



# Bluebird Monitor

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

Winter 2015



## Member News

### Marcella Hawkins Receives OBS Blue Feather Award

Wooster, Ohio - Marcella Hawkins was named the 2015 Blue Feather award recipient from the Ohio Bluebird Society (OBS), a statewide organization headquartered in Wooster. This award honors an OBS member in recognition of that individual's extraordinary accomplishments in all areas of Bluebird conservation and management. OBS was formed in 1987 to support the return and perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity nesting birds in Ohio. For more information, go to [www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org](http://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org).



Nominations for the 2016 recipients of both the prestigious Blue Feather Award and also the Wildlife Conservation Award are being sought up to Dec 31, 2015. Please send nominations to [info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org](mailto:info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org) or download and mail the filled out PDF form found on the OBS website [ohiobluebirdsociety.org](http://ohiobluebirdsociety.org), under the link 'Awards'.

### Donations

**Harold and Nanette Waite - \$50.00**

For *Nest of Bluebirds* books

### Amazon Smile

With the holiday shopping focus in the weeks ahead please remember that you can help OBS whenever you purchase on Amazon. Simply sign up to purchase through Amazon Smile instead and designate the Ohio Bluebird Society as your charitable choice. A portion of your purchase will be given to OBS and won't cost you anything – what a deal! OBS has made over \$300 in the past year through members who have done this. It is simple and helps our budget!

### OBS News Email Edition

In order to save OBS significant cost for printing and mailing the quarterly journals Monitor we would like to ask members to consider changing to email versions of the Monitor. It is always sent out earlier than the printed version, is full color throughout the issue and is a green alternative that saves trees and money. If you would like to start receiving the email version instead of the printed one please send an email to [info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org](mailto:info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org).

### OBS Gift Memberships and Legacy Program

Give the gift of an OBS membership to a bluebird lover in your life. See page 15 for membership application information. Another very special way to honor a bluebird enthusiast is through the Legacy Program. Information and details can also be found on the our website under the link titled "OBS Legacy Program."

*Welcome To Our New Life  
Member Jon Zabowski*

# Blooming Bluebirders



## David Herpst's Troop 241, Eagle Scout Project: *Twelve Bluebird Nesting Boxes*

By Jay K. Brindo, OBS President

On September 5th of this year my wife and I were headed home from visiting family in the South Russel area. My wife spotted some guys out in a field installing nesting boxes so I pulled in the parking lot and made the several hundred yard walk up the hill in 90 degree heat to introduce myself. Like every other effort I've made in regards to Bluebirds, I found it certainly worth the effort. It was there that I met David Herpst, his dad Mr. Michael Herpst, adult scout supervisor Mr. Ken Vacek, and David's brother and fellow scout, Austin Herpst. I explained how I got involved with helping Bluebirds and The Ohio Bluebird Society, and how one of the organizations goals is to offer support, encouragement and certainly recognitions for such efforts. I also gave them OBS literature, several Hit The Trail for Bluebirds brochures, written by OBS Advisor Dick Tuttle, and OBS business cards that I carry in the glove compartment of my car. We talked about the domino effect of such conservation efforts and I asked if I could take their photo and write a feature for one of our upcoming newsletters. Their big smiles answered my questions.

They explained to me that Linda Gilbert with Geauga Parks had helped direct them in placement of boxes and committed to the follow-up monitoring of the trail. Mr. Herpst said they would post the information I gave them in the Park's bulletin board so people visiting would learn more about cavity nesting birds and The Ohio Bluebird Society. David's one comment to me was, "boy I didn't realize how much work this would be." I followed by saying, "yes, it is a lot of work, but it's also hard to realize how many lives will be affected in a positive way by your efforts." David is shown on the far left of the bottom photo and his dad to the far right.

So hats off to them, Geauga Park's Linda Gilbert, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, and the partnering Village of South Russel for giving these young scouts a lifelong learning opportunity toward nature conservation. It was an honor and privilege to meet David and I know he's headed for making this world a better place for future generations.







## *Getting in Contact with Our OBS Area Contacts* **Youth and Conservation Efforts in Central Ohio**

By Darlene Sellick, OBS Franklin County Area Contact

Through my almost 28 years of bluebirding, I have found setting up trails of boxes and training new or existing volunteers something I enjoy. Sometimes I start from scratch to put in a new trail or more times than not, I am repositioning nest boxes, adding baffles or refurbishing an old trail. Each time a list of things to-do is shared with the land owner or trail manager.

Many years ago I learned how much I enjoyed involving our youth! For 20 years I have been an advisor for 23 Boy Scouts who received their Eagle Award, the highest honor in Boy Scouts. I have also worked with several Girl Scout troops and children of all ages to build nest boxes. I am co-advisor to the central Ohio OYBC (Ohio Young Birders Club) through Black Swamp Bird Observatory. Their executive director, Kimberly Kaufmann, had a dream to start a club for young birders and the central Ohio chapter was the second chapter in Ohio. Our group meets monthly and also plans yearly projects which include varied and meaningful conservation projects. We are teaching about caring for our planet, paying it forward, helping birds and being stewards of our “local patch”. That is a Cornell e-Bird term used to describe a fairly small area that you cover regularly or where you really care about tracking your bird lists. A patch can be your Local Park, favorite lake, birding spot or refuge wildlife drive. I hope you will take out a young person and let them peer into a nest box and involve them in bluebirding in your local patch.

Thanks to the Eastern Bluebird I began meeting people who had the shared interest of being outside learning from and helping nature and learning good conservation practices from each other. From the experts to the newcomers, each season birds teach us if we give them time. One of my favorite photos shows some of these people. Let me tell you about this photo.

On an 18 acre wooded wetlands which is located east of Route 270 and Sawmill Road near Columbus, Ohio is an

area owned by the Division of Wildlife called Sawmill Wetlands. It is an area where I received permission to put up 14 nest boxes and a Northern Flicker box. Fourteen year old Stephen Bischoff and his older brother Sam and father Tim live nearby and agreed to be the dedicated monitors for this area. Within 3 weeks we built the boxes and prepared the poles and baffles and received donations to cover the cost of the project. In the photo you will see the many folks who came out to install the 14 nest boxes. These are some of the wonderful people I have met thanks to our common love of the bluebird! I hope you will find new friends too as you work on projects, involve youth and help ‘the bird with the sky on his back’.



From left to right- Madame Wingnut (Paula Ziebarth), John Taylor, Jerry Weise, Charlie Zepp, Darlene Sellick, Al La Sala, Tim Bischoff father of Sam (right front in red Buckeye shirt) and Stephen Bischoff, and on the ground in front is Paula's son Gregory Ziebarth who has built over 120 nestboxes including the 14 at Sawmill Wetlands.



# Out of the Box

## Pine Siskin

### (*Carduelis Pinus*)

By Cathy Priebe; Photo by Dave Priebe

About six years ago in early fall, I happened to notice a bird that I was not very familiar with on one of my thistle feeders. It did not take long for me to realize that I had a pine siskin. Yes, I had seen them before this. Just not in my backyard.

The next day brought a few more, and then a few more and then a few more... After two weeks; I was feeding over 100 siskins (all over the yard) and replenishing four feeders every other day. I even bought a five pound thistle feeder so I did not have to go outside as often. Needless to say, this feeding frenzy was getting a bit costly, but I was not going to stop. These little birds were so entertaining, especially when winter can be so dull sometimes.

Fondly described by Pete Dunne as “the bratty, streaky, little pipsqueak at the thistle feeder”, siskins are a small, brown-striped finch type bird with some dull yellow throughout and a yellow lower wing bar. They also have a little, pointy bill and beady black eyes.

Pine siskins are an irruptive (meaning they show up without an invitation) species that generally breeds from southern to central Alaska across boreal Canada. They are also found year round in the northern U.S. and in the western mountain ranges. In the winter and early fall, large flocks of siskins will leave their northern ranges and head south to forage for food.

Take it from me; if you are lucky enough to host a hungry group of siskins, they stick around as long as the buffet stays filled! Along with gold finches, house finches, American tree sparrows and others, I was keeping the feed stores happy on a weekly basis.

Even though thistle is probably their favorite food, siskins like to eat conifer cone seeds, weed seed, insects, flower buds and nectar. They will also eat on the ground and generally hang out with gold finches. Once I became more familiar with their vocalizations, I learned to hear them before I saw them. Siskins have a wonderful and identifiable call that almost sounds like a zipper being pulled up. I describe it as zzzzziiiiippppp. Other descriptions are zzzreeee, zzzzeeee or zzzzeh. I guess it is open for interpretation.

Generally, siskins do not regularly nest in Ohio. There have been some documented sites at several lake metro parks in the past. Since I was advised to keep a close eye out for nesting behavior, I was able to document at least two nesting pairs in my own backyard the following spring. Yes, I had siskins until June that year. I was even able to observe an adult siskin feeding a baby cowbird and a baby siskin. Amazing!

According to the OBBA, that year produced many nesting siskins all over Ohio. It was a banner year for siskins and fortunately there were people paying attention. Some very important data was collected on a very rare nester.

On that note, keep your thistle feeders filled this winter. According to past records, siskins have major irruptions every other year. I will guarantee that you will be delightfully entertained by these sporadic winter visitors!

References: *Birds of Ohio*, Jim McCormac; *Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion*, Pete Dunne; *Birds of the Cleveland Region*, Larry Rosche; *Stokes Field Guide To Birds*, Donald and Lillian Stokes; *OBBA*.







# Wildlife Preservation

## Catesby and the Bluebird

By Jim McCormac



On April 23, 1712, one of the greatest naturalists to ever step foot in the Americas landed in what was then considered the Colony of Virginia. At that time, this territory was under the rule of Great Britain, and the naturalist was an Englishman named Mark Catesby. Catesby possessed an insatiable desire to study and document the flora and fauna of eastern North America. He began his explorations long before John James Audubon, Alexander Wilson and other better known naturalists arrived in the New World and commenced their investigations.

After seven years of roaming the southeastern part of North America – what today would be the Carolinas and Virginia – Catesby returned to England. His illustrations and descriptions of the animals and plants that he discovered dazzled his countryman, who thirsted for information about mysterious and largely unexplored America. In 1722, Catesby returned to the New World, the hand-picked natural philosopher (scientist in current parlance) of an expedition organized by botanist William Sherard and underwritten by the Royal Society, among other patrons. Catesby once again set sail, making landfall in Charleston, South Carolina. For the next three years, Catesby trekked about the southeastern coastal plains and its environs, finding scores of previously undiscovered animals and plants. Upon his return to the Old World in 1726, he began work on his magnum opus: *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*. Catesby released his work in sections, and the final product, completed in 1747, encompassed 220 colored illustrations of his discoveries, along with brief descriptions of the new plants and animals. Cromwell Mortimer, secretary of the Royal Society and a contemporary of Catesby's, wrote high praise of *The Natural History*: "...the most magnificent work... since the art of printing has been discovered."

Mark Catesby was a naturalist in the truest sense, with boundless curiosity about all life forms. The plates in his *Natural History* treat plants, snakes, frogs, fish, and more. And, of course, birds. Largely due to the indefatigable



Catesby, 76 species of birds have been described to science from South Carolina – more than any other state. One of those species is featured on Plate 47 in Volume I of *The Natural History*, and it will be of special interest to readers of this publication. The plate is an illustration of an eastern bluebird perched on a stump, surrounded by a bouquet of sarsaparilla vine. This is the first documentation of our favored thrush, and Catesby was the first to formally note its existence. He dubbed it the "blew bird", along with the polynomial "*Rubicula americana caerulea*". Following is Catesby's brief description that accompanied his illustration - the first published account of this species:

*"This Bird weighs nineteen Penny Weight and is about the bigness of a Sparrow. The Eyes are large. The Head and upper-part of the Body, Tail and Wings are of a bright blue, except that the Ends of the Wing-Feathers are brown. The Throat and Breast, of a dirty Red: The Belly white. 'Tis a Bird of a very swift Flight, its Wings being very long; so that the Hawk generally pursues it in vain. They make their Nests in Holes of Trees; are harmless Birds, and resemble our Robin-red-breast. They feed on Insects only. These Birds are common in most Parts of North America, I having seen them in Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and the Bermudas Islands."*

We've gathered mountains of information on America's most beloved thrush since Catesby's day, and could readily amend several aspects of his spare account. But the privilege of being the first to illustrate and describe the eastern bluebird will forever belong to Mark Catesby.



# Ask Madame WingNut

## Alien Vs. Predator

by Paula Ziebarth

In the 2004 movie “Alien Vs. Predator”, character Sebastian de Rosa declares, “The enemy of my enemy... is my friend.” The movie title, along with this quote, embody my attitude toward House Wrens in the city.

The little House Wren can be a fierce predator of our other native cavity nesting birds; removing nests, eggs, and young nestlings in multiple nest boxes found in a territory claimed by them. That is why, on all my Eastern Bluebird Trails, I dissuade House Wrens from nesting by siting boxes outside their habitat (at least 40 yards from heavily wooded or brushy areas) whenever possible and block off or remove any nest boxes that House Wrens show interest in.

In densely populated cities, Eastern Bluebirds have little chance of nesting successfully due to their archenemy. I am talking about an alien to be reckoned with, the infamous House Sparrow (or English Sparrow). This non-native species was introduced to North America deliberately in the mid-1800's and has wreaked havoc with all of our native cavity nesting species. This extremely capable aggressive alien outcompetes native species by using its seed cracking beak to kill adults, young and eggs inside nest cavities. In older cities, nooks and crannies abound for House Sparrows to nest in: holes in building facades and siding, old gutters, signs, light fixtures, etc. Human structures fledge nest after nest of them throughout the breeding season. Little brown winged aliens suffuse the landscape in search of new cavities to breed in and few native cavity nesting birds stand a chance.

In addition to monitoring nest boxes, Madame WingNut enjoys gardening. In the City of Delaware in central Ohio, she has a small vegetable plot at the Delaware County Community Garden. In the

center of that garden plot sits a solitary nest box. Within that nest box, in an impressive fortress of sticks, five fuzzy predators are growing stronger every day. Soon they will join six siblings that fledged from this same box earlier in the season. Site fidelity will drive these little winged predators to return to the area next season to breed. They will be looking for nests of competitors to take over; eggs to pierce and toss out; young nestlings to hurl. Aliens beware.

While I discourage people in densely populated cities from trying to attract Eastern Bluebirds to their yard, I encourage them to provide nest sites for House Wrens. It is easy to keep House Wrens safe from House Sparrows by installing a 1-1/8” entry hole on a nest box. House Sparrows are unable to enter, keeping the native nesting birds safe. While working in their yards, people will be regaled with bold, bubbly wren song and scolded heartily when working near an active nest box. I find the antics of House Wrens extremely entertaining. The parent birds will load themselves and their young with garden insect pests. Everybody wins... except the House Sparrow... which cannot enter the box to breed... which of course is a major bonus. In the battle of Alien Vs. Predator, I am cheering for the predator.



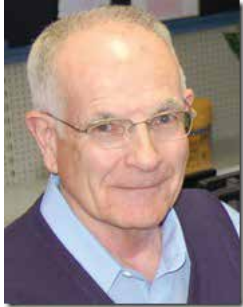
*An experienced monitor of over a dozen Bluebird Trails in central and northern Ohio, Madame WingNut enjoys all creatures that fly, regardless of their stage of development.*

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

# Feeding Our Bluebirds - Part 2

## Experiences, Observations and Opinions

by Mel Bolt, OBS Advisor and Past OBS Blue Feather Award Recipient



*Editor's note: Feeding our Bluebirds - Part 1 appeared in the fall 2015 issue of the Bluebird Monitor. Mel Bolt introduced us to his belief that bluebirds should be fed only when "the need arises" and that any food offered should be a natural, normal part of their diet. His concern that the behavior of bluebirds could be altered*

*by human intervention was supported by some of his observations and experiences.*

I believe we should not give food assistance to bluebirds on a continuing basis and I also believe that the food presented should be natural. I have experimented with using wild berries as supplemental food during the cold winter months and early spring when chicks are in the nest and insects are in short supply.

During the fall of 1991 I collected an assortment of wild berries, most of which I could not identify, from the shrubs on The Ohio Agricultural and Research Center in Wooster, Ohio and wild Cherry and Dogwood berries from my yard. I placed them on a divided platform feeder (a section for each berry) and located it on the ground near a nest box preferred by Bluebirds. To my surprise the Bluebirds preferred the small Dogwood berries as they could swallow them whole even when frozen. They could not eat the large berries as their beaks are too soft to crush the berries, especially when frozen. After experimenting with different ways of storing the dogwood berries I discovered that placing the berries in plastic bags that were filled with water and then placing them in the freezer for storage worked best. These were then thawed enough to remove the water and presented to the birds still frozen. The Bluebirds swallowed the small frozen berries whole without a problem.



I then tried to experiment by placing some chopped raisins on the feeding platform and they gobbled them up. So I purchased some baking currants (a small raisin like fruit made from the Zante

grape) and put them on the platform. These became the favorite even over the dogwood berries. I even made a

feeder designed for presenting them and painted it tile red- it was somewhat like a nestbox with a removable front panel which had a 1 ½ inch oval hole in it. I placed it near the nestbox and after the birds located it I moved it to a nearby tree and then to my deck. Some years a flock of up to eleven birds feasted from the feeder so I made a larger

feeder with two holes for the additional feeding birds.



Regardless of how many birds were feeding it was not made available until mid December. I didn't want to possibly interfere with the migration of the birds. It is estimated that 10% of our Bluebirds winter over in the northern

tier of states. The feeder remained in place until late February or early March. If the spring was cold and damp making insects and other food sources scarce then the feeder remained until just before the first chicks were to fledge and then not used again the entire summer. Thus, I did not want to change the natural hunting behavior of the young birds.

Using this method of feeding caused some slight behavior changes with the birds. They frequented the feeder early in the morning and late in the day with occasional visits during the daylight hours. They also learned the color of the feeder and the location of the food but I believe these were minimal changes. In an overview of this practice of 12 years of feeding the bluebirds I observed the birds thrived very well during the winter months. However since they did not spend their energy returning from migration and they were in prime condition they frequently began their nesting season much too early, sometimes laying eggs before the freezing time was over. On rare occasions the winter fed bluebirds would nest three times during the summer as the result of them being in prime condition.

Other foods presented by some people are based on lard, suet, peanut butter, etc and mixed with corn meal, nuts of different kinds, seeds, etc. I believe that these are not natural foods and that Bluebirds must be trained to come to the feeder and to accept them. In summary, we must be ever alert to the natural needs and foods of Bluebirds and try our best not to impose our human influences on them. In my opinion they should remain wild and free and not allowed to become domesticated.



# OBS Spotlight

## Gary Fowler



By Chuck Jakubchak, OBS Board of Trustees, Photos By Penny Brandau

*Gary Fowler, a Master Bird Bander residing in the Cleveland area, recently banded the first kestrel nestlings of the Black River Audubon Society's new kestrel program. Kestrel program director Larry Wilson contacted Gary to request his help in banding these young falcons. OBS member Penny Brandau and her husband Fritz were the monitors for this nest box. Watching the banding of these young birds was a very exciting event! For his volunteer efforts and all of the excitement surrounding the new kestrel chicks we decided to place Gary in the OBS Spotlight for this edition of the Bluebird Monitor.*



The kestrel box was lowered on its telescoping pole for nest box monitoring and also for the kestrel banding.

Bird banding, just like nest box monitoring, is a valuable portion of citizen science because valuable data is collected regarding nesting habits, migration and overall health of the species we enjoy. Thankfully, Gary and his wife Jill, are dedicated volunteer bird banders, having begun their career/hobby back in 1997.

Bird banding isn't just about working in the field a few months of the year. Gary attested to the fact that he spends 75-100 days a year in the field, actively banding in spring, summer and fall as part of research projects. All of his work is motivated by the steady decline

of neotropical migratory species and hopes that his research will help ornithologists better understand the factors contributing to those shrinking populations.

When not in the field, he compiles statistics, summarizes data and submits reports to national organizations that analyze the information and marry it with corresponding info from other states. The paperwork is intensive, but a necessary part of the banding process and Gary is committed to accuracy and timeliness, even though it consumes a good portion of his week. In many ways, his sizeable commitment mirrors the efforts of dedicated OBS members.

Since 1997 Gary and Jill have collectively banded more than 26,000 birds with goldfinches and catbirds being the primary species banded (3,000 and 2,300 respectively). Although they focus on song birds, Gary has also had opportunity to band owls, hummingbirds and waterfowl. He is especially proud of the snowy owl he banded in 2014 and of his chance to band a bald eagle along with 63 red-tailed hawks. Can you imagine having the opportunity to hold any of these species in your hand and see them up close and personal?



Gary measured the young kestrels' legs for correct leg band size.

*"OBS Spotlight" continued on page 11*



# Winter Roosting Boxes

By Dean Sheldon, OBS Advisor



If you take the time to thumb through the endless parade of fall gardening, garden supply and birding catalogs, you are bound to find entries suggesting the purchase of special roosting boxes for birds. The commercial sale of these boxes has been very successful. Generally speaking, these boxes are about twice the size of a conventional

bluebird nestbox. These proposed winter shelters are about 9" across, 7.5 "deep and 19 " (+/-) high. The box has a bottom entry hole and six dowel rod interior perches located on the sides of the box. The boxes are constructed of the same wood as is used in bluebird boxes.

Homemade versions of this same kind of box often include the use of extra thick wood together with Styrofoam (blueboard) insulation for extra protection from cold, windy, wintry nights. There are other variations in the design....all for the purpose of protecting birds in our severe winter climate.

Please note: these supplemental roosting boxes are not a required part of bluebirding trail equipment. We have never used these boxes because we find that our resident bluebirds are successful in finding winter shelter in the naturally-occurring nesting cavities found in the deep woods, bottomlands and thick pine-spruce plantations in our area. Furthermore, we find that groups of bluebirds oftentimes roost together in conventional nesting boxes along our trails for warmth on cold nights. Evidence of this can be seen in an accumulation of seeds in the fecal matter discovered in the routine spring cleaning of nest boxes. Sometimes dead birds are found due to overcrowding.

***There are many good reasons NOT to purchase or employ the use of special roosting boxes. Some of these reasons include:***

- Positioning of the boxes in exposed locations where they are subjected to greater wind and storm conditions;
- Because of the over-sized dimensions of the chamber, the heat loss opportunities from individual birds is greater. Natural cavities (in trees) make for warmer/more protected roosting circumstances within wooded areas;

- The perches permit individual roosting without the communal advantage of "cuddling up" with other birds whose feathers are puffed out and where heat is shared between birds;
- A bottom entry hole causes a constant draft of cold air. This can cause chilling of birds on the floor of the box... especially if no perches are used;
- The exposed location often gives rise to competition from sparrows and starlings. That is generally not the case in the natural, deep woods cavities. In the fall, many sparrows/starlings abandon those wooded nest sites in favor of farmyards and feedlots where there is warmth and a huge food supply over the winter season;
- The principal food sources (fruits, berries, insect eggs and wintering insects) for bluebirds are found within wooded areas. Those areas likely would be some distance away from the locations generally chosen for roost boxes.

Our Christmas Bird Counts almost always reveal that, in the main, most of the Eastern Bluebirds found on the Counts, are in/around heavily wooded areas. On the Plymouth Count several years ago, we found that 91% of the EABL sighted were in such areas. If that be typical, one can see that there seems to be little reason for the installation of the supplemental roosting boxes.

The North American Bluebird Society has undertaken studies and reported that: "Until field testing proves that they are widely used, NABS does not recommend the use of specialized roosting boxes. Adequate roosting sites for birds during the non-breeding season can be provided through natural cavities or by modifying existing nest boxes through the sealing of ventilation holes and openings under the roof lines of the boxes..."

OK: The temptation is always great to "do something special" for bluebirds... and roosting boxes fall into that category. All bluebirders spend countless hours on the trails of boxes making sure that the bluebirds are cared for during the nesting season (early April into mid-August). So it is only an outgrowth of that concern that causes many bluebirders to want to carry over their efforts into the rest of the year. The evidence clearly shows that roosting boxes do little, if anything, to improve the lot of bluebirds in the off season. Save your resources and add a few more productive nest boxes for the next nesting season.

# Tracking Success of the Eastern Bluebird Through Volunteer Nest Box Monitoring

By Heather Clendenin of the Toledo Metroparks

The Eastern Bluebird is a success story in conservation biology: with populations displaced by introduced species, efforts to restore prairies and supplement habitat with nest boxes contribute to their ongoing recovery. The Metroparks of the Toledo Area have participated in these efforts, and volunteers within the parks have conducted nest box monitoring since 1988.

The monitoring data collected is used to track changes in rates of eggs fledged over the years. However, these observations are only relative without baseline figures to serve as benchmarks of success. Finding baseline values can prove difficult; little has been published recently that includes data on fledge rates comparable to those recorded in the parks. The most recent research found were studies on nests through 1968-1977, where eggs fledged at a mean rate of 52.1% (Pinkowski, 1979).

Given that populations of bluebirds have increased by approximately 2% yearly from 1966 to 2010 (North American Breeding Bird Survey, 2012), more recent figures

for comparison were necessary for meaningful analysis. Data was requested from areas where monitoring had occurred using compatible methods: Holden Arboretum and Lake Metroparks by volunteer nest box monitors, and Delaware State Park, Ohio Wesleyan University Trail, and the Olentangy Environmental Control center by Dick Tuttle. This allowed for assessment of fledge rates in relatively similar areas under comparable conditions, acting as a proxy of the desired baseline.

The story told by these data fit into other documented trends of stability and growth. Within the Metroparks of the Toledo Area, our data show ongoing increases in numbers of eggs laid and young fledged, and improvements in fledge rates over time (Figures 1-3). Data from the most recent years appear consistent across locations; though the areas sampled show variation in the range of values, there were no significant differences in the mean fledge rates (Figure 4). Additionally, all study areas show a dramatic improvement over the documented rate of eggs fledged from Pinkowski's research; the total mean fledge rate for all locations was 75.8%, remarkably higher than the 52.1% reported in 1979.

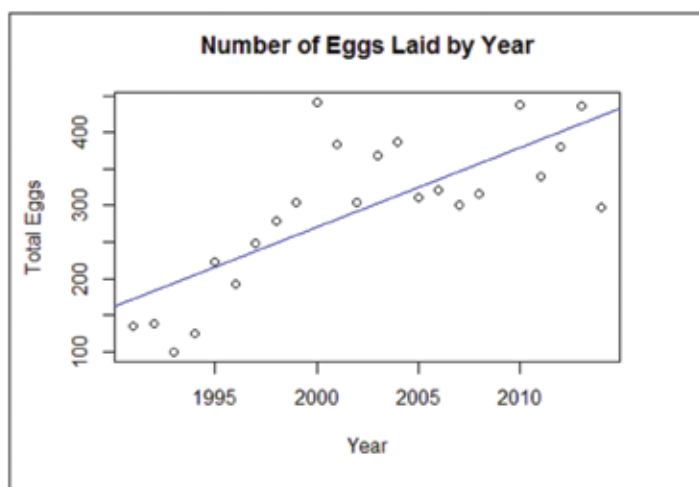


Figure 1: Open circles indicate total number of eggs documented by volunteer monitors of nest boxes within the Metroparks of the Toledo Area. The regression line illustrates a positive correlation between the length of the study and the number of eggs laid (Pearson's product-moment correlation = 0.753; p-value = 3.356e-05).

These analyses, however, are only descriptive. Given more time, it would be possible to organize and test additional data collected by volunteers. Further analysis would help determine which factors are driving these changes, be it overall habitat restoration, site-specific management practices, or longer periods of warm weather permitting a greater number of successful nest attempts per year. Data such as these, collected by dedicated volunteers, have the power to guide management decisions and can act as indicators of effective practices. These monitoring efforts will only grow in importance as climate change progresses and we face new challenges in protecting wildlife.

Much thanks are offered to Christina Piedrahita of Lake Metroparks, Mike Watson of Holden Arboretum, and Dick Tuttle of the Columbus area for their contributions.



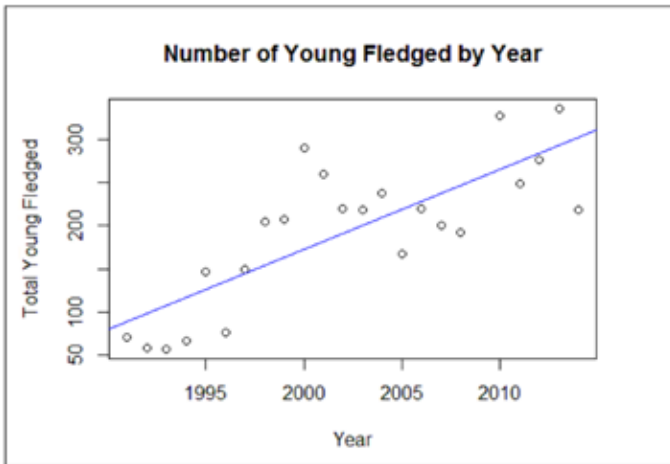


Figure 2: Open circles indicate total number of young fledged documented by volunteer monitors of nest boxes within the Metroparks of the Toledo Area. The regression line illustrates a positive correlation between the length of the study and the number of young fledged (Pearson's product-moment correlation = 0.788; p-value = 7.958e-06).



Figure 3: Open circles indicate the rate of eggs fledged documented by volunteer monitors of nest boxes within the Metroparks of the Toledo Area. The regression line

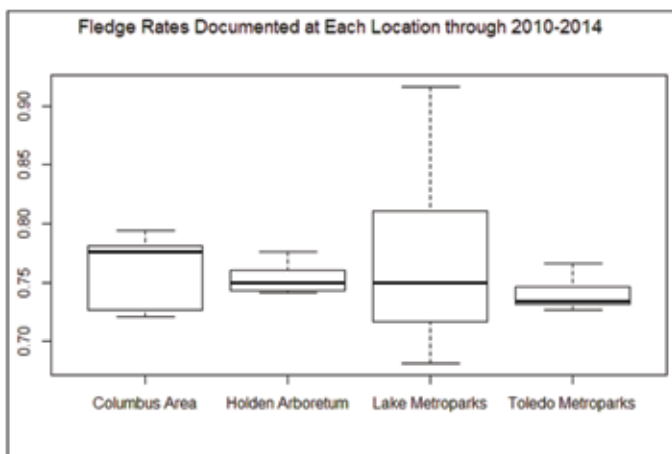


Figure 4: Mean fledge rate for each location is designated by the heavy black line. Other divisions represent quartiles. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that there was no significant difference between fledge rates by location (F-value = 0.394, p-value = 0.759).



Banding is complete and the young kestrels are returned to their nest box.

Gary bands birds at a variety of locations throughout northeast Ohio but frequents the Lake Erie Nature and Science Center (Bay Village) and the Medina Raptor Center (Spencer) because he especially enjoys working with wildlife rehabilitators. During the colder winter months he and Jill can be found banding at the Rocky River Nature Center (North Olmsted) on select weekends.

Working at the nature center in North Olmsted may be the most valuable work he performs because it is open to the public and he encourages children of all ages to watch him work. "Seeing a child's face light up when they observe the beauty of a bird from inches away or help to release a captured bird back in to the wild is priceless," according to Gary. He further emphasized that his goal in conducting public bandings, "Is to get people excited about birds and to establish an emotional tie between the observer and the bird, one that would be difficult to achieve any other way."

In spite of his 18 years of banding experience, 26,000 assorted birds and work with various wildlife rehabilitators, never before had Gary had the occasion to band a wild kestrel chick. He was thrilled with the chance to band the kestrel nestlings for Penny and Fritz and would gladly do it again. Let's hope OBS members call him many more times to band young kestrels.

# Ohio Bluebird Society Annual Conference

February 20, 2016

registration 8:30, conference 9:00-3:15



John C. Myers Convocation Center ~ Ashland University ~ Ashland, Ohio

## ***Birds and People: Collaborating For A Better World***

### Speakers and Topics Include:

*From Refuse to Refuge: Byers Woods* - Chuck Jakubchak

#### Keynote Address

Jamey Emmert, ODNR Division of Wildlife  
*Where Would We Be Without Birds?*

#### Lunch Break-out Sessions

*Getting Started with Bluebirds* - Jay Brindo

*Improving Your Bluebirding Skills* - Don Plant and Dale Rabung

*Grants and OBS Assistance* - Mike Watson

*Restoring the Mountain Bluebird (film)* - Penny Brandau

*Bluebirds to Barn Owls: Thinking Outside the (Bluebird) Box* - Kurt Gaertner

*First the Birds, Now the Bees* - Carrie Elvey

*Birds for Eternity* - Chuck Jakubchak and Sara Brink



Open to the public. Cost: \$25 OBS members / \$30 non-OBS members

**Registration Deadline: Feb. 5th**

**Conference Location:** 401 College Ave., Ashland, OH 44805 ~ [www.ashland.edu](http://www.ashland.edu)

Registration form and more info available at [ohiobluebirdsociety.org](http://ohiobluebirdsociety.org)



# Ohio Bluebird Society Annual Conference

Saturday, Feb. 20, 2016

ohiobluebirdsociety.org



## Registration Form

**Registration Deadline: Feb. 5th**

You must pre-register - there is **NO** walk-in registration this year.

**Price** (includes conference and lunch): \$25 OBS members, \$30 non-OBS members  
(no outside food allowed at convocation center)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ OBS Member? YES / NO

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch Option: ☐Veggie Wrap ☐Ham Club ☐Turkey Club

Additional participants: (if different address, please use separate form)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ OBS Member? Yes (\$25) / No (\$30)

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch Choice: ☐Veggie Wrap ☐Ham Club ☐Turkey Club

Name \_\_\_\_\_ OBS Member? Yes (\$25) / No (\$30)

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch Choice: ☐Veggie Wrap ☐Ham Club ☐Turkey Club

Make checks payable to "OBS"

Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Additional information and registration forms available at OBS website: ohiobluebirdsociety.org

## OBS Area Contacts (as of April 1, 2014)

Up-to-date list is available online at [www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org](http://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org)

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### Address:

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

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



# Ohio Bluebird Society

## Number of bluebirds fledged in 2015 by county

REPORTED AS OF 11/03/15:

Eastern Bluebird - 4,162

# Reports Submitted - 42

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

Tree Swallow – 4,384

House Wrens – 1205

Carolina Chickadee – 87

Black-Capped Chickadee – 114

Carolina Wren – 93

Prothonotary Warbler – 16

Purple Martins – 1124

Eastern Tufted Titmouse – 0

American Kestrel – 81

Barn Swallow – 153

Wood Duck – 4

Osprey – 6

House Sparrow Eggs Discarded – 548

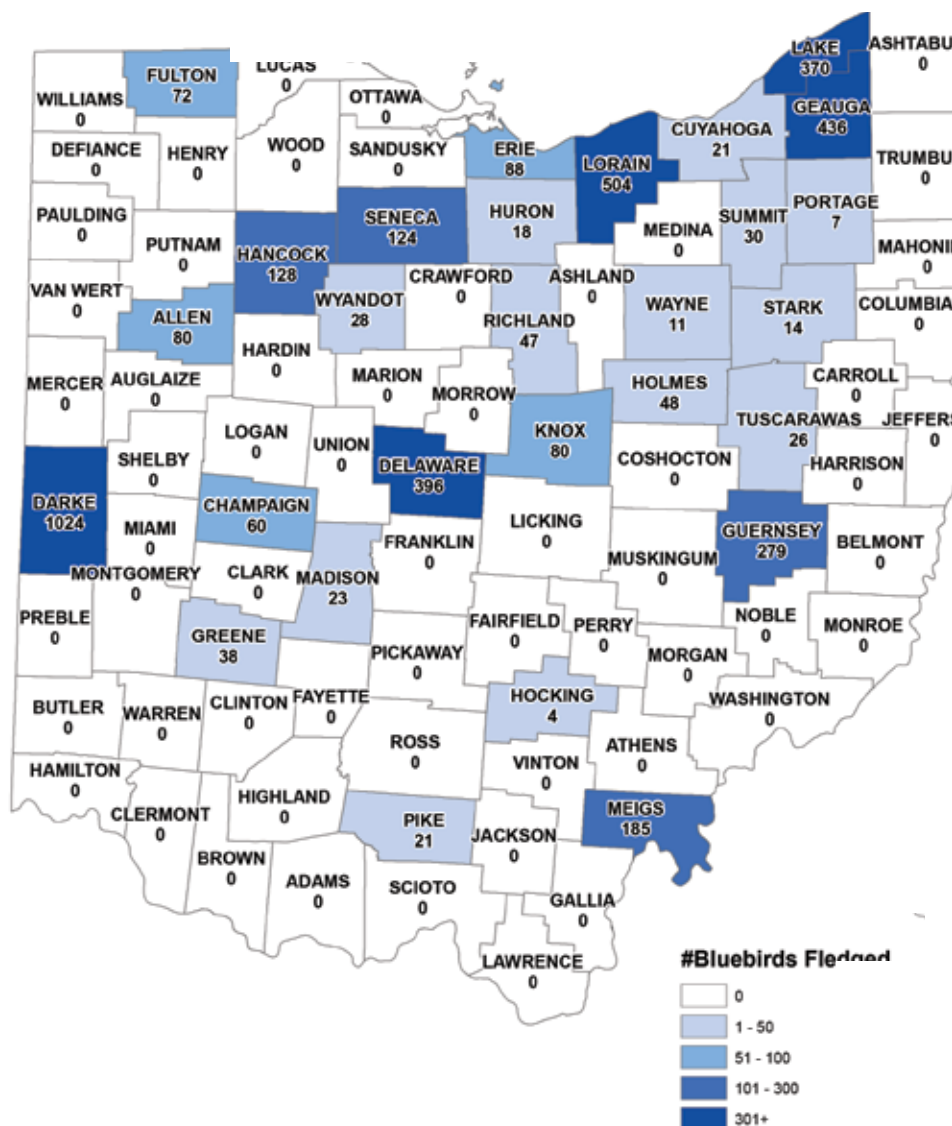
House Sparrows Dispatched – 446

Send info to:

info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Download fillable form -

see FLEDGLING REPORT tab





## OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
AKRON, OH  
PERMIT NO. 286

## Mission Statement

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

[ohiobluebirdsociety.org](http://ohiobluebirdsociety.org)

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Affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society

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## Deadline for Submitting Articles:

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

## OBS Receives Generous Donation



Rose Marie Botts Scott, author of "A Nest of Bluebirds" recently donated 1,660 copies of her book to the Ohio Bluebird Society (OBS) through the agency of her publisher The Wooster Book Company. Pictured are Carol Rueger (middle), owner of The Wooster Book Company, with Ohio Bluebird Society representatives Marcella Hawkins and Mel Bolt. The books will be used by OBS to further their education in the use, conservation and creation of habitat for the protection of Bluebirds, a native cavity-nesting bird.