



# Bluebird Monitor

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

Summer 2019



## OBS 2019 Conference

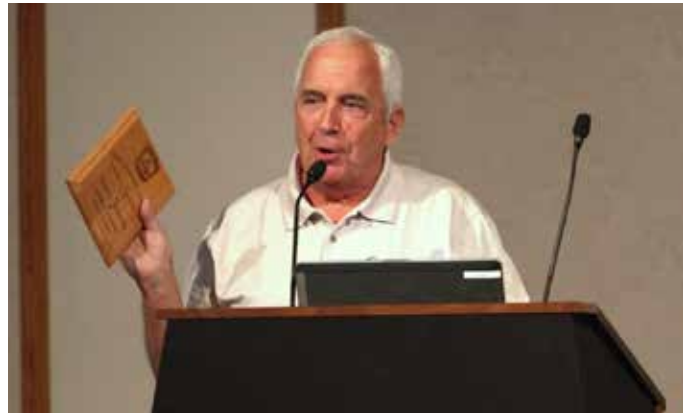
By Darlene Sillick, OBS trustee and Franklin County Area Contact

*On behalf of the Ohio Bluebird Society board and volunteers who worked on our annual meeting committee, we want to say thank you for attending the conference on March 9, 2019 in Ashland, Ohio. What a great day we had! Topics that were covered by our speakers fit nicely with the Ohio Bluebird Society Mission Statement. A difference this year was the youth speakers and the youth emcee. I hope you will agree that the students from Ohio Young Birders Club added something new and exciting to our annual conference. Their energy, polish, and relevant talks sure gave hope for OBS and the future of conservation.*

A few highlights and photos follow. Let's start with the two traditional OBS awards. The OBS Wildlife Conservation award went to The Dawes Arboretum and Kris Davis accepted on behalf of Dawes. It was obvious after Kris gave his talk that Dawes does a lot more than plant trees and shrubs. They work with all different types of habitat and they are dedicated to helping many of our native cavity nesters.



The highly coveted Blue Feather award went to Dale Rabung. His daughter was very proud to make the introduction to her father's work helping bluebirds in his county. Congratulations Dale and thank you for your many years of past work promoting bluebird conservation and for continuing as Medina County Area Contact.



Every student who attended contributed to the OBS conference in a big way. Some presented posters, a few gave very interesting talks and one helped build nest boxes with attendees on breaks. The boxes could be bought or signed and given to one of our county projects. The teen emcee had poise and a big heart, working the microphone and giving the introductions. We wish to thank all the youth for spending their day with us. Keep doing your great conservation efforts.



## Please enjoy these photos from the OBS conference.



Devray Kirkland II helping Seri Zimmerman build a nestbox.



Our keynote speaker, Julie Zickefoose, gave a moving opening talk and was very busy signing books on the breaks.



Lloyd learns more about Hoodies and Woodies from Hannah Thomas.



The silent auction is our biggest fundraiser of the year. We thank all who donated or gave to this event!



Madame Wingnut, Paula Ziebarth, talks about the importance of trapping and how to properly use the Van Ert Sparrow trap.



Youth presenter Anna Rose impressed our keynote speaker Julie Zickefoose.



Carl Gleditsch volunteered at the OBS table. (One of the many wonderful volunteers who helped.)



Katelyn Shelton and the Little Trail that Could!



Young birder Anna Rose has so much talent in her art and speaking and conservation work.



Robyn Bailey, project director, sharing and teaching about Cornell Nestwatch.



Molly Wilsbacher- we thank you for your work as treasurer and for running the Silent Auction.



We sincerely thank Mike Watson for his leadership as president of Ohio Bluebird Society!

# A Bluebird Trail Scoreboard

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



Whenever I visit or read of a bluebird nestbox trail being maintained on public lands such as parks, schools, cemeteries, or any other properties visited by the public, I always wonder if a visitor can read of the trail's reproductive success? Starting in 1968, my first bluebird nestbox trails were on farms where I had worked as a teenager, and at the end of each season, I would report the trail's reproductive numbers to the

landowners for good conversations. Of course, the farm trails were not on public lands and my only objective at the time was raising bluebirds and other native cavity nesters.

In 1977, I started to establish bluebird trails on public lands, with Delaware State Park taking the lead. The park will host 166 boxes for the 2019 season, and during all of the park's trail history, "Bluebird Trail Scoreboards" have been posted so park visitors can read the latest reproduction scores of the park's nestboxes.

For example, when a lone visitor or family turns into the park from State Route 23 to seek a camp site, they drive pass 37 nestboxes during their two-mile journey on their way to the camp check-in station. If they are on their way to the marina, they will pass 27 nestboxes as they travel more than a mile to the boat launch area. If they know little about birds and bluebird trail management, travelers may wonder what those boxes are for. Or if they have heard of bluebird nestboxes, they may be excited to see a bluebird, or wonder what was that sleek looking bird with the white belly?

For the past 42 years, I have always posted one or more scoreboard sheets so visitors can see how the birds are doing. I have always posted a sheet in the check-in station, and the park management issued me a key so I could unlock the kiosk at the marina so I could tack my score sheet to the inside of the kiosk's north facing panel. In other words, a curious visitor can find the basic information about the bluebird trail, and once they locate one of the sheets, they know where to look on any return visit. Also, park attendants can simply point to a posted sheet and enjoy any conversations that follow.

This article has two images of my Bluebird Trail Scoreboard. Figure I shows a blank scoreboard that I hope will be downloaded, enlarged, and printed on a standard sheet of paper, taken to a printer, and copied into dozens of sheets so a trail monitor can enjoy promoting the environmental interpretation of a well maintained nestbox trail.

Figure II shows how I labeled it and added the years 2018 and 2017. I had filled in the data after I had monitored my trail on June 10, 2018. By looking at the scores, one might wonder or ask if Tree Swallows nest later than bluebirds, or are the chickadees done? And, it appears that the bluebirds and wrens are way behind the previous year until you remember that they normally have at least two families per nestbox each season, etc.

One of my trails consists of fifty boxes at the Olenangy Environmental Control Center (OECC), a Delaware County sewage treatment facility. After I enter my trail data into my data book, I fill out a scoreboard sheet for OECC and mail it to its manager, who tacks it on their bulletin board so their technicians can inspect the data and discuss the project. This arrangement leads to good conversations on their grounds as I monitor my trails every nine days.

Whenever, and wherever possible, also provide copies of "Hit the Trail for Bluebirds, How to Make and Enjoy Your Own Bluebird Trail" so inspired visitors can launch their own projects. Props, such as a pipe stand with an attached nestbox protected against climbing snakes and raccoons by a baffle is also good. So, if you maintain and monitor a bluebird trail on public land, please maintain and update a Bluebird Trail Scoreboard so others can tune into your project. The birds will benefit, and their trail monitors will have a rewarding hobby. Bluebird on!

Figure I

	Raised	To Go	Last Year
Bluebirds			
Tree Swallows			
House Wrens			
Chickadees			
Titmice			

Last count was on \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_ nest boxes make up the bluebird trail.

Figure II

	2018 Raised	2018 To Go	2017 Last Year
Bluebirds	61	40	169
Tree Swallows	-	428	368
House Wrens	6	185	425
Chickadees	6	-	-
Titmice	-	-	-

Last count was on 6-10-18.  
164 nest boxes make up the bluebird trail.

# An Idea Blossoms with the Help of Volunteers

By Darlene Sillick, OBS Trustee and Area Contact

Glacier Ridge Metro Park (GRMP) is a 1000 acre park in the Franklin County Metro Park system. The mailing address is Plain City, Ohio but it also takes in parts of Delaware, Franklin and Union Counties. The park was a recent recipient of 68 new nest boxes. In less than 30 days the plan was put together, equipment built and boxes installed by some amazing volunteers who came together to help Eastern Bluebird and Tree Swallow conservation.

The original nest boxes had been installed over 15 years ago. The old boxes needed repair and some needed to be replaced. Also with habitat changes over time, moving the boxes was a must. GRMP volunteer Carl Gleditsch asked Darlene Sillick if she would help with a nest box facelift. Carl and Darlene put together a plan to meet with park rangers, naturalists and the park manager. Darlene agreed to donate 68 cedar nest boxes to the park and the park manager agreed to fund the 1 inch diameter EMT poles, 6 inch aluminum stove pipe and hardware for the project. Darlene has worked with Lowes in Dublin, who provides a discount on supplies for community projects, and, in less than 4 weeks, the new boxes were in place. All of this happened by the end of March, which was in time for the beginning of nesting season.

To make this happen, we wanted to put best practices in place. The park had been using Cornell NestWatch to enter the data for the past 3 years and by reviewing and evaluating the data, we created a plan to place the boxes in habitat preferred by bluebirds and swallows. We also wanted to make it easier for volunteers to do their weekly monitoring and try not to disturb fragile habitat for valued ground nesting birds. This park has nesting Bobolinks and Grasshopper Sparrows. We took into consideration that some volunteers might want to monitor riding their bikes to their boxes. The park has over a 9 mile paved bike and walking path. Therefore, this meant the boxes would be highly visible to the public. It would be easy to do public programs and to share monitoring with small groups of people out on the paved trail.

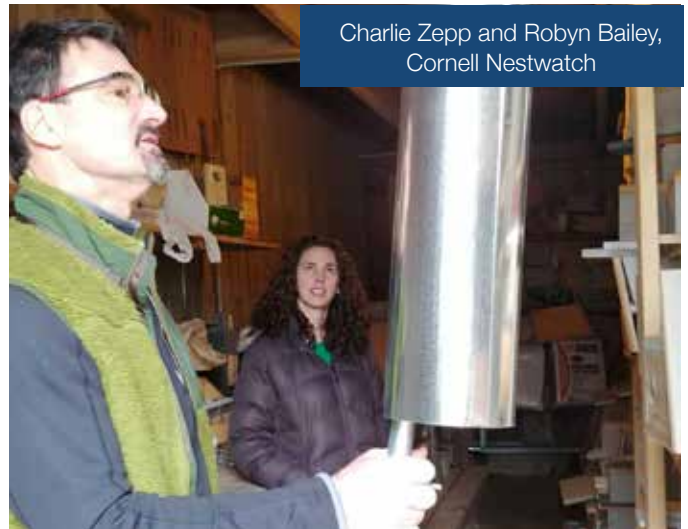
The first volunteer Carl and Darlene recruited was Paula Ziebarth (Madame Wingnut to OBS readers). She is Delaware County Area Contact for OBS and a whiz when it comes to working Cornell NestWatch data. She reviewed the data from the last 3 years and it was easy to tell the boxes that needed to be moved. Every box needed to be moved! She taught Carl how to review the dataset and why she made the recommendations for the new 68 box placements. From last year's data, numbers proved to be interesting with the Tree Swallows. The park fledged 103, had 23 unhatched eggs and 42 birds were found dead in their boxes. Paula felt the box



Paula Ziebarth  
working the data

placement had something to do with the loss of swallows. Bluebirds fledged 20, 4 unhatched eggs and 2 dead in boxes. Five boxes had the non-native House Sparrows. We want to give Paula a big shout-out for analyzing the data and helping flag the new box placement.

Next was all the prep for the box poles and baffles. Charlie Zepp has worked with Darlene for over 30 years gathering scrap wood from construction sites to do conservation projects. Charlie started this project with his father in law over 30 years ago and his volunteer efforts won him the Ohio Bluebird Society Conservation Award about 3 years ago. The park maintenance team cut the 1 inch EMT poles down to 8 feet and Charlie drilled all the holes for the nest box mounting bolt and added the hose guard hardware for the baffle. Then Charlie assembled the 6 inch metal baffle and we were ready to begin the install.



Charlie Zepp and Robyn Bailey,  
Cornell Nestwatch

In 10 hours over 2 days, 14 volunteers from Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists, metro parks and friends of Darlene's put up 68 newly placed nest boxes at GRMP. The parks staff took down the old boxes and hardware the next week. That was quite a project too.

"So how were all these cedar boxes built?" you ask. Darlene had a co-worker at Cardinal Health who was trying to find a volunteer project for his 8th grade son Devray Kirkland II. Darlene needed nest boxes built and they started with 20 kits. Devray enjoyed using a power drill and he ended up building over 80 boxes. All 68 nest boxes at GRMP are signed and dated on the bottom of the box by this young man. In another month, he will go out and see the nesting birds he helped by building their housing. His project was for National Honor Society hours and he gave 4 times the number of hours needed for his project. His story has been picked up on Facebook by Robyn Bailey, Program Director for Cornell NestWatch and by the Metro Parks on their Facebook site.



Devray Kirkland II building boxes at OBS conference



Devray, Devray II, Dakota Ramsey and Carl Gleditsch, nestbox delivery



Tim Lipetz with GPS

We had the good fortune to have an expert with a GPS, Tim Lipetz, an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (OCVN) graduate, who came out and helped to map all the new boxes. Tim also helped us with an earlier Highbanks Metro Park project where we replaced 70 boxes and he helped at several other smaller sites. The GPS data he provided helped us with the box mapping in the Cornell NestWatch program.

It is almost the end of April and bluebirds and tree swallows are busy nest building. We are eager

to see how the season progresses at GRMP and Highbanks, where the 70 boxes were also completely replaced and moved. In the fall we will do a follow-up article and are eager to see the end of season numbers for 2019 to evaluate if our Cornell Nestwatch analysis had merit.

A special thank you to Sarah Hunter, GRMP naturalist and the rangers and park managers who believed in us and our project to help the secondary cavity nesters in their park. You might say it took a small army to get the job done!



Sarah Hunter, Preethika Muniyappa, Dawn Elsea and Aaron Eagle



GRMP\_install team

I want to put out a challenge to other folks in the Ohio Bluebird Society to share their knowledge and work with other volunteers to find a way to redo old trails in their communities. Take the lead to help others and offer a helping hand to our amazing cavity nesting birds. Especially give the time to work with the next generation of birders. Let these birds teach our youth to care about conservation, one nest box at a time.



# Ask Madame WingNut

## House Sparrow (HOSP) Management Techniques

By Paula Ziebarth

### Deterrents

- 1) **DON'T** site nest box for native cavity birds near stiff needled evergreen trees. HOSP are drawn to these trees, nesting or roosting in them. Also keep nest boxes a distance away from human houses or outbuildings.
- 2) **DO** remove potential HOSP nesting or roosting areas wherever possible: install hardware cloth over fan/dryer vent exhausts; remove nests from gutters; block access behind signs; prune trees and shrubs that harbor groups of HOSP, etc.
- 3) **DON'T** feed seeds or other food that HOSP eat during nest season. Thistle seed, sugar water for hummingbirds and a few mealworms occasionally are fine during nest season. Feeding other foods during fall and winter months is fine.
- 4) **DO** carefully consider other native cavity nesters' territory and habitat requirements when siting multiple nest boxes in an area. The more boxes you have in a given area, the more attractive they are to HOSP so why load up an area if boxes will realistically not be used by native birds?
- 5) **DO** provide solitary tree or perch near box for Eastern Bluebird or other native bird to use as sentry post. Native male bird perched nearby may be able to chase HOSP as it approaches box.
- 6) Removing HOSP nest and eggs is not much of a deterrent. Removing the nest seldom drives the male HOSP away. Male HOSP can stay with "their" box for months before they give up. Emptying box of all nest material can set "ecological trap" for native cavity nester. They enter the HOSP's box, and he follows them in. Seed cracking beak is excellent head cracking beak. I find Tree Swallows (TRES) are especially susceptible to being killed by HOSP in this manner.
- 7) **DO NOT** let HOSP reproduce in your boxes. Because they are a non-native invasive species, they are not protected by law. Although native cavity nesters are protected under the federal migratory bird act, HOSP are not. Inbox trapping is best practice to control HOSP, but if unwilling to do this, remove their eggs once or twice per week and leave the nest.
- 8) If you are unwilling to trap HOSP and/or HOSP are especially numerous in your area, install a sparrow spooker on active native nester's box. After first egg of native cavity nester is laid, sparrow spookers can be used to help deter HOSP from killing eggs/young/adults.

### Best Practice = Trap and Dispatch

- 1) Learn to identify both female and male HOSP. Get to know the male's "song". A good place to learn both is: [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House\\_Sparrow/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House_Sparrow/id)
- 2) **DO NOT** install only one nest box. It works well to have an empty nest box for the HOSP to "try" to use where you can trap it. Otherwise, he/she is more likely to evict your nesting Eastern Bluebird (EABL): killing eggs, young and adult(s) in the box. Consider dedicating a box specifically for trapping HOSP. Install a 1 1/4" hole reducer on a standard nest box and site it near a stiff needled evergreen tree (ex: Austrian pine, blue spruce), bird feeder, human structure, shrubby or brushy area where they roost, etc.
- 3) **DO** use inbox trap to capture HOSP as soon as there is evidence they have been in a box. Evidence of HOSP activity will include one or more of the following: HOSP seen in or on the box; male HOSP chirping enthusiastically beside the box; HOSP nesting material in the box; HOSP roost evidence (white dry feces, about 1/4" long white chow mein noodles). It is not necessary to wait for nest material to be added to capture them.
- 4) My favorite inbox trap is the Van Ert Universal Sparrow Trap which can be purchased through this website: <http://www.vanerttraps.com/> **DON'T** allow male HOSP to declare territory and wait for him to attract female and lay eggs. His singing attracts not only a female, but plenty of new males who are interested in his "find".
- 5) **DO** check every hour or two when trap is set in a nest box during daylight hours. Birds should be dealt with quickly and humanely. Native birds may become trapped and must be released as soon as possible.
- 6) **TRAPPING TIPS:**
  - Have all nest boxes ready for trapping. Box(es) should be fitted with trap set screws if using Van Ert Universal Sparrow Traps. Manufacturer recommends using #10 Pan Head screws, 1/2" long. This makes it easy to slip in a trap when needed. Make sure side vents are not too wide or HOSP will escape through them when trap is sprung.
  - If monitoring multiple boxes, start your trip by checking boxes most prone to HOSP usage. That way you can set traps and return at end of monitoring trip to retrieve trapped birds.

- When approaching nestbox, if you see nest material up near hole or vent, you have a House Sparrow (HOSP) nest. Quickly block hole with hand, plastic grocery bag, or small rag and you may get lucky by trapping HOSP inside.
  - As you open box to set trap, ignore HOSP that is watching you – don't make eye contact – pretend you don't notice HOSP and hide trap from view.
  - Reduce HOSP nest to top inch or so of material so trap can spring freely shut
  - Replace any eggs they have laid or add plastic craft egg to back of box where they can see it.
  - Scatter attractive HOSP nesting material on ground in front of box
  - Put single blade of grass in box hole
  - Set trap and leave quickly – don't linger by box long.
  - Time of day - setting trap early in the morning or at dusk will almost certainly capture male as he is energized in early morning to go into "his" box. Setting trap at dusk is very effective way to capture the HOSP. This is the one trapping protocol where you do not need to check box until an hour or two after dawn.
  - When retrieving trapped birds, always put mesh laundry bag over box and cinch tight at pole before opening – insures no escapes (especially if you have trapped both of them).
- 7) When trapping, if you capture the female HOSP, **DO** reset your trap immediately as the male will likely return shortly. After you capture the male HOSP, **DO** remove all nesting material and trap from the box.
  - 8) After capturing a HOSP, **DO NOT** release him/her elsewhere. You will be transferring your problem to someone else and the HOSP may just beat you home.
  - 9) After capturing a HOSP, **DO** quickly and humanely dispatch the animal. Methods are explained in this excellent website: <http://www.sialis.org/hospdispatch.htm>
  - 10) **DO** recycle the HOSP if possible. Bag them and put in freezer immediately after dispatch. Our local wildlife rehab center really appreciates this food source for injured Cooper's and Sharp-Shinned Hawks. These hawks eat birds in the wild, and are not very fond of the mice that are fed to the raptors at the center. It is very important that no chemicals (car exhaust, etc.) be used and no BB's or pellets for any HOSP you wish to recycle. Call your local wildlife rehabber first to see if they can use them.
  - 11) If you accidentally capture a native bird, you can easily tell through your mesh bag. Simply release the bird unharmed. Capturing a native bird in a nest box that has obviously been claimed by a HOSP can save their lives. IF the HOSP follows the bird into the box without a trap in there, the bird can easily become beheaded. Sprung trap provides safe barrier to keep HOSP away from the native bird until you can release him/her. The native bird is released immediately and after that



Picture is of male EABL that was killed by HOSP on one of my trails a couple weeks ago. Even with diligent trapping, I lose a few. EABL had roosted in this box over winter and box was empty week prior to this. I approached nestbox and saw male

HOSP on roof and female HOSP flew out, so she was definitely in there attacking him. Male EABL was on his side and still alive. His eyes were not damaged, and all other body parts were in good shape, but his head was scalped and bloody. I drove him immediately to Ohio Wildlife Center - held him. He did not leave my hand until he was in theirs. Unfortunately, head injuries were too severe and he did not make it through the night.

While EABL was on his way to the hospital, trap was set in his box and I captured male HOSP. I did not catch female HOSP, but did catch female EABL following morning. She was released and I exchanged the xbox that EABL was killed in for a Zeppick with monofilament line on it to give it a try (have never used it before). EABL had two-inch nest built last week. She found a new mate immediately or new pair moved in.

trauma, hopefully will not be back (another good outcome because box is NOT safe until you catch HOSP).

- 12) If HOSP are especially prevalent on your property, you may want to use a repeat bait trap (baited with white bread or millet seed) to reduce their numbers. This is especially effective starting in late summer (after nest season is done) through late fall. An excellent repeat bait trap can be found at [www.sparrowtraps.net](http://www.sparrowtraps.net)



If you have any questions, contact Paula Ziebarth at: [paulazbird@gmail.com](mailto:paulazbird@gmail.com) or 614-323-7566

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.

# NABS Factsheet

## Monitoring Bluebird Nestboxes

### WHY MONITOR YOUR NESTBOX?

It is very important that bluebird nestboxes be actively monitored (checked) at least once a week. Bluebirds are tolerant of humans, and will not abandon a nestbox that is properly monitored. All bluebird boxes should be built so that they can be opened either from the side, front, or top.

A box that is not monitored may do more harm to bluebirds than good. Monitoring increases the chances of success for bluebirds using the box. When good records are kept, it is also valuable for determining population trends.

Monitoring nestboxes will alert you to problems birds may be having with predators and competitors. **House Sparrows** (sometimes called English Sparrows) and **European Starlings** are non-native species introduced from Europe. Their aggressive seizure of cavity nest sites is a primary reason for declines in bluebird populations. Starlings nest in many of the natural nest sites but can be excluded from nestboxes by using  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or  $1\frac{5}{16}$  inch entrance holes. House Sparrows are smaller, so they can readily enter bluebird nestboxes. They frequently kill adult and nestling bluebirds, destroy their eggs, or drive them from their nests. At no time should they be allowed to successfully nest in bluebird boxes. Doing so will increase the House Sparrow population and further reduce the number of bluebirds. See the NABS factsheet on [House Sparrow Control](#) (available on our website at [www.nabluebirdsociety.org/bluebirdfacts.htm](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/bluebirdfacts.htm)).



David Kinneer

A **paper wasp** or **mouse** nest will drive nesting birds away from the box, and should be removed. Take appropriate precautions to avoid breathing the dust from a mouse nest.

Knowing what species is using the box is also beneficial. Bluebird societies would like you to monitor and report all species using your nestboxes, not just bluebirds. Tree Swallows, titmice, chickadees, Carolina and House Wrens and nuthatches are all native, beneficial birds. Remember: It is illegal to remove an active nest of any *native* cavity-nesting bird. Keeping records on a weekly basis, and sending survey forms in at the end of the nesting season increases our knowledge of cavity-nesting birds.



Bet Zimmerman

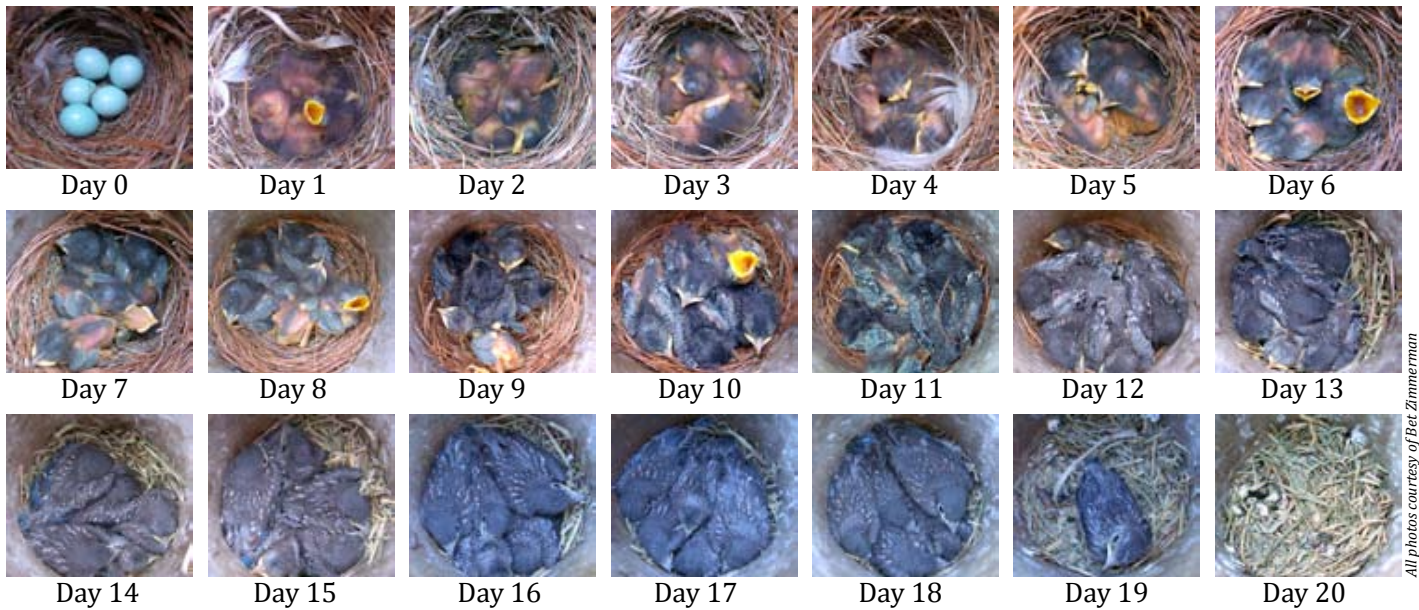
After any nesting effort has ended, either due to nest failure or successful fledging of the young, remove the used nest from the box. When a bluebird nest is successful, re-nesting in the same box may be encouraged if the first nest is removed. This can be done as soon as all chicks have left the nest. Females usually build a new nest.

### WHAT TO MONITOR

When you monitor a box, determine which species is using it by examining nesting material and eggs. Record the date and the number of eggs or young observed. Knowing when the eggs were laid will help you determine if they are infertile, or when they should hatch and when the young would be expected to leave the nest. In the case of most cavity nesters, one egg is laid one each day until the entire clutch is complete. Incubation will then begin. For bluebirds, incubation typically lasts approximately 12–14 days. After hatching, the chicks will remain in the nest for about 17–21 days. Your monitoring should be limited to viewing from a distance after the 12–13<sup>th</sup> day, or the chicks might jump or fly from the box prematurely.



## Eastern Bluebird Daily Growth



### HOW TO MONITOR

Nest monitoring should only be done during calm, mild, and dry weather conditions to reduce the chance of chilling chicks or eggs. Open the nestbox carefully, and do not to allow the eggs to fall out or chicks to jump out. Songbirds have a poor sense of smell and will not abandon the nest due to monitoring the nest, eggs, or chicks. Even so, you should avoid touching eggs or nestlings.

Complete monitoring as quickly and quietly as possible to minimize disturbance. Avoid disposing of used nest material near the nest site as it may attract predators—instead put it in a paper or plastic bag and dispose of it in the trash far from the nestbox. Always be certain to close the box door securely before leaving. Record what you observed.

### HOW TO IDENTIFY NESTS AND EGGS BY SPECIES

**Bluebird:** The 1–4 inch tall, relatively neat nest is built with fine grasses or pine needles with a fairly deep nest cup. Eggs (4–6) are powder blue or occasionally white. Mountain and Western Bluebird nests may contain bits of trash or feathers.



Eastern Bluebirds



Western Bluebirds



Mountain Bluebirds



Tree and Violet-green Swallow: Their nest is also made of grasses but they may use somewhat coarser fibers than a bluebird. It generally has a flatter cup than the bluebird's and is usually lined with many feathers. Eggs (5–7) are white, pointy on one end, and smaller than those of a bluebird.



Jim Williams



Bet Zimmerman



Marion Ball

Tree Swallows

House Wren: House Wrens fill a nestbox with sticks and then line the deep nest cup with fine plant fibers or feathers. “Dummy nests” without the nest cup are often built in other cavities within the male House Wren’s territory to reduce competition for resources. The tiny eggs (6–8) are glossy white/tan, heavily speckled with pinkish-brown spots.



David Mitchell



Bet Zimmerman



Marion Ball

Chickadee: Chickadees build a nest of moss and plant down, with a small, deep nest cup lined with hair, fur or plant down. They lay 5–8 white or cream non-glossy, tiny eggs that are covered with reddish-brown speckles. Eggs are often covered with a plug of hair or fur when the female leaves the box.



Marion Ball



Marion Ball



Marion Ball

House Sparrow: House Sparrows build a tall, sloppy nest of coarse grasses (usually with seed heads), often with feathers and pieces of scrap paper, cloth, cellophane, or other garbage. The nest in a large box or in the open forms a canopy with a tunnel-like entrance. The 5–7 cream- or greenish-colored, non-glossy eggs have heavy brown markings.



Adam Kuniszcza

J.M. Garg



Bet Zimmerman



Bet Zimmerman



**Tufted Titmouse:** The nest of moss, fur, and soft plant fibers is similar to that of chickadees; may be made primarily of crumpled dried leaves with grass, also bits of snakeskin, cellophane, and bark strips. The cup may be padded with hair, fur, bits of string, or cloth. The eggs are similar to the House Wren's but larger and less heavily marked.



## Some Common Cavity-Nester Eggs



## Cutaway Views of Nestboxes



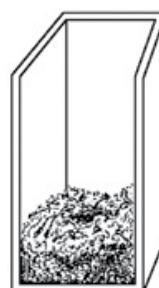
Eastern Bluebird nest



House Wren nest



Tree Swallow nest



Carolina Chickadee nest



House Sparrow nest

Other nests sometimes found in bluebird nestboxes (depending on the area) include those of Ash-throated Flycatchers, Bewick's Wrens, Carolina Wrens, Eurasian Tree Sparrows, Great Crested Flycatchers, House Finches, nuthatches, titmice, and Prothonotary Warblers.

Revised May 2012

*The North American Bluebird Society, Inc. is a non-profit education, conservation, and research organization that promotes the recovery of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting bird species in North America.*

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





# Member News

## Welcome to New Members

John & Phyllis Barcza  
Jenny & Denny Baughman  
Deborah Beckman  
Renee Boronka  
Jim Bouscher  
Veronica Brannen  
Carol Connelly  
Shawnee Culbertson  
Dawes Arboretum  
Connie Dolder  
Jamey Emmert  
Matthew Giorgio  
Wayne Hershberger  
Larry Hunter  
Carice Jameson  
Catherine Katz  
Teddi Keith-Morris  
Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust  
JoAnna Kralian  
Bruce Kramer  
Kari & Sarah Masuoka  
Scott & Laura Miller  
George & Sue Panak  
Bruce Platt  
Danielle Price  
Scheryl Rader  
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Kim Thomson  
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## President's report: Summer 2019

By Mike Watson

I'd like to start by saying Thank You to everyone involved in this year's conference. Darlene Sillick took the lead (again!) on conference planning, but OBS could not plan and present a conference of this scale without the help of the board, many volunteers, excellent speakers, people bringing educational displays, and everyone who attends the conferences. Thanks to all of you, and to the staff at Ashland University.

Attendance was excellent this year: 144 attendees representing 43 counties across Ohio. Our goal when planning OBS conferences is to provide information that reflects the wide range of people who are attracted to bluebirding. This includes bluebird basics for those who are new to bluebirding, data-heavy reports for those interested in a more scientific approach, and reports from new trails that represent the expanding footprint of bluebird conservation. But bluebirds are not the only native cavity nesting birds in Ohio, and we know that bluebirds act as a 'gateway' bird for many people who then become interested more broadly in conservation. This balance between topics is always a challenge and we appreciate your feedback after the conference.

We received 49 responses to our online evaluation. Overall, more than 90% of responses were positive and there were many comments complementing the speakers, the volunteers and the venue. There were also many very helpful comments suggesting changes, improvements, and recommendations for future conferences. We really do appreciate this feedback and will use it while planning the 2020 conference.

Immediately before the conference, we held our annual members meeting. Those of you who were unable to attend might be interested to know what was covered at that meeting, which was basically a 'state of OBS' presentation.

## Annual Meeting highlights

### Financial Report:

OBS Treasurer Molly Wilsbacher summed up the current financial situation well: "a stark improvement" since 2016. At the end of Fiscal Year 2018 OBS had \$21,520.64, a gain of roughly \$8,000 since 2016. This is due to a number of cost-saving changes, improving membership numbers, and some important donations and grants over the past couple years. In 2019 we foresee sizeable costs related to the conference, website redesign, and the newsletter. We also hope to take advantage of our solid financial situation to do more with our Small Grants program. We hope to re-structure this program in order to increase on-the-ground conservation efforts across the state.

### Membership Report:

Pat and Dave Dutton (OBS Membership Chairs) have made some significant changes to how OBS manages memberships over the past few years. These improvements have streamlined renewals, allow better tracking of membership numbers, and have allowed integration with other OBS business (e.g. conference registration). We have seen growth over the past few years, including during 2018. We currently stand at 347 members, an increase of 31 over the 2017 numbers. Senior 3-yr is by far the most common membership category, accounting for nearly 40% of all memberships. Life and Regular 3-year membership each account for nearly 20% of total memberships.

## Nestbox Report:

OBS received 70 nestbox reports in 2018, representing 34 counties. A total of 7127 bluebirds and 8733 tree swallows (plus 9 other species) fledged from nearly 5000 nestboxes. The total number of native birds fledged in 2018 was 25,890! This represents not only a huge dataset, but more importantly a significant addition to these populations.

## Other activities:

In addition to anticipated upgrades to our Small Grants program, the OBS board completed a redesign of our information/membership brochure. Nearly all of the first 1000 brochures were taken during the conference. A second run has recently been completed and hundreds have been mailed to Area Contacts. Please contact us if you need brochures.

We are also making good progress on our website redesign. Website structure, content editing, and overall graphic design have been completed. The actual construction of the site, including new features such as online nestbox reporting, is underway. When complete, the website will be more functional, easier to navigate, and contain updated content and appearance.

Again, thank you to everyone who helped with this year's conference and all of you who attended. We hope to see all of you (and many new faces) next year: the 2020 conference is scheduled for February 29th at Ashland University.

## *A Bluebird Story* From Diane Devereaux

I've seen bluebirds throw feathers out of the birdhouse when sparrows have gotten in and tried to nest but today I saw something that showed me just how much they dislike other birds feathers. The female was sitting on the house and the male was up in a tree when two nice sized "abdominal" feathers from some other bird came drifting down toward the house. The male caught one of them in mid-air and flew away with it to deposit it somewhere else. The other feather landed on the ground and the female then swooped down to the ground, picked it up, and flew off after the male.



## Treasurer's Report

by Molly Wilsbacher

1. Our Bluebird Conference in March was a great success with over 160 attendees this year. We experienced an increase in attendance, sponsorships, and donations for our silent auction, while decreasing our costs for catering and printing. The silent auction garnered so many items that we filled 5 tables to capacity and could have easily used one more table. We made \$1,260 on the silent auction alone. Thank you all for your generous donations!
2. The Board of Directors are happy to report that our Bluebird Conference enjoyed a modest net gain of \$1,372.72 that can be utilized on our conservation efforts. In comparison, last year's conference in 2018 resulted in a small loss of \$(123.56). Many OBS members may not realize this, but the costs are substantial to run a well-organized conference. Conference Expenses totaled \$5,376.03 this year and consisted of the following: Keynote Speaker Fee, Reimbursement of Speaker Travel Expenses, Printing, Postage, Awards, and of course, Ashland University for Catering and Room Rental.
3. The Ohio Bluebird Society's bank accounts currently reflect that OBS has \$23,646.84 in our accounts at the end of the 1st Quarter of 2019, which is an increase of \$2,126.84 over the last quarter (mostly attributable to an increase in memberships, which is expected this time of year). Our anticipated expenditures over the next quarter include reprinting our pamphlets, publishing and mailing the Summer Newsletter, and finalizing updates to our new website. If you would like the full financial breakdown of the 2019 Conference, or any quarterly financial statement, please email me and I'd be happy to provide you with a copy.





## OBS 2018 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](mailto: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

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### 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)	\$15	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular/Family	\$20	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational	\$50	\$140
<input type="checkbox"/> Life	\$300	

☐ Tax deductible gift to OBS \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Membership renewal ☐ New membership

☐ I am interested in participating in OBS activities

☐ Email Newsletter OR ☐ 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 2019)

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## 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](http://ohiobluebirdsociety.org)

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## Deadline for Submitting Articles:

Spring Issue - February 1  
Summer Issue - May 1  
Fall Issue - August 1  
Winter Issue - November 1

## Stories from Ohio Bluebirders



**Christine Shermak of North Ridgeville, Ohio** had an unusual bluebird nest this spring. Her bluebirds spurned the normal grasses or pine needle material and instead made their nest from the rough twigs of a nearby gold rush dawn redwood and then lined the cup with soft grasses! The five eggs have hatched and should soon be fledging! Thanks for sharing this interesting nesting Chris!



**92-year-old Ford Smith of Lorain County** enjoys his six young bluebird chicks which are 10 days old in this photo. He keeps dry mealworms in the bluebird feeder and makes sure the parents have several live mealworms to feed these hungry, growing young bluebirds.