



Bluebird Monitor

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

Spring 2021



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY 2021 Virtual Annual Conference March 6, 2021

Due to Covid 19 this year, we are trying something different for our OBS Annual Conference. There will not be an in-person conference at Ashland. Our theme is "Back to the Basics" and our wonderful logo was created by Anna Rose.

We are going to have 4 main power point talks that will be on the website by March 6 and will be keeping with the theme. They are listed below:

SPEAKER	TOPIC	LENGTH
Bet Zimmerman Smith	Bluebirding 101	45 minutes
	NABS introduction	15 minutes
Dick Tuttle	Wildlife Management for Tree Swallows	45 minutes
Marne Titchenell	Woodland Cavity Nesting Birds	45 minutes
	Woodpecker Use of Nestboxes	15 minutes
Paula Ziebarth	Don't Pull That House Sparrow Nest!	30 minutes

We also have OYBC young birders doing talks that will be in the Youth section of the OBS website:

Hannah Thomas	Deer Creek State Park Monitoring
Zak Beaver	Establishing the Minerva Park Blue Bird Trail
Elizabeth Kanzeg	Opal Ashcraft: Birder, Artist and Friend
EJ Steele	A Home for the Swifts

The Ohio Bluebird
Society 2021



Presentations will be available on the OBS website by March 6, 2021. You can view as your time permits and as often as you want. We will continue to add more educational videos and articles throughout the year.



2021 Virtual Conference Program



Bet Zimmerman Smith

Bluebirding 101, 45 minutes

Presentation will cover what a bluebird looks like, why they need your help, top tips on attracting bluebirds and keeping them safe, and who else might use your nestbox.

NABS Introduction, 15 minutes

North American Bluebird Society (NABS): Who NABS is, History, Boards and Committees, Financials, Grants, the Journal, Website, Facebook, Awards, Conferences and Membership Benefits

Bet's Bio

Bet Zimmerman Smith is a Certified Environmental Professional, with a B.S. from UCONN and an M.S. from Yale in Environmental Management. Since 1978, she has worked and volunteered in the field of environmental protection for government and non-profit research and conservation organizations, including the Peace Corps, the CT Dept. of Environmental Protection, and Battelle.

She saw her first Eastern Bluebird in 1998, after installing a nestbox she received as a gift. She and her husband then adopted several "abandoned" bluebird trails, which eventually expanded to a network of 50 to 100 nestboxes in northeastern CT.

Bet maintains an educational website about bluebird and small cavity nester conservation at www.Sialis.org. She serves on the NABS Board and is a Life Member of NABS and several State bluebird organizations. In 2008, she received the North American Bluebird Society John & Nora Lane award for outstanding contributions to bluebird conservation.



Dick Tuttle

Wildlife Management for Tree Swallows, 45 minutes

Wildlife Management for Tree Swallows will include box placement from straight lines to nestbox grids that result in maximum use by swallows. Other topics will include furry flat-tailed bluebirders of centuries ago, feather tossing, paired

boxes, and other topics practiced for greater production of our avian neighbors.

Dick's Bio

Dick Tuttle is a retired middle school life science teacher that religiously monitors and maintains nearly 400 bluebird nestboxes on eight bluebird trails and Tree Swallow nestbox grids on public lands in Delaware County, including projects at Delaware and Alum Creek State Parks, the Olentangy Environmental Control Center near Mt. Air, Smith Park in Delaware, and the Delaware Wildlife Area. Since 1968, he has offered hundreds of conservation programs, and since 1967, his nestboxes have raised more than 57,000 native birds representing ten species. He has worked with teams of other conservationists to install Osprey nest platforms since 1997, and roadside nestboxes for American Kestrels since 1993.

Dick successfully raised his first bluebirds in 1968 and his first Tree Swallows in 1977. Since then, his boxes have fledged 11,909 bluebirds and 30,461 Tree Swallows!

Dick authored the Division of Wildlife's "Hit the Trail for Bluebirds" in 1975. Also, type "Dick Tuttle Columbus Audubon" into your computer's browser in order to read many of Dick's articles, thanks to Bill Heck, Columbus Audubon's web master.



Marne Titchenell

Woodland Cavity Nesting Birds, 45 minutes

There are several species of woodland birds that will use nest boxes. This presentation will discuss several cavity nesters in Ohio's woodlands and how you can provide them with the best nest box possible. We will

discuss flycatchers, sapsuckers, chickadees, and more!

Woodpecker Use of Nestboxes, 15 minutes

Woodpeckers are known for excavating their own cavities for nesting and roosting, however there has been some reported use of nest boxes, especially during the winter. We will explore this topic further in this short video, which includes several video clips of woodpeckers exploring nest boxes.

Marne's Bio:

Marne is an Extension Wildlife Program Specialist, with the Ohio State University. She works within the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences in the School of Environment and Natural Resources. She provides a variety of educational programs, workshops, conferences, and publications centered on wildlife ecology and biology, habitat management for wildlife, and managing nuisance wildlife species.



Paula Ziebarth

Don't Pull That House Sparrow Nest!, 30 minutes

Paula Ziebarth (Madame Wingnut) will discuss the challenges and dangers surrounding the non-native House Sparrow. The efficacy of both passive and active management strategies will be reviewed.

Paula's Bio:

Like the Eastern Bluebird, Paula is native to Ohio. She grew up on the west side of Cleveland and settled in central Ohio after graduating from Ohio State University with a degree in Civil Engineering. She began monitoring Bluebird Trails in 2002. Paula is a Delaware County and Ottawa County Area Contact for the Ohio Bluebird Society (OBS). She also serves as Coordinator of the Delaware County Chapter of Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch and is a board member for Lake Erie Islands Conservancy. Last year Paula monitored over 400 nest sites in Delaware and Ottawa Counties. Birds she has worked with include Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Tufted Titmice, Carolina Chickadees, Carolina Wrens, House Wrens and Purple Martins. She is also the author of the OBS newsletter "Ask Madame Wingnut" feature articles.



Elizabeth Kanzeg

Opal Ashcroft: Birder, Artist and Friend

Elizabeth combined her love of Ohio, birding, history, and stories to create her final birding conference presentation as a high school student. She has served on the youth advisory for OYBC, appeared

in Jason Ward's web series Birds of North America, emceed and presented at conferences, been a boardwalk guide for The Biggest Week, and interviewed many accomplished birders as part of her time as a young birder. She wishes to thank Darlene Sillick, Laura Guerard, and Kim and Kenn Kaufman for their selfless support of young birders. What a gift!



Eliza Jane (EJ) Thomas

A Home for the Swifts

Eliza Jane (EJ) Thomas is a twelve year old 6th grader in Oberlin, Ohio. From 2019-2020, she helped her Girl Scout troop design and build a chimney swift tower. The pandemic halted the project for 6 months, but it was installed in a restored prairie in Oberlin in September

2020. The Girl Scouts earned the Bronze Award, the highest honor a Junior Girl Scout can receive. EJ is also a member of OYBC Northwest Chapter, which she joined at age 9. She also helped install and monitor bluebird nest boxes in Oberlin.

YOUTH PRESENTERS



Zak Beaver

Establishing the Minerva Park Blue Bird Trail

Zak is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys fishing, birding, kayaking, horseback riding, gardening and the shooting sports. He is involved in 4H at the state and county level where his awards include: State Champion- skeet and dog

rally, County Champion and Best in Show- Dog Obedience, gardening and agriculture. Zak is serving his second term on the ODNR Director's Conservation Teen Advisory Council (ConTAC). He is a member of the Delaware County Junior Fair Board and an officer in the Columbus Police Public Safety Cadet program. Zak's interest in birding started four years ago after reading Kenn Kaufman's Kingbird Highway. He has been a member of OYBC ever since.



Hannah Thomas

Deer Creek Monitoring

Hannah Thomas is a Senior at Westfall High School and is currently 17 years old. This is her 3rd year managing the Deer Creek State Park Bluebird Box Trail. She is a member of the Ohio Young Birders Central Chapter, Kountry Kids 4-H Club, Pickaway County Junior Fair Board, and the Westfall

High School chapter of The National Honors Society. As a 4-H member she has shown exhibition ducks at the Pickaway County Fair for nine years. She won first place in Senior Duck Showmanship her Junior year. Hannah also enjoys photography and volunteering at The Ohio State Fair Natural Resources Park. She has recently been accepted to The Ohio State University where she plans to earn a Bachelor's of Science in Zoology.

Cavity Nesting Great Crested Flycatchers

By Gina Swindell, OBS Member

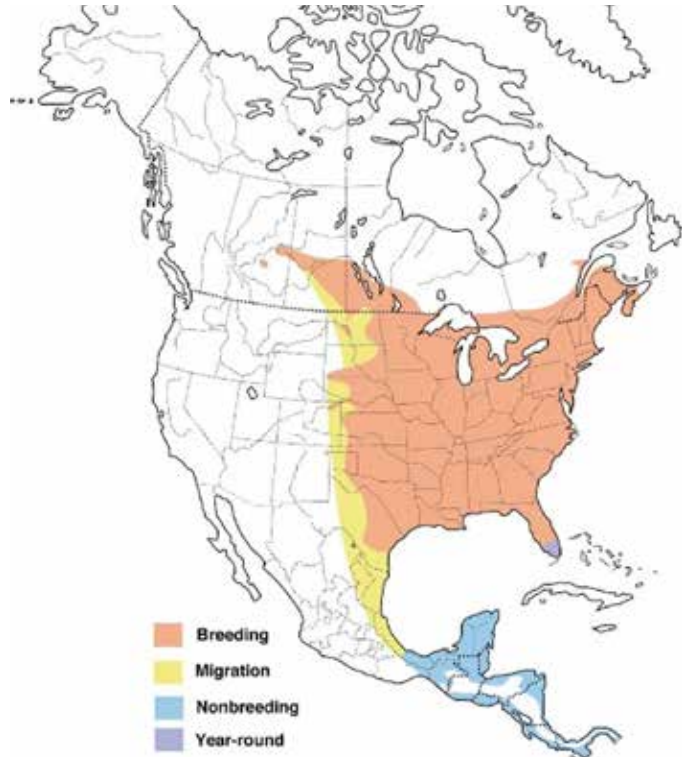


My husband and I are fortunate to live just an hour away from Magee Marsh, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR) and Howard Marsh—all great places to bird along Lake Erie in northern Ohio. While attending the Biggest Week in American Birding in 2018 we were driving the wildlife drive at ONWR when we saw a good amount of bird activity a few hundred

feet ahead. We pulled over and noticed a bird in a tree less than a story up that we did not immediately recognize. Once we peered through our binoculars, we speculated that it might be a flycatcher but it had a yellow belly and was bigger than most flycatchers. I thought it might be a Great Crested but since I had never seen one in person, I had to open the field guide for verification. Yep, it was a GCFL!!

Since Great-crested flycatchers are listed as LC (least concern) on the IUCN Red List and they have a wide range which includes Ohio, one would think that these birds should be fairly easy to see, but this is not the case. They are the most widely distributed flycatcher in their genus (*Myiarchus crinitus*) and are common in all parts of Ohio in the summer months because they do breed here— but they are more often heard than seen, as they spend most of their time high up in the canopy perching or hunting.

Great Crested flycatchers, which is the only flycatcher that nests in holes, prefer natural holes in dead trees but also find abandoned large woodpecker holes quite suitable. Life for most cavity nesters is getting harder and harder due to our manicured properties and forest removal. Developers clear land at astonishing rates and citizens prefer that dead trees and snags are not a part of their landscape. Fortunately, in



this case, the Great Crested flycatcher takes well to nesting boxes and will even nest in things such as a hollow post, pipe, buckets, etc. Forest fragmentation that often occurs from development actually suits this species.

These flycatchers prefer the edge of forest habitat and will nest as low as 2 feet from the ground up to 50 feet or higher, it really just depends on cavity availability. A very interesting material that is often found intertwined into their nests is snakeskin. In fact, in Florida, where snakeskin is readily available, almost all nests contain snakeskin. This choice might be to scare off intruders or maybe it's simply a decorating choice, no one really knows for certain. Other common materials include cellophane or plastic wrappers and onion skin—thin, delicate materials.

While I doubt that we'll be lucky enough to find a GCFL nest on one of our drives or hikes, we are thankful to have seen our one and only Great Crested flycatcher on that drive in May of 2018. We were at the right place at the right time. If you haven't had the good fortune to see one, I hope that you will because they are a striking bird. Happy Birding!

The map is from All About Birds.

www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great_Crested_Flycatcher/lifehistory

www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/great-crested-flycatcher

www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/pdfs/species/GreatCrestedFlycatcher.pdf

www.birds-of-north-america.net/Great_Crested_Flycatcher.html

In Appreciation of Terry Doughty's Bluebird Artwork

By Molly Wilsbacher, OBS Treasurer



Thank you to everyone who provided positive feedback on my most recent article on vintage bluebird artwork. If you are like me, you not only enjoy spending time outside taking care of our feathered friends by providing them with safe living quarters, but you enjoy displaying prints and figurines of bluebirds as well. We decided to start a

new column each newsletter that highlights artwork featuring our favorite subject – bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds.

In this newsletter we are featuring artist Terry Doughty. Terry is a nationally known wildlife artist who has won over thirty major awards since 1988, including the Ducks Unlimited National Artist Award. Terry is a self-taught artist whose passion is being out in the wilderness. He is well-known for his detailed, lifelike renderings over the past 50 years and his paintings are included in many corporate, public, and private art collections (including my own).

According to an article that appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel in 2015,¹ Terry's parents "encouraged his talents by buying him a set of colored pencils. His father helped instill a love of the outdoors by bringing Doughty along on hunting and fishing trips from the time he could walk."



OLD HOMESTEAD BLUEBIRDS

What I personally enjoy most about Terry's artwork is how natural and realistic the scenes are depicted. In the above digital image of his *Old Homestead Bluebirds*, the colors are so vibrant and the detail so meticulous from the thistle and daisies, to the rustic barn, and of course, the bluebirds. And anyone who has ever monitored a bluebird trail will appreciate the bird droppings down the front of the bluebird box.

I asked Terry's wife, Christine, what draws his inspiration and she told me that "Terry takes a lot of pictures of old barns,

fences, landscapes, woods, etc. Eventually the pictures are used in one of his paintings." *Old Homestead Bluebirds* rings so true that it could easily be from my father's old family farm near Marietta, Ohio.

Christine Doughty also informed me that they currently have two Bluebird houses in their yard. "Every year we usually get one or two families. We love watching them as they have a certain favorite spot on the back fence to sit every morning and early evening." Surely, their backyard fence was the inspiration for *The Blue Crew*, which is depicted below. As with many of our own bluebird broods, the fattest chick is always up front with its mouth wide open anticipating its next meal. And the look on the third baby bluebird's face is just priceless!



THE BLUE CREW

In addition to the quality of his art and major awards, Terry Doughty's professional diversity and community contributions are equally as impressive. Over the years his donations of original paintings and limited edition prints have helped support conservation groups, including the Ohio Bluebird Society. The digital prints of the artwork depicted in this article were donated for use by Terry Doughty Wildlife Art and are reprinted with permission.

I encourage every reader to peruse Terry's website (<http://terrydoughty.com/artwork/>) and the 55 different songbirds and birds of prey artwork that are depicted there (as well as at least 100 other wildlife artwork). I believe most, if not all of them, are available for purchase in Giclée (pronounced "zhee-clay") prints. If you do decide to purchase something, please thank him for letting the Ohio Bluebird Society use two of his prints in our Spring newsletter.

¹ See Artist Continues to Get Stamps of Approval by Paul A. Smith, <http://archive.jsonline.com/sports/outdoors/artist-continues-to-get-stamps-of-approval-b99555442z1-321700391.html>.

Avian Conservation in 2020 at the Olentangy Environmental Control Center (OECC)

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



The OECC is one of Delaware County's wastewater treatment facilities and has a capacity of more than five million gallons daily. It serves the Olentangy basin area and is located along State Rt. 315 near the Franklin County/Delaware County line just north of Mt. Air. Highbanks Metro Park is its neighbor across the Olentangy River to the east.

In 1983, I and other members of the Columbus Audubon Society (CAS), installed 15 bluebird nestboxes around two ponds and flowing canals throughout the property. Not only bluebirds, but Tree Swallows was a second objective of the conservation project. CAS member Anita King monitored the boxes during its first year to record the fledging of 12 bluebirds and 14 Tree Swallows, and I continued the counts for 37 seasons since.

I added more nestboxes periodically until 29 made up the project by year 2000. By the start of 2001, I added nine boxes in a grid formation of three rows of three boxes each to accommodate Tree Swallows. Also, eleven structures are called nest tubes since they are made from forty-inch lengths of four-inch PVC drainpipe that includes the nest chamber and baffle in one continuous piece. The tubes were added to the riparian habitat along the river and one tube was installed in a wooded wetland in the middle of a grassy field.

Two Wood Duck boxes complete the project's total of 52 boxes that I try to check every nine days during the nesting seasons.

My effort to help OECC's nesting birds in 2020 started on March 15 as I de-winterized the boxes by removing weatherstripping from the front vent slots of the standard bluebird boxes, and removed tape from nest tube vents. Fortunately, I found no winter-killed birds in the boxes. Once the vents are opened, nesting birds can enjoy proper ventilation, and second vents are opened in mid to late May before summer temperature extremes arrive.

Nest tube T-7 presented a special surprise. As I lowered T-7, a flying squirrel's face appeared in the entrance less than a foot from my face. Yes, we both had a reflexive reaction: I jumped back and the little fuzzy-face continued out the entrance to circle the tube and glide to a tree close by. I had forgotten to bring my camera that day and I vowed to try for a photo on my next visit. Unfortunately, the squirrel was not in the nest chamber on my return visit, only a flat carpet of moss. Perhaps, the nest tube was just a stop over point for the furry glider.

T-11 had another surprise; it was half full of acorns. By April 9, the acorns were gone. Had T-11 been a winter storage depot? Well,

I had made up my mind to try to outsmart my furry friends by the 2021 season, but I was too busy to tackle that project until late fall.

There were several other reasons to focus on problems with my riparian nest tubes. First, no chickadees were produced. Only one nest started with seven chickadee eggs and it was ultimately usurped by House Wrens.

Chickadee production has taken a dive since 2015 when the riparian zone raised 39. The yearly production fell from 39 to 25, then 11, 6, 5, to zero in 2020. You can say that there are multiple reasons, but all birds must be well fed in order to court, build and guard their nests, and feed and fledge their young. Once again, I think the largest factor is how climate change is decimating insect populations.

My third concern about my riparian boxes was that I had mounted two nest tubes too close to the river in 2001. Frequently, when the Delaware Dam releases stored water after a flood management episode, high water currents become a reality for T-2 and T-5. Usually the posts are slightly pushed to a small angle and I only have to push them back once the river returns to normal flow. Nesting birds have been good at practicing perseverance and not abandoning nests during rocky times.

On May 24, T-5 was leaning considerably after being pushed by a high water flow. After I pushed and pulled it back to stand straight on June 2, I counted five wren eggs, and on June 10, five nestlings were two days old. Analysis of my recorded data revealed that eggs had been in the tube when it was pushed by flood waters. The young wrens fledged around June 24 due to the dedication of their parents.

T-2 was a different story. High water had pushed it over enough until the current ripped its roof off and away. There was no evidence that a nest had been in the nest chamber during the flooding event. Since I could not find the roof, I removed the tube and its pole from its anchor post and I took the nest tube to my workshop so I could create a new roof.

During the second week of November, I returned to OECC twice to make changes. I used my two-wheeled dolly to transport



The dolly transports a post puller, post pounder, tree lopper, and other tools once they are tied on.



On May 24, 2020, T-5 had been pushed by high water from the Olentangy River. The nest tube held wren eggs at the time, and they developed to fledge five.

my post puller, post pounder and other tools so I could easily pull T-2 and T-5 and reinstall them on higher ground to avoid powerful highwater currents. I also shifted one standard bluebird box away from encroaching hardwood trees. I then shifted three tubes that had evidence of flying squirrels into open spaces among the maturing forest. Even though I could imagine a flying squirrel could still glide to the tubes from tall trees nearby, the squirrels would feel insecure with not being able to glide from the tube's roof to a tree trunk close by. I was thinking that the squirrels would not be comfortable running on the ground to a safe tree. I have to admit that my assumption might be wrong.

If you are interested, the Internet has a lot of information about flying squirrel conservation, including nestboxes for sale, plans for boxes, and many other topics. They are fun animals and it might be exciting to help them out.

Bird production at OECC is disappointing when compared to values for 2019. Bluebird production decreased 54.8%, Tree Swallow production fell 32.3%, and House Wrens dropped 14%.

A closer inspection of my data reveals that bluebirds attempted 13 nests with eggs and seven nests (53.8%) successfully produced fledglings. Wrens had caused two failures and causes

for four failures were undetermined. Bluebirds laid 47 eggs, 29 (61.7%) hatched, and 19 (40.4%) fledged. Once hatched, 65.5% became fledglings.

Tree Swallows started 22 nests and 17 (77.3%) became successful. Swallows laid 105 eggs, 72 (68.6%) hatched, and 65 (61.9%) fledged. Once hatched, 90.3% fledged. Among the five nest failures, House Sparrows wiped out one family by killing six swallow nestlings. Two nests failed due to conspecific competition, and two failures were undetermined.

At least ten pairs of House Wrens started 18 nests and 13 (72.2%) became successful. Flying squirrels caused one wren nest failure while four nest failures remain mysteries. Wrens laid 101 eggs, 70 (69.3%) hatched, and 63 (62.4%) fledged, for a fledge rate of 90% for hatchlings.

In a successful attempt to stop the carnage brought on by alien House Sparrows, VanErt sparrow traps were used to catch nine sparrows that were humanely euthanized and stored in plastic bags in a freezer with other sparrows awaiting delivery to museums at Ohio State and Ohio Wesleyan Universities, and some have already been delivered to recuperating accipiters and owls at the Ohio Wildlife Center.

A Wood Duck fledged eight ducklings in the most northern box, then egg dumping took place as two females laid 14 more eggs. The wetland dried up and the later eggs were abandoned after partial development took place. I removed the decomposing eggs on August 23.

The southern wood duck box became the home to Carolina Wrens that laid their first of five eggs on July 17, and all hatched and everybody fledged around August 18. Carolina Wrens nesting in wood duck boxes is becoming quite common.

Another positive note; OECC has a native plant prairie that was planted two springs ago, and it was flowering quite well this past season. It adds flowers and butterflies to the grounds between OECC's eastern pond and the driveway that borders the wooded riparian habitat. Four and five boxes make up two rows of evenly spaced prairie nest sites to satisfy Tree Swallows, and bluebirds always claim the highest prairie box that stands on a knoll.

Two deer were grazing in the prairie on July 16, and I saw my first grasshopper there on July 25. On August 3, a flock of eight Goldfinches flew off to produce a powerful, spiritual boost for my day.

And yes, I always enjoy the Canada Goose families that inhabit the center's ponds and canals along with its grassy habitats. Thanks go to the maintenance team that mows around some of my boxes and I keep them informed with mailed score sheets after each of my visits.

Conserve on!



On July 26, 2020, nestboxes stood among blooming prairie plants at the OECC.



Ask Madame WingNut

House Wrens Raise a Baby Bluebird

An article by an OBS Member,
with comments from Paula Ziebarth



Last year, one of our OBS members wrote the following article. Aaron's article is reprinted here with a few edits and some subsequent comments by yours truly. During the "Summer of COVID", our Eastern Bluebirds were the salvation for many of us devoid of much human interaction. Aaron is no exception, and his keen observations and interest in the

natural world in his own backyard are evident here:

This past spring, I was fortunate enough to attract a pair of Bluebirds to nest in my yard. We live on the outskirts of Medina City, not exactly Bluebird country, but I was determined to see if I could get them to use my nest box. The pair of Bluebirds had plenty of competition from House Sparrows and House Wrens so I knew it wasn't going to be easy. I set up a Gilbertson style bird house in the corner of my property and within a few days, the Bluebirds were flying in and out of it. It took about a week for them to build their nest and then they laid their first egg. I made a point to keep an eye on the nest to monitor their progress every day. They laid two more eggs and I was fairly sure everything was going well. The day after egg number three was laid, a House Sparrow got into the house and destroyed one of the eggs. The other two were left alone. I decided to take drastic measures by putting fishing line near the house entrance hole. This worked well, but I noticed that the Bluebirds were also having a hard time getting into the house. So, I removed the fishing line and then set up a couple of decoy bird houses nearby to attract the House Sparrows. Afterwards, the sparrows left the Bluebird house alone and focused on the decoy houses. The Bluebirds would go on to lay one more egg for a clutch of three. To make a long story short, all three eggs hatched and fledged. (As a side note, the sparrows never laid any eggs.)

After the chicks fledged, I thought for sure the parents would start a second brood right away. Well, that didn't exactly happen. The male Bluebird was taking care of the fledglings while the female began to start another clutch. She laid one egg and then disappeared for about two days. I went to check on the nest and as I approached, I noticed on the ground, about ten feet away from the nest box, a Bluebird egg with a puncture hole in the shell. A House Wren had removed the egg so it could take over the nest. I checked to see if the female Bluebird had laid any more eggs but the one egg on the ground is all that I found. I decided to set up a decoy nest for the House Wrens, closer to a thicket where they liked to perch. Turns out they preferred this location instead. They began building their nest right away and left the Bluebird nest alone.

The Female Bluebird laid only one more egg. Afterwards, she disappeared, leaving the male to take care of the growing fledglings in the nearby trees. Days passed, and the female never returned. Meanwhile, the House Wrens had laid a clutch of 6 eggs in the nest box I had set up for them. And then I had an idea.

I knew time was getting short and if the mother Bluebird wouldn't return, the egg didn't have a chance. So, I decided to take the Bluebird egg and put it in with the House Wren eggs. I thought there may be a chance that the mother Wren would incubate the egg along with her own. At this point, I had a strong feeling the female Bluebird wasn't coming back so I felt that there wasn't anything to lose by trying. Besides, the Wrens owed me for destroying the other egg. At least that's how I justified it to myself. I took the Bluebird egg and put it in the Wren nest. For the next week and a half, I would check on the nest daily to see if the Bluebird egg was still there.

Then, a wonderful thing happened. I opened up the Wren house to check on the nest and to my surprise, the eggs had all hatched, including the Bluebird egg! I was very happy to say the least. Here in the nest I could see a number of darkly colored chicks along with one big bright pink chick. I made a point to take pictures so I had some evidence to show what had just taken place. The mother Wren was nearby so I closed up the nest box so she could feed the babies undisturbed. Over the next couple of weeks, I would check on the nest daily. One of the Wren chicks was small compared to the siblings and died after a few days. The Bluebird chick was growing larger every day and a size difference was becoming more and more noticeable. I knew that eventually I would have to move the chicks out of their nest and into a larger one that would accommodate the Bluebird's size and also have an entrance hole large enough for him to get out.

Then fledging day came. The Wrens had left the nest box, leaving only the baby Bluebird inside. Sadly, one more Wren had died a day or two earlier. The Female Wren was no longer coming back to the nest box despite the chirping of the baby Bluebird still inside. I didn't know if the mother Wren would continue to feed the Bluebird once it fledged. I also didn't want the Wrens to leave the area before the Bluebird had a chance to leave the box. So I opened up the nest box and let the baby Bluebird out. He wasn't quite ready to fledge but I didn't feel that I had another option. I put him up into a tree near the Wrens hoping that the mother would hear him chirping. She never came over to feed him. That's when I knew I had a problem. He couldn't quite fly yet but he was getting stronger. I tried to contact a few people who I knew would be able to help. Luckily, I was able to get in touch with my OBS County Area Contact.

He was gracious enough to drive over to my house and take the baby bird with him to a bird rehabilitation center. There, the baby would be cared for until it was ready to be released.

I learned a great deal this year about being a Bluebird landlord. It's a lot of work but the reward is worth it. I would like to point out that what I did by taking the Bluebird egg and placing it inside the Wren's nest was probably not something I should have done, nor would I encourage others to do it. If you come across a situation like mine, contact your local Ohio Bluebird Association representative and ask for advice. They will know if there are other bluebird nests in the area that can foster eggs or chicks of the same age.



Above left: This is a picture of the Bluebird chick in the Wren nest with its' foster siblings. Notice the difference in color.



Above right: A few days old, the Bluebird dwarfs the other chicks.



Above left: The chicks had to be moved to another nest box due to space constraints. In the picture most of the Wrens have fledged, leaving only the Bluebird and one other Wren chick behind



Above right: This is my final picture of the Bluebird before he was relocated to a bird center before being released.

Aaron took some really great initiatives and some not really great ones in his Bluebird adventure. The following comments address both. Some will agree with my analysis and some won't, but this is "Ask Madame WingNut," so here goes...

Aaron mentions he sited his nestbox in the back corner of his yard. Although not all suburban lots are the same, many (like mine) have landscaping at the yard boundaries and siting a box in those areas will place them right in House Wren habitat.

House Wrens much prefer nest sites near a wood edge or brushy areas. To get a nestbox out of House Wren habitat, you need to move it at least 40 yards (120 feet) from such areas. This is often impossible in a small suburban yard like mine for example, but you can really lessen House Wren competition by placing nestbox in the most open area of your yard, as far from your people house and wood edge/brushy areas as you can get. I live on a small ¼ acre suburban lot in the City of Powell and my backyard box, which is sited in the most open area I can achieve, has successfully fledged Bluebirds for the past 16 years. I have only had House Wrens place sticks in this box four times during this time frame late in the season. As soon as I see sticks in a nestbox, they are removed and the box is blocked for at least 2 weeks.

The use of additional nestboxes to give House Sparrows an optional box to "try" in (never let non-native House Sparrows fledge from boxes) or for House Wrens to nest in, in attempt to pull them away from your Bluebird box is good strategy. Both of these species will pierce and toss out eggs of other native cavity nesting birds, and they often do not limit their house cleaning efforts to only one box. Aaron calls these "decoy boxes" in his article. I personally prefer to not have either species on my trails or in my yard if I can help it. For House Sparrows, I manage these non-native competitors with inbox trapping. Deterrents on the nestbox of native cavity nester like Sparrow Spookers and/or monofilament line can be helpful, but if a House Sparrow enters a box, I will trap it as soon as possible. A "decoy" box" or trap box with a 1 1/4 inch hole in an area they love will often lure them there to be dealt with.

For House Wrens, allowing them to successfully nest will almost ensure their return to you next year and they may compete with your other nesting birds. Once a native bird has completed its nest and laid eggs, it is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It is illegal to remove or destroy any active nest from a native bird species, defined as a nest with eggs or brooding adults in it.

Fostering an egg or young of a different species into a nest is never advisable. It is likely that the Bluebird chick in Aaron's story acted much like a Brown Headed Cowbird chick, with the larger Bluebird able to gape and reach beyond the smaller House Wrens for food, starving a couple of the House Wren chicks. I don't know what the young Bluebird's survival chances would have been if the House Wrens fed it after it left the nest instead of abandoning it. It is important for young birds to be raised by parents of their own species to learn how to hunt and be all they can be.

I am glad Aaron was able to get help for his young fledgling. His story is certainly a fascinating one.

If you have any questions, contact Paula Ziebarth at: 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.

Eagle Scout Project

By Andrew Flemming,
Hilliard Boy Scout Troop 814



While seeking an Eagle Scout project, I became aware of the need for Chimney Swift towers from a friend of my mother, Darlene Sillick. She shared information and tips about building towers. Chimney Swifts are small to medium size birds with long, curved wings and black to dark brown plumage. They are nicknamed “flying cigars”. They have extremely short legs, and do not perch, but cling vertically to rough surfaces, such as chimneys, on which they roost or raise their young. They are beneficial because they eat thousands of flying insects daily. They are in Ohio from April to October, and winter in the Amazon basin of Peru. Because there are fewer hollow trees available, and because people cap their chimneys, swifts can be assisted by man-made chimney swift towers. After looking at a few towers that have been built in the Columbus area, and reviewing plans for towers, I thought building a chimney swift tower would be a fun and helpful Eagle Scout project.

The park manager at Prairie Oaks Metro Park, Tom Cochran, was enthusiastic about adding a chimney swift tower to the park. The park is nearby, just west of Hilliard. Tom asked his colleague, Mike to show me a few potential locations they thought would be successful. I chose a site in a field east of the Darby Bend Lakes, and close to Amity Road.

The 15-foot tower is made of wood and mounted 3 feet off the ground on angle irons, which are sunk into a cement base. The

space below the tower provides ventilation and an opening to clean out debris as needed in the future. We shopped at local hardware stores and requested and received discounted prices. My grandmother also donated to help with expenses.

The first scout workday, July 31, was to dig the hole for a 45” square base, and pour the cement around the angle irons. We used 1,400 pounds of cement mix and brought water up from the lake in buckets. We had a generator for the rented cement mixer. The scouts assisted in smoothing the cement, learning about working with a trowel. We had 7 scouts volunteer on this workday.

The second scout workday, August 14, was to raise the tower, connecting it to the angle irons. My father and I built three 4-foot sections of the tower at home, prior to the workday. We rented scaffolding for this step of the project. The boys enjoyed climbing up to add each section. To finish work, we added insulating sheets covered by exterior plywood and 1x4 strips of wood at the outer edges. We covered the top piece with flashing to keep predators from coming inside. We had 7 scouts helping on this workday.

All who worked on the project are hopeful that the swifts will find the tower next spring when they return to Ohio and adopt it as an active roosting site.



Hey, That's My Box!

By Shelley Tender, Interpretive Services Manager, Medina County Park District



Medina County Park District is sporting some unique-looking nest boxes, and they seem to be confusing some visitors. Back in the fall, one of our fellow OBS members visited Letha House Park in Spencer, Ohio and saw what appeared to be a mud-covered entrance hole on the front of a bluebird nest box. Assuming it was

created by wasps, the fascinating discovery was captured in a photo and shared in the last issue of the OBS newsletter.

As I read through page five, the photo stood out. That looks familiar, I thought. Then I read the caption. Hey, that's one of my boxes!



As the manager of the education department and a naturalist for Medina County Park District, one of my many duties is overseeing the bluebird trails throughout our parks, which, at the present moment, includes 126 boxes in 15 park areas. Over the years, I have experimented with many different styles of boxes -- Peterson, Gilbertson, Slot, Slant, and various forms of the standard NABS box. But one of the latest experiments is this version created by our very own natural resources staff.

These guys really are resourceful -- salvaging materials wherever they can to create nest boxes for songbirds, wood ducks, owls, and squirrels. When performing hazard tree removal work, they keep their eyes open for just the right-sized knot holes to salvage. These knot holes make perfect coverings for the entrance holes on bluebird boxes and give the boxes a much more natural appearance. While the addition of the knot hole is mostly for aesthetic purposes, we are curious if birds will find this style of box more attractive. So, I have been pairing the knot-hole boxes with standard NABS boxes whenever I can and will be watching the data collected by our volunteer monitors to see if we can establish a marked preference.

There are at least two dozen of the knot-hole boxes around our park district, so be sure to look for them if you are visiting us here in Medina County. And if you happen to know Travis, Jay, or Jim -- give them a pat on the back for their creativity! Perhaps we should trademark these boxes?

Treasurer's Report by Molly Wilsbacher

1. I wanted to thank all of our members for continuing to pay your membership dues and making donations in 2020 and 2021.

Since we are not holding our annual bluebird conference this year, your dues and donations are our only source of income in 2021. A big "thank you" also goes out to Cardinal Health Foundation and Ohio Department of Natural Resources, who together granted the Ohio Bluebird Society with \$4,228 in 2020.

2. The Ohio Bluebird Society's annual financial report for the year period ending September 30, 2020 reflects the following (if you would like a copy of the full report, please send me an email):

- OBS received \$6,038 in membership dues.
- OBS received \$6,537 in grants, sponsorships, and donations.
- OBS received \$5,647 in conference registrations.
- OBS received \$3,225 from silent auction and box/trap sales.
- OBS received \$825 for Legacy Fund Bluebird Boxes.
- Expenses for the annual conference totaled \$5,761.
- Publishing and mailing the newsletter cost \$2,184.
- Maintaining the OBS webpage cost \$2,512.
- OBS awarded \$350 in grants and sponsorships.
- Other miscellaneous costs totaled \$1,172, which includes liability insurance, PayPal fees, and membership expenses.

3. Ohio Bluebird Society's bank accounts remained steady through the last quarter.

Checking and Savings bank accounts currently reflect an ending balance of \$35,503 as of December 31, 2020. Our anticipated expenditures in the current quarter include designing, publishing, and mailing this Newsletter, as well as expected expenses associated with maintaining insurance, website maintenance, and hopefully, awarding a few grants and sponsorships.

4. Reminders:

(1) Legacy Boxes are a great way to honor or remember bluebirders and bird enthusiasts, while providing nest boxes for cavity nesting birds you love and enjoy. For only a \$125 donation, Ohio Bluebird Society volunteers will build, erect, maintain, and monitor a bluebird box on prime habitat for bluebirds.

(2) When purchasing from Amazon, please do so through Amazon Smile (<https://smile.amazon.com>) and designate the Ohio Bluebird as your charitable choice.



Member News

Thank You to Our Donors!

Don Althoff

Dan Best

Jeffery & Barbara Davis

Debbie Smilek

Ron Swart

Deb Williams

Thomas & Pauline Watkins
In Memory Of: Richard Thoma

Welcome New Members!

Amy Barnes

Todd Brown

Jeffery & Barbara Davis

Bob & Kathy Kinklin

Tammy Jo Hughes

Robbie McMinn

Carla & Eugene Miller

Jeff Root

Stanley Rosiak

Karen Schmidt

Anthony Shmitt

Gegory Siegfried

Ray & Marian Wernet

President's Report – February 1, 2021

By Darlene Sillick



As I have looked forward to February finally arriving while working from home, I have been delighted and entertained by seeing seven Eastern Bluebirds (4 male and 3 female) visit my feeders. My spirits have been lifted by their daily visits since just before mid- December. I live in a condo unit in Powell and before the snows came I started to scatter some No-mess seed (sunflower chips, peanuts and millet) and also have placed it in the tall cylinder pictured in the photo below. The cylinder on the right in the photo also has dried mealworms and there is a suet feeder in the middle. I feel blessed with

their daily visits! It is interesting to note that the males are already chasing each other away and have even chased off some House Finches and House Sparrows so they can eat in peace. I assume they will be visiting the local nestboxes more than my feeders in another month or so. If you are also fortunate to have bluebird visits please take the time to write to us about it and send it to either OBSpresident@gmail.com or editor pennybrandau@gmail.com with pictures if possible. Share your smiles!

If you can get out on your trails of boxes in February, it would be interesting to take some notes about who has visited your boxes over the winter. Madame Wingnut, Paula Ziebarth, has done trapping for House Sparrows as early as February. It would be interesting to note different droppings in the boxes, the possible chipping away of the entry hole or inside of the box and try to guess if it was a Downy woodpecker roosting in there during the winter or perhaps a chickadee? Put on your detective hat and take pictures or visit the box before dusk to see who enters. Also check to see if you need to do any repairs on your boxes or baffles. Watch and listen for native and non-native birds sitting in the trees, watching you.

As we start another year with Covid-19 ruling our lives, we decided to be a bit different with our conference. It will kick off the weekend of March 6, 2021 and it will be virtual. The theme will be "Back to the Basics" and we will have 4 adult and 4 young birder presenters. The presenters are the top in their areas of expertise. Please take a look at the flyers in the newsletter and on the OBS website. Some of the speakers have also agreed to come back in 2022 when we hope to be back in Ashland and in person! One really good thing about this year's virtual conference however is that you can view the virtual Zoom videos when it is convenient for you and watch them over and



over since they will be posted on our website. There are already some educational videos on the website which were added last fall. The conference videos will be added also.

Do you have suggestions for short how-to videos? Please let us know- this will help us give you what you want to learn or try.

On March 6th we will award the Blue Feather Award and the Wildlife Conservation Award. We can't tell you until then but we as a board are very pleased with the recipients! Stay tuned!

We will also be voting on two new board members (see below), so if you are an OBS member please make sure to look at their photos and bios and vote before Feb 28th. Both nominees have been at the last several conferences helping and learning.

Former OBS President Mike Watson is still busy helping with many aspects of OBS including fledgling reports and he mentioned to me that he has not gotten as many reports as in former years. We are adding this reminder that you can still send in your reports from 2020. Fledgling Report - Ohio Bluebird Society.

This is a good time to look at and set up Cornell Nestwatch for reporting your nesting data also. Their website puts your data into a nice printed report. NestWatch | NestWatch - Where Birds Come to Life. If you want more information or assistance you can contact Paula Ziebarth, (Madame Wingnut), or OBS board member Carl Gleditsch. They are real experts with Nestwatch.

I want to thank all of our Ohio Bluebird Society members for joining our organization and giving us your support. It means so much to the board and advisors and area contacts to have members who support and who go above and beyond too. Membership chair Pat Dutton reports that we have 414 total members. That is fantastic! Thanks to all of you!

Due to the conference being totally virtual this year we want you to know that our members and donors will be appreciated more than ever. Be sure to consider joining a committee and get more involved with OBS. Our conservation efforts can be done by all ages. Hope to see or hear about you out in the field. That next bluebird you see will be saying thank you too!

MEET OUR BOARD CANDIDATES



Stephen Bischoff

As a teenager, my interest in nature started through photography. At that time, I lived in Texas and its rich diversity of Reptiles and Amphibians had my eyes glued to the ground. The occasional upward turn to photograph Black-Chinned Hummingbirds and Painted Buntings would light a spark that would eventually develop into a passion for birding. When I moved to Ohio in 2014 that spark of Interest led me to a Columbus Audubon meeting where I met Darlene Sillick. With her encouragement, I joined the Ohio Young Birders Club until I graduated from high school in 2018.

While a member of the Ohio Young Birders Club, I monitored three nest box trails: OCLC, Sawmill Wetlands, and Kiwanis Riverway Park in Dublin. While monitoring the trails, I took growth and development photographs of bluebirds and tree swallows. I presented this work at the 2014 OBS Conference in Wooster, Ohio.

My interest in nature led me to the Environmental Science program at Columbus State as an Honors Student. While at Columbus State, I worked the summer of 2018 with Elizabeth Ames and Chris Tonra at Ohio State University monitoring the nests of Prothonotary Warblers at Hoover Reservoir. While at Columbus State, I became a licensed real estate agent. I currently work as an office administrator at RE/MAX Revealty in Worthington.



Anna Rose

Anna Rose, an experienced birder and wildlife artist, is a second-year student at the Ohio State University. She is pursuing her passions with a major in Forestry and Wildlife, as well as minor in Studio Art. At OSU, Anna has recently been engaged in the Ornithology Club's 'Lights Out!' project, which involves the monitoring of window strikes during the migratory season. Anna was the emcee at the 2020 Ohio Bluebird Society Conference and was a speaker at the 2019 Conference when she gave a presentation about her bluebird trail. Anna is also an alumnus of the Ohio Young Birders Club.

**Please complete and mail the ballot below before Feb. 28 to:
OBS Election 2021, The Holden Arboretum
9500 Sperry Road, Kirkland, Ohio 44094**

OBS ANNUAL ELECTION FOR THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES – 2021

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: _____

Notes on Fledgling Report

By Mike Watson, OBS Area Contact

Although 2020 was a difficult and challenging year in a number of ways, the reports that have been submitted to OBS indicate some impressive numbers. As of February 1st, reports to OBS indicate 4,466 bluebirds fledged, as well as nearly 5,000 tree swallows and thousands of other native cavity nesting species. In total, 13,823 fledglings were reported to OBS for the 2020 nesting season.

How does this compare to previous years? Well, numbers are down a bit. For example, the 5-year average for the number of bluebirds fledged is more than 6,000. Although this is substantially higher than this years' total, it can likely be explained by reporting statistics. So far, we've received fewer reports than average (61 reports vs a 5-yr average of 68 reports per year). And these reports represent a substantially lower number of nest boxes: 2,978 for 2020 vs an average of more than 4,000.

The average number of nest boxes per report is also lower (52 in 2020 vs 76), suggesting that proportionally more of our reports came from small to medium-sized programs than in past years. There are several large nest box programs that have not yet reported their 2020 numbers. When those reports arrive, not only will we see increases in the 2020 totals, but we'll have a better understanding of how it compares to past years.

It should be noted that 2020 numbers are very likely impacted by Covid-19. Access to trails on public lands could have been restricted as agencies struggled with safety regulations. And in some cases, people may not have been able to monitor nest boxes to due to their own health or the health of family members.

As always, thank you for all you do to support our native cavity nesting species.

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.

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The Holden Arboretum
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Ohio Bluebird Society Membership Application

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<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		

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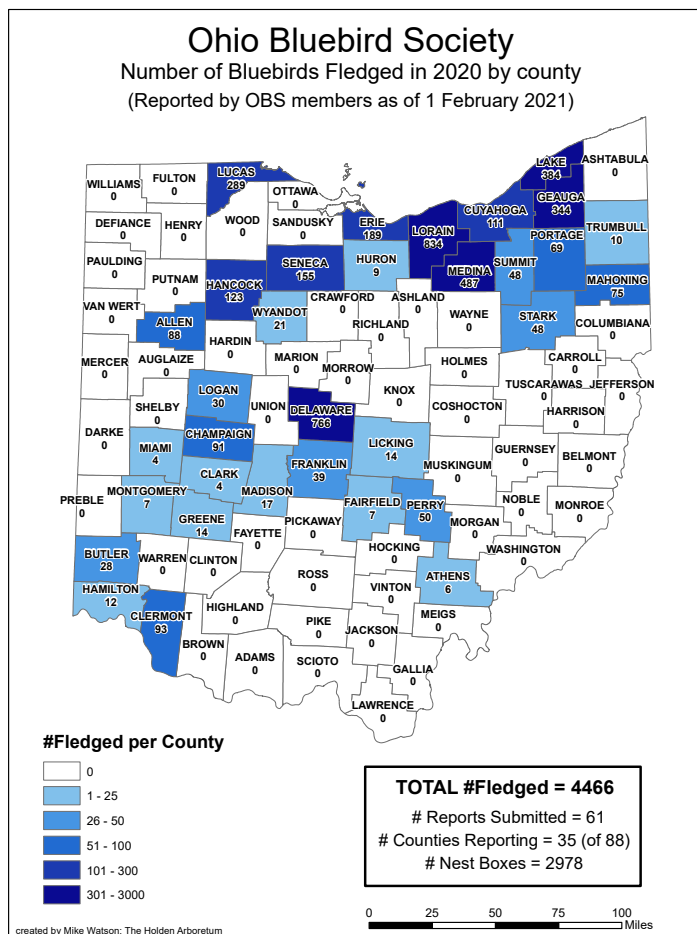
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Make checks payable to:
Ohio Bluebird Society

Mail to:

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

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



OBS FLEDGLING REPORT

Updated 02/01/21

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

Eastern Bluebird	4466
Tree Swallow	4911
House Wren	2151
Purple Martin	1732
Black-capped Chickadee	46
Carolina Chickadee	63
Carolina Wren	102
American Kestrel	64
Osprey	13
Barn Swallow	184
Prothonotary Warbler	33
Tufted Titmouse	31
Wood Duck	21
Great Crested Flycatcher	0
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	6
White-breasted Nuthatch	0
House Sparrows	777
House Sparrow eggs	1150
European Starling	94
European Starling eggs	38
#Reports	61
#Nestboxes	2978
#Counties	35

OBS Area Contacts (as of November 2020)

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			WYANDOT	James R. Coffman	jrussoff@gmail.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.

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Deadline for Submitting Articles:

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

OBS Committee Invite



OBS needs your help and expertise. In an effort to do more for our cavity nesting friends, OBS has set up several committees and is looking for anyone interested in helping out.

The committees are:

Grant – In case you didn't know it, OBS has a grant program. Applications are received and as much as \$250.00 can be given to worthy applicants for their conservation projects.

Education – OBS has always promoted best practice in conservation efforts. To achieve this goal, education is key and this committee helps

to create and develop educational materials for the general public.

Website – The committee will work with our web design and maintenance team to provide best practice in web designs and information.

Nominating – Looks for conservation minded individuals that can help on the board of trustees and the various committees.

Conference – Help with the development and running of the yearly OBS conference.

If you would like to help and share your passion and talents, please let Darlene Sillick know at obsresident@gmail.com