



Bluebird Monitor

OBS encourages good stewardship
by **Monitoring** our Trails
Summer 2018



2018 Conference: Mission Possible



Outgoing Trustee Mary Lee Minor with current OBS Vice President John Barber



Trustee Darlene Sillick and Paula Ziebarth, Area Contact for Delaware and Ottawa Counties



Membership chairs Pat and Dave Dutton



NABS board member, webmistress for popular bluebird website www.sialis.org and conference speaker Bett Zimmerman Smith



Conference morning goodies



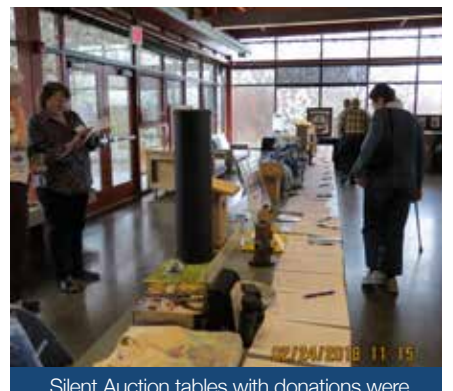
Former Blue Feather Award recipients Jim Coffman, Seneca County Area Contact, and Dick Tuttle, Delaware County Area Contact



Conference Keynote Speaker Jim McCormac



Trustee Mel Bird and his wife Mona Bird



Silent Auction tables with donations were managed by Trustee and OBS Treasurer Molly Wilsbacher

Blue Feather Award

Preliminary efforts leading to the creation of the Ohio Bluebird Society took place in the mid-1980s. Shortly thereafter [early in 1990], the Board and Society founders acted to create the prestigious Blue Feather Award. This award is intended to honor OBS members in recognition of their extraordinary accomplishments in all areas of bluebird management and conservation. This recognition is to be given to individuals who, over time, have made the OBS mission statement their very own. Areas of contribution are to include, but are not limited to, effective bluebird trail management, plus unique and creative management methods in support of the return and perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity-nesting bird species.

LIST OF RECIPIENTS

1991	Arlene Kunkel - Fredericktown
1992	Joe Huber - Heath
1993	Dick Tuttle - Delaware
1994	Dr. Wayne Davis - Lexington, KY
1995	Andrew Troyer - Conneautville, PA
1996	Bill and Joan Davis - Dayton
1997	Robert Orthwein - Columbus
1998	Mary Kowalchik - Mansfield Darlene Sillick - Dublin
1999	Tom Kashmer - Fremont
2000	Lum and Meriam Bourne - Westerville
2001	Julie Zickefoose - Whipple
2002	Gil Trail - Mansfield
2003	Mel and Mary Ellen Bolt - Wooster
2004	Doug Le Vasseur - Senecaville
2005	John Lapin - Poland
2006	Jean Rutan - Mechanicsburg
2007	D. Michael Worley - New Marshfield
2011	Earl Carlton - Carrolton
2012	Dean Sheldon - Greenwich
2013	Allen and Nina Bower - Britton, MI
2014	Fred Nye - Alvada
2015	Marcella Hawkins - Brinkhaven
2016	Tom Barber - Cambridge
2017	Jim Coffman - Tiffin
2018	Bethany Gray - Greene County

NOTE: NO AWARD PRESENTED IN 2008/2009/2010

Wildlife Conservation Award

This award was created by the OBS Board in 1995. It differs from the Blue Feather award in that membership in OBS is not a requirement. The award recognizes a strong conservation ethic throughout Ohio and in selected locations elsewhere. This recognition is given to honor individuals and organizations who are committed to this idea through the expression of it in many different ways. Some examples of the conservation efforts for which the individual awards have been presented include: wildlife rehabilitation, ODNR/Wildlife management, trail management for other bird species, avian and mammalian research efforts, wildlife research and experimentation, group presentations and educational efforts. Organizational awards have been made to: Audubon centers, arboretums, municipal park systems, metro and county parks and many other local conservation groups. With this presentation, OBS recognizes and supports a wide variety of wildlife conservation efforts wherever they may be undertaken.

LIST OF RECIPIENTS

1995	Donald L. Burton, DVM - Worthington
1996	Edward L. Smith - Caldwell
1997	Dublin City Parks
1998	Aullwood Audubon Center - Dayton
1999	Toledo Metroparks - Lucas County
2000	Mark Shieldcastle - ODNR - Oak Harbor
2001	American Bird Conservation Association - Amish Country
2002	Darke Countians for Wildlife - Greenville
2003	Raptor, Inc. - Cincinnati
2004	Dick Tuttle/Dick Phillips - Delaware County
2005	Tim Brugeman/Hancock County Parks - Findlay
2006	Edith Konzett / Holden Arboretum - Kirtland
2007	Kendra Wecker - ODNR/Wildlife - Columbus
2011	Jay Reno Reda - Chardon
2012	Ken Cochran/Secrest Arboretum - Wooster
2013	Charley Zepp - Dublin
2014	Jack Smith/Black River Audubon - Lorain County
2017	Tom Kruse/Ashland County Parks - Ashland
2018	Beaver Creek Wetlands Association - Greene County

NOTE: NO AWARD PRESENTED IN
2008/2009/2010/2015/2016

Banding Cavity Nesting Birds

By John Barber, OBS Vice President and Area Contact, Cuyahoga County



A sponsor of one my houses on a bluebird trail recently texted me with a photograph of an owl pellet with a bird band deeply embedded in it. His sadness was that he'd lost a bluebird we'd banded a year ago. In reading the band number, we discovered that the owl had eaten a banded female Tufted Titmouse, not a bluebird. This discovery led to a discussion of why we band cavity nesting birds.

I've been banding birds in small nest boxes for many years on a number of bluebird trails. This means I've banded Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and House Wrens in northeastern Ohio. As in most banding work, recoveries are few and far between. Why do we band?



Many bluebirders get to know their pairs of bluebirds by observations, and often talk about how "their" bluebirds have returned again and again. Identification of specific bluebirds is sometimes made by plumage and behavioral differences that allow keen observers to identify individual birds. Since each band has a unique nine-digit number on it, banding can confirm individual identification. Even without re-capturing the bird, seeing a bird with a band on top of a bluebird house confirms that it is a known bird.

Methodically banding birds on bluebird trails also provides data on turnover – how often do new adults inhabit a box? One sign of a healthy population is the presence of "floating" individuals

that aren't currently nesting, but are hanging around a trail looking for an unmated bird and a chance to begin nesting.

One project underway in northeastern Ohio is to quantify how often bluebirds and swallows move from one trail to another. There are a number of trails in northeastern Ohio where banders are banding some adults and most nestlings each year. We are accumulating data on how often adults move among trails year-to-year to nest, and where nestlings may disperse to breed in subsequent years. (We still have some trails where banding resources aren't available.)

Banding birds requires significant training and both federal and state permits. Currently licensed banders can mentor people to be candidates for banding permits. Banding permits are issued only for clearly-defined research projects.

If you find banded birds and can determine the band number, be sure to report that band number and the circumstances under which you found the band through the Bird Banding Lab's website at <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/bblretrv/>. You can also report seeing a banded bird to your Area Contact (remember which leg wore the band!).



The Bluebird in Science and Symbolism

By Barbara Baudot

In his article “Science as a Vocation” (1922), Max Weber argues that with ‘progress’ the world has become disenchanted; “there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can in principle, master all things by calculation.” He asks whether such calculations have any meanings beyond the purely practical and technical. No, he holds because modern science does not lead to the “way to true being, true art, true nature, true God,” or ... “true happiness.”

In his poem *The Rock*, T.S. Elliot addresses disenchantment with a series of rhetorical questions including: “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?” “Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” And naturalist, WH Hudson writes in *Birds and Man*; “Facts in themselves are nothing to us; they are important to us in their relations ... to all things, and the essence of things, material and spiritual.”

What does this rather scholarly introduction have to do with the bluebird? There are many facts about bluebirds. Having examined an eastern bluebird specimen, Linnaeus classified the bird as *sialia sialis*, belonging to the thrush family. Books offer pictures and summary details of their physiognomy, behaviors, foods, habitat, nesting, and relationships between bluebirds and with other birds. Many articles have been written about their diseases, distribution, changing demographics, etc. And popular articles describe how to attract bluebirds to one’s garden. This information informs our heads. But what about knowledge of the spirit, the soul, and the values attributed to these birds that touch our hearts. To awaken our deep interest in their wellbeing we refer to other sources of knowledge to gain a more enchanting, holistic perspective.

Paintings and prose can create enrapturing revelations about birds, as does John J. Audubon in *Birds of America*. His work on the bluebird is illustrative of the soulfulness his arts convey. His painting reveals the tenderness with which bluebirds fulfill family responsibilities; a stirring model for the human species. His prose offers a warm hearted description of the essence of a bird whose beauty is far deeper than any factual description.

He writes: “This lovely bird is found in all parts of our country. ... Full of innocent vivacity, warbling its ever pleasing notes,



John J Audubon – Plate 113.

and familiar as any bird can be in its natural freedom, it is one of the most agreeable of our feathered favorites. The pure azure of its mantle, and the beautiful glow of its breast, render it conspicuous, (whether) it flits through the orchards and gardens, ...or hops along by the road-side...When March returns, the male commences his courtship, manifesting as much tenderness and affection towards his chosen one, as the dove itself. Martins and House Wrens! Be prepared to encounter his anger, ...Even the wily cat he will torment with querulous chirpings, whenever he sees her in the path from which he wishes to pick up an insect for his mate.”

Symbolism is used to tie ordinary things to more universal themes, grander ideas, or qualities with deeper meanings. The Noble Prize winner for Literature in 1911, Maurice Maeterlinck was cited for his dramatic works, distinguished



Maurice Maeterlinck

for “profound imagination and poetic fancy revealing a deep inspiration, which appealed to the readers’ own feelings and stimulated their imaginations.” He addressed absolute truths through the use of symbols in stories to evoke spirituality and dreams. Such was his famous play “The Bluebird” (written in 1908) by virtue of which the ordinary eastern blue bird became the symbol of Happiness.

Birds ascending directly to their destination symbolize truth. Inspired, however, by the ethereal blue reflected by cells in the bluebirds feathers, Maeterlinck intended his bluebird to symbolize celestial truth from whence true happiness derives.

Decades later, just before, during, and after World War II, a number of songs about bluebirds became very popular because of the promise of happiness and peace they communicated. In 1934, Metropolitan opera tenor, Jan Peerce sang the “Bluebird of Happiness” widely promoting the bluebird as the symbol of happiness. “Be like the Bluebird” from the musical *Anything Goes* by Cole Porter in 1934 is another song familiarizing the bluebird with the public. Other songs about happiness and bluebirds include the 1939 song “Somewhere over the rainbow [where bluebirds fly].” And, in the darkest days of 1941, the promise of “better days of love and laughter and peace ever after” feature in the lyrics of one the most popular songs originating in England (*There’ll Be Bluebirds Over*) *The White Cliffs Of Dover*.

Poetry, prose and paintings suggesting relationships between bluebirds and true happiness, and its complements hopefulness and truth have elevated bluebirds to a heavenly space from which they conjure up inner peace, inspiration and great expectations. They lend energy, urgency, and impulse to caring for the living breathing bluebirds in our neighborhood.

Sources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txMoP0IK7sc>; Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Bluebird: A Fairy Play in Six Acts*; Henry Rose, *Maeterlinck’s Symbolism, The Bluebird*. Wikipedia: various articles.

The album—*The Blitz Years - Songs of Hope and Glory* Available on iTunes at <http://smarturl.it/iTunesBlitzHopeGlory>

OBS License Plate

Join OBS in showing your support for both the bluebirds and the organization we love so much by participating in our Bluebird Ohio license plate project. We would like to have a formal OBS bluebird license plate created which would show OBS, and a design of a bluebird as a new organizational Ohio license plate.

In order to get the process moving along, the following conditions need to be met:

1. 150 original signatures from people who intend to purchase the new plate (it does not mean you have to purchase one)
2. Complete the Petition to Establish Organizational License Plate Form BMV 4820
3. Requires the passage of a bill by a state legislator
4. Once all the conditions have been met and the designs are submitted, organizations must maintain a minimum of sales of 25 license plates per year.

What could this mean for OBS?

- A great visual method of promoting OBS and bluebirds
- For each plate sold, \$15 would come to OBS
- OBS does not need to pay any money to have this plate created and sold

The form for signatures can be found at <http://publicsafety.ohio.gov/links/bmv4820.pdf>

Once we get the 150 signatures, we will move forward in contacting a state legislator to pass the bill allowing this new plate design.

How you can help:

Print off the form for signatures from the link above and contact friends, relatives and others to ask them to consider signing the form.

If you are an OBS County contact, consider getting signatures from the OBS members in your specific county.

Consider bringing the form to areas where the public may gather - fairs, conferences and many more.

Thanks for your help in moving this project along. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Watson (obsresident@gmail.com), Pat Dutton (OBSmembershipchair@gmail.com) or Judy Semroc (rainefox51@gmail.com)

Thanks,
Judy Semroc
OBS trustee and OBS Area Contact for Stark County

Blending Two Tree Swallow Nestbox Grids into One

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



Time passing promises change, especially when it involves industrious beavers and an aging body. At the end of the 2004 nesting season, I dismantled three bluebird and Tree Swallow nestbox trails for different reasons, and before the 2005 season, all of the boxes were reinstalled as two nestbox grids for Tree Swallows on the Delaware Wildlife Area

(DWA). The DWA is a public hunting area that requires that my nestboxes and their raccoon resistant baffles are removed from their posts and stored on my back porch in Delaware City during hunting seasons from September through February. I try to return all boxes and baffles to their posts by early March each year.

Researches had found that nesting Tree Swallows tolerate members of their own species when nestboxes are spaced 20 meters apart which is nearly 22 yards. I spaced 25 boxes at 25 yards apart along the west side of Panhandle Road. The rows contain 2, 4, 5, 6, 6 and two boxes, respectively. Boxes 26 and 27 are paired five yards apart to accommodate nesting bluebirds and swallows and are located near the parking lot on the east side of the road. Since most of the boxes came from the dismantling of the Izaak Walton-Columbus Zoo Nature Preserve where ice on the O'Shaughnessy Reservoir had repeatedly bent the mounting pipes, the DWA came to the rescue and donated replacement poles for the new 2005 relocation. The poles are eight feet long stop sign poles that required me to have a custom-made pounder made that weighs 28 pounds. It takes thirty hits with the pounder to drive each pole into the ground two or more feet.

Before the 2014 season, I added five boxes to the Panhandle Road Grid (PRG) to make 32 available nest sites. By this time, a



Delaware Wildlife Area Technicians Troy Golden (left) and Rick Dorn install u-posts in the Panhandle Road Grid for Tree Swallows on November 1, 2017.



A March 22, 2013 photo shows the first row of a wet Leonardsburg Road Grid.

new, smaller post was available. Like the larger posts installed in 2004, the 2014 posts are U-shaped with bolt holes every inch in their channels, but only seven feet long. A standard post pounder is used to pound them into the ground one and one-half feet for a solid nestbox mount.

Since 2005, the PRG has raised 1,445 Tree Swallows and 69 Eastern Bluebirds.

In 2005, I established a second grid on the wildlife area after I had pulled 19 boxes from a field near the Alum Creek State Park camp check-in station after it was determined that campfire smoke was fatally poisoning swallow nestlings during temperature inversions. A second set of ten boxes was taken from fence mounts along Cherry Street that leads to the Delaware Water Treatment Plant. Construction was planned along the road and fence at that time.

Twenty-five of the pulled boxes were reinstalled with their original poles in a narrow field along the west side of Horseshoe Road on the wildlife area. The small field forced me to space the boxes at 22 yards in three rows of six boxes each, and one row of seven boxes. The field had brushy fence rows that attracted egg-piercing House Wrens, and the neighboring private properties included livestock farms that supported murderous alien House Sparrows. Even though the grid fledged 58 Tree Swallows and eight bluebirds in 2005, I concluded that the need to trap and eliminate sparrows while tolerating native wrens were two good reasons to move the effort to another location.

By March 5, 2006, all 25 boxes had been moved to stand in a perfect square of five rows of five boxes each, all spaced at 25 yards to form the Leonardsburg Road Grid (LRG) that is located four-tenths of a mile from PRG. In the beginning, the boxes of both grids could be seen by anyone passing through the southwest section of the wildlife area, and that was one of my objectives; I wanted the grids to promote Tree Swallow conservation.

During twelve seasons, from 2006 through 2017, LRG produced 1180 Tree Swallows and 12 bluebirds, but as stated earlier, with time comes change. During recent years, the LRG has become wetter. I blame beavers that are quite active east of the grid. Even though they are trapped in order to manage the area for water storage during flood control, enough of the rodents avoid capture to build dams. Water around 15 of 25 boxes is deep enough to cover my feet, and some water is knee deep, so I must wear hip boots. The deep water has enabled cattails to grow six to eight feet high and that brings up another growing concern. I have reached the age that when I examine a newspaper's obituary page, I find that I'm older than the majority of those listed. If I have a medical emergency inside the LRG, I could drown after falling, and I would not be seen. In fact, since the cattails make it seem like I'm walking inside tunnels, one of my favorite birds, the Turkey Vulture, would not be able to fly inside the grid to recycle me. So, once again, it became time to move the grid's boxes.

As I do every year, on August 5 and 6, 2017, I removed the nestboxes and baffles from the LRG. As I talked with the wildlife technicians on Horseshoe Road, the final decision was made to transfer the Leonardsburg boxes to join the PRG before the 2018 season. The project was approved and endorsed by Tim Davis whose office is at the Big Island Wildlife Area in Marion County. Tim made sure that u-posts would be delivered to Delaware for installation. During a busy fall schedule, natural resources technician Charlie Allen brush-hogged the original PRG and the

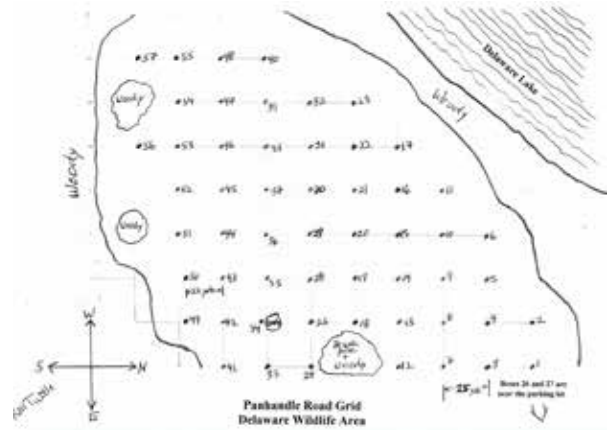
area south of it to prepare the area for the new additions while keeping the final vegetation tall enough to shelter pheasants and other game animals.

On October 16, I used six posts to plot and start three rows in the new area. I returned to the grid area two weeks later to install small wooden stakes at 19 locations. Once the new posts arrived from Big Island, arrangements were made for me to meet with wildlife area technicians Troy Golden and Rick Dorn on November 1 to install the remaining posts. After we met at



A pipe extension awaits a nestbox and baffle. The pipe is 16" long with two 5/16" holes; one hole is one inch from the top and the other is 13" from the top edge.

the site, I walked to the small stakes as Troy and Rick followed to pound the posts into their positions. The posts were transported



Map of Panhandle Road Grid in the Delaware Wildlife Area, Delaware County, Ohio.

in their pickup truck. The task was completed in one hour and ten minutes for a great activity.

The expanded grid will consist of one row each of four and five boxes, two rows of two boxes each, and two rows each of six, seven, and eight boxes for a total of 55 boxes in the same field that encompasses more than five acres of small game habitat. I spent hours in my workshop cutting recycled pipe into lengths sixteen inches long, drilling two holes in each, so they can stick nine or more inches above the u-posts to support nestboxes. Two identical signs will stand along Panhandle Road explaining the grid, including the fact that each swallow family will consume more than 300,000 flying insects during the 45-day period when they occupy a nestbox.

Since the original PRG raised 112 Tree Swallows and 12 bluebirds in 2017, and the now bygone LRG fledged 102 swallows in the same season, the combined total of 214 swallows and 12 bluebirds from both grids will be the targeted goal for 2018 in order to judge whether the merger of two grids was a good wildlife management decision.

I have felt compelled to drive past the expanded grid almost daily to check on progress. During March and early April, bluebirds had been using the nestboxes as hunting perches almost every day. I know that bluebirds will be nesting in two or three grid boxes once spring stabilizes, so I have prepared three boxes to be added five yards away from any boxes containing bluebird nests. I have labeled the boxes with large letters instead of numbers. So, if all goes well, you will be able to see boxes X, Y, and Z among the evenly spaced numbered boxes. This practice is called "pairing." Pairing allows swallows and bluebirds to live in relative peace once they agree on which of the two boxes is theirs.

In conclusion, I am proud to be an official volunteer with the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Even though I no longer hunt, I always buy a hunting license, a fishing license, along with an annual Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp. Please do what you can to support wildlife management in your area and elsewhere. Conserve on!

Go Figure! Calculating Your Bluebird's First Egg Date, Hatch Date and Fledge Date.

By Penny Brandau, OBS Member



Whether you have one bluebird box in your back yard or 100 bluebird boxes on trails it is VERY important to be able to calculate three important dates of each bluebird nesting attempt. It is recommended by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, North American Bluebird Society and many other bluebird conservation

organizations that you check your bluebird boxes at least once each week but preferably twice a week during bluebird nesting season, from mid- March through August, and keep accurate notes of nest status, young and adult status each visit. This information will be critical in calculating your bluebird's first egg date, anticipated hatch date and also expected fledge dates. Here is a simple way to figure those important dates.

Most songbirds lay one egg per day. When they have laid the last (ultimate) or second to last (penultimate) egg of that clutch the female bluebird begins incubating them. Incubation develops the eggs into chicks and typically takes 14 days for bluebirds. Since they were all incubated for the same length of time all eggs will normally hatch within 24 hours of each other. It will then take 17-20 days for these newly hatched bluebird chicks to develop enough to fly (fledge) from their nestbox.

June 6th. You know that the female started to incubate all of her eggs on the last egg date (June 6th) and that she will incubate them around 14 days before they hatch.

Hatch date in this scenario could be calculated as 14 days from June 6th. Hatching could be expected therefore around June 20th! Got it?

Anticipated fledge date would be 17 to 20 days AFTER the eggs hatch for bluebirds. That can also be easily estimated by adding 17- 20 days to the hatch date of June 20th. In this scenario the fledge date should be around July 7-10.

First egg date- June 3rd | Hatch date- June 20th
Fledge date- July 7-10 | Easy!!

In our region Eastern Bluebirds will often nest twice each season, rarely three times. April is usually when first nesting attempts occur and the second nesting attempts often start in late May to late June. Knowing the date of the first egg and the size of the clutch allows us to figure the hatch date and the expected fledge date.

In order to avoid premature fledging, it is important to avoid opening the door of a nestbox when the bluebird chicks reach the age of 12-13 days old. Knowing your expected first egg, hatch and fledge dates can save the lives of your young bluebirds. Go figure!

JUNE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

JULY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Use the information about nesting and the sample calendar above to figure a first egg date, expected hatch date, and also fledge date. Imagine that you checked your nestbox on June 4th and found 2 eggs. You know that the female laid her first egg one day earlier, on the 3rd. This is first egg date! If you checked the nestbox again on the 8th and found 4 eggs you could figure that the mother must have laid her last egg on the 6th. First egg- June 3, second egg- June 4th, third egg- June 5th, fourth (Last) egg-



Blooming Bluebirders

My Bluebird Trail

Photos and article By Katelyn Shelton,
a Central Ohio Young Birder's Club teen member



It was a chilly day in March when my family, my good friend Darlene Sillick and I set up the nestboxes. The Big Walnut Trail, which I fondly nicknamed "the Loop", was down the street from my house and located between the neighborhood houses and the Walnut River. The center of the Loop was mostly a mixture of meadow and shrubs and the west side, which bordered the river, was a beautiful deciduous forest. It was a good place for a variety of birds. Despite this variety in the Loop, the Eastern Bluebird had never been a resident there even though they passed through. The bluebird trail and its boxes however changed that.

Not only did I introduce Eastern Bluebirds to the Loop, but I was pleasantly surprised with Carolina Chickadees in the trap box that I had put in my backyard. Almost immediately after I saw them going in and out of the box my father and I ran to the store to purchase a hole reducer so that the House Sparrows wouldn't be a problem. The chickadees continued bringing mouthfuls of moss and strips of bark. About two weeks later, they had eggs. I was so happy!

At the time, all of my boxes down at the Loop were empty but as the temperatures warmed a flock of about seven Tree Swallows showed up. Right away they took to box number three. The males sparred in mid-air and the females peeked inside the box. Some even landed on the ground to get small twigs. Most of them were small, that is. One male grabbed a large twig-like grass which twitched and shook as he tried to fit it inside. He was successful in the end! Good for him!

It was around 8:30 am when I saw the Eastern Bluebirds for the first time. I froze in my tracks when I saw the male, a brilliant blue puff ball in a bush. He gave me a quick wary look, then flew down the trail and around a corner. He had seemingly disappeared. I continued walking and from a safe distance, concealed by brush, I spotted him again in a leafless tree near the nest box. I took out my binoculars and watched. After a few moments of watching the male hunting close to the box, I saw the female dart into view and then disappear into the nesting box. This was all I needed to see.



I jumped for joy! I practically skipped home, my smile stretching from ear to ear. I had brought Eastern Bluebirds to the Loop!

Now, the Eastern Bluebird nest and the Tree Swallow nests are underway while a Carolina Chickadee snuggles into her nest and keeps her eggs warm and toasty. The bluebird trail has enriched my birding experience and enriched the habitat around my neighborhood. In fact, the trail has made me more adventurous. I now explore the areas around my house to know what birds are where. I have found a Coopers Hawk nest, a Red-bellied Woodpecker cavity, two American Robin nests, and one Mourning Dove nest. All of these nests were highly active and I am now able to observe the different nesting behaviors of the different species, which is truly beautiful. I owe all of it to my Bluebird Trail!

Note from Darlene Sillick:

Katelyn is a freshman in high school and started birding in 2015. Her enthusiasm is contagious and she not only is a bird lister but she wants to help the birds around her. The fall of 2017 we met when a mutual friend said there was this young teen who wanted to put up a bluebird trail at a park near her home and she asked me to help her. I reached out to her and she built the boxes, put up the 6 boxes with her family and she is having a great time learning and peeking into the life of Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows and Carolina Chickadees. She joined the central Ohio Young Birders Club and I am one of the co advisors. She has helped with several conservation projects including helping last December with two Christmas Bird Counts. She is amazing and I love the way she documents what she sees from behind the lens. All the photos here are her own. She also is in the band, draws, hangs out with friends and she kayaks. This summer she will attend an ABA camp in CO. It will be her first time west of the Mississippi, Let's wish her continued success this nesting season and in the next issue, we will hear her nestbox results. She also adds her nesting data to Cornell Nestwatch. May you all have a Katelyn to work with and inspire other teens and even inspire adults!

Darlene Sillick, OBS trustee and central OYBC advisor



Ask Madame WingNut

House Sparrows Then and Now

By Paula Ziebarth

Most of you know the history. House Sparrows, otherwise known as English Sparrows, were introduced to this country in the mid-1800's by well meaning groups. A couple of alleged reason(s) for their introduction include: help with crop pest control (it was believed they would eat insects); and European immigrants in the city may have missed the melodic "CHEEP" of their homeland birds. Little groups of House Sparrows were released throughout the country at different locations and people soon became painfully aware of the devastation they caused to crops and native cavity nesting birds. Within a couple decades of their introduction, localities were offering rewards for their demise.

I have a copy of *The English House Sparrow in North America* by Walter B. Barrows (US Dept. of Agriculture publication, 1889). This is a 405 page book and it has a map showing distribution of House Sparrows at the end of 1886 (mostly only eastern third of United States back then). This book is full of evidence and testimony regarding the problems these birds presented, even early on. Barrows documented House Sparrows attacking 70 different bird species.

Now HERE is a piece of legislation for you! Ohio law (bounty) (Revised statutes 1884, section 6960, as amended by act of April 19, 1883)

..."An ACT to provide for the payment of Bounties for the killing of English Sparrows.

Section 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio, That every person, being an inhabitant of this State, shall be entitled to receive a bounty of ten cents per dozen for all sparrows, known as the English Sparrow, killed; to be allowed and paid in the manner hereinafter provided.

Section 2. Every person applying for such bounty, shall take such sparrow or the head thereof in lots of not less than 25 to the clerk of the township, village or city, within which such sparrow shall have been killed, who shall thereupon decide upon such application, and if satisfied of the correctness of such claim, shall issue a certificate stating the amount of bounty such applicant is entitled [to], and deliver the same to such applicant, and shall destroy the heads of such sparrows.

Section 3. Such certificate may be presented by the claimant or his agent, to the city treasurer, or the treasurer of the township in which such sparrows may have been killed, who shall pay the same out of the township fund of said township.

Section 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Passed March 30, 1888."

Looking at my House Sparrow tallies for the past 15 years, I have removed 3125 House Sparrows from my trails. Someone owes me \$26.04.

Fast forward to present day. 168 years after their introduction to this country, House Sparrows are prevalent throughout most of the North American continent. Most Bluebirders and Purple Martin landlords have seen the carnage caused by this invasive species and many actively manage House Sparrow populations in their areas. When nest season begins in the spring, I try to follow the adage "trap early and trap often", removing as many House Sparrows as possible before they can kill native birds on my trails.

I encourage monitors not to wait, but to trap House Sparrows in nest boxes as soon as they see evidence that they have been inside a box. Such evidence includes: male singing on, in or near the box; House Sparrow bird dropping(s) in the box; dead native adult bird with head pecked in; and/or House Sparrow nest material added to the box. There is no need to wait for them to complete their nest and lay eggs. The sooner they are gone, the sooner the threat is gone. If left on site to sing, male can attract more... and more...

Here is an example of a little House Sparrow crime scene investigation (HOSP CSI) that I observed this spring. In a paired station, an Eastern Bluebird made a nest start in one box, and a complete nest in the other. This is very common on trails I monitor, and I designate the small nest as a "dummy" nest. Although the second box in a paired station is intended for Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds very often make nests in both boxes in their territory, likely in an attempt to reduce competition, hoping nothing will use that box if they put material in there. This is of course conjecture on my part, but I believe that is what they are doing.



The following week, the “dummy” nest was complete. It contained one broken egg and a single House Sparrow dropping. Madame WingNut encourages all Bluebirders to know their sh@! so I have included a picture of the offending excrement (pictured above). They are usually shorter than this one. Broken Eastern Bluebird egg + House Sparrow dropping + completed dummy nest told me House Sparrows had driven the Bluebirds from the first box, forcing them to complete their dummy nest and then the usurpers took over this box as well. No House Sparrows were seen or heard, but the evidence told me what had occurred. They had entered and destroyed the first egg laid in the Eastern Bluebirds’ clutch. I returned early the following morning when I knew House Sparrows would be most active. One of the Eastern Bluebirds’ nests now had one piece of long grass with seed head added to it (House Sparrow addition) and the female House Sparrow flew out of the other box. I gently removed the Bluebird nests to set my Van Ert Universal Sparrow traps.

As I drove off in my golf cart (yes, monitoring a trail at a golf course has its perks), I heard the SNAP of a trap going off. I returned to find female HOSP trapped in one of the nest boxes. I reset both traps and returned less than an hour later, to find male trapped in the other box. Both EABL nests were returned to their original boxes. Within a week, the Eastern Bluebirds returned to their nest and the female is now incubating 5 eggs.

Very often HOSP will claim both boxes of a paired station, with female building and laying eggs in one box, while male roosts in the other box, killing other species that attempt to use either box. Sometimes, I have seen two separate pairs of HOSP using each box. They will nest literally on top of each other, having very small territory requirements as Purple Martin landlords everywhere know.

I’ve included some range maps of House Sparrows in 1886 and present day for your perusal. Pictures of the House Sparrow dropping and the male House Sparrow that left the offending excrement in the Bluebird box area also included. As you will note, Madame WingNut will not have a future career as a hand model...



Good luck this spring. Nest season is (finally) upon us. Wishing you all very few House Sparrows and a plethora of Bluebirds!

Bluey yours,
Madame WingNut



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.



Member News

Welcome to New Members

Connie Abel
Dennis & Rhonda Berry
Liane Buckingham
Jim & Kathy Cooper
Bob & Sara Crist
Sarah A. Flickinger
John K. & Laurie L. Flickinger
Mary Jane Foes
Sharon Foster
Don & Bobbie Gfell
Sylvia Hadley
Troy Herrel
Mary B. Hofacker
Debra Hofacre
Annette Hrach
David Hughes
Marilyn Hummel
Ron Johnson
James Lemaster
Sarah Longaker
Gary & Sandra Matheny
Mary McNulty
Alice Miglets
Steven and Marian Moeckel
Mark Plunkett
Maura & Dave Rawn
Kathy Porcen & Phil Robinson
Sam Romeo
Carol Rowley
Kennan Salzbrenner
Eric Schmidt, MD
Steve and Kim Selegue
Tom & Marilyn Smith
Mike Smith
Mary Starbuck
Peter Torvik
Ann & Mark Wegman
Takahiro Yabe
Elizabeth Zimmerman Smith

Thank You to Our Donors

Bob and Sara Crist
Ronald Duecker
Cynthia J. Floyd
Beth Gosman
Carrie Hill
James Jablonski
Paula Kramer
Sarah Longaker
Tim Mendiola
JoAnn Wester

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Mike Watson

The OBS Board of Trustees has been working on a number of important issues recently. First is an assessment of the **2018 Conference in Columbus**. We asked those attending to provide feedback on all aspects of the conference, from topics to logistics to food. Generally, the results were very positive (85% Agree or Strongly Agree responses overall). Topics, speakers, check in, and membership were all very highly rated. We saw some criticism of food quality and the logistics of the break out sessions. Clearly, our efforts to provide breakout session during lunch created some confusion and led to some people losing their lunch. We will use the information from the survey results to help guide our planning for 2019.

Speaking of the **2019 Conference** – the date has been set: Saturday March 9th, 2019. After much consideration, the board has decided to return to Ashland University for 2019. We are already working on topics and speakers for the 2019 conference and will share details as they develop.

One (likely) change for 2019 (and one that has been raised in past conference surveys) is **online conference registrations**. Although this capability is not currently built into the OBS website, we are in the early stages of a website re-design, and online registration is a top priority.

Those of you who are **OBS Area Contacts** know that we are working to reinvigorate our AC program, under the leadership of John Barber, Bethany Gray, and Paula Ziebarth. Our Area Contacts are the ‘boots on the ground’ that are vital to accomplishing important conservation work across the state. One valuable tool of our ACs is the **OBS brochure**. With recent changes to the OBS mailing address and phone number, the brochure is in need of an update. The board is currently working on this redesign; when completed we will distribute to our ACs with the goal of replacing older brochures as quickly as possible. In the meantime, we encourage ACs to update the existing brochures with printed labels to correct the mailing address (especially for membership). **If you need corrected brochures**, please contact OBS and we will mail some to you. If you purchase printer labels and correct your current stock of brochures, OBS will reimburse the cost. Our top priority is to ensure correct and current information.

The Board is also working on upgrading/expanding the **OBS Small Grants program**, petitioning the state legislature to create an official **Bluebird license plate** (see Judy Semroc’s article in this issue), and developing short **“How To” videos** to teach different basic bluebirding techniques (such as choosing a good nest box, installing nest box and predator guard, etc).

Clearly, the Board has an ambitious agenda for 2018. We welcome the support of any members who may be interested in working with us on the projects mentioned.

Thank you for all you do for our native cavity nesters and Happy Bluebirding!

Mike Watson
President, Ohio Bluebird Society

Join the Sparrow Swap,
a Citizen Science Project.
Become a citizen scientist
and help build the research
collection of house sparrow
eggs at the North Carolina
Museum of Natural Sciences.
Learn more and get involved
at bit.do/sparrowswap.

MEET OUR NEW AREA CONTACTS

OBS would like to introduce two new Area Contacts to our active and growing group of volunteers who are available to answer questions and provide advice for those needing help with bluebirds and other cavity nesters.



TERESA PETERS

I'm a life long resident of Clark county and have worked full time at Wright State University in the Information Technology department for 25 years. I hope to retire in the next few years so that I have more time to devote to my passion for nature and volunteer work.

I started monitoring Bluebird boxes about 4 or 5 years ago for Darlene Sillick at the Ohio Wildlife Center in Powell, Ohio. I enjoyed it so much that I started setting up my own bluebird trails along my property and my parents property. I have 13 boxes between the two properties. I have been successful in getting Eastern Bluebirds, Carolina Chickadees, and Tree Swallows to nest and fledge. In fact I had not noticed Bluebirds in the area until I started setting up nest boxes. Now each year I see more Bluebirds in the area and nesting in my boxes.

I started volunteering at Brukner Nature Center in Troy Ohio 5 years ago in their Wildlife Rehabilitation unit and also doing Ambassador Animal care. For the past 4 years I have also monitored their nest boxes. There are 3 nest box trails that total about 19 boxes, 9 of those boxes are set up in Prothonotary Warbler habitat. I have assisted with putting on Bluebird workshops and setting up information tables, am certified as a Volunteer Naturalist and look forward to becoming more involved with OBS.



SAM ROMEO

My name is Sam Romeo and I am an Environmental Educator and Naturalist for the National Audubon Society at the Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm in Dayton, Ohio. I recently moved to Dayton, Ohio in May of 2017 from Athens, Ohio where I graduated from Ohio

University in 2014 with a B.S. in Geography and Environmental Studies. After graduation, I was an AmeriCorps member with the non-profit Rural Action working as an Environmental Educator in local school districts. This is where my love of building nest boxes, birding and spreading the joy of building Bluebird trails began. I helped numerous schools incorporate citizen science projects such as eBird and NestWatch into their lesson plans as well as building and maintaining the nest boxes on numerous school properties throughout Southeast Ohio. I was then asked to build nest boxes for a newly developed wetland in the city of Athens, Ohio alongside a newly built bike path spur. I built and installed 10 Tree Swallow nest boxes with the Southeast Ohio Young Naturalist Club that year and each nest box had many successful baby birds fledge. My last big nest box project before the move to Dayton, Ohio was building and installing 20 Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes along the Hockhocking Adena Bike path.

Today, I coordinate Aullwood's Bluebird monitoring project as well as monitor many other nest boxes throughout the property. I love helping people create better habitats for birds near their homes as well as helping out many of the nesting bird species we have here in Ohio. From Wood Ducks to Great Crested Flycatchers, I want to help anyone who is willing to spend the time to install a nest box and help them bring the joy of providing a safe and successful nesting location for our feathery friends.

Treasurer's Report by Molly Wilsbacher

1. Our Annual Conference was a great success in getting back to the basics of Bluebirding. We reached capacity and received \$3,490 in conference registrations. A big "Thank You!" to all who donated items for the silent auction, where we raised \$1,031 to help defray the cost of the conference. We couldn't have done it without you.
2. We will be raising our membership fees slightly effective July 1st, 2018. We estimate that we have not raised membership fees for the past 15 years despite increased costs every year. Hopefully you agree that the Ohio Bluebird Society is a good investment and will continue to support our Mission and remain a dues paying member!
3. The financial statement for the period ending 3/31/18 reflects a checking account balance of \$11,918.26 and a savings account balance of \$9,530.09 for a grand total of \$21,448.35.
4. Please do not forget that the Ohio Bluebird Society participates in 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. [PLEASE NOTE: Only purchases made at smile.amazon.com (not www.amazon.com or the mobile app) generate AmazonSmile donations].
5. Similarly, Ohio Bluebird Society is 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>.

OBS 2017 FLEDGLING REPORT

Reported As Of 5/21/2018: Eastern Bluebird - 6,090

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

Eastern Bluebird	7545	Osprey	17
Tree Swallow	8075	Barn Swallow	64
House Wren	2053	Prothonotary Warbler	80
Purple Martin	4124	Tufted Titmouse	21
Black-capped Chickadee	45	House Sparrows dispatched	816
Carolina Chickadee	161	House Sparrow eggs destroyed	1211
Carolina Wren	35	European Starling eggs destroyed	5
American Kestrel	185	#of Reports	66

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

The Ohio Bluebird Society would like to express deep appreciation to Carrie Elvey, Mary Lee Minor and Penny Brandau for their willingness to serve as trustees on the OBS board for an extended term. Much has been accomplished with the willing help, knowledge and experience of these outgoing trustees. Thank you very much!

We would also like to welcome newly elected trustees Loyd Marshall, Joanne Kale and Judy Semroc to the OBS board. With their varied and extensive backgrounds, experiences and talents they are sure to bring new ideas and fresh perspectives to the work and mission of OBS.

OBS Officers, Board of Trustees, and Advisors

We wish to thank the many people working with and for the Ohio Bluebird Society. Without their help, we could never accomplish our mission.

TRUSTEES

John Barber (Vice President) -
jbarber27@gmail.com
216-233-2271

Mel Bird -
mrbird90@aol.com • 419-577-9545

Pat Dutton -
obsmembershipchair@gmail.com
330-763-0474

JoAnn Kale -
joann.kale@gmail.com • 479.769.0574

Loyd Marshall - llmarsh@aol.com

Judy Semroc -
rainefox51@gmail.com
330.877.3551

Darlene Sillick -
azuretrails@columbus.rr.com
614-288-3696 (text preferred)

Mike Watson (President) -
mwatson@holdenarb.org
440.946.4400 ext. 132

Molly Wilsbacher (Treasurer) -
OBSTreasurer@gmail.com
614-886-0372

ADVISORS

Mel Bolt -
mellen@sssnet.com • 330.262.0448

Linda Lang -
NRWS_Lang@tccsa.net • 419.651.4196

Dean Sheldon -
seedbed@frontier.com • 419.752.1451

Dick Tuttle - 740.363.6433

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRS

Dave Dutton: 330-674-7585
Pat Dutton: 330-763-0474
obsmembershipchair@gmail.com

E-mail:
info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Phone:
440.462.9084

Website:
www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org

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

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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 May 2018)

County	Name	Phone	Alt. Phone or Email	E-mail
ALLEN	Mohr, Mark	419.302.2707		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
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
CUYAHOGA	Barber, John	216.233.2271		jcbarber27@gmail.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		paulasbirdz@yahoo.com
ERIE	Bird, Mel	419.577.9545		mrbird90@aol.com
FAIRFIELD	Kale, JoAnn	479.769.0574		joann.kale@gmail.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
HURON	Bird, Mel	419.577.9545		mrbird90@aol.com
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
MIAMI	Peters, Teresa			tm_peters@yahoo.com
MONTGOMERY	Romeo, Sam	330-503-6730	office: 937-890-7360 ext 223	sromeo@audubon.org
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	Hillteach@gmail.com
PORTAGE	Gammon, Darrell	330.575.5166		invisibleman53@yahoo.com
ROSS	Hill, Carrie (Bishop Flaget School)			chill@cducation.org
SANDUSKY	Rock, Lisa	419.708.3949		snowbunting123@gmail.com
SENECA	Coffman, Jim	419.618.1835	419.448.4753	jrussoff@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

2018 Conference: Mission Possible



The Earth, Wind and Flowers Garden Club from Bucyrus donated the beautiful centerpieces that were given away as door prizes



Janice Petko with Keith Kridler, Texas Bluebird Society, conference speaker and author. Photo taken by Paula Ziebarth.



OBS President
Mike Watson



NABS President and
conference speaker
Bernie Daniels