



Bluebird Monitor

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

Winter 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

Looking Forward to 2013



This year has been a good one for OBS members. Our fledgling numbers are looking good – see page 15 for our map and list of fledglings. The year started out with some bad weather but we are pleased with the numbers reported for 2012.

Please take a look at our annual Treasurer's report on page 11 and note that we have been spending quite a bit on the printing of the Monitor. In order to go green and conserve our funds, as of the Spring issue for 2013, we would like to send paper Monitors only to those people who request them or who do not have an e-mail address. If you have e-mail but still wish to get a paper Monitor, please send your request to info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org. Please note that we cannot get the e-Monitor to you if we do not have your correct e-mail address. If you haven't seen any e-mails from OBS for a while, please send us a message to make sure we have the correct address.

We are working on our 2013 Annual Conference and know you will want to attend. See page 9 for the registration information. If you would like to set up a retail table at the conference, please let me know before January 31, 2013. There will be no charge for the table but we will ask you for a raffle item. Any organizations that want to set up displays are also asked to contact me at our e-mail address.

Marcella Hawkins
OBS Executive Director



Ask Madame WingNut

The European Starling

by Paula Ziebarth

Well, they're back: hordes of them; murmurations as it were. It is winter in Ohio and over 200 European Starlings flocked into the WingNut backyard yesterday, banking and swooping with fighter jet precision, to eventually rest in the mature Shagbark Hickory trees in the backyard. From that lofty perch, they conversed with shrill calls, mellifluous chortles and raucous rattles. Then they were off once more on a new mission, descending en masse upon the Bradford Pears fronting the street, devouring all the fruits they found there.

The nonnative European Starling was introduced to this country in the early 1890's by a group that wanted America to have all the birds mentioned in Shakespearean literature. Mortimer and his friends were released into Central Park, New York and the rest is history. The entire continent is riddled with them today.

Many Bluebirders do not give much consideration to European Starling as these birds can be easily excluded from Bluebird nestboxes with a standard 1.5" diameter hole size. If you begin to "think outside the box", your whole attitude may change.

In Ohio, we have large flocks of European Starlings every winter and they quickly strip an area of natural food stores as the winter wears on. Several years ago in my area, we had major Eastern Bluebird deaths attributed to late winter cold snaps with birds dying from starvation in rural areas where they could not find enough food to make it through the night (found dead packed in nestboxes in the spring). If the non-native hordes had not depleted the natural food supply in the area, I wonder if so many would have died.

Eastern Bluebirds are not the only native cavity nester harmed by European Starlings. Populations of our primary cavity nesters (woodpeckers) have suffered greatly as a result of these aggressive nesting site robbers. Purple Martins will no longer nest in

natural cavities east of the Rocky Mountains due to the non-native scourge of European Starlings and House Sparrows. To my knowledge, they will only breed in manmade housing now, and a colony will often abandon that if their landlord allows nonnative aggressors to coexist in the housing.

During nesting season I deal with nonnative European Starlings as I deal with nonnative House Sparrows, using inbox traps to capture both in any nestboxes or gourds they attempt to use. During winter months, I use bait traps. Although all of these traps capture live birds unharmed, it is important to carefully monitor them to make sure native birds are not captured. Live nonnative birds remaining in bait traps are fed, watered, and covered at night. If any are interested in trapping European Starlings this winter, know that they will not come near trap stations until the snow flies. Once it does, you will catch a lot of them. Effective traps for both House Sparrows and European Starlings include the Deluxe Repeating Sparrow Trap, small havahart traps (chipmunk and squirrel sized), and the ST-1 Trio Sparrow Trap. An internet search of any of these will get you started. Peanut butter is excellent bait for European Starlings.

If you are feeding Eastern Bluebirds and others suet mixes this winter, I hope you will invest in a Starling proof feeder. Plexiglass feeders will work if you remove any perch platforms and keep the food in the center of the feeder. However, the sides will soon be greased up with suet mix and you will not get a very good view of the birds. I much prefer the Evergreen Bluebird Feeder. This 1.5" square mesh feeder can be ordered over the internet. It allows access from all my native birds, but European Starlings cannot access food with small retrofit I have done. Buy a desk organizer plastic rectangular tray. Rubbermaid makes opaque ones and other manufactures make clear ones which are very nice because you can see suet level and/or mealworms from

your window. Overall dimensions of tray are 3 inches wide by 9 inches long by 2 inches high. Get sticky velcro squares and velcro the thing to the center of the floor of the feeder. Just pull it out to fill or clean - very simple.

Even the woodpeckers can access the feeder. The larger Northern Flickers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers cannot fit in there, but they have really long tongues. It is fun to watch them perch on the side and unfurl those tongues to snag suet crumbles. I have the feeder bottom mounted. Baffle any feeder containing suet mix or squirrels will chew it up trying to get in.



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.



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OBS Spotlight

Chris McQuillen

By Chuck Jakubchak



Photo by Shawn Kendall

Chris McQuillen has been a member of the Ohio Bluebird Society since its inception back in 1987 and her devotion to bluebirds makes her worthy of the OBS Spotlight in this edition of *The Monitor*. Thank you Chris for all that you have done in the past and for all that you will do for Ohio's cavity nesting birds in the coming years.

Approximately 25 years ago Chris and her late companion, Gil Trail, started and maintained a bluebird trail at Malabar Farm State Park. The team of Gil and Chris also taught workshops and hosted "Bluebird Sundays" at the farm, fueling the public's interest in bluebirds. Gil, with the loving support of Chris, provided leadership for the emerging OBS, becoming a Trustee, President and editor of the newsletter. Chris and Gil had incredible foresight and were ahead of the bluebird popularity curve.

After Gil's unfortunate passing in 2001 Chris carried on their passion for bluebirds and she has monitored their bluebird trail ever since. During the early years there were more boxes than the 32 on the trail today, but Chris estimates that the average fledge rate of the Malabar trail is at least 80 bluebirds per year. Together Gil and Chris created and maintained a trail that has produced more than 2,000 bluebirds and the total increases each breeding season.

There are 2 bluebird trail stories that stick out in Chris's mind from her years of experience. The first one is related to a 6 foot snake that she found in a bluebird nest box. The snake struck at her but she bravely threw the snake out of the box and rescued the 2 remaining nestlings. As the unharmed snake (later nicknamed Goliath) slithered away, Chris wasn't sure whose heart was pounding louder during their encounter; the nestlings, hers or Goliath's.

Story number 2 was the result of Chris casually approaching a nest box that had been partially obscured with a beautiful daylily. For an unknown reason Chris approached the box from the backside and was unable to see the hornet's nest that had been constructed on the underside of the box. Several facial stings sent her scurrying and a quick trip to a medical center followed, even though she had delayed going under the assumption

that "she would be all right". Lucky for Chris that she received the necessary medication when she did and it was a lesson learned in several ways.

Chris has other ties to Malabar Farm that go beyond summertime and bluebirds. During the Spring she can be found volunteering in the sugar shack and handing out samples of the fresh maple syrup. Autumn brings about Night Haunts at Malabar where Chris acts as one of the ghostly characters from the Louis Bromfield era, entertaining guests that choose to tour the farm during the evening hours. During December Chris volunteers for the Candlelight Christmas Tours as the Bromfield homestead is festively decorated in the spirit of the 1940's.

Like most OBS members, Chris lends her support to many other organizations. She volunteers at the Mansfield Renaissance Theater, Gorman Nature Center, Ohio Bird Sanctuary, Public Library, Red Cross and at special events throughout the Mansfield area. Chris is valuable to the OBS, but even more valuable to the community where she lives and citizens like her make our world better.

Chris has always been an active volunteer, even during her years with the US Postal Service, but her retirement in 2000 freed up more hours. Now she has time to read or tend to her ever expanding collection of houseplants. Her most interesting hobby (aside from bluebirds) will probably surprise you. She is a proud collector of Star Trek memorabilia and even attended a Star Trek convention in Columbus a few years ago.

Should you have the opportunity to meet Chris at one of the venues where she volunteers, please introduce yourself and ask her about bluebirds. She is personable, has a wealth of knowledge and would enjoy speaking with you.

Do you know someone that deserves recognition for their service to the OBS or their assistance to cavity nesting birds? If so, please nominate that person by contacting Chuck. We might be able to use your nomination for an article in an upcoming edition of the *Bluebird Monitor*. (Jakubchak@Yahoo.com)



Out of the Box

The Black Capped Chickadee “Adaptable, Clever & Cute”

By Chuck Jakubchak



How could anyone dislike a black capped chickadee? These tiny birds are chatty and cheerful and bring a friendly presence to any backyard. Although their appearance is mere black and white, they still entertain you with their familiar song and acrobatic maneuvers; hanging upside down by their strong toes and gleaning morsels from tiny tree branches.

If you have a bird feeder you know about their fondness for sunflower seeds and their habit of selecting a seed from your feeder and rapidly retreating to a safe spot. What you may not have realized is that a chickadee will consume approximately 150 sunflower seeds each day (or the nutritional equivalent), but will only take 25% from any one feeder. On cold days they increase their consumption to 250 seeds, always being careful to spread their feeding over multiple sources as a precaution should one source be eliminated.

Chickadees also protect themselves from lean times by caching seeds when food is plentiful and they draw upon their stash during inclement weather. Mother Nature has equipped this species with an expandable memory that grows during cold months and shrinks during warmer weather. The temporary increase in memory allows the bird to recall exact cache locations for up to a month and facilitates their survival during the toughest of times. When the additional memory is not required, their memory cells revert to their previous state and the process is repeated during the following winter.

Birds that brave our Ohio winters have to be adaptable, especially when they weigh 10 grams (the equivalent of 4 US pennies). During cold winter nights chickadees can drop their body temperature from 108 degrees to 50 degrees in order to conserve precious energy. Several birds may also huddle together to further conserve body heat with each bird benefitting the other.

Another key to a black capped chickadee's survival is their small conical beak that is a versatile tool. The beak is strong enough to excavate a nesting cavity in a tree, small enough to extract insect eggs from hiding spots and powerful enough to open the seeds that it eats. Their beak has more functionality than a Swiss Army Knife!

Between August and February you can usually observe black capped chickadees in mixed flocks whenever you hike through wooded areas. They accompany downy woodpeckers, tufted titmice, kinglets, nuthatches and brown creepers as they search for sustenance with the additional eyes working together to locate food and avoid predators. Black capped chickadees unify the diverse group of birds through their constant calling, chirping and general communication and a welcome addition to any mixed flock.

One of the other interesting characteristics of chickadee behavior is the manner in which they fly across open areas. Should you spot chickadees in edge habitat you will notice that the birds do not fly in flocks from one area to the next. Instead, they will fly 1 or 2 at a time across an open area, making it very easy to count the birds as they fly by.



Photo by Jeanne Jakubchak

Black capped chickadees remain in Ohio throughout our winters, entertain us during Spring and Summer and their presence adds enjoyment to our Autumn walks. They stay with us when others migrate to warmer climates and seem to genuinely appreciate

the seeds we feed them. Chickadees are a wonderful species that bring joy to all bird lovers.

Blooming Bluebirders



The Life of a Bluebird

Part 1 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 just beginning to rise over the tops of trees, its shining rays make the snow and ice-covered plants glisten. Everything is quiet. I am perching in a cedar tree, watching the scenery around me. I quickly fly over to the nearby Dogwood patch and begin plucking berries from the trees. The berries are beginning to diminish, thanks to all of the robins and waxwings. I will have to start getting harsh with them if they do not stop eating all of my berries. By now the sun is well over the tree tops. It is now time for me to fly down to the creek bottoms. Wait a minute; do I see what I think I see? Yes, it is, it's a Cooper's hawk! I must hold very still. The hawk swoops down and streaks past me. I feel the wind from his wings. That was a close call. Now I can head down to the creek and get a drink. As I fly down to the creek I join other bluebirds also heading toward the creek bottoms.

On arriving at the creek I see a flock of robins drinking from the waters of the clear, ice cold creek. I perch on a tree limb to survey the area before getting a drink. All is quiet, except for the wind, which seems to be getting stronger. I fly down to the water's edge and begin to drink. I hear the sound of something walking on the frozen snow - crunch, crunch, crunch. There are too many bushes around the creek to see what is coming. I fly back up to my perch; I see several deer heading for the

creek. The creek is a hot spot in the winter. I guess it is because the water supply is so limited that any open water draws wildlife to it like a magnet. The deer come closer; they perk up their ears and flick their tails. Their breath is frozen in little puffs as soon as it reaches the freezing air. I fluff up my feathers and rest. The deer are now drinking and the robins feasting greedily on their honeysuckle berries. I hear the shrill whistles of cedar waxwings as they fly overhead. They are likely heading for the cedar trees where I perched last night. A red-bellied woodpecker trills from a tree a little ways off, followed by another. I hear some jays scolding in the woods. I feel a tinge of pity for the creature the jays were scolding. I know how it is to have those wicked birds chase you all over the place, stealing your food and just trying to make your life miserable.

Suddenly I awoke, the sun has disappeared and the wind is blowing the snow up off the ground in gusts. The temperature has dropped and it is beginning to snow. I fly down and get another drink before flying into the woods for protection from the wind. When I get inside the woods other bluebirds were eating from the wild rose bushes below. I drop down to join them. They sing to me in welcome. As I begin eating of the fruit, a squirrel chatters from a nearby tree. I have hard feelings against squirrels. It was squirrels that destroyed my nest and killed my mate the summer before. Our nest had been made in an old woodpecker cavity. My mate had laid five eggs; one of those eggs was white. She had begun sitting on them when a



squirrel decided it wanted our tree for his own nest. I protested strongly but, to no avail. The squirrel went inside the cavity and ate the eggs. I spent the rest of the day calling for my mate but she never responded. She must have also fallen into the hand of the squirrel. It was too late in the season to mate again so I did not look for another mate. The chicks that my mate and I fledged earlier that season still followed me wherever I went, until they moved to the other side of the forest with a group of other bluebirds.

It was beginning to snow. Heavy. There was already two or three feet of snow on the ground. This snow storm felt like it would last the rest of the day. A chickadee chattered in a shrub off to my left, followed by more chickadee calls. I hear titmice and nuthatches also. The chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches move through the forest in a large group. They make about four or five rounds a day. The birds move on, leaving me and the other bluebirds alone.

Our flock moves from the rose bushes up to the trees. We perch there for a while watching our surroundings. In a large oak tree a little ways off a couple little red squirrels play with each other and a raccoon meanders toward the creek to see if there are any crawdads to eat. The snow storm has set in for the afternoon. My bluebird companions and I will rest until the storm passes. I fluff up my feathers; put my bill under my wing, and sleep.

Later that day the sun comes out again. I head straight for the creek to get a drink and eat berries. The robins and waxwings have beaten me there. As I drink from the creek I notice several dark eyed juncos along with some American tree sparrows and song sparrows hopping around on the ground hunting for seeds. I fly up to a low branch and sing a little, calling for my companions. They respond and soon all of them are perched with me. We fly up out of the wooded creek bottoms and stop and perch in a

tree near a log cabin with smoke billowing out of its chimney. Someone comes out the door and begins hauling wood into the cabin. Inside the cabin I see a lamp burning and children are playing by the fireplace. I wonder why these creatures have come to our peaceful forest. I have never seen anything like it before. These creatures started coming into our peaceful forest about a year ago. They cut down trees and built cabins. There are about twenty or thirty cabins like this one scattered around the area. I have seen Indians pass thru every now and then but these creatures are different. These creatures carry sticks that make a lot of noise. Whatever they pointed these sticks at fell over instantly. I try to avoid these creatures as much as possible. Sometimes, out of curiosity, I like to perch on tree limb and watch them.

We leave our perch by the cabin and fly up to where the dogwood trees grow. We fly down and eat berries from off the trees. The sun is beginning to slip behind the trees far in the west. The day is over. It is time to find a place to sleep. I fly down to the swamp where there are a lot of drowned out trees. I find a hole and slip inside. It is dark and still. A perfect place to sleep. I call to my companions and they enter into the hole after me. We crowd close together, fluff up our feathers, and drift off to sleep.


It is bright and clear this morning. As I climb to the mouth of the cavity, a warm breeze engulfs me. Outside it is sparkling white. Something feels different. Little sparkling water drops fall from the long icicles to the white ground below. I fly out of the tree and head straight for the berry patch. At the berry patch the robins and waxwings are eating their fill. I drop down and perch on a limb of a dogwood tree. The limb is loaded with shrunk up, dry berries. They are not the most appetizing, but, they keep me alive, that is all that counts. After eating, I fly to the top of a hill and perch in the top of the highest tree. What I see is beautiful, the beaver pond is all white, except for

the tops of the beaver's lodge, and it is a dark brown. The rolling wooded hills are the most wonderful thing to behold. Above me a red-tailed hawk soars on his majestic wings. I sing a song to my Creator, thanking him for his wonderful creation, and for all of the bountiful berries to eat. The warm air is wonderful after almost four solid months of freezing weather and snow. I feel spring. It's coming, coming in the Chinook, which is now blowing up from the south.

Down at the creek everything is alive. As I perch on my favorite tree limb, I watch the other birds and wildlife around me. I watch as the robins sing in the high tops of trees, as the mockingbird sings his chattering copycat song from a nearby shrub, and the muskrats chase each other up and down logs, splashing in the water and enjoying the warm weather. In an open field in the distance I see a couple tom turkeys strutting to attract a mate. I am also in search of a mate. I sing daily to try and attract a widowed female, or a young female from last year. At last a female bluebird flies in and perches beside me. I have found a mate. We are now in search of a home. My mate and I fly all over looking for a suitable cavity. The days are beginning to get longer and the air is almost balmy. The snow is almost gone, only a few large patches remain. Soon the trees will begin to put out green leaves. Every creature is rejoicing! Spring! A wonderful word it is. All of the birds are singing. Spring is the happiest time of the year. Already some of the earliest spring migrants are flooding into our woods. Blackbirds, sandpipers, killdeer, tree swallows, and a few warblers. My mate and I find a cavity in a dead elm tree. It is the perfect spot. The tree was drowned out a couple of years ago when the beavers dammed up the creek. Away from the reach of squirrels and other predators, this makes a wonderful nesting spot. I must leave the rest of my story for another time.

Be sure to look for part two in the spring Bluebird Monitor.





Mysteries of Nature and How They Relate to Bluebirds

OBS Annual Educational Conference Saturday, February 23, 2013

The Arden Shisler Center for Education & Economic Development – 1680 Madison Ave., Wooster, Ohio 44691

For map: <http://www.shislercenter.ohio-state.edu/secondary/Location.htm>

Wayne County Visitors Bureau: www.waynecountycvb.org

Agenda

- 8:00 - 9:00** **Registration, light refreshments**
- 9:00 - 9:15** **Welcome** - Kyle Maurer, OBS Director
 - Marcella Hawkins, Executive Director
- 9:15 - 10:00** **Darlene Sillick, Conservationist/Birder–**
 OWLS – WHOO knows anything about owls?
- 10:00 - 10:15 Break
- 10:15 - 11:00** **Roger Downer, Ph.D. – MOTHS - WHAT is the mystery?**
- 11:00 - 11:15 Break
- 11:15 - 12:00** **Chuck Jakubchak, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist –**
 How do migrating birds know WHEN to migrate?
- 12:00 - 12:30** **Medina Raptor Center**
- 12:30 - 1:30 Lunch - Raffle - Vendors
- 1:30 - 1:45** **Presentation of Blue Feather Award and**
 Wildlife Conservation Award
- 1:45 - 2:30** **Jason Martin, Ph.D., Cornell Lab of Ornithology –**
 Inside the box is WHERE the action is.
- 2:30 - 2:45 Break - Last Chance for Raffle
- 2:45 - 3:30** **Greg Miller (The Big Year) – On birdwatching –**
 WHY is it so addictive?



***Start saving your change
now. We will have a piggy
bank at the conference to
collect your donations.***

Accommodations

***Be sure to mention “OBS”
when making your reservation***

Rooms for Friday (22nd) are
being held until January 23.

Hilton Garden Inn

(across the road from
Shisler Conference Center)

959 Dover Road
Wooster, OH 44691
Phone - 330.202.7701
Fax 330.202.7781
\$91/night plus tax



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s) for name tags: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Number of People Attending: _____ E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Boxed lunch(es)? Enter number for each. All lunches are \$10.00 and come with macaroni salad, chips and a cookie. Prepared by Honeybaked Ham.

_____ Turkey Classic

_____ Chicken Salad

_____ Veggie Delight

_____ Ham

Make checks payable to OBS

Mail to:

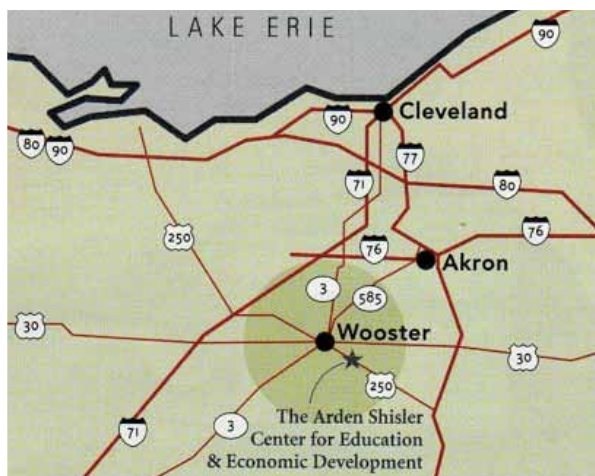
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To use PayPal, please send request to info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Questions?

Please call Marcella Hawkins at 330.465.6987 or send e-mail to info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Walk-ins welcome! *This Is A Free Educational Event Provided By The Ohio Bluebird Society if you pre-register. **There will be a \$5/person fee for walk-ins.***



If you would like to have a vendor table at the conference, please send an e-mail request to info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org or call 330.465.6987.

**Don't forget to bring a raffle item. The money we raise helps us with our conference costs and allows us to keep this a "free" educational event.*

OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

Fiscal Year End (9/30/2012) Treasurer's Report

Kara Scott, Treasurer

Grand Total as of 9/30/11 **\$19,175.42**

Activity for 10/1/2011 through 9/30/2012:

Apple Creek Bank CD

Balance Fwd. 9/30/11	10,216.89	
~ Interest	<u>59.81</u>	
Balance 9/30/12		\$10,276.70

First Merit Checking Account

Balance Fwd. 9/30/11		6,784.01
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Income

~ Annual Conference Receipts	2,252.14	
~ Donations	2,865.00	
~ Membership Dues	<u>4,162.50</u>	
Total Income		9,279.64

Expenses

~ Annual Conference	5,419.23	
~ Business Office	1,490.17	
~ Dues	250.00	
~ Education	94.51	
~ Membership Expense	245.37	
~ Newsletter	3,674.40	
~ PayPal Fees	34.89	
~ Website Expense	<u>1,000.00</u>	
Total Expenses		<u>-12,208.57</u>

Balance 9/30/12		3,855.08
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First Merit Savings Account

Balance Fwd. 9/30/11	2,174.52	
~ Interest	<u>1.00</u>	
Balance 9/30/12		<u>2,175.52</u>

TOTAL AS OF 9/30/12		<u>\$16,307.30</u>
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NET LOSS BETWEEN 9/30/11 AND 9/30/12		-2,868.12
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Trail Tales

Nesting Kestrels Establish a New Record in 2012

By Dick Tuttle



As monitors of a fifty-mile-long roadside nestbox project for American Kestrels in Delaware County, Dick Phillips and I did not know what to expect after a wet and warm winter, but our determined sparrow hawks fledged a record 77 young falcons in 2012 surpassing 76 raised in 2010. From

the first egg laid on March 14 to the last fledgling flying from its nest on August 18, nestboxes sheltered eggs or young for 158 days for a typical kestrel nesting season. Hot temperature extremes became a concern but no nestlings succumbed to the challenges of climate change as they thrived inside the project's well ventilated, dry nestboxes. On the other hand, for the second straight season, no clutches of six eggs were laid since three nestboxes held six eggs in 2010. Were there fewer prey items in 2012 to limit food energy for egg production, or did temperature extremes demand that more calories be used for cooling, etc.? Things to think about as the changing climate continues to set records.

For the 2012 season, 19 kestrel nestboxes were offered within 18 possible territories. We had installed two boxes; both numbered as K-1, one-half mile apart within the same territory. The plan was to remove one box after kestrels made their choice. However, our target

species rejected both boxes after they apparently found the adjoining habitats to be too overgrown. We removed both boxes on August 22 and reinstalled one in prime kestrel habitat along Harris Road where utility wires string above wide grassy berms.

A Closer Look at the 2012 Nesting Season

Kestrels completed three clutches with four eggs and 15 clutches of five eggs for 18 clutches in 17 boxes. The average number of eggs per clutch was 4.83. Only one clutch failed to hatch after the male disappeared, and after 78 (89.7%) of 87 eggs hatched, 77 (88.5%) fledged, and 98.7% of hatchlings fledged with an average of 4.53 fledglings for successful nests. One box fledged three, six nests fledged four each, and ten families raised five young. The only nestling to die in 2012 might have choked, starved, or suffocated after a snake lodged in its mouth and throat.

When other native species build nests in our kestrel boxes, we attach front panels from bluebird nestboxes to reduce the three-inch entrance to 1-1/2 inches to keep swallows and bluebirds from becoming snacks for kestrels. In 2012, six Tree Swallows from one family and two Eastern Bluebirds grew to fly from their huge natal nest chambers.

Too Many Falcons?

Sometimes, you have to go with your gut-feelings when managing wildlife. We decided to move K-17 from the Delaware Wildlife Area for a very good reason: there might be too many falcon species there for the good of our continent's smallest falcon, *Falco sparverius*. K-17 hung from a utility pole between two nestbox grids that I maintain for Tree Swallows along Panhandle and Leonardsburg Roads. Before March 15 each year, I take the grids' 52 nestboxes from winter storage at my home and return them to their permanent pipe mounts in the wildlife area. Three or four times each spring while I am working with my grids across the road from a 50-acre wetland, I hear the squawks of hundreds of ducks and



The Peregrine Fund recently reported that the American Kestrel population in the U.S.A. has declined 47-1/2 percent during the last 45 years. These nine-day-old kestrel nestlings will try to reverse that trend.



If this situation is ever encountered again, a gentle attempt will be made to pull the snake from the nestling's mouth. A leg band identified this kestrel after its remains had been cannibalized by its siblings.

geese as they take to the air all at once, and I smile as I try to find the Bald Eagle that is causing the mayhem and mass flight. Many times, I have failed to locate a flying eagle that should be easy to see, so what else could be causing the fuss?

During early March visits in 2012, a pair of kestrels was part of the life perched on the utility wire that passed over K-17. By April, the kestrels had disappeared and European Starlings had claimed the box. We evicted three clutches of starling eggs before a kestrel egg appeared on May 28, then we counted five cold falcon eggs on June 13 and the male kestrel was nowhere to be seen. The female kestrel stayed all summer but her eggs remained cold. The nest had failed.

Presently, the leading suspect for K-17's failure is Duck Hawks, better known by their modern name, Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*). Peregrines are becoming more common in Delaware County and that is good. Their nickname explains one of the reasons that they would find the wildlife area to their liking since 159 acres of the area are seasonal wetlands managed for migrating and nesting ducks. Where there are ducks, there should be duck hawks. Peregrines also target Mourning Doves sitting on wires, and to a peregrine, a kestrel perched on a wire would also encourage a deep, fast dive for lunch.

Where would non-breeding first and second year peregrines be roosting, and where might breeders find

A female kestrel is determined to defend her three hatchlings and one egg on July 14. The family was to be the only successful second brood from the same box for 2012. The pictured egg also hatched and fledged.



scrapes in tall cliffs above the ground for nests? Across the western edge of Delaware County, tall limestone cliffs parallel the Scioto River and become even taller in Franklin County. Am I making a diction mistake by using "tall" instead of "deep" to describe these cliffs, because I'm talking about stone quarries that hide their walls below the horizon and remain unseen by most of our species. Peregrine Falcons, on the other hand, may be using quarries to roost or nest in. Peregrines try to avoid the murderous Great-horned Owl, so quarries with mature woodlots overlooking cliffs would be unacceptable to a wise peregrine. Well, something to think about, but a gut-feeling nonetheless.

There is a second falcon species that might have been a problem for K-17's kestrels. Bird watchers frequently spot them during their migration as they perch in a stand of cottonwood trees 90 yards from K-17. Merlins (*Falco columbarius*), nicknamed pigeon hawks, can be seen in the wildlife area between mid-March and mid-May, within the same time period when K-17's first kestrels disappeared in 2012.

So, acting on gut-feelings, we moved K-17 to Cackler Road where it now stands nine-tenths of a mile from

K-18. The new location includes a solitary Oak tree that stands ninety yards from K-17's new utility pole. The majestic oak will provide a safe haven for a kestrel while it guards its nest. Also, the Oak's crown will shield our smallest falcon from the speedy, lethal dives of its larger cousin. As Dick and I pulled off the road to install K-17 at its new site on August 22, a kestrel flushed from the electric line strung over a well-manicured grassy berm. We broke into laughter and both announced in our own way, "Buddy, you just got a new nestbox!"

Looking forward to 2013, raptor on, Dick Tuttle



A mature oak tree is an added bonus for K-17's new location along a quiet road with wide, grassy berms teeming with small rodents and insects.

Member News



Welcome - To Our New Members

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Guy, Susan
Hess, Linda
Lambright, Vickie
Ralston, Don
Smith, Carol
Taylor, John

Donations

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Petco, Janice

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Donna Mattmuller

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Search for Ohio Bluebird Society to join our group.

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For the Bluebird lover in your life – think about a gift membership for Christmas.



Bluebird Winter Treat (Meriam Bourne)

- 1 c. Flour
- 1 c. Lard
- 4 c. Yellow Cornmeal
- 1 c. Crunchy Peanut Butter
- 1 c. Currants
- 1 c. Sunflower Hearts

Mix together by hand.
Pack into yogurt cups to mold, then pop out to use.

Winter Feeding

Be ready for winter feeding – whether it's currants or mealworms. If you order mealworms from The Natures Way, be sure to mention that you are an OBS member to receive your discount. www.thenaturesway.com



Start saving your change now!

We will have a piggy bank at our 2013 conference to collect your donations. Help us keep our annual conference FREE. Any other donations will also be gladly appreciated. Thank you!



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