



# Bluebird Monitor

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

Fall 2012



## 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

## Wrap-up of Another Nesting Season

By Marcella Hawkins



I'm sure you have heard it many times lately – “Where has the summer gone?” That’s a good question...and one we hear most every year. So, here we are – looking back at our nesting season; some of you may even still have nesting birds. It’s time to put your fledgling count on paper and send it to us or email it to us. You will find the Fledgling report on page 15 of this newsletter and it is also available on our website. We will start posting our 2012 results on the website in the next few weeks.

Take note of our flyer for the upcoming annual conference in February, 2013 (page 14). This is a summary of the event – the detailed schedule and registration form will be made available on-line and in our next Monitor.

If you would like to help with the cost of the annual conference, we are accepting sponsorships. A list of donors will be included in the program at the event. If you have a donor match program at your place of employment, please consider a gift to OBS so we can keep our organization strong.



Our Facebook page now has 118 followers. If you are not one of them and have a Facebook account, please check us out. It’s a great way to share photos.

Thank you for your continued support and interest. Please contact us by e-mail with any questions or comments.

*Marcella Hawkins*



## Bluebird Seminar – October 6

Deborah's Garden Market, of 1494 East Smithville Western Road, Wooster, OH will sponsor a Bluebird presentation for beginning Bluebird enthusiasts in the store on Saturday October 6, 2012 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM. Guest speaker will be Mel Bolt of The Ohio Bluebird Society. His presentation will discuss the history of Bluebirds, setup and monitoring nest boxes, predators of bluebirds, controlling the predators and the needs of bluebirds for their survival. The 40 minute presentation will be supplemented with approximately 60 color slides.

This event is free and open to the public. Preregistration is required. For more information and to preregister, call Deborah at 330-601-1027.

## From Member Jeanne McClain



Quite interesting...but this is our story. Mama bluebird made a lovely nest in our closest box, laid four blue eggs, then we didn't see her for weeks....we thought that she had abandoned them, but at the proper time, there were two, then three, then all four little baby bluebirds in the box with mama and papa feeding them very industriously. We think it was due to the heat...we went from 90's to one day 109 degrees. So they weren't abandoned, it was just warm enough to hatch them without having mother bluebird suffer in the nest. Good bluebirding this summer. One pair just built a next in that same box and hope there are eggs this week.

# OBS Communications Block

## 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@gmail.com

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

### ADVISORS

Mel Bolt: 330.262.0448  
mellen@sssnet.com

Chuck Jakubchak: 440.238.1720  
jakubchak@yahoo.com

Linda Lang: 419.651.4196

Dean Sheldon: 419.752.1451  
seedbed@accnorwalk.com

Dick Tuttle: 740.363.6433

### TREASURER

Kara Scott: rkscott@sssnet.com

### SPECIAL EVENTS CHAIR

Marcella Hawkins: 330.465.6987  
gofish710@embarqmail.com

### MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Nancy Adams: 440.354.0894  
nadams11211@hotmail.com

### E-mail:

info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

### Phone:

330.466.6926

### Website:

www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org

### Address:

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

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## Join Online!

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



# Out of the Box

## The Tufted Titmouse: *Plain But Delightful*

By Chuck Jakubchak



Nothing warms up a cool autumn day better than the arrival of a tufted titmouse at your backyard bird feeder. Those little birds, with their crested head, silvery coat and shiny black eyes quickly grab your attention. Their appearance at your feeder is a generous payback for your investment in their favorite

food, sunflower seeds, and your generosity of providing bird food has helped this species extend their range northward and endure our frigid winters.

In a bit of irony, those shiny black eyes contributed to how this bird was named. Many years ago someone noticed that the large, dark eyes of a tufted titmouse resembled those of a small mouse and decided to incorporate “mouse” into their official name.

Tufted titmice have been in every Ohio county since 1900 and can still be found throughout the state year round. Their preferred habitat is deciduous, mature woodlands as well as orchards, parks and neighborhoods and Ohio is blessed with plenty of suitable habitat. Because they nest in abandoned woodpecker holes, natural tree cavities or occasionally in an OBS bluebird box, this species has sufficient locations within Ohio to support breeding.

During 2010 the OBS members fledged 36 tufted titmice but 0 in 2011. Mike Watson, OBS Director and “Keeper of Statistics” attributed the reduced fledging count to natural variation and noted that Ohio’s tufted titmouse population has not changed during the past few years. Plus, Mike noted that tufted titmice rarely nest in bluebird boxes so he was not surprised by the shutout in 2011.

A tufted titmouse is an interesting bird that is often overlooked by many people, probably because they are abundant and lack flashy coloring that “WOWS” your senses. Nevertheless, they are a useful species, consuming the seeds of plants and trees in one area while scattering their droppings far from the mother plants so that new seedlings may flourish. They are also responsible for consuming caterpillars, beetles and other pesky insects.

The song of a tufted titmouse is disproportionately loud versus the size of the bird (small bird, loud song) and they start singing each year about the time maple sap begins flowing in Ohio. Although their feathers may camouflage their appearance, the loud song easily gives away their location.

When watching titmice during the colder months, you may also view downy woodpeckers, chickadees, brown creepers, kinglets or white breasted nuthatches since they feed in mixed flocks when times are tough. Tufted titmice benefit from mixed flocks as they have greater success in locating food and avoiding predators, intelligently increasing their odds of surviving our Ohio winters.



The next time you see a tufted titmouse please take a few minutes to appreciate their physical beauty, admiring those shiny black eyes and recognizing their ongoing contribution to Ohio’s landscape. The tufted titmouse helps to make Ohio the special place that it is!

Photo courtesy of ODNR



# Ask Madame Wingnut

## Madame WingNut Says “Be Safe Out There”

by Paula Ziebarth

*I have had several inquiries about health and safety concerns that Bluebird monitors may encounter when checking nestboxes. I am not an entomologist or epidemiologist, so take this advice with a grain of salt. I am but a humble field monitor, learning from my mistakes and the mistakes of others. What follows are Madame WingNut's Rules of Thumb for Monitor Safety.*

### Rules of Thumb

#### 1. Do not blindly stick your thumb or any other part of your anatomy into a nestbox.

- If the thing that is in the nestbox is not the thing that is supposed to be in the nestbox, you may suffer pain and humiliation. I personally suffered minor pain and major humiliation when I accidentally grabbed an Eastern Gray Squirrel that was sleeping in a Flicker box a couple seasons ago. I thought I had trapped a nesting European Starling. Family doctor and nurses were amused and Madame WingNut's tetanus shot is up to date.
- I have also run across mice, bats, bumble bees, wasps and hornets when opening nestboxes. Luckily all these encounters happened while employing Rule #1. Others have encountered flying squirrels and snakes. Best not to grab any of the above.

#### 2. Watch where you are stepping!

- When on the move, make sure to look where you put your feet. I know several monitors who have twisted ankles in groundhog holes or who have been tripped up by vegetation, etc.
- It is common in our monitoring zeal to look intently at the next box on the trail as we approach. I admit to stumbling a few times doing this. Stop and look.
- In addition to monitor devouring holes in the terrain, watch out for slippery rocks, sunning snakes, hunkered rabbits and the like (i.e. don't step on something that could give you the ride of your life).

#### 3. When cleaning out old nests, take reasonable precautions.

- Minimally, stand upwind.
- If you have a friend helping you on the trail or visiting, have them stand upwind as well. With enemies, advise them or not as you see fit.
- I like to use a 3 inch metal scraper or putty knife to get under nest and remove it, scraping box clean. I always bag old nests and throw them away in nearby trash can. Leaving old nests in the field near the nestbox is bad practice as the smells emanating from the nest can attract predators.
- Some monitors wear dust masks and latex gloves while performing this duty. Others spray nest with bleach solution or water to keep airborne particles down. I do not, but do carry hand sanitizer which I use afterwards. This helps to kill any lingering germs or small parasites that could harm me or the next nest I visit on the trail. I recommend unscented hand sanitizer to keep unwanted scents off the trail.

#### 4. Wear your body armor.

- Sunscreen, insect/tick repellent, long (preferably light colored) pants, long socks, good footwear, hat, sunglasses, hand sanitizer, etc.
- Ticks are especially prevalent in tall grass. I find a lot of them on my Tree Swallow grid trails which are generally in unmowed tall grass habitat.
- Tuck bottoms of pants inside your socks. This keeps ticks on outside of clothing where you can find them easier. It also helps protect you from poison ivy, biting flies and chiggers. It has been pointed out to me by friends that this “look” is quite the fashion statement, but I just smile when said friends are later picking ticks off their nether regions.
- Treat clothing with DEET if it works for you. I have had little luck with the stuff. Apparently, I am a tick magnet. I removed 16 of the little buggers from my person after one field visit early this summer. I had

liberally sprayed my pants from knee down with Deep Woods Off. I believe ticks often hop off of me in my truck and then find me again several days later. I adopt a “princess and the pea” demeanor after monitoring trails in tall grass, very aware of the slightest crawly, tickly tick feet.

- Permethrin treated “BugsAway” clothing is somewhat effective keeping ticks and unwanted insects off your person. Madame WingNut has a pair of stylish field pants and socks that have served well over the past several years. Chemical remains active for 70 washings. You can also buy Permethrin spray and treat clothing yourself. Precautions should be taken when doing this. [http://www.travmed.com/health\\_guide/permethrin.htm](http://www.travmed.com/health_guide/permethrin.htm)

- Wash hands well after handling bird nests. Remove any dead birds from nestboxes with plastic bag or rubber gloves. Having clean hands between nest checks is also important so using unscented hand sanitizer when handling active nests is a good idea. The birds have enough of a challenge without encountering our sunscreen, insect repellent, remnants of burger grease from our lunch, or parasites and bacteria from the nest we checked previously.



## 5. Carry cell phone.

- In the event you need help, have emergency numbers pre-programmed into your phone. I keep local police and park district personnel numbers in mine.
- Today’s smart phones are a great field tool also; enabling monitor to get some great field pictures, birding apps, etc.

## 6. Don’t monitor at dusk or during inclement weather.

- Monitoring at dusk is bad practice for the birds. It is not a good idea to scare an incubating or brooding female off her nest during the failing light.
- Monitoring at dusk is bad practice for us. This is when most of the mosquitoes are coming out in their hungry search of Bluebird monitors. Reduce your exposure to disease carrying mosquitoes by remaining indoors at dusk.
- If you can hear thunder, you can be hit by lightning. Get off the trail.

## Real Dangers Out There?

**1. Lyme Disease:** transmitted by tiny deer ticks. Great information about the disease and how to remove ticks can be found at: <http://www.sialis.org/lyme.htm>

**2. West Nile Virus:** From Sialis website, “West Nile disease is killing birds. Believed to be spread by bites of infected mosquitoes and bird-to-bird contact, this virus is of concern to the birding world everywhere. People who develop high fever, confusion, muscle weakness or severe headaches should see a doctor right away. Keep up to date on the spread and what can be done. It is not common, resulting in about 111 deaths per year (a little higher than deaths from lightning strikes.) CDC West Nile Virus.”

**3. Hanta Virus:** This rare, but potentially deadly virus is carried by mice. A properly baffled nestbox should prevent mice from getting inside, but if you encounter this, special precautions for cleaning out a box that housed mice should be taken. From Sialis, “Before removing a used mouse nest, use a spray bottle to thoroughly soak the nest and box (to control dust) with a 10% bleach solution. After 15-20 minutes, while standing upwind/wearing a dust mask, use gloves or a plastic bag to remove the nest, and then sweep and scrape out the box. Wash your hands afterwards. Leave the box open for a day to air it out.”

**4. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever:** In Ohio, the American dog tick is the vector. This disease is more prevalent in southern states. One gets the disease from a sustained tick bite of at least 4 hours, or by coming in contact with bodily fluids or secretions of ticks through careless handling (never squash them!)

**5. Histoplasmosis:** a disease caused by inhalation of microscopic *Histoplasma capsulatum* fungal spores found in the environment. Many people inhaling the spores do not get sick. Symptoms are similar to pneumonia if you are affected and future skin and eye infections, though rare, can occur. Sometimes called the “Bird Droppings Disease”, the spores are found in the soil and in material contaminated with bird or bat feces (see Rule #3). <http://www.cdc.gov/fungal/histoplasmosis/>

**6. Bumblebees:** I have encountered these a few times when monitoring Chickadee nests (see Rule of Thumb #1). Madame WingNut leaves them bee (sorry) as they are beneficial insects. Check out: <http://www.sialis.org/beeid.htm>

**7. Wasps:** Weekly monitoring makes short work of these unwanted insects in my nestboxes. If there are fewer than 6 or so, I simply squash them with my 3 inch metal putty knife and remove nest starts – excellent tool! I have never been stung doing this. My father was known as the Wasp Whisperer and taught me his technique. It involves a calm, slow dance interspersed with periodic motionlessness and sometimes prayer. If you run screaming and flail about and get stung, do not blame me. Many monitors use hard bar ivory soap or a thin layer of Vaseline on ceilings of nestboxes to prevent wasps from starting nests. I prefer the dance.

**8. Bird Mites:** I monitor a lot of Tree Swallow and Purple Martin nests and have had some mitey interesting encounters with nestbox parasites. I believe the only thing that can crawl faster than a determined tick is a red bird mite. I have never been adversely affected by them. From the little reading I have done, bird mites losing their host birds can bite humans, causing some contact dermatitis, but they cannot complete their life cycle in a mammalian host. Bird

mites are rarely disease transmitters. When removing Tree Swallow or Purple Martin nests, I use my 3 inch metal putty knife to keep nest material at hand's length, bag the nest and dispose ASAP. I recommend a good shower and shampoo afterward.

**7. Chiggers:** the juvenile (larval) form of a mite in the family of Trombiculidae. In its juvenile form, chiggers have 6 legs, are red in color, and barely visible (length is less than 1/150th of an inch). Requiring a high level of humidity for survival, they are usually found on vegetation close to the ground (see Rule #4). Symptoms are severe itching at site of bite for one to two days and small red pustules or blisters, often on ankles or other areas of tender skin (groin, folds in skin, beneath underwear elastic, etc.). Contrary to popular belief, they do not burrow into your skin. Something to relieve the itching is best treatment.

**8. Black Widow and Brown Recluse Spiders:** Black widow spiders are relatively uncommon in Ohio, especially in the northern half of the state. Brown recluse spiders are even more uncommon in Ohio, only found living in the southwest corner of the state. I have never run across either species in a nestbox, but some of my friends in southern states have. Best again to observe Rule #1.

I may have forgotten some of the dangers of monitoring and hope you will all enlighten and enliven with some of your tales from your trails. In any event, I sincerely hope that this article does not scare you off the trail! Remember, you could fall off the couch and none of us would want that. Better to get some bumps and bruises while helping the birds.



*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.*

# Remembering Ric Mattmuller

## May 9, 1926 – May 12, 2012



As I've grown older and occasionally look back on my life, there are a few people and events which really stand out in my memory. Some good I'll always remember, and some not so good I'll wish to forget. One person who really made a positive contribution to my life and one I'll always want to remember is Ric Mattmuller.

Ric was very influential in encouraging my interest in Bluebirds and in getting me started with OBS. Our friendship grew as we traveled to OBS meetings, talked on the phone and worked the OBS booths at the Ohio State Fair and The Great Geauga County Fair. I sure know from the time spent together that he loved his wife, loved her cooking, his family, his friends, Dahlias and Bluebirds. He was also a business owner and pharmacist in his day who knew how to serve his customers and make them feel special each time they came into his store. Because I didn't feel I could adequately do Ric justice in writing this article, I asked his wife Donna if I could interview her. Donna graciously offered her help as she always has when it comes to OBS. As many of you already know, Donna was greatly influential in Ric's success as a father, grandfather, businessman, volunteer at his church, involvement with many local civic groups and his participation in OBS. This interview was not easy for her and I wish to express my deepest heartfelt thanks on behalf of OBS.

1. *How long were you and Ric married?* 63 ½ years
2. *Tell me about your family.* We have four children, six grand children and two great grand children.
3. *When and how did Ric first show signs of being interested in Bluebirds?* Around 1979 when OBS was first forming, Ric became friends with a gentleman

by the name of Bill Davis. Bill and Ric really hit it off and Bill was very influential in helping Ric learn about Bluebirds.

4. *When and how did Ric become involved with OBS?* Bill Davis was also the main influence in helping Ric become involved with OBS.
5. *What responsibilities and positions did Ric serve in while in OBS?* Ric was an OBS trustee, County Coordinator and also a District Coordinator who was responsible for finding people to serve as County Coordinators. He also helped train these OBS representatives.
6. *What were Ric's most enjoyable moments and fondest memories related to OBS?* Ric was a real talker. He loved people and loved talking Bluebirds. He really enjoyed showing his slide show to churches and civic groups and talking with folks at the many County Fairs around the state.
7. *As OBS goes forward toward the future, what advice do you think Ric would leave with us?* I think Ric would most want OBS to keep pushing for Bluebirds.
8. *How do you think Ric will want to be remembered by OBS members?* That he really loved Bluebirds, loved learning about them and enjoyed being involved with OBS.

How fitting that Ric came into and left this world at a time of year which so reflects the beginnings of a new season and new life. He was a friend, a great example and a very fun guy to be around. He will be greatly missed!



*Respectfully and fondly submitted,*  
Jay K. Brindo, OBS Director

# Trail Tales

## When Grease Fails By Dick Tuttle



During my first year bluebirding in 1968, raccoons became a nightmare as they wiped out nine of 12 bluebird nest attempts after climbing to nestboxes to feast on eggs or nestlings. Murderous House Sparrows claimed a tenth bluebird nest. Only two families fledged nine bluebirds from a potential of 37 eggs laid. Unknowingly, I had erected 35 “raccoon feeders” by nailing

bluebird boxes directly to wooden fence posts on two farms that I had worked on as a teenager. I had started my conservation career after my first year of teaching ninth-grade science and had looked forward to my new hobby. Raccoons, and to a lesser extent, House Sparrows, became my unwanted mentors as they taught me that I had to use my big brain to outsmart their little brains.

By late July during my first nesting season, I began removing all of my nestboxes from their original wooden fence posts. I used a carriage bolt and a twisted wire loop to attach each modified box to a gas or water pipe that I had salvaged at a junk yard. In the meantime, raccoons continued to climb the bare pipes to check boxes for snacks. Fortunately, one of my real mentors happened to be Marion County’s game warden, Emory Jividen, who listened to my frustrations in the Prospect Restaurant and offered me the best advice at the time. Emory said he was sure that the Ohio Division of Wildlife used chassis grease on their Wood Duck poles to keep raccoons and other climbers at bay. After Cecil Oehler, owner of the local Sohio gas station, donated grease to help the bluebirds, I added a greasy six-inch zone as thick as cake frosting to the middle of each pipe where a bipedal raccoon would touch its front feet when attempting a climb. By mid-March 1969, I had greased my nestboxes’s pipes and my bluebirds were ready for a raccoon-free nesting season.

The grease worked and for my second season, my boxes fledged 64 bluebirds without interference from masked acrobats. During the years that followed, I applied new grease above old zones on poles, then after many years, I added new grease on top of the old, dried grease. To readers worried about grease’s threat to the environment, few things are more organic than chassis grease that is nearly pure carbon, and most of it stays where it is applied. Does

grease block all climbers? No, far from it; there are five scenarios where grease does not work and two occur when grease has been hardened by winter temperatures.

### *Nursing Red Squirrels*

Each year when I ready my nestboxes prior to March 15, I occasionally discover a nest of young red squirrels. The single mother moves into her nursery when temperatures have hardened the grease, and if she is home when I visit, she will cuss me when I begin to open the nestbox. I respect her warning and gently close the box, and then I return later with a putty knife, coffee can, and rags to scrape and clean away the hardened grease so she can raise her young without tracking grease to her family once higher temperatures create a slippery mess. Once the squirrel family leaves the box, I clean out their used nest, and since the mid-1980’s, I have installed baffles made from 30-inch lengths of four-inch PVC drainpipes to all squirrel boxes to prevent future busy-tails from homesteading. Also, I used to blame mother squirrels for enlarging some entrance holes until I caught a youngster teething the soft white pine. Like bluebirds, red squirrels only use the boxes to nest in.

### *Mice Pose a Threat*

Mice, like squirrels, only move into my nestboxes during the colder months. Once I evict them in March, they don’t move back. In order to avoid the threat of Hantavirus, a disease that is very dangerous for humans and is carried by rodents, especially deer mice, I make sure that I don’t touch their nest material, or the stick that I use to evict them.

### *Snakes Ignore Grease*

Snakes, specifically black rat snakes, can climb through grease. An incident I most remember took place on 26 June 1981. I was helping Ron Keil, the Ohio Division of Wildlife’s video photographer, collect footage for our nation’s first government produced bluebird conservation video. We had arrived at a golf course south of Delaware where I had banded a family of six bluebird nestlings two days before. The box’s pipe had five years of accumulated grease on it and it was easy to trace the path of a large snake up the greased pipe to the nestbox. When the snake reached the top of the box, the roof’s edge had scraped a blob of grease from the snake’s body. Of course, all six bluebird nestlings were gone, having been recycled into the flesh of the climbing reptile.





A snake's path through grease is easy to trace. A blob of grease on the roof's edge is a sure sign that a snake had traveled over the top of the box on its way to the nest chamber.

Black rat snakes climb and hunt in forest canopies, raiding bird nests and consuming young squirrels found in cavities. The slithering giants can grow to be eight feet long, and when they leave the woodlands to meander through prairies, pastures and golf courses, they can be very impressive as they search for ground-nesting birds and rodents. During the 2012 season, a rat snake had climbed to four of my boxes in a nine-box grid that I had arranged for Tree Swallows before the 2001 season. From late May through June, the snake consumed three families of nestlings and climbed to one empty nestbox

by mistake. Twelve years ago, cottonwood tree seedlings were sprouting here and there throughout the grid. Today, the seedlings have grown to be forty feet high with trunks nearly a foot wide. In other words, the nestbox grid has grown into a habitat attractive to black rat snakes and I will have to decide to add snake-proof baffles to my pipe mounts, or move the nestboxes to locations out of snake habitat before the 2013 season.



Ironically, the black rat snake is one of my favorite animals. On 7 June 2012, this big guy had to be close to eight feet long and its cloudy eye was a sign that it was about to shed its skin. It is my responsibility as a bluebird trail manager to out-smart snakes with baffles, etc.

### Jumping Felines

Jumping house cats is another nemesis, at least until coyotes come to the rescue. Delaware State Park is fairly isolated with few homes as neighbors, but I have counted three different cats in the park this past season. I think someone is dumping felines in the park, since the cats I have seen do not behave like true feral cats. On the other hand, they are not tame enough to approach a stranger that might take them to a shelter. After all, if they have been trapped and betrayed once, they aren't going to respond to anyone's offer to help them. Cats' bellies collect grease as they repeatedly jump up to snag their targets. Also, they can encounter grease as they drop to the ground after their meal. Since cats are jumpers, they will not leave claw marks on the lower portion of the pipe like raccoons do. Jumping cats made it to three of the park's nestboxes in 2012, devouring four Tree Swallow nestlings and two clutches of swallow eggs.

### Droughts Bring on Adolescent Climbers

Unfortunately, some raccoons manage to climb through grease. I believe that first climbers are adolescent raccoons, and they will never repeat a climb once they try to remove grease from matted fur. Raccoons have only climbed through grease during times of drought, when they were desperately hungry. I first recorded raccoons climbing through grease during the drought of 1988, and during 2012, raccoons only climbed to two nestboxes to ruin one nest of Tree Swallow eggs. The other breached box was empty.

Presently, I maintain and monitor 375 nestboxes for bluebird trail species at ten locations. Nearly half of my boxes (170 boxes, 45.3%) are protected by baffles. Most of my baffles are made from thirty inch lengths of four-inch drainpipe with a plastic cap held in place with two or three screws. Each Baffle hangs within an inch below the nestbox and rests in place upon an electric conduit hanger that surrounds the pipe. Grease, and only grease, protects the other 205 nestboxes. I always add more baffles to my boxes each year, but since I saw my first bluebird in 1968 when I was 23 years old, you can do the math to determine how many more years I will be doing more than just adding new grease to my mounting pipes. Adding chassis grease to poles might not be the ultimate or most esthetic answer to protect nestboxes, but it is the easiest and cheapest alternative, and it works 98-percent of the time. Sometime during the 2012 season, I will record my 10,000th bluebird fledgling since 1968, and I owe much of that success to liberal applications of chassis grease.

*Happier bluebirding when nestboxes are safe from hungry climbers.*



A climbing raccoon, most likely a hungry, drought starved adolescent had climbed through more than 30 years of grease. Multi-purpose hand cleaner and paper towels were used to erase the sticky mess.



A baffle installed to prevent pregnant red squirrels from claiming a nestbox had stopped a raccoon in its "greasy" tracks.

# OBS Spotlight – Dave and Nancy Reinhart

By Chuck Jakubchak

Photo courtesy of Metro Parks, Serving Summit County

The purpose of this column is to recognize the contributions of OBS members that have strived to make our natural world a better place and this month we found an excellent example in Dave and Nancy Reinhart. They are an enthusiastic couple from Stow, Ohio with an infinite range of interests and have continued the OBS tradition of giving back to the community for many years. During the past 11 years Dave and Nancy Reinhart have accumulated more than 4000 volunteer hours and are very worthy of the OBS Spotlight.

This husband and wife team began monitoring bluebird trails in 2002 and decided to become OBS members in 2004, following the advice of Lew Monegan, the former area contact for Summit County. They currently monitor 50 boxes on 3 separate trails with Dave being the lead monitor and Nancy providing support as needed. Their trails are located in Stow and the Munroe Falls Metro Park and to date they have successfully fledged more than 300 bluebirds. After 10 solid years of monitoring bluebird trails they still consider their work a labor of love.

In 2010 and in cooperation with the Metro Parks Serving Summit County (MPSSC) Dave and Nancy helped found a Young Birders Club, conducting monthly meetings with prospective birders. This organization is critical to the future of all birds and the Reinharts are instrumental in developing another generation of bird enthusiasts.

Their actions are not limited to birds as they have participated in Citizen Science Surveys, surveying frogs, owls, coyotes, butterflies and anything else that needs to be counted for the Metro Parks. In 2012 Dave and Nancy completed the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist course at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and they plan on

using their new credentials to work with school groups, motivating students and seniors to become excited and knowledgeable about nature.

Dave and Nancy's interests extend beyond animals and nature. Hiking is a passion and they have participated in the MPSSC Hiking Program for the past 44 years, hiking at least 12 specified trails each year. Bicycling is another hobby and they combine their riding with box monitoring, pedaling between the boxes on their trail in the Metro

Park. Since they enjoy biking in the park they became certified bicycle trail monitors and routinely patrol the Metro Parks trails looking for anyone that may need assistance. Their certification in CPR and First Aid are a valuable asset when patrolling the bicycle paths!

Like many OBS members, travel is an important element of their yearly agenda. Dave and Nancy have visited all 50 states and recently returned from Alaska where they were able to add 70 birds to their life lists. In the next few years they plan on attending the Prairie Pothole Festival in North Dakota and traveling to Arizona to view more incredible birds and landscapes.



Both Dave and Nancy had successful careers as teachers and retired a few years ago knowing that their work would continue. Dave taught 8th grade science for 31 years in Stow while also coaching cross country and track. Nancy taught business classes for 20 years, taking time out to raise a family. Now they are using their free time, experience, education and enthusiasm to make our world a better place. We are happy to have this couple in the OBS and if you see them at the next conference or on a hiking trail, please introduce yourself and share some of your favorite bird stories.

# Blooming Bluebirders

## Bluebird Field of Dreams!

by Linda Lang, Fifth Grade Science Teacher



The beautiful baseball and soccer fields behind our Northwestern Elementary School are a shared resource. The Bluebird trail that was constructed in the spring of 2005 has been providing nesting boxes for Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows, as both are cavity nesters, for the past eight years. So the Class of 2012 set the trail up when they were fifth graders and since then approximately 175 Bluebirds and 150 Tree Swallows have fledged from the boxes surrounding the ball fields. So far this year we have had 5 pairs of Bluebirds nesting in the boxes and 31 young have successfully fledged. Both Bluebirds and Tree Swallows consume many insects, including mosquitoes in the course of a nesting season which lasts from April through August. Fifth graders monitor the Bluebird Trail starting in March as the boxes need to be checked for eggs, wasps, spiders, blowfly larva, spiders, and evidence of predators such as raccoons, snakes and house sparrows. The Bluebird Trail enables fifth graders to experience a hands on project that focuses on much of the science ecosystems course of study.

We would like to encourage our neighbors who have Bluebird habitat to put up boxes. The Ohio Bluebird Society has a wonderful website with much valuable information on Bluebirding. The website is: [www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org](http://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org).

So the next time you are walking the nature trails or playing ball on the fields please take a moment to enjoy the Bluebirds and Tree Swallows who share it with us. It's true: If you build it: they will come!



# Blooming Bluebirders

2012 Trail Happenings  
By John Bigham Jr., Preble County



As I sit here writing on June 30th, I have three bluebird nests that are still active. A couple of days ago, nine bluebirds fledged from two different nests. They were both second broods, one of which came from a clutch of white eggs!! This was my first nest ever with white

eggs. It was a very exciting experience to have white eggs in an eastern bluebird nest!! The other nest of chicks was on a trail not far from my place. The young that fledged before this batch helped care for their younger brothers and sisters. It was neat to watch as the young came back to the nest they had fledged from. It is a great reward for all the labor that we put into restoring the beautiful eastern bluebird.



Yesterday afternoon, at about 4:00 pm a large thunderstorm blew through our area. It brought wind gusts up to forty miles per hour. It let out a huge amount of rain

all at once!! I have a purple martin nest in a house that I put up a couple years ago. They built their nest in a north facing cell. Of course, the wind was from the north and the rain was coming down in sheets. My poor little martin chicks got all wet. The parents tried to keep them dry, but water was coming in everywhere. The chicks could not help but get wet. An hour later, the storm slowed up enough that I could go check on the chicks. I let the pole down and looked inside the cell. The chicks were shivering and the nest was drenched. I quickly put the pole back up and went to get a dry towel and some pine shavings. I lowered the pole, for the second time, the parents were very upset at me. They would swoop down and “dive bomb” me. They did not want me messing with their babies. I took the chicks out of the nest one by one and dried them off. I placed them



in a dry cell. While I worked on the nest, I put some dry pine shavings on top of the wet nest and hurriedly put the chicks back in the cell. I put the pole back up and prayed they would survive. Today they seem just fine!! When

surveying the yard under the house, I discovered a dead martin chick. It must have blown out of the cell during the storm. Thankfully since then, the rest of the baby martins have fledged!!!

I went outside the other day and there on the ground was a little baby carolina wren. Mom was scolding me and flying up very close to me. There was a cat ready to have a “wren burrito”, just about five feet away from mom and baby. I ran at the cat and scooped up the little wren. I set it on our trampoline so mom could see it. I chased the cat even farther away!! I hope the little guy survived! This morning I saw mom and dad singing on the shed roof. They seemed happy, so that is good!



This year I have had a record breaking amount of orioles. We have AT LEAST ten pair and their babies!! They eat one jar of grape jelly in two days!! They are a spoiled bunch,

but they are happy....and beautiful...even if they do eat us out of house and home!! Hmmmmmm who is more important, me or the orioles.....not sure, I will get back to you on that one!!!

*May you fledge many birds!!!*

# Winterizing a Nest Box

by Mel Bolt



There are different opinions as to how a nest box should be prepared for winter. Some use dowel material to plug the round ventilation holes and some use duct tape in an effort to close the boxes up tight. Some, I have heard, say you can put grass in the nest box to make it warmer for wintering birds. I would prefer to use the grass in a different function, that is, make a comfortable cushion for the winter birds to rest on. I have even made 3 nest boxes that have no ventilation in them for winter installation. (Since they are under shade of trees they stay up year round and have successfully fledged bluebirds). They have also housed other birds over winter. I tell you all of this so you can get a grasp of the ideas of which I have knowledge.

As for me, I like to use an engineering principle for winterizing nest boxes and I do use it for the first nesting only in the spring when the weather is yet cold and eggs or young chicks are in the nest. In the summer if you have vent holes in the floor of the box and much greater ventilation space at the top area of the box, when the temperature inside the box rises, the heated air escapes out the top vents drawing ambient air, which is cooler, into the box thru the bottom vent holes. In the winter it is reversed as the warm air rises, drawing in the colder air. This is called air “make-up”.

So, in the winter or early spring I close off the bottom vents by cutting a piece of material the exact size of the floor space and place it on the floor of the box. This plate can be made of thin plywood, plastic, corrugated or almost anything that has some durability. This stops the draft, or if you please, the air make up which in the winter is cold to freezing air. The heat generated by the bodies of the roosting birds then tends to stay in the box near the floor where the birds are roosting. I have read that each bird generates about 2 degrees of heat.

I arrived at this approach because the boxes I make have 1.75 square inches of ventilation in the bottom and far more in the top. I had no reports this year from people using my style box of birds dying from the excessive heat, and not even in my own 12 boxes on the Research Center here in Wooster.

If you feel uncomfortable with this approach only, why not close off all vent holes with duct tape and remove it when the outside weather is no longer a threat to the birds either roosting or young in the spring.

## Member News



### Welcome To Our New Members

- |                               |                   |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Avery, Allen Jr.              | Ream, Judith      |
| Bonsell, Charlie & Bernadette | Scott, Kara       |
| Dieffenderfer, Dr. Richard    | Ventling, Douglas |
| Golias, Carrie & Joseph       | Wise, Diana       |
| Heeg, Bonita                  | Yoder, Bill Jr.   |
| Heston, Inge                  | Young, Bruce      |
| Hoffman, Thomas & Janet       | Yoder, Harry      |
| Kreiling, Robert              |                   |

### Old Membership Forms

If you have any old membership applications, please have them destroyed and ask for updated ones. We just received a new member application that has Senior members paying \$7.50 for a year – and it was sent to the Senacaville address. Now that’s an old form.



Start saving your coins now for our 2013 Conference.

### OBS Donations

**In Memory of Ric Mattmuller \$50**  
**Miscellaneous Donations \$25**



Knox County Barn Tour (held on June 16) – Mel Bolt shared his Bluebird knowledge with interested visitors.



# Mysteries of Nature and How They Relate to Bluebirds

OBS Annual Educational Conference  
Saturday, February 23, 2013, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Shisler Conference Center, Wooster, Ohio

For more information, contact OBS by e-mail at  
[info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org](mailto:info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org) or call 330.465.6987.

Open to the public.

Free if pre-registered or \$5 donation at the door.



## Who?

**Darlene Sillick** will speak on **Owls**  
(Who knows anything about owls?)



## What?

**Roger Downer** – **Moths**  
(What is the mystery?)



## When?

**Chuck Jakubchak**  
(How do migrating birds  
know **When** to migrate?)



## Where?

**Jason Martin**  
(Inside the box is **Where** the action is)



## Why?

**Greg Miller** – **On birdwatching**  
(Why is it so addictive?)

# Ohio Bluebird Society Nest Box Report

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Cavity Nesting Species	Nesting Attempts	Number of Eggs	Number of Nestlings	Number of Fledglings
Eastern Bluebird				
American Kestrel				
Black-Capped Chickadee				
Carolina Chickadee				
Carolina Wren				
Eastern Tufted Titmouse				
House Wren				
Prothonotary Warbler				
Purple Martin				
Tree Swallow				
House Sparrow Eggs Removed				
Other:				

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

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

**OPTIONAL**

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

How many boxes do you manage?: \_\_\_\_\_ How many trails do you manage?: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you actively control House Sparrows and European Starlings? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

What are your most serious predator/competitor/other problems on your trail?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you believe Tree Swallows are becoming more numerous on your trails? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Are you an OBS member? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Any comments will be welcomed - thank you for taking time to complete this form.

**Mail to: Ohio Bluebird Society, PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Road, Wooster, OH 44691  
or e-mail completed report to: [info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org](mailto:info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org)**

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



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

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Affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society



## Ohio Bluebird Society Membership Application

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mail to:**

OBS  
 PMB 111, 343 W. Milltown Rd.  
 Wooster, OH 44691-7214

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