



Bluebird Monitor

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

Volume 23, Number 3 • Fall 2010



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 2010 - 2011 Bluebird Monitor Articles

- Spring 2011 - February 1, 2011
- Summer 2010 - June 1, 2010
- Fall 2010 - August 1, 2010
- Winter 2010 - November 1, 2010

2010 OBS SUMMER CONFERENCE

by Marcella Hawkins

The 2010 OBS Summer Conference was held at the Shisler Conference Center in Wooster on August 7. There is usually only one conference each year but we wanted to offer an additional one for those people who could not make it to the annual conference in February due to weather conditions.



*Marcella Hawkins,
Chair of OBS Special Events*

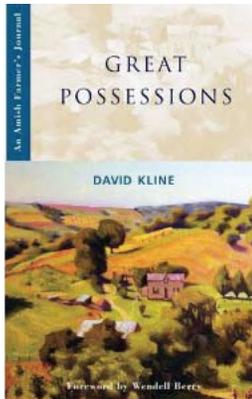


Q&A panel at the conference. The panel was made up of Mel Bolt (OBS Advisor) and OBS Directors Sharon Lynn and Mike Watson.

Continued on Page 2

Our speakers included:

Roger Downer, Ph.D., an OARDC Entomologist whose topic was *Good Bugs, Bad Bugs – Why We and Our Bluebird Friends Can't Get Along Without Them*.



The next speaker was **David Kline**, Amish Farmer, Self-Taught Naturalist and Author. His topic was *Woodpeckers and Bluebirds* and he enhanced his talk by adding stories of his many nature experiences. He was also available to sign copies of one of his books. Another book is in the works and will hopefully be ready by early November.

There was a Question and Answer Session that followed with **Tim Leslie** as the Moderator. Tim has been birding for 20+ years and is a member of the Greater Mohican Audubon Society as well as OBS. The panel members included (1) **Mel Bolt**, with 35 years of experience in helping Bluebirds survive and reproduce; (2) **Sharon Lynn, Ph.D.**, an avian field biologist and Associate Professor of Biology at The College of Wooster as well as an OBS Director; and (3) **Mike Watson**, a Conservation Biologist at The Holden Arboretum who directs their Bluebird Program. He is also an OBS Director.



Dean Sheldon

Dean Sheldon, Conservationist and Birder, was our last speaker and his topic was *Short Stories and Yarns From the Trail*.

At the conclusion of the meeting we announced the winners of the door prizes. Our table decorations of



wooden Bluebirds (made and donated by Mel Bolt) were given to a lucky winner at each table. At that time, those who were so inclined took a tour through the Secret Arboretum, which is located on the same campus.

The tour was led by **Ken Cochran**, Secret Arboretum Director and **Roger Downer, Ph.D.**, OARDC Entomologist.



Mel Bolt, Dick Tuttle and Dean Sheldon, OBS Advisors



Don and Diana Plant, Tim Leslie and Chris McQuillen



Jeanne and Jack McClain



Julie Williams



Janice Petko, Darlene Sillick, Lum Bourne, Al LaSala, Bernardine Akkerman and Doug LeVasseur



Lum and Meriam Bourne



Bev and Roger Ramseyer



Juanita and Fred Nye



Carol Maurer and Joy Wengerd



Johnathan Davis



Marlene and Bernardine Akkerman, Carol Connelly



Earl Carlton and Linda Lang



Mary and Rod Baxter

Trail Tales

Carolina Wren

by Jay K. Brindo

The 2010 nesting season, like so many past nesting seasons, brought new learning opportunities to expand my trail monitoring skills. Each March as I begin routine box maintenance in preparation for the upcoming season, I am very aware that nature has some new and exciting event ahead that will enhance my learning curve. My job is to be patient, be willing to learn and stay ready to record the experience. This year the event was the first time ever nesting of a Carolina Wren in one



of my Bluebird boxes. When I'm checking boxes and I see that a new nest has been started, sometimes I have to take a wait and see approach because the nest is not evolved enough to reveal its builder. So it was with the Carolina Wren. I knew the nest was different but never saw a bird flying in and out of the box to help identify it. It wasn't long before eggs were laid and my visit to the box earned me a good scolding by the mother Wren. Fortunately the box is close to my home and I was able after several visits to capture the pictures attached to this story. I'm so glad to learn that a nesting Wren doesn't



always mean little sticks built into a fortress like those of the House Wren and taking the wait and see approach does pay off. If you are interested in learning more about the Carolina Wren, please visit these two web links for your reading pleasure.

<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/188/articles/introduction>

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Carolina_Wren/lifehistory



Blooming Bluebirders

A Bluebird Field of Dreams

Picture and Article By Linda Lang



Pictured left to right are Kristy Greene, Hope Leiby, Brittany Morgan and Christine Collins as they monitor a Bluebird box with week old nestlings in May at Northwestern Elementary School near West Salem, Ohio. The girls were fifth graders in Linda Lang's science class.

In 2003, Northwestern Elementary school was built near West Salem, Ohio in Wayne County. As excited as we were to move into a new school, we had mixed feelings as we had to start over building a new Bluebird trail. Thanks to the encouragement and mentoring help from Mel & Mary Ellen Bolt, our trail at the old Chester School had been successful. But, now we were faced with the task of starting again with a whole new habitat and of all things, a huge baseball and soccer field complex to work around. With the help of our Northwestern High School Industrial Arts students we built boxes and set up a new trail of twelve nesting boxes surrounding our baseball fields. Believe it or not, the very first day that we put up boxes in April 2004, my students observed a female Bluebird “checking them out!” Excitedly, they prepared to monitor the first nest and the rest has been a wonderful story of children learning about the joy and, yes, occasional sorrows of Bluebirding. We discuss passive controls for “varmint” species such as

House Sparrows and raccoons. Over the years students have learned how important monitoring is to helping our Bluebirds survive and some students have started their own backyard Bluebirding areas. Last year we successfully fledged 21 Bluebirds and 18 Tree Swallows.

We refer to our habitat behind our school as a “Field of Dreams” for both baseball, soccer, and Bluebirds as our Bluebirds love to perch on the fences, backstops, dugouts and soccer goals while hunting for insects. Our students also realize that the fences and backstops seem to provide some manmade boundaries for a naturally territorial species. Students have learned that we can coexist wonderfully with Tree Swallows that eat many pesky mosquitoes! No spraying in our Field of dreams! So the expression “If you build it; they will come” means Bluebirds, as well as baseball players at Northwestern Elementary School!

Nestling Growth

by Keith Kridler - Mt. Pleasant, Texas

For those of you who don't have The Bluebird Monitor's Guide, here is part of the day to day series of photos of nestlings and how fast they grow and how they fit in a nestcup.

There are only 4 out of 5 eggs that hatch from this clutch and the female bluebirds create a nest cup small enough to easily keep all of the eggs clustered together in order for her to easily incubate them. When she leaves the nestbox, all of the eggs should roll together and be touching one another.



The tiny weight or mass of these eggs quickly allows them to start losing heat as soon as the female leaves the nest. **Notice** that the females will create a nestcup deep enough so that at day six, when these young bluebirds are **still** cold blooded and not creating any of their own body heat the width and depth of the nest cup forces all of these young birds to be in tight body contact with one another!

At this age, the young are still forced into the narrow nest cup. The female can easily cover this whole mass of young with her bare brood patch even though the total weight of these four young birds will be as much, if not more than, the females weight!

IF the young were 14-days old and the temperatures inside this nestbox become "hot" then these 14-day old young birds would spread out inside the nestbox, lift/spread their wings off of their bodies and pant heavily to shed body heat.

But, six-day old birds are too weak to push up and out of the nestcup for them to spread out, and if temperatures reach 109°F inside their tiny bodies then those baby birds up on top of the nestcup will suffer heat stroke. The young birds, deep in the nest, might be just a degree or two cooler for an hour or two, and you might have a couple survive and a couple die. Thus, we often have smaller clutch sizes fledge during the really high heat of late summer.



By day 14, the upper body feathers will be nearly full grown **but** much of the blood of these young bluebirds will be used to fill up the feather shafts of the wing feathers and tail feathers. These birds evolved to grow the insulating feathers first to conserve energy early in the spring and then to complete flight feathers at the very end of their time spent in a nestbox. Their tail feathers often continue to grow for up to a week after they "fledge." Notice how wide and shallow the nest cup has been forced with just four young in the box. I believe this box was close to 25 Square inches of floor space. For some reason, bluebirds evolved to nest multiple times all summer long.



Overall growth of baby bluebirds will depend on **quality** of diet. Day length will also have an effect as the longer the hours they are fed, the more growth they will put on in a short period of time. Baby bluebirds fed constantly from 16 to 18 hours a day would mature faster than a similar nest of young that were only fed 7 hours a day.



Ask Madame Wingnut

What is Earthworm Disease?

by Paula Ziebarth

What an interesting question. Those unfamiliar with the condition might first envision an earthworm with a bad cough or unusual mucous discharge. Of course, experienced Bluebird Monitors know otherwise.

The term refers to the life threatening condition found in nestlings that are fed too many earthworms by the parent birds. In Ohio, "Earthworm Disease" usually rears its ugly head during extended wet weather conditions found when Bluebirds are on their first nesting during the spring months. In the early nesting season, there is a dearth of more desirable caterpillars, grasshoppers, and other ground dwelling insects. Extended cold, rainy periods reduce these populations further while driving a bounty of earthworms up and out of the wet ground, squirming about for easy pickings. In a desperate attempt to assuage the voracious nestlings, the parents begin stuffing earthworms into their gaping mouths and this can be disastrous.

Young nestlings' digestive tracts cannot handle many earthworms. It is believed that the dirt castings in the earthworm's gut may be the source of the problem and the problem is that the nestlings develop a bad diarrhea. They may easily become dehydrated and die. A monitor looking in a nest where Earthworm Disease is prevalent will find a disgusting goeey mess in the nest sometimes referred to as "fecal glue". When the young get a diarrhea, fecal sacs are not formed and the parents cannot remove the mess from the nest. Young may actually become "glued" to the nest.

So what is a monitor to do? If you find this condition in a nestbox, I recommend replacing the wet, dirty nest with a clean dry one fashioned from pine needles or

dried grasses. ONLY use materials that are normally used by the parent birds. During periods of extended wet or cold weather, you can also help by supplementing the Bluebirds' diet with mealworms. Place a shallow dish (small margarine tub works great) of mealworms on the ground near the nestbox. These harder shelled larva will go down a lot better and help the nestlings recover and hopefully make it through to healthier days.

Bluely Yours, Madame WingNut

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.

**Our next question for Madame Wingnut:
How and what is the best way to deal
with ant infestation while either eggs or
nestlings occupy the nest?**

.....

Please Email your responses to
info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org, or mail
them to PMB 111, 343 West Milltown
Rd., Wooster, OH 44691.

Blue Feather and Wildlife Conservation Awards

The Blue Feather Award

Preliminary efforts leading to the creation of The Ohio Bluebird Society took place in the mid-1980s. Not long after, the Society founders acted to create the prestigious Blue Feather Award. This award was intended to honor an OBS member and was given in recognition of that individual's extraordinary accomplishments in all areas of Bluebird conservation and management. This would be a person who over time had made the OBS mission statement their very own. The areas of contribution would include, but not be limited to, effective trail management; unique creativity; and innovation supporting the return and perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity-nesting birds.

Wildlife Conservation Award

This award was created by OBS leaders and first presented in 1995. This differs from the Blue Feather Award in that membership in OBS is not a requirement. The award recognizes a strong conservation ethic throughout Ohio and in selected locations elsewhere. The recognition is given to honor individuals and organizations who are committed to this concept but manage the expression of those concepts in many different ways. Some examples of the concerns of the organizations and individuals recognized include: wildlife rehabilitation, ODNR/Wildlife management, the work/research of other bird conservation groups and individual wildlife conservation efforts.

Additionally, awards have been made for conservation efforts at Municipal Park Systems, Audubon Centers, Arboretums, County Parks, Metro-Park Districts and several ODNR divisions.

This broad base of concern permits The Ohio Bluebird Society to support and recognize outstanding wildlife conservation efforts wherever they may be undertaken.

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. (See Communications Block for information.)

Deadline for receiving nomination(s) is November 15, 2010.

Please note: If you have already submitted a nomination, you do not need to re-submit.

Blue Feather Award Recipients:

- 1991 **Arlene Kunkel** - Fredericktown
- 1992 **Joe Huber** - Heath
- 1993 **Dick Tuttle** - Delaware
- 1994 **Dr. Wayne Davis** - Lexington, KY
- 1995 **Andrew Troyer** - Conneautville, PA
- 1996 **Bill and Joan Davis** - Dayton
- 1997 **Robert Orthwein** - Columbus
- 1998 **Mary Kowalchik** - Mansfield
& **Darlene Sillick** - Dublin
- 1999 **Tom Kashmer** - Fremont
- 2000 **Lum and Meriam Bourne** - Westerville
- 2001 **Julie Zickefoose** - Whipple
- 2002 **Gil Trail** - Mansfield
- 2003 **Mel and Mary Ellen Bolt** - Wooster
- 2004 **Doug LeVasseur** - Senecaville
- 2005 **John Lapin** - Poland
- 2006 **Jean Rutan** - Mechanicsburg
- 2007 **D. Michael Worley** - New Marshfield

Wildlife Conservation Award Recipients:

- 1995 **Donald L. Burton, DVM** - Worthington
- 1996 **Edward L. Smith** - Caldwell
- 1997 **Dublin City Parks**
- 1998 **Aullwood Audubon Center** - Dayton
- 1999 **Toledo Metroparks** - Lucas County
- 2000 **Mark Shieldcastle ODNR/Wildlife** - Oak Harbor
- 2001 **American Bird Conservation Association**
- 2002 **Darke Countians for Wildlife** - Greenville
- 2003 **Raptor, Inc.** - Cincinnati
- 2004 **Dick Tuttle/Dick Phillips** - Delaware
- 2005 **Tim Brugeman/Hancock County Parks** - Findlay
- 2006 **Edith Conzett** - Holden Arboretum
- 2007 **Kendra Wecker - Wildlife Diversity Coordinator** - ODNR/Wildlife

From Our Members



Last summer we had a pair of bluebirds that would come up on our deck and feed on meal worms. Here are a few pictures we took during the process. Eventually they would do it with us sitting right at the table. My goal was to get them to feed out of my hand, but we didn't make it that far. Maybe this year we can.

– Terry & Debbie Lee, Ravenna OH



Eastern Tufted Titmouse (ETTI) baby pic is to the right. These birds successfully fledged four of these adorable LOUD nestlings from a standard NABS box I have mounted on the side of my house right next to the front door. We hardly ever use our front door, so the location seemed to suit this rather timid nester. This nestling in the picture left his nest a day or two before he should have (probably shoved out). I took this shot as he was perched on a root of the ash tree in our front yard. He let me get the camera about 4 inches from him before he hopped off. After his quick photo shoot and scary foray into the big new world, I popped him back in the box and he remained there for another day or two, fledging with his boxmates. I have entitled this photo “Don King”.

– Paula Ziebarth



Pictures from Vicki Mountz - taken near Centerburg, in Knox County.

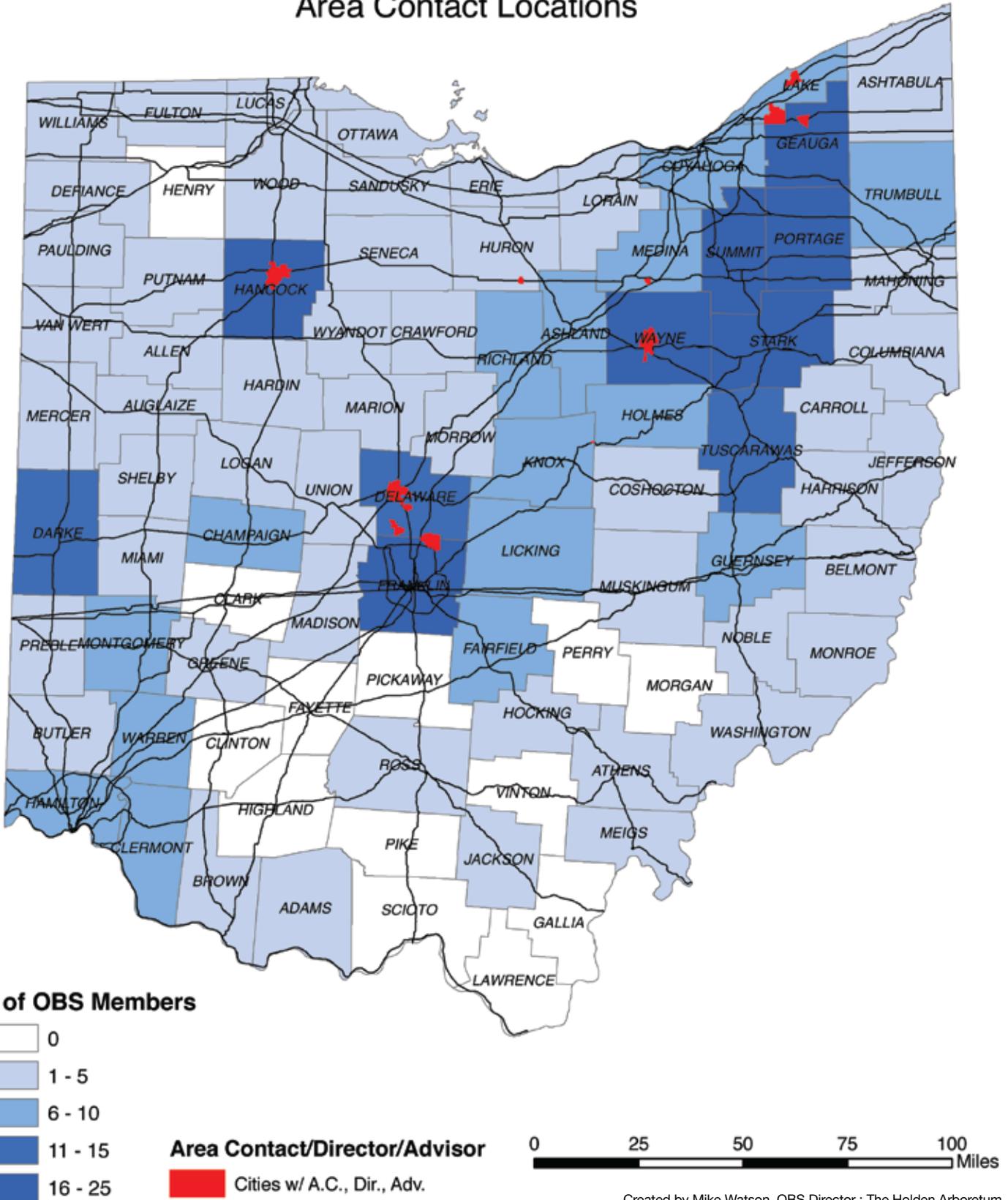


Ohio Bluebird Society

County Membership Numbers

and

Area Contact Locations



Created by Mike Watson, OBS Director ; The Holden Arboretum

WELCOME - TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

(June 16 through
August 15, 2010)

Robert Abbott
Harry O. Crego
Paige Gerber
Tom Gilt
Vic & Lois Harder

Lisa Heintz
Jennifer Hugon
Chuck & Jeanne Jakubchak
Michael Kabel
Gene Robinson

Al La Sala
Ann & John Schuster
Kathleen Vesha
Joy Wengerd
Jacqueline Zofcin



www.geaugafair.com
September 2 - 6, Burton, Ohio

Ohio Bluebird Society at The Great Geauga County Fair in Burton, Ohio

Jay Brindo shows his Bluebird display at the Geauga County Fair - the oldest fair in the state of Ohio. He has labeled each fact about the nestboxes he uses on his trail in case he, or another volunteer, is not there when a visitor stops by. This is a great way to volunteer and help educate others. Maybe you will want to give it a try too. *Call our OBS number for more information - 330.466.6926.*



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY DONATIONS

Our thanks goes out to the following donors:

Mary Ellen Bolt Memorial Bench - \$1,175 (as of August 21, total is \$1,175)

- Benner, Wilbur & Ruby
- Berger, Nelson & Helen
- Bourne, Lum & Meriam
- Bower, Allen & Nina
- Cochran, Kenneth & Linda
- Duecker, Ron & Ethel
- Hall, Helen
- Hawkins, Marcella
- Kinney, Patricia
- Kessel, John and Janet
- Lang, Linda
- Mattmuller, Ric & Donna
- Sheldon, Dean and Carol
- Tessitore, Salvatore V.
- Tope, William & Doris

In Memory of John Lapin - \$50 (as of August 21, total is \$1,495)

- LeVasseur, Doug

General Donations - \$120

- Hughes, David
- LaSala, Al

E-mail to Marcella Hawkins from Natalie Lapin

Thank you from Natalie and John S. Lapin

I apologize for not keeping in touch very much after Dad's funeral. Sadly, Mom passed away 33 days after Dad, and it took all of us by surprise. (She actually passed away the day she was discharged from the rehab center.) She was able to come home that day, sat in the chair next to Dad's, commented on how she missed him, cried a little, and then her heart simply stopped. The doctors believe she died of "Broken Heart Syndrome", and just didn't want to go on without Dad after 65 years of marriage. We have all been adjusting, and not doing the best job of it.

I did want to tell you that some miraculous things happened the day of Dad's funeral. First, several people came up to us at the funeral, and told us they had seen bluebirds in their yards for the first time ever. One of Mom and Dad's neighbor had a bluebird outside their window, their niece had a male and female bluebird appear, a gentleman that has had a bluebird house up for years finally had a bluebird appear on the box, my husband and I had a male and a female appear on our bluebird box, and there was a pair of bluebirds outside of Mom and Dad's kitchen window that morning, as well. All of these "sightings" actually occurred the morning of Dad's funeral. My husband put up a bluebird box at Dad's grave that evening, and two days later a pair began building a nest in the box, and ultimately one little bluebird fledged. (Five fledged from our bluebird house.) What is remarkable about the bluebirds in the cemetery is that it is located in the city of Poland, on a very busy street, and people are constantly in and out of the cemetery. Many people found out about the bluebirds that were nesting, and they virtually had a village of people watching them. The grounds keepers were given strict orders not to disturb the box (not by us, but by the cemetery Board), and everyone waited in eager anticipation for the baby bird to be born and fledged. John cleaned the box after the baby fledged, and you would be amazed at the number of phone calls we received from people with concern that the side had been removed from the box! One gentleman was so concerned, he went and attempted to put on a side himself! (John had left it off intentionally during the cleaning.) These beautiful, gentle birds have brought us all so much comfort.

Thank you again for keeping us informed of the donations. Dad would have been so moved by everyone's kindness.

Thanks,
Natalie and John S. Lapin

Mary Ellen Bolt Memorial Bench

On Saturday, August 28 a dedication service was held for the Mary Ellen Bolt Memorial Bench at the Secret Arboretum in Wooster. Here Mel Bolt is pictured with donors and longtime friends Sam and Mary Ellen Tessitore.



NOTICE

WHAT: 2011 OBS Annual Conference
WHEN: Saturday, February 26, 2011
WHERE: Shisler Conference Center, Wooster, Ohio

Please give us your feedback on our conferences that were held this year (February 27 and August 7) and let us know if you have any suggestions or comments about what you would like to see at our next conference in 2011.

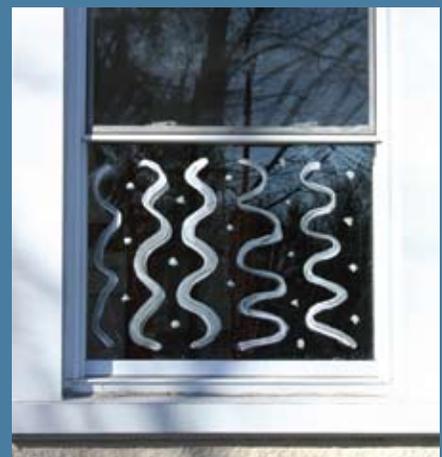
Send an e-mail to info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org. *Thanks!*

Birds Hitting Windows

Please check out this website:
www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions_flyer.pdf

The people from the American Bird Conservancy have created a pdf file showing ways to keep birds from colliding with windows. They include applying Tempera paint in squiggly lines or using decals available from www.michaels.com, www.amazon.com, www.spraypaintstencils.com that can break up reflections enough so that the birds see the glass. There are also window films, inside or out, "glass wax" or light-weight netting along with prefabricated decals.

This website was included in Bluebird Trails & Tales, the newsletter of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, Volume 13, Issue 2.



Tempera paint is a washable, long-lasting, and non-toxic solution to preventing bird/window collisions.

Member News



From Member Jo Marie

I have been having some fun and have picked up some tips along the way (not exclusively for bluebirds, sorry). I hung some of those little yard flags around the feeders and they sure slowed the grackles down (trying to navigate around them). I hung my hummingbird feeder from a copper shepherd's hook and accidentally discovered that ants (that plague the feeders) do not seem to like to walk on copper.

I bought a machine called a songbird magnet and when I first started using it, it did attract the birds and now they out-sing it so I leave it off most of the time unless I am lonely (no one around) and then I will plug it in for the company.

—Jo Marie

YouTube Video

Check out this great video submitted by **Susan Moore**, 15 year volunteer at Blacklick Woods Metro Park, Franklin County Ohio: "*Along a Bluebird Trail.*"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S6xDexMv8c>



It's Not Too Early

It's not too early to start thinking about what you will do if we have another ice storm like we did in 2004. Whether you feed mealworms or currants or both, have your plan ready NOW for what you will need when the weather turns cold.

Photo by Marcella Hawkins



Fledgling Count

As of September 1, here are the numbers reported so far from 36 members :

- Bluebird - 1636
- Carolina Chickadee - 37
- Carolina Wren - 4
- Eastern Tufted Titmouse - 9
- House Wren - 132
- Purple Martin - 306
- Tree Swallow - 898
- House Sparrow Eggs Discarded - 225

Please forward your fledgling count by e-mail to:
info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

or by regular mail to:
Ohio Bluebird Society
PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Road
Wooster, OH 44691

and we will add your numbers to our spreadsheet and post the numbers on our website. If you have not checked out the website - please go to **www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org** and see what you have been missing.



Ohio Bluebird Society Membership Application

- | 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 | | |

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 Board of Directors and Advisors

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

OBS Communications Block

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info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Website:

www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Phone:

330.466.6926

Address:

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

Ohio Bluebird Society is
500 members strong ...
and growing.



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Affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS NOW LIVE!



Our redesigned website is now up and running - please visit www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org.

You will not need to have a username and password to view all of the pages. Passwords are for joining, renewing memberships, or updating contact info online only.