



Bluebird Monitor

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

Spring 2018



OYBC at the 2017 Audubon Christmas Bird Counts

Thank you to Darlene Sillick, OBS Trustee and Columbus Audubon for sharing this story with OBS



Darlene Sillick states that 3 of the OYBC central Ohio birders are building bluebird boxes and 2 are putting up trails in March. It is reported that bluebirds are already checking out three new boxes that one family just put up! Nice to have such enthusiastic and dedicated young birders!



It was a frigid morning and it could not have been more than five degrees outside when I began my Christmas Bird Count. A small group and I were assigned an off-trail area in the wetlands of Glacier Ridge Metro Park. We saw a Northern Harrier and few species of native sparrows, but besides that, the walk was grueling and nearly devoid of birds. Despite the rough conditions, I enjoyed seeing friends

and the Glacier Ridge naturalists Chrissy Hoff and Sarah Hunter from the CBCs of previous years. The CBCs are a great way to meet other birders in the community. They are not always fun out in the elements, but they are extremely important to our understanding of the movements of birds during the winter months. The data collected by years and years of CBCs allows us to see the status and health of bird populations across the continent. I count the birds, because I know that as part of the CBC I am helping provide data that can be used to make a difference in the future of birds.

Anna Rose is a high school junior and member of the Central Ohio chapter of the Ohio Young Birders

Nearly every winter since 1900 bird-watchers across the continent have braved cold and wet weather to count birds for a day. This year's 118th Christmas Bird count took place during the period December 14, 2017 and January 5, 2018. Data from this census will allow scientists to assess the health and diversity of bird populations. Find out more about the history of this bird census at the Audubon Web site.

In central Ohio, we have a number of well-attended Christmas Bird Counts, not only adults but many young students contribute to the effort. Our youth should be applauded for the time, effort, and fun they had doing not one but in some cases three Christmas Bird Counts. While most are birders of age 12 through 16 from our Central Ohio Young Birders Club chapter, one was a high school senior who has been birding for only one year and another a junior at Ohio Wesleyan University who has been birding with Dr. Jed Burt since he was in 5th grade. I asked each of these students to write about their experience and why they thought this was something important to do over their Christmas break especially this year, when temperatures had dropped into the single digits!! I for one say thank you to them and hope they will give you a little incentive to come out with them next year. If you see them out in the field, applaud them. They have found some great uses for their cell phones from eBirding to sharing their latest sighting with their birding friends. As one 14-year-old eBirder, Adriana, said, 'I like to finish my year, Dec. 31, and start my year, Jan 1, birdwatching and having fun with my friends and doing citizen science'.

Darlene Sillick is co-advisor, with Maura Rawn, for the Central Ohio chapter of the Ohio Young Birders.



Ah, the Christmas Bird Count. One of America's largest citizen science projects, it seems. Held every year near the holidays, the CBC might seem like a waste of time in an otherwise busy season. Why do we do it?

My name is Katelyn, and I've only been a part of two CBC's. So far, I've been able to recognize the importance (and fun) that this special bird count brings us. It helps ornithologists keep track of wintering species across the U.S, seeing if the numbers shift in number and location. We can further delve into big questions for our feathered friends. Not so many Red-breasted nuthatches here as last year? Maybe it's due to weather? Development? What has changed here that could've made it less hospitable for these birds?

Plus, birders take pleasure in going out onto local trails to count and test their skills as bird watchers. It being an across-the-country census, birders enjoy a bit of friendly competition within states. Who got the one bird that no one else got? The most numbers? But at times, we just do it to have a well needed walk through the woods with friends and family, admiring the wondrous birds all around us.

Katelyn Shelton is a high school freshman and member of the Central Ohio chapter of the Ohio Young Birders

Bluebirds and Cicadas

By Mike Watson, OBS President

Reprinted with permission. First published in the Summer 2017 issue of *Holden Forests and Gardens* magazine



The Holden Arboretum has hosted a bluebird conservation program for more than 50 years. In 2016 we saw an unprecedented spike in the number of young birds in our program. Was this due to normal year-to-year fluctuation or could it be linked to the emergence of periodical cicadas?

but if food is superabundant the adults may require smaller territories, which would result in more nests in the same amount of area. If they are feeding the cicadas to the nestlings, it could mean healthier chicks that grow faster and are more likely to fledge.

I don't think we can necessarily answer this complicated question, but we can look for hints in some measures of bluebird success.

Cicada Basics

There are thousands of species of cicadas worldwide. Most are "annual" cicadas, meaning that some portion of the population emerges every year. There are, however, seven species of "periodical" cicadas that emerge on predictable 13 or 17 year cycles. During an emergence, hundreds of thousands or millions of individuals per acre will emerge from the ground within a few days of each other. They fly to the tree tops and sing, mate and die in just a few weeks. The vast numbers of individuals represent a nearly inexhaustible food source for many different predators including spiders, birds, raccoons, coyotes and even fish.

2016 witnessed an emergence of Brood V in eastern Ohio and neighboring states. Cicada numbers were impressive across the Arboretum, and it was easy to see how raccoons, squirrels and birds responded.

Bluebirds and Cicadas

A good year at the Arboretum fledges 350 bluebirds. A great year fledges 400. Prior to 2016, our best year on record fledged 444 bluebirds. In 2016 we fledged 558 bluebirds. Bluebirds are predominately insectivorous, so it is reasonable to think that bluebirds could be one of the many species that would benefit from the cicada emergence.

Cicadas represent an abundant food source, but for whom? If the adults are feasting on cicadas it could lead to healthier mothers laying more eggs. It could also mean the adults spend less time searching for food and can dedicate themselves to feeding the young and defending the nest from predators and competitors. Bluebirds are territorial,



Periodical cicadas that have recently emerged from the soil and are beginning to molt. They will then climb into the tree tops and mate, if they are not eaten first.

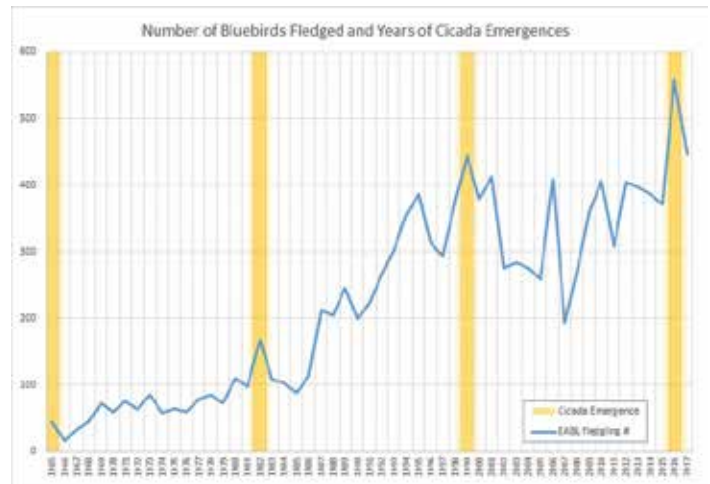
Measuring Bluebird Nest Success

The Arboretum's bluebird volunteers have been collecting the same kinds of information about each bluebird nest in our nest boxes since 1965. We can show there were more fledglings during emergence years than in the years previous or subsequent to cicada emergences.

We found that the average number of eggs laid per nest attempt spiked in emergence years, indicating that females were laying more eggs in those years. Additionally, cicada emergence appears to boost the total number of nest attempts and the number of repeat (2nd and 3rd) attempts. This suggests that the plentiful cicadas may have allowed the adults to get through their first nest attempt in better than normal condition, which allowed more of them to start second and third attempts. We also found evidence that hatching rate was higher in emergence years, possibly indicating better adult condition during incubation. Fledging rate did not strongly respond to cicada emergence, which may indicate that cicadas are not a food source for nestlings.

It should be noted that we see a lot of year-to-year fluctuation in bluebird numbers due to a wide range of factors, so it is possible that some of the increase during emergence years could be unrelated to cicadas. This and the fact that these cicadas emerge so infrequently makes it difficult to pin down precisely how they affect the bluebirds. However, the Arboretum's bluebird data clearly shows that cicadas do affect bluebird numbers, most likely by providing a plentiful food source for the adults. This resulted in larger clutches, more attempts, and better success rates. And we can safely predict another great year in 2033.

As an addendum to the story about Holden's bluebird program, I also looked at OBS nest box report data. I compared fledgling numbers in counties that were part of the 2016 emergence to those that were not. Counties outside of the cicada emergence reported 18% more fledglings in 2016 compared to the 5 previous years. Counties within the cicada emergence reported an 88% increase in 2016. This suggests that 2016 was better than average overall, but much better in counties that were part of the cicada emergence.



Plot of number of bluebirds fledged during each year of Holden's program. Vertical yellow bars indicate years of periodical cicada emergence. Note that fledgling numbers spike during cicada emergence years. Also note the substantial year-to-year variation that is normal in the bluebird population.



Shed exoskeletons on a Magnolia tree. This density of cicadas was normal across many parts of Holden in 2016.



Female cicada cutting small slits in a young tree branch to lay eggs. A small number of eggs are laid in each slit. This damage can weaken the branch, often resulting in breakage during strong winds.

A Better Idea

By Dean Sheldon,
OBS Advisor



Feb 11, 1847 Milan, Erie County, Ohio

A light twinkled in the frosty darkness at the top of the wooded slope overlooking the turning basin of the Milan Canal on the Huron River. The candle lit the bedroom of a modest, yet classic, brick home. Dr. Galpin had just finished delivering a baby boy to the Edison

family. And there it was, in our own county, that the early life of the genius who brought light to the world began.

Thomas Alva Edison, surely the premier inventive genius of our time, has enriched our lives far beyond our wildest imaginings. And it is in his honor and about “inventive genius” that we write this piece.

While not nearly so monumental in scope, the inquiring minds and the zest for experimentation within the bluebirding community have brought lasting change to our conservation movement as well.

In October 1997 we attended the very first conference of the Indiana Bluebird Society in Leesburg... a memorable day for many reasons. Our strongest recollection of the day, however, had to do with the Amishmen who came from all over northern Indiana with trailer and truck loads of their marvelous “inventions” for housing Eastern Bluebirds and Purple Martins. Boxes and baffles, feeders and traps, real gourds and plastic gourds...and roosting boxes and boxes for Wood Ducks and Flickers and Chickadees and Tufted Titmouse...and wrens. You name it... it was there in wood, plastic, fiberglass, PVC, aluminum, copper...and a newspaper tube or two, as well.

Poles and ratchets and cables and swing-down boxes and starling-proof entrances. “Pull ‘em up on a cable drum or drop the box down on a pivoting arm”- your call. The whole assemblage was a truly remarkable display of the creative/ inventive genius at work...making something new...or at least making something better.

And the descriptions that came with each device...how each different concept was arrived at and how the final product was developed through experimentation in the shop and in the field and through trial and error...that was wonderful. But, perhaps the best part was the fact that these Amish inventors wanted to do more, to hear more, to get input and feedback on all of their work but with one purpose in mind... how to do it BETTER. What a day that was!!!

...and going back to the beginnings of the movement: Duncan, Musselman, Larry Zeleny, Dick Peterson, Dick Tuttle, Wayne Davis’ KY Slot Box, Steve Gilbertson and his PVC/pseudo birch bark number, Frank Zuem and his Tree Branch Box, Andy Troyer and his sparrow resistant creation, Chris Slabaugh’s Promo Box, the Gilwood Box done by Steve Gilbertson and the two-hole box experimentation being done by dozens of people and Dick Purvis with his bough-hung California boxes! And then you add to all of this, those experimenters who have said...” well, I like what he did, but I think that if we just changed...” and you get some idea of the magnitude of this inventive movement amongst bluebirders across the continent. And all of this directed toward simply making “a better box”. And then there are the hybrids.. a case in point: Kevin Berner’s findings that bluebirds will take to almost any ol’ box as long as the entrance hole is Dick Peterson’s oval/elliptical number. Preferred is what it’s called in academic circles.

And then, just about the time that it’s all put away in neat categories, someone at a meeting raises his/her hand and ponders, aloud, “I know...but what about the Vince Bauldry box with the hardware cloth covering a 4” hole cut in the top (roof)? Everyone says that’s the answer.” And from another corner of the meeting room, someone intones the importance of the resurrection of the NABS double -roofed box as touted in the last couple of years by the late Bob Orthwein. And so, it goes, each person adding his experience to the rich inventive fabric of bluebirding genius.

But wait...if it were only nest boxes that employed this special genius for invention. But that, most certainly is not

the case. Consider trapping...with Andy Troyer, Joe Huber and Mel Bolt leading the way and all kinds of variations on a theme invading the field. And the intensive studies done by Wayne Davis, Kevin Berner and many others relating to entrance holes... and, hold on...

There's all of the great experimentation with box mounting, predator-proofing, baffles, guards, snake control, insect control (wasps, ants, blowflies) and the great investigative work done and being done with nesting material and whether it should be changed or left after fledgling... and then... the inventiveness associated with handling competition from other avian species... how DO we handle HOSP, HOWR, TRES, EUST and all the rest who, from time to time, pose a threat to bluebirds?

All of what we've said is fine...but the real inventiveness within the bluebirding movement comes from the thousands of bluebird enthusiasts all across North America who have developed singular techniques for their management of individual trails. There simply is no one way to approach the task and it is truly marvelous to witness the inventive and creative manner in which this work is done...all the way from box mounting to record keeping...with box building thrown in for good measure. And almost all of this is done by a single individual who has learned (mostly the hard way) how to get the task accomplished. There is no coterie of lab assistants/statisticians waiting in the next room.

Thomas Edison would be proud!!!

In Contact With Our Area Contacts

By Darrell Gammon, OBS Area Contact – Portage and Stark Counties.



My name is Darrell Gammon and I have been involved with bluebirds since 1995 when my younger brother talked to me about setting up and monitoring nest boxes like he did as a hobby. Well, as all things can happen, I went beyond just a few boxes. I built boxes from scrap lumber and placed them around my country

neighborhood. Then I asked a few farmers if I could place some on their back pastures. As years went on, I was at one time monitoring up to 145 nest boxes in 4 different counties, Mahoning, Columbiana, Stark and Portage. It was somewhat overwhelming so I cut back on the furthest ones after 5 years and now I monitor around 138 but 75 boxes are the Berlin Dam Army Corps of Engineers.

See, I was hunting out in Willow Creek and kept seeing bluebird nest boxes in the fields. I had to find out who owned them because they were not in good condition. Talked to a Ohio Division of Wildlife officer who directed me to the Corps. Resource manager, Barb Gill, was glad to see me and asked me to help out. After the regular monitoring ranger was transferred, I assumed monitoring and have been with the Corps since 2001. I go out every weekend from late April till September to check the boxes, record the data and every month send in my findings to the Corps who send it to a biologist in Pittsburg, PA.

I have asked and received the Corps' help in setting up wood duck nest boxes on the Mill Creek in Mahoning County for 2018 season and hope to see how we succeed with this new program from 3 boxes that I built from scrap lumber.

I'm presently retired as a radiation therapist from Aultman Hospital in Canton, Ohio with over 37 years of service. I love the outdoors which is why I also took up trail running and mostly do long distances from half marathons to 100k. I am an animal lover. Birds, cats, dogs, whatever, I love taking care of them.

I am a life member of the Ohio Bluebird Society and a previous board member for several years. I'm also a member of the North American Bluebird Society and support the Midwest Peregrine Falcon Society and Wood Duck Society.

I asked to be a contact to help out the Ohio Bluebird Society in answering questions to interested people.

Check out a very interesting YouTube video called "How Birds Survive the Winter Season - Mini Documentary" at the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUohmDU_tLI

This short documentary gives some fascinating information and video to help us better understand how many birds manage to survive the cold and snow!

Delaware County Kestrels in 2017

By Dick Tuttle, OBS Advisor and Past OBS Blue Feather Award Recipient



On December 4, 2017, Dick Phillips and I went about trading two repaired kestrel nestboxes for K-5 and K-10, two boxes of 18 boxes in the Delaware County American Kestrel Nestbox Project. During Dick's drive of nearly 20 miles from his home in eastern Delaware County to my home in

Delaware City, Dick counted four of our small falcons perched on utility wires hunting for rodents below. Of course, modern counts are made during a time when the once called sparrow hawks have diminished down to 34% of North America's count in 1966. To help bring back our continent's smallest falcon, our boxes in Delaware County have fledged 1,102 young since our project's first successful nest in 1995. Seventy-three kestrels fledged in 2017 alone.

All but one of Delaware's 18 boxes hang from utility poles that belong to Delaware Electric Cooperative. Only one box, K-16, hangs from a cable connected to a winch on its own pole in Gallant Woods Park, making Preservation Parks our second partner in the project's conservation effort. (From the beginning, other partners include Roger Wren of the Delaware County Health Department who was awarded a grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Division of Recycling and Litter Control to encourage school students from throughout Delaware County to recycle aluminum cans at Worly Recycling to finance the first ten boxes that were attached to traffic signs maintained by the Ohio Department of Highways from 1993 - 2000. Members of the Delaware County Bird Club constructed the first ten boxes.)

Once the morning's task was completed, we discussed the fact that if ten-year-old students recycled aluminum cans to finance the original ten nestboxes during their 1992-93 school year, it's quite possible that they could be fathers or mothers of children of the same age today. Hopefully, parents are now pointing out to their children nestboxes and kestrels as they drive along Delaware County's roads. Passing knowledge to younger generations is one definition of culture. During 2017, as we traveled our roadside trail 15 times for monitoring and banding, many people waved at us as they traveled by. Hopefully, some had helped to launch the project 27 years ago when they were students.

Monitoring trips in 2017 started on March 17 as we added white pine bedding to four boxes that had been excavated by European Starlings. We also encountered a female kestrel on a dead starling in K-11, and most promising was finding the season's first kestrel egg in K-9. At our last box check at K-16, we used the pole's winch to provide the only up-and-down ride for a gray Screech Owl since it failed to show up during later checks. I reported all of these events in an earlier article.

The second monitoring trip on April 2 found three grassy starling nests. We do not remove starling nests since kestrels can use them; we only remove starling eggs and check the boxes every two weeks to remove alien eggs before they can hatch. By April 16, four boxes had starling eggs, and starlings always stop laying eggs by the end of the first week of June. For 2017, we removed 78 starling eggs from 17 nests among four boxes.

Only two kestrel nests were active during the April 2 check, but by the next check on April 16, fourteen boxes held eggs or female falcons that remained committed to stay on their nests to conceal their eggs from the monster man in their ceilings. One half of the active nests contained incubating females.

By the end of the season, kestrels would attempt 17 nests with eggs in 14 boxes. Sixteen nests (94.1%) became successful by fledging one or more young. From the first egg laid on March 17 to the last fledgling on August 18, the kestrel nesting period lasted 155 days for a typical season. A total of 84 eggs was laid, 75 (89.3%) hatched, and 73 (86.9%) fledged. Once hatched, 97.3% of hatchlings grew to fledge. Kestrels in 2017 fledged 35.2% more young than the 2016 total.

Only one nest failed due to unavoidable reasons. Electric lines along Cline Road were being updated with new poles that required weeks of work on site. Kestrels are easily spooked by our species' activities, and even though the electric company and their contractor did everything possible to minimize their impact on the falcons, the first nest failed. Also, there were no pastures or hay fields in K-2's territory where kestrels could hover over low vegetation away from human activity to harvest small rodents and large insects. There were only corn and soybean fields that forced the falcons to hunt only the grassy road berms that were occupied by efforts to install new utility poles and electric lines.



Finally, after two years of failing to hatch eggs in K-14, a female kestrel shields hatchlings on May 19, 2017. The five hawklets grew to fledge around June 16.

Only two kestrels hatched from K-2's five eggs, and by May 26 the box was empty, probably because the young died and were then consumed by their parents. We told the utility crew that the box could now be moved to the new pole and the old pole was pulled. We could not check the nest on June 3 because it had been attached to the new pole too high for us to reach it with our ladder. Arrangements were made for the box to be lowered during the following Monday. One bucket truck was used to lower the box and to everyone's surprise, the kestrels had started a second nest with three eggs. After the technician gently lowered and reattached K-2 to be twelve feet above the ground, it took three of us to roll the old post so I could salvage the aluminum sheeting and reinstall it below K-2 on the new pole, all to deter climbing raccoons. Everyone was pleased by the progress.

At the next visit to K-2, we found four eggs and the determined falcons went on to raise four fledglings by August 6. Human beings and birds had worked together for a successful nest. Two boxes produced two families each in 2017. Historic data from 287 nest attempts reveals that if the first egg of the season appears before April 12, there is time for a second family that will produce a first egg before June 25. The frequency of second successful broods averages one in 36 nest attempts, so second broods are not that common.

Three kestrel fledglings were lost to traffic while one fledgling was rescued and successfully released by a crew from the Delaware County Engineers Office. I have listened to criticism of installing nestboxes along roadways, but even if nestboxes raise young in the middle of fields, the young kestrels will still fly to utility wires in order to hunt large insects from the road's surface. It takes time for the birds to learn to avoid fast-moving automobiles, and some don't learn fast enough.

One of the best developments of 2017 was that K-14 became productive again, fledging five from five eggs after two years of failing to hatch eggs. We concluded that the eggs had been infertile because both parents were present for both years and they incubated the eggs well into both seasons. If the eggs were fertile, then nearby bridge and road work could have possibly caused two years of nest failure. Yet, all was peaceful, quiet, and productive in 2017.

All 73 of 2017's nestlings fledged wearing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leg bands. We aim to band nestlings between 14 and 24 days old when they can be sexed and their muscles are too immature for them to draw blood from their captures' hands.

At each box, I would climb the ladder, disengage the roof's hook, lift the hinged roof and look in to count the nestlings. I would pick one nestling and descend the ladder and hand the young bird to Dick. I would list band numbers in my banding data book before attaching the band as Dick held the nestling. The sex of the nesting is recorded next to its band number. Dick would climb the ladder to return the nestling to its nest, then he would pick the second bird and descend as I waited with the second band in the jaws of the pliers, etc. The process proceeded repeatedly until the entire family wore their new bracelets. We do not band the adults and it is usually a very peaceful and rewarding process since we enjoy the behaviors and personalities of the spirited young falcons.

Practicing conservation is an entertaining and rewarding team endeavor, so raptor on into 2018!



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 24, 2018



Join Us As We Investigate The:

- ✓ **BEST METHODS**
- ✓ **BEST PRACTICES**

For Our Native Cavity Nesters

SPEAKERS

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Jim McCormac (OH) | Keynote Speaker, Naturalist, Author |
| Keith Kridler (TX) | Texas Bluebird Society - Co-Founder, "The Bluebird Monitor's Guide" (Author) |
| Bet Zimmerman (CT) | Mentor & Award Winning Website: www.sialis.org |
| Mike Watson (OH) | Ohio Bluebird Society - President |
| Q & A Speaker Panel | Topic: Birding 201 |

CONCURRENT SESSIONS (CHOICE OF 2 DURING EXTENDED LUNCH BREAK)

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Bluebirding 101 | Doug LeVasseur |
| Yikes, House Sparrows, Now What! | Paula Ziebarth |
| Native Woodland Species | Marne Titchenell |
| Prothonotary Warblers and American Kestrels | Dick Tuttle |

CONFERENCE LOCATION & TIME

Check-In: 8:30 Meeting: 9:00 – 4:00
 Grange Insurance Audubon Center
 505 W. Whittier Street
 Columbus, OH 43215 <http://grange.audubon.org/>

COST

\$25 OBS member, \$30 non-OBS member, \$15 student (12 and under)
Includes Conference and Lunch (Please pre-register ASAP using attached registration form)

- *Registration Deadline: February 14, 2018 (Space is limited)*
- *Mail to: Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair, 7747 TR 103, Millersburg, OH 44654*

Awards, displays, silent auction and much more!
 Visit our website for more information and to see program updates!

<https://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org/>

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photography
Lisa Young UNCAGED



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

ANNUAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 24, 2018

REGISTRATION FORM

*Registration Deadline: February 14, 2018
(please pre-register, space is limited)*

(Only one person per form please. Thank you for printing off additional forms for additional attendees.)

Name: _____ OBS Member? YES / NO

Organization: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

I AM REGISTERING AS

____ OBS Member (\$25) ____ Non-OBS Member (\$30) ____ Student – 12 & under (\$15)

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO
OBS

MAIL REGISTRATION
Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair
7747 TR 103
Millersburg, OH 44654

LUNCH SELECTION

Choice:

- Tuscan Veggie Wrap
- Ham and Swiss on rye
- Turkey/Cheddar on wheat
- Gluten-Free sandwich
- Grilled Chicken sandwich



THANK YOU SPONSORS!





Ask Madame WingNut

Winter is Here! Time to Think Outside the Box

By Paula Ziebarth

Being a good steward of our native cavity nesters doesn't stop when nest season is over. In 2018, as soon as the calendar marked the new year, winter hit with a vengeance in Ohio. Winter is the time to think outside the box. How can you help Eastern Bluebirds and other feathered friends during the bleakest months?

Provide shelter during cold winter months. Winterize nest boxes by blocking vents with felt window insulation or other insulating material that does not leave a sticky residue. I also like to place a layer of dried pine needles on the nest box floor to provide a nice roosting option for Eastern Bluebirds and other cavity nesters during cold winter nights. Brush piles and old Christmas trees can provide shelter in your yard also. I set our used Christmas tree near the bird feeding station to provide shelter for birds during winter months.

A source of unfrozen water is important for birds this time of year. You can purchase heaters for your bird bath or purchase a bird bath with a built-in heating unit. I highly recommend the latter. Eastern Bluebirds and other species will drop by for a drink.

If you have not already done so, consider planting some native plants in your landscape that will provide food for birds. Berry producing plants such as winterberry holly, chokeberry and bayberry are examples of plants that provide berries for Eastern Bluebirds and others during winter months.

Bluebirds swallow their food whole and cannot crack a seed. If you want to set food out at your bird feeding station for them, they can eat shelled sunflower seeds, chopped peanuts, Zante currants, chopped raisins, etc. Mealworms are always a favorite of Eastern Bluebirds. Some people feed dried mealworms this time of year although birds prefer live food. Feeding mealworms during winter months can get rather expensive. I prefer setting out homemade suet mix crumbles for the birds during fall and winter.

Different suet recipes can be found on www.sialis.org website. I have set out Bluebird Banquet for the birds for many years and many different species love this food, Eastern Bluebirds especially. Most ingredients can be found at the grocery store. Zante currants are in the same aisle as raisins. Make sure to buy corn meal, NOT corn meal mix

which has leavening in it. I purchase peanuts, sunflower chips and cakes of Simply Suet from Wild Birds Unlimited to use in recipe, melting suet cake in microwave in a 2-cup glass Pyrex measuring cup which makes it easy to pour.

Bluebird Banquet (Linda Janilla Peterson)®

- MIX 1 cup peanut butter
- 4 cups yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup unbleached or whole-wheat flour
- ADD 1 cup fine sunflower seed chips
- 1 cup peanut hearts (or finely ground nuts)
- 1/2-1 cup Zante currants (or raisins cut in halves, or chopped dried cherries)
- DRIZZLE and STIR IN 1 cup rendered, melted suet
- Cool.

Resulting mix will be crumbly and should have bean/pea sized lumps from the drizzling of the melted suet. If too sticky after cooling, mix in a bit more flour. If too dry, drizzle in more melted suet. Refrigerate any mix you are not using to prevent suet from turning rancid.

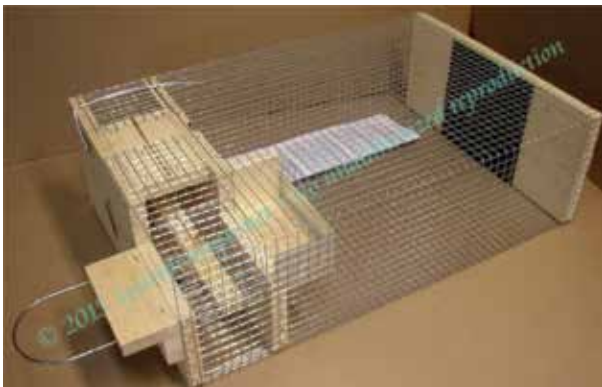
Nutritional analysis: Protein 12.7%, Carbohydrates 45.9%, Fat 32.7%, Fiber 5.9%

To keep European Starlings from mobbing your feeders, suet mixes should be placed in a mealworm feeder or other starling proof feeder if possible. This picture of my Evergreen Bluebird Feeder shows Eastern Bluebirds enjoying suet mixes during a cold winter day. I prefer the plastic-coated mesh sides to plexiglass sides. Plexiglass sides can be confusing and frightening for birds if they try to exit through the clear sides. Additionally, when feeding suet mixes, plexiglass quickly gets smeared with fat so you cannot see the birds well. It is very important to keep the food in the center of the floor or European Starlings will be able to get to it. To do this, I have velcroed a plastic desk organizer tray to center of floor. With tray added, my feeder allows many points of ingress/egress for Eastern Bluebirds, Carolina Wrens, and other small birds. Woodpeckers of all sizes are still able to access food with their long tongues (fun to watch), but Starlings cannot.

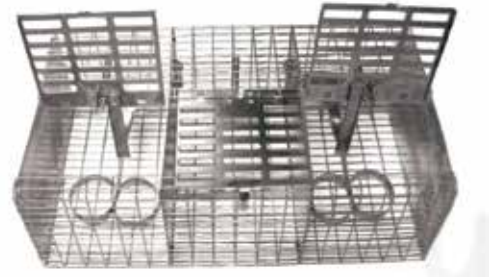


It is wonderful to provide food, water and shelter, but if you are willing to think outside the box a little more, you can help native cavity nesters even further by using repeat bait traps to capture non-native invasive House Sparrows and European Starlings during fall and winter months. Natural food stores become scarce as winter marches on. Eliminating some of these non-native avian competitors leaves more food in the wild for our native birds and other wildlife. By reducing their numbers, you also reduce competition from these aggressive non-native nest robbers next spring. Both House Sparrows and European Starlings are known to attack and kill native birds in nest boxes and/or natural cavities.

Best results with repeat bait trapping vary with the two species. The type of bait used and best season for trapping are different for House Sparrows and European Starlings. My favorite traps work well for either species. Blaine Johnson's Deluxe Repeating Sparrow Trap can be purchased online at www.sparrowtraps.net This durable, well designed trap will serve you well. I have had mine for over 10 years. This is a true repeating trap and does not require resetting. Keeping live decoys (live House Sparrows or European Starlings) in the trap attracts more of their kind and seems to dissuade native birds of other species from venturing near. I place trap on ground near bird feeders or under tree birds like to roost in. Decoys are well fed and watered and covered during the night with waterproof mat.



Another wonderful, trap is a compact 3-compartment unit. Purple Martin Conservation Association sells Songbird Essentials Wire Sparrow Trap online at www.purplemartin.org Birds are trapped in the two outside compartments, with the middle serving as a small holding chamber for a decoy or two. This trap requires manual resetting. Although it doesn't happen often with live decoys in trap, all traps must be carefully monitored to make sure any native birds are released immediately.



House Sparrows are easily trapped late summer (after nesting season winds down) through late fall. Baiting traps with white millet, cracked corn or white bread works well. Juvenile birds are most easily trapped, and the more decoys you get, the more they pile in.

European Starlings cannot be captured until temperatures drop below freezing and there is snow cover on the ground. This usually doesn't happen until the first or second week in January. It is important to deny them access to feeders to insure they move on to bait traps. It is common to capture over 20 per day when weather conditions are good. My good friend Connie and I have a friendly competition going. I captured 174 European Starlings during the first half of January. I believe Connie caught more. She doesn't count them, but the heft of her bag indicated that she did. To trap Starlings, bait traps with peanut butter and/or suet crumbles. I keep two decoys overnight. Once temperatures get above freezing, you will not catch any more. Humanely dispatched non-native species can be frozen and delivered to local wildlife rehabber to be used as food for injured wildlife if your local rehabber accepts them.

I hope you will think outside the box this winter and stay warm doing it!

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

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



Darlene Sillick and Paula Ziebarth are shown wearing their "Elmer Fudd" hats, a good way to keep warm while thinking outside the box!



Member News

"Sometimes you belong so you can give, not just receive. The membership dues to OBS allow us to do so much to help birds, our communities and ultimately ourselves."

~ Chuck Jakubchak

Welcome to New Members

- Carol Frederick
- Kathy Goldsberry
- Kathi Ingram
- Bill Jirousek
- John B. Neeb
- Mike Sapp/Kelly Thiel
- Jane & Bob Scott
- Terry Spaeth
- Ryan Taylor
- Mike Tufts
- Mary Ann Webster
- Kay West

Wild Birds Unlimited, Attn: Lou Ann White

Thank You to Our Donors

- John Barber, donation
- Dan Best, donation
- Columbus Audubon Society, conference sponsor
- Carol Frederick, donation
- Ohio Ornithological Society, conference sponsor
- Cardinal Health Foundation, grant
- Jane and Bob Scott, donation
- Dick Tuttle, donation
- Scott and Gail Jamison, memorial donation in memory of Jerry L. Amos
- Linda S. Mathews, memorial donation in memory of Jerry L. Amos

OBS changes phone number and mailing address

The Ohio Bluebird Society has a new phone number: (440) 462-9084

The Board recently activated a Google Voice phone number that is linked directly to my cell phone. This eliminates the need for a stand-alone cell phone for OBS. All calls to the new phone number go to a voice mail account. When a call is received, Google sends a text and email to my cell phone. I will review the messages and either return the call or redirect it to the appropriate officer or Area Contact.

Google Voice is a free service, meaning that this change saves OBS more than \$200 per year.

OBS also has a new mailing address:

Ohio Bluebird Society
The Holden Arboretum
9500 Sperry Road
Kirtland, OH 44094

The explanation for this change is a little more complicated, but comes down to streamlining and cost savings. First, we decided to direct all conference registrations and membership forms to our Membership team (Pat and Dave Dutton). This eliminated the need to collect those documents at the Wooster address and then forward them to the Duttons.

Second, keeping a PO box in Wooster means having someone in Wooster to collect the mail. A big "Thank You" to Marcella Hawkins for being that person for years, but there is no guarantee that we will have someone near Wooster in the future. Our goal was to find a new mailing address with a good sense of permanence and, ideally, for free.

The Board's solution was to shift OBS mail to The Holden Arboretum. Holden has a long (50+ year) history of bluebird conservation. That program is overseen by the Conservation Biologist (me). My job description now includes "OBS Liaison", which means that retrieving and managing OBS mail is part of my job. It also means that whoever has the job after me will be responsible for OBS mail. And, this allows us to eliminate the Wooster PO box, saving OBS \$120 per year.

We will maintain both the Wooster PO box and the cell phone number until after the conference.

The OBS Board would like to thank Jay Brindo for handling OBS phone calls and Marcella Hawkins for handling all OBS mail. Both have contributed many hours of their time to keep OBS communications running.

The Bluebird

Poem by Eben Eugene Rexford

Submitted by Molly Wilsbacher, OBS board member and treasurer. It was sent to Molly by Deborah Scott, who found the poem among her aunt Lois Welch's belongings after her death.

.....

Listen a moment, I pray you; what was that sound I heard?
Wind in the budding branches, the ripple of brooks, or a bird?
Hear it again, above us! and see! a flutter of wings!
The bluebird knows it is April, and soars toward the sun and sings.

Never the song of the robin could make my heart so glad.
When I hear the bluebird singing in spring, I forget to be sad.
Hear it! A ripple of music! Sunshine changed into song!
It sets me thinking of summer when the days and their dreams are long.

Winged lute that we call a bluebird, you blend in a silver strain
The sound of the laughing waters, the patter of spring's sweet rain,
The voice of the winds, the sunshine, and fragrance of blossoming things.
Ah! You are an April poem, that God has dowered with wings!



OBS 2017 FLEDGLING REPORT

Reported As Of 1/30/2018: Eastern Bluebird - 6,090

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

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Tree Swallow - 6,335 | Purple Martins - 1,639 |
| House Wren - 1,741 | Eastern Tufted Titmouse - 0 |
| Carolina Chickadee - 112 | American Kestrel - 185 |
| Black- Capped Chickadee - 31 | Barn Swallow - 64 |
| Carolina Wren - 20 | House Sparrow Eggs Discarded - 1,191 |
| Prothonotary Warbler - 80 | House Sparrows Dispatched - 816 |

Send info to: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org
 Download fillable form - see FLEDGLING REPORT tab

Treasurer's Report

- Ohio Bluebird Society is now part of the Paypal Giving Fund. If you'd like to make a donation online, please go through the Paypal Giving Fund where 100% of your donation goes into supporting our Mission: <https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/108133408063901813/charity/1309161>.
- Ohio Bluebird Society received \$15.30 last quarter simply from members shopping via Amazon's Smile Program. Please sign up to purchase through Amazon Smile (<https://smile.amazon.com>) and designate the Ohio Bluebird Society as your charitable choice. We receive a small percentage and it won't cost you anything!
- As we get ready to host our Annual Meeting and Conference, the financial statement for the period ending 12/31/2017 reflects a checking account balance of \$11,255.11 and a savings account balance of \$9,528.91 for a grand total of \$20,784.02.

OBS Officers, Board of Trustees, and Advisors

TRUSTEES

- Mike Watson - President:
440.946.4400 ext. 132
mwatson@holdenarb.org
- Mary Lee Minor - Secretary:
419.562.6377
chickadee@columbus.rr.com
- Molly Wilsbacher - Treasurer:
614.886.0372
OBSTreasurer@gmail.com
- Patrica Dutton - Membership Chair:
330.763.0474
obsmembershipchair@gmail.com

- Penny Brandau -
Newsletter Editor: 440.670.3684
pennybrandau@gmail.com
- John Barber: 216.233.2271
jcbarber27@gmail.com
- Mel Bird: 419.577.9545
mrbird90@aol.com
- Carrie Elvey: 330.359.5235
carrie@wildernesscenter.org
- Darlene Sillick: 614.288.3696
azuretrails@columbus.rr.com

ADVISORS

- Mel Bolt: 330.262.0448
mellen@sssnet.com
- Linda Lang: 419.651.4196
- Dean Sheldon: 419.752.1451
seedbed@frontier.com
- Dick Tuttle: 740.363.6433
- MEMBERSHIP CHAIRS**
- Dave Dutton
330.674.7585
- Patrica Dutton 330.763.0474
obsmembershipchair@gmail.com

E-mail:
info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Phone:
330.466.6926

Website:
www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Address:
The Holden Arboretum, 9500 Sperry Road, Kirtland, Ohio 44094



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



Ohio Bluebird Society Membership Application

| Membership Class | Annual | 3-years |
|--|---|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 21) | \$10 | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Sr. Family (over 60) | \$12 | \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular/Family | \$15 | \$40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational | \$40 | \$110 |
| <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 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email Newsletter OR <input type="checkbox"/> Print Newsletter | | |

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

County: _____

E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to:
Ohio Bluebird Society

Mail to:
Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair
7747 TR 103
Millersburg, OH 44654

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

OBS Area Contacts (as of November 2017)

| County | Name | Phone | Alt. Phone or Email | E-mail |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ALLEN | Mohr, Mark | 419.221.1232 | | mohrbluebirds@hotmail.com |
| ASHLAND | Lang, Linda | 419.945.3005 | | nrws_lang@tccsa.net |
| ATHENS | Caldwell, Reid & Teresa | 740.448.7445 | freidc@yahoo.com | teresacaldwell@athensswcd.org |
| BELMONT | Kabel, Michael (Rev. Father) | 304.551.2517 | | bluebirdpadre@yahoo.com |
| CHAMPAIGN | Rutan, Jean | 937.834.3336 | | cpjrutan@gmail.com |
| CLARK | Gray, Bethany | 937.767.1919 | | ohiobluebirder@gmail.com |
| COLUMBIANA | Nutter, Susan | 330.692.2447 | | susannutter11@gmail.com |
| CRAWFORD | Minor, Mary Lee | 419.562.6377 | | chickadee@columbus.rr.com |
| DARKE | Luttmer, Bob | 937.526.5477 | | bonnie561@roadrunner.com |
| DARKE | Smith, Tom | 937.996.1629 | | bluebirdman@embarqmail.com |
| DELAWARE | Tuttle, Dick | 740.363.6433 | | ohtres@cs.com |
| DELAWARE | Ziebarth, Paula | 614.323.7566 | | paulaz@columbus.rr.com |
| ERIE | Sheldon, Dean | 419.752.1451 | | seedbed@frontier.com |
| FAIRFIELD | Kale, JoAnn | 479-769-0574 | | joann.kale@icloud.com |
| FRANKLIN | Aldridge, Julie | 218-820-3286 | | juliealdridge10@gmail.com |
| FRANKLIN | Sillick, Darlene | 614.288.3696 | | azuretrails@columbus.rr.com |
| GEAUGA | Brindo, Jay | 440.343.9275 | | jbrindo@aol.com |
| GREENE | Gray, Bethany | 937.767.1919 | | ohiobluebirder@gmail.com |
| GUERNSEY | Barber, Tom | 740.439.4284 | | klbarber62@roadrunner.com |
| HAMILTON | Romine, Jim | 513.236.5598 | | jdromine@cincinnati.com |
| HANCOCK | Nye, Fred | 419.387.7465 | | evaferdy@tds.net |
| HOLMES | Hawkins, Marcella | 330.465.6987 | 330.276.0909 | gofish710@embarqmail.com |
| LAKE | Watson, Mike | 440.497.4669 | 440.946.4400, Ext. 132 | mwatson@holdenarb.org |
| LORAIN | Brandau, Penny | 440.670.3684 | | pennybrandau@gmail.com |
| LUCAS | Seaman, Tammy | 419.349.5162 | | erictammy@sbcglobal.net |
| MEDINA | Rabung, Dale | 330.725.0895 | 216.973.1503 | twodr@zoominternet.net |
| NOBLE | LeVasseur, Doug | 740.630.7945 | | doug.levasseur@gmail.com |
| OTTAWA | Ziebarth, Paula | 614.323.7566 | | paulasbirdz@yahoo.com |
| OTTAWA | Rock, Lisa | 419.708.3949 | | snowbunting123@gmail.com |
| PICKAWAY | Hill, Carrie | cell: 740.248.425 | home: 740.474.2439 | carepaulgreg@yahoo.com |
| PORTAGE | Gammon, Darrell | 330.575.5166 | | invisibleman53@yahoo.com |
| ROSS | Hill, Carrie (Bishop Flaget School) | | | chill@cdeducation.org |
| SANDUSKY | Rock, Lisa | 419.708.3949 | | snowbunting123@gmail.com |
| SENECA | Coffman, Jim | 419.618.1835 | 419.448.4753 | jrusscoff@gmail.com |
| STARK | Gammon, Darrell | 330.575.5166 | | invisibleman53@yahoo.com |
| STARK | Semroc, Judy | 330.877.3551 | cell 330.612.0391 | rainefox51@gmail.com |
| SUMMIT | Grande, Marcy | 330.807.6983 | | mgrandesign@yahoo.com |
| UNION | Lowe, Laurie | 614.733.8149 | | wildwabbit1@gmail.com |
| WARREN | Jeffries, Art | 317.445.8559 | | gonebirding@hotmail.com |
| WAYNE | Bolt, Mel | 330.262.0448 | | mellen@sssnet.com |
| WOOD | Hamlin, Terry | 419-349-8596 | | tkhamlin@icloud.com |



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

The Holden Arboretum
9500 Sperry Road
Kirtland, Ohio 44094

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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



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

New Area Contact for Sandusky and Ottawa Counties



Although Lisa Rock modestly claims that “my birding career is pretty much the routine “backyard birder” story.” you can see from her brief bio that she is a very committed and enthusiastic birder and new Area Contact for OBS! Thank you Lisa!

I started really working with the Bluebird trails just 3 years ago when I began to volunteer with a local conservation group - Green Creek Wildlife Society (founded over 30 years ago by retired school teacher & Federally licensed bird bander, Tom Kashmer). I monitored several trails (the group

maintains & monitors over 100 trails with a total of 800+ boxes!)....and helped with trail maintenance (repairing/replacing boxes, cutting & spraying vines & poison ivy, etc.). Now I also assess data from the weekly trail monitor reports in order to check on issues (house sparrows) and any repairs needed.

I have worked with Purple Martins for over 6 years, and now have a successful colony with 5 rigs, 60 units of housing (gourds). I am also in contact with 40+ Purple Martin landlords, working to improve housing/rigs as well as learning more about best practices so that we can all have more successful colonies.

My greatest challenge with Bluebirds (and Purple Martins, too) is the competition from house sparrows....and my greatest joy is watching a family of Bluebirds that were successfully raised in one of my nest boxes, knowing that my efforts increased their chances of surviving those early weeks & fledging!!