



Bluebird Monitor

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

Fall 2011



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.

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Deadline for Submitting Articles:

Spring Issue - February 1
Summer Issue - June 1
Fall Issue - August 1
Winter Issue - October 1

2011 Nesting Season Close; 2012 Conference

By Marcella Hawkins



This familiar sight is over for 2011. We would love to have your information on how your year went for all cavity-nesting birds you monitored. The annual nest box count is included in this newsletter. Please fill it out and either mail, or scan and e-mail it back to us—see Communications Block for addresses.

Our next free educational conference will be held at the Arden Shisler Conference Center in Wooster on Saturday, February 25, 2012 – the same location we have used for the last three conferences (Feb. 2010; Aug. 2010; and Feb. 2011). After much deliberation on the matter of when to hold the conference, it was decided to stay with the same time. In 2010 we met on February 27 and had over 200 attend; in August of 2010 we had around 100 in attendance. In February of 2011 we had 175 or more who attended. We realize that the weather may be a concern to some but the numbers in attendance show that it still works. By February of any year, people are having “cabin fever” and could use a good learning experience to help them through.

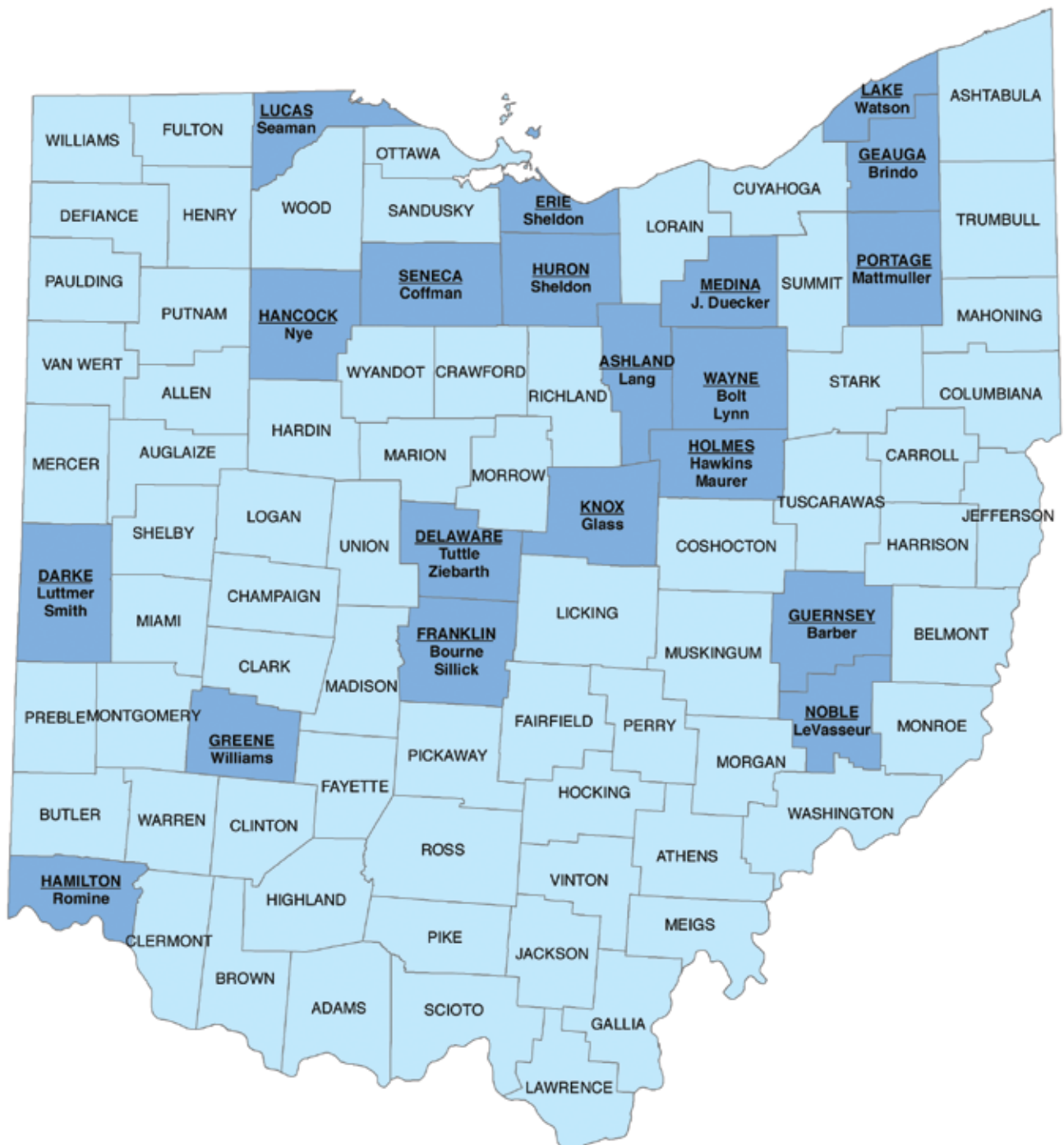



The 2012 conference will be “Celebrating Things ... With Wings!” We have speakers lined up for Birds, Bats, Butterflies and Bees. There will also be activities to get our youth involved. Stay tuned for more information.


We will also be starting Summer field trips around the state. The 2012 OBS Field Trip will be in the Columbus area and hosted by Darlene Sillick. More information will follow.

Ohio Bluebird Society

Counties with Director, Advisor, or Area Contact



 Counties w/ Director, Advisor, or Area Contact

 Counties w/out

0 25 50 75 100 Miles

created by Mike Watson; The Holden Arboretum

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Join Online!

You can now sign up online and pay your member dues via Paypal with your credit card or bank account. Go to www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org/membership/become-a-member/ to sign up today!

Member News



Welcome - To Our New Members

Blanco, Alfred W.
Kuehn, Scott
Pitre, Nancy
Shaberly, Leanna
Skach, John
Stout, Kathleen

Ohio Bluebird Society Donations

Our thanks goes out to the following donors:

Total Donations - \$350

Bartlett, Erin – in memory of
Richard Bartlett
Columbus Academy

Facebook

facebook

Ohio Bluebird is now on Facebook!
Search for Ohio Bluebird Society
to join our group.

From Jeanne McClain

I had Bluebirds eating daily at our suet feeder – does anyone else note this? I get the non melt suet - which has seed in it and they don't seem to mind. I took pictures but am not a good photographer (as Mel & the pileated woodpecker). It is a first for us of them clinging to the suet feeder. ~ Jeanne McClain, Granville, Ohio

A New Bluebirder!

OBS Director Mike Watson and his wife welcomed their son, Alden, in April of 2011. Here he is – wearing his OBS T-shirt.



Piggy Back Feeding

Info: 2nd brood, fledged on 8/6 and brought back to feed on 8/21. This picture was taken on 8/21. Daddy had just fed sibling when 2nd came in and was a little rough on the landing and ended up landing on daddy. So very cute!
~ Laura Hertel



From Don Sampson

I have been monitoring up to 20 houses for the past 6-7 years and have had blowfly larvae problems about 35% of the time in the Metro Parks (not in my backyard for some reason). Using the DE this year I had none. I wait for eggs to be laid so I am not wasting my time. I raise the nest with a putty knife enough to spoon in about 1-2 teaspoons of DE and spread it over the the front 1-2" of the floor of the house. Then insert a false bottom of about 4"x4" hardware cloth with the edges bent over 90 degrees to raise the nest off the floor by 1/2" or so. I carry the DE in an old prescription bottle and sometimes can just dump out a small amount into the box or use a narrow spoon. I am careful not to let the DE blow around or in my face. Breathing it or getting it in your eyes not advisable since it is a silica product. When the box is cleared out after fledging I use my putty knife and a paint brush to brush out the DE always standing up wind as this creates some dust. I also remove the hardware cloth as without the nest in place birds could possibly get caught in it.

~ Don Sampson



Ask Madame Wingnut

The English House Sparrow

by Paula Ziebarth

Why did they bring the English House Sparrow to the USA?

Thank you

John Bigham jr.

New Paris, Ohio

Dear John,

Such an excellent question! It makes one want to throw their hands up to the heavens and loudly proclaim, "Why?! Why?! Why?!"

There are a couple of rumors as to why the House Sparrow was brought to this country, but I could find no definitive citation. In documents I have read, some believe they were brought here to enhance the lives of city dwellers of the time. Immigrants from Europe may have missed that incessant, delightful "CHEEP" call they remembered from their homeland. Deforestation of land for city development drove away many native birds from urban areas and the House Sparrow was known to thrive in the proximity of human dwellings. Perhaps they just missed seeing birds in the city.

It is also rumored that caterpillars and other insects were wreaking havoc on the foliage of the remaining trees in the urban landscape and some well meaning people may have believed the House Sparrow might help control insect pests in their beloved cities. We know today that the diet of the House Sparrow is predominantly seeds, but they may not have known that back then. Regardless of the motivation, the little brown plague was released on the continent at multiple locations in various cities throughout the United States and Canada. Legislation was actually enacted in many cities to protect the bird.

An excellent history on the dissemination of House Sparrows throughout the United States can be found on Bet Zimmerman's website: <http://www.sialis.org/hosphistory.htm>

Apparently, the introduction of House Sparrows was a concerted effort by many different groups to many different cities. The first birds were introduced in Brooklyn, New York in the fall of 1850 and many other cities followed suit for the next 25 years or so. Apparently, House Sparrows became an American fad. It was not until the late 1870's that people began to realize their mistake. By the late 1880's, protective legislation was rescinded and large scale efforts were undertaken to try to eliminate House Sparrows.

Regarding the proper name of the bird, I discovered an interesting side note when delving through the tome, *The English Sparrow in America* by Dr. C. Hart Merriam and Walter B. Barrows, published in 1889 (pg. 17). "The true name of this bird is the 'House Sparrow.' The name 'English Sparrow' is a misnomer, as the species is not confined to England, but is native to nearly the whole of Europe. The fact that most of the birds brought to America came from England explains the origin of the misleading name by which it is now so widely known that any attempt to change it would be futile." As to why the authors then used the improper name in the title of the book, Madame WingNut just sits here scratching her head in wonder...

I delved into the WingNut library and will quote a couple references for you that should help to further explain the reason for introducing these birds to our continent, as well as some history on early attempts to then eradicate them. From these references, it seems as though House Sparrows were introduced so people could enjoy birds in the cities. As native cavity nester conservationists, we are all familiar with the aggressive habits of the bird toward native birds. Additionally, the House Sparrow turned out to be quite the destroyer of crops in agricultural areas and the desecrator of city buildings and landscape due to its roosting and defecating habits. The mistake was realized, but attempts to stop the ensuing scourge were for naught.

Continued on Page 6

USDA Farmer's Bulletin 493 "The English Sparrow as a Pest", originally published on April 20, 1912, states that the English Sparrow was introduced into America in 1851.

"An ill-advised endeavor, about the middle of the nineteenth century, to populate a few parks with nonmigratory birds resulted favorably as an enterprise but very unfortunately for the general welfare of this country. Among several kinds of European birds introduced, one was the house sparrow, commonly called the English sparrow. From a few centers this bird has spread in vast numbers from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Gulf of Mexico well into Canada. The English sparrow defiles private and public property, fights and dispossesses useful native birds, replaces their songs with discordant sounds, and destroys fruit, grain, and garden truck. At first it was confined to towns, but its rapid multiplication has caused it to push out into farming communities, and thus to extend its pernicious activities. The fact that in isolated cases the bird has been found doing useful work against insects barely saves it from utter condemnation."

The bulletin goes on to recommend trapping and other techniques to eliminate and discourage House Sparrows. Finally, it encourages people to eat them, explaining how to dress and prepare them.

The following excerpt is from *The Birds of Ohio* by William Leon Dawson, published in 1903.

"WITHOUT question the most deplorable event in the history of American ornithology was the introduction of the English Sparrow. The extinction of the Great Auk, the passing of the Wild Pigeon and the Turkey, - sad as these are, they are trifles compared to the wholesale reduction of our smaller birds, which is due to the invasion of the wretched foreigner, the English Sparrow. To be sure he was invited to come, but the offense is all the more rank because it was partly human. His introduction was effected in part by people who ought to have known better, and would, doubtless, if the science of ornithology had reached its

present status as long ago as the early fifties. The maintenance and prodigious increase of the pest is still due in measure to the imbecile sentimentality of people who build bird-houses and throw out crumbs for the 'dear little birdies', and then care nothing whether honest birds or scalawags get them. Such people belong to the same class as those who drop kittens on their neighbors' door-steps because they wouldn't have the heart to kill them themselves, you know.

The increase of this bird in the United States is, to a lover of birds, simply frightful. Their fecundity is amazing and their adaptability apparently limitless. Mr. Barrows, in a special report prepared under the direction of the Government, estimates that the increase of a single pair, if unhindered, would amount in ten years to 275,716,983,698 birds.

As to its range, we note that the subjugation of the East has long since been accomplished and that the conquest of the West is succeeding rapidly. It is only a question of a few years until it becomes omnipresent in our land.

It requires no testimony to show that the presence of this bird is absolutely undesirable. It is a scourge to the agriculturist, a plague to the architect and the avowed and determined enemy of all other birds. It is, in short, in the words of Dr. Coues, 'a nuisance without a redeeming quality.' Altho we assent to this most heartily, we must confess on the part of our race to a certain amount of sneaking admiration for the Sparrow. And why, forsooth? Because he fights. We are forced to admire, at times his bull-dog courage and tenacity of purpose, as we do the cunning of the weasel or the nimbleness of the flea. He is vermin and must be treated as such, but - give the Devil his due, of course. What are we going to do about it? Wage unceasing warfare as we do against mice and snakes. There is no ultimate issue to regard. The House Sparrow is no longer exterminable, but he can be kept within limits. No doubt there will be English Sparrows in cities as long as there are brick-bats, but the English Sparrow in the country is an abatable nuisance. He can be shot, and he ought to be. There are no English Sparrows about my present home, in a suburb of Columbus. A sensible and determined

neighbor has plied the shotgun for several years and as a result Bluebirds, Chipping and Field Sparrows, Woodpeckers of all kinds, Warblers, Robins, Blue Jays, etc. are plentiful hereabouts. I prefer Bluebirds myself.

The Sparrow exhibits a most cosmopolitan taste in the matter of nesting sites. The normal half-bushel ball of trash in the tree-top is still adhered to by some builders, but the cavity left by a missing brick, a Woodpecker's hole – deserted upon compulsion – or a throne upon the scale-pan of Justice – done in stone upon the County court-house, and mercifully blind – will do as well. Of late the choicest rural sites have been appropriated, and the cliffs once sacred to the gentle Swallow, now resound with the vulgar bletherings and maudlin mirth of this avian blot on nature.”



An experienced monitor of more than a dozen trails in central and northern Ohio, Madame WingNut enjoys fielding your questions in a humorous, but informative way. Some believe she has a screw loose.

Her questionable title notwithstanding, she insists that the only house of ill repute she presides over is the unfortunate nestbox that attracts the unruly, nonnative House Sparrow.

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



Trail Tales

My Bluebird Trail

By John Bigham, Jr., age 13

My Bluebird Trail is located two miles east of New Paris, Ohio on New Paris Eldorado Road. It is along a fence row with a hay field on one side and a corn field on the other side.

I did not get my bluebird houses up until late March, which may have slowed the nesting season down a bit. The first nest was in a PVC house. The female bluebird layed five eggs. Three quarters of the way thru the incubation period a raccoon destroyed the nest and eggs. Then they moved into a house facing a soy bean field with an old barn on the left of it (perfect house sparrow habitat). She then layed five eggs and she sat on them for eighteen days and then abandoned the nest. I do not know why the eggs did not hatch. When I removed the nest I broke an egg and there was no chick in it. I think it died somewhere around the fifth day of

incubation. She built a nest in the next box down the trail and layed five eggs. The first egg of that brood was layed on June the fourteenth. On the fourteenth day of Incubation she abandoned the nest. Again there was no chick inside the egg. It could be the eggs were not fertile or it could have been the heat and humidity were not right for the eggs to develop. Now she is setting on four eggs in a house with a mowed yard in front of it and a pond behind it. Hopefully she will have sucesss with this brood.

I had seven tree swallow nests, five of which fledged successfully, two house wren nests both fledged successfully, and I now have three bluebird nests - one with eggs and two with chicks. I have two house wren nests with eggs in them. There is a white wren egg in one of the nests.

OBS Spotlight –

Robert Hershberger of Time & Optics

By Chuck Jakubchak (Photos by Jeanne Jakubchak)



As every craftsman knows, having the correct tools makes any job easier and when it comes to bird watching, Robert Hershberger, the owner of Time

& Optics in Millersburg, Ohio, has been providing birders with quality tools for more than fifteen years. The history behind his store can be linked to Robert's two life-long passions; birds and optics. Robert became interested in birds at a young age when he spotted a mature eagle in a tree near his home in Millersburg. After he saw that eagle, he knew he was hooked, just like every bird watcher that spots their trigger bird and ignites their bird watching interest. During his youth Robert also developed an interest in optics, educating himself by reading and diligently studying various optics catalogues and publications. As an adult and with incredible insight regarding the forthcoming popularity of birding, Robert transformed his family's watch repair business (JH Watch Repair, named after his late father) into Time and Optics, a watch and optics store with particular appeal to bird watchers.

Time & Optics is a unique store with something for everyone. Although they specialize in birding binoculars and spotting scopes they also stock an array of bird related items like feeders, bird



houses, seed, suet and field guides. In addition to the bird related items, Time and Optics focuses on timepieces and expert watch repair. Their inventory of clocks and pocket watches will easily occupy your interest as each time piece is exceptional. If you want to browse through other items, check out their inventory of specialty flashlights, wireless weather stations and astronomy related merchandise.



Robert Hershberger is an optics specialist and he currently stocks approximately 150 different models of binoculars representing more than twelve of the

leading manufacturers. Aside from the regular inventory, Time & Optics maintains a "Bargain Case" of special models and used binoculars. When you decide to visit Time & Optics you will find a selection that ranges in price from \$30 to \$2,500 and numerous items in between. Robert has a pair of binoculars that are right for anyone that enters his store.

What separates Time & Optics from other stores is Robert's expertise, his "no pressure" selling style, ongoing customer service and his insistence that you take some of the models outside so you can personally experience the models they sell. Once outside you can watch the purple martins that nest along-side the store or observe the swallows soaring through the fields across CR 77. Trying the binoculars in a realistic, birding setting will help you differentiate the various models and allow you to make a sound, educated buying decision. What you get at Time & Optics, you cannot get via the internet!

You probably will not see an advertisement for Time & Optics in any publication as Robert relies on "word of mouth" and his reputation as a fair businessman. His strategy and philosophy have been successful, generating customers from Haiti, Europe, Africa, Canada and multiple states, including Alaska. Repeat customers are numerous because he maintains a high level of customer satisfaction and he is most grateful to his Ohio customers that have supported him through the years.

The OBS decided to spotlight Robert and Time & Optics in this newsletter because he has been a huge supporter of birding in Ohio for many years. A member of the Ohio Bluebird Society since 2006, he attends each annual OBS

conference and always maintains a vendor table displaying his products. Robert can be seen at many other birding conferences throughout Ohio and is the backbone of The Bobolink, a quarterly journal that covers and promotes birding in a twelve county area in north central Ohio. When asked about his future birding plans, Robert indicated that he is thinking about developing an exciting program that would allow interested bird watchers to visit select Amish farms; birding territory in the Millersburg area that is not open to the general public. "Birding on the Farm" as he calls it would give many birders unique opportunities and beautiful venues to view their favorite birds. Next time you see Robert, be sure to ask him about it.

Robert Hershberger and Time & Optics are great for birds and for bird watchers and we hope that you will support this business the next time you need optics. Clearly, he is a man that can change the way you view the world.



Time & Optics is located at 6954 Co. Rd. 77 in Millersburg and their phone number is 330 674 0210.

Why OBS? Why Me?

By: Jay K. Brindo



I would like to speak to you regarding my own personal experience of being introduced to OBS and why I became a member. Have you ever heard someone say; "Why should I become a member of OBS? What value can it offer me that I'm not already getting?"

Most of us have discovered through working with nature that the greater joys in life come from taking opportunities to help others in ways others have helped us.

I remember the first OBS gathering I attended at the Portage Lakes facility in Akron, Ohio a few years back. Besides being trained at Holden Arboretum as one of their Bluebird volunteers, I had been reading all about Bluebirds and trying the best I could to take in as much information as possible. Picture this – a dry sponge trying to find water. Well, that was me for sure. I was hungry to learn and I couldn't get enough. I remember walking up to this really friendly guy there at Portage Lakes with a very nice display table and all kinds of things he called sparrow traps. I introduced myself and he said, "Hi, I'm Mel Bolt." I said, "MEL BOLT!" To me it was like meeting some famous movie star because I had heard his name so many times while trying to gain knowledge about how to protect Bluebirds from House Sparrows. What a great day it was meeting Mel and so many other people that were so helpful and so generous in sharing their experience.

Speaking of personal experience, did you know that speaking with an actual living, breathing, passionate person with 45 years experience in setting up and

monitoring nesting boxes can't even begin to compare to just downloading info from the web into a laptop? I don't care what the subject matter is; digital data does not, and can not take the place of personal contact. Meriam and Lum Bourne were also two iconic individuals I met there at Portage Lakes along with Dean Sheldon, Rick Mattmuller, Dick Tuttle and many others. These people are treasures and gifts to us. They desire to give back to nature what nature has given them. They do this by sharing their passion. And believe me, it is contagious! They set the bar and have spent most of their lives teaching, guiding, inspiring and wooing crowds at public speaking events. There would be no OBS without them. How does one put a price tag on such dedication and commitment to nature preservation/conservation? They were not experts when they first started, just regular people like you and me wanting to help make a difference and looking for ways they could inspire and educate the public about cavity nesting birds. And the greatest thing is; they will always be there to help as long as they are able. That's what being a member of OBS is all about for me and why I joined. This is an opportunity to be like them and leave a legacy of giving to help others. Belonging to OBS and sharing in the opportunities it offers is like a bridge to cross leading one into new territories, a diving-board springing one into fresh, cool water, a tree to climb where you begin to see with a different perspective, a hill to cross where you can only see the benefits, after you make the effort. Most of all, it's a way to serve others who are hungry for an opportunity to learn and grow. Would you please consider what OBS means to you and share it with others.

Now as Dick Tuttle always says; "Bluebird on!"



Out of the Box

By Chuck Jakubchak



A new column has been added to the Bluebird Monitor and beginning with this edition, newsletters will include an educational article

about one of Ohio's cavity nesting birds. Rather than focus specifically on the bird's reproduction and nest box activity, the articles will overview the lives and behaviors of the birds away from their nest box, presenting informative facts in a unique way, hence the title of the column, "Out of the Box."

I hope you enjoy the articles and please let us know if there is a particular species that you would like to see included in an upcoming issue of the Bluebird Monitor!

– Chuck Jakubchak

Breeding season is finally over and many birds, such as the American kestrel, are able to temporarily relax because the young have fledged and fall migration has not yet started. During this lull in the life of the American kestrel, The OBS Network caught up with a male kestrel just outside of Millersburg, Ohio and obtained an exclusive interview with this amazing species.

OBS: American kestrels have been called “Sparrow Hawks” for quite some time. Which name do you prefer, American kestrel or “Sparrow Hawk”?

AK: The name sparrow hawk is inaccurate because we are falcons not hawks and sparrows are not our main source of food. Please do us a favor and drop the term “sparrow hawk.” It really hurts our image and may mislead birders as they get to know us.

OBS: OK, got it. Moving right along... Winter is approaching and we were wondering where you plan to spend the next few months?

AK: Kestrels don't like temperatures below 20 degrees so we have to move to the southern United States or Mexico where food is plentiful and the temperatures are pleasant. That is different than the kestrels that already live in warmer climates because they don't have to migrate. They can stay in their habitat and ride out the cooler months without having to fly those extra miles.

OBS: Where can Ohioans, especially interested birders, expect to find you when spring and summer come around next year? What are the keys to spotting you?

AK: We like to perch on wires and fence posts near open fields or meadows because we can easily survey the fields for our favorite foods; grasshoppers and crickets during the warm summer months and mice or voles during the cooler months. However, sometimes people have a tough time telling us apart from perched mourning doves, but mourning doves have long,

pointed tails and that quickly differentiates us. Here's another tip for birders that like to watch kestrels: American kestrels will easily flush from their perch, but if you remain still or retreat a little, we may fly a short distance away, hover and then return to the same location where you first spotted us. Keep that in mind when you want to get a better look at us.

OBS: What makes kestrels excellent hunters?

AK: Aside from our basic hunting skills, American kestrels are capable of flapping their wings and hovering in the air while they search for food. We can capture food while flying through the air or by swooping down and catching it on the ground. We are also very strong birds, capable of lifting up to 50% of our body weight (about 4 ounces). Kestrels can also cache food for up to 7 days, taking advantage of a bountiful hunt and setting aside food for use when prey is scarce.

OBS: What are the challenges facing American kestrels?

AK: There are many factors impacting our species, but first and foremost is habitat destruction. Simply said, there aren't enough nesting sites for our needs. I know you are with the OBS and I want to personally thank the OBS team for providing kestrel nest boxes. They are a huge help and hope that more people will consider installing kestrel nest boxes for the upcoming breeding season. After all, there are more than just bluebirds out there and we need all the help we can get.

OBS: Do kestrels possess any special talents that make them unique from most other birds?

AK: One special attribute of American kestrels is our ability to survive with little to no water. Yes, you heard me correctly. If our territory has sufficient food, we can obtain our water requirements from the food we consume and our own metabolic processes. Some researchers also suspect that we can see UV light. The urine trails of voles, one of our main sources of food, reflects UV light and if the researchers were correct we could easily locate voles by tracking their urine trails.

However, I will neither confirm nor deny the claim that we can track voles by their urine trails as that is considered privileged and proprietary information.

OBS: What attribute makes you most proud of your species?

AK: Males are great providers for their mates. Although we are usually solitary birds, once we select a mate for the breeding season, the males provide all of the food for the females. This begins before egg laying and continues after hatching. For approximately 11 weeks we are their meal ticket. Although this sounds generous, we are increasing the odds that are nesting will be successful because the female can focus on the eggs and incubation for up to 20 hours per day. This helps to ensure that my DNA gets passed to another generation.



photo by Marcella Hawkins

Another accomplishment of American kestrels is their ability to control insect and small rodent populations as they are our primary food source. This is another good reason for OBS members to provide kestrel nest boxes as we can help police the environment!

OBS: What behavior makes kestrels the most uncomfortable when discussing their species?

AK: I was afraid you would ask that question. Kestrels have a tough time recognizing their own eggs and we are often victims of egg dumping, the depositing of another species eggs in our nest boxes. On occasion, kestrels have incubated wood duck eggs and I know of one instance where a pair of American kestrels raised a screech owl to fledgling status. Boy, that was awkward, oops; I mean it must have been awkward for those adults.

Let's end the interview because I suspect a nice juicy vole is waiting in the field for me and I need to consume more protein before I head south. Thanks for your interest in my species and please extend my sincere thanks to all of the OBS members that set out nest boxes.

OBS: The interview ends on an uncomfortable note and the male kestrel quickly flies away. I suspect that screech owl episode hit a nerve.

A New Management Plan Works for Prothonotary Warblers

by Dick Tuttle



After the 2010 nesting season, I decided to try pairing nest structures (nest jars made of four-inch PVC drainpipe and nestboxes made of plastic or wood) to accommodate Prothonotary Warblers and Tree Swallows. My project is located along the western shore of Alum Creek Lake south

of Kilbourne in Delaware County, Ohio. By 14 April 2011, I had installed nest structures that stood above the lake at seventeen locations. One additional pair and four singles stood along the opposite shore along Hogback Road. At each paired location, two nest structures stood within five yards of each other. In 2010, all of my nest structures had 1-1/4-inch entrance holes, but by 2011, I had bored out half to 1-3/8" to make it easier for Tree Swallows to enter their nest chambers. I had also patched the remaining entrances down to 1-1/8" to admit warbles while shutting out swallows. One of each made up pairs that stood above the lake.

To better match nest sites with birds' behaviors, I faced the warbler boxes toward the shore since yellow swamp warblers hunt insects from wooded habitats, and for aerial-feeding swallows, I pointed boxes and jars with larger entrances toward the lake. I tried to place pairs near trees that had toppled or leaned into the lake in order to maximize shade during morning hours. Since the shoreline along my project is the base of a steep, wooded ridge (with a recreational horse trail), all nests are shaded during the afternoons.

As expected, Tree Swallows nested in every nest chamber that admitted them, raising 77 young from 20 of 23 nest attempts, and I was extremely pleased when 33 warblers fledged, surpassing all my expectations. The 2011 yield was 2.35 times greater than 14 warblers produced in 2010. In 2011, females completed nests at seven of nine locations where males had added moss to nest chambers. Among 41 warbler eggs laid, 36 (87.8%) hatched and 33 (80.5%) fledged. More than nine of every ten hatchlings (91.7%) matured to fledge. The prothonotary's nesting season, from the first egg laid to the last nestling fledged, lasted 82 days from May 11 through July

31. The latest first egg date was July 5, the latest ever for my prothonotaries. In the future, I will wait until after July 5 before I start removing nest jars for winter storage so I don't deny a nest site to any late nesters.

The idea of pairing nest structures specifically made for warblers next to designs built for swallows was applied to lessen competition between the two species while adding aerial protection for warblers' nests. Swooping swallows will defend all nests within a fifteen-yard radius from their own. Hoping that Tree Swallows would act as deterrents against hawks, woodpeckers, and egg-piercing House Wrens was one objective of my plan while offering smaller entrances that protect warblers from swallow competition was another goal.



The middle two nest structures have 1-1/8" entrance holes that will admit Prothonotary Warblers but will shut out Tree Swallows. The outer two nest chambers have 1-3/8" entrances that will admit both species.

At the beginning of the 2011 nesting season, the plan worked as planned at four locations where warblers chose to nest in chambers with smaller openings, while swallows chose the larger entrances. Nest histories for both species at three locations were synchronized with only two, two, and five days, respectively, separating first egg dates between the neighboring species, and peace reigned at these locations. Of course, there are always those birds that do not go along with the plan. Warblers chose to nest in three structures with larger entrances

meant for swallows, and one family paid a fatal price for its bad choice.

One of three warbler nests in nest jars with "swallow entrances" had hatched all six of its eggs. I was on a mission to attach leg bands to its nestlings on June 6, and as I floated my canoe toward the warbler nest, I saw a parent warbler charge and chase a Tree Swallow away from its nest jar. When I opened the jar, I found only five nestlings, and one was dead. The dead nestling had two small open wounds on its head that barely tore its delicate skin. Another live nestling showed a swollen eyelid. As I examined the siblings and went about attaching their leg bands, I looked up to see two swallows perched on the same limb within ten feet of me, staring and stalking the warblers' nest jar. When all the evidence was considered, the swallows' one-man jury found them guilty of the crime. The Tree Swallows' behavior told

me that they were determined to nest in the jar inadvertently claimed by the warblers.

I looked down to the floor of my canoe where the warbler nestlings had snuggled into a warm clump on my pack. They all wore their new leg bands and I knew what I had to do to insure their safety. I reached into their jar and gently removed their moss nest and placed it beside them. I then proceeded to switch the nest jars by trading their places on their mounting pipes. Once the jars were in their new locations, I placed the prothonotary's moss in the jar with the smaller, safer entrance. The jar with the largest entrance hole now stood where the swallow-excluding nest had once been. I returned the banded nestlings to their moss nest at their same location, but they were now safe and free from murderous swallows. As I paddled from the site, I paused to see a yellow parent entering its new, smaller entrance to feed its nestlings. And, yes, I forgave the determined swallows, and they went about raising four of their own in the nest jar that had temporarily housed warblers. Mission accomplished.

Some might argue that it is best to make all entrance holes 1-1/8" and exclude swallows altogether, but I want Tree Swallows to keep devouring the more than 300,000 flying insects that each family consumes as they occupy their nestbox. I will continue to do my part for both species that commonly shared habitats during the era of abundant wetlands maintained by beavers hundreds of years ago when only Native Americans inhabited our continent. For the future, I will carry tools and a rivet kit so I can patch down entrances at any nest sites where warblers have claimed the "wrong" nest jar, etc. Also, I will also include extra "swallow-friendly" nest jars in my canoe in order to keep the aerial-feeders in the game.

Each of two locations produced two broods of warblers during the 2011 season. At one spot, a jar with a swallow entrance raised three warblers, and then raised a second brood of four in the jar it was paired with that had a smaller entrance designed for warblers. Unlike the murderous swallows described above, the swallows at this location had been patient enough to wait

for the first brood of warblers to fledge before they "moved in" and raised four of their own.



Three six-day-old Prothonotary Warblers are the latest family of 2011 with their first egg laid on July 5. They left the nest on July 31.



This July 2008 photo by Mike Maier shows that a Prothonotary Warbler in a 1-1/4" entrance that could easily negotiate a smaller 1-1/8" opening.

At another location, warblers raised consecutive broods of five and three in the same jar as swallows used the neighboring jar to raise their family at the same time as the warbler's first brood. Close by, a large, dead tree had fallen into the lake and its bare crown became a community gathering place for Tree Swallows and Northern Rough-winged Swallows throughout the summer, adding more protection for the warblers nesting there.

Two families of Carolina Chickadees raised five and six young. One of the chickadee families took advantage of a paired nestbox with a warbler entrance. The other chickadee family nested in a nestbox that was not paired and stood alone along the eastern shore. Once chickadees fledged, the only nesting House Wrens moved in and raised five. Another wren was responsible for the only warbler nest failure, but only after paired swallows had fledged, leaving the late-nesting warblers unprotected. The wren only left a few sticks before it was time for me to remove the nest jars for winter storage.

The effort to band my project's prothonotaries demands that I make more canoe trips along the project's one-mile route. Because of the physical demand, I was beginning to question whether I should continue to band warblers. Then, I received a report from the Bird Banding Lab that a Prothonotary Warbler banded by me on the Delaware Wildlife Area on 10 July 2010 had been found at South Lake, Indiana, five miles west of Terre Haute. One of five nestlings that I had banded from jar-5 had flown south to winter in Central or South America and returned near the Wabash River, 240 miles from its natal nest. Jean Cottrell of Terre Haute had found the bird on 13 May 2010, but it was dead in a nestbox. Perhaps, extreme weather became too much for the young warbler. Ironically, the bird's bad luck renewed my spirit to keep banding my prothonotaries. Now I know that my feisty, little warblers are dispersing to far away lands where, hopefully, fellow conservationists will welcome them with effective management plans.

Conserve on, Dick Tuttle

My First Bluebirds by Kara Scott



Kara Scott

Every story has a beginning, middle, and an end. My bluebird story actually began many years ago due to the influence of my parents, Mel and Mary Ellen Bolt. They attended their very first OBS meeting in Granville, Ohio in the fall of 1991 and soon became life long members.



Mary Ellen Bolt

Countless times through the years while visiting them, Mom and I would spend our time on their patio enclosure. We would talk and enjoy the warm summer day while watching the birds come and go at the feeder and birdbath. If I saw a bird which was not familiar to me, I would ask Mom and she would always supply the answer. If by chance

(and weather permitting) there happened to be a nest of bluebirds in one of their boxes, Mel would take me out to “showcase” the eggs or babies.

In early fall 2009, my husband and I moved to Wooster. Shortly after, I could hardly believe my eyes. Bluebirds were hanging around our patio! I never saw them at our previous home and I was so excited after all these years over the prospect of having bluebirds at my house that I called to tell Mom right away. She was happy for me, but asked a few questions just to verify. I assured her they were indeed bluebirds. I only saw them a few more times and could only hope and pray they would come back in the spring.

The happiness I felt with the bluebirds’ arrival helped to offset the sadness in my heart. Mom had been diagnosed with non-smoker’s lung cancer in May of 2008. By December of 2009, it was becoming apparent the disease was winning against her hard fought battle. While Mom was slowly declining in

February 2010, we had many conversations together. Most importantly I told her how much I loved her and whenever I saw a bluebird I would know it was her coming to say “hi”, to assure me she was just fine, and to comfort me with its presence.

Mom passed away on May 12, 2010 and three days after her passing my bluebirds reappeared. I saw a male and female in my backyard. I cried and cried when I saw those birds as I felt it really was a sign from Mom and she was letting me know all was well. A little while after seeing this pair of bluebirds, I went outside to take a walk. As I walked down the road, they followed me the entire way down the road and back. All the while I had this feeling it was Mom walking with me and telling me things would be just fine. I didn’t see them again until exactly one month after her passing on June 12th. This sighting of the bluebirds continued in the same manner all the way until October. As each month passed, I would see them just on the exact date of her passing and then not again.

In the hopes of enticing the bluebirds to stay around during the winter, Mel brought me a feeder in November 2010. My family had come over for Thanksgiving dinner and while cleaning up the kitchen, I happened to look up and out my sunroom window. The female bluebird “aka Mom” was at the feeder. I thought for sure she had come to share the day with us. After that day, I never saw another bluebird the remainder of the winter and Mel took the feeder back so he could use it.

Before long it was spring time and in March 2011 I noticed my prayers were answered and the bluebirds were back. Mel brought the feeder back along with some currants to feed them. Soon a very amazing occurrence was happening. The female came each day and sat on my windowsill! This surely was a sign from Mom—checking in again. She wouldn’t stay long, but came faithfully several times a day. I was fortunate to capture a few pictures of her sitting on the windowsill.

At this same time, Mel had also furnished me with a nesting box. As luck would have it, my husband wasn't prompt in putting it up and when I came home from work the first of April, I noticed the feeder had what appeared to be the start of a nest. I called to tell Mel and my sister about my suspicions. It didn't seem possible and Mel questioned me thoroughly on it. By April 8th, the nest was complete in the feeder! Since the weather was very rainy and chilly this spring, Mel had me continue to feed the bluebirds by placing the currants in the nest box and leaving the door open.



Could the bluebirds' choice of the feeder over the nest box be another sign from Mom? After all, the feeder was strategically placed directly outside of my sunroom windows. I could sit and watch them all day, every day. Again, mother bluebird was still making daily visits to me on the windowsill. It was almost as if Mom was saying, "Are you watching? I'm here and I'm fine."

On April 15th, I had my very first bluebird egg! What an exciting day for me. On April 16th, the second egg was laid. I was well on my way to a successful first nesting experience. Or so I thought. On April 17th, severe weather with winds up to 45 mph materialized. I awoke at 6 am to find the feeder lid had blown open! I was very worried about the eggs staying warm and the mother sitting on them. I ran out and closed the lid (a third egg was present) only to notice a couple of hours later it was once again flipped open! My husband decided to put a tie-strap around the feeder. Now it looked like the feeder was someone with a bad toothache and a bandage wrapped around his head! The bluebirds intently investigated this new addition to



their home. It must have passed inspection as another two eggs were laid. That made a total of five eggs for my first bluebird nesting. As silly as it sounds, this seemed to be another sign for me. I have four siblings. Five baby bluebirds and Mom had five children. It seemed logical to me.

The remainder of April was cold, windy, and rainy almost every day. I continued to provide food for them in the actual nest box. On May 2nd, I came home from work and discovered one of the eggs had hatched. It was such an exciting day for me. By the next day, the remaining four eggs had hatched. It was so much fun to check on the babies each day when I came home from work. I took pictures as often as I could of their development and marveled at how quickly they were growing. The babies certainly kept mom and dad bluebird busy feeding and taking care of them. I enjoyed watching all the activity.



Continued on Page 16



I hoped I would be able to see them fly from the nest when it was time. As luck would have it, they were fledging on a Saturday. While preparing breakfast on May 21st, I looked out the window and saw the first one peek its head out of the feeder and try to decide whether or not it was ready to leave the nest. My husband joked I would get nothing accomplished as I was going to be spending the day looking out the window with binoculars at the babies. He was right! However, it was well worth it as I had the good fortune of seeing the last baby fly out of the feeder (nest) and over to a small tree in my yard. It gave me such a great feeling to be able to catch nature at its best that afternoon. I went out to the tree to get a closer look and the baby appeared scared, but eventually flew away.

Following Mel's instructions, I cleaned out the nest and washed the feeder. I anxiously waited with great anticipation for a second nesting, which did happen. However, once again the bluebirds chose the feeder over the nest box due to a pair of tree swallows that had decided they wanted the nest box for themselves. Mel brought me another nest box in the hope that the tree swallows would take one box while the bluebirds had the other. Unfortunately, the tree swallows were so domineering that they not only took over one of the nest boxes, but sat on top of the other--continuously chasing the bluebirds away.

On June 1st, the bluebirds once again had the feeder all set up with their nest. By the 5th, the first egg was laid. This time I had only four eggs and on June 20th all four

had hatched. I attentively checked in on the babies each day. It still amazes me how fast the process is from birth to fledging and such a joy to be able to watch so closely.

I feel my first experience with bluebirds is all because of my mother. I would say this is the ending, but in reality it is just a beginning. She brought me something to smile about through my sorrow as I truly believe it has been her spirit coming to me in the form of these beautiful little birds. She loved all of nature, but especially bluebirds. She has let me know she is fine and things will be okay. The visits to my windowsill each day were a comfort. Even after my screens were in place, mother bluebird was visiting each day. People may think I am crazy and there is no such thing as a person's spirit coming to visit after someone has passed, but I don't think I'm crazy at all. Mom knew how much I loved her and how I was going to be looking for her whenever I saw a bluebird. She just kept her promise to me to come and visit.



Blooming Bluebirders

The Surprises of Bluebird Monitoring

By Kate Shulgina



I don't remember why I began monitoring bluebird boxes. It may have been the desire to try something new in the fresh spring air, or to add to my

college applications, or to see another side of the birds that I've been chasing with binoculars ever since I was a little girl. Whatever the reason was, in my junior year of high school I became a bluebird box monitor at Glacier Ridge Metro Park. I did not sign up to observe the fascinating dramas that unfolded.

I named the first pair of bluebirds that settled into one of my boxes Crystal and Frank. Each week, I stopped by to record the progress of their nest. It never failed to amaze me how fast the nest advanced. One week, there was only a thin layer of grass; the next week, the nest had five beautiful baby blue eggs. Less than three visits later, their nestlings were ready to explore the outside world. I felt like a proud grandmother, watching Crystal and Frank's fledges fluttering around-- "I remember when you were just a little egg!"

The events I witnessed the following two years monitoring boxes ranged from ordinary to puzzling, from awful to amazing. I faced the mysteries of enigmatic eggs appearing in unoccupied boxes and of boxes filling up with a House Wren's sticks overnight. The joy of seeing eight Tree Swallow nestlings huddling

in a box was sometimes dampened when only three of them lived to fledge. At one point, House Sparrows began building nests in some of the boxes. The aggressive House Sparrows entered a neighboring bluebird box and killed the adult and nestlings inside. As a result, the sparrows had to be eliminated. Despite their losses, the bluebirds eventually shone through. Before I had the chance to clean out an old sparrow nest, a female Eastern Bluebird built her own nest on top that ended up fledging two young bluebirds.

Whatever harm may come to native birds from man-made boxes, from House Sparrows to vandalism, is certainly outweighed by the good of providing cavities. Many birds that nest in cavities, such as Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows, are in decline partially due to competition for natural nest sites with aggressive introduced species (House Sparrows, European Starlings). Man-made boxes also have additional protection from predators, like raccoon baffles and snake guards, that natural cavities lack.

To fully succeed, bird boxes need dedicated monitors to make sure that the boxes aren't unintentionally letting non-native birds reproduce. Monitors also collect useful data about birds that helps further conservation. Monitoring boxes is a great way to help out native birds and volunteer-- whether you need hours for school or just want to see the lives of birds up close. Who knows, you might get hooked too!

Interview with a Bluebirder – Harry Price

By Jay K. Brindo



Each month OBS receives calls from people all over the state of Ohio wanting to share their stories. They want someone to know how much they care and how,

in their own way, they are trying to make a difference in nature and in the lives of their friends and neighbors. Sometimes the greatest efforts are done with no fanfare, no awards and no desire for attention. Such is the story of Harry Price. A quiet, simple man who uses his woodworking talents and love for nature and God to help the Bluebirds he loves so dearly. This past month I was privileged to speak with Harry and am grateful that he agreed to this interview for our newsletter. Many thanks to Harry and to many of you who share his sense of stewardship and passion.

1. Where are you from/where do you live in Ohio?

North Jackson, Ohio (south of Lordstown)

2. How did you become interested in Bluebirds?

I saw there was a need to help them.

3. When did you start building Bluebird nesting boxes?

1960 or 1961

4. How many Bluebird boxes have you built since you started?

934

5. What type/style of box(es) do you build and do you have a favorite?

Bluebird & Wren houses. No I don't have a favorite.

6. What type of wood do you use and why?

Pine, because it is easier to work with.

7. Are wood and related building materials expensive?

Hasn't been too expensive. If you enjoy a hobby nothing gets too expensive.

8. Do you paint or chemically treat boxes to help make them more resistant to weather?

Yes and no. If someone wants paint on them, I do and if they don't, I don't paint or finish them.

9. What in your opinion is the most important box feature in building a box?

Make it drafty so it doesn't attract sparrows.

10. What do you do with boxes after they are built?

Either give them away or the most I have charged is \$10.00.

11. What advice would you give to someone who would like to start building their own boxes?

Enjoy what you do and do it.

12. What is your most memorable experience in working towards helping Bluebirds?

We found a newly fledged baby bluebird in the swimming pool and saved it from drowning.

13. How have Bluebirds made a difference in your life?

They make you realize how important & delicate God's creatures are.

14. Do you have plans to make more Bluebird boxes in the future?

Yes I do. PS. God wills how many.



Ohio Bluebird Society Nest Box Report

Year: _____

Cavity Nesting Species	Nesting Attempts	Number of Eggs	Number of Nestlings	Number of Fledglings
Eastern Bluebird				
American Kestrel				
Black-Capped Chickadee				
Carolina Chickadee				
Carolina Wren				
Eastern Tufted Titmouse				
House Wren				
Prothonotary Warbler				
Purple Martin				
Tree Swallow				
House Sparrow Eggs Removed				
Other:				

Name: _____ County: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

OPTIONAL

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

How many boxes do you manage?: _____ How many trails do you manage?: _____

Do you actively control House Sparrows and European Starlings? _____ Yes _____ No

What are your most serious predator/competitor/other problems on your trail?

Do you believe Tree Swallows are becoming more numerous on your trails? _____ Yes _____ No

Are you an OBS member? _____ Yes _____ No

Any comments will be welcomed - thank you for taking time to complete this form.

Mail to: Ohio Bluebird Society, PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Road, Wooster, OH 44691

or e-mail completed report to: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org

**OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY**

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Membership Class**Annual****3-years**

- | | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 21) | \$10 | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Sr. Family | \$12 | \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular/Family | \$15 | \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational | \$40 | \$100 |
| <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 | | |

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