



Bluebird Monitor

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

Spring 2019



We are fortunate to have a “double-header” this month from Madame Wingnut!

Ask Madame WingNut: Why NestWatch?

By Paula Ziebarth



Eastern Bluebirds and Purple Martins are two of the species I keep track of on Nestwatch.



NestWatch is Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s online database. As the overview on website nestwatch.org explains, “NestWatch is a nationwide monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds, including when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, how many eggs hatch, and how many hatchlings survive. Our database is intended to be used to study the current condition of breeding bird populations and how they may be changing over time as a result of climate change, habitat degradation and loss, expansion of urban areas, and the introduction of non-native plants and animals.”

I have been entering data online for 16 years (before database was changed to NestWatch). I love networking and helping new monitors. I have found NestWatch to be an invaluable resource for managing trail data and monitor assignments. In addition to helping me manage data from numerous trails, NestWatch is also used for the greater good; it is citizen science data that can be used by approved researchers.

Connie Dolder and I are Coordinators for the OBS Delaware County Chapter of NestWatch. Other NestWatch Coordinators in Ohio include Matthew Knittel (Cleveland); Darlene Sillick (Columbus); Mike Watson (Kirtland); and Jared Merriman (Xenia). We do NestWatch trainings and help participants regarding questions they may have when navigating the database.

Some of the things Nestwatch has allowed me to do:

- Paperless! I jot notes in small field notebook and then enter them on computer database when I come off the trail. Those handwritten notes are then thrown away because they are all now accessible and organized on the computerized database. Those with just a few boxes may want to use the NestWatch app on their smartphone and enter data directly online in the field.
- Free. NestWatch does not charge subscription fees. Database is free to use, but please consider donating money to support Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s NestWatch and other citizen science projects.
- While new NestWatch user is online, I can get online on my own computer and talk them through any problems they are having. We can both look at the same screen from our different locations. The NestWatch site has wonderful tutorials, but a lot of people are like me and just want someone to tell them how to do it...
- NestWatch shows all my boxes in map view or numerical list of box numbers, however I want to see them.

- For monitors sharing duties (some take turns monitoring or check trails for those on vacation), monitor can go online and see trail data and notes entered the week before. They know what to look for in each box and what to expect.
- I can remotely look at monitor notes on NestWatch and see where they are having trouble. An inexperienced monitor may not know what they are looking at, but when they report “sticks” in the note column, I can e-mail and tell them -or- add note of my own in NestWatch so they can see that.
- Most of my monitors are trained to enter their data weekly. With timely data, I can get online and easily find a foster nest for young Eastern Bluebirds or Tree Swallows that have been rehabilitated at the Ohio Wildlife Center. Fostering is almost always successful if foster young are within a day or two of the age of the natural chicks AND as long as nest never exceeds numbers found in nature (i.e. EABL nest cannot have more than six nestlings).
- On large trails (usually park systems), sharing user name and password allows us to learn from each other, seeing how other parts of the trail are doing.
- On large trails, subdividing trail into Groups allows individual monitor to click on their group and enter data. You can create Groups based on box locations (ex: Wetland Trail) or by monitor assignment... or both!
- At the click of a mouse, for each box in “View Site Summary”, I can see the history of that nest box, what has used it throughout the

years. Land is allowed to go to succession in many of the parks I monitor. When that happens, I will see House Wren attempts and that tells me it is time to remove or move nest box. When I see a lot of House Sparrow attempts, I know I need a monitor that can deal with that effectively or move box, etc. I can see when native nesters are successful and when they are not. Those invaluable notes monitors enter in the margins often tell me why.

- With paired box stations (boxes spaced 0 - 24 feet apart for TRES/EABL), I can determine whether existing spacing is working. Are both species using boxes simultaneously? In some habitats I may need to tighten up spacing, move boxes farther apart, or remove paired stations altogether.
- At the end of each nesting season, NestWatch generates a wonderful summary for me to send to the owners and monitors of all the public trails I work with, letting them know how successful “their” birds have been and letting them know how I appreciate that.

Unfortunately, other bird conservation groups do not share data with NestWatch and vice versa so you need to send summary data to those organizations for trail separately. I also report to Ohio Bluebird Society (OBS) and Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) for the trails I monitor.

I know many of you will be attending the OBS Annual Conference on March 9th. OBS is fortunate to have Robyn Bailey, Project Leader for NestWatch, speaking at the conference. Come to the conference and learn more!

Ask Madame WingNut: Helping the Natives

By Paula Ziebarth

At Madame WingNut's hacienda, bluebirding doesn't stop when nesting season ends. By setting up repeating bait traps near my bird feeding stations, I capture quite a few House Sparrows during late summer and autumn months and I capture a LOT of European Starlings during winter months when temperatures drop below freezing, especially when there is snow cover. In Ohio we have large flocks of European Starlings; they quickly strip an area of natural berry food stores as the winter wears on. Eastern Bluebirds are not the only native cavity nester harmed by these birds. Woodpeckers and Purple Martins have suffered greatly as a result of these nest site robbers.

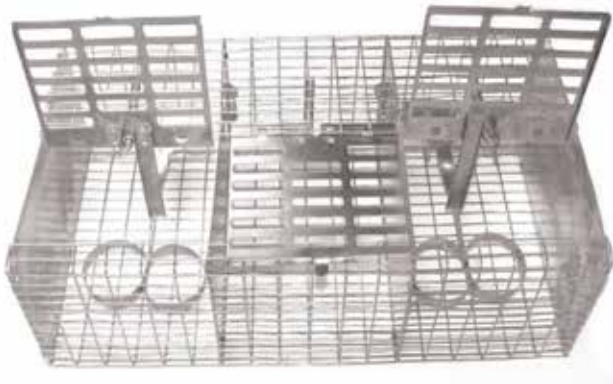
My favorite traps work well for either species. Blaine Johnson's Deluxe Repeating Sparrow Trap (DRST) can be purchased online at www.sparrowtraps.net This durable, well designed trap will serve you well. I have had mine for over 10 years. This is a true repeating trap and does not require resetting. 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 a 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 (when used to trap House Sparrows). 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.



My favorite way to use these traps is to keep 2 or 3 live decoys in the DRST and flank it with two of the 3-compartment traps.



As many of you with bird feeding stations know, when you feed the birds, you feed ALL the birds. Cooper's Hawks hunt birds at the feeders, and when you have a bait trap with live decoys, it can be quite the hawk attractant. I have had Cooper's Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks interested in the traps. This does not happen often, but when it does I always toss them a bird. Cooper's Hawk will be taking a bird from my feeding station any way, and why not fill its belly with a non-native selection from the feeder menu? Successful hunting can be difficult, especially for juvenile hawks that are still learning. Hawks can become obsessed with repeating traps that hold live food. You either need to toss them a bird or take your traps in for a few days. I learned this the hard way about ten years ago when I had a juvenile Cooper's Hawk obsessed with my trap to the point where it would not leave, expending valuable energy to try to get birds out of the trap and then patiently waiting in a tree, hoping birds would fly out. I found that hawk dead on our street a week later. I truly believe it starved to death.

Below is a picture of a Red-shouldered Hawk taken by my good friend Connie Dolder in her yard.



Successfully feeding a European Starling to a hawk takes a little stealth and planning. Some of my friends are intimidated by Starlings because they are so large, but let me tell you that they really cannot hurt you. Their bills are much weaker than a House Sparrow. A House Sparrow can grab that skin between your thumb and index finger and pinch hard (seed cracking bill). European Starlings cannot crack a seed, which is why my fly through feeder with sunflower oilers (shells on) is not bothered by them. If you watch them feeding for grubs, the strength in their bills is actually in the opening muscles; watch them peck the ground and pry open their bills to dig for grubs, etc. The closing bill muscles are fairly weak.

If a hawk shows up, I grab a dedicated pair of wing trimming scissors and head outside. As I approach the trap, I use stunted shuffling old Madame WingNut moves (arms unthreatening down by my sides and eyes downcast most of the time). The goal is to not flush the hawk from its perch and scare it away. I periodically glance at the hawk to make sure it is still there and retrieve the bird from the trap. I grasp bird as a bander would - head between index and middle finger of left hand, then trim right wing (up to the elbow). Because of the dexterity of my left hand (I am right handed) and my political affiliation, it is very important to trim that right wing first. I turn bird in my hand (hold on tight) and trim left wing. After the wings are trimmed I toss bird as far as I can toward the hawk. The hawk will come off its perch and hit it. Red-tailed and Red-shouldered always come to ground after the bird. Cooper's Hawks often catch bird in midair. If the bird escapes, it cannot fly and will become food for hungry wildlife shortly or end up back in my repeating traps.

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.

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.

An Ohio Chimney Swift Tower

By Colvin Bear, OBS Member

In the summer of 2017 as I was reading the Ohio Bluebird Society "Bluebird Monitor" I saw an article on Chimney Swifts and building a nesting and roosting tower for them. I have been fascinated with Chimney Swifts for years after seeing them in Springfield, Ohio during the summer. Springfield has a wonderful summer arts festival lasting several weeks with live performances at the Veteran's Park Amphitheater, in Cliff Park. I have been able to play in several performances about every summer with the Springfield Symphony or in the orchestra playing for a musical. Before a new hospital was built on the other side of Buck Creek behind the audience there had been several large old warehouse or factory buildings. While everyone was watching the performance on stage, if it was a time I wasn't playing music I could watch as the chimney swifts came in to roost for the evening. However, when the new hospital was built the old buildings were demolished, and the swifts lost their roosting habitat. I have seen several swifts flying about during the festivals since then, but not nearly as many as before. So the possibility of having swifts near my home, which is about 20 miles away, fascinated me.

The first question needing answered was where to place the tower on my property. It has many trees which I have planted, space for a garden, but open space is limited outside of the leach field, which did not seem like a suitable location for a tower should a plumbing problem make digging the leach field necessary. However, the best place soon presented itself. We had an old basketball hoop on a pole which I had put up for my sons. However, they are now in their 30's, and many a year has passed without a basketball going through the hoop. So a location was determined.

I knew I was going to need the advice of someone who understood woodworking and construction better than I did, so I visited a good neighbor, Kim Yost, who has built his own house, including all the interior woodwork, and is an excellent craftsman. I have maintained several bluebird boxes on his property for many years. He and his wife Janet had just celebrated their 61st anniversary and declared their house "complete", but they continue tweaking things, as well as doing other cabinetry work for special projects, like the Piatt Castles in West Liberty. So I went to Kim and asked him if he might be interested in helping me with this project. When his eyes immediately lit up I knew I had the advisor I needed, and the project got under way in September 2017.

Using the location where the basketball hoop was located required several modifications from the basic plan presented in the book [Chimney Swift Towers](#) by Paul and Georgean Kyle. The size of each side had to be increased, as the basketball pole had been secured in concrete, and that concrete was larger than could be spanned by the standard size in the book. The standard plan calls for getting four sides out of one 8'x4' sheet of T 1-11, with each side being about 2 feet wide. We increased the size so we would get three sides from each sheet of T 1-11, which meant we



The start of digging away the dirt, rock, etc. around the concrete where the old basketball hoop had been but was cut down.



The base section in the hole, showing the form for the concrete, the depth of the hole and the old concrete from the basketball hoop.

needed to buy four sheets instead of three, and adjust all other lateral measurements accordingly. The next problem was getting the basketball hoop pole down, especially since I had dutifully followed instructions when assembling the pole for my sons, which meant the pole was full of concrete. This was accomplished by using an angle grinder to grind through the metal of the pole at the base. Then was the test to see if hitting it with a sledge hammer would crack the concrete and bring the pole down. I was expecting this to be problematic, so I got out the sledge hammer and took a light tap to see if I was lined up to begin pounding. The light tap was all it took, and over went the concrete filled pole. Next stop for it was the dump.

Whatever time was available in the fall was spent on construction of the tower sections. With the guidance of Kim Yost and the use of his fantastic wood working shop tools the three sections of the tower were made with special corners, and inside the corners two inch square wood was mounted so any screws would go into wood through the T 1-11, thus strengthening the overall construction. The angle iron legs were also screwed through the T



The base section with the concrete poured – a ton-plus of dry quick-crete mixed with water and added to the existing concrete.



The base with the two sections added to it, with my wife Carol in the picture for size comparison.

1-11 into the two inch square reinforcements. The top and bottom were assembled, but not attached until the tower was erected to minimize weight. The hole for the concrete and forms were made in the fall. As the size of the chimney was bigger the pad size was enlarged to 52 inches each side, and as we have frost and freezing in Ohio where such is not an issue in Texas, the depth of the pad was increased to 12 inches. Also, as the entire tower is larger we increased the size of the chimney hole in the top a bit.

The weather, however, put an end to the work for the season. It became too cold to do concrete work, and too wet as the hole filled with water from the rain. I knew the top of the concrete forms were level since the water was an even inch from the top all the way around. We had to wait for spring and dryness, so the pieces of the tower spent the winter in storage in my shed.

Finally the weather allowed us to get to work again. I drilled some holes in the concrete left over from the basketball hoop and inserted re-bar in those holes as well as used the suggested re-bar pattern in the plans. I also wired a large “X” of re-bar over the top of the existing concrete. The day came to mix and pour the concrete. With the help of another friend and Kim’s wife’s concrete mixer (it had been a birthday present to her when they were making their house) over a ton of ready mix was worked and poured into the form around the old concrete, covering the old by a couple of inches. We had priced it out, doing our own concrete was about one fourth the cost of having a truck bring it, but that was quite a hard morning’s work. The concrete was covered in cloth to keep it damp and left to harden for about a week for security.

When the concrete had cured for a week construction resumed. The hardest part was getting the top section of the tower in place, as we were working on ladders about nine feet up. Another neighbor figured how to move it around, like a refrigerator on one foot, until it could drop in place. No pictures were taken of this operation so we would be sure OSHA would not pay us a visit. From there it was fastening on the corner braces, top and bottom, then filling the space with insulation and covering it with siding. The siding was left over from when the house was sided the previous summer, but we had to buy the corner pieces of siding since none had been left.

The entire project was completed on June 21, as a wet spring had slowed progress also. This was well after the spring migration time for the chimney swifts, so the chances of getting birds to roost this year were minimal. Our house is in the country and swifts tend to roost in and near towns, so we will wait and hope for residents this coming spring. This summer I saw swifts in Springfield again, saw some in Mechanicsburg and outside of St. Paris but near the town, and heard there were some in Urbana. I think I have seen the occasional swift flying around here, also. So here’s hoping for avian visitors this coming season!



Left: A “Gray’s Anatomy” shot with the cap section on the top and painted, one side finished, the other side edged, insulation in the bottom of the side (an 8’ tall section of insulation) and the wood showing at the top. Insulation was added there before siding coverage.

Right: The finished project. All that is needed is some paint on the legs, some grass on the dirt, and some chimney swifts living in it and eating the bugs.

A Prolific Nestbox Grid for Tree Swallows

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

Article previously published in the Delaware County Bird Club newsletter



In 2017, two nestbox grids of 25 and 32 boxes, respectively, raised a total of 214 swallows and 12 bluebirds on the Delaware Wildlife Area.

In 2018, 25 boxes making up the Leonardsburg Road Grid were moved to join 30 boxes to make a grid of 55 boxes within a five-acre field on the west side of Panhandle Road. When a pair of boxes' totals on the east side of Panhandle

Road was added to the west side's totals, the 57 boxes raised 250 swallows, six bluebirds, and ten House Wrens for a successful conservation maneuver that was also inspirational.

Eleven rows of nestboxes, from two to eight boxes per row, make up the grid. Most are spaced 25 yards apart, and three boxes are spaced closer to avoid brush. The grid offers a symmetrical sight for dog walkers, joggers, hikers, bikers, birders and others just passing by.

During fall and winter, the project's nestboxes are stored on my back porch in order to avoid unintentional shotgun pellets during hunting seasons. Between February 11 and 18, I returned the boxes to their mounts in order to accommodate any bluebirds looking for a place to nest. During the first three weeks of April, I trapped and dispatched two male House Sparrows after they had killed two adult Tree Swallows.

On April 25, I found an active bluebird nest with one egg in Box-50. After finding the bluebird nest, I returned to my hobby car to retrieve a post pounder, a T-post, a baffle, a pipe extension, and Box-X. I installed Box-X six yards Northeast of Box-50 so a Tree Swallow family could nest in harmony with the bluebirds. During the same visit, I also recorded 43 Tree Swallow nests in different stages of construction. The nesting season had been launched!

The bluebirds in Box-50 raised two families of three fledglings each and the second family fledged around July 19.

Pairing worked and all 57 box locations fledged swallows after Tree Swallows laid 344 eggs, 278 (80.8%) hatched, and 250 (72.7%) fledged. Once hatched, 89.9% of hatchlings grew to fledge. The earliest swallow first-egg-date (FED) was May 6, and the latest FED was June 22; both record dates took place in Box-41, the only box to produce two swallow families.

During the 2018 season, swallows had only four nest failures among 62 nest attempts for a 93.5% success rate. After failures took place, successful second attempts followed in the same boxes.

As I monitored the PRG throughout the summer, I was inspired by a sky filled with graceful birds flying to, from, and around their boxes. Of course the determined swallows also frequently dove at me to sustain the smile on my face.

Many times memories surfaced and took me back to when I experienced my first beaver ponds inside Isle Royale National Park during four backpacking tours that started in the 1970's. The island's beavers had built dams that flooded woodlands and smothered trees. Some trees had been girdled as the rodents sought nutritious cambium layers beneath the outer bark. Other trees were felled to provide building materials for their dams and some branches were anchored on the ponds' floors so their bark could provide winter nourishment.

Trees left standing were in different stages of rot and some had cavities that had been whittled by woodpeckers seeking insects. The cavities served as nest sites for cavity nesting birds, including Tree Swallows.

In 2000, I explored more beaver worlds in Burr Oak State Park near Athens, Ohio, and by early 2001, I had produced a slide Program entitled, "The Beaver Hypothesis; Bluebirding in the Seventeenth Century." The program offers evidence that Tree Swallows and bluebirds depended on beavers for habitats with nest cavities that dominated North America before Europeans arrived to harvest beaver pelts. The hypothesis offered that bluebird nestboxes mimic the availability of natural nest cavities in and around beaver ponds, and given enough time, modern Tree Swallows will reclaim their ancestral nesting range that coincides with the original land area claimed by beavers throughout North America.

In 1935, and as recently as 1980, Tree Swallows were not nesting anywhere south of the upper two thirds of the state of Ohio. Today, the white-bellied swallows nest in all Gulf States to support my hypothesis. In ancient times, nesting swallows could thank beavers for their nest sites, while today's swallows can thank conservationists for nestboxes throughout North America that mimic the evenly spaced cavities found in beaver ecosystems. In 2005, beavers provided more adventures within the Delaware Wildlife Area's Green Tree Marsh after I launched a project to raise Prothonotary Warblers there.



A Gray Tree Frog has adjusted its body color to green as it sticks to a signpost on the Delaware Wildlife Area.



Cavities that support nesting birds can be whittled in the widest trees in this beaver pond in Isle Royale National Park.

This year, another world was revealed after the nesting season when it was time to remove nestboxes and baffles from their posts to be stored at my home before September's hunting seasons. One hundred-fifty-one frogs were found using the inside surfaces of baffles for shelter. Baffles are 33-inches long and are made from four-inch plastic drain pipe. Twenty-two frogs were also found inside nestboxes. Gray Tree Frogs made up the super majority and several Spring Peepers were also encountered. If Someone wants to conserve some of our small frogs, I've got a good idea for you!

Nestbox posts are steel sign posts supplied by the Ohio Division of Wildlife and the small frogs find the flat surfaces easy to climb while using their round, flat toes. At my other nestbox projects, I always smear grease on the posts inside baffles to deter most ant species from invading bird nests. In an agreement with the division, no grease is used on posts at the wildlife area so hunters and their dogs need not worry about getting smeared with grease. Of course, this respectful policy is also good for the frogs.

Unfortunately, 36 baffles were homes for paper wasp nests and I sustained four wasp stings before I completed my job. Only two nestboxes contained active wasp nests that I had failed to see and evict during normal monitoring visits during the nesting season.

I am still impressed by the Tree Swallows' nesting success. A minimum of 58 pairs of eyes watched for hawks and invading House Wrens. Wrens were kept at a distance until the colony had raised most of their young. June 24 and July 6 were the First-egg-dates for the only two House Wren nests.

As I have stated frequently in the past, our Tree Swallows consume more than 300,000 flying insects during the 45-day period that they use our nestboxes to raise their families. Using a conservative value of 58 successful swallow families, our efficient white-bellied friends consumed 17.4 million flying insects as they gleaned the sky up to 40 feet above the ground. I never need to wear insect repellent when my swallows are nesting en masse. Conserve on!

In Contact With Our OBS Contacts

Molly Wilsbacher, OBS treasurer and also OBS trustee; article by Carolyn Greco, City of Dublin Volunteer



Molly Wilsbacher first glimpsed the striking azure of a bluebird flitting along Dublin's walking paths.

"I'd never seen a bluebird in my life," she said. "I want one of those in my yard!"

Molly first built her own backyard bluebird house in 2004 and learned as much as she could about their declining population. In 2011 Molly turned her backyard into

a Certified Wildlife Habitat to help Dublin become a certified Community Wildlife Habitat.

Dublin is a part of bluebird conservation having created a bluebird trail of more than 50 wooden nest boxes in its many parks and natural green spaces. The Bluebird Team is a group of volunteers who monitor the trail's nest boxes to identify and correct nesting problems in an effort to increase the bluebirds' survival.

As Dublin's Bluebird Team Leader and a staunch defender of her feathered neighbors, Molly keeps predators—mostly house sparrows—from harming other native cavity nesting birds, including tree swallows, chickadees and titmice.

"If you place a nest box in your backyard, please don't put the nest boxes in a tree because bluebird nests will get invaded by predators," she advises.

Raccoons, foxes, cats, opossums and other birds eat fledglings or eggs. Bluebirds are only found, and are native to, North America. They prefer to build nests in abandoned tree cavities. However, the continuing loss of natural nest sites to sparrows and starlings means that the beloved bird needs help to survive.

One of Molly's fondest bluebird memories is watching a bluebird mother teach her chick to fly.

"The chick just didn't get it on the first attempt, was very wobbly, and landed in the grass," she said.

With her then 8-year-old daughter, they watched in fascination as the mother chirped encouragement to the chick as she provided repeated short flying demonstrations from the grass, then the retaining wall, then up to a low hanging branch. It was a good parenting lesson.

If you see Molly along the trail, please stop her and inquire as she's always happy to talk birds—especially bluebirds!

Recruits willing to assist Molly and her team defend Dublin's harbingers of happiness, please contact the Volunteer office via email at volunteer@dublin.oh.us.

If you would like your blue-birding achievements mentioned in our next newsletter, please send an email to our newsletter editor Penny Brandau at pennybrandau@gmail.com.

OBS Conference Preview

By Darlene Sillick, OBS Trustee and Conference Chair

Spring! We all know it is the season of the year between winter and summer with a gradual temperature rise and a rebirth of life. Plants begin their growth after their winter sleep. But for a bluebirder, there is something more that happens. Animals and birds come out of their winter dormancy or hibernation and begin to think about nesting and reproduction activities. We head out early March and look for all those signals and sounds of the changing season. Seeing a male bluebird giving a female bluebird a chortle and wing wave, warms our hearts and makes us smile inside and out. We know it is time for nesting season to begin with baby birds chirping and fledging. We are READY to be outside and can't wait to capture the season and peer into nestboxes!

We are eagerly awaiting the March 9, 2019 Ohio Bluebird Society Annual Conference which will be held at Ashland University from 8:30am to 4:30 pm. Again this year, the conference is focused around our mission statement. Ohio Bluebird Society, Inc. (OBS) was formed in 1987 for the purpose of supporting the return and the perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) and other native cavity nesting birds in Ohio. To this end, OBS will strive for the best methods to use, conserve and create habitat for the protection of such species. We consider the conference a chance to bring dear friends old and new together to learn about and teach best practices to help our native cavity nesting species. We have an exciting line up of speakers that you will want to hear and learn from.



Julie Zickefoose is such an amazing and talented writer, artist and naturalist from southeast Ohio. We are fortunate to have her as our keynote speaker. She believes birds to be 'the most vibrant vessels for the life force'. She said that painting baby birds as they grow has been her favorite project to date. Julie loves to encourage people to watch birds more closely and carefully. Through her talk and slides, you will be transformed and think you are out on a walk on her farm. Not only will she talk about Baby Birds, she will also talk about what she has done to help birds on her property. She will have some of her artwork and books to sell and will autograph books during our breaks and lunch break.

You may have read Ohio Young Birder's Club member, Katelyn Shelton's story of her first season on a bluebird trail which was recently published by the National Audubon Society and published by Cornell Nestwatch eNewsletter and reprinted on the OBS website. OBS is happy to support the Ohio Young Birders Club and the important conservation work that they do. Katelyn is an accomplished photographer and writer. You can see her bird photos on page two of our conference registration form. You will be delighted with her inspiring talk and impressed to learn what a 16-year-old is doing in her area to help birds.



All the way from Ithaca, NY, Robyn Bailey will visit Ohio from her perch as the Project Leader for Cornell Nestwatch. Robyn researches trends in nesting success using data provided by citizen scientists. Her work has been published in journals, on websites and blogs, and in ornithology textbooks. Robyn is a Certified Wildlife Biologist and earned her M.S. while studying rattlesnakes in Michigan.

Robyn will introduce NestWatch, a citizen-science nest monitoring project. We will discuss how to participate in NestWatch, and Robyn will show examples of how the public has helped to answer pressing questions about the management of nesting birds by contributing data. From recent research results to ongoing studies, Robyn will share how NestWatchers are helping to shape the direction of nest monitoring in North America.



Join Kris Davis, Ecosystem Manager at The Dawes Arboretum, and learn about the many bird conservation efforts and how the Dawes is striving to promote and protect the many spectacular avian species that call the Dawes home. He will talk about "From Bluebirds to Wood Ducks, and everything between!" He grew up in Hopewell, Ohio on a farm where his love for

nature and wildlife was cultivated from a young age. His favorite part of the job is creating/managing wildlife habitat and helping conduct prescribed burns. Dawes has just under 100 nestboxes and Kris will share some of the amazing fledge rates and conservation work being done at The Dawes Arboretum.



Madeline Sudnick is a sophomore in the Honors Tutorial College at Ohio University. She has been involved in Dr. Kelly Williams's avian ecology lab since fall of 2017. Madeline's research interests include how nest structure, temperature, and behavior are connected in avian breeding biology. She also investigates how birds can defend their young from nest parasites, including parasitism by the avian blow fly. She presented last October at the Avian Conference at Dennison

Anna Rose is a senior at Wattersen High School and another amazing Ohio Young Birder's Club member. She is a very accomplished artist and created our event logo on the first page of the conference flyer. Anna monitors nestboxes at Brookside Country Club and this year she plotted and planned to redo all the boxes after building them over the winter. The central Ohio Young Birders Club youth members helped her to get the new boxes set up on a chilly day last March. All her data was recorded on Cornell Nestwatch, She won awards at the Ohio State Fair for her work that you will see through her artistry and writings.



Doug McClain earned a B.S. in biology from Muskingum University and an M.S. in zoology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, studying wood duck nest site selection. After graduate school, he worked for the Illinois Natural History Survey, where he conducted research on a variety of wetland and waterfowl research projects. Currently, Doug is the state waterfowl biologist for the Ohio Division of Wildlife. We are delighted



to have Doug present about Hoodies and Woodies, two waterfowl cavity nesters we hope to learn a lot more about through his work.



So as we eagerly anticipate spring after the coldest few days in years and years in Ohio and know that nesting season is just around February's corner, we hope you all register for the OBS Annual Conference and prepare to be amazed with the work of dedicated conservationists of all ages. We have more surprises with a teen emcee who will wow you from behind the podium. Elizabeth

Kanzeg, bird blogger and nature enthusiast, is a youth advisor for the central chapter of the Ohio Young Birders Club. Through OYBC, Elizabeth has conducted video interviews with birder Christian Hagenlocher and hiker Eddie Boyd, and is looking forward to interviewing Julie Zickefoose later this year. She recently worked alongside Kenn Kaufmann to present his annual ID quiz, and enjoyed emceeing the OYBC conference in 2016. Her blog, birdiesfinchesandferns.blogspot.com, was recently picked up on Twitter by the team at Brave Wilderness.

We always look forward to the Blue Feather and OBS Conservation Awards and of course our favorite, silent auction, a fund raiser that helps the club in many ways. This year we will have educational booths during the 1 hour and 15 minute lunch break. You can build a nestbox with 8th grader Devray Kirkland II. Darlene works with his father and Devray was looking for a service project to earn hours for National Honor Society. He is building 80 nestboxes for Glacier Ridge Metro Park and volunteers will redo the bluebird trail in February. Devray has given 4 times the hours needed. He is curious to see who will move into his handiwork! And we can't wait to have him hold a baby bird.



We look forward to seeing you and know you will go home after the conference excited to start checking your nestboxes. You will enjoy visiting your bluebird friends of over 30 some years and you will come away enlightened with how our next generation is helping our native birds. We are very excited for the adults and youth presenting at this year's conference. Watch for a few more updates on the website and see you in Ashland March 9 at 8:30am when our president Mike Watson welcomes you to a fantastic day learning best practices to use in the field.

We wish to give a thank you to our early event sponsors, Ohio Division of Wildlife, Cardinal Health and Ohio Ornithology Society. See you soon!!

Darlene Sillick
OBS trustee and OBS conference chair; OYBC co-advisor



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
MARCH 9, 2019

SPEAKERS

Julie Zickefoose Keynote Speaker, Naturalist, Author and Artist
 Robyn Bailey Cornell Nestwatch, Project Leader
 Douglas McClain ODNR Waterfowl Biologist
 Kris Davis Ecosystem Manager,
 The Dawes Arboretum
 Anna Rose Ohio Young Birders Club
 Katelyn Shelton Ohio Young Birders Club
 Madeline Sudrick Sophomore, Ohio University

LUNCH HOUR BREAK

Area Contacts session
 Book signing by Julie
 Nestwatch demo by Robyn
 Demonstrations and Posters
 OBS display table – traps and boxes for sale
 Silent Auction



Artwork designed by Anna Rose
OVBC High School Senior

CONFERENCE LOCATION & TIME

Check-In: 8:00am
 OBS Annual Members Meeting: 8:30 - 9:00am.
 Conference: 9:00am – 4:30pm
 Non-members plan to arrive by 9:00am main conference start time
Ashland University
John C Myers Convocation Center
638 Jefferson Street, Ashland, Ohio, 44805

COST

\$25 OBS member, \$35 non-OBS member, \$15 student (21 and younger)
 Includes Conference and Lunch (please pre-register using attached registration form)
 - Registration Deadline: March 1, 2019 Register Online at <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/conference/>
 - Or mail completed registration form to: Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair, 7747 Township Road 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/>

THANK YOU SPONSORS!



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
MARCH 9, 2019

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Deadline: March 1, 2019
 Register Online at <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/conference/>
 (please pre-register, space is limited)

Name: _____ OBS Member? YES / NO
 Organization: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

I AM REGISTERING AS
 OBS Member (\$25) Non-OBS Member (\$35) Student – 21 and younger (\$15)

MAIL REGISTRATION **MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO**
 Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair OBS

7747 Township Road 103
 Millersburg, OH 44654

OBSMembershipChair@gmail.com

LUNCH SELECTION

Name on Name Tag: _____

Check Lunch Choice:

- Smoked Turkey and Gouda
- Roast Beef and Boursin
- Ham and Swiss
- Gluten-Free sandwich
- Vegetarian Wrap

Please bring your own reusable coffee/tea or water container to help the planet and our goal of a zero waste conference!!

THANK YOU SPONSORS!



Photos by Katelyn Shelton
OVBC Sophomore

Wood Duck: *Aix sponsa*

By Cathy Priebe

The mission of the Ohio Bluebird Society is to support the return and the perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity nesters. The following article by Cathy Priebe gives us great information about one of those other native cavity nesters- the Wood Duck.



The male species of this particular water fowl is probably one of the most handsome ducks I have had the privilege to witness on a very regular basis at Sandy Ridge Reservation, one of the best parks to see resident and migrating ducks in Lorain County.

The wood duck is easy for me to identify even from a distance by its distinctive manner when swimming, bobbing its head forward and back as it weaves in and out of vegetation near the water's edge or swimming in a small group, usually from 6 to 20 individuals. The male's striking colors, green head with white, chestnut breast, buff sides and red eye also make identification very simple.

Also referred to as a perching duck, the wood duck is as nimble walking and flying in the tree tops as it is graceful gliding in the water. Preferring old growth swamps and thickly vegetated marshes near woodlands, the wood duck will nest in holes created by woodpeckers, natural cavities or strategically placed nest boxes.

The female will lay more than two dozen (white) eggs and incubate them for about 30 days. The nestlings are not molly coddled at all and after only resting for a day after hatching, they jump from their safe haven down to the forest floor, sometimes dropping almost 75 feet, to join their mother on a journey to the nearest body of water.

The wood duck is now a very common breeding bird in Ohio although that was not the case in the early 1900's. Many bird experts speculated that due to habitat loss and hunting, the wood duck would be extinct by the early 1930's. Building nest boxes, creating more wetlands and providing the right habitat, brought this water fowl back from the brink so we are able to enjoy its beauty and its unique lifestyle.

Some fun facts about wood ducks:

- They prefer to socialize among their own kind and stay away from other ducks.
- They have strong claws that can grip bark so they can perch on branches.
- The female has a very eerie call, Oooo-EEEEK, when startled.
- Females have a large white teardrop around their eyes and their plumage is a muted gray/brown.
- One of the few ducks that eat acorns, fruit and nuts.
- Also referred to by Pete Dunne as a "Swamp Squealer".

Wood Duck
Aix sponsa



References: *Birds of Ohio* by Jim McCormac;
Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion
by Pete Dunne; *All About Birds*, Cornell Lab.



Member News

Welcome to New Members

Dawn Birney
Curt Cooper
John D'Acierno
Tom Davis
Carl Gleditsch
Black Swamp Bird Observatory
Tim & Barb Hubbell
Renee C. Isaac
Barbara Matacia
Shawna Stambaugh

Thank You to Our Donors

Judy Semroc:
Conference Sponsor
Paulette Sawvel:
In Memory of John Sawvel
Cardinal Health Foundation
Dan Best
Eileen Cernea
Robert Corrington
Wayne & Charlotte Frank
Jean Krafft
Vickie Lambright
George Pasipanki
Rod & Melissa Scheidler
Ron & Carol Swart
Deb Williams

President's report: Spring 2019

By Mike Watson

I am writing this on what is purported to be the coldest day in a generation, with wind chills reaching life threatening lows in some parts of the northern US. And it's got me thinking about global warming. This might seem counter intuitive, and there are folks who argue that these temperatures provide evidence against global warming. But climate scientists have been studying the impacts of warming on the jet stream and polar vortex for more than a decade and they see evidence that warming can destabilize these cycles, which would result in more frequent weather events like what we're seeing today. Although it is difficult (perhaps impossible) to say that today's unusual weather is directly the result of global warming, the fact is that we are seeing more and more extreme events that fit well with climate modelling. And in many cases the planet is changing even faster than the models predict (deep ocean warming and glacier melt, for example).

I think all of us who are interested in bluebirds and other wild animals, are concerned about their safety on days like today. And during the nesting season we'll have to deal with immediate threats like house sparrows, cats, and parasites. Dealing with these immediate threats is clearly very important to conservation, but global climate change is poised to present a new suite of challenges that may be much harder to manage. Without going into the details, the list includes: timing of nesting and insect emergence becoming out of sync; increased exposure to extreme weather events; impacts on plants that could lead to habitat loss; widespread insect declines; changes to pest/parasite/disease dynamics. The future is always uncertain, but it now includes the likelihood of some very significant ecological changes in short time periods. The work that all of you are doing to maintain healthy native bird populations will better prepare them to handle those changes.

We will discuss many of the challenges and successes associated with cavity-nesting bird conservation at the 2019 OBS Conference in March! You can register online or by mail; registration closes on March 1st. See more about the conference in this issue or online.

Please take some time to review the ballot for this year's board election. You can vote either by mail or in-person at the conference. Two board members are stepping down this year: John Barber and Mel Bird. We thank them for all they have contributed to OBS, not only as board members but as very active bird conservationists.

Thank you and stay warm!

Treasurer's Report by Molly Wilsbacher

1. As reported elsewhere in this newsletter, our Bluebird Conference is on March 9, 2019. We are actively seeking donations for our silent auction. If you have a new or slightly used item (i.e., framed artwork) that you believe someone else might appreciate, please donate it! Feel free to bring it with you to the conference and drop it off at the silent auction table when you arrive. Please keep in mind that the value of all donations can be used as a tax deduction next year.
2. The Board of Directors are happy to report that our cost-cutting measures are really paying off. In 2018 we reduced expenses by approximately \$1,800, and improved our financial position by \$5,383 over what it was in fiscal year 2017. Please email me if you would like a copy of the Ohio Bluebird Society's Annual Financial Report for the period ending 9/30/18.
3. Our bank accounts currently reflect that OBS has \$21,520 in our bank accounts, with anticipated expenditures in the 1st Quarter of 2019 for the Bluebird Conference (food and speakers), our Spring Newsletter, and the remaining balance on our new website.

MEET OUR BOARD CANDIDATES



Tim Hubbel

I am 57 and married to my beautiful wife Barbara. We moved to Fairfield County, southwest of Lancaster 3 ½ years ago to be closer to our children who all live in the greater Columbus area and to be closer to the Hocking Hills region. We have four children and seven grandchildren. I enjoy the outdoors, nature, camping, hiking, walkabouts, family and photography.

My wife and I have been successfully “raising” Bluebirds for over 20 years. Our current property has two boxes. I have a deep appreciation and respect for all of creation, wildlife and Ohio’s natural resources.

In July of this year, I graduated from The Ohio State University - College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Science’s “Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist” (OCVN) Program, Hocking Hills Region. I am an active (OCVN) volunteer at Clear Creek Metro Park, Three Creeks Metro Park, Pickerington Ponds Metro Park, Fairfield County Parks, Lancaster City Parks and some State Parks and State Nature Preserves in the Hocking Hills region.

Previous employment includes:

- Director of Operations/ Finance at The Recovery Center in Lancaster, outpatient addiction/mental health counseling agency.
- Administrative / Operations Pastor at Crossroads Church of God in Lima, community care, daycare, men’s pastor and 25 acre retreat/nature center (called “Deep Woods”) development and oversight.
- State Trooper - Staff Lieutenant at the Ohio State Highway Patrol, various assignments and ranks.

The next Great Backyard Bird Count is February 15-18, 2019. Bird watchers of all ages count birds to create a real-time snapshot of where birds are. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one or more of the days of the count. You can count from any location! It’s fun and easy to support this online citizen science project. Check out gbbc.birdcount.org for more information.

If you haven’t sent in your **2018 fledgling count** please download the report form from the OBS website <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/fledgling-report/> and send to ohiobluebirdsociety@gmail.com.

www.allaboutbirds.org/why-do-we-feed-birds has a provocative discussion on the history of feeding birds and why we do it. Check it out!



Monica Klarer

I am interested in bluebirds, and nature in general. My background is in occupational therapy but I do volunteer at two local nature centers and with the local parks. I monitor 3 small bluebird trails, with modest success, but I am by no means an expert. I do have some board experience, as I am just finishing a 2 year term as president of Milan Rotary club.

(some info from Mel Bird’s nomination of Monica)

She is a retired physical therapist from the Milan school system and is currently the President of the Milan Rotary. I met her when I gave a bluebird presentation at one of their meetings. She has in the past managed a trail at Osborn Park in Perkins Township and currently set up a trail in the Milan Cemetery.



The ballot to be used for voting can be filled out at the OBS members meeting on March 9th or placed in a sealed envelope with a legible return name and address and mailed to:

**OBS Election 2019
The Holden Arboretum
9500 Sperry Road,
Kirkland, Ohio 44094**

OBS ANNUAL ELECTION FOR THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES – 2019

I hereby cast this ballot for the candidates listed as nominees in this issue of the Bluebird Monitor as follows:

I vote for both candidates for the trustee positions

I vote for only the following candidate:

Candidate: _____

Signed: _____

Print: _____

Date: _____

The Ohio Bluebird Society’s annual conference will be held on Saturday March 9, 2019 and registration deadline is March 1st. Conference information and registration forms can be found on page 10 of this newsletter issue.

Valentines Day is a great time to purchase a membership to the Ohio Bluebird Society for someone special... maybe even yourself! Send email request to ohiobluebirdsociety@gmail.com for more information.



OBS FLEDGLING REPORT

Reported As Of 1/31/2019: Eastern Bluebird – 5991

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

Tree Swallow	6775	Barn Swallow	122
House Wren	2169	Prothonotary Warbler	74
Purple Martin	1916	Tufted Titmouse	4
Black-capped Chickadee	51	Wood Duck	11
Carolina Chickadee	96	House Sparrows dispatched	970
Carolina Wren	34	House Sparrow Eggs destroyed	1142
American Kestrel	173	European Starling Eggs destroyed	8
Osprey	11	# of Reports	60

Send info to: info@ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Download fillable form - see FLEDGLING REPORT tab

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) -
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216.233.2271

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Mike Watson (President) -
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Phone:
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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	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3-years		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 21)	\$10	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Sr. Family (over 60)	\$15	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular/Family	\$20	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational	\$50	\$140
<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
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CLARK	Gray, Bethany	937.767.1919		ohiobluebirder@gmail.com
COLUMBIANA	Nutter, Susan	330.692.2447		susannutter11@gmail.com
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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
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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
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LUCAS	Seaman, Tammy	419.349.5162		erictammy@sbcglobal.net
MEDINA	Rabung, Dale	330.725.0895	216.973.1503	twodr@zoominternet.net
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PORTAGE	Gammon, Darrell	330.575.5166		invisibleman53@yahoo.com
ROSS	Hill, Carrie (Bishop Flaget School)		740.248.4255	hillteach@gmail.com
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STARK	Semroc, Judy	330.877.3551	cell 330.612.0391	rainefox51@gmail.com
SUMMIT	Grande, Marcy	330.807.6983		mgrandesign@yahoo.com
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WARREN	Jeffries, Art	317.445.8559		gonebirding@hotmail.com
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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

Nest Box Monitoring Tips

Many people are hesitant about looking into their nest boxes, but monitoring your boxes can give the bluebird a much greater chance of survival. It also allows for early detection of problems and provides valuable research data.

- Nest boxes should be monitored at least once a week from early April through late August.
- Make a little noise as you approach the box or tap on its side before opening. This gives the adult bird time to leave the nest and young time to huddle down.
- Open the box very slowly and carefully. Be prepared for wasps, snakes, squirrels, and startled birds.
- Occasionally, the female may remain on the nest. (Titmice may hiss at you)
- Check the box quickly for wasps, blowflies, ants, and dead birds, record the number of eggs, etc. Then leave the area promptly and quietly.
- The female normally lays one egg per day, usually in the morning. Incubation begins when the clutch is complete (4-5 blue, sometimes white eggs). Ideally, check in the afternoons during this time.



- Remove the old nest, clean out the box and remove contents from the area when the young have fledged. Leaving the old nest near the box may attract predators.
- DO NOT open front or side opening boxes once the nestlings are 14 days old. This could cause the young to fledge prematurely, thus reducing their chance of survival.

Taken from "Supporting the return of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity nesters", an OBS publication.