering plan and he suggested that perhaps the diet of the young should be briefly supplemented with mice or House Sparrows to help the parents during the sudden rapid increase in their clutch size. Again, Tim came through by providing frozen white mice. The plan was for the Brandaus to place two thawed mice into the kestrel box hole every couple of days to help the parents feeding just in case it might be needed.

On June 19 the LCCC kestrel box was lowered on its telescoping pole by Larry Wilson and Fritz and three foster kestrel nestlings (one male and two female) were placed by Tim Jasinski into the box along with two thawed mice. The foster kestrels had been banded on their left legs earlier by Gary Fowler to distinguish them from the two LCCC kestrels which he had banded on their right legs on June 14.

Tim suggested a wait of two days for the kestrels to “settle in” before attempting to lower the nestbox to place two more thawed mice into the nestbox hole. On June 21 Fritz and I lowered the box and placed two thawed mice in the entrance hole. However, when the door was opened briefly to check that all five kestrels were still doing well it was apparent that only three kestrels were in the box! Our fears were that the slightly older foster kestrels might have eaten the two LCCC female kestrels. A quick phone call and texting to Tim ensued and it was decided that since clear visibility of the kestrel leg bands wasn’t possible when the nest box was initially lowered that it would need to be lowered once more to confirm if the kestrels in the box were native or foster kestrels. If the bands were on the left legs then we decided we would not attempt fostering kestrel nestlings in the future at the expense of the native ones.

When the nest box was lowered the second time and the door was opened to get a quick photo the foster male kestrel decided to bail out of the door! Fritz quickly captured him and placed him back in the box—this was obviously a premature fledging since he only made it a few feet into the meadow grass near the box. However, the photo which was taken of the box contents clearly showed that although the foster male’s leg band was on his left leg the female’s was on her right leg! What a relief to have proof that the two females in the box were the slightly younger LCCC females and the two foster female kestrels must have fledged! Whew!

On June 25 Fritz and I were walking the LCCC meadow perimeter checking the 18 bluebird boxes when a female kestrel suddenly appeared from the east and alarm called as we neared bluebird boxes #5 and 6. She persistently called and hovered, then flew to the windmill platform. We were able to see a female kestrel sitting on a solar panel and her left leg band was clearly seen in a photo. This was very encouraging! Mom kestrel was protecting and caring for this foster fledgling! The other LCCC kestrels were due to fledge around June 27.

On June 27 Fritz and I again returned to LCCC to check on the kestrels. None were seen at their box but when we walked to the east end of the meadow Fritz spotted a kestrel on the LCCC turbine tower. This kestrel flew toward us as we approached bluebird boxes 5 and 6 and alarm called as she flew. We then noticed several other kestrels on or under solar panels of the roof of a small building in that area. Some looked like they were enjoying the sun while others were relaxing in the shade of the panels. We definitely saw at least six kestrels! The male and one of the females were under the panel, three others were on the roof peak, and one was under the opposite side of the panel.





On June 28 we went to LCCC to clean out the kestrel box. An adult kestrel appeared overhead and alarm called as we circled the meadow. We then realized that at least three kestrels were on the LCCC turbine platform (the photo cropping revealed four kestrels). Mom kestrel flew to a tower line which was south of the turbine and another kestrel was seen below her on the line. This made a count of at least six, possibly seven, kestrels seen again on this day.

I walked the area once more on July 1 and saw at least six kestrels in the eastern area of the meadow. I don't know how long they will stay together as a family but this experience of helping with the fostering of rehab kestrel nestlings has proven that kestrels can accept, care for, and protect foster nestlings that are placed in their active nests. They continue to care for them after fledging, too. It has been amazing and beautiful to observe.

It has been a privilege to work with so many different organizations and talented, dedicated people to make Tim Jasinski's vision a reality. Allowing kestrels to

be raised in a family unit instead of a rehab facility is a clear win for the kestrels! Hopefully this story will challenge other rehab and conservation organizations to work more closely together and to communicate opportunities for placing orphan kestrels whenever possible into appropriate foster nests.

From Penny: "My husband Fritz and I live in Lorain County, Ohio, near Lake Erie and are both recently retired nurses. We are coordinators for the Black River Audubon Society's bluebird program which has 454 bluebird boxes on 31 trails and 33 amazing trail monitor volunteers! We enjoy sharing our love of bluebirds with others. I am also on the board of the Ohio Bluebird Society and am the editor of their quarterly newsletter, Bluebird Monitor. Both of us have belonged to NABS for several years and have been able to attend several NABS conferences—all were great experiences!"



This article was originally published in the Fall 2017 Ohio Bluebird Society newsletter Monitor and is reprinted with permission.

Flock to NABS on Facebook!

Great friends, great photos, great videos, and great information are all waiting for you on the NABS Facebook page. Stay connected with NABS members and other bluebird enthusiasts at www.facebook.com/NorthAmericanBluebirdSociety



Parasite Strikes Eastern Bluebirds

Sandy Morrissey

It was with amazement that I read the Fall 2017 issue of *Bluebird*. In it were three articles all reflecting issues related to our own 2017 nesting season: The Acanthocephalan parasite, changing insect populations, and golf course bluebirds.

First some background information. Begun in 1998, our Bronx River – Sound Shore Audubon Society’s Eastern Bluebird Project has steadily grown to now having over 300 nestboxes and over 30 monitors, primarily in Westchester County, New York. Since 2011, we have banded almost all the nestlings and all the adults we can trap. We have many years’ experience with our bluebirds and good nesting data for the past seven years. We were flying high with the bluebird of happiness until the spring of 2017.

In early April, a nestbox monitor called to say she found a dead bluebird in one of her boxes. Like the dead bluebirds that Dr. Zitek reported on in the Fall issue of *Bluebird*, it had no signs of external injuries. While adult mortality happens from time to time, I had no idea that it was a precursor to our nesting season.

Subsequently, other monitors sent me reports of dead adult bluebirds, and I found several myself. Alarmed, I contacted the Animal Health Diagnostic Center (AHDC), an agency at Cornell University that had examined some dead bluebirds once before. They agreed to test for us and, sadly, I spent part of the 2017 nesting season packing up beautiful—but dead—adult bluebirds and sending them off in

coolers to AHDC (same place where Dr. Zitek’s birds were sent).

Results of their testing was somewhat inconclusive, but at least we know many of the birds had died from a combination of an acanthocephalid, a parasitic worm in the genus *Plagiorhynchus*, and a secondary bacterial infection. The birds were suspected of eating pill bugs, which are hosts for the parasite’s eggs. When a bluebird ate pill bugs, the parasite’s eggs hatched inside the bluebird, and the parasite then attached to the bird’s intestine. That, along with an increase in some bad bacteria, killed it. The parasitic worms are the same ones reported by Dr. Zitek.

In all, 18 adult bluebirds died in our nestboxes (ranging in age from second-year birds to a five-year bird). Who knows how many died outside and undetected? What we do know is our numbers crashed. The actual number of bluebird nest attempts dropped precipitously to 97 from a record high last year of 137.

Another depressing number shows up in the banding statistics. In our first year, 2011, we banded 290 bluebirds. We reached a high of 414 in 2014. Last year we slipped to 376 bands, which I had attributed to nest failure after a wicked cold spring following a warm winter. This year we banded only 254 bluebirds: a drop of 32% from last year, a decrease of 39% from our high in 2014, and less than the total number we banded our first year. Since we increase our number of nestboxes and locations every year, what should be on the upswing is seriously down.

Golf Course Bluebirds Hit Hardest

An alarming statistic showed up in the success rate of nest attempts (nest attempt defined as at least one egg laid; success defined as at least one nestling fledged). For the first five years of keeping this statistic, 2011–2015, our overall nest attempt success rate was 79%, which I believe is about the normal rate for nestbox bluebirds. Last year our success rate slipped to 58%, which I had attributed to that cold spring mentioned above.

In calculating our success rate this year, I was surprised to find the overall success rate at 59%, slightly better than last year. However, a disturbing number jumped out when I looked more closely at



Dead male bluebird. Why did it go into the box to die?

the data. Since my banding project is to study the long-term survival of bluebirds nesting on golf courses vs. all bluebirds nesting in other locations, I looked at the nesting success of the golf course bluebirds compared with the others. In the past, the success rate has been about the same. But this year there was a sharp difference.

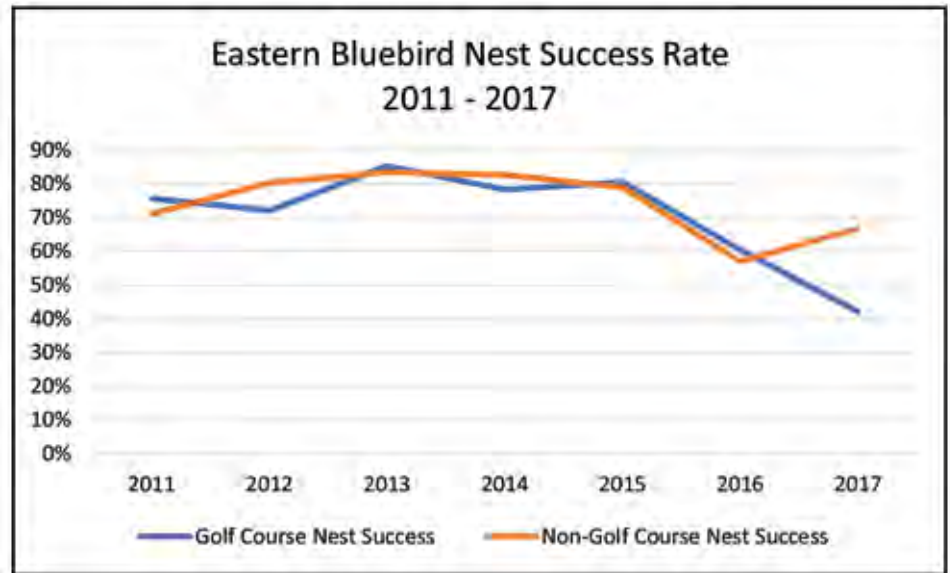
The success rate of the golf course nests was a dismal 42%, while the non-golf bluebirds improved to a 67% success rate (still below normal). Both groups had fewer nest attempts. But the golf course bluebirds had 50% fewer nest attempts, while the non-golf bluebirds had 25% fewer attempts than last year. These numbers are reflected in the number of dead adult bluebirds. Of the 18 dead bluebirds found, 11 were found on golf courses and 7 on non-golf locations.

Before we start blaming golf course chemicals, I must say we found dead bluebirds in locations that use no chemicals at all. And before this year, I found no major difference in the nesting success rate and very little in the long-term survival rate of bluebirds on and off golf courses (will publish survival rates in a separate article). I asked several golf course superintendents if they were using any new chemicals. They all replied negative. They were using fewer chemicals than they had in the past. One superintendent said it had been a “mostly no-spray year,” meaning that the weather was such that they needed fewer chemicals. In addition, the pathologist from AHDC said the dead birds did not have lesions suggestive of a toxic cause.

An article in the Fall 2017 issue of *Bluebird* by Chuck James informed us how to get a nestbox trail going on a golf course, and I certainly would still encourage this (that’s how I got started). As stated earlier, before this year, we had great success with our golfing bluebirds.

Many Unanswered Questions

No one really knows what caused this parasite outbreak. Is it weather related? Are the bluebirds eating more pill bugs than usual and, if so, why? Are their normal bugs not available? In NABS



The nest success rate of golf course bluebirds vs non-golf course bluebirds was about the same until 2017. Note that both rates of success crashed in 2016, but in 2017, non-golf bluebirds improved, but golf bluebirds declined significantly more.

president Bernie Daniel’s column in the Fall *Bluebird*, he brought attention to the decline in the insect population, verified by research studies, and rightly wonders how this will affect our bluebirds.

Another question: Why did the bluebirds go into the box to die? If it was mostly females found, that’s understandable, as they spend more time in the nestbox building the nest and incubating. But 11 of the 18 dead were males. And why were golf courses more affected?

I contacted other bluebird organizations. While a few were experiencing some problems, we seemed to be the hardest hit. Now I read that Shelter Island’s bluebirds had the same parasite.

We can only hope that the problem in 2017 will disappear as mystically as it appeared, and that our bluebirds will rebound next year. But with the ongoing threats to our environment—climate change, the rollback of environmental regulations, the threats to turn national parks and lands into mines for coal, gas, and oil—one must have great concern for the future of our bluebirds and all wildlife!

Sandy Morrissey is president of the Bronx River – Sound Shore Audubon Society (a NABS Affiliate) and creator of its Eastern Bluebird Project. She started with three nestboxes on her local golf course in 1998 and now finds herself keeping track of 300.

Bring Back the Bluebirds Project – 5 Years Later

Valentin Schaefer and Alina Fisher

A lot has happened since Julia Daly wrote her 2012 article in *The Victoria Naturalist* on “A Bluebird Summer: Bringing Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*) back to Southeastern Vancouver Island.” In her article Julia described her experiences working as a field technician in the pilot year of the five-year reintroduction project. The article we present here briefly summarizes what has been accomplished since Julia shared some of her daily notes. There are plans to publish greater details about the data in a peer-reviewed article and more details on history in the future by project partners.



Figure 1. Banded juvenile male Western Bluebird on a fencepost. *Photo by Trudy Chatwin*

Prior to the 1950s, the Western Bluebird was considered common in Garry Oak savannas and meadows of the Georgia Basin. It was extirpated from the San Juan Islands by the 1960s, the Fraser River Valley by the 1970s, and Vancouver Island/Gulf Islands by the 1990s (Fraser et al. 1999). The Georgia Depression population is Red-listed in British Columbia, and considered Extirpated since 1995.

The five-year pilot of Bring Back the Bluebirds Project is centered in the Cowichan Valley around Duncan, BC. From 2012 to 2016 the project was led by the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team. The Cowichan Valley Naturalists Society (CVNS) has now taken over the project lead. Other partners on the project are the Ecostudies Institute, Province of BC, North American Bluebird Society, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Southern Interior Bluebird Trail Society. This transboundary species recovery project is modeled on the successful bluebird reintroduction program

on nearby San Juan Island, Washington, spearheaded by the Ecostudies Institute, the American Bird Conservancy, and the San Juan Island Preservation Trust.

The combined success of the San Juan Island and Vancouver Island reintroduction programs has seen a steady increase in the regional population of the Western Bluebird in the Salish Sea. Both projects involved a series of translocations of birds from Fort Lewis, Washington, by the Ecostudies Institute to improve short-term success. The first pairs of birds were released at the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve in Duncan, BC; this restoration site became the first established breeding territory and has been consistently used by those birds' offspring since then. Each year, as release sites become established territories, the project has released bluebirds at new sites throughout the Cowichan Valley.

Translocations are key to the success of the project because natural dispersal from the nearest healthy populations in southern Washington and Oregon is unlikely due to the great distances involved and the fragmented habitat that lies in between. Breeding pairs were released in the first year (2012) to establish a founder population, but additional translocations were undertaken (2013–2016) to supplement natural recruitment for several more years. Translocations of breeding pairs (with or without hatchlings) took place strategically throughout breeding seasons in March and April. The goal was to have 90 Western Bluebird adults released between 2012 and 2016.



Figure 2. Bluebirds from Fort Lewis, Washington, being released from a temporary aviary in the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve, Duncan, BC. *Photo by Reanna Shilling*

Concomitantly with the translocations, the project has involved a vigorous nestbox stewardship program on Salt Spring Island, the Cowichan Valley, and Victoria areas. Building upon earlier efforts by the Victoria Natural History Society, GOERT and its project partners have been replacing missing nesting cavities with nestboxes as far north as Nanoose Bay. These boxes were placed in Garry Oak savannas in parks and protected areas, in healthy, pesticide-free agricultural areas, and in other open meadow habitats on golf courses and private lands. The nestbox installations focused on the Cowichan Valley, Metchosin, the Saanich Peninsula, and the southern Gulf Islands.

Results

Initial results of the project show increasing successes in breeding territories, nesting attempts and success, and the number of fledglings. At the end of the 2012 season there were two adults and eight juveniles with one breeding territory and one successful nest (Figure 3). In Year 2 neither of the translocated adults returned but four of the island-fledged juveniles returned plus a female adult from the San Juan Island population. In 2013 there were 28 birds released—nine breeding pairs and ten young. There were five successful nests that fledged 22 island-hatched young in 2013. For the first time since extirpation, both returned and newly released bluebirds established successful territories. At the end of the 2013 season there were 14 adults and 32 juveniles. Over the five years 36 birds were successfully translocated and the population consisted of 95 birds—28 adults and 67 juveniles (Figure 3). The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) caused the greatest known source of mortality, killing nestling bluebirds to claim nests for themselves.

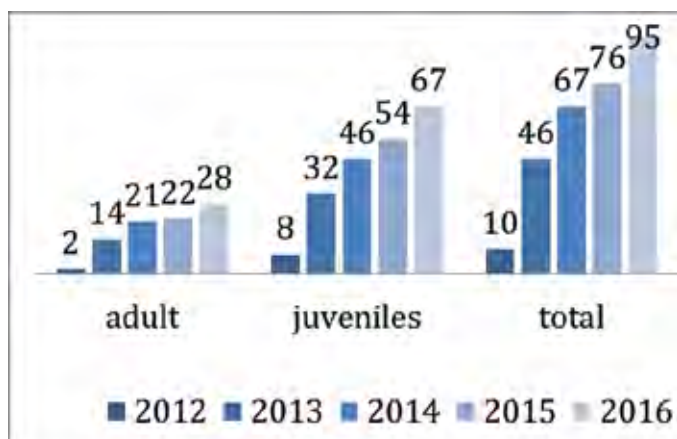


Figure 3. Annual population size of Western Bluebirds at end of breeding season from 2012 to 2016.

Discussion

Throughout North America, Western Bluebird populations have rebounded with active nestbox programs. They are habitat generalists where habitat structure is more important than habitat composition. They will use fence posts and other structures, and inhabit hay fields, pastures, orchards, and other areas with remnant large oak trees and scattered perches, whether natural or not, and readily adapt to using nestboxes when they are provided in suitable habitat and are more than 100 m apart (Purcell et al. 1997).

A five-year translocation and monitoring study of Western Bluebirds was done from 2007 to 2011 on San Juan Island by the American Bird Conservancy, Ecostudies Institute, San Juan Preservation Trust, and many other partners (Slater and Altman 2012). During that time 99 adults and 35 juveniles were translocated and released.

Slater and Altman (2012) concluded that the reintroduced population of Western Bluebirds met simple criteria of success where translocated individuals and their offspring reproduced successfully and the population increased in size. Nevertheless, the population in the San Juan Islands is small and remains at risk, as is the case with the population established in the Cowichan Valley over the last five years.

No new translocations are planned at the moment and the focus will be on environmental stewardship. The CVNS is focused on the Cowichan Valley where the bluebird population is most likely to establish itself. The GOERT Society is focussing on stewardship in the Greater Victoria area in the hope that bluebirds will expand their range here—some have already been seen. Although bluebirds are faced with many challenges, the Bring Back the Bluebirds Project has successfully established a promising founder population.

Acknowledgments

The Bluebird Project has had many supporters. These include BC Ministry of Environment, Canada Summer Jobs, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society, Environment Canada EcoAction, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund (Bird Studies Canada), Joint Base Lewis-McChord, The McLean Foundation, Mountain Equipment Coop, North American Bluebird Society, Nature Conservancy of

Canada, Parks Canada Agency, Public Conservation Assistance Fund, Science Horizons Youth Internship, Southern Interior Bluebird Trails Society, TD Friends of the Environment, Sitka Foundation, Vancouver Foundation, Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Society, Victoria Natural History Society, and many private donors. Genevieve Singleton of the Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society, Gary Slater of the EcoStudies Institute, and Trudy Chatwin, Vertebrates at Risk Specialist with the BC Ministry of Environment, in particular made significant contributions. Over the years Project Coordinators collected data and wrote the reports that formed the basis of this article. They were Kathryn Martell, Reanna Shelling, Julia Daly, Jemma Green, and Alina Fisher.

References

- Fraser, D.F., W.L. Harper, S.G. Cannings, and J.M. Cooper. 1999. Rare Birds of British Columbia. British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria.
- Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team. 2002. Western Bluebird Stewardship Account for the Garry Oak Ecosystems of Southwestern British Columbia. Prepared by Manning, Cooper and Associates for the GOERT Vertebrates at Risk Recovery Action Group.
- Purcell, K.L., J. Verner, and L.W. Oring. 1997. A comparison of the breeding ecology of birds nesting in boxes and tree cavities. *The Auk* 114:646–656.
- Slater, G.L., and B. Altman. 2011. Avian Restoration in the Prairie-Oak Ecosystem: A Reintroduction Case Study of Western Bluebirds to San Juan Island, Washington. *Northwest Science* 85:223–232.
- Valentin Schaefer is Chair of the GOERT Society. Alina Fisher was Bluebird Coordinator 2016.*
- This article originally appeared in BCnature magazine; it is reprinted here with permission.*

Thoughts of Michael

Kathy Kremnitzer

Michael L. Smith was a founding member of the Maryland Bluebird Society and I met him for the first time in March of 2005. Some of us have a man in our lives who fits the description of “teddy bear” and, for me, that was Michael. He was a burly man with a rich, deep voice and an undeniable presence. His photographic genius was a gift, but no more so than the man himself.

Michael had had an eye for wildlife since he was a child. The Pileated Woodpecker was his first bird fascination. He would watch a pair nesting near his home and remembered his mother telling him how rare they were. While delivering newspapers as a boy, he saw bluebirds for the first time in the yard of one of his customers. He got to know the customer well as he spent time observing and becoming familiar with the habits of those bluebirds. In the 1970s, Michael began photographing birds and wildlife. His trademark photo, “The Mad Bluebird,” was captured in 1978. He did enjoy photographing bluebirds the most, but also loved capturing the images of Osprey and other birds. He often described the time spent in the cold, in the heat, in water, in blinds, all the

while hauling his heavy photography equipment, trying to keep it dry and protected from the elements. He would later say that the emergence of digital photography made it so much easier for today’s photographers to capture those sought-after images.

Michael had plenty to say on a lot of subjects but he especially loved wildlife—birds in particular. He recounted that his photo, “The Mad Bluebird,” was not one of his favorites and he didn’t appreciate the impact it would have on his life until people began to make a fuss over it. He had positioned his camera/tripod in his backyard, aimed at a fencepost, in the hopes of capturing the image of one of his beloved blues. He, himself, was some 60 feet away inside his home, remote control in hand, waiting. From this vantage point, he saw a bluebird land on the post and was pretty sure it was facing the camera, so he clicked the remote and ended up with the infamous image of the moody bluebird. While this image would change his life in many ways, it did not stop his efforts to learn more about and to understand wildlife through his photography and for that I am grateful.

In my various roles within the Maryland Bluebird Society, I am in regular contact with its board members, which included Michael. The interactions almost always began with me emailing him a question and him replying with "CALL ME!" He confessed to me once that he didn't like to type and preferred talking to people instead. He felt that he was better at communicating verbally rather than through writing. Talking with him was an adventure and you could never be sure where it would lead! During our last conversation, in February 2017, he told me that he was very ill and that treatments were affecting his mobility and his energy level. He was still able to enjoy watching the birds from his windows, though, and this brought him pleasure as he spent time at his various vantage points, recording his observations. As always, the subject matter of our talk was varied. We spoke of his love for birds, especially bluebirds and woodpeckers, of winter bird feeding (he fed dried mealworms to his bluebirds along with Pine Tree Farms suet cakes). We ventured briefly into politics and then talked a bit about technology and the future possibilities of communicating with birds and other animals. He felt that, at some point, man would be able to bridge the technology gap enough to communicate with wildlife and that we would not like its message.

One of my favorite memories of my "Mad Bluebird" friend is from an MBS annual meeting/picnic celebration a few years ago. It was the last one that Michael would attend, due to his health. Conflicting event dates caused us to schedule our picnic for mid-October rather than our usual early September Sunday afternoon and the weather did not cooperate. The day dawned cold and gray with gusty winds and occasional drizzle. Being hardy-hearted bluebirders, we were determined to gather and celebrate our love of bluebirds in spite of the weather. I had prepared a crockpot of chili as my contribution to our potluck meal, and had been able to keep it warm for the drive to the park. When I arrived at our reserved shelter, Michael and his partner, Marci, were unloading his slideshow and photography

equipment from their car. As we worked to set up for the event, I admit to grumbling about how nice it would be if we could keep the chili hot. From the corner, where he was working, Michael called out, "Why don't you plug it in?" I'm sure I rolled my eyes in his direction. I probably also said something like haha or very funny. He did have a great sense of humor, after all. But he walked over to my table and said that, really, I should plug it in. I asked how I was supposed to do that and he pointed at a box about 20 feet from the shelter. He told me he was an electrician, that the box was an electrical box, and that if we had an extension cord, we could plug in the crockpot. He *was* an electrician, it *was* an electrical box, and we *were* able to plug in the crockpot. The chili stayed nice and hot and, as we all took turns warming our hands around it, I realized that I had learned something new about my friend.

Sadly, Michael passed away in April of 2017, after battling cancer for nearly a year. His talent, wit, and humor are very much missed by those of us at MBS who shared his love for bluebirds and nature. While this bigger-than-life man is now gone from our daily lives, his amazing photographs will keep him forever in our hearts.



Michael Smith's photo, "Mad Bluebird's Grandson," which he captioned "And you thought my grandfather was mad!"

Bluebird Observation Feeder

Chuck Burilla

Being newly retired, after a long and active career as an aerospace research scientist, I now had a lot of time on my hands and started longing for something I might do with some of that spare time. My wife had suggested that I take up golfing or some other sport. Well, I never golfed or truly enjoyed sports all my life and had no desire to start now! I had been reading a book about bluebirds and the large following these birds had and I decided I might enjoy this strange thing called “bluebirding” as a hobby. Then *it* began; I started reading all the publications about bluebirds I could get my hands on and learned everything I could about these wonderful birds and the unique people who follow them with a passion.

Since bluebird houses were often discussed in the books I had read, and I already enjoyed woodworking, it only followed that I attempt my first bluebird house in my workshop. I completed it in two days, took a few pictures, and mounted it on a 4½ foot pole in my backyard on a cold, cloudy late February day. Then my daily rituals began. I found myself watching for these bluebirds I had read so much about, and I knew they were around since I had seen them a few times in my new neighborhood. Well it had now been whole week and I had not seen even a single bluebird on my property let alone one near my magnificent new nestbox! Nonetheless I kept up my daily routine, watching for them as much as I could, and hoping I would see just one on my fence, which was about 15 feet from the nestbox.

Then it happened; I had a real bluebird land right on the roof of my creation. I began to wonder; would the bright blue handsome male I had seen on my nestbox like it and, if he did, would he be able to successfully attract a mate? Would she approve of his chosen house and would she participate in the courtship ritual I had read so much about? Well everything worked out swell and I soon had my very own bluebird couple. She built the nest and laid her eggs and all four of them hatched! Papa and momma began bringing the tiny babies food chosen just for them. I was so happy and right then and there I knew *I had finally found a hobby I could really enjoy in my retirement years.*

I was thrilled that the house I had built for my newfound friends was now a *home*. As the days began

to warm I would watch as mom and dad tirelessly flew back and forth acquiring live insects for their babies. I thought to myself maybe I should purchase a bluebird feeder for *my* bluebirds and the next day I bought the finest one I could find. I mounted it on a 4 foot pole about 10 feet from the nestbox hoping I would make it easier for mom and dad to feed their fast-growing babies. I decided to put live mealworms in my feeder since I had read they were a bluebird’s favorite food. My bluebirds began using it the same day I put it up and once more I felt accomplished and very happy.

After a few days went by I started seeing other birds drop in for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. One particular bird, which had a white belly and dark wings with white markings, had me concerned. He was fairly large and consuming most of the mealworms and I noticed he would also chase my bluebirds and bully them every chance he got. Not knowing what bird he was I got out my bird identification guide and discovered he was a mockingbird. I had read earlier on that mockingbirds could really wreak havoc on bluebirds and devour their mealworms fairly quickly.

Furthermore I learned they could be tormenters to bluebirds, too, and I was seeing this firsthand. There was not much I could do but I was really bothered by this. Should I take down my feeder or just put up with this mockingbird’s bullying and his insatiable appetite for my mealworms? Things were about to get worse; I began noticing blackbirds coming to the feeder in large numbers. They also liked my mealworms and discovered what I called “blackbirds” where really starlings and that they were often seen in flocks. It was looking like this bluebird feeding thing could get very expensive and not enjoyable at all, but I decided to try and put up with these pilferers. After observing these mockingbirds at the feeder daily for a month or so I learned a lot about them, including their feeding habits and the bullying tactics they used daily on my bluebirds, especially at the feeder.

I began wondering what I could do to remedy this feeding situation. Being a scientific person it was natural for my mind to begin wandering into deep thought. I had gained a lot of data from my many hours observing the mockingbirds and starlings at the

feeder. Then it hit me: why not try to design a feeder that would be foolproof in keeping large birds out but at the same time would also be one that my bluebirds might be attracted to and be able to use easily and safely? Could I also design it with additional features that would also appeal to us bluebird lovers? After several long days and nights I now began to see a clearer picture of what the new bluebird feeder should look like and what features it must have.

1. Foremost it must be acceptable and easy to use by bluebirds and of course be inaccessible to larger birds
2. Be able to withstand harsh outdoor weather conditions and be virtually indestructible
3. Be convenient to fill with feed, accept multiple types of feed and keep the feed dry in rainy spells.
4. Be squirrel-proof
5. Allow crystal clear outside visibility for the bluebirds inside the feeder as well as for people on the outside looking in
6. Provide more comfortable feeding conditions in all types inclement weather (high winds, rain, and winter conditions where the bluebirds overwinter)
7. Be easy to clean, both inside and out
8. Be fairly lightweight and easy to mount on a pole
9. Be attractive in and of itself

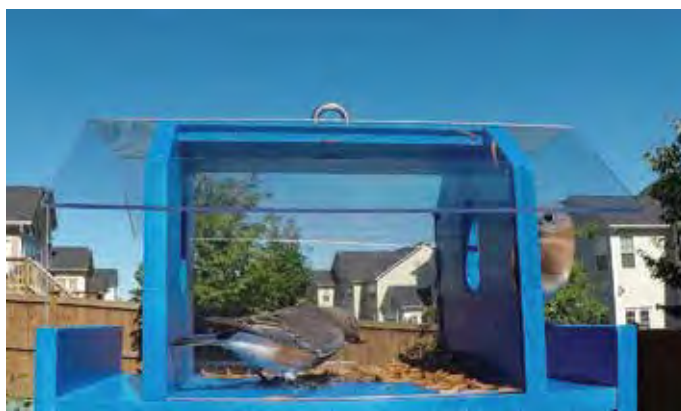
With these nine items in mind I came up with a design I believed would work. The final design was one I choose to name a “Bluebird Observation Feeder.” It had a front, back, and roof made from LEXAN Plexiglas panels and a body made of Cellular PVC and it met all of the properties I described above. I decided to construct one and test it on my bluebirds as well as on the other large birds visiting the feeder, especially the mockingbirds.

I mounted my new feeder on a pole and put in a half cup of live mealworms. Now I would anxiously begin watching them closely to see how they would react to my novel feeder. They discovered it within a matter of hours, fluttering around and landing on the roof looking down through the crystal-clear Plexiglas at the activity just inside. I really got a kick out of them turning their heads side to side observing the wriggling mealworms just below their feet as if trying to figure out what they had to do next.

The next day they started coming to the feeder frequently, still landing on the roof but also perching on either side allowing them to see the mealworms through the entrance holes. They then quickly realized that they had to enter through the elliptical openings for their meal! After the first one entered others followed shortly thereafter. Once they tasted

their favorite food they were visiting every morning at daybreak, throughout the day, and at dusk. Very happy bluebirds and a very happy bluebird enthusiast!

The most I have seen in the interior with the feed at one time was three. There were a few more that perched on the sides but only entered one at a time once one of the three inside exited... Very orderly and well-behaved creatures—and very smart!



Now I had to wait patiently for the *mockingbird test*. I set up my new GoPro high resolution camera (bluebird lovers love toys, too) on a tripod close to the feeder and started recording. It wasn't long before Mr. Mockingbird noticed the feeder. He landed on the top of it and saw the wiggling mealworms



Note the elliptical entrance holes on the feeder at left; once installed, the hole reducers (below) prevent larger birds from entering.



underneath. He then flew haphazardly around the feeder frantically observing the mealworms and finally landed at one the entrance holes. He hesitated but soon hopped right in *as I expected*. The 1½" by 2½" elliptical holes were too large to prevent him from doing so, but I planned for this in my design! The reason I built the feeder with the large elliptical holes was so the bluebirds would be more willing to enter and thus adapt to this unfamiliar feeder much quicker. Once they were comfortable and began to use it frequently I added the hole reducers, which I designed to fit over the elliptical holes, and reduced the hole size to a circular 1½". Since my blues had already become very comfortable with the feeder they didn't hesitate to enter with the hole reducers installed.

feet, and get frustrated. They now realize they can't fit through the smaller holes and just give up, and my blues are getting a kick out of their confused neighbors at *their* feeder. I did however put up a *standard* feeder just for them but without mealworms they would gobble down in a few minutes! For the first time I can now say *I really am really enjoying my blues at the feeder and saving a lot of mealworm money too!*

The mockingbirds still visit, oftentimes trying to snatch a mealworm they believe is right at their

Due to requests from members of Facebook Bluebird Groups the author is currently offering this feeder for sale on eBay. I have named the feeder "Mr Chucks Bluebird Observation Feeder." If you would like to watch two interesting videos I recorded at the feeder you can find them at:

<https://youtu.be/Q0jj1TL1tN4> and

<https://youtu.be/OkISmBRilAs>

I have also set up a Facebook Group ("Mr Chucks Bluebird Feeder") if you want to join.

Mozart's Starling

Introduced to North America in the 1800s, European Starlings have spread across the entire continent as a result of their intelligence, adaptability, and aggressiveness in acquiring nest cavities. These traits make them widely despised among North American bird enthusiasts, but in their native Old World home, starlings are admired for those same qualities. In addition, they are skilled mimics, able to imitate the songs of other birds, frogs, coyotes, human voices, car alarms, and other natural and human-made sounds.

Among those other sounds is music. In 1784 the composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart purchased a starling that could "sing" part of a Mozart composition. Charmed by this talent, plus the bird's intelligence, Mozart kept the bird as a companion until its death after three years (whereupon he organized a fairly elaborate funeral attended by his friends and family).



The story of Mozart, his starling, and starlings in general is told in an excellent new book by Lyanda Lynn Haupt. Readers willing to set aside (at least temporarily) how the species is viewed in the New World will be rewarded with fascinating insights into our relationships with starlings, birds, and the natural world.



The Industry Leader

Producers of Live Food Totally Pest Free!

ATTRACT WILD BIRDS WITH OUR ORGANIC MEALWORMS!

**15% Discount
for All NABS
Members**

**Large
mealworms now
available!**

Free Brochure on Request

1-800-318-2611 • FAX (513) 738-4667

info@thenaturesway.com

P.O. Box 188, Ross, OH 45061-0188

www.thenaturesway.com

“Feeding live insects to the wild birds in my yard has helped me build a special bond with individual birds.”

–Julie Zickefoose

The Western Bluebird Conservation Project: A Great Success

Dessi Sieburth

Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*) are small thrushes that can be found year-round in Los Angeles County. Their primary habitat is open grasslands or parks, and their diet includes berries and insects. Western Bluebirds are cavity nesters, which means that they make their nests inside cavities in hollow dead branches or trunks of trees. Bluebirds can not make their own cavities, as their bills are not strong enough to chisel out the wood. Instead, they rely on finding cavities that have already been made by woodpeckers. Woodpeckers have very strong bills and are excellent cavity makers. The woodpeckers use the cavities they make for nesting, and when they are done nesting, the cavity can be used by another cavity nester, such as a Western Bluebird. In fact, over 80 species of North American birds nest in tree cavities, highlighting the importance of dead trees and branches for birds. Unfortunately, we often cut down dead trees for safety or for aesthetic reasons, which destroys potential nesting sites for many species, including our Western Bluebirds.



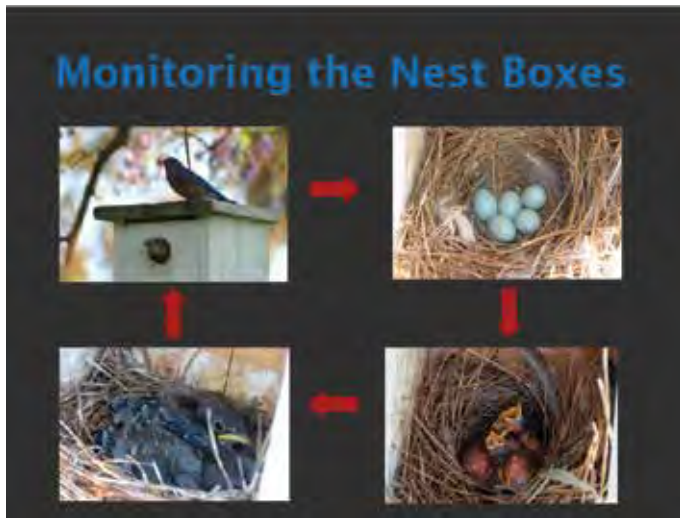
A male Western Bluebird. Photo by Dessi Sieburth.



A female Western Bluebird feeds her young.
Photo by Dessi Sieburth.

In the early 20th century, Western Bluebirds were reported to be common summer residents from the foothills to the mountains up to 10,000 feet in Los Angeles County. However, Western Bluebirds started declining in the 20th century due to habitat loss and the introduction of European Starlings and House Sparrows. The starlings and House Sparrows, which were introduced from Europe, are also cavity nesters and compete with bluebirds for nesting habitat. Both species have been known to kill adult and young bluebirds.

In recent decades, however, the Western Bluebird has made a comeback and is now a widespread and common year-round visitor in Los Angeles, thanks to the Southern California Bluebird Club. The Southern California Bluebird Club was founded in 1984 by Dick Purvis and three other bluebird enthusiasts to provide nesting sites for bluebirds by hanging bluebird nestboxes in trees. The nestboxes are installed on tree branches about 10 feet high. The nestboxes are made of wood, and their entrance holes are small enough so that starlings cannot enter. Bluebird nestboxes are mainly responsible for the increase in the Western Bluebird population in Southern California. The California Bluebird Recovery Project (www.cbrp.org/)



The bluebird nestbox cycle. *Montage by Dessi Sieburth.*

keeps records of all the bluebirds raised in nestboxes throughout California; last year, 11,969 Western Bluebirds were raised.

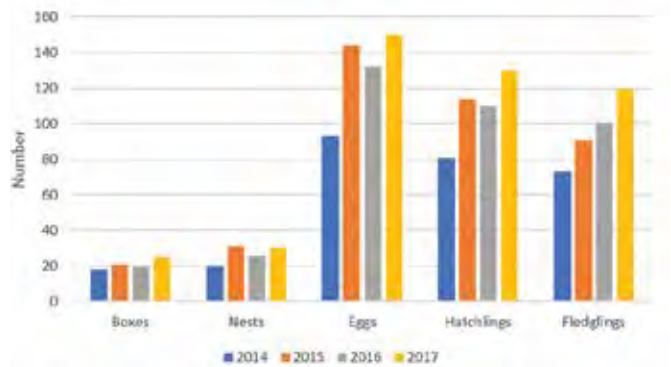
In 2013, my friend Norm Vargas and I decided to build and hang up bluebird nestboxes in Los Angeles County. First, I hung five boxes at an Equestrian Center in Sylmar. In 2014, I expanded my nestbox project by installing more boxes at a local cemetery and around my neighborhood. I ended up with 22 nestboxes. During the breeding season, which goes from April to August, I monitor the boxes once a week by taking each one down and looking inside to count the eggs and young. If there are any House Sparrow nests I remove them. I found it amazing to see a bluebird pair build their nest, lay the eggs, and feed the young. Each week, I could see the young bluebirds inside the box gradually grow and mature. It takes 21



This White-breasted Nuthatch was using one of my bluebird nestboxes. *Photo by Dessi Sieburth.*

days for the young to fledge. Bluebirds are socially monogamous, but the nests can sometimes have more than one male parent. Several times, I witnessed three bluebirds (usually 2 males and a female) all working together to raise a brood. The second male was likely from a previous brood. Once, when I opened a box to check it, a White-breasted Nuthatch, another cavity nester, was nesting inside the box. The nuthatch pair ended up raising four nuthatch fledglings in the bluebird nestbox.

I have been monitoring the same bluebird nestboxes for five years, and I now have put up 22 boxes in three different locations. When I started in 2013, five bluebird fledglings were raised, and this year, 120 bluebird fledglings were raised in my boxes, with an increase in fledglings each year. The chart shows my data from 2014 to 2017.



Western Bluebird nestboxes monitored by Dessi Sieburth in Los Angeles County.

There are simple things we can do to help the Western Bluebirds in Los Angeles. First, we can help them by not using pesticides. Birds may ingest and swallow pesticides or bathe in poisoned water. Instead of using pesticides, you can plant native plants to attract beneficial insects and keep your garden in a balance. Second, outdoor cats kill millions of birds each year, so keeping them inside is good for all birds, including bluebirds. Finally, if you have a dead tree or tree branch in your yard, consider not cutting it down entirely. Even leaving five feet of a stump or a few feet of a branch can be enough to provide nesting habitat for cavity nesters. Of course, it is important to consult an arborist about safety when leaving parts of a dead tree. To learn more about the management of dead trees please go to <http://cavityconservation.com/saving-dead-trees/>.

If you would like to learn more about how you can help birds go to my website: <http://protectingourbirds.my-free.website/>.

Thanks to Norm Vargas for helping me with my bluebird nestbox project, Gillian Martin for mentoring me on cavity conservation, Los Angeles Audubon Society for supporting my conservation efforts, and Pasadena Audubon Society for providing a grant to build the nestboxes.

For more information on bluebird nestboxes please visit www.cbrp.org/SDBbluebirds/nestboxes.htm

References

- Allen, L.W. , K. L. Garrett, and M.C. Wimer. 1994. Los Angeles County Breeding Atlas. Los Angeles Audubon Society, Los Angeles, CA.
- Olson, M. 2008. A hole lotta love for the Western bluebird. Los Angeles Times July 16. <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jul/16/local/me-bluebird16>



A fledgling Western Bluebird, likely a male due to the deep blue tones in the tail and wings. Photo by Beatrix Schwarz.

Dessi Sieburth is a 10th-grader at Saint Francis High School in La Canada, California. He is a member of the Los Angeles Audubon Society and the Pasadena Audubon Society Young Birders Club. Dessi started his bluebird nestbox project at the age of 10. He has presented at schools, bird clubs, garden clubs, and public events about protecting cavity-nesting birds. Dessi is a regular contributor to the Los Angeles Audubon Society Newsletter, The Western Tanager, and he is a volunteer at the Moore Lab of Zoology at Occidental College, where he has conducted research on Golden-cheeked Woodpeckers and Rufous Hummingbirds. Dessi is the 2015 American Birding Association Young Birder of the Year, and he was named Kid Hero for the Planet by Time for Kids magazine in 2017.

VEHICLE/PROPERTY DONATION PROGRAM

If you have a car, truck, motorcycle, RV, boat, or even an airplane that you no longer need, NABS would like to receive it as a tax-deductible charitable donation.

To donate, simply call this toll-free number: 866-244-8464. Our agents will have your vehicle, boat, RV, etc. picked up and taken to a facility where it will be evaluated by experts. A determination will be made regarding what should be done to maximize its selling price, thereby resulting in significantly higher value than it might otherwise generate so you will receive the maximum tax benefit allowable by U.S. law. For tax purposes you, the donor, will receive a formal Certificate of Donation complying with all State and Federal requirements for authenticating your donation to NABS, an IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charity.

Thank you for supporting the conservation of bluebirds and other native cavity nesters!



Screech Owls are Short Lived

Leo Hollein

The Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey has a robust Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) population and offers an interesting environment for studying them. The Refuge has about 200 Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) nestboxes that are being actively maintained and monitored. These boxes are located in 2,500 acres of a management area that is closed to the public. Wood Ducks nest in a majority of the boxes. Hooded Mergansers (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) are another cavity-nesting duck that nests in the boxes; a maximum of four Hooded Merganser nests have been found in a year. Screech owls roost in the boxes in winter and nest in some boxes in the spring. Screech owls are not migratory—they remain on their territory all year provided there are sufficient food resources.

A screech owl banding program began in 2009. Wood Duck boxes are inspected and cleaned during the winter to determine if they were used by nesting ducks. Fresh wood chips are added to provide nesting material (neither Wood Ducks nor screech owls build nests). Any owls found during the winter inspection are banded and returned to their roost box after it has been cleaned. If an owl is already banded, the band number is recorded. A limited number of boxes are checked in early April for nesting screech owls. Only boxes used by nesting owls in past years or used by roosting owls in the past winter are checked. On average about two screech owl nests are found in the boxes in the spring.

In the past seven years, 63 adult screech owls have been banded. Twenty-six (41%) of these owls have been recaptured at least once. This is a very high recapture rate versus the 8% typical of Wood Ducks banded in the Refuge. All owl recaptures have been in the same box or in a box near where the owls were originally banded. Most owls are recaptured annually; only 4 of the 26 recaptured owls were not captured in consecutive years but skipped a year between recaptures. This indicates a high annual recovery rate (85%) of

banded owls.

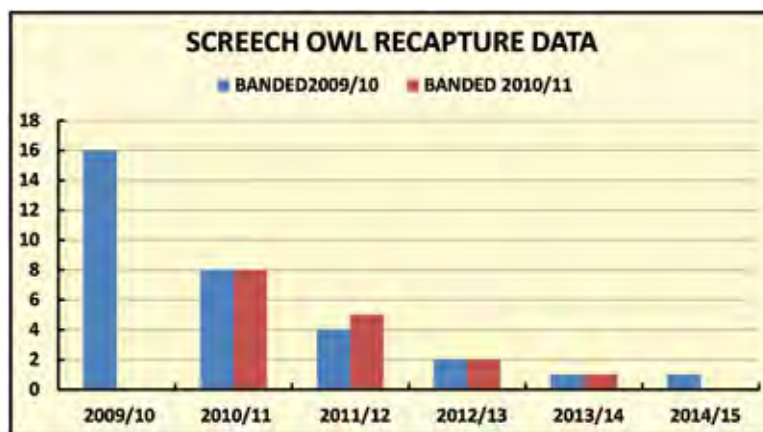
Thirty screech owlets have also been banded. None have been recaptured in the Refuge or reported to the Bird Banding Lab as having been recaptured or found dead elsewhere. Adult screech owls are known to drive their young out of their territory; this prevents inbreeding in a species that remains on its territory year round.

As expected, the largest number of adult screech owls (16) was banded during the first year of the study in the winter of 2009–2010. The expectation was that as time passed there would be more recaptured owls and fewer unbanded owls. However, this trend only lasted for the second year. The recapture of banded owls never exceeded unbanded owls until the 2013–2014 winter when six owls were recaptured and only five owls were banded. The significant number of owls banded every year suggests that screech owls do not survive long in the Refuge.

Refuge Screech Owls have High Mortality Rates

In captivity screech owls have lived longer than 20 years. The record lifetime (Bird Banding Lab database) for an Eastern Screech-Owl in the wild is 14 years and 6 months. This owl was banded as an adult and found dead due to predation. In the Refuge a screech owl was banded as an adult in January 2010. It has been recaptured in the same area every winter until October 2014. It lived for at least six years.

The chart (below) follows two screech owl populations through six and five seasons, respectively. It verifies that the lifetime of a screech owl in the Refuge on average is short. The blue



bars represent the 16 owls banded in 2009–2010. The blue bars in subsequent years represent the number of the original group of owls that were recaptured. As shown the population of recaptured owls was halved every year from 2010–2011 through 2014–2015. The red bars

represent the eight owls banded in the winter of 2010–2011. The results come close to replicating the data illustrated by the blue bars.

The data indicate a mortality rate of not more than 50% per year for adult screech owls. The mortality rate could be somewhat lower if there are some owls that were not recaptured. An adult screech owl in the Refuge lives on average less than three years. The Refuge mortality rate of 50% is significantly higher than the 34% mortality rate reported by Van Camp and Henny in their study of adult screech owls in four Ohio counties (L.F. Van Camp and C.H. Henny. 1975. *The Screech Owl: Its Life History and Population Ecology in Northern Ohio*. U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. North American Fauna, No. 71.).

The most frequently recorded reason for the death of an adult screech owl is collision with a motor vehicle. I have witnessed an owl collision with a car as well as found one as roadkill. Screech owls are nocturnal stealth hunters. They fly quietly and pounce on their prey. They are not swift fliers. The only road through the management area is closed to traffic at night. This should minimize any owl/vehicle collisions in the area of the Refuge that contains the Wood Duck boxes.

The Refuge, however, does have a healthy population of larger owls that are also active at night. This could account for the seemingly higher rate of screech owl mortality in this owl-eat-owl world. The Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) and the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) are year-round residents of the Refuge. Long-eared (*Asio otus*) and Short-eared (*Asio flammeus*) owls are occasional winter residents. All these owls are much larger than the diminutive screech owl and are known to prey on their smaller cousins. Eastern Screech-Owls are only about 8 inches long and weigh about 6 ounces.

Screech Owls Use Nestboxes for Eight Months

The screech owls nest in the Wood Duck boxes from March through May and roost in the boxes starting in October when the trees begin to drop their leaves. Screech owls are the only birds to roost in the duck boxes during the winter. Screech owls use a number of nestboxes as roosts during the winter. Presumably they move around in search of prey. The number of nestboxes with owl pellets or prey items is about three times more than the nestboxes where owls are found. Screech owls begin laying their clutch of four or five eggs in late March. Their eggs are round and



Figure 1. Red phase screech owls and their owlets

white; they look like ping-pong balls. Incubation begins when all the eggs are laid. Both parents (as with most raptors, the female is larger than the male) are usually in the nestbox during the incubation period, but the female incubates the eggs. She is fed by the male during this period. The male usually roosts nearby but outside the nestbox once the eggs hatch. However, both parents may roost in the box with young owlets (Figure 1). The owlets are pure white and down-covered when they hatch. They remain in the nestbox for about four weeks. They are banded along with their mother at about three weeks (Figure 2).

The female stops roosting in the nestbox when it is time for the owlets to leave the nest. It takes several days for all the owlets to depart the nestbox. When the owlets leave the box in late May, they are unable to fly but they can hop and climb. The parents continue to feed and train their young after they leave the nest until they are able to fly



Figure 2. Banded red phase screech owl standing on a flicker feather.



Figure 3. A red and gray pair of nesting screech owls and hunt on their own.

Both parents hunt at night to obtain food for their young. Although their favorite food is small rodents such as mice and voles, screech owls are truly omnivorous. If the hunting is good, extra food will be stored in the nestbox for later. Prey items found in boxes include frogs, fish, crawfish, flying squirrels, and a variety of birds or bird feathers including Blue Jays, cardinals, flickers, robins, warblers, Downy Woodpeckers, Tree Swallows, and juncos. They also catch insects and worms. Two owlets died in one nestbox; they were eventually dismembered and eaten. This behavior has been observed in other owl species.

Red and Gray Color Morphs are Equal in the Refuge

Eastern Screech-Owls are unique among North American owl species in having two color morphs—red and gray. Figure 3 is a pair of mixed color morph

owls. These colors are not determined by age, gender, or season—the owls are either red or gray just as people have either blue eyes or brown eyes. However, just as some humans have hazel eyes, there is also an unusual intermediate-colored owl called a brown screech owl as shown in shown in Figure 4. It has traces of both gray and dull red.

The color morph distribution for the adult owls banded in the Refuge is essentially a 50:50 mix of red and gray owls. The ratio of red to gray phase screech owls banded is nearly constant from year to year. A pair of red phase owls has red owlets. A pair of gray owls has gray owlets.

This even distribution of color morphs in the Refuge is not representative of other areas. Van Camp and Henny found that 80% of the screech owls in Ohio were gray. A probable reason is that gray owls are less conspicuous and less likely to be killed by a predator in areas with long and snowy winters.



Figure 4. Brown phase screech owl

Membership Renewal

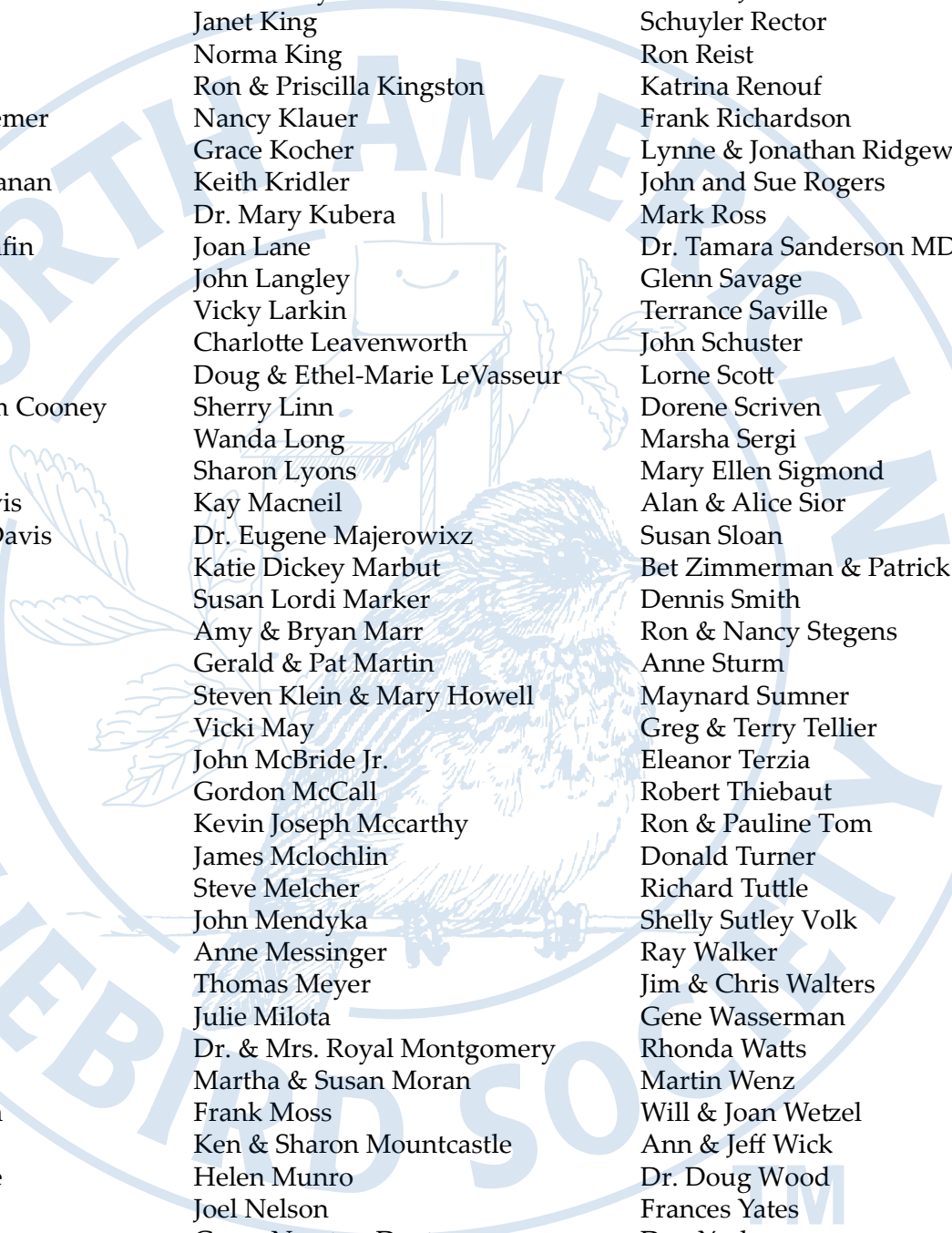
Is this your last Journal? Please check your mailing label for membership expiration date. If renewing through PayPal, remember you can use either your credit card or your PayPal account.

Q: I see on the form I can renew for multiple years – how do I do it using PayPal?

A: Change the quantity from the default of 1 to the number of years you want to renew for. PayPal does the math and we pick up the number of years to adjust your NABS record.

NABS Life Members

Our heartfelt thanks to the following NABS Life members for their commitment to the organization and its mission.



Sarkis Acopian	Mary Janetatos	Margaret Anne Payne
Dharma Alagerantnam	Charlotte Jernigan	Stuart Pendleton
Madison Alderson	Bruce Johnson	Janice Petko
William Bahr	Roger Jones	Beverly Phifer
Linda Baldauski	Ali & Margery Keskin	Murial & John Prianti
Virginia Banks	Dr. Bill Keyes	Mark & Jean Raabe
Mary Baxter	Janet King	Schuyler Rector
Alan Beattie	Norma King	Ron Reist
Bonnie Bell	Ron & Priscilla Kingston	Katrina Renouf
Ann Earley & Bob Siemer	Nancy Klauer	Frank Richardson
Randy Brimm	Grace Kocher	Lynne & Jonathan Ridgeway
Jean & E David Buchanan	Keith Kridler	John and Sue Rogers
Jim & Sharon Burke	Dr. Mary Kubera	Mark Ross
Ray & Charlotte Burnfin	Joan Lane	Dr. Tamara Sanderson MD
Vicki Butler	John Langley	Glenn Savage
William Carmines	Vicky Larkin	Terrance Saville
Charlie Chambers	Charlotte Leavenworth	John Schuster
Mark Christ	Doug & Ethel-Marie LeVasseur	Lorne Scott
Martha Mullin & Tom Cooney	Sherry Linn	Dorene Scriven
Dr. Wayne Davis	Wanda Long	Marsha Sergi
G. Dunn Davis	Sharon Lyons	Mary Ellen Sigmond
Mr. & Mrs. James Davis	Kay Macneil	Alan & Alice Sior
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Davis	Dr. Eugene Majerowixz	Susan Sloan
Ann Davis	Katie Dickey Marbut	Bet Zimmerman & Patrick Smith
Dale & Susan Dietz	Susan Lordi Marker	Dennis Smith
Jimmy Dodson	Amy & Bryan Marr	Ron & Nancy Stegens
Lillian Lund Files	Gerald & Pat Martin	Anne Sturm
Stanley Fisher	Steven Klein & Mary Howell	Maynard Sumner
Margaret Flerchinger	Vicki May	Greg & Terry Tellier
Carolyn Foil	John McBride Jr.	Eleanor Terzia
Karen Fortenbery	Gordon McCall	Robert Thiebaut
Mrs. Irene Frantz	Kevin Joseph Mccarthy	Ron & Pauline Tom
George Freeland Jr.	James Mclochlin	Donald Turner
Stephen Garr	Steve Melcher	Richard Tuttle
Dr. Robert Giddings	John Mendyka	Shelly Sutley Volk
Mahlon Gingerich	Anne Messenger	Ray Walker
Raylene Gordin	Thomas Meyer	Jim & Chris Walters
Dr. Donald Gunter	Julie Milota	Gene Wasserman
Bob & Edwina Hahn	Dr. & Mrs. Royal Montgomery	Rhonda Watts
Jean Hamilton	Martha & Susan Moran	Martin Wenz
Miss Georgia Hariton	Frank Moss	Will & Joan Wetzel
Clark Hart	Ken & Sharon Mountcastle	Ann & Jeff Wick
Mike & Kathy Hartke	Helen Munro	Dr. Doug Wood
John Hartrampf Sr.	Joel Nelson	Frances Yates
Joan Heilman	Gwen Newton-Denton	Don Yockey
Thomas Henry	Laura Nielsen	The Roberts Family
Traci Hoffman	Wendy Nuetzel	Phelps Family Trust
Paul Hoopes	Paul Oettel	Southern Interior Bluebird Trail
Richard Hospers	Thomas O'Neil	Society
Shirley & Fred Huntress	Mary Ann Pavel	

Bluebirds Everywhere

“Bluebirds Everywhere” is a feature that celebrates the widespread and creative uses of bluebird images and the word “bluebird” itself. We invite you to submit your own images and ideas—simply email them to NABSeditor@gmail.com or mail them to NABS Editor, 5405 Villa View Dr., Farmington, NM 87402. Let’s see what bluebirds you can find!



Jon Belisle sent in a note about a country music duo, Carl and Pearl Butler, and their song, “Let’s Watch the Bluebirds.” Jon suggested we search the YouTube.com video website for a recording of the song. Sure enough, we found it, and a nice old song it is. But in the process, we also found a LOT of other songs with bluebird in the title. Here are just a few:

- “I Heard the Bluebirds Sing”
- “Bluebirds are Singing for Me”
- “Bluebirds in My Belfry”
- “Bluebirds over the Mountain”
- “Farewell Bluebird”
- “My Blackbirds are Bluebirds Now”
- “Bluebirds in the Moonlight”
- “Old Man Sunshine (Little Boy Bluebird)”
- “Beautiful Bluebird”
- “Bluebird Blackbird”
- “The Bluebird Song”

Nest box sales

\$17

Gilwood Bluebird
(All Cedar)*

\$15

Troyer Bluebird
(All Cedar)*

\$18

**NABS-style Eastern/
Western/Mountain
Bluebird Box**

All-cedar front opening,
1 9/16" hole, additional
ventilation can be added
on sides upon request

\$13

PVC Bluebird
Sparrow-resistant

\$13

PVC Chickadee
1 1/8" hole

\$20

**Barnwood
Chickadee**

1 1/8" hole & wood-burned
chickadee on door

All boxes come with roofs unattached.
 Gilwood, Troyer, NABS-style and PVC boxes
 come with roofs treated with product to
 increase longevity.
 Gilwood, Troyer and PVC boxes built to mount
 with Gilbertson conduit rebar system.

**Offered by
Bluebirds
Across Nebraska**

Visit bbne.org
to order boxes;
printable order
form may be
downloaded.

Order form
available upon
request, contact
Steve Eno at
402-783-3011.

Shipping not
included in price.

One free box
with every
10 ordered.

Research Review

A Summary of Recent Scientific Research on Bluebirds and Other Cavity Nesters

Scott W. Gillihan

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Bluebirds are in the thrush family, cousins to the American Robin. A distant cousin is the Eurasian Blackbird, which is different from the birds that we call blackbirds in North America, which are in a different family (Icteridae). Like bluebirds, Eurasian Blackbirds exhibit partial migration, in which some individuals in a population migrate south for the winter but some stay on the breeding grounds. Because they are both thrushes, and they both exhibit partial migration, results of a study on migration in Eurasian Blackbirds might shed some light on migration in bluebirds.

Flying hundreds (or thousands) of miles each year between the breeding grounds and the wintering grounds is risky. Bad weather, unreliable food supplies, and changing habitats all increase the risk for migrants. But staying on the wintering grounds can be risky, too, especially due to cold weather and transient food sources. Like many things in life, the decision of whether to stay or migrate is a tradeoff.

Eurasian Blackbirds that stay on the breeding grounds all winter are able to claim the best territories in the spring, since they are already present when the migrants return. On the other hand, the migrants have a higher survival rate over the winter, since they've enjoyed the comparative warmth of more southern regions. On average, a migrant will live longer and

have more years to breed, but they will be locked out of the best breeding territories each year. The fact that both migration strategies exist among many species (including bluebirds) suggests that neither strategy is consistently better than the other—conditions favor migrants some years, and year-round residents other years.

Daniel Zúñiga, Yann Gager, Hanna Kokko, Adam M. Fudickar, Andreas Schmidt, Beat Naef-Daenzer, Martin Wikelski, and Jesko Partecke. 2017. Migration Confers Winter Survival Benefits in a Partially Migratory Songbird. *eLife* 6:e28123.

Woodpeckers to the Rescue

Introduced, exotic species are notorious for wreaking havoc on native species and ecosystems. Bluebirders need look no further than the House Sparrow for an example. Among insects, the emerald ash borer is an egregious example. Introduced to North America around 2000, this Asian beetle has spread throughout a large chunk of the continent, feasting on millions of native and ornamental ash trees and causing billions of dollars in damage along the way.

In Asia, woodpeckers are significant predators on the beetle, and that predation seems to be occurring in North America, too. The sheer numbers of beetles appears to be benefiting the birds. In the areas occupied by the beetle, populations of woodpeckers (Hairy, Downy, Pileated, Red-headed, and Red-bellied) and the White-breasted Nuthatch have increased markedly in the years since arrival of the beetle. This increase is believed to be partly due to the increase in numbers of dead trees available for nesting by woodpeckers but also by the availability of so many fat, juicy beetle larvae in the winter.

The hope is that woodpeckers and nuthatches will continue to increase in numbers, and exert some control over the numbers of emerald ash borers, thereby slowing the beetle's destructive march across the continent.

Walter D. Koenig and Andrew M. Liebhold. 2017. A Decade of Emerald Ash Borer Effects on Regional Woodpecker and Nuthatch Populations. *Biological Invasions*. doi:10.1007/s10530-017-1411-7.



Eurasian Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)



PO Box 15001
Hamilton, OH 45015

Discount
for all
NABS
members!



Discount for
licensed
wildlife
rehabilitators!

Great selection, low price, and unbeatable quality.

Phone orders please call 800-222-3563.

Fax orders to 888-222-3563.

We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover.

*For additional information or to place an order through our website,
please visit www.grubco.com. Buy from us with confidence!*



Grubco's bluebird feeders are available in two versions; cedar and recycled plastic. The recycled feeder is made from recycled milk jugs. Keep any unwanted birds out. The holes are sized and located specifically for bluebirds. Whichever feeder you decide to use, you will join thousands of happy bluebird feeder users.

Affiliates of the North American Bluebird Society

The North American Bluebird Society serves as a clearinghouse for ideas, research, management, and education on behalf of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting species. NABS invites all state, provincial, and regional bluebird organizations to become NABS Affiliates in a confederation of equals working together in a partnership in international bluebird conservation. No cost is associated with affiliating with NABS. Your affiliated organization will be listed on the NABS website and in *Bluebird*. If your organization has a newsletter, please forward a copy to our headquarters. To find out more about becoming a NABS Affiliate, read our Affiliate Letter. Notice: If you are listed below, please check listing to see if it is current. If not, please send correct information to Kevin Corwin at KCorwin@nabluebirdsociety.org.



Alberta

Calgary Area Nestbox Monitors
Ron Reist
5720 59th Ave.
Olds, Alberta T4H 1K3 - CANADA
403-944-1155
rreist56@gmail.com

Ellis Bird Farm, Ltd.

Myrna Pearman
P.O. Box 5090
Lacombe, AB T4L-1W7 - CANADA
403-885-4477
403-887-5779
mpearman@telus.net
www.ellisbirdfarm.ab.ca

Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society

Joe Michielsen
2123 22nd Street
Coaldale, AB T1M-1H6 - CANADA
403-345-4777
joe.michielsen@hotmail.com
www.bluebirdtrails.org

Arizona

Tucson Audubon Society
Jonathan Horst
300 E. University Blvd. #120
Tucson, AZ 85705
520-971-6238
jhorst@tucsonaudubon.org
www.tucsonaudubon.org

Arkansas

Bella Vista Bluebird Society
Leon Wehmeyer
15 Banff Lane
Bella Vista, AR 72715
479-855-1642
lwehm@sbcglobal.net

Bermuda

Bermuda Bluebird Society
Stuart Smith
#2 Up and Down Lane
Paget DV 03, Bermuda
441-777-9856
smitty@ibl.bm
www.bermudabluebirdsociety.com

British Columbia

Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team
Val Schaefer
841 Ralph Street
Victoria, BC V8X 3E1 - CANADA
250-472-4387
schaefer@uvic.ca
www.goert.ca

Southern Interior Bluebird Trail Society

Ray Town
P.O. Box 277
Logan Lake, BC V0K 1W0 - CANADA
250-523-9474
info@bcbluebirds.org
www.bcbluebirds.org

Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society

Bring Back the Bluebird Project
Genevieve Singleton
6015 Mary St.
Duncan, BC V9L 2G5 - CANADA
250-746-8052
twinflower4@gmail.com

California

California Bluebird Recovery Program
Dick Blaine
22284 N. De Anza Circle
Cupertino, CA 95014
408-257-6410
dick@theblaines.net
www.cbrp.org

Palos Verdes South Bay Audubon Society
(unable to contact at this time)

Southern California Bluebird Club

Jo-Ann Coller
18132 Larkstone Dr.
Santa Ana, CA 92705
joann1@socal.rr.com
www.socalbluebirds.org

Colorado

Colorado Bluebird Project
Audubon Soc of Greater Denver
Kevin Corwin - 720-482-8454
9308 S Wadsworth Blvd
Littleton, CO 80128
303-973-9530
303-973-1038 f
bluebirdproject@denveraudubon.org
www.denveraudubon.org/conservation/bluebird-project/

Florida

Florida Bluebird Society
Faith Jones
763 Mallard Dr.
Sanford, FL 32771
407-415-0705
floridabluebirdsociety@gmail.com
www.floridabluebirdsociety.org

Tampa Audubon Society

Mary Miller
P.O. Box 320025
Tampa, FL 33079
813-951-8145
limpkin1945@verizon.net
www.tampaaudubon.org

Georgia

Bluebird Hollow Farm
Ray Burnfin
3400 Bronco Road
LaFayette, GA 30728
706-638-5906
ray@bluebirdhollowfarm.com
http://bluebirdhollowfarm.com

Idaho

Golden Eagle Audubon Society
(unable to contact at this time)

Our Bluebird Ranch
(unable to contact at this time)

Rocky Mountain Blues

David Richmond
HC 67 Box 680
Clayton, ID 83227
208-838-2431
fowest@custertel.net

Illinois

Bond County Bluebird Society

James E. Wilson, D. Mus
502 Shannon Drive
Greenville, IL 62246-1359
618-664-1045
w.j.wilson@sbcglobal.net

East Central Illinois Bluebird Society

Paul or Janice Thode
2420 County Road 0 North
Broadlands, IL 61816
217-834-3050
janice_thode@yahoo.com

Northwest Illinois BBRP

Dick Bach
9262 Fitzsimmons Rd.
Stockton, IL 61085
815-947-2661
Kiritemoa35@gmail.com
www.jdcf.org/guardians

Southern Illinois Audubon Society

Laraine Wright
P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222
618-457-8769
LARAINEWRIGHT66@gmail.com
www.siaudubon.org

Indiana

Bluebird Team SMG, Sunnyside Master Gardeners

Ray Weatherholt
1180 Nance Lane
Lanesville, IN 47136
812-725-2009
r.weatherholt@twc.com

Brown County Bluebird Club

Dan Sparks
2634 Scarce O Fat Ridge Rd.
Nashville, IN 47448
812-200-5700
360-361-3704 f
b4bluebirds@yahoo.com

Hendricks County Bluebird Society

Karen Smith
1777 E. County Road 400 S.
Clayton, IN 46118
317-513-6403
Karen12208@aol.com
www.hendricksbluebirdsociety.info

Indiana Bluebird Society

Ken Murray
P.O. Box 134
Rensselaer, IN 47978-0134
219-866-3081
ibs07@rhsi.tv
www.indianabluebirdsociety.org

Iowa

Bluebirds of Iowa Restoration

Jaelyn Hill
2946 Ubben Ave
Ellsworth IA 50075-7554
515-836-4579
jaclynhill@netins.net

Iowa Bluebird Conservationists

Chris Parks
P.O. Box 302
Griswold, IA 51535
712-520-2103 cell
chparks@gmail.com

Johnson County Songbird Project

Jim Walters
1033 E Washington
Iowa City, IA 52240-5248
319-466-1134
jcmwalt@infionline.net

Kentucky

Kentucky Bluebird Society

Philip Tamplin, Jr.
26 Poplar Hill Rd.
Louisville, KY 40207
502-426-7500
philip.tamplin@gmail.com
www.biology.eku.edu/kbs

Louisiana

Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society

Sheryl Cooper Bassi
356 Lord Road
Oak Ridge, LA 71264
sherylbassi@hughes.net
www.labayoubluebirdsociety.org

Maine

Mid-Coast Audubon Society

John Weinrich
P.O. Box 548
Damariscotta, ME 04543
207-563-2930
jweinrich@roadrunner.com
www.midcoastaudubon.org

Manitoba

Friends of the Bluebirds

Herb Goulden
3407 Rosser Ave.
Brandon, MB R7B 2P9 - CANADA
204-728-8370
ggoulden@mts.net
www.mbbbluebirds.org/

Maryland

Maryland Bluebird Society

Kathy Kremnitzer
19305 Deer Path
Knoxville, MD 21758
301-676-9371
griffin459@myactv.net
www.mdbluebirdsociety.org

Michigan

Michigan Audubon Society

Rochelle Rook
P.O. Box 15249
Lansing, MI 48901
517-580-7364
rrooke@michiganaudubon.org
www.michiganaudubon.org

Michigan Bluebird Society

Kurt Hagemeister
P.O. Box 2028
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-2028
734-663-9746
khagemeister@michiganbluebirds.org
www.michiganbluebirds.org

Minnesota

Bluebird Recovery Program

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis
P.O. Box 984
Faribault, MN 55021
Carrol Johnson
507-664-9433
mnbluebirder@hotmail.com
www.bbrp.org

Missouri

Missouri Bluebird Society

Steve Garr
P.O. Box 105830
Jefferson City, MO 65110
573-638-2473
steve@birds-i-view.biz
www.missouribluebird.org

Montana

Mountain Bluebird Trails, Inc.

Lisa Rakich
P.O. Box 794
Ronan, MT 59864
406-925-0025
president@mountainbluebirdtrails.com
www.mountainbluebirdtrails.com

Nebraska

Bluebirds Across Nebraska

Steve Eno
2500 W. James Dr.
Raymond, NE 68428
402-783-3011
info@bbne.org
www.bbne.org

New Jersey

New Jersey Bluebird Society

Allen C. Jackson
37 Porreca Drive
Millville, NJ 08332
856-327-4861
609-805-4073 (cell)
aljaxn@aol.com
www.njbluebirdsociety.org

New York

Bronx River - Sound Shore Audubon Society

Sandy Morrissey
Scarsdale, NY
914-949-2531
www.brssaudubon.org

Michael Kudish Natural History Preserve

David Turan
2515 Tower Mountain Rd
Stamford, NY 12167
607-242-1260
info@mknhp.org

NY State Bluebird Society

Kevin Berner
499 W. Richmondville Rd
Richmondville, NY 12149
518-294-7196
bernerkl@gmail.com
www.nysbs.org

Orleans Bluebird Society

Gary Kent
3806 Allen's Bridge Rd.
Albion, NY 14411
585-589-5130
gkworking4u@hotmail.com

North Carolina

NC Bluebird Society

Ken Kernodle
3102 Doubleday Place
Durham, NC 27705
919-489-0095
president@ncbluebird.org
www.ncbluebird.org

Ohio

Ohio Bluebird Society

Mike Watson
PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Rd.
Wooster, OH 44691
330-466-6926
info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org
www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Bluebird Society

Herb Streater
6400 E. Commercial St
Broken Arrow, OK 74014
918-806-2489

Ontario

Ontario Eastern Bluebird Society

Bill Read
24 Brant Place
Cambridge, ON, N1S 2V8 - CANADA
519-572-3633
billreadsbooks@gmail.com
www.oebs.ca

Oregon

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

Lisa Fratianni
P.O. Box 1469
Sherwood, OR 97140
503-816-1837
lisafратиanni@comcast.net
www.prescottbluebird.com

Pennsylvania

Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

Dean Rust
253 Brook Farms Road
Lancaster, PA 17601
JULY7DS@aol.com
www.thebsp.org

Purple Martin Conservation Assoc.

John Tautin
Tom Ridge Environmental Center
301 Peninsula Dr., Suite 6
Erie, PA 16505
814-833-2090
jtautin@purplemartin.org
www.purplemartin.org

South Carolina

South Carolina Bluebird Society

Mike DeBruhl
P.O. Box 5151
Aiken, SC 29804-5151
803-641-2092
cmdebruhl@atlanticbb.net
www.southcarolinabluebirds.org

Tennessee

Tennessee Bluebird Society

Chuck James
119 Talah Way
Loudon, TN 37774
865-458-6904
tnsialia@gmail.com
www.tnbluebirdsociety.org

Texas

Texas Bluebird Society

Pauline Tom
P.O. Box 40868
Austin, TX 78704
210-201-5678
ptom5678@gmail.com
www.texasbluebirdsociety.org

Virginia

Audubon Society of Northern Virginia

Laura McDonald
11100 Wildlife Center Drive, Suite 100
Reston, VA 20190
703-438-6088
info@audubonva.org
www.audubonva.org

Virginia Bluebird Society

Cathy Hindman
726 William St
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
703-470-7425
vbs@virginiabluebirds.org
www.virginiabluebirds.org

West Virginia

Potomac Valley Audubon Society

Kristin Alexander
P.O. Box 578
Shepherdstown, WV 25443
304-676-3397
Kristin@potomacaudubon.org
www.potomacaudubon.org

Wisconsin

Bluebird Restoration Assoc of Wisconsin

Patrick Ready
815 Sky Ridge Dr.
Madison, WI 53719
608-239-0791
birdsready@gmail.com
www.braw.org

Lafayette County Bluebird Society

Carol McDaniel
9320 Wicks Rd.
Gratiot, WI 53541
608-922-2473
bluebirdhouse.org@gmail.com
www.bluebirdhouse.org

A great big THANK YOU to these NABS Sponsors!

Our sponsors support the work of NABS through an annual contribution

Gold Level (at least \$2,500)

**Lordi Marker
Family Foundation**

Silver Level (at least \$1,000)

Vicky Larkin



Bronze Level (at least \$500)



True Blue Level (at least \$250; available only to NABS Affiliates)



Nestbox Neighbors (at least \$100; available only to NABS Affiliates)



**SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
AUDUBON SOCIETY**





North American Bluebird Society
P.O. Box 7844
Bloomington, IN 47407

Winter 2017-2018
Please recycle

Printed on recycled paper
with 10% post-consumer content



NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
Montezuma, IA
Permit No. 30

Renew Today! Give a friend the gift of bluebirds!

Please be sure to include your **NABS membership ID number on all renewals** (your ID number is on your address label)

Date _____

New Membership Renewal A gift subscription from: _____ for:

1 Year 2 Years 3 Years 4 Years

	Household	Single Person
Subscribing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75
Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/> \$110	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State / Province: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Organization \$50

Small Business \$50

Corporation \$125

A+ (one year, one-time \$15

introductory membership offer for Affiliate members only)

Name of Affiliate organization: _____

Membership number: _____

Additional Donation

\$30 \$50 Other _____

Where did you learn about NABS? _____

Check enclosed (in U.S. funds)

Visa MasterCard

Card # _____

We do not share or sell NABS's membership list.

Last 3 digits on reverse side: _____

Payment must be in U.S. funds.

Expiry: _____ Signature: _____

Mail to: **NABS Treasurer, P.O. Box 7844,
Bloomington IN 47407**

Total amount paid/charged to credit card: _____

An online membership form with payment through
PayPal is available online at www.nabluebirdsociety.org