



Bluebird Monitor

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

Summer 2013



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 - May 1
Fall Issue - August 1
Winter Issue - November 1

2013 OBS Grant Recipient



Instructor John Kuenzli
and project assistant
Cheyenne Carter

It is with great pleasure that we announce the recipient of this year's Ohio Bluebird Society education grant. This grant is offered to deserving organizations to help further the OBS Mission Statement as establishes by our OBS founders. Congratulations goes out to the Hamilton Township High School of Columbus, Ohio who submitted one of the most comprehensive grant applications in OBS's history. This project was initially submitted to OBS by senior high school student, Cheyenne Carter. Addition support came from her biology teacher Mr. John Kuenzli and Dr. Susan Witten Director of Teaching and Learning at Hamilton Local Schools.

When asked what is the purpose and goal of your organizations project?

They stated; "The purpose of the Bluebird trail is to develop a genuine science experience for students of multiple ages. We will engage these students in science outside of the classroom that will involve multiple ages, teachers, and school buildings within the Hamilton Local School district. Our over-arching goal is to get more students interested in science."

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When asked how a Bluebird trail will enhance your students learning experience?

They responded with; "The Bluebird trail will enhance our students learning because it will allow students to experience science outside of the classroom. Students will be able to experience science with the intention of initiating a love of science as lifelong learners. Our student-scientists will be part of larger scientific organizations (namely, Project NestWatch and the USGA Bird Banding Laboratory if it is determined that banding birds is part of the project), and understand the advantages of scientific collaboration."

With the grant funds made available from OBS, students at the school will be directly involved in building forty nest boxes and installing them in carefully selected location most likely to offer Bluebirds and other cavity nesting species a home. Their box installations will include donated cone-shaped predator guards, implementation of "passive" House Sparrow control in an educational manner and

monitoring by students, teachers and parents during the entire nesting season. In the near future we also look forward to receiving nesting data they collect and showing the membership via the Newsletter, Facebook page and website, photos of the each phase of their project. Hats off to the school's supportive administration, teachers, students and parents who helped make this new and exciting learning adventure a reality.

OBS hopes to offer our continued encouragement and support when needed. From everyone in OBS to the students, faculty and administrators of the Hamilton School District, welcome to our wonderful world of helping Bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds.



Photos from Bluebird Observers



This picture taken by David Gilbert is on our Facebook page and has been viewed by 1,637 people!



I thought bluebirds had almost disappeared from Ohio, so I was very surprised to see this pair inadvertently appear in a photo I had taken while visiting Captina A.M.E. cemetery, a very historic and long forgotten (until just recently) African-American cemetery just outside of Barnesville, Ohio. The tall stone happens to be that of the family of Sandy Harper, a staunch abolitionist and operator of the Underground Railroad in Belmont County. Curious about this sighting, I did a little research and discovered your website. It's great to know that bluebirds are making such a comeback.

The bluebirds added a wonderful bit of 'color' to a very touching moment for us – my wife and I were at the Captina Cemetery to dedicate a newly-placed headstone for a long-lost relative from Somerton, Ohio, who served during the Civil War in the much renowned 55th Massachusetts Colored Infantry (sister unit of the 54th, which was featured in the film 'Glory') and was wounded at the battle of Honey Hill, South Carolina. The cemetery, in a very isolated wooded area, was pretty much forgotten and in a state of disarray for well over a century until some local historians took it upon themselves to restore it. The birds provided a beautiful background chorus as my wife, Debbie, read the dedication. It was our good fortune to be there that day in such good company.

Doug & Debbie Tracy
New Albany, Ohio

Member News



Do you have a camera and do you love to take pictures? Would you like others to see the fun you are having?



In accordance with the OBS mission statement related to supporting the return and perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird and other cavity

nesting birds, we'd like to give the OBS membership an opportunity to share how they are having fun while helping to fulfill our mission statement via their photographic skills. The goal is to not only showcase the birds and how you have interacted with them, but also inspire and educate everyone interested in helping nature.

Each member can submit five photos for each category in either color or black and white. These should be related to your experiences with helping Bluebirds and other Native American cavity nesting birds. The two categories are: In the Box and

Out of the Box. The photos must be taken in 2013 and emailed to OBS at info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org and marked "2014 Conference Photo." Photos must be received by the last day of December, 2013. We need to know the author, title of picture(s) and location taken. They will be showcased during the next conference and then placed on the OBS website for the world to enjoy after the conference. We'd like the photos to be as close as possible to what the naked eye would normally see, so please try to keep digital enhancements to a minimum with this goal in mind.

This is not a competitive contest with prizes and awards. The greatest reward will be knowing you've helped to inspire others. The only winners are the birds we all love so much and want to help!

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!

Welcome - To Our New Members

Pavek, Darlene
Schafer, Mike & Julia
Smialek, Richard

Facebook

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

Please post your Bluebird pictures to our Facebook page for everyone to see. The most "views" we have for one picture has been 1,637 people!!

Bird Rehabilitation

In case you need to find a rehabilitation center this summer for injured birds, here is a link for all the licensed bird rehab centers in Ohio:

<http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/Home/resources/orphans/rehabilitators/tabid/6013/Default.aspx>

Reminder

Please remember to send any change of mailing or e-mail address to: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.net.

OBS Spotlight

Bethany Gray

By Chuck Jakubchak, Photo by Jordon Gray

Bethany Gray saw her first bluebird 3 years ago and has been hooked ever since. She started out monitoring trails in 2010 and quickly progressed to becoming the lead volunteer and trainer for other bluebird monitors in Dublin. Her enthusiasm for bluebirds has helped her become a valuable resource to the City of Dublin and their network of volunteers, dubbed the "Green Team." Bethany's commitment to nature and bluebirds was the reason we decided to feature her in the OBS Spotlight, Summer edition.

Next on Bethany's "to do" list is to engage a retirement community that is located near one of Dublin's bluebird trails. She hopes to have residents observe and record data about bluebird activity and believes the project would be beneficial to both the birds and the senior residents. Bethany is committed to helping people and birds and people this type of energetic thinking is exactly what the OBS needs.

She is especially grateful for Dublin's ongoing commitment to conservation and maintenance of green space in light of the city's rapid growth. In 2010 the city was awarded the National Wildlife Federation's Community Habitat Certification and to this date they are the only city in Ohio to receive that distinction. Bethany was quick to point out that the city's bluebird trail helped the city achieve the award and clearly recognizes the value that bluebirds can bring to a community.

The Ohio Wildlife Center (OWC) in Columbus also receives some of Bethany's volunteer hours as she regularly mans the wildlife hotline, providing advice to concerned callers regarding wildlife situations. Perhaps a caller found an injured animal or maybe they have been plagued by a family of marauding raccoons.

Either way Bethany answers their questions in a polite, professional manner and provides necessary guidance. The one aspect of her involvement with the OWC that Bethany finds most impressive is the number of people that take time to call the OWC because they are concerned about wildlife. The public's sincere concern for wildlife is especially gratifying to her.

Bethany believes her appreciation for nature, especially birds, can be traced back to her maternal grandmother's love of bluebirds. Although she never had the chance to discuss bluebirds with her, she recently learned of their shared interests through her mother and that discovery has further motivated Bethany to do more with birds.

During 2013 she has committed to do more with bluebirds and promises to go birding at several of Ohio's premier locations. All of her bird related activities are done in memory of her late grandmother and the inspiration that she provided.

The 2013 Ohio Bluebird Conference was Bethany's second conference and she was very pleased with the crowd and enjoyed connecting with people that monitor nest boxes across the state. Whether she was admiring the informative bluebird trail displays or listening to speakers review their conservation efforts, she was thrilled

with what the annual conference had to offer. Bethany even has hopes of bringing a larger display from the Ohio Wildlife Center to the 2014 conference so she can share their work with the interested crowd.

As the OBS continues to grow and gain influence throughout Ohio, we will need more members like Bethany. The OBS appreciates enthusiastic individuals that are willing to learn and volunteer, helping others that want to know more about Ohio's cavity nesting birds. We are glad to have Bethany as an OBS member and hope we can find many more just like her.





Out of the Box

The Red-Bellied Woodpecker

By Chuck Jakubchak, Photo by Jeanne Jakubchak



Everything about red-bellied woodpeckers is positive and that cannot be said of many bird species. This cavity nester can easily be observed anywhere in Ohio, consume a significant quantity of insects that we label nuisances, create habitat for other cavity nesting birds, remain with us during our coldest months (brightening up back yard bird feeders when we need it most) and their population is doing quite well without assistance from anyone.

Their breeding success in Ohio can be attributed to their flexibility in utilizing a variety of habitats as they can be found in woodlands, swamps, marshes, local parks and even in your own backyard. They are not dependent on specific habitats in order to succeed and where ever you hike in Ohio, the chances of encountering a red-bellied woodpecker are pretty good.

Red-bellied woodpeckers are good for our environment because they consume various insects (ants, beetle larvae, grasshoppers, caterpillars, etc.) During the fall and winter months red-bellied woodpeckers concentrate on mast as they are especially fond of acorns and beechnuts. In late summer and early autumn they eat berries, corn kernels and assorted seeds. Although they are mainly vegetarians, their diverse appetites have helped them overcome environmental challenges. They will even cache some food for later consumption and everyone must appreciate a creature that pro-actively prepares for hard times, setting aside their bounty for later consumption.

One of the nicest attributes of this species is their bold behavior and they can easily be seen by interested birdwatchers. Red-bellies can be spotted chiseling in dead trees or you can hear their distinctive vocalizations that even non-birders seem to recognize. Another option is

to follow the loud drumming noise that is part of their spring pair-bonding ritual. If you go looking for red bellied woodpeckers, you will likely succeed and even though they may not be as flashy as some songbirds, they are there when you want them!

Red-bellied woodpeckers excavate nest cavities between 5-40 feet high in decaying trees, excavating a cavity that is approximately 10-12 inches deep with a 2 inch opening. The female lays 4-5 white eggs and both sexes share incubation responsibilities. In anticipation of incubation the male and the female pluck feathers from their lower abdomens, exposing bare areas of skin and these "brood patches" are a critical part of the incubation process. The female incubates the eggs during the day and the male during the night and both use the brood patch to warm the eggs, allowing embryos to develop in about 12 days.



Young are pink, blind and naked at hatching and do not emerge from the cavity until they have obtained their signature black and white plumage. They will fledge in approximately 26 days and both parents will work as a team, providing food for the fledglings even after they have left the nest.

Ohio's red-bellied woodpeckers only nest once per year and each year they excavate a new nest cavity. The previous year's cavity will be used by bluebirds, chickadees, great crested flycatchers, small woodpeckers or a mammal in search of a home. Their behavior benefits other species in Ohio!

The only downside involving red-bellied woodpeckers involves their rivalry with starlings. Although they are aggressive towards starlings and utilize their sharp beak to defend themselves and their territory, they sometimes lose the ownership battle of the cavities they created and inadvertently create a nest cavity for this invasive species. Once again, starlings are able to overcome the odds to the detriment of this native species.

Blooming Bluebirders



The Life of a Bluebird

Part 3 of 4

By John Bigham Jr., Preble County

This story is fictional, but I think that you will enjoy it. This story takes place in the late 1700's when English settlers were just beginning to settle Ohio.

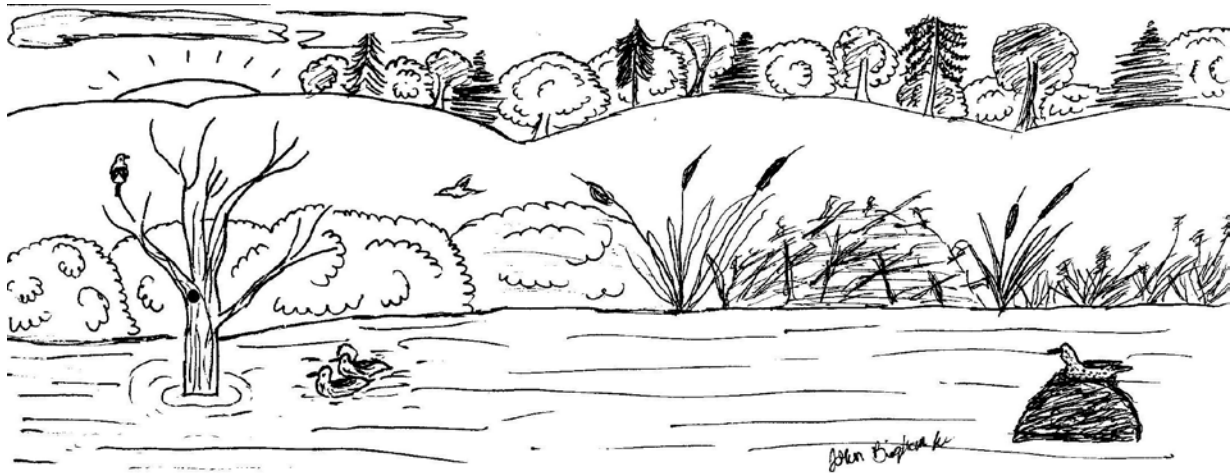
The sun is rising over the distant eastern bluffs, its rays shining down into the valley making the dew on all of the trees and plants sparkle and shine. A light breeze is blowing through the trees making the leaves rustle. Everything is quiet. I can see deer farther down in the valley eating the wet green grass. A few wild turkeys are walking through the valley. The beaver pond is very still and silent, the beavers are still out working. I am sure they will be going into their lodge for the day very soon. My mate is awake and out hunting for our babies. I am looking for insects to feed them. My mate is flying in with the babies. They are very hungry, and somewhat nervous. There is a hawk soaring above us. I must keep an eye on it. Hawks are some of our worst enemies. The sun is now up over the tree tops and it is getting hotter. It is time for my mate and me to take our family to the creek.

It has been about two weeks since our chicks have fledged. We still have all but one of them, which, when flying out over an open field was spotted by a Red-tailed Hawk, and so perished. My mate has begun to build her second nest in a different location. The nest is in a dead cherry tree, that has a knothole in it just large enough for us to slip through. It is out in the middle of an open grassland. I hope it is a safe place for us to nest. I can hear my mate calling for me, I better go and see what she needs. I can see her perched on a tree limb a little ways off. I fly over to her and she twitters to me. We twitter to each other for a while before going to check on our chicks. The chicks seem to be used to being out in the open now, it is about time for my mate to lay her second clutch of eggs.

Two weeks later.

My mate now has a clutch of five eggs. She has been sitting on them for a week and a half now. It is very hot. It has not rained for a long, long time. It seems like it could rain today. It is so hot and still. Not a breeze blowing. The clouds are heavy and dark looking. It is late in the afternoon. I feel hot and tired. I think I will take a nap.

CLAP!! BANG!! CRASH!! I jerk awake! A storm is coming. The western sky is black as black can be. The wind is blowing strongly and the lightning is flashing all around me. I fly closer to our nesting hole and sit there watching the storm come. I feel a drop of rain hit me on the head. Now it is falling all around me. Harder and harder the rain comes down. I slip into the nesting cavity with my mate to wait out the storm. I can hear the rain beating down outside of the tree. The inside is dry and cozy. The storm keeps getting stronger over the next hour. It hailed a little bit, but not much. At last I can hear the storm slow down a bit, but it is still raining outside. I fly back out to my limb to see if I can find any insects. I find a few and then take them into the tree for my mate. She twitters to me and takes the insects. I fly back out of the tree to find my own food. It takes me a while to find any more insects, but I finally fly into a group of insects. I swoop through them catching some in my bill. The sun is beginning to come out again, but farther to the west. It must be evening already. I sit there, watching the sun slip behind the hills, and listening to the birds sing their melodies straight into the gates of heaven. I can even hear the frogs down by the swamp trilling, chirping, and bellowing. Everything is peaceful and quiet as I drift off to sleep.



One week later

The sun is hot today. Very hot. All I am doing is sitting in the shade and hunting for bugs. None of the birds are singing. It has been a week since that wonderful storm drifted through. My mate has chicks now, they hatched about two days ago. They are not eating much because of the heat. They just sit there and pant. It is late afternoon and I can see no sign of rain anywhere. My mate is perched in a tree not far from the one I am in. She is hunting, like I am, for bugs. I grab a grasshopper and take it to the nest. The chicks squabble for a little bit, before one of them snatches it and swallows it. I fly back out into the blazing sun to roast. But not for long, because I can smell rain coming!

Two weeks later

It has cooled down a lot. The sun is pleasant to be in, and our chicks have all fledged. This will be the last brood

of the year. Now my mate and I can teach our chicks how to hunt, fly, and hide. The rain two weeks ago made everything turn green again. So far we have lost only one chick from our second brood, due to overheating in the nesting cavity. I can see my mate fluttering around the chicks teaching them how to fly, I can also see a family of rabbits in the distance. There are five babies and a mama. They are out in the meadow eating grass and enjoying the sun. I see some deer out in the meadow too.

The fawn's spots have all but disappeared, the only remains are a few white spots on their tan colored sides. It is a wonderful day to sit and watch. But...watching makes you tired! So I think that I will take a snooze.

Be sure to look for part four in the fall Bluebird Monitor.

Photos from Marcella Hawkins



Left: Another cavity nester
Above: A beautiful sight
Right: Happy couple

Controlling the House Sparrow

by Mel Bolt



A recent incident where an unknown individual was monitoring a bluebird nest box in a state park near Columbus, OH caused a negative reaction when another person observed him twist the neck of a captured House Sparrow that had invaded the box.

Compounding the negative reproach was that several children were nearby when the act was accomplished. The publicity of this event should be an alarm to all who monitor Bluebird nest boxes that any control of House Sparrows should be accomplished as discretely as possible. Wide spread exposure of this nature could have a long term effect on all of the Bluebird groups across the nation.

Therefore, House Sparrow control should be considered a ticking time bomb to OBS and other Bluebird organizations. There are several well known groups that would view this as cruelty to animals as they apparently are unaware of the history of House Sparrows and how they have upset the balance of nature in this country. There are very strict laws against confirmed cases of cruelty to animals. These laws are not currently applied to House Sparrows because they are alien (imported) from England and are not subject to the Migratory Protection Act of 1913.

House Sparrows were originally imported into New York City from England in 1850. Its purpose was to eat the seeds from the horse droppings in the city and/or consume the canker worms in the trees outside one man's office building, as is reported in several articles. Having survived in the city it came to be considered a "prestige bird" so many other cities in the eastern part of the country also imported them including some in Ohio. Shortly thereafter they were observed as

being a nuisance bird which was displacing our native cavity nesting birds, devastating the sprouting leaves of farmers newly planted crops, accumulating around barns where grain is stored or building their nests in obstructive places as gutters, vent pipes, signs of store fronts etc. Their nests were bulky & messy and their droppings were unsightly & required frequent clean up.

Public speakers promoting the protection and survival of Bluebirds have undoubtedly been exposed to the backlash of promoting the control of House Sparrows. Most listeners have no knowledge of their past history and especially the negative effects they have on our small native cavity nesting birds. Therefore, some who are offended proclaim we sacrifice one species of birds so another can live, or that it is an act of cruelty, or it is a beautiful bird and should be left alone to do its own thing along with other reasons for their offense. People of religious persuasion will defend them because of their being referenced in the Holy Book but fail to realize they are actually finches and not sparrows.

House Sparrow control may be accomplished in two ways, namely, passive and active. The method an individual chooses likely depends on his endurance as to certain aspects of the life of birds and other animals.



Passive Control:

1. Nesting material

- Frequent removal from the nest box

2. Eggs

- Removal from the nest after the entire clutch is laid
- Pierce a pin hole in each egg and return to the nest (will not hatch)
- Heat the eggs (boiling) so they will not hatch
- Place fake eggs in the nest

Each of these will cause the female to incubate for a period of time and eventually she will abandon the nest.

3. Entrance Hole

- Plug the hole until the Sparrows leave for another location

These three procedures limit the reproduction of House sparrows but frequently chase the birds to your neighbor, making him deal with the problem.

Active control:

1. Capture the Sparrow live and take it to a bird rehab center so that it can be fed to another bird in recovery.

2. Trap live bird and permanently dispatch it along with its mate if possible. Allowing one of the pair to remain will not interrupt the reproduction cycle as it will seek another mate and continue the reproduction cycle.

3. Never dispatch a Sparrow in the sight of others to witness. Be as discrete as possible so that the Columbus event does not happen again.

Never publicly use the words “kill” or “killing” as they are very inflammatory to most people, especially animal lovers and young children.

Bird groups frequently request that you report the number of Sparrows dispatched during the year. This is a bad practice as it provides information that in the future can possibly be used against bird groups.



Why is it necessary to control the House Sparrow?

1. House Sparrows usurp existing nests of all of our native cavity nesting birds, including Bluebirds. They peck holes in their eggs and remove them from the box, then build their own nest over the original nest.

2. House Sparrows find chicks or adults in the nest box and maul them to death.

- Their beaks are very hard for cracking seeds and the top beak overhangs the lower and is very sharp. It becomes a lethal weapon which it uses to attack the chicks or adults.
- The male House Sparrow sits in the entrance hole, blocking the exit, thus making the birds captive inside the box. It first pecks the eyes, blinding the resident bird. Next it pecks the head of the bird, exposing the skull, causing the eventual death of the bird.
- Once the adult or chicks are dead, it builds its own nest on top of the old nest and decaying bodies. Since they have little or no sense of smell this does not create a problem for the sparrow.
- The House Sparrow is a non-native bird to which our native birds have not yet evolved enough to compete with them for nesting sites or to defend themselves from attacks when trapped inside the nest box.

Our native cavity nesting birds require human intervention as the result of importing the very aggressive House Sparrows. Prior to 1850 our native birds had evolved to deal with their natural threats and were successful in reproduction and growth in their numbers. This natural existence was changed when man upset the balance of nature by bringing in these alien birds.



Ask Madame WingNut

Trails and Tribulations

by Paula Ziebarth

I. Delaware Wastewater Treatment Plant Trail Established

In 2006, the City of Delaware, Ohio had a 20-box Tree Swallow Grid Trail installed at their wastewater treatment plant. The area has excellent Tree Swallow and Eastern Bluebird habitat. Monitoring of the trail was apparently not done or done haphazardly, however. In September 2012, nestboxes were cleaned out and box maintenance done.

II. Trail Reclamation

On 4-25-13, I made my first visit to monitor this trail. I always monitor trails myself before handing them off to another monitor. I want to see what is using the boxes and any challenges that there may be.



In the above trail map, you can see that House Sparrow (HOSP) nests were in every nestbox. Nest sites circled in red indicate HOSP presence. I made two visits to the site this day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. There were 6 Tree Swallows (TRES) on site, but luckily smart enough not to enter nestboxes. There were no Eastern Bluebirds (EABL) seen or heard.

Male HOSP dispatched = 6

Female HOSP dispatched = 13

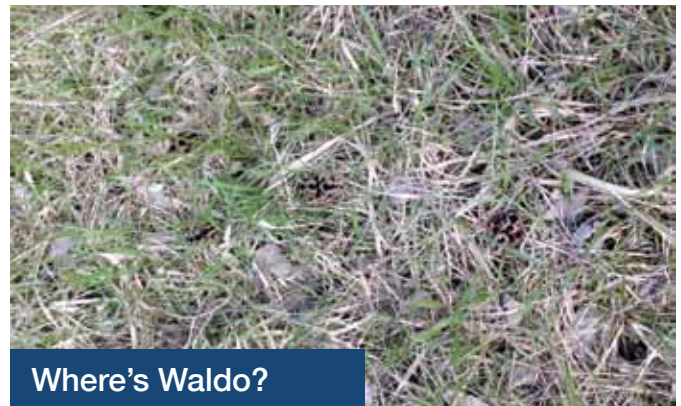
Eggs removed = 52

Dead Native Birds = 1 female EABL in nestbox (HOSP kill)

III. Timberdoodle Toddlers and Almost Goosed!

On 4-30-13, I made my second trail check. During my morning visit, I had two interesting encounters with birds in the field. One nestbox was near a Canada Goose nest. The male came at me in full hiss mode and was not impressed when I threatened him with my power drill. Yelling and arm movement did nothing. I knew to maintain eye contact and not run, and finally thought to throw my bird bag at him when he was 10 feet away. Bag hit him in chest and he backed off.

While walking through the natural grassland habitat, I flushed an American Woodcock. I immediately froze and looked down. She had 4 young. I had never seen Timberdoodle young before. They froze so tight, I got some close up pictures with my iphone – gorgeous little creatures.



Timberdoodle Toddler

Back to the trail work. I found it very interesting that TRES had claimed boxes in center of grid. This made a lot of sense to me, with TRES establishing colony behavior to protect each others' nestboxes from marauding HOSP. It also made sense that HOSP would be approaching trail and claim boxes from the outskirts, especially nestboxes around the overflow pond which is nearer to buildings.



Above map shows nestboxes with HOSP presence circled in red. Nestboxes with TRES nest starts are circled in green. The site with no circle on the left was where I encountered the Timberdoodles. As I look at this map, I am reminded of the board game Risk. The birds are strategizing and field battles are occurring. Without active HOSP management, this trail would stand no chance (as seen by condition in first visit). Boxes clustered this close together (spaced 25 yards apart) should attract colony of TRES and a couple nesting pairs of EABL. However, clustered boxes also attract HOSP and if a male HOSP is left on site to sing, he calls in more... and more. Key to success in TRES grid is to eliminate HOSP as soon as they show up.

On this visit, 10 TRES are on site and two male EABL are calling. TRES and EABL are both entering boxes now and I fear for their safety. There are still plenty of HOSP challenges.

Male HOSP dispatched = 5
 Female HOSP dispatched = 6
 Eggs removed = 1
 Dead Native Birds = 0
 TRES nest starts = 5
 EABL nest starts = 0

IV. Eastern Bluebirds Return

On 5-6-13, I visited trail for the third time. The monitor who will be taking it over came with me. She needed a little refresher on what to look for and when to set inbox traps for HOSP. The importance of knowing what HOSP droppings look like was emphasized as we found several boxes with HOSP droppings in active TRES nests, indicating it was worth trying to catch them. HOSP nest structure was studied too so she could tell the difference between their nests and those of native birds.



Boxes circled in red show HOSP presence; boxes circled in green have TRES; boxes circled in white have EABL nests. HOSP are trying to retake some of the TRES nestboxes. Boxes with no circles around them are empty now, ready for native birds to use or the next HOSP to "try" to use.

Male HOSP dispatched = 2	Dead Native Birds = 0
Female HOSP dispatched = 1	TRES nest starts = 5
Eggs removed = 0	EABL complete nests = 2

V. Future Trials on the Trail?

I have no doubt that HOSP will continue to be a problem to some degree this season. The importance of (at least) weekly monitoring and inbox trapping is apparent to me and I hope I didn't bore you all with this long article. I can report back at end of season for those interested.



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.

Trail Tales

Strike Up the Bands By Jay K. Brindo, OBS Director



No, not really the musical kind of bands with seventy-six trombones or the sixties rock-and-roll band called The Birds, but the bands we place on our birds. OK I admit it, my corny title was to get your attention on a subject we sometimes overlook until we need it like I recently did.

In past years I've been out on my trail with Edith Conzett, licensed bander and recipient of the 2006 OBS Wildlife Conservation Award presented to Holden Arboretum, and Dan Best, Chief Naturalist for Geauga Parks with both of them trying to teach me (Mr. Fumble Fingers) how to band. Honestly, it seemed almost a surgical skill taking a lot of patience, very steady hands and a keen eye. Along with this article are pictures I took of Dan banding Bluebirds on my trail while the male Bluebird watched on.



So why do we band Bluebirds anyway and when did this whole process start? I posed these questions to Mike Watson, one of my fellow Co-Directors of OBS and Director of Holden Arboretum's volunteer Bluebird monitoring program. Mike states:

"Bird banding dates back to at least the 16th century in Europe. Large-scale, scientific banding in the United States started early last century with the goal of providing information about migration, lifespan, nest site fidelity, and other aspects of bird biology. I'm not sure when the first bluebird was banded, but I suspect they were one of the early species to be banded since people have always been fond of them. Holden started banding at the beginning of our volunteer bluebird program, in 1965. Overall, only about one out of 200 bands are ever recovered. Any time you find a dead bird, it's worth checking for a band; it could provide another little bit of insight into the biology of birds."

Recently I got a call from my neighbor, Charlie Hitchcock. Charlie called very upset because a Bluebird had flown into their kitchen window and he found it dead outside on the ground. He said it did have a band on its leg so I asked him to remove it and told him I'd stop by to pick it up. Mike Watson was kind enough to give me a web link (see below) for locating banding numbers, but he also took the time to bypass this process and go through Holden's database to see if one of their volunteers had possibly banded it. Sure enough, he discovered that Mr. Joe Cluts (Bluebirder extraordinaire) had banded the bird on June 26th, 2010. It was one of four young in nestbox 1-B on what Holden calls their Lower Baldwin Trail. The box it fledged from was approx. 1-1/2 miles from where it hit the window and died. So this was a Holden bird just a month short of being three years old that had ventured to the area where I have my trail on the south side of Little Mountain. With so many unknowns in nature, to learn where a bird came from and know its exact age was exciting. I've come to really appreciate those who band our birds and now better understand from this first-hand experience its importance to science.

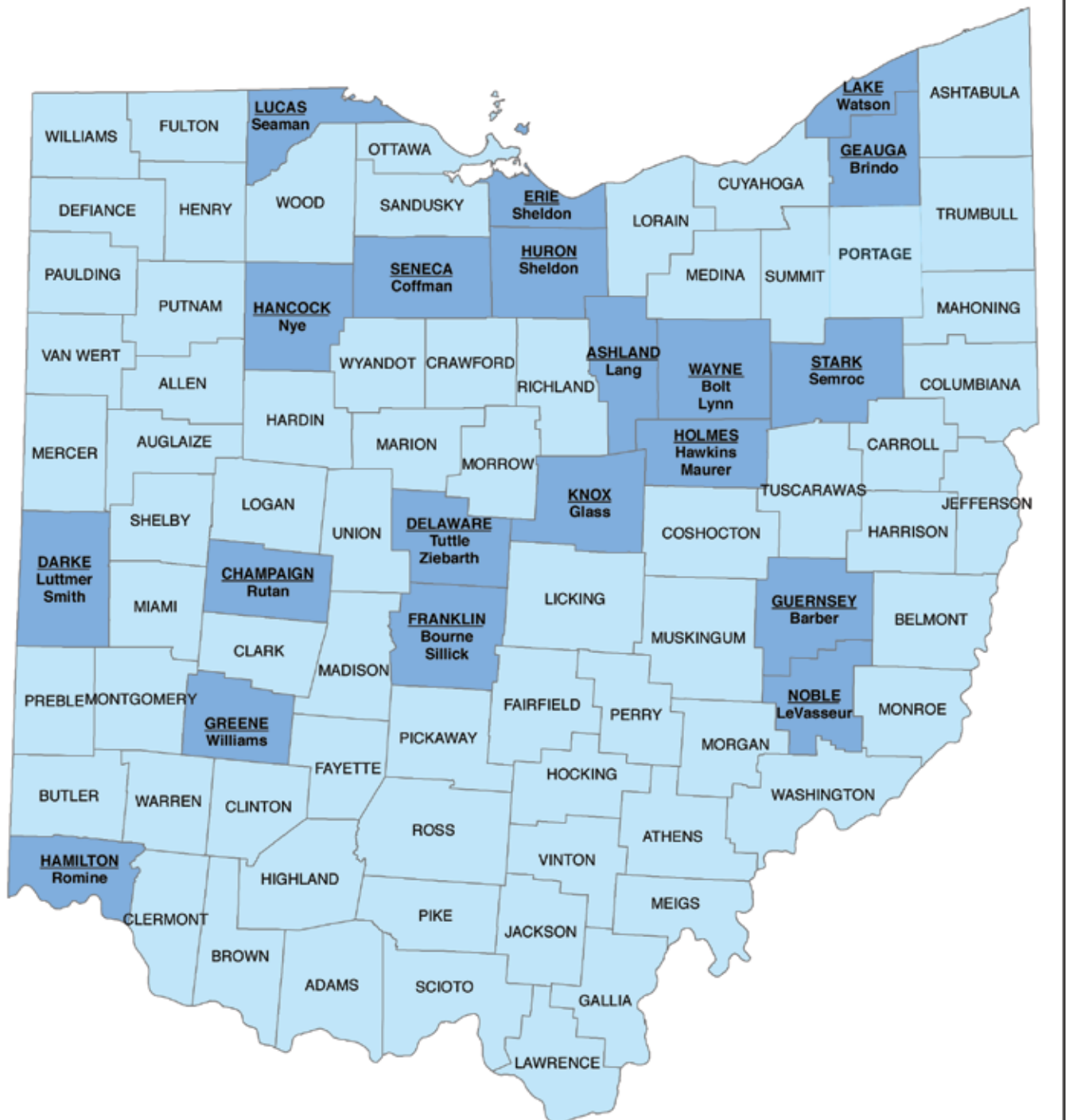
Many thanks to Mike Watson for his help and insight.

To locate banding numbers, go to this website:
<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/bblretrv/>



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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