



# Bluebird Monitor

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

Volume 23, Number 2 • Summer 2010



## Mission Statement

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

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## Deadline for 2010 - 2011 Bluebird Monitor Articles

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

## "GATOR" AID FOR BLUEBIRDS

by Ron and John Duecker .....

Earl Carlton of Carroll County has been a Bluebird proponent for more than 50 years. Recently we visited Mr. Carlton at his home East of Carrollton, Ohio, to learn more about his long dedication and enthusiasm for Bluebirding.

We were graciously welcomed into his house, located on the grounds of Carlton Tree Farms. While enjoying a cup of coffee, our attention was diverted to a Red Bellied Woodpecker that was busy gathering his breakfast from a large maple tree near the window. A Downy Woodpecker was also feeding at another nearby tree as Earl explained how he became involved with Bluebirding, a hobby that has lasted more than 50 years.

*Continued on Page 2*



# OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY DONATIONS

As of June 13, the total donations in memory of John Lapin are \$1,445. Our thanks goes out to all of the following donors:

- Aebischer, Harold & Donna
- Braman, Mark & Sheila
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- Stillerman, Margaret
- Tomko, Ray & June

Additional donations (other than for John Lapin) in the total amount of \$613 were from:

- Black River Audubon Society
- Don Carver
- Columbus Academy
- Patty Dove
- Kendra Frank
- Kurtis & Heather Frank
- Kelley Scott and Trina Thornton

After graduation from Ohio State University, and five years serving his Country in the U. S. Navy aboard a mine sweeper during World War II, Mr. Carlton began a career in 1945, as District Soil Conservationist, serving Summit County. Earl's job responsibilities involved meeting with farmers and he was assigned a U.S.D.A. truck to carry tools and equipment for soil testing and other activities necessary for his work.

During his visits to farms he noticed the absence of nesting sites for cavity nesting birds, especially Bluebirds. The top of wooden fence posts had been a common nesting site for Bluebirds but these were rapidly being replaced with steel posts. Earl became concerned about this and as an active member of Akron Men's Garden Club, he discussed the issue with some fellow members. One member, a carpenter, suggested they build nestboxes for Bluebirds. He gave Earl some boxes he had made and Earl began giving them to farmers as he made his visits. The carpenter had lots of "cutoffs" of lumber from his building projects and made those available for Earl's use.



Bluebird nestboxes became one of the "necessary items" Earl carried in his truck. . As Earl told us "I always had 5 or 6 nestboxes in the back of the truck and as I visited a farm I would offer them a nestbox or two. I learned that the ladies were the ones to ask because they always wanted to see more Bluebirds." Earl would mount the box and give a brief lesson on how to attract Bluebirds and how to care for them. A week or two later he would stop by the farm to see if they had nesting birds and answer any questions. He provided approximately 50 nestboxes per year during the 27 years before his retirement in 1978.

After retirement, Earl and his wife Marie retired to her grandparents 110

acre farm near Carrollton. He planted some pine trees and several years later sold some as Christmas Trees. Neighbors admired the conservation methods the Carltons used on the farm. When neighboring farms were no longer cultivated and profitable, the owners offered their property to Earl. During the ensuing years Carlton Tree Farms was incorporated and now consists of more than 1600 acres. Earl is no longer active in the business that is now operated by his sons.

Bluebirding is nearly a year long activity for Earl. He begins preparing for the season in January when he builds nestboxes, usually 25 -50. He uses lumber from trees harvested at the farm which have fallen due to storms or disease. In March he cleans the boxes of any debris or rodents who may have Wintered there. Beginning in April he monitors the nestboxes on a regular basis, first dusting them with Rotenone or sulfur powder to reduce infestations of mites.

A JOHN DEERE “GATOR”, a 6 wheel ATV, is the “BLUEBIRD MOBILE” for Earl. Along with ABBEY, his Australian Shepherd dog as “SECURITY OFFICER”. Before each monitoring trip, Earl equips the GATOR with 3 or 4 nestboxes, a power screwdriver and a bucketful of sphagnum moss. The sphagnum moss is inert and will not support insect larvae, so it is sometimes used to encourage a Bluebird to start a nest in a new box or to replace a nest that has become wet or is contaminated with any sort of insect. Nestboxes are mounted in locations that are accessible with the ATV, and at a height that allows Earl to open the box without leaving the GATOR. We spent several hours monitoring

a one mile stretch of the Carlton Bluebird Trail. Boxes are mounted on utility poles, wooden fence posts and dead trees, along rural roads, in cemeteries, at the edge of private ponds and other suitable locations away from the roadway.



When asked about the total number of nestboxes on his trail, the answer was “Too many to count, but more than 500!” As we monitored the nestboxes on a one mile stretch, along one of the rural roads bordering the farm I counted 91 boxes, not including those we could see from the road that were located in back yards of homes.



One of the highlights of the day was when we sighted three male Bluebirds sitting on a fence. We approached to within 50 feet of them before one of them flew away to a spot further along the fence. At the time of that sighting it occurred to me that these birds know Earl and his vehicle, but were likely frightened by the two additional people on board.

Earl celebrated his 93rd birthday in March 2010

and still shares his knowledge and materials with 4-H clubs, Scout groups and other organizations. For many years he provided nestboxes for the local Ruritan Club, at no cost. They were sold as a fund raising project, the proceeds of which were used to fund local community needs.

As we said our farewells, we marveled at this great conservationist who wears no hearing aid and has one pair of “dime store” reading glasses that lay on the kitchen table in case they are needed for reading some “very fine” print.

# My Memories of Mary Ellen Bolt

12/13/1929 – 5/12/2010

by Marcella Hawkins

My first encounter with seeing a Bluebird was in 1999. I didn't know what it was and looked it up in my bird book. Shortly after that, I saw an article in the paper about Mel Bolt – a Bluebird expert – who had given an educational program on the subject. I called Mel and he invited me to visit with him and his wife – Mary Ellen. As I am sure many others had come before me, I was welcomed as if I was an old friend. I left that day with a new nestbox and a lot of good information – from two Bluebird experts. The phrase “Mel and Mary Ellen” is a very well known one. Wherever Mel was, Mary Ellen was there too.

Over the years since my first meeting with Mel and Mary Ellen, I have called on them to help me in my Bluebird seminars and they always helped with anything I asked them to do. Mel was the speaker and Mary Ellen kept everything in order, telling me about things that they had experienced over the years at different events. Mary Ellen always had great ideas on how I could do things the best way, and the easiest way... for myself.

Mary Ellen was always volunteering with some group. If she was not at the Viola Startzman Free Clinic, she was working on the Smucker's Retiree functions; or with the Greater Mohican Audubon Society; or at the Wooster Hospital; Every Woman's House; or an Ohio Bluebird Society (OBS) function. At the OBS functions, she always had everything well organized – taking care of the registration duties and helping with the raffle too. In 2003 she, along with Mel, received the highest OBS recognition with the Blue Feather award for all of their contributions to the society.

If I had a question on how to do something the best and easiest way for a function – according to experience – I always checked with Mary Ellen because she had so much volunteer experience. Mel and Mary Ellen made such a great couple – they fed off of each other. They each had so many good ideas and got so much accomplished as a team.

Mary Ellen was feisty – and I admired her for that too. She had an opinion and didn't mind sharing it – I like that in a person.



I will never forget the hug she gave me when I left the Bolt residence two days before she passed away. She squeezed me tight and I recall telling her that she was very strong. She said other people had told her that lately too. I'm sure she knew it would be the last time she would give me a hug.

Mary Ellen was someone who I will never forget. She taught me many things and she, along with Mel, was and will always be my Mentors. Even though she is no longer with us, I pretty much know what she would tell me if I were able to ask her for advice today. I will always treasure those memories.

She will be missed by many and we can think about her every time we hear a beautiful Bluebird song. As she requested, we need to smile because we remember her. It is impossible not to smile while looking at a Bluebird. Thanks, Mary Ellen – we could use a good smile today.

***Mary Ellen passed away on May 12 after a 6-1/2 year battle with breast and lung cancer. Her illness only recently kept her from participating in OBS events.***

Contributions are being accepted for a memorial bench in Mary Ellen's honor that will be located in the Secret Arboretum in Wooster. Make checks payable to "OBS" and put "M.E. Bolt Bench" on the memo line - mail to our OBS address (see page 15.)

# Bluebird Story

by Becky Parkin



I have been Bluebirding for three years. Each year I gain more stories to share about my Bluebird Trails. And recently I gained another experience that I know would be a keepsake for life.

I realized early on in my Bluebirding career that there is something so calming and peaceful about being out on my trail, that it removes me from the everyday chaos. It refreshes me. I love being out in the morning with all of the birds. I feel that I am peeking into a world that not many people get to experience.

And, so with all this in mind, I decided to take my cousins, who are in high school, out two weeks ago to help check the boxes with me. Both are interested in nature and have a voracious attitude for learning all they can about the outdoors. We headed off to Indian Point Park, in Leroy, which is where my 15 boxes are located. My cousins had never been Bluebirding, so I was excited to see their reactions!

Once we were on the trail, I explained how to open the box and what we might see. As we got to the first box, I could see that the girls were anxious, as I was, to find something waiting for us. I opened the box and...nothing. We went to the second box, nothing and so on until we reached the 7th box, which I knew had 8 House Wren Chicks. I had already told the girls that when we got up to the box, the House Wren's would start their indignant chirping. I love House Wrens! I laugh every time this tiny bird tries to run me away by "yelling" at me. So when we got close to the box, and there was no chirping, I knew something was not right. We opened the box, sure enough, the eight chicks were gone. The girls were slightly disappointed but have enough knowledge to know that predation can happen. In fact, I spoke with them afterwards, and they thought it was interesting to see just "one of the many things that can happen in nature".

A little disappointed but still excited to see what was waiting for us, we pressed on to the next box and what did

we find, but an active Bluebird Nest. We were all so excited to find what we had been looking for out in the field! The girls carefully opened the box to find 5 beautiful eggs. They checked the nest and the eggs to make sure they were warm and as they turned away from the box, I could see their huge smiles. It was a success! We had found the prize. I think the girls took away some ownership of those soon to be Bluebirds with them that day.

We found House Wren eggs and chicks, ducked so we would not get hit by a Tree Swallow and discovered that the wasps do enjoy that boxes we give them, but nothing was as exciting as the box with the Bluebirds.

It was only about an hour and half of our lives, but it will be a memory that I will keep with me always. The girls later told me that they loved seeing "every walk of the bird's life" and they felt, just like I do, that they "were out there away from it all". So keep in mind that there are so many wonderful things to see and share in life. The small things do count and sharing those small things is not only what we should be doing, but what we should want to be do.

*Becky Parkin is a Nature Interpretive Manager for Lake County Metro Parks in rural Lake County located 30 miles east of Cleveland, Ohio. She directs the Parks Bluebird program and teaches Bluebirding to young students and the general public. Becky may be reached at 440.256.2106 or by email at [bparkin@lakemetroparks.com](mailto:bparkin@lakemetroparks.com).*



# Trail Tales

## Which Works Best – Removing the Nest, or the Sparrow?

by Paula Ziebarth



Pulling nests and eggs vs. trapping exacerbates the HOSP problem in my experience. The HOSP will eventually go elsewhere close by to breed when you do this, and they will breed. The following year, the original HOSP and their young will be checking out trail boxes. Additionally, if the more experienced older HOSP that killed

native birds last year return, they will do it again... and again. Not a good scenario.

Regarding people feeding or housing HOSP adjacent to trails, I have been very successful approaching this by placing an intriguing letter on their front porch, encouraging them to contact me to learn more. The letter is short, not preachy, not accusatory, with just enough information to get them hooked and call me. They always have so far. We have to remember that people that feed birds and put out all those nest boxes mean them no harm, just the opposite. When they realize what they are doing, they seek knowledge to learn more and change the way they do things. I have several families adjacent to my trails that trap HOSP in their yards and look out for things when I am not there. They can use in-box traps as well as repeat traps and pellet guns and they do a great job.

Following is sample text of what I stick in their door. I have tailored it to teach people to pair boxes for TRES if I see a pair interested in an EABL box etc. The great thing about this way of approaching people is that they contact me. They have always been very eager to learn. Of course, once they open that door, look out...

*Dear Homeowner,*

My name is Paula Ziebarth and I monitor the Bluebird Trail at Liberty Park which is adjacent to your property. I am also a Delaware County Coordinator for the Ohio Bluebird Society (OBS). I am always thrilled to see people putting up houses for the birds. There are many native cavity nesting birds who need safe homes to raise their young. Eastern Bluebirds, Purple Martins, Tree Swallows, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Nuthatches, Carolina Wrens, American Kestrels, Flickers, and House Wrens are all native birds that use man-made nest boxes of varying sizes in our area.

I see you have put up many wonderful homes for the birds on your property. Unfortunately, it looks as though English House Sparrows have taken most, if not all, of your nesting sites. These birds are not native to this country and are believed by many to be the main cause of the decline of many native cavity nesting birds since their introduction to this country. They are very aggressive birds and will kill the eggs, young, and even adult birds in the nest box to take over a nesting site. Because these birds are not native, it is legal to control them by removing their eggs, nests and/or the birds themselves.

I actively control House Sparrows on the Liberty Park Trail and would be happy to show you how to do this if you are interested. One thing all Bluebirders agree on, is that if you have House Sparrows, you will not have Eastern Bluebirds (or other desirable birds for that matter).

Please contact me if you would like more information or would like me to drop by and help in whatever way I can.

Paula Ziebarth  
(614) 848-3784  
paulaz@columbus.rr.com



# From Our Members

These birds nested in the spring and summer of 2009. The nest was located in a dead picnic area tree, slated to be removed by the maintenance staff. The tree was located by the lake restrooms - one of the busiest areas in Sharon Woods Metro Park (N. of Columbus.) Although the nest could not be seen, we are pretty sure that two clutches were raised (approximately 8 fledglings) by the end of the nesting season. It was a great talking point for school field trips and summertime day care groups! The tree was removed in September but the birds continued to forage for food near the restrooms and lake until wintertime. Two volunteers cut the tree down the middle and added hinges to make a "door" to view the nesting cavity. It's now on display at the naturalist office.

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Sharon Woods Metro Park  
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Westerville, OH 43081  
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fax: (614) 865-4509  
shaw@metroparks.net  
www.metroparks.net



The two Bluebird babies in the picture left their nest on Father's Day. Based on feathers, size, and when they left their nest, I'd say they were a day or two older than I thought. I took the picture on Thursday the 17th of June and for fear they would fledge prematurely that was the last time I inspected the box. There were three eggs and only two hatched. As you can see their parents made the nest with many pine needles in it. I feel because there were only two babies and the nest was primarily made of pine needles this helped prevent blowfly larva infestation. In fact, I did not find one blowfly larva. This is unlike many past grass nests with four or five babies when the weather was as wet and warm as it has been lately. These are the only two babies we had this year so far. We have 22 boxes on nearly 21 acres and we have been Blue Birding 18 years now.

Rod Scheidler, Crawford County - Galion



## WELCOME - TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

(January through  
June 15, 2010)

Cindy Boggs  
Barbara Brown  
Don Carver  
Carol Connelly  
Gary Cottongim  
Connie Dolder  
Jack & Ruth Frazer  
Carol Fry

Bethany Gray  
Rose Hartman  
Diana Keplinger  
Mike Kern  
Mary Kitchen  
Don Lingle  
Sharon Lynn  
Amy Maggiore

Randy & Marjorie McGlothlin  
Bob & Martha Mertz  
David & Sharron Nielsen (LIFE)  
Ed Percy  
Sandy Plew  
Cynthia Ploch  
Dennis Reinhart  
Tom Sciranka  
Tammy Seaman

# Nestbox Predators

by Keith Kridler - Mt. Pleasant, Texas

It is really hard to imagine what the Virgin Timber forests east of the Mississippi looked like for thousands of years, before the axe and the plow showed up. Long Leaf Pines were a dominant tree species from the east coast just south of the Mason Dixon line all the way west deep into East Texas. Average tree height for this species would have been over 100 feet tall with trunk diameters well over 4 feet.

There was an entire ecosystem of plants, animals and birds that inhabited this vast type of Virgin Pine forest land. Back in the 1980's there were only 10 active colonies of nesting Red Cockaded Woodpeckers that Arkansas Fish and Game biologists could find. These colonies were still selecting mature pines (at least 70 years old) with Red Heart Disease to create their nest cavities, then the whole colony would help guard and feed the young from the dominant pairs of birds in this colony.

They were having trouble with predation from Rat Snakes and they contacted Harry Krueger about his Ross's Garden Netting Mesh Snake traps. We ended up recommending they use a similar style mesh trap that I was using on the larger electric power poles to protect some of my bluebird boxes. Anyway the biologists rigged up these snake traps well up off of the ground to surround the whole trunk of the pine trees that the woodpeckers were using to nest in.

They had tried globbing Tangle Foot on tree trunks, dumping sulfur, moth balls or crystals around the trunks to create a snake barrier but nothing stopped this predation by snakes.

The very first nesting season they trapped at least one snake crawling up these trees in 8 out of 10 active nests! They figured that older snakes had learned where these cavities were since this species of woodpecker re-uses the same cavity year after year. They felt that snakes also knew that once a natural cavity was created by woodpeckers that year after year, one species of secondary cavity nester after another would move in and use these cavities and that all during the spring and summer there was a good chance that a meal could be found in these trees with cavities. Somewhere I have a photo and an article from the Fish and Wildlife biologists showing that between checks at one of the nesting trees they had trapped three rat snakes. I think they observed each nest each week for a few hours.

We see report after report where birds lose a nest of egg or young in one of our nestboxes and we can predict that within 14 days or so there is going to be another nest of eggs or to these snakes they know that every full moon (27 days) there is going to be another full meal of baby birds to eat in that cavity!

Same goes for Sharp Shinned and Cooper Hawks and any other predator you want to name.



Predators also learn where every hollow tree is in their territory. Fox and Raccoon den trees are used year after year with one generation of these predators passing on the den when they are no longer strong enough to fight off the next dominant female!

Snakes and other predators are smart enough to know that when they find food in a nestbox or natural cavity they only have to check that spot every couple of weeks and they will be rewarded with another small meal! Just as raccoons know that each night certain bird feeders will nearly always contain corn or sunflowers and they know what night folks put out garbage and who normally puts edible food in which bags!

Anyway we often put up nesting boxes in our yards where the poles will be "out of the way" of mowers and more often we place them so that we can watch them from certain windows and we don't locate the boxes for the most important reasons! We probably should be moving nestboxes around, changing locations every year or so just to limit the numbers of natural predators that have learned what that nestbox will have in it next year! I have a couple of nestboxes up right now in the same locations where I fledged the first bluebirds there back in the early 1970's.

I personally believe that bluebirds and most of the other small cavity nesters suffer through tremendous losses due to predators and or the weather year in and year out but each pair only needs to have two young survive during their whole lifetime to keep all of the available nesting sites and feeding areas filled up each pringtime! Good habitat is disappearing at an alarming rate, in direct proportion to an exploding human population.

Paula just mentioned one of her nestboxes in an "out of the way" location still had five different species killing each other over control of that one nestbox, actually quite late in this current years nesting season! OK if any birds fledge any more young from that box this year will their be eight or more pairs fighting over that location next year? (I counted Paula as the fifth "predator/competitor" for that nestbox.)



# Meet the Treasurer and Chair of Special Events, Marcella Hawkins



I have been the Treasurer for OBS since October of 2003 and since that time, my duties have expanded somewhat. As some changes are being made in OBS, I have been more involved in things such as getting the website redesigned and planning conferences.

My husband, Tim Bartrum, and I live in Holmes County on the 210-acre family farm where I grew up. We share our home with our two dogs and one cat.

I am a financial advisor for a wealth management, brokerage and retirement provider in beautiful downtown Wooster and my prior job experience includes working as a claims processor at Medicare, a legal secretary and a bank trust officer.

My organization memberships include Quota International of Wooster, Wayne-Holmes Estate Planning Council, Wayne County Women's Network and Wayne County Business Referral Group.

My hobbies - in addition to being obsessed with Bluebirds - are fishing, photography, mushroom hunting, arrowhead hunting, and travelling. My obsession with Bluebirds began 11 years ago when I saw my first one. I was going out of my driveway one morning and saw a beautiful blue bird sitting on a cement mushroom statue under our pine trees. I stopped the car and took a picture of it, then wondered why it didn't leave - especially since I had just used my flash to take the picture. Then another blue bird dropped down from the pine trees and they both flew off together. The first bird had been waiting for its mate. I looked in my bird book to find this beautiful bird and came across the Eastern Bluebird. A week or so later I saw an article in our local paper about Mel Bolt giving a talk to a garden club about Bluebirds. His phone number was listed - so I called.



## Care to Share

by Marcella Hawkins

While dining at Carrabba's Italian Grill in Canton recently, my sisters and I were offered seating at a long "community" table if we didn't care to wait for a private table. We were in a bit of a hurry as we were on our way to a show - so we decided to dine with strangers. We struck up a conversation with the couple across the table and enjoyed their company. Then the woman said I looked very familiar to her. I told her where I worked and then began to list the different organizations I am in. When I mentioned "Ohio Bluebird Society" she and her husband started telling me about their interest in Bluebirds. We talked for quite awhile about our feathered friends and before they left, I went to my car and got copies of the last three Monitors for them to read. A few days later I received an e-mail from the couple - there was a Bluebird at their house and they were thrilled. Thank you **Pamela Hamlin** for giving me one more excuse to talk about Bluebirds.



# Wing Wave

Photos by Janice Petko

## Great Crested Flycatcher - The Other Native Cavity Nesting Bird

by Doug LeVasseur

I can't think of a single Bluebird or Purple Martin organization or society that doesn't mention "other native cavity nesting birds" or a very close approximation thereof in its mission statement. From the beginnings of the Purple Martin and Bluebird conservation movements Purple Martin landlords and Bluebird trail monitors have been told that Great Crested Flycatchers (GCF) fall into the category of "other native cavity nesting birds". Yet I ask you when was the last time you saw a nesting of the Great Crested Flycatcher recorded in a year-end nest box survey? And there are very good reasons why this beautiful bird is so seldom recorded in such surveys.

First of all, the Great Crested Flycatcher cannot enter through the one and a half inch hole of the thousands of Bluebird nestboxes placed all over the eastern United States. Many boxes placed in the western portion of the Great Crested Flycatchers range and some in the east too do have a one and nine sixteenth entrance hole. But these barely permit the Great Crested Flycatcher to enter. The flycatcher prefers an entrance hole of from one and three quarters to two inches in diameter. Once inside the box, the GCF finds the typical four-inch square bottom much too small. The few nest box plans I have found for the GCF show a six-inch square floor plan with a distance of 10 inches from the entrance hole to the floor. Then there is the matter of the height of the box from the ground. Yes, the Great Crested Flycatcher will nest in a box four to six feet off the ground but they prefer a box from 10 to 20 feet in the air. In other words the Great Crested Flycatcher simply does not find the typical Bluebird box usable or attractive.

I am sure you can all anticipate the problems that will arise should you decide to erect a home that would

be attractive to a Great Crested Flycatcher. One of the few articles I found about GCF was entitled "Crested Flycatchers Need Help Too" It was written by Dr. Lawrence Zeleny and appeared in the Summer 1980 issue of Sialia. Dr. Zeleny stated "With the coming of the House Sparrow these flycatchers, like the Bluebirds, were forced to compete with them for cavity nesting sites. Unlike the Bluebirds, however, the flycatchers could often defend their nesting sites from the marauding sparrows. But later, with the advent of the European Starling in America, the flycatchers found themselves in serious trouble. They can almost never compete successfully with the starlings. Consequently wherever starlings are abundant, crested flycatchers, like Bluebirds, tend to disappear unless human help is forthcoming".

Time now to return to the singing Great Crested Flycatcher, 15 feet in the air, atop one of the larger gourds in my assemblage. A gourd with a 2 inch opening, and not 100 feet from a very effective Troyer starling and sparrow trap that had already removed more than two dozen starlings from the area surrounding my Purple Martin house. In a matter of hours I had attuned my ear to the ascending loud whistling "wheeeep" of the male Great Crested Flycatcher, and so had its mate. I was simply thrilled to see the two of them begin carrying pine needles, leaves, twigs and feathers into the gourd. I did notice that the flycatchers were having a very difficult time entering the gourd as it was prone to swing wildly, especially when the birds first landed. They also lacked a surface upon which to brace their tails. I lowered the gourds and affixed a platform to the occupied gourd. This helped somewhat but at this time I noticed another problem. GCF seem to carry excessive nesting material into their nests. There



was so much nesting material – by now along with several eggs – in the gourd that the level of the nest was actually ABOVE the level of the entrance hole! I feared that the young, or even the eggs might roll out of the gourd. I felt drastic action was necessary so I located an unused

flicker box in the barn, removed all the nesting material and the eggs from the gourd and placed them in the flicker box. I securely fastened the new nesting box in the same position the gourd had occupied and then watched and waited. To my delight the nesting pair of GCF immediately took to their new home. I lowered the nest about 10 days later and saw that my efforts had been rewarded as 5 lovely newly born chicks were snuggled in the nest. I then made a grave error.

Experienced Purple Martin landlords and Bluebird trail monitors stress a number of points to those just getting started – one of which is to monitor, monitor, monitor your nestboxes. I have never heard of a case where Bluebirds or martins have abandoned a nest because it was checked too often. Never. Yet when something very special is going on – especially a special first something – there is a tendency even among veteran monitors to “not disturb them too much”. In my case I felt I had drastically altered the normal nesting routine of these birds and had “gotten away with it”. Why run the risk now of doing something simple that might make them abandon their nest. So I didn’t lower the nest for more than a week. And when I did I didn’t find the 12-day-old healthy chicks I was expecting but instead found 5 dead 10-day-old chicks. The chicks had succumbed to a severe infestation of mites. I was devastated.

For the next two years I would hear the calls and see the GCF in the vicinity of my still unoccupied Purple Martin gourds. But if they had a nest in the area, I was unable to locate it. Then last year they again took to the gourds. But this time they chose an even larger gourd, which tilted backwards as they filled it with nesting material. I decided the chicks would be safe and did nothing but monitor the nest regularly. I did change the nesting material when

the chicks were about five days old and at that time I sprinkled a generous amount of Rotenone in the bottom of the gourd. I was lucky enough to actually observe my first nesting of GCF fledge from their nest the next week. This spring I again would hear and see the GCF in the woods around our house. I watched them closely and finally discovered that they had taken up housekeeping in an “all purpose” nesting box affixed to a hickory tree that has been up for years. I have observed both owls and Wood Ducks using the box in the past and a family of fox squirrels had raised a family in it earlier this spring. The box has a 10-inch square bottom and was already three quarters full of leaves and wood chips when the GCF moved in. The only actions I took with this nest besides regular monitoring was to wrap a piece of sheet metal around the base of the tree in an attempt to discourage raccoons and snakes. I also placed a generous amount of Rotenone beneath the nesting cup when the chicks were about 5 days old. This box also fledged 5 GCF this summer. When monitoring the nests of a GCF it is important to remember that both the incubation period (13 to 15 days) and the days from hatching to fledging (12 to 14 days) is less with GCF than with Bluebirds.



Since the success of a nesting attempt by the GCF seems more closely tied to the control of the European Starling than anything else, and among bird conservationist Purple Martin landlords alone work toward the eradication of these obnoxious birds, I would like to encourage Purple Martin landlords to erect an appropriate GCF nestbox in an edge area of their backyard or barnyard. As Dr. Zeleny noted, GCF “have had to abandon most of the areas near our homes where they formerly brought great pleasure to many people,” and, after all, “Crested Flycatchers Need Help Too”.



# OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY SUMMER CONFERENCE

**Saturday, August 7, 2010**

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](http://www.waynecountycvb.org)

*This Is A Free Educational Event Provided By The Ohio Bluebird Society*

## AGENDA

*Light refreshments will be provided throughout the event.*

- 8-9 AM** Registration  
**9-9:15 AM** Welcome
- 9:15-10 AM** **Roger Downer, Ph.D., OARDC Entomologist**  
Insects and Bluebirds
- 10-10:15 AM** BREAK
- 10:15-11 AM** **David Kline – Amish Farmer, Self-Taught Naturalist and Author**  
Woodpeckers and Bluebirds
- 11-11:15 AM** BREAK
- 11:15-12 PM** **Information Exchange – Q&A Session**  
Mel Bolt, Mike Watson and Sharon Lynn, Ph.D.
- 12-1 PM** LUNCH
- 1-1:45 PM** **Dean Sheldon – Conservationist and Birder**  
Short Stories and Yarns From the Trail
- 1:45-2 PM** Close, door prizes  
**2:30 PM** Secret Arboretum Tours  
(on same campus)

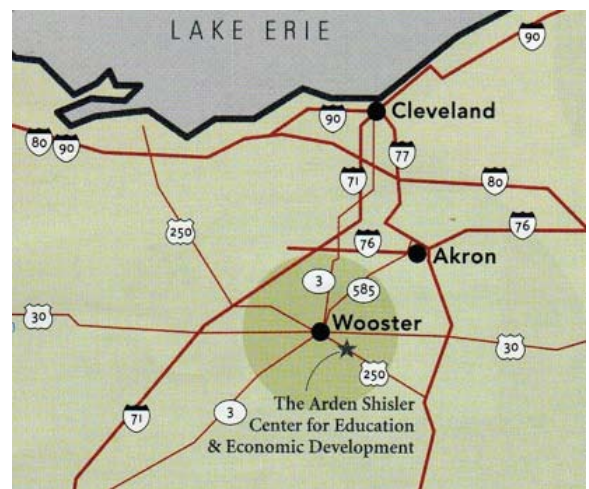
## LODGING

### Hotels:

- Best Western – 330.264.7750  
Econo Lodge – 330.264.8883  
Hilton Garden – 330.202.7718  
Rodeway Inn – 330.262.5008  
Super 8 Motel – 330.264.6211  
[www.super8.com](http://www.super8.com)  
Wooster Inn – 330.263.2660

### Bed and Breakfasts:

- Market Street Inn – 216.272.5566  
[www.marketstreetinnwooster.com](http://www.marketstreetinnwooster.com)  
Mirabelle Bed & Breakfast – 330.264.6006  
[www.bbonline.com/oh/mirabelle](http://www.bbonline.com/oh/mirabelle)



# OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY SUMMER CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s) for name tags: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Number of People Attending: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Tour of Sequest Arboretum at 2:30 pm: \_\_\_\_\_ people will attend

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

\_\_\_\_\_ Turkey Classic

\_\_\_\_\_ Chicken Salad

\_\_\_\_\_ Veggie Delight

\_\_\_\_\_ Ham

**Make checks payable to:**  
Ohio Bluebird Society

**Mail to:**

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

**Questions?**

Please call Marcella Hawkins at 330.465.6987 or send e-mail to [info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org](mailto:info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org)

*This Is A Free Educational Event Provided By  
The Ohio Bluebird Society*

## Artist Roberta Lee



For those people who attended the conference in February and asked me where they could get a copy of the poster showing all three species of Bluebirds, I have found the artist – Roberta Lee – and she does have a few posters left. You may send her an e-mail at: [bertgrrrl@yahoo.com](mailto:bertgrrrl@yahoo.com) for more information.

**Following is more information on Roberta:**

- Website: [www.RobertaLeeArt.com](http://www.RobertaLeeArt.com)
- Roberta's YouTube: [www.YouTube.com/user/bertgrrrl](http://www.YouTube.com/user/bertgrrrl)
- LinkedIn: [www.Linkedin.com/in/robertaleeart](http://www.Linkedin.com/in/robertaleeart)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/home.php#/pages/Roberta-Lee/63\\_914960408?ref=mf](http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/pages/Roberta-Lee/63_914960408?ref=mf)
- Follow her on Twitter: [RobertaLeeArt](https://twitter.com/RobertaLeeArt)
- Subscribe to her podcasts on iTunes

Marcella Hawkins

## Ask The Experts

Our members are experts when it comes to answering bluebird questions! Each issue we'll pose a question to you, the experts, and the best answer will be posted in the next newsletter.

**Here's this month's question:  
What is earth worm disease and how does it affect Bluebird nestlings?**

Please Email your responses to [info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org](mailto:info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org), or mail them to PMB 111, 343 West Milltown Rd., Wooster, OH 44691.

# Member News



## Notice to All OBS Members

This past year has been a whirlwind of change. These changes are being implemented to bring you, the OBS valued membership, a new and revitalized OBS organization. These are good changes because they act as bridges to support the OBS mission statement created by our founders.

One of these changes has been the elimination of the OBS County Coordinator. When people call OBS needing our help, they need it now and they need to know the person contacting them is one of the very best in the field. This person must be professional, experienced and answer each call with enthusiasm realizing it is a privilege to help others learn about Bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds. In recent years, the County Coordinator system has not effectively fulfilled these needs. OBS will replace the County Coordinator system with a new, more streamlined system consisting of fewer representatives, each serving a larger area. The new representative position will be called OBS Area Contact and consist of people willing to serve in a voluntary capacity. These people may include our Directors, Advisors, Treasurer, OBS members or other qualified persons approved by the above. We hope this change adds value to the membership, makes obtaining help more accessible, and takes our organization up to a new level in serving the membership and general public. As we move forward in the reorganization process, these OBS Area Contacts will be listed on the website and in the newsletter. If you are interested in helping or know of a person or an organization needing our assistance, it is best to contact OBS via the main OBS phone or by emailing the main office.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support. Especially thank you for helping our precious Bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds.

*OBS Directors*

## Call for Photos

The Bluebird nest in the below photo was found in a newspaper box attached to the side of a mailbox, along a busy highway. If you have a picture of an unusual nesting site, please send it to us.



## Blue Feather Award

**Nominations for the Blue Feather award are now being taken.** Please e-mail or mail your nomination, along with the list of qualifications that makes that person deserving of the award. (see Communications Block for information.)

*Deadline for receiving nominations is July 31.*

The Blue Feather award is the highest honor bestowed upon a Bluebirder who has made our mission statement their own.

## Fledgling Count

We will have a year to date Fledgling Count on-line and in our newsletter. Please send us an e-mail with the number of your Bluebird fledglings for the year. Send this when you have new fledglings to report so we can keep the count current. Thank you for your participation!



# Ohio Bluebird Society Membership Application

- | Membership Class  | Annual | 3-years |
|---|--------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 21)                                 | \$10   | \$25    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Sr. Family                                  | \$12   | \$30    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular/Family                                     | \$15   | \$40    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational                                     | \$40   | \$100   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting   | \$100  | \$275   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life   | \$300  |         |
| <br>  |        |         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tax deductible gift to OBS \$ _____                |        |         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership renewal                                 |        |         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New membership                                     |        |         |
| <br>  |        |         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in participating in OBS activities |        |         |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Make checks payable to:**  
Ohio Bluebird Society

**Mail to:**  
OBS  
PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Rd.  
Wooster, OH 44691-7214

Ohio Bluebird Society  
is a 501(c)(3) Organization

## OBS Board of Directors and Advisors

### DIRECTORS

Jay K. Brindo: 440.343.9275  
JBrindo@aol.com

Sharon Lynn: 330.263.2437  
slynn@wooster.edu

Kyle Maurer: 330.317.4995  
kylemaurer63@yahoo.com

Mike Watson: 440.946.4400 ext. 132  
mwatson@holdenarb.org

### ADVISORS

Mel Bolt: 330.262.0448  
mellen@sssnet.com

John Duecker: 330.598.1576  
jduecker@neo.rr.com

Ron Duecker: 330.345.3540  
areldee@sssnet.com

Dean Sheldon: 419.752.1451  
seedbed@accnorwalk.com

Dick Tuttle: 740.363.6433

### TREASURER, CHAIR OF SPECIAL EVENTS

Marcella Hawkins: 330.465.6987  
gofish710@embarqmail.com

### MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

John Duecker: 330.598.1576  
jduecker@neo.rr.com

## Join Online!

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

## OBS Communications Block

### E-mail:

[info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org](mailto:info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org)

### Website:

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

### Phone:

330.466.6926

### Address:

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

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



**OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY**  
 PMB 111  
 343 W. Milltown Rd.  
 Wooster, Ohio 44691

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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Affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society

# OUR NEW WEBSITE IS NOW LIVE!



Our redesigned website is now up and running - please visit [www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org](http://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org).

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