



Bluebird Monitor

OBS encourages good stewardship
by **Monitoring** our Trails

Winter 2017-2018



Bluebird Box Outcome for OSU Trails

By Melanie McFaden, Photography By Alex Eberts



The season has closed, and the birds have moved on. However, they will hopefully return to the sites that led them to breeding success this year. Success this year was due to many efforts that began around this time last year. Last fall Darlene Sillick noticed that the boxes at Chadwick Arboretum had fallen into disrepair. She devised a plan that included the efforts of Eagle Scouts, Boy Scouts and

OSU students. As his Scout project, Ryan Jenkins of Troop 117 wanted to help repair and replace the boxes surrounding Chadwick pond. In tangent, Charlie Thacker of Troop 387 and past OSU Ornithology Club President, Melanie McFadin worked with Darlene planning a new trail and installing it at Waterman Farm. Several family members, friends, and students helped in the installation and repair of boxes at both trails on the Ohio State Campus last October.

As Tree Swallow migration came closer, Darlene, trail expert Paula Zieberth, and well-known enthusiast Leslie Sours came to educate OSU students on Bluebird trail monitoring. The students were educated on how to monitor young, House Sparrow and other pest management, as well as entering data into Cornell's Nestwatch. The students eagerly awaited March, newbies and veterans alike. The bi-weekly monitoring by several students commenced in March and endured throughout the summer for the few who were able to stay in Columbus. This year at OSU's Bluebird Trails, a total of 85 Eastern Bluebird and Tree Swallow were fledged.

As with most bluebird trails, there was a tireless battle with the invasive House Sparrow. They were the first to start nesting this year, with the first almost fully formed nest seen as early as March 1st. The Tree Swallow parents at Chadwick box #20 would know this struggle best, after losing all five

of their brood to House Sparrow brutality in early June. One Waterman Farm Tree Swallow also lost its life to this pest. However, Alex Eberts, one OSU graduate, never stopped thwarting their attempts. Through his dismantling of nests and discouraging future attempts, these House Sparrows saw 0% nesting success this year.

In contrast, Tree Swallows saw a 75% fledging success at Waterman Farm and 73% at Chadwick. There were a total of 23 nesting attempts; 8 at Waterman and 15 at Chadwick. They fledged a total of 70 young, including one unique anomaly. Tree Swallows have an average clutch size of 4 to 7 young. However, Chadwick box #19 produced a clutch of 10 this year. Of course, a clutch this large is an extreme outlier, where we may only expect to see a fraction of the young survive. This year, though, 8 of the 10 fledged! As we look at success percentages, perhaps the higher success rate for the TRES at Waterman can be attributed to local competition. Competition at Waterman was Interspecific with only the HOSP. At Chadwick there was competition by both House Sparrow and Eastern Bluebird.



Continued on page 16

Bermudez Nest Box Experiment Update

By Mel Bird, OBS Board Member



This report is a follow up to articles published in the 2007/2008 winter & 2008 fall issues of the Bluebird Monitor regarding the Bermudez research project.

In the 2001/2002 time frame a Mr. Barry Bermudez of NY reported in his research that HOSP & European Starlings apparently will not use a nest box with a large (2-1/2" - 2-3/4") diameter entrance hole which is 60" or lower from the ground. In 2007 We had trail of 50 boxes of which 23 never had a EABL nest, only HOSP, or HOWR nests. We replaced these 23 fronts with 2-12" to 2-3/4" diameter entrance holes and lowered all to 60" or less from ground level. For the next 6 years we did not have one HOSP occupy any of these boxes and EABI, TRES, & HOWR all used these boxes. However, in 2015 we saw a couple of HOSP attempts, then in 2016 we experienced a few that were occupied by HOSP. This year, 2017, we have 56 boxes with 26 having the larger holes and by June, nine (9) of these 26 had HOSP nests and by the end of July almost all the larger hole boxes have had HOSP nests.

END OF EXPERIMENT

It now appears that the HOSP has adapted to the enlarge hole. Following is a summary of miscellaneous notes relating to our experimental project:

1. This experiment did not work on a 5 acre farm in Somonauk IL. We put up 4 boxes with large holes, 55" off the ground and before we had the fourth one installed the HOSP were building in the first one
2. The TRES, HOWR, & EABL all readily adapted to the larger holes.
3. Where a large hole box and a standard hole box were in proximity to each other the smaller hole was occupied first by TRES & EABL
4. HOWR seemed to prefer the larger hole boxes over the 1-1/2" diameter ones.
5. We are presently converting the large hole boxes to the standard hole where HOSP have used them. A few not used by HOSP will remain until such time.



Blooming Bluebirders Building a Bluebird Box

By Dean Rust, President of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania,
member of OBS and former 'Buckeye'



This is a story in photos about my 84 year old sister, Barbara, who lives in Eaton, OH, 30 miles west of Dayton, OH.

Four years ago I got her started with a simple bluebird box and an 8"x 24" stovepipe baffle for a predator guard. She had never even seen a bluebird in her backyard prior to the summer of 2014. I coached her through the process with my new book - *The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird*. I am happy to say that she has been an excellent learner.

This year Barbara has enjoyed three Bluebird nests; first nest – five bluebirds FLEDGED; second nest – five bluebirds FLEDGED; third nest – four bluebirds nestlings, 7-10 days old. She has been having more fun sharing her backyard bluebird hobby with others including friends, family and neighbors.



Bluebird Migration

By Dean Sheldon,
OBS Advisor



Many theories about bluebird migration have been propounded... but most of the conclusions reached indicate that, if there is, indeed, an annual migration of bluebird, it is largely a local phenomenon with birds moving from those areas where they are seen during the nesting season to more protected, and wooded, areas for the winter

months. And, in addition, it has been found that the birds move generally in response to the winter availability of food sources. Our purpose here is to examine this “migration” and, in so doing, help to better understand the preferred winter habitats of these birds.

Any basic biology text will tell you that all living creatures on the Earth have but four basic needs for survival: food, water, shelter and living space. During the summer months those needs of EABL are met in very familiar short grass habitats (i.e. suburban and rural yards and open space). The breeding season habits of EABL are well known and are presented in dozens of excellent books on the subject. Summer food sources have been studied and documented.

Summer shelter is found in several locations. Of course, the nesting female is afforded shelter in man-made nest boxes or in natural cavities in trees, stumps, wooden fence posts and the like. The male seeks roosting shelter in trees adjacent to the nesting site. It is this practice which makes the presence of a tree near the nest box such an important criterion in nest box site selection.

In the context of the breeding season, living space has to do with the competitive nature of the territories which are established by the males of each pair. Once again, the characteristics of this happening are well-known and, equally, well documented. Anyone who has ever been a trail manager is familiar with this basic aspect of bluebird biology.

MIGRATION

Sometime in August, depending on where you happen to have your trails, things begin to change, dramatically. As the nesting season draws to a close:

- Shelter is no longer generally sought in the nest boxes. Final fledgings from the box have taken place. There seems to be no interest, whatever, in the nesting process.
- Competition for nest boxes and territorial domination is reduced or eliminated.
- Food sources begin to change. Insect pupation takes place at a greater rate and caterpillars are no longer a mainstay of the high protein diet. While adult insects continue to be plentiful, fruits and berries become the basis of the fall bluebird diet.
- Local sources of water often dry up in August and September. Backyard birders lose interest in filling birdbaths and the bluebirds find themselves searching out new water sources for early fall.
- “Family” groups of bluebirds are formed from adults and fledglings. These groups tend to form into flocks and stay together during the fall and winter months. It is not clear if all birds within the flocks are related. The birds take on a communal aspect in their movements from one place to another. Fewer and fewer individual birds are seen as this pattern develops.

As all of this is taking place, a reduction in the number of daylight hours is occurring. This “triggers” significant changes in the body chemistry of the birds. This certainly is responsible, in part, for the development of the local migration patterns which take place. Of course, individual birds within these groups respond in different ways to these stimuli... and some of the birds will make a true migration out of the area.

Equally important.. as all of these natural developments are taking place, the bluebirder bemoans the absence of his “blues” from those areas in which he is accustomed to seeing them. In his mind...the birds have truly migrated and he will not expect to see them again until Spring. His mind



moves to the thought of “his” birds spending their winters in the relative comfort of Alabama, Georgia or Mississippi.

WINTER

Sometimes it takes nothing more than a late fall field trip from a local nature center or the Christmas Bird Count to introduce the new bluebirder to those areas where “his” blues are spending their winter. Even a casual Sunday afternoon drive in the country can produce an amazing amount of new information as to where the bluebirds are, in fact, located during the winter months. In our area, it is not uncommon to see flocks of fifteen or more bluebirds emerging from heavily -wooded areas even in the coldest parts of the season.

It is so simple... in reality, what has taken place here is that the birds have migrated from the open, unprotected fields and grassy areas of their summer nesting to the relative safety of the deep winter woods for shelter, food, water and protection from avian predators. They have a much better chance at survival during the winter by moving into the shelter and protection of the wooded areas, Why?

Berries and fruits remaining from the summer season are available in abundance in wooded areas. Vine tangles and thickets offer protection from diurnal avian predators such as Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s hawks. Shelter from the bitter cold and penetrating winter winds is found in abundant tree cavities for roosting. Communal roosting in these natural cavities is common during bitter cold winter nights and on those days when foraging is not practical. Pine and spruce plantations, together with thick, viney/brambly understory offer wind protection during prolonged cold spells and stormy periods. Within the woods, the birds can respond quickly to dramatic weather changes by selecting from a variety of areas offering maximum protection to them.

In many places, all of these features are found in the moist bottomland areas so common along rivers, streams and

creeks. Bottomland areas are almost always “made to order” for these winter migrants. Likewise, water is almost always available for their needs, many times from just seeps or springs leading into the main watercourse.

But, best of all, House Sparrows and Starlings have moved to THEIR winter quarters as well. Farmsteads, feedlots, granaries, sheds provide a ready food source and shelter for these alien pests who wreak such devastation on bluebirds during the rest of the year. This, then frees up the cavities in dead trees for the use of the bluebirds during their sojourns in the woodlands.

BLUEBIRDERS AS...BIRDERS:

Many bluebird trail managers maintain boxes during the nesting season per se and then pack it in after the last box is cleaned in August or early September. Nothing is done in the field after that time until box cleaning and trail preparation is done in the spring. And that regimen is at the heart of the problem for those who do not know where their birds have gone during the winter months.

If you want to know where “your” bluebirds are during the winter months, become a bit of a naturalist and a birder and search out those areas surrounding your trail which are most likely to be hospitable to overwintering bluebirds. You don’t have to hike the woods or plan for extensive campouts. You don’t even have to go heavy on the Swiss Miss. Most of this exploration can be done from the comfort and warmth of the front seat of your family car. Even though the major activity takes place in the interior of the wooded tracts, the birds still come to the edge of the woods to forage. And they continue to be drawn to the familiar electric line perches which they have used during the summer season...and that is where you are likely to see them. And don’t forget your ears... because the beauty of their warbling song, especially during the winter months can be the best indication of the winter presence of your...migrating...blues.



Smith Park Tree Swallows

By Dick Tuttle, OBS Advisor and Past OBS Blue Feather Award Recipient



On March 19, 2017, twelve nestboxes designed for bluebirds and Tree Swallows were added to a trail of eight boxes that were installed in Smith Park before the 2016 season. Twenty boxes now stand in the drainage ditch inundated with cattails that parallels Troy Road for 400 yards before it veers east into a pond. The boxes are spaced 25

yards apart to allow the target species, Tree Swallows, to nest in peace with their neighbors.

Nesting Red-winged Blackbirds also shared the cattail marsh habitat and occasional conversations with curious park visitors also added to my weekly trail visits.

Swallows built 12 successful nests in ten boxes. Fifty-five eggs were laid, 52 (94.5%) hatched, and 46 (83.6%) fledged. Once hatched, 88.5% of hatchlings matured to fledge into the outside world. The Tree Swallow nesting season lasted 97 days with the first egg laid on April 28 and the last nestling fledged on August 2 for a typical season.

Due to their diet of small flying insects, Smith Park swallows offered park visitors an environment with fewer mosquitoes and biting deer flies. Based on research that examined and described the diets of swallows, it can be said that for the 45-day period when swallows claim a nestbox and build a nest, lay and incubate eggs, and feed nestlings, the family consumes more than 300,000 flying insects with most being shorter than a centimeter. Since the park's nestboxes housed 12 swallow families, there were 3.6 million fewer insects to irritate park visitors, or to pass on diseases with their insect bites.

On August 14, I winterized the boxes by closing the ventilation slots above the back and front panels. The back panel is closed by tightening two screws after I slide its plastic vent cover up to



Dick Tuttle, pictured using a machinist (mechanics) mirror and penlight to see inside a closed nestbox



Nestboxes sprout from a drainage ditch along Troy Road to offer nest sites for Tree Swallows and bluebirds in Delaware, Ohio.

engage the roof. The front vent is then stuffed with a six-inch piece of felt weather stripping. Studies have shown that bluebirds prefer to roost in winterized nestboxes when they return from their winter homes. Tree Swallows also seek shelter from cold weather when they return. I will reopen front vents during spring cleaning in March, and the back vent will be reopened prior to Memorial Day or before the first days of ninety-degree weather.

The Eastern Bluebird season in the park was a disaster because of alien House Sparrows. I found a sparrow-killed female bluebird during my first round to collect data on March 19. By April 17, four bluebird eggs had been evacuated and the nest claimed by a sparrow. Also, on May 1, I discovered a sparrow-killed female Tree Swallow. Although discouraging, such events were expected due to the proximity of the nestboxes to suburbia. Bluebirds had only one successful nest, but it wasn't very successful. The nest started with four eggs and only one hatchling grew to fledge. Whatever happened, took place after hatching since I found no unhatched eggs.

I trapped and dispatched my first House Sparrows on March 28, and by the last one on July 1, the total came to 39 for the season. Had I not controlled the sparrows, eight swallow nests would never have been started. Since birds will roost in a nestbox in order to better claim it, I might start controlling sparrows earlier next spring by checking boxes at night with a penlight and machinist mirror.

Last winter was not a good test to see if nestboxes would be adversely affected by dense, heavy snow thrown by snowplows since snowfalls were rather small. Perhaps, the upcoming winter will provide a better test. For now, I look forward to next season as veteran nesters and their offspring will be back to fill more boxes with nesting swallows and bluebirds.



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 24, 2018



Join Us As We Investigate The:

- ✓ **BEST METHODS**
- ✓ **BEST PRACTICES**

For Our Native Cavity Nesters

SPEAKERS

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Jim McCormac (OH) | Keynote Speaker, Naturalist, Author |
| Keith Kridler (TX) | Texas Bluebird Society - Co-Founder, "The Bluebird Monitor's Guide" (Author) |
| Bet Zimmerman (CT) | Mentor & Award Winning Website: www.sialis.org |
| Mike Watson (OH) | Ohio Bluebird Society - President |
| Q & A Speaker Panel | Topic: Birding 201 |

CONCURRENT SESSIONS (CHOICE OF 2 DURING EXTENDED LUNCH BREAK)

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Bluebirding 101 | Doug LeVasseur |
| Yikes, House Sparrows, Now What! | Paula Ziebarth |
| Native Woodland Species | Marne Titchenell |
| Prothonotary Warblers and American Kestrels | Dick Tuttle |

CONFERENCE LOCATION & TIME

Check-In: 8:30 Meeting: 9:00 – 4:00
Grange Insurance Audubon Center
505 W. Whittier Street
Columbus, OH 43215 <http://grange.audubon.org/>

COST

\$25 OBS member, \$30 non-OBS member, \$15 student (12 and under)
Includes Conference and Lunch (Please pre-register ASAP using attached registration form)

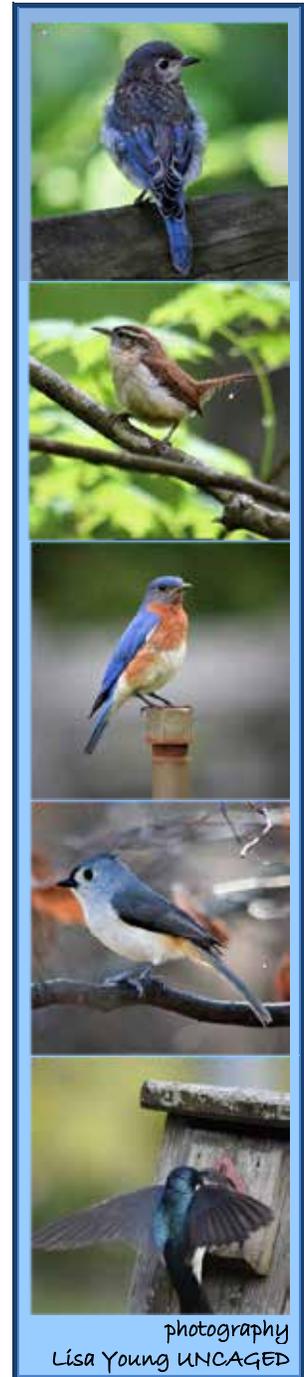
- Registration Deadline: February 14, 2018 (Space is limited)
- Mail to: Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair, 7747 TR 103, Millersburg, OH 44654

Awards, displays, silent auction and much more!

Visit our website for more information and to see program updates!

<https://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org/>

THANK YOU SPONSORS!





OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 24, 2018

REGISTRATION FORM

*Registration Deadline: February 14, 2018
(please pre-register, space is limited)*

(Only one person per form please. Thank you for printing off additional forms for additional attendees.)

Name: _____ OBS Member? YES / NO

Organization: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

I AM REGISTERING AS

_____ OBS Member (\$25) _____ Non-OBS Member (\$30) _____ Student – 12 & under (\$15)

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO

OBS

MAIL REGISTRATION

Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair
7747 TR 103
Millersburg, OH 44654

LUNCH SELECTION

Choice:

- Tuscan Veggie Wrap
- Ham and Swiss on rye
- Turkey/Cheddar on wheat
- Gluten-Free sandwich
- Grilled Chicken sandwich



THANK YOU SPONSORS!



Thank you to Dean Sheldon

Dean Sheldon is an OBS advisor and has been tireless in his support of OBS and its mission for many years. Building and maintaining relationships with other like minded organizations is important and mutually beneficial. Thank you Dean for your recent gift to our parent organization, The North American Bluebird Society!

OBS is an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society.



The North American Bluebird Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 7844, Bloomington, IN 47407 • www.NABluebirdSociety.org

October 1, 2017

Dean E. Sheldon, jr.
4569 Greenwich – Milan Townline Road
Greenwich, OH 44837-9429

Dear Dean,

On behalf of the Society I would like to thank you for your generous donation of one hundred dollars (\$100 USD) to the North American Bluebird Society. This money will be used to support NABS outreach programs in education and public awareness and to sponsor research on bluebirds.

I know you agree that if we are to preserve our three bluebird species we must have bluebirders! So it is important that NABS be able to raise the "bluebird flag" to inspire the next generation of nestbox builders and trail managers across this Continent. Your donation will help NABS to continue those efforts.

Bluebirds are safe for now thanks to the efforts of you, and thousands of other bluebirders who have given these charismatic birds a second chance for survival. But we all know that if the nestboxes and trail managers were to go away bluebirds would be back in dire straits in less than a decade.

Without the outstanding support by individuals, such as yourself, it is hard to imagine how this effort could continue, and certainly not at its current level of effort. So again, a sincere thank you!

Please keep this letter for your files as confirmation of your donation to NABS this year.

Sincerely,

Bernie Daniel
President - NABS
bdaniel@cinci.rr.com

cc: Ohio Bluebird Society

The North American Bluebird Society is a tax-exempt organization – I.R.S. Code Sec. 501(c)(3).
All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.



Ask Madame WingNut Are You Blue... Or Swallowing Hard?

By Paula Ziebarth

I am completing end of season data reports for trails I monitor, and getting ready to submit data to OBS. One of the questions on the OBS Fledgling Report form is “Do you believe Tree Swallows are becoming more numerous on your trails?” This question reflects a trend observed by many, albeit a concern expressed by some...

When I began monitoring public trails 15 years ago, my mentor had established a standard practice of pairing nest boxes for Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds in central Ohio. On a paired box trail, paired stations are set out every 100 to 150 yards apart. Looking through the literature, the recommended distance between “paired” boxes varies between 0 (boxes back to back on same post) to 24 feet apart. The goal of a paired box station is to have Tree Swallows nest in one box and Eastern Bluebirds in the other, both nesting simultaneously and harmoniously together, raising their young and working as a team to keep other avian interlopers (Tree Swallows, House Wrens or House Sparrows) from attempting to take over active nests in the paired station.

My first paired box trail had boxes spaced only 5 feet apart. Interspecies squabbles were intense and paired boxes seldom used by both species. I experimented and increased distance between boxes to 12 to 15 feet apart and birds tolerated each other better. Experimenting over the years in different locations throughout Ohio with nest box locations and observing bird behavior and success, the main thing I have learned is that habitat is KEY.

If you have a body of water (pond, lake or river) near your trail or nest box, Tree Swallows will be dominant. Tall grass or prairie habitat is preferred by them also, producing plenty of flying insects to feed adults and young, allowing them to stay near their nest box and defend it. If you do not have a substantial body of water nearby and have short mowed grass habitat with solitary trees throughout (most suburban yards for example), Eastern Bluebirds will be dominant.

TWO CASE STUDIES – City of Powell Parks and South Bass Island

City of Powell Parks

The City of Powell (central Ohio) has eight neighborhood parks. Bird trails were established in 2006 and, as my mentor taught me, set out as paired box stations for nine years. Paired boxes were used by Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds simultaneously less than half the time. Usually, Eastern Bluebirds made a dummy nest in one box and used the other box for their nest. House Sparrows are prevalent in the city and trails have always been managed with inbox trapping. Interspecific competition between House Sparrows and Tree Swallows kept Bluebirds hopping, exerting valuable energy defending their nest box AND the paired box. Watching these interactions over the years, I decided to make some changes.

I dismantled all paired box stations in the spring of 2015, leaving solitary boxes for Eastern Bluebirds spaced every 125 – 150 yards apart in most of the parks. Two neighborhood parks have ponds, so these trails were maximized for Tree Swallows, setting nest boxes around pond perimeter 25 yards apart.

Planning for House Sparrow competition, I set out several “trap” boxes with 1- ¼” diameter entrance holes on Bluebird Trails to intercept incoming House Sparrows. These boxes were sited away from Eastern Bluebird nest boxes; near stiff needled evergreen trees, playgrounds, picnic areas, buildings (i.e. areas House Sparrows are drawn to). Of the 101 nest sites available on Powell trails today, 24 of these are dedicated “trap” boxes.

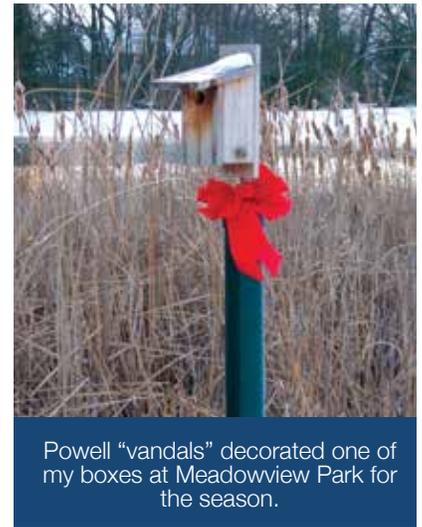


Tree Swallows abound at Meadowview Park.

POWELL TRAIL HISTORY – Birds Fledged

| YEAR | Purple Martins | Eastern Bluebirds | Tree Swallows | Carolina Chickadees | House Wrens | Carolina Wrens | Tufted Titmice | House Sparrow Attempts* |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 2006 | | 42 | 43 | | 2 | | | 24 |
| 2007 | | 57 | 31 | | 7 | | | 23 |
| 2008 | | 76 | 40 | | 15 | 2 | | 5 |
| 2009 | | 100 | 37 | 7 | 19 | | | 43 |
| 2010 | | 135 | 36 | 6 | 3 | | 4 | 54 |
| 2011 | | 116 | 43 | 15 | | 4 | | 81 |
| 2012 | | 96 | 81 | 7 | 10 | | 2 | 59 |
| 2013 | | 135 | 93 | | 1 | | | 78 |
| 2014 | | 123 | 98 | 3 | 6 | 5 | | 111 |
| 2015 | | 139 | 87 | 25 | 6 | | | 148 |
| 2016 | | 136 | 122 | 21 | | 4 | | 132 |
| 2017 | 3 | 207 | 114 | 34 | 8 | 2 | | 138 |
| TOTAL | 3 | 1362 | 825 | 118 | 77 | 17 | 6 | 896 |

*No non-native House Sparrows fledged from trail.



Powell “vandals” decorated one of my boxes at Meadowview Park for the season.

Trail summary data is reflected in table above. I believe high Eastern Bluebird fledge rate this year may be due in good part to the cicada hatch we had in June in Powell. Overall data reflects increased number of Eastern Bluebirds fledged in past three years. Now the cool and weird stuff.

Carolina Chickadee fledge rates have increased. This is due to Carolina Chickadees using the “trap” boxes for nesting. Boxes sited near solitary evergreen trees seem to attract them. As soon as I see moss in a box, a 1- 1/8” diameter hole reducer is installed to keep House Sparrows or larger birds from depredating their nest. House Wrens are not as attracted to these solitary evergreen trees as they are to wood edge or brushy habitat so less House Wren problems too.

House Sparrow attempts are up. I expected this and glad to see it. I trap as many as I can, making entire city safer for native cavity nesting birds.

And now the really weird thing. Trails are fledging more Tree Swallows without the paired stations than they did when boxes were paired. Tree Swallows are successfully using some of the “trap” boxes also. Eastern Bluebirds that had outcompeted them at paired stations (one park had no Tree Swallows successfully nest for nine years), are tolerating them in the “trap” boxes.

South Bass Island

If you have a trail on Lake Erie, get ready to swallow hard (gulp)... I established trails for Tree Swallows on South Bass Island in Lake Erie in 2004. Eastern Bluebirds have never attempted to use a box on the island. Several were observed migrating through one early spring and several paired stations were installed back to back on poles in an attempt to attract them while providing for Tree Swallows also. Bluebirds never tried and Tree Swallows generally use both boxes in these pairs. In trails on the island, recommended 25 yard box spacing can be tightened up considerably and Tree Swallows will successfully use every box.

The flying insect population on the island is substantial. Swallows of all kinds thrive. Purple Martins seem to time their egg laying so that their young hatch when the mayflies hatch. At dusk, visible clouds of these insects come out of the trees. It is amazing to watch and makes fat and happy swallows.

I celebrate the return of the swallows on the island, setting out nest boxes for Tree Swallows in March. I also set out nest platforms for Barn Swallows on my house. I have had friends tell me it looks like a tornado of birds flying around my house there.

Summary

I recently established a small trail at our church in central Ohio. I installed three nest boxes in great Bluebird habitat a couple of years ago. Eastern Bluebirds successfully nested the first year in one box, but Tree Swallows mobbed them (4-5 birds mobbing them at one time) in two locations this year, taking over their nest sites. There is a large pond on private property adjacent to the site. Next year I will pair boxes here and see how it goes.

Rather than beginning with paired stations, I now proceed by setting out solitary boxes in prime Bluebird habitat. Then, if nesting bluebirds are harassed by Tree Swallows, or more than 50% of bluebird trail boxes are occupied by swallows, I set out a second, “paired” box.

Whether you are blue... or swallowing hard, the birds will make you feel better. Take the birds God sends your way and provide for them.



An experienced monitor of over a dozen Bluebird Trails in central and northern Ohio, Madame WingNut enjoys all creatures that fly, regardless of their stage of development.

Send your questions to Madame WingNut at: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org or by mail to PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Road, Wooster, OH 44691.



Member News

"Sometimes you belong so you can give, not just receive. The membership dues to OBS allow us to do so much to help birds, our communities and ultimately ourselves."

~ Chuck Jakubchak

Welcome to New Members

Julie Aldridge Lisa Shumaker
Sue Guarasci Teresa Staats
Janine Lenos Barbara Wilkinson
Sarah Preston

Thank You to Our Donors

Jean Krafft

Conference Sponsorships

The Ohio Bluebird Society is currently seeking sponsorships for the upcoming annual conference on Feb 24th to help defray expenses. If you or your business would like to support the OBS conference please contact us at ohiobluebirdsociety@gmail.com.

Email Newsletters

Signing up to receive the quarterly Bluebird Monitor newsletter by email not only helps us conserve trees but saves OBS the cost of printing and mailing newsletters. The entire emailed newsletter is in full color also.

OBS Meeting

The next meeting for the Ohio Bluebird Society trustees and officers will be held on Sat. December 9th at 10am at The Wilderness Center in Wilmot, Ohio.

Fledgling Reports

Download our Fledgling Report form (PDF) and send your info to:

info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Or mail to:

Ohio Bluebird Society, PMB 111
343 W. Milltown Rd., Wooster, OH 44691

OBS Holiday Gift Ideas

Amazon Smile

The Holidays are rapidly approaching and buying gifts for loved ones is a common part of those days. Giving gifts and helping OBS at the same time is easy to do! Amazon Smile is a simple and automatic way for you to support the Ohio Bluebird Society every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to OBS. It's simple to do! For more info go to: <http://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org/shop-amazon-smile/>

OBS Memberships

Memberships to the Ohio Bluebird Society make wonderful surprise gifts for those bluebird lovers in your life! Great stocking stuffers too! It's a gift that benefits not only the recipient but also helps promote bluebird conservation!

Award Nominations

Nominations for the Blue Feather and the Wildlife Conservation awards are now being taken. Please e-mail or mail your nomination(s), along with the list of qualifications that makes the nominee deserving of the award. Deadline for receiving nomination(s) is December 31, 2017.

<https://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org/blue-feather-award/>

Do Predator Guards Improve Nesting Success?

Many people add predator guards to their nest boxes, but few studies have shown whether this improves nest success. Using data from 24,114 nest records contributed by participants in NestWatch, a new study shows that predator guards increased nesting success by 7 percent nationally. Not all species benefited equally, though. Learn more and find out which predator guards work best. See the results:

https://nestwatch.org/connect/blog/predator-guards-carry-their-weight/?utm_source=Cornell+Lab+eNews&utm_campaign=100826f995-LabeNews_Oct2017&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_47588b5758-100826f995-302303817

Area Contacts:

OBS Area Contacts (ACs) are individuals with knowledge and experience related to all aspects of bluebird conservation, from nestbox design and placement to nest monitoring and how to manage problems during the nesting process. ACs are available to answer questions and provide advice for those needing help with bluebirds or other cavity nesters. In addition, ACs are often available to give presentations to local clubs and other groups. For more information about the OBS AC program or to learn about joining the AC program, contact us at: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org.

We are happy to introduce two new Area Contacts to our OBS membership. Please welcome them and thank them for their willingness to serve!



Julie Aldridge New Area Contact for Franklin County

Could you tell us how you became involved with blue birding, when you started and what you have done to promote bluebirds? Was there a person who was instrumental in introducing you to blue birding?

Where do you live (i.e. city, country, small town?) and is there anything else you would like to share with other OBS members about yourself or your experiences?

My first experience with blue birding was through Antioch University as a naturalist intern at the Glen Helen Nature Preserve in Yellow Springs. I learned how to monitor and maintain the existing boxes and eventually expanded the trail. For several years I worked as a seasonal naturalist at conservation centers throughout the Midwest and blue bird trails were usually one of my responsibilities. My education and background are in environmental education with a focus on non-formal learning experiences. I was also a public high school science teacher in northern Minnesota. Currently I live in Columbus and am graduate student in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at OSU.



Joann Kale New Area Contact for Fairfield County

Hi! My name is JoAnn Kale. I am married 40 years this December. My husband and I are proud parents of 2 Stanford University graduates, and grandparents to 2 new babies. Our grandson Wally (son David) is 10 months,

and Josephine (daughter Megan) is 8 months. They have enriched our lives immensely. I help every afternoon with Josie's childcare. Audiobooks help with my commute to west Columbus. I am worn out by the end of the week, but am loving every moment.

I was born and raised in Berea, and am a 1976 graduate of The Ohio State University, with a BS in Nursing. Bob and I live in rural Fairfield County, and share our days with 13 chickens, 3 Mammoth donkeys, a Haffinger mule and a Shetland Pony. We also have 3 dogs and a cat. Ohio is home to both of us, and we just moved back in 2016 after leaving in 1981 for career and child rearing.

My love affair with Bluebirds began in 2003, when Bob and I moved to our farm property in Sequoyah County, Oklahoma, and situated our home on top of a ridge. My (now 95) year old Mom was living with us at the time and one day said to me, "there sure are a lot of bluebirds here."

With her help and research, over time we placed 11 nestboxes encircling a 50 acre pasture. Our last summer in Oklahoma, the trail fledged 30 babies. The wondrous thing about our situation there, was the fact we had basically no HOSP issues. Lucky us! We did battle raccoons and snakes, though, and did our best to keep the poles greased. Thank goodness for the baffle systems we are currently using. My mom loved feeding mealworms, and the birds got very comfortable with us walking the trail frequently. They would almost land on our heads. It thrilled Mom so to watch the progression from nest building, to counting eggs, to watching the tiny ones grow and leave.

I love Facebook as it affords me an opportunity to stay in touch with friends, both near and far. I have used it frequently to post information and pictures of our trail. I am pleased to report that FB friends seem genuinely interested in the trail, and ask great questions.

There are many differences here in my home state of Ohio. We have learned lots of new things already. 2 boxes housed Tree Swallows, which we didn't see in the Sooner state. What glorious birds and such beautiful nest builders. I wanted to crawl in there myself! We also discovered that one box needs to be moved away from twiggy brush. I am anxious to continue what we have started, add new boxes, and to help anyone else do the same.

OBS Bylaws

by OBS President Mike Watson

During the September 23rd Board Meeting, the OBS Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve new bylaws for the organization. The product of more than a year of work, these new bylaws represent an updating and streamlining of the previous bylaws. The goal of this process was to modify the existing bylaws to create a simpler and more flexible document that better matches current technologies. Both versions of the bylaws are available for review on the OBS website and will be available at the 2018 OBS Conference on February 24th. OBS Bylaws allow changes to the bylaws by action of the Board of Trustees or by majority action of voting members.

OBS 2017 FLEDGLING REPORT

Reported As Of 10/31/17: Eastern Bluebird - 2,272

In accordance with our Mission Statement, we support all native cavity nesting birds in Ohio.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Tree Swallow - 2,577 | Purple Martins - 555 |
| House Wren - 595 | Eastern Tufted Titmouse - 0 |
| Carolina Chickadee - 0 | American Kestrel - 13 |
| Black- Capped Chickadee - 23 | Barn Swallow - 55 |
| Carolina Wren - 18 | House Sparrow Eggs Discarded - 582 |
| Prothonotary Warbler - 0 | House Sparrows Dispatched - 134 |

Send info to: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org
 Download fillable form - see FLEDGLING REPORT tab

OBS Officers, Board of Trustees, and Advisors

TRUSTEES

Mike Watson - President:
440.946.4400 ext. 132
mwatson@holdenarb.org

Mary Lee Minor - Secretary:
614.562.6377
chicadee@columbus.rr.com

Molly Wilsbacher - Treasurer:
614.886.0372
lilmissmolly1@gmail.com

Patrica Dutton - Membership Chair:
330.763.0474
obsmembershipchair@gmail.com

Penny Brandau -
Newsletter Editor: 440.670.3684
pennybrandau@gmail.com

John Barber: 216.233.2271
jcbarber27@gmail.com

Mel Bird: 419.577.9545
mrbird90@aol.com

Carrie Elvey: 330.359.5235
carrie@wildernesscenter.org

Darlene Sillick: 614.288.3696
azuretrails@columbus.rr.com

ADVISORS

Mel Bolt: 330.262.0448
mellen@sssnet.com

Linda Lang: 419.651.4196

Dean Sheldon: 419.752.1451
seedbed@frontier.com

Dick Tuttle: 740.363.6433

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRS

Dave Dutton
330.674.7585

Patrica Dutton 330.763.0474
obsmembershipchair@gmail.com

E-mail:
info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Phone:
330.466.6926

Website:
www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Address:
PMB 111, 343 West Milltown Rd.
Wooster, Ohio 44691-7241



Like us on Facebook! Search for Ohio Bluebird Society to join our group.



Ohio Bluebird Society Membership Application

| Membership Class | Annual | 3-years |
|--|---|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 21) | \$10 | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Sr. Family (over 60) | \$12 | \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular/Family | \$15 | \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational | \$40 | \$110 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting | \$100 | \$275 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life | \$300 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tax deductible gift to OBS \$ _____ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> New membership | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in participating in OBS activities | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email Newsletter OR <input type="checkbox"/> Print Newsletter | | |

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

County: _____

E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to:
Ohio Bluebird Society

Mail to:
OBS
PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Rd.
Wooster, OH 44691-7214

Ohio Bluebird Society is a 501(c)(3) Organization

OBS Area Contacts (as of November 2017)

| County | Name | Phone | Alt. Phone or Email | E-mail |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ALLE | Mohr, Mark | 419.221.1232 | | mohrbluebirds@hotmail.com |
| ASHLAND | Lang, Linda | 419.945.3005 | | nrws_lang@tccsa.net |
| ATHENS | Caldwell, Reid & Teresa | 740.448.7445 | freidc@yahoo.com | teresacaldwell@athensswcd.org |
| BELMONT | Kabel, Michael (Rev. Father) | 304.551.2517 | | bluebirdpadre@yahoo.com |
| CHAMPAIGN | Rutan, Jean | 937.834.3336 | | cpjrutan@gmail.com |
| CLARK | Gray, Bethany | 937.767.1919 | | ohiobluebirder@gmail.com |
| COLUMBIANA | Nutter, Susan | 330.692.2447 | | susannutter11@gmail.com |
| CRAWFORD | Minor, Mary Lee | 419.562.6377 | | chickadee@columbus.rr.com |
| DARKE | Luttmer, Bob | 937.526.5477 | | bonnie561@roadrunner.com |
| DARKE | Smith, Tom | 937.996.1629 | | bluebirdman@embarqmail.com |
| DELAWARE | Tuttle, Dick | 740.363.6433 | | ohtres@cs.com |
| DELAWARE | Ziebarth, Paula | 614.323.7566 | | paulaz@columbus.rr.com |
| ERIE | Sheldon, Dean | 419.752.1451 | | seedbed@frontier.com |
| FAIRFIELD | Kale, JoAnn | 479-769-0574 | | joann.kale@icloud.com |
| FRANKLIN | Aldridge, Julie | 218-820-3286 | | juliealdridge10@gmail.com |
| FRANKLIN | Bourne, Lum & Meriam | 614.882.1188 | | meriam.lum@worldnet.att.net |
| FRANKLIN | Sillick, Darlene | 614.288.3696 | | azuretrails@columbus.rr.com |
| GEAUGA | Brindo, Jay | 440.343.9275 | | jbrindo@aol.com |
| GREENE | Gray, Bethany | 937.767.1919 | | ohiobluebirder@gmail.com |
| GUERNSEY | Barber, Tom | 740.439.4284 | | klbarber62@roadrunner.com |
| HAMILTON | Romine, Jim | 513.236.5598 | | jdromine@cincinnati.com |
| HANCOCK | Nye, Fred | 419.387.7465 | | evaferdy@tds.net |
| HOLMES | Hawkins, Marcella | 330.465.6987 | 330.276.0909 | gofish710@embarqmail.com |
| LAKE | Watson, Mike | 440.497.4669 | 440.946.4400, Ext. 132 | mwatson@holdenarb.org |
| LORAIN | Brandau, Penny | 440.670.3684 | | pennybrandau@gmail.com |
| LUCAS | Seaman, Tammy | 419.349.5162 | | erictammy@sbcglobal.net |
| MEDINA | Rabung, Dale | 330.725.0895 | 216.973.1503 | twodr@zoominternet.net |
| NOBLE | LeVasseur, Doug | 740.630.7945 | | doug.levasseur@gmail.com |
| OTTAWA | Ziebarth, Paula | 614.323.7566 | | paulasbirdz@yahoo.com |
| OTTAWA | Rock, Lisa | 419.708.3949 | | snowbunting123@gmail.com |
| PICKAWAY | Hill, Carrie | cell: 740.248.425 | home: 740.474.2439 | carepaulgreg@yahoo.com |
| PORTAGE | Gammon, Darrell | 330.575.5166 | | invisibleman53@yahoo.com |
| ROSS | Hill, Carrie (Bishop Flaget School) | | | chill@cducation.org |
| SANDUSKY | Rock, Lisa | 419.708.3949 | | snowbunting123@gmail.com |
| SENECA | Coffman, Jim | 419.618.1835 | 419.448.4753 | jrusscoff@gmail.com |
| STARK | Semroc, Judy | 330.877.3551 | cell 330.612.0391 | rainefox51@gmail.com |
| SUMMIT | Grande, Marcy | 330.807.6983 | | mgrandesign@yahoo.com |
| UNION | Lowe, Laurie | 614.733.8149 | | wildwabbit1@gmail.com |
| WARREN | Jeffries, Art | 317.445.8559 | | gonebirding@hotmail.com |
| WAYNE | Bolt, Mel | 330.262.0448 | | mellen@sssnet.com |
| WOOD | Hamlin, Terry | 419-349-8596 | | tkhamlin@icloud.com |



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

PMB 111
343 W. Milltown Rd.
Wooster, Ohio 44691

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Mission Statement

The Ohio Bluebird Society was formed in 1987 to support the return and the perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) and other native cavity nesting birds in Ohio. To this end, the Ohio Bluebird Society will strive for the best methods to use, conserve and create habitat for the protection of these species.

ohiobluebirdsociety.org



Affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society

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Deadline for Submitting Articles:

- Spring Issue - February 1
- Summer Issue - May 1
- Fall Issue - August 1
- Winter Issue - November 1

Thank You Donors!

OBS Treasurer Molly Wilsbacher's annual financial report shows an increase in the balance of total OBS funds from \$13,690.48 on 10/1/2016 to \$15,705.56 on 9/30/2017. Thanks to so many of you for your donations and support in the past year. It helps OBS make a difference in bluebird conservation!

Continued from front page.

Perhaps success percentages can be attributed to habitat. For example, the Eastern Bluebird had only 4 total nesting attempts at Chadwick. Yet they saw a 100 % success rate, producing 15 young. Perhaps this is due to the variety of landscape offered at Chadwick that is lacking at Waterman; including higher ground, dryer grass, and more brushy vegetation. It is very possible that the local bluebirds had a preference for the Chadwick terrain. The real reason may just be an excellent research opportunity for future students to pursue. More outreach for installation of similar trails should be something to think about for current and upcoming students. Although the Bluebirds are recovering, they still have a long way to go. With the continuation of this project and others like it, Eastern Bluebirds can flourish again!



Nandina Berries Kill Birds

Popular but non-native garden shrub berries are toxic to birds and other animals. See link written by Jerry W. Davis at www.ar.audubon.org/news/nandina-berries-kill-birds. OBS encourages planting of native shrubs, trees and plants as much as possible. It is better for birds and other wildlife.