



Bluebird Monitor

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

Winter 2020-2021



Oberlin Junior Girl Scouts Awarded for Work on Chimney Swift Structure

By Dylan Reynolds, reprinted with permission by The Chronicle-Telegram

OBERLIN — Nine Junior Girl Scouts from Northeast Ohio Troop 50439 of Oberlin were presented with the Bronze Award on Sunday for their work on a tower that will provide chimney swifts with a safe place to roost when they fly through the area.

An awards ceremony for the Scouts and their families at the recently opened Oberlin Preserve prairie on West Hamilton Street went forward and avoided the worst of the rain that persisted for most of the afternoon.

The Bronze Award is the highest honor a Junior Girl Scout can receive, earned by planning and completing a lasting community project as a team.

These fourth- and fifth-graders in Troop 50439 decided to lend a helping hand to the chimney swifts, a migratory species of bird that often passes through the area in the spring and fall. Troop leader Lili Sandler said just a few weeks ago they saw more than 1,000 of the birds at Oberlin's Prospect School.

"They traditionally roost in hollowed out trees or in chimneys, but due to deforestation and due to chimneys being capped off, they have had fewer and fewer places to roost," Sandler said. "So conservation groups are building these towers to offer them safe places to roost while they're migrating."

Installed on Sept. 3, the 12-foot tower resembles a chimney in shape and sits among the prairie grass. Images of the insectivorous birds adorn the stained wood, and there are plans to put up signage and a kiosk in the future. Part of the project involved learning about the birds and their habitat.

The project was completed in partnership with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the Black River Audubon Society, the Oberlin College and the Ohio Ornithological Society, but the Junior Girl Scouts took the lead.

Scouts spent two "extremely long building sessions" with troop parent Travis Tyson, who has a woodworking shop in his garage and taught the girls how to use the necessary tools, Sandler said.

Oberlin City Council President Linda Slocum was on hand Sunday to read an official letter of commendation for the Scouts' construction of what she described as a "significant community service project."

"Your project was multi-faceted and you worked at it diligently, achieving your goals in under a year in the midst of a global pandemic," she told those in attendance.

Members of Junior Girl Scouts from Northeast Ohio Troop 50439 pose and point at the habitat tower they created at the Oberlin Preserve prairie.



Continued on page 16

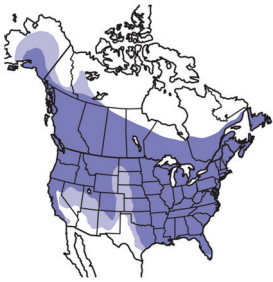
Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers

By Gina Swindell



We are lucky here in northeast Ohio to be able to see several species of woodpeckers including Red-headed, Red-bellied, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied sapsucker, Pileated and Downy. As we all know, the Pileated is the smallest woodpecker in the United States. Of course, I'm kidding, it's the Downy woodpecker. These little cuties are the smallest woodpecker in

all of North America measuring 5-7 inches in length. They are also the most commonly seen, as they occupy much of the U.S. and Canada which is noted on the included range map from Audubon. Though these birds are not migratory, in colder weather the northern most inhabitants may move a bit south and those in higher elevations may move to a lower elevation. They are pretty easy to find since they are here year-round.



Downys are common backyard birds and are the most likely of the woodpeckers to visit your feeder. Should you try to attract them, they enjoy suet, sunflower seed, peanuts and dried fruit but their main diet is insects. An interesting downy behavior is that when feeding naturally, the male prefers to forage on the smaller

branches that trail away from the main tree and the female prefers the larger branches closer to the main part of the tree. What a neat observation. I can't wait to watch to see if our resident downys follow this pattern. The challenge for newer birders may be distinguishing them from the Hairy woodpecker.

It took me awhile to figure out if I was looking at a downy or a hairy woodpecker. Their markings are nearly identical. Once you've seen a hairy, it is pretty obvious. But before I had seen one, it was difficult because downys vary greatly in size (a couple of inches is a big difference when looking through binoculars) and their markings are identical to the "untrained" eye. But why do Hairy woodpeckers and Downy woodpeckers look so similar? Are they closely related or is it social mimicry?

It seems that the look-a-likes are not closely related, and the Downy woodpeckers may actually use the intimidation of hairy woodpeckers to scare off competitors. Hairy woodpeckers can be aggressive and a bit grumpy—and a lot of other birds don't like to deal with them. Thus, research suggests that by looking like a Hairy, downys can fool other birds and scare them off at feeders. But who don't they fool? You guessed it, they don't fool the Hairy woodpeckers, who are quick to show aggression to their "mini-me." But, there are a few field marks that you can look for if you are questioning your sighting.

Look for the black spotting on the outside of downys white tailfeathers, as these marks are absent on the hairy. Also, note their "mustache." This patch of hair (bristles) between their beak



and eye is said to be used to keep woodchips out of their nostrils while excavating cavities. I bet all woodpeckers wish they had such a luxurious stache! To me, this is much more noticeable on the downy than it is on the other woodpeckers in our region. The ratio of the beak to the head differs as well. A downy's beak is typically less than half of its head length where the hairy's beak is as long as its head. Finally, something I hadn't noticed until researching for this article, the hairy has a small black line that extends out over the shoulder that the downy does not have. If you see an immature male downy, it's obvious by the rusty, rather than red, patch on the back of its head.

Downys are of breeding age at about one year. They will pair up in the fall and remain monogamous staying together year after year. They nest build together in cavities of dead trees or the bottom-side of a dead limb (on a living tree) that is no longer than 7" in length, which can take them between 1-3 weeks to excavate. The male will incubate half of the time and she the other half. They both feed the nestlings who may stay close to their parents for several months. Mom and dad work well together, which might explain their ability to mate "til' death do them part."

If you haven't seen a downy, be on the lookout and happy birding!

forum.americanexpedition.us/downy-woodpecker-facts

www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/d/downy-woodpecker/

www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/downy-woodpecker

www.thespruce.com/downy-or-hairy-woodpecker-387335

Friend Or Foe

By Mel Bird, former OBS Board Member



My wife and I have had a bluebird trail in Milan, OH for 20+ years. The trail now consists of 70 boxes located in two, one-acre lot developments in Milan Township and numerous boxes on small lots in the Village of Milan. When we first started the trail, the predominant problem facing us was the house

sparrow (HOSP). In 2001, we removed 248 HOSP eggs from our trail which at the time had 21 boxes. The problem only got worse, so then in 2008 we experimented with the Bermudze theory that making the hole 2-1/2" in diameter and placing the entrance hole no higher than 52" high would deter the HOSPs. At this time, we modified 26 boxes that were only occupied by HOSPs out of the 52 that constituted our trail now. From 2008 until 2017 not one HOSP built a nest in any of these modified boxes. We still had a few HOSP nests in boxes with standard size holes but the problem was insignificant. For example, in 2012 we removed 11 HOSP eggs. So far so good, but in 2017 we saw the HOSP building in these modified boxes, and by 2018, all but a few modified boxes had HOSP nests. During this transition time we started to see a major increase in the number of House Wren (HOWR) nests, and by 2019 the HOWR became the major disruption of EABL nests. This year we had so many HOWRs that they took over HOSP nests, Carolina Wren nests (CAWR) and Tree Swallow nests. By July of this year, approximately 50% of all our boxes were occupied by HOWR or Carolina Wrens. The HOWR also continued to take over the numerous Carolina Wren nests. By the end of the season the HOWRs were the major

occupants of our boxes. I am considering abandoning the trail next year as there is little that we can do to eliminate the HOWR. I hate to admit that the HOWRs have outdone me.

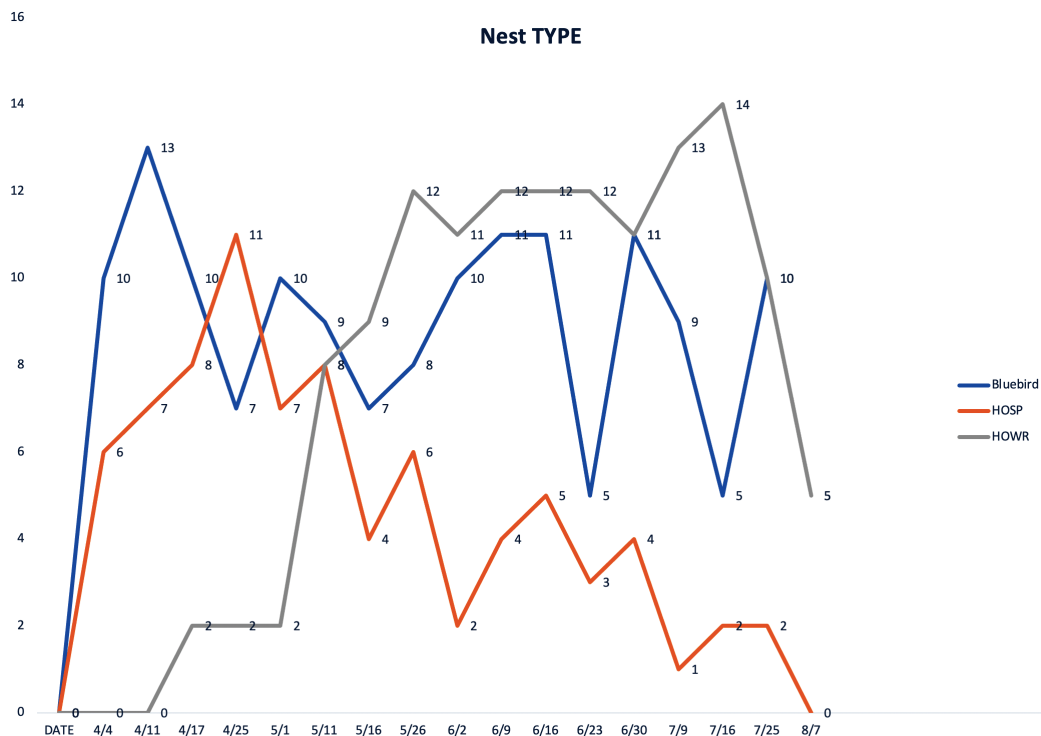
To try to cope with the problem on my acre of land, I placed three HOWR boxes at the edge of the woods, but the HOWR continued to settle in the EABL boxes that are out in the open. It appears they are not dumb, as they prefer the 1-1/2" hole size to the 1" in their boxes as it is much easier to get their long sticks into it. On our trail, relocating our boxes more than a couple of hundred feet from trees is near impossible in both these sub-divisions. We enjoy having HOWRs around, but they are having a negative effect on our goal to increase the EABL population. So, is the HOWR a Friend or Foe?

Note:

The Bermudze experiment was tried on a trail on my daughter's 5-acre property in IL and it had no success. Within minutes of converting the holes over to 2-1/2" diameter and lowering the boxes, the HOSPs were carting building material into them.

Another factor also came in to play this year. Prior to 2018, we never had a CAWR nesting, however, last year we had one productive nest and this year we had eight. They occupied our boxes but did not appear to destroy EABL eggs or take over an existing EABL nest, this was left to the HOWR.

The chart below shows the number of EABL, HOSP, and HOWR nest for each monitoring visit in my sub-division. Once the HOWRs arrive, around late April early May, the number of HOSP nests declines and the HOWR nests overtake the number of EABL nests. This is our consternation.



Are Bluebirds in Vintage Art Portrayed as Blue Birds?

By Molly Wilsbacher

To paraphrase William Shakespeare's famous quote about roses, "What's in a name?" That which we call a bluebird by any other name would look as sweet. Just like roses come in a variety of shades, so are bluebirds depicted in art through the ages.

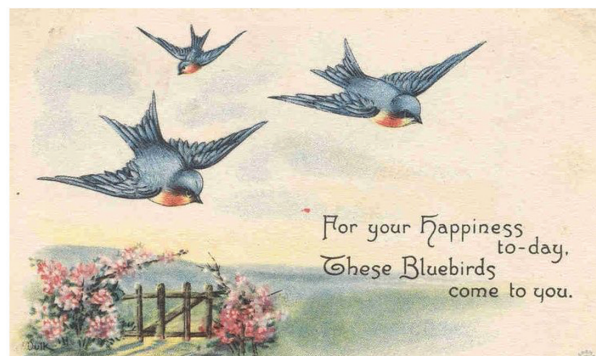
As members of the Ohio Bluebird Society, we know that eastern bluebirds are pretty much as John James Audubon depicted them in 1831. Bluebirds are very conspicuous compared to their much larger thrush cousins, the Robin, with their beautiful azure coats and vibrant orange breasts.

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Similarly, the image from a card that is sending good tidings "for your happiness to-day," appears to be barn swallows despite the orange coloring on the birds' throats, as bluebird tails do not have the same shape in flight.



However, I am always amazed how many of my friends and family do not realize which bird species I refer to when I mention how much I love bluebirds. Even though they may say that they enjoy seeing bluebirds too, they are actually referring to blue birds. Inevitably, when they finally see one in my backyard they are struck by the beauty of an eastern bluebird and inquire what species it is.

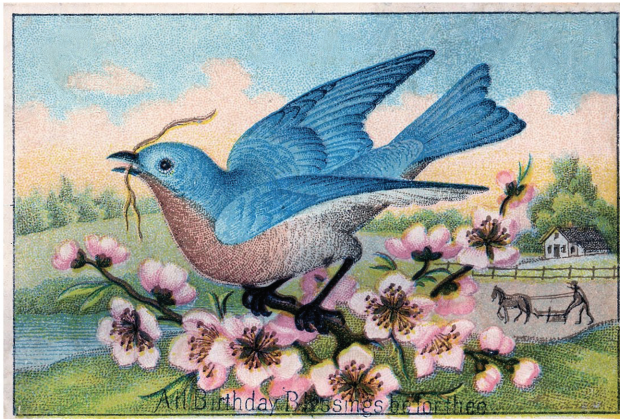
Even my own grandmother exalted the brilliant colors in a visitor to my bird feeder one spring and claimed she never saw one before in her 90+ years of living.

After searching the internet for vintage bluebird images, it is easy to understand why so many of our friends and family do not necessarily understand our enthusiasm for bluebirds. For example, those of us who ever monitored nest boxes before know that the wings and tails of the blue birds flying over a field of daisies in the beautiful postcard below are clearly those of swallows, not bluebirds.

And the vintage valentine below appears to depict blue and yellow tanagers, not bluebirds, due to their distinctive blue throats and yellow bellies. Western bluebirds also have blue throats, but if this valentine were portraying them, why were their breasts not more orange?



Thankfully there are several vintage images of actual bluebirds for us to relish and enjoy. One of my favorite vintage postcards features a bluebird wishing “All Birthday Blessings Before Thee.” The bluebird sits on cherry blossoms while holding the ever-important nesting material in its beak, while a farmer hoes his field in the background. It reminds you of home in Ohio, doesn’t it?



Artist Mabel Rollins Harris definitely knew the difference between an eastern bluebird and other types of blue birds. She painted many pictures for calendars that Brown & Bigelow published in the 1930’s and several of her prints featured children with bluebirds. Below is “Girl Painting Bluebird,” which is one of my favorites. You can tell the bird featured is an eastern bluebird by the color of its throat.

Regardless of whether a blue bird by any other name is truly a bluebird, we all can appreciate them in art because they look as sweet!



If you’ve enjoyed reading this article, please let the editor, Penny Brandau, know and perhaps I can share a few more of the bluebird images that I’ve collected over the years in a future newsletter.

What’s in a name? that which we call a rose. By any other name would smell as sweet.” Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene II. William Shakespeare.

All images are considered vintage and in the free public domain. OBS is a non-profit organization and this newsletter is free to all members.

Photos from Members



An interesting new hole guard extension on this bluebird box in Leatha House Park near Spencer, Medina County was spotted by bluebirder Diane Devereaux of Lorain County. She believes it was formed from mud and thought it resembled the mud nests of cliff swallows although it was likely a type of hornet or wasp that constructed this interesting addition to the bluebird nestbox hole. Thanks for sharing this fascinating photo Diane!



“Really Hot Bluebird Babies” by Judy Semroc. This baby bluebird is seen trying to cool off by holding his head at the opening of the box.

Prothonotary Warbler (PROW) Adventures - 2020

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



The quest to attract nesting golden swamp warblers starts with reestablishing their nesting structures at two locations, Alum Creek Lake near Kilbourne, Ohio, and along the original Leonardsburg Road in the Delaware Wildlife Area.

At Alum Creek, forty-five pipes stand in the lake all year near the northern and western

shore for a shoreline distance of more than a mile. The pipes stickup three to five feet above the summer pool of 888 feet above sea level, managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the lake's dam. Nestjars made of four-inch PVC drain pipe and nestboxes constructed from wood and other materials are attached to five-foot lengths of one-inch plastic water pipe that function as sleeves to slide over the steel pipes to hold nest structures more than six feet above the lake after I tighten hose clamps that I adjust from my rowboat. My boat is an Old Town Stillwater-12 that is extra wide and designed to be extra stable for duck hunters and fishermen. A length of rope with carabiners at each end allow me to safely snap the rope from my boat to around the pipes so I can stand and lift the nest structures to slide their water pipe sleeves over, and onto, their steel pipes.

During winter months, the lake's water is lowered to 885 feet above sea level for numerous reasons. At 885 ft., the lake's bottom is exposed at its northern end, so on March 13, 2020, I did not need my boat to reinstall 14 structures in the vicinity of most northern Osprey platform, AC-1. I wore hip boots that fasten to my belt so the thick sticky mud could not pull my boots off. Knee boots will not work in thick, sticky mud. During my first reinstallation episode, I counted four Tree Swallows that were glad to see their nest structures; sometimes they would land to look in the entrance hole before I was done adjusting the box's height.

By April 2, the lake was at 887.4 feet and I used my boat to reinstall the middle 15 nest structures that restored the project past Osprey platform AC-3, and the next day, I finished installing the last 16 to await the arrival of the prothonotaries, House Wrens and more Tree Swallows.

Boxes and jars are paired around five yards apart with one structure that has a 1-3/8 inch entrance for swallows, and the other has a 1-1/8 inch opening for warblers and wrens. The management goal is that swallows swoop at, and discourage wrens, and protect warbler nests in the process.

I made six boat trips to collect data on how things were going. The earliest Prothonotary Warbler egg was laid on May 20 and the latest first egg was laid on July 8. The latest fledgling took



A 2008 photo by Frank Germann shows the main features of a nestjar with a PROW removing a fecal sac.

place around August 1, all to make a 78-day season of active warbler nests for the 2020 season.

The warblers attempted nine nests with eggs, and only two failed due to House Wrens. So, 77.8% of nest attempts were successful after 45 eggs were laid, 28 (62.2%) hatched, and all (62.2% of eggs) fledged. Of course, since all (100%) hatchlings grew to fledge, 2020 was a great year for my prothonotaries.

Tree Swallows attempted 21 nests with 107 eggs and only one nest failed for unknown reasons. A nest success rate of 99.1% sounds good until a further analysis takes place. Ninety-five swallow eggs hatched (88.8%) but only 75 (70.1% of eggs) developed to fledge. A 78.9% fledging rate for hatchlings reveals that the food supply of flying insects was lower than earlier years since swallows usually fledge around nine of every ten of their hatchlings. Furthermore, at the end of the season, it is not pleasant to find the remains of twenty young swallows when their used nests are removed from their cavities. The active nest season for the swallows lasted for 90 days from the first egg on May 8 to the latest fledging on August 5. None of the swallows attempted second nests, another symptom of low populations of flying insects.

House Wrens earned their nickname, super bird, that I gave them decades ago. Wrens attempted 25 nests, and 24 were successful for a 96% rate. They laid 129 eggs, 118 (91.5%) hatched, and 116

(89.9%) fledged for a 98.3% fledge rate for their hatchlings. Yes, they earned their nickname as they foraged the brushy shoreline for small insects and other life forms to feed their young. The efficient wrens established a 73-day period of active nests from the earliest first egg on May 12 to the last nestling flying from its nest on July 23.

There's more than birds going on at Alum Creek Lake; the joy of kayaking has been discovered by many people of all ages. And, the kayakers enjoy the visual encounters with the Osprey, prothonotaries, swallows, and even the wrens. I've had many conversations, been told of natural nests along my route, and answered many questions, and since cell phones enable their owners to be wildlife photographers, I've enjoyed watching boaters capturing images of "my birds" tending to their families.

Another successful prothonotary nest took place on the Delaware Wildlife Area north of Delaware. As Leonardsburg Road crosses Horseshoe Road and passes over a tall levee that holds flood waters for Delaware Lake, the willow saturated wetland on the north side of the road is a "green tree marsh," a wildlife

management term that describes a woodland flooded to benefit wetland wildlife that copies what beavers do. If you want to add Red-headed Woodpeckers to your list, this is the place to visit.

One nestbox and four nestjars stand in water, parallel to the road, and I usually wear chest waders for monitoring. This year, the water had been raised to a higher level so the wildlife division could flood adjoining fields in order to wipe out unwanted vegetation. I had to launch my boat five times for very short, pleasurable glides to record data. The five structures fledged three Tree Swallows, two families totaling 11 wrens from one jar, and one family of five golden swamp warblers from another jar. A pair of additional boxes stands on land overlooking the marsh and one of the boxes raised six wrens.

Since my first PROW nest raised two from four eggs at the Izaak Walton - Columbus Zoo Nature Preserve in 2004, my projects have raised 366 of the only cavity nesting warbler east of the Mississippi River. Like the bluebird, their beauty is their best promoter, so let's see more nestjars and boxes out there!

Conserve on!

Research Article on Warming Climates and Nesting Outcomes

Reviewed by Mike Watson

Warming climate increases risk of nest failure in two populations of Tree Swallows.

Climate change is, without a doubt, a serious threat to species and ecosystems around the planet. One focus of research has been on the effects a warming climate has on the annual cycles of animal species. There is mounting evidence that warming temperatures can trigger earlier migratory or reproductive activity. In a recently published study, Shipley et al. found that Tree Swallows have responded to the warming climate by shifting their nesting cycle earlier in the year, which results in a greater risk of nest failure.

This study, conducted on two populations of tree swallows near Ithaca, New York, demonstrated that temperatures in May and early June increased 1.9°C (3.4°F) between 1972 and 2015 and that over that same period Tree Swallows shifted egg laying 13 days earlier in the spring.

This apparent shift in nesting activity in response to warmer springs is expected because birds use environmental cues, including temperature, when determining when to begin nesting. And, earlier nests tend to be more successful overall. So, as the spring weather warms, birds will try to nest earlier.

However, the climate is changing in more ways that just warming; it is also becoming less predictable. Environmental cues, such as temperature, may no longer be reliable indicators of other climate-related risks.

This study used weather data from the NOAA from 1893-2019 to better understand how the local climate has changed. They found an increased risk related to cold daytime temperatures that reduce flying insect availability. When temperatures fall too low (below 18.5°C (65°F)) the abundance of flying insects declines sharply, meaning there may not be enough food for adults and nestlings. Timing egg laying to avoid cold snaps can be the difference between nest success and failure.

Shipley, et al. found no apparent change in the patterns of cold snaps near Ithaca over the 125 years studied. However, by nesting earlier in the season tree swallows are increasing the chances of experiencing a cold snap during the nesting process. In fact, nestlings are at a near double risk of experiencing a deadly cold snap now. In essence, adult tree swallows are shifting their nesting activity into a riskier time of year, which results in higher mortality among nestlings: the average percent of nests experiencing complete failure increased from about 16% to 33%. This can have substantial impacts on the total reproductive output of the population.

Citation: Birds advancing lay dates with warming springs face greater risk of chick mortality. Shipley, Ryan J.; Twining, Cornelia W.; Taff, Conor C.; Vitousek, Maren N.; Flack, Andrea; Winkler, David W. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences; Oct 2020, 117 (41) 25590-25594.



Ask Madame WingNut

Don't Pull That House Sparrow Nest!

By Paula Ziebarth



Managing the non-native invasive House Sparrow can be difficult. It is from an altruistic perspective that most people set out their first nest box. They see a beautiful Eastern Bluebird in their yard and try to provide safe housing. Then a House Sparrow arrives on the scene and takes over, often killing adults, eggs and/or young. There are deterrents that can work rather well to make a nest box

undesirable to House Sparrows, but if the House Sparrow breaches those deterrents, quick inbox trapping (Van Ert Universal Sparrow Trap is my favorite tool) is best practice. When I see a House Sparrow on a nest box, or see evidence that he/she has been in it (nest material and/or House Sparrow droppings in box), it is an immediate call to action. Waiting a week until next nest check is never a good idea. Even waiting a day could end badly. I set a trap immediately, removing the threat as soon as possible. This takes dedication and time as the trap should be checked every couple hours when used during the day. I often set the trap at dusk and retrieve the bird an hour or two after first light. This strategy usually works very well. Once the male House Sparrow has been eliminated, the nest can be removed, but not until then.

Many people try to manage House Sparrows by removing their nests without trapping. While this keeps them from successfully reproducing in the nest box they have claimed, it seldom drives them away and they can remain with that box or in that vicinity for the entire nesting season, harassing and often killing native cavity nesting birds. Pulling the nest can drive them to take over the nest of a nearby native bird; with their nest gone, it is much easier to build on top of a nest that is already constructed. It is also easy for them to take it by force and they do. Very often they will remain with their original nest box, rebuilding again... and again... When the nest is emptied, it can signal "all clear" to a native bird looking for a nest site; native bird enters, House Sparrow follows it in and bird is killed. Eventually the House Sparrows may abandon the site, but rest assured that they will then reproduce nearby and they and their adult young will be back in future years to out-compete native cavity nesters you are trying to house. "Don't pull that House Sparrow nest!"

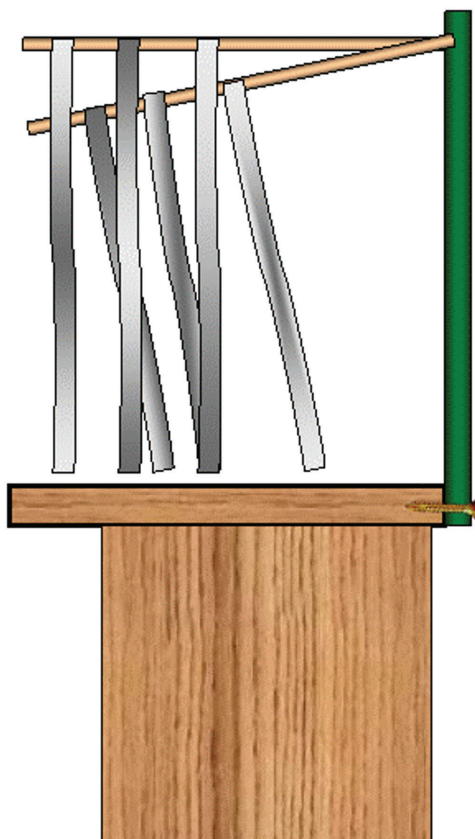
House Sparrow Deterrents

Two deterrents that I have seen work rather well are sparrow spookers and monofilament line. Sparrow spookers must be installed after the first egg of the native bird is laid and it is very important to remove the spooker after the young fledge. Otherwise House Sparrows become accustomed to them and ignore them. The flapping mylar strips that brush the top of the nest box serve to scare most House Sparrows away. A drawing of sparrow spooker I have used is included. You can also purchase one at www.sparrowtraps.net.

OBS Board Member, Carl Gleditsch, has designed a monofilament deterrent that is effective if installed before House Sparrows show interest in a nest box. The monofilament is a permanent addition to the nest box. There is no need to remove it. A drawing of Carl's design is included here. Carl recommends tying monofilament tight with a Fisherman's knot. Monofilament configuration on the front of the box allows native Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows to enter safely without danger of their wings becoming entangled. I have spoken with a few people that have tried other monofilament designs that have it hanging freely (weighted at bottom) from nest boxes that have had birds get tangled in it. If securely fastened, as in Carl's design, this cannot happen.

Native cavity nesting birds fly up to box, land on front with wings tucked to sides, and enter undeterred. House Sparrows, on the other hand, fly toward the entrance with their wings extended. Carl says that the sparrows never hit the fishing line. They seem to see it just before landing on the box and freak out. Being a seed eating bird for the most part, their eyesight may not be as keen as our (mostly) insectivorous native cavity nesters. Monofilament on the top of the box deters House Sparrow from perching there where it could harass nesting birds. Carl installed monofilament on all nest boxes at Glacier Ridge Metro Park in Plain City, Ohio prior to the beginning of this past nest season. There were no House Sparrow attempts reported in these boxes this season whereas there had been the season before (without deterrent). This is very encouraging.

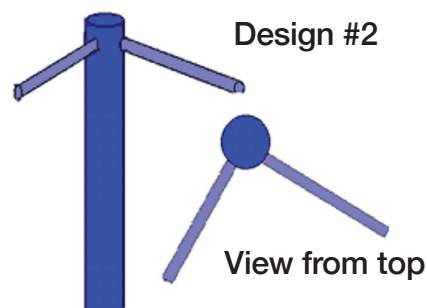
It is easy to deter House Sparrows from Chickadee and House Wren nests by simply installing a 1-1/8" hole reducer on the nest box as soon as you see evidence either species is building in the box. If you see moss, it is a Chickadee nest start. If you see sticks, it is a House Wren. Both of these little birds will fit easily through the smaller hole, but House Sparrows will not.



Materials Needed:

- 1 foot section of $\frac{3}{4}$ or 1" diameter PVC pipe
- (2) 9 inch long sections of $\frac{1}{4}$ " diameter wooden dowel rods or 2 chopsticks from your favorite Chinese carryout
- Mylar strips - Mylar 1" bird repellent flash tape
- Wood screw to mount spooker (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " works well)

View from side



Pictures courtesy of Bet Zimmerman at www.sialis.org/sparrowspooker.htm

A final deterrent is simply stop feeding them. During nest season, I do not set out seeds that House Sparrows eat. There is no need to feed birds during this time of plenty, but if you need to enjoy some feathered friends, feed hummingbird nectar, thistle seed for finches, and maybe a handful of mealworms for your bluebirds if you must. Try not to attract competitor birds.

While these deterrents can be effective, monitors should be ready to deal with any House Sparrow that breaches them. Inbox trapping and humanely dispatching House Sparrows may be necessary.

Tale of Two Trails

I review and compile trail data for a few parks in central Ohio and recently compared outcomes for two trails that have been managed for House Sparrows differently. Neither of these trails used sparrow deterrents and both trails have a prevalence of House Sparrows. One monitor chose to manage House Sparrows by pulling nests whereas the other used inbox trapping as soon as House Sparrows showed up.

The trail managed with nest pulling has three paired stations (6 boxes total). At the first paired station, House Sparrows remained from March through end of July. Nest pulling stopped

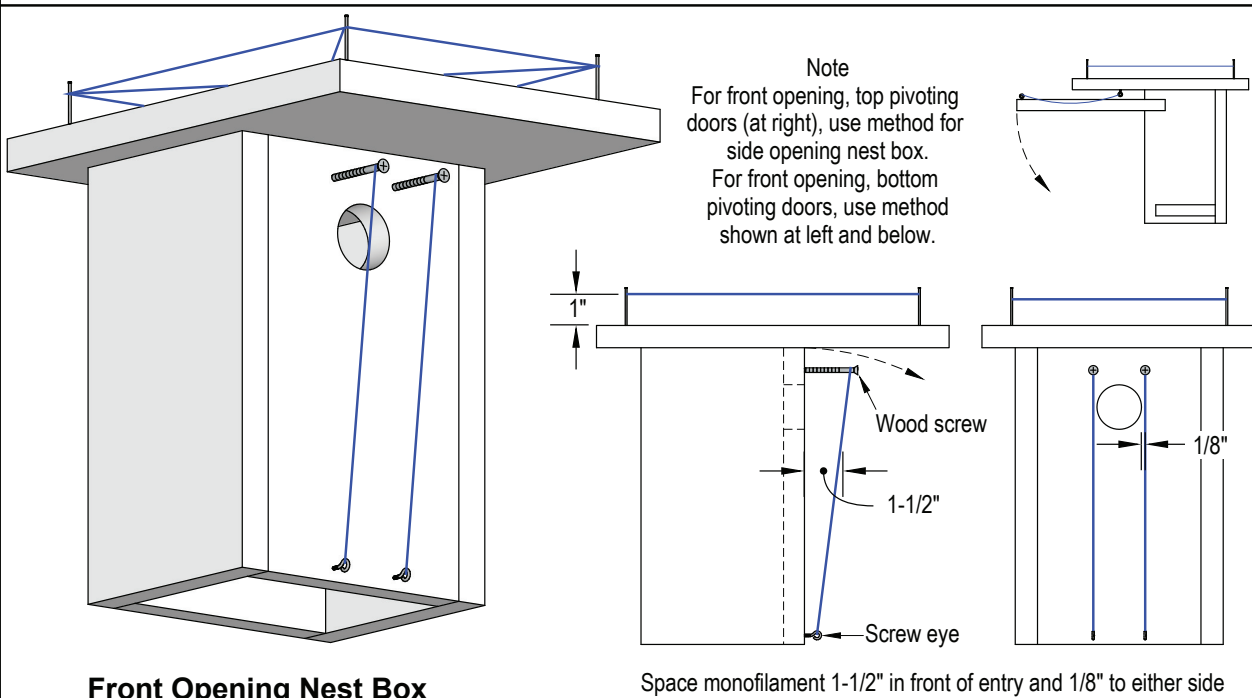
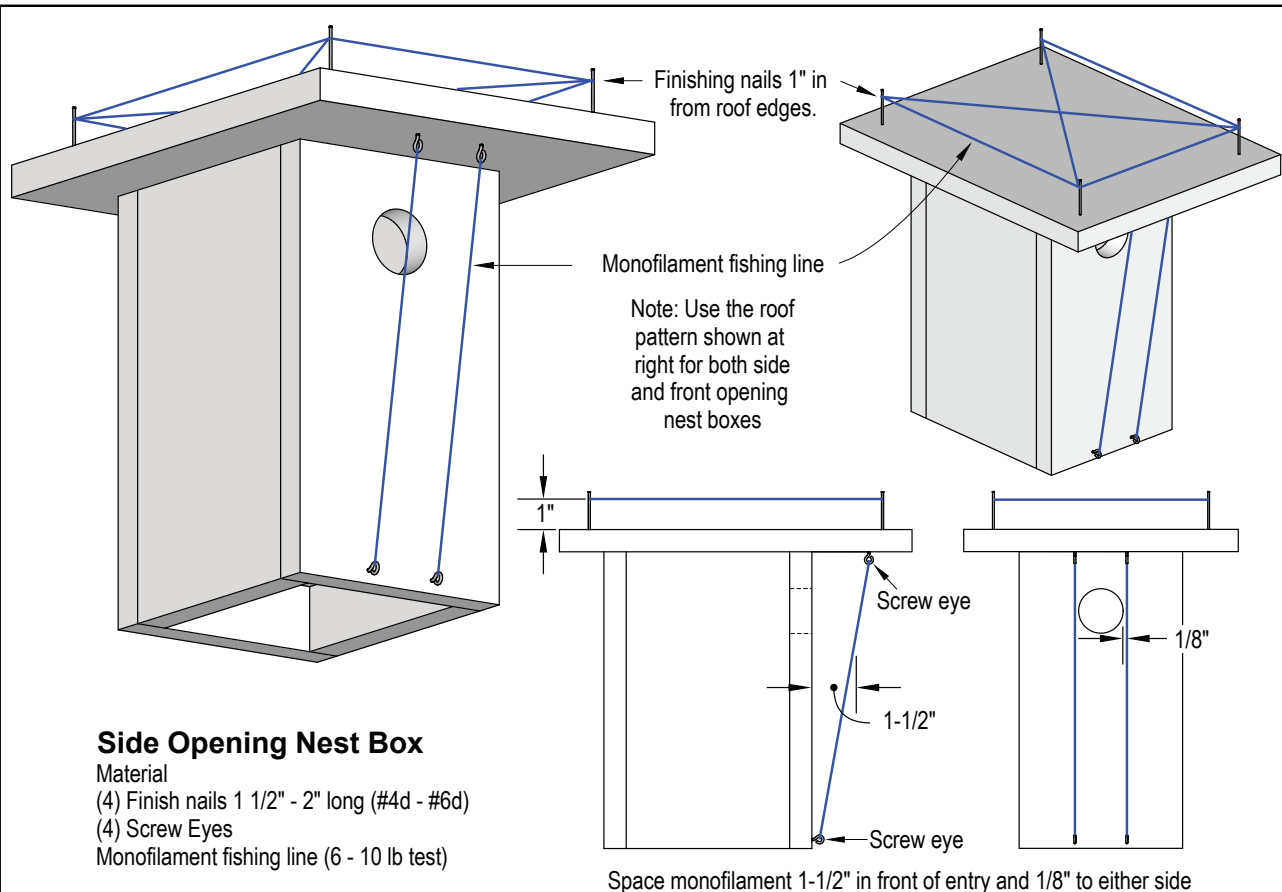
them from successfully breeding, but they killed three Tree Swallow young and Eastern Bluebirds abandoned an attempt. At the second paired station, House Sparrows remained throughout season and they killed two adult Tree Swallows. The third paired station remained House Sparrow free, fledging a nest of 3 Tree Swallows and 4 Eastern Bluebirds.

The trail managed with inbox trapping has 10 nest boxes spaced 25 yards apart for Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows. The monitor trapped 18 House Sparrows during the season, removing them before they were able to kill native birds (there were no adult, egg or young losses due to House Sparrows). These 10 nest boxes fledged 33 Tree Swallows and 13 Eastern Bluebirds.

If you try any of the sparrow deterrents outlined here, let me know how they work for you.

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.



Monofilament Sparrow Deterrent

For front and side opening nest boxes

Designed by Carl Gleditsch

(based on original design by sialis.org)

Drawn by Fred Stille, Sr.

Date: November 1 2020, version 1

Page 1 of 1



Member News

Thank You to Our Donors!

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Michelle Schneider

Mindy Sykes

In Memorium

Lois Rae (Hehl) Harder of Oak Harbor passed away on July 29, 2020 and our deepest sympathies go to her family and friends. Lois was very active in Black Swamp Bird Observatory, North American Bluebird Society and was a dear longtime member of OBS. Stories and photos can be shared at www.crosserpriesmanfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Lois-Rae-Hehl-Harder?obId=17672052#/celebrationWall

President's Report – November 1, 2020 By Mike Watson



My term as OBS President ended on October 1st. This also coincides with the end of my time on the Board of Trustees, a position I've held since 2010. I'd like to use my final President's Report to reflect (briefly) on the past decade of OBS and to thank the people I have worked with over the years.

I've always felt like I was thrown into the deep end of 'bluebirding' without much time to really understand it. My first experience with bluebirds was as a volunteer with the

Lake Metroparks bluebird program. After a season monitoring a trail for LMP, I was hired at Holden to (in part) oversee their 200+ nest box program. Just a year later, Jay Brindo (a Holden Volunteer at the time) asked if I'd join the OBS Area Contacts program. And two years later I was on the board.

So there was a steep learning curve for me, from basic bluebird biology and best practices to the structure and function of OBS. Luckily, there have always been people associated with OBS who were generous with their time and knowledge. I think this is a very important reason why OBS continues to be significant in the realm of grassroots conservation in Ohio.

So how has OBS changed in the past decade? When I first joined, the board was just 4 people under the guidance of Marcella Hawkins. All the board members were new to the board and relatively new to OBS and we relied heavily on the leadership of Marcella and four Advisors (Mel Bolt, Dick Tuttle, Dean Sheldon and Linda Lang). Over the years, there have been some really amazing people who committed their time and effort to improving OBS and we were able to build to a nine-member Board and re-establish committees and officer positions that had languished.

After taking one year off, OBS began offering an annual conference again in 2016. We have seen steady growth and improvements as we find how we fit in the landscape of many conservation-related conferences. The board is currently struggling with the challenges presented by Covid-19, but under Darlene's leadership I think OBS will be able to offer an excellent (if different) conference experience in 2021.

Other changes include a membership database created by Pat and David Dutton (a great improvement over how membership information was managed in the past); the creation of the Legacy Program (spearheaded by Chuck Jakubchak); a rewrite of the OBS bylaws (led by Carrie Elvey); Penny Brandau's excellent work with the newsletter; and updates to the website, the OBS brochure and our Grants Program.

I think, measured by various metrics, OBS is very strong right now – growing membership, strong financial standing (thank you to our Treasurer Molly Wilsbacher), improving presence online (Facebook and instructional videos on the website and YouTube) – and is positioned to continue doing valuable conservation work. Again, THANK YOU to everyone that has made the past 10 years so successful and I look forward to seeing what OBS does over the next decade.

OBS Grants Update

The OBS Board is happy to announce that the upgraded/updated OBS Grants program is now live on the website. The goals of recent changes to the program were to increase total funds dedicated to grants, improve the application and reporting process and broaden the types of projects we will support, all with the goal of supporting valuable conservation efforts that mesh with OBS's mission.

OBS has committed enough funds to the program to support multiple projects per year with a cap of \$500 per project. Projects must benefit bluebirds or other native cavity nesting species by creating or improving nesting habitat. This could mean building and installing nest boxes, improving/replacing existing boxes, landscape-level projects that improve winter

food resources, educational program that integrate cameras into nesting boxes and any other creative conservation effort that directly creates or improves habitat to benefit native cavity nesting birds.

Applications can be submitted in three ways. 1. Download the application, fill it out by hand and then mail it to OBS. 2. Download the application as an editable PDF and return to OBS via email. Or 3. Fill out the application on the website and submit it to OBS directly.

Please visit the website for more information and please help OBS spread the word. The more people who learn about our Grants program the more conservation work we can support.

In-coming President's Report – November 1, 2020

By Darlene Sillick



We are in one of the most challenging years in history and a month we may never forget. I have had my first board meeting under my belt as the new OBS board president. I sincerely wish to thank Mike Watson for giving OBS 10 years as our president. Mike completed so much in these 10 years and I encourage you to drop him a note thanking him for his time and energy and for building a stronger organization. Following Mike's efforts to help our non-profit grow, I hope and pray

I can be a leader to grow OBS. Those who know me know I feel very strongly about conservation, working with youth and networking around the state, sowing the seeds of our mission.

Our Mission Statement reads: 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.

I like challenges and I like being a team player and teaching others. I will strive hard to promote best practices while we teach the young and those more senior. In turn, we will learn from them. New ideas to try, new projects to share and in turn helping the bluebird and other cavity nesters from the different habitats they live in.

While Covid-19 has given us some challenges, we have learned about Zoom conferencing and how to be safe and still learn

through this format. Your board is meeting every other month for 2 to 2.5 hours to plan and share ideas using the Zoom format. One project I have enjoyed since coming on the board is to think outside the box when we have a conference. The full board and volunteers worked hard the end of February 2020 and thank goodness we could come together for the best conference yet. A huge thanks to all who participated, our speakers and the other non-profits who shared information about their organizations and helped to sponsor OBS.

Now for 2021! After much discussion, we will be having a virtual conference. We are still working on the fine details. Our theme is Back to the Basics. Anna Rose designed our event logo and she will be our emcee, virtual that is. On March 6, we will kick off a couple speakers live on Zoom and a number of others will pre-record their talks. Information will show up sometime in December on the OBS website. We are tossing around a few different ideas with the plan to host two speakers live and also a panel discussion. We would like for you to send your questions to Penny or Madame Wingnut or myself by February 1, 2021.

Their email addresses are pennybrandau@gmail.com, paulazbird@gmail.com or dsillick118@gmail.com. Anna has some ideas as emcee to have this be inter-active. Stay tuned. We will compile and plan an interactive session or use the chat in Zoom.

Some of our planned speakers are: Bet Zimmerman will be talking about Bluebirds 101 and 201, Dick Tuttle will be talking about Tree Swallows and Paula Ziebarth will speak about the challenges of House Sparrows. Marne Titchenell's topic for her lecture will be Woodland species. We have some new speakers too. Dan Best will talk about his 29 year work with the Golden Candle of the Swamp, Charlie Zepp will demonstrate how he builds his cedar boxes for a number of species. Many of the talks will be a link you can view at your leisure. All presenters will have their recorded talks live on the website that day. We

have about 4 teens who will have talks recorded too. Please mark your calendar now for 9-am -12pm on March 6, 2021 for next year's virtual conference! In December we plan to have more updates on the OBS website.

I would also like to thank some of our viewers who shared that they too had challenges with the cold late spring in 2020 and then this summer almost two months that were hot and dry. We can't control mother nature but we can do our best to help our native species survive. Maybe a supply of meal worms or some chilled crickets or water out on our trails. We learned this year so much negative came our way. But one thing was a plus. More people became bird watchers and gardeners and put up a nest box or two. Hopefully, with your mask on, you helped to teach them what you learned from Ohio Bluebird Society and those who came before you.

A couple reminders, please send in your trail or nestbox fledgling report data to OBS and Mike Watson. Take the time to join Cornell and add your data to Nestwatch. Think about someone who might be worthy of the Blue Feather award and the Wildlife Conservation Award. Information is on our website. We are always looking for volunteers to help with OBS and perhaps serve on a committee or the board as a trustee. More information will be on our website about our committees. Check out some of our best practices Go Pro video's prepared by Josue Sanchez, a co-worker at Cardinal Health who is making the video's and editing them. We are always adding more cool and helpful things to our year old website. If you have ideas of things you want to see there, we are happy to hear from you!! I look forward to meeting you and hearing your ideas for OBS. It takes a village to raise a child, sometimes it takes that and more to help our native cavity nesting species, just one box at a time.

On one very sad note, we lost an amazing conservation hero, Alan Dolan, a Canton Audubon Society member and past president. Alan Dolan, passed away after a struggle with Multiple Myeloma and Acute Leukemia. He served as president for 30 years for Canton Audubon Society. He also served on the board of the National Audubon Society as Regional Director – Mississippi Flyway North. Alan and his wife Lee loved our native cavity nesters and supported youth becoming active in conservation and birds.



Treasurer's Report

by Molly Wilsbacher

.....

- 1. The Ohio Bluebird Society's bank accounts currently reflect that we enjoy \$35,058 in all accounts as of November 1, 2020.** Our anticipated expenditures over the next quarter include publishing and mailing the Winter Newsletter and, hopefully, awarding a few small grants. A portion of membership fees are devoted to our small grants program, which is intended to provide financial support to the creation and installation of new nesting habitat. Because education is such an important component of wildlife conservation, we are particularly focused on projects that combine on the ground conservation with education. Please visit our website to learn more or to apply <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/grant-information>.
- 2. Legacy Boxes** are a great way to honor or remember bluebirders and bird enthusiasts, while providing nest boxes for the 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. Plus, each box will be tagged with a decorative plaque containing the honoree's name and you will be notified when the box is officially placed on an existing bluebird trail. For a full list of all Legacy Fund Honorees or to obtain an Honoree Designation Form, please visit our website: <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/grant-information/>. A big thank you goes out to Stephen Habash and Doug Levasseur who each honored and/or remembered several individuals with Legacy Boxes over the past year!
- 3. As reported elsewhere in this newsletter, our annual Bluebird Conference is going virtual in light of COVID** to ensure all of our members remain safe and healthy. There is NO COST for participating or watching any of the videos. If you have silent auction items, please hold onto them until it is safe for us to meet again in person on Saturday, March 6, 2021.
- 4. If purchasing from Amazon for your holiday shopping this year, please do so from Amazon Smile** (<https://smile.amazon.com>) and designate the Ohio Bluebird Society as your charitable choice. We receive a small percentage of all purchases made through Amazon Smile and it doesn't cost you anything. [Only purchases made at <https://smile.amazon.com> generate AmazonSmile donations].

OBS is currently seeking nominations for the following two awards:

Blue Feather Award

This award was intended to honor an OBS member and was given in recognition of that individual's extraordinary accomplishments in all areas of Bluebird conservation and management. This would be a person who over time had made the OBS mission statement their very own. The areas of contribution would include, but not be limited to, effective trail management; unique creativity; and innovation supporting the return and perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity-nesting birds.

Wildlife Conservation Award

This differs from the Blue Feather Award in that membership in OBS is not a requirement. The award recognizes a strong conservation ethic throughout Ohio and in selected locations elsewhere. The recognition is given to honor individuals and organizations who are committed to this concept but manage the expression of those concepts in many different ways. Some examples of the concerns of the organizations and individuals recognized include: wildlife rehabilitation, ODNR/Wildlife management, the work/research of other bird conservation groups and individual wildlife conservation efforts.

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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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	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tax deductible gift to OBS \$ _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Membership renewal <input type="checkbox"/> New membership		
<input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in participating in OBS activities		
<input type="checkbox"/> Email Newsletter OR <input type="checkbox"/> Print Newsletter		

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

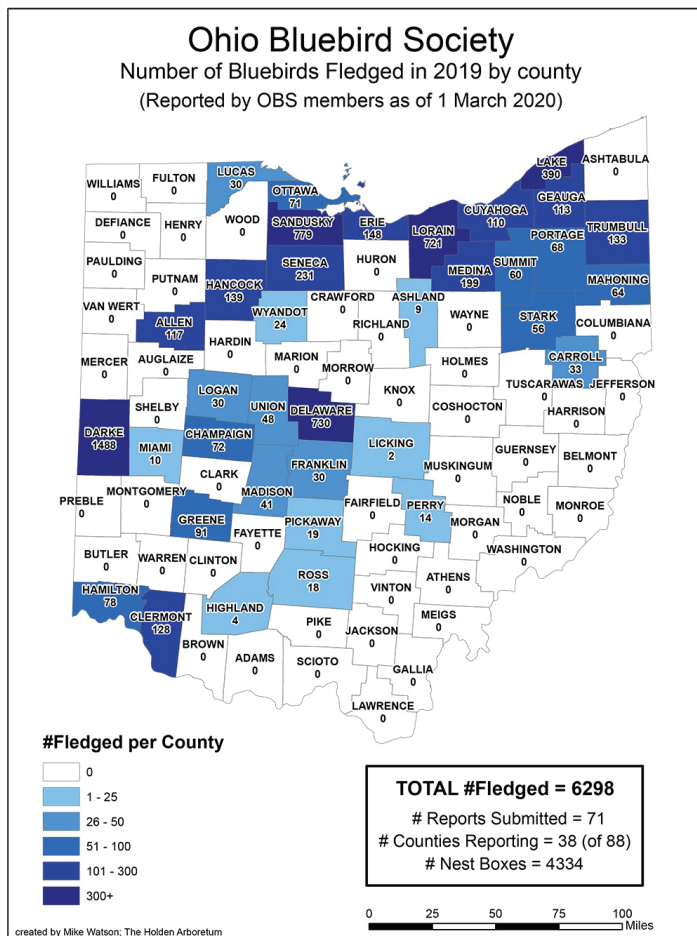
County: _____

E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to:
Ohio Bluebird Society

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

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



OBS 2020 FLEDGLING REPORT

Updated 03/06/20

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

Eastern Bluebird – 6298

Tree Swallow – 7659

House Wren – 2562

Carolina Chickadee – 123

Black – Capped Chickadee – 54

Carolina Wren – 25

Prothonotary – 122

Purple Martin – 6359

American Kestrel – 177

Barn Swallow – 146

Osprey – 14

Wood Duck – 17

House Sparrow Eggs Eliminated – 1333

House Sparrows Destroyed – 1305

European Starling Eggs Removed – 22

European Starling Eggs Destroyed – 6

OBS Area Contacts (as of November 2020)

County	Name	E-mail	County	Name	E-mail
ALLEN	Mohr, Mark	mohrbluebirds@hotmail.com	LAKE	Watson, Mike	mwatson@holdenarb.org
ASHLAND	Lang, Linda	lindaflang@gmail.com	LICKING	Joann Kale	joann.kale@gmail.com
ATHENS	Caldwell, Reid & Teresa	freidc@yahoo.com; teresacaldwell@athensswcd.org	LORAIN	Brandau, Penny	pennybrandau@gmail.com
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The Holden Arboretum
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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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What's Inside...

Oberlin Junior Girl Scouts Awarded for Work on Chimney Swift Structure.....	1, 16
Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers	2
Friend Or Foe.....	3
Are Bluebirds in Vintage Art Portrayed as Blue Birds.....	4-5
Photos from Members.....	5
Prothonotary Warbler (PROW) Adventures - 2020.....	6-7
Warming Climates and Nesting Outcomes ..	7
Madame Wingnut.....	8-10
Member News	11-13
Treasurer's Report	13
OBS Contact Block.....	14
Fledgling Report.....	15
OBS Area Contacts.....	15

Deadline for Submitting Articles:

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

Continued from page 1

Slocum said she has been impressed by the troop's involvement in matters of community interest. Members participated in a Planning Commission meeting over the summer to ensure their chimney swift tower would get the thumbs-up from the city.

The Oberlin Preserve appears to be a great habitat for swifts, said Judy Semroc, a naturalist and conservation expert who drove in from nearly two hours away to speak to the Scouts. She put up a tower about 10 years ago, and warned from experience that it took some time before the birds discovered and began roosting in it.

"But once they found it, they have been coming back every year for the last nine-and-a-half years," Semroc said.

Oberlin has its own unique history with chimney swifts. The first person to conduct significant research on their



A tower habitat built by Girl Scout Troop 50439 and designed for chimney swifts is shown at the Oberlin Preserve prairie.

life cycle was an Oberlin College alumna from the class of 1875, said Troop 50439 co-leader Diana Steele. Althea Sherman built a larger tower with a staircase where she could observe their nesting and migratory behaviors up close.