



Bluebird Monitor

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

Summer 2022



The “Art” of Gift Giving

By Molly Wilsbacher, OBS Treasurer



To paraphrase the proverbial saying, “don’t look a gift horse in the mouth,” we probably shouldn’t look a bluebird gift in the mouth either. If you are like me, your friends and relatives know you enjoy bluebirds, so when you receive a gift for Christmas or your birthday, you probably receive a trinket or some houseware with a bluebird depicted on

it. Let’s be honest though, some gifts and likenesses of bluebirds are better than others.



One of the first bluebird mugs I received was from my sister-in-law more than a decade ago – a Pfaltzgraff “everyday” coffee mug. It is a generous size and heft and perfect for my morning pot of tea. It is also dishwasher safe. Unfortunately, the bluebird depicted on it is of a Western Bluebird and not my beloved Eastern Bluebird.

A few years later, another sister-in-law gave me a pair of stemless wine glasses by Mary Elizabeth Arts. Besides not being a wine drinker, I’m not sure what type of blue bird is depicted on the glass. This glass was used only once in the last several years. When I receive something like this, I always keep in mind what Brigham Young said, “Love the giver more than the gift.”



On the other hand, the items I appreciate the most and use most often are those that also happen to be popular items at our silent auction at our annual Bluebird conferences. Below are three items that my daughter gave me over the years including a coffee mug, spoon rest, and nightlight by artisan Dean Crouser. The first time I saw the coffee mug below,

it was donated by member Bethany Gray and the winning bid was \$25. Since then, we’ve had several auction items donated depicting this beautiful bluebird. Many stores sell these items, including online at www.demdaco.com.

Finally, one of my favorite gifts that I received over the years is also probably one of the simplest – the below 4 x4 ceramic tile that my daughter bought at Wild Birds Unlimited. I use it every day as a coaster and still love looking at it. It’s another Dean Crouser painting called “The Nesters”. The sticker on the back leads you to Dean Crouser Fine Arts <https://www.crouserart.com>, where this image can also be purchased in various sizes of prints, a larger 8 x 10 ceramic tile, coasters, greeting cards, and ornaments.

Because I enjoy it so much, I’ve given away many coasters and mugs by this same artist over the years! After all, Russell Simmons said it best: “Give what you want to receive. If you want happiness, make others happy.” And nothing is better than giving the bluebird of happiness.



Thank you to author, Joan Watroba, Editor of “Bluebird Trails and Tales”, the newsletter of The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania. Reprinted with permission.

Non-native House Sparrows

Non-native
female house sparrow



Non-native
male house sparrow



Non-native
full house sparrow nest



House Sparrows certainly give all sparrows an undeserved bad rap. House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) are one of the main threats to cavity-nesting songbirds. They were intentionally introduced to the United States from England and were released in New York City in 1852 to control linden moths. They are aggressive competitors of nesting sites and will kill adult and young songbirds of all species and will take over their nests.

House Sparrows are often referred to as English Sparrows and are not related to our native sparrow species. They are actually in the Weaver Finch category of Old World birds. Native sparrows, including the Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and the Song Sparrow do not nest in cavities and are not a threat to cavity-nesting songbirds.

Because of the serious harm that House Sparrows pose to native birds, they are not protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, so it is legal to remove the nests, eggs, young, and adult birds from the environment.

In the nesting season 2021, 86 out of 129 (67%) of BSP Bluebird Trail Monitors reported that House Sparrows created problems for the native nesting songbirds along their bluebird trails. It is important to make sure that House Sparrows do not nest in your nest boxes. House Sparrows can nest multiple times per season and that accelerates the problem.

Non-native
house sparrow eggs



vs. Native Sparrows

Native
chipping
sparrow



Native
white-
crowned
sparrow



Native
white-
throated
sparrow



Native
song
sparrow



Some of the ways that can be effective to control House Sparrows include:

- Avoid placing nest boxes in urban settings or near barns or sources of food or feeding areas
- Avoid placing nest boxes near bushes or dense vegetation, as that is where House Sparrows often congregate
- Monitor nest boxes frequently -every 2 days -if you observe House Sparrow activity and repeatedly remove their nests
- Avoid feeding the millet, cracked corn and other low-quality seeds which House Sparrows prefer. Black oil Sunflower seeds are a better choice and will attract a large variety of native songbirds.
- Try adding a Sparrow Spooker or Monofilament Line to the nest box to deter House Sparrows from using it. However, once the adult House Sparrow bonds to the nest box, these two methods may not be as effective, so install them early in the nesting season before nesting activity begins.
- Try trapping the adult House Sparrows and removing them from the habitat.
- In-box traps, including the Van Ert Traps work well.
- If these methods do not work, either take down the nest box and relocate it , or add a hole reducer of 1 and 1/8" in diameter, which will allow Black-capped Chickadees to use it. Try to place the nest box away from wooded habitats to avoid attracting House Wrens, which are native birds, but will interfere with your chickadee nestings by removing their eggs, young, and nests.

For more information about deterring House Sparrows and for diagrams of the Sparrow Spooker and the Monofilament Line Installation:

www.thebsp.org (Select Detering House Sparrows)

www.sialis.org (Select- House Sparrow Control)

Joan Watrous



Ask Madame WingNut

Anatomy of a City Trail

By Paula Ziebarth



I live in the City of Powell in central Ohio and have monitored city park trails here since 2006. House Sparrows have always been a problem in this suburban environment, as expected. Over the years, I have experimented with box pairing, single Bluebird boxes, and strategically placed House Sparrow “trap” boxes (regular nest boxes with

1-1/4” hole reducers on them) on trails in 8 parks in Powell. Last year, I installed monofilament House Sparrow deterrent on some trails to see if it would make a difference and I am impressed with the results.

At this particular park, challenges include: skate park, community swimming pool, parking lots, service center building with cupolas that are attracting House Sparrows to nest, two gazebos for picnickers, a basketball court, restroom building, a playground, and evergreen shrubs/trees. All of these amenities are House Sparrow attractants.



Box #1 in open field overlooking skate park.

Adventure Park in Powell, Ohio was established in 2006. The trail originally had three paired box stations for Bluebirds/ Tree Swallows. Bluebirds were outcompeting Tree Swallows here and House Sparrows were drawn to the paired box near the Bluebirds, which was too close for comfort. In 2015, I eliminated the paired stations and today the trail has 8 nest boxes on site. Four of the nest boxes are dedicated “trap” boxes with 1-1/4” hole reducers on boxes that are sited in areas House Sparrows will find attractive. The hole reducer allows House Sparrows access, but excludes the larger Eastern Bluebird. Van Ert inbox traps are set in these boxes



Box #3 has been a real challenge in this open space near playground and maintenance building. You can see a “trap” box in the background. “Trap” box is facing maintenance building and tucked between evergreen trees where HOSP like to approach from.

only when House Sparrows claim them. The other four boxes have a 1-9/16” entry hole and are sited for Eastern Bluebirds. Bluebirds fared better with this arrangement. In 2021, I added monofilament line House Sparrow deterrent (see below) to the Bluebird boxes while leaving the “trap” boxes open. Once installed, that line remained on.

With the monofilament line on Bluebird boxes throughout the winter months, I was very pleased to discover that there had been no House Sparrows roosting or starting nests in these boxes during winter months. All of the “trap” boxes had House Sparrows occupying them, however. I begin monitoring and House Sparrow inbox trapping with Van Ert traps on trails in early March. As of this writing at the end of April, I have trapped and dispatched 18 House Sparrows from the 4 “trap” boxes on the Adventure Park Trail in 2022 and there have been no House Sparrow attempts in the Bluebird boxes. The combination of siting “trap” boxes in areas House Sparrow will love and having them unadorned with monofilament line pulls them in to attempt to use these boxes and leave the Bluebird boxes alone for the most part. How are the four Bluebird nest boxes doing? All four are occupied by Eastern Bluebirds incubating eggs, 19 eggs total for this first nesting with no House Sparrow attempts in them so far this season.



Box #3 monofilament deterrent

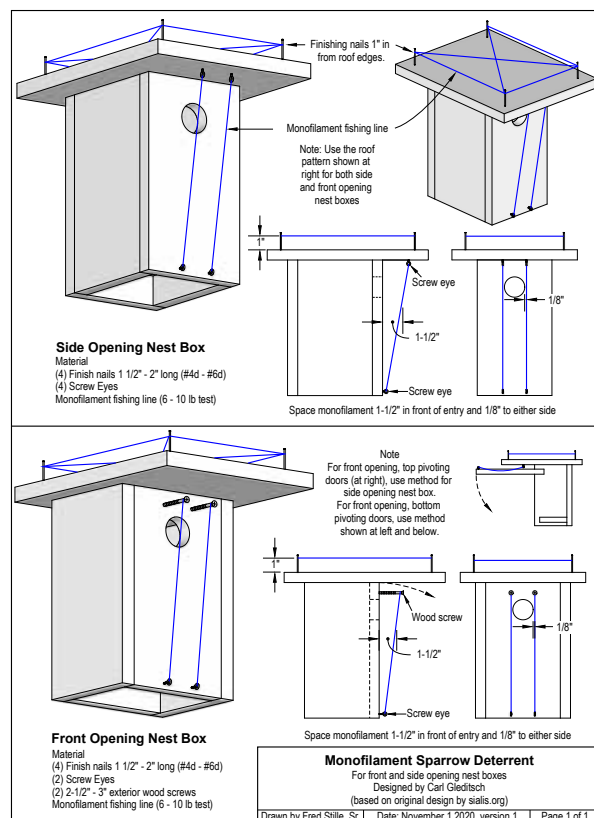


Box #2 near basketball court and gazebo

Since 2006, this trail has fledged 269 Eastern Bluebirds and 51 Tree Swallows. This same trail has had 198 House Sparrow attempts during these past 16 years so trail monitors need to be on their toes.

It is important for people to realize that House Sparrow deterrents are just that, DETERRENTS. In locations where there are no available box alternatives, and where box is placed in area House Sparrows find attractive, they will breach the deterrent and should be trapped and dispatched as soon as this happens. For backyard bluebirders, installing a Bluebird nest box in an open area of your yard, on a freestanding pole with predator baffle and House Sparrow deterrent(s), combined with a House Sparrow “trap” box installed near spruce trees, dense shrubs or your people house will serve you well. The monofilament line house sparrow deterrent can remain on the box throughout the year. Sparrow spookers can be installed after the first Bluebird egg is laid and should be removed after young fledge so House Sparrows do not become accustomed to it.

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.



The Flycatcher That Thinks It's a Bluebird

By Rob Thorn

I was climbing & crawling through a thick grove of mangroves, trying to get an approach to see a cluster of herons & egrets, when a bird erupted from a hole in one of the trees only a few inches from my head. I froze, slowly turning to look up, expecting to see a woodpecker. Instead, gazing back at me with a beady dark eye was a Great Crested Flycatcher, and it was hard to say which of us was more startled. Flycatchers in holes? The thought had never occurred to me.

Turns out an entire group of flycatchers in the genus *Myiarchus* are very adept at finding & taking over cavities or old woodpecker holes. The Great Crested, *Myiarchus crinitus*, is the typical one in the eastern U.S., and they sport the typical gray head-brown back-yellow belly of the genus. The Great Crested is distinctive with large rufous-colored areas in its wings and tail. Its loud, drawn-out 'Weeep' call rings through eastern deciduous forests, pinelands and swamp forests from April through August. The very similar Ash-throated and Brown-throated Flycatchers are found in a variety of different habitats in the western U.S, where they also hunt out nesting cavities. There are even more species of *Myiarchus* flycatchers in Mexico and Central America.

Great Crested Flycatchers are fairly catholic in their choice of cavities. They have a slight preference for old woodpecker holes, but have been found nesting in a variety of cavities, including natural tree holes, seams in cliffs, holes in brickwork, pipes, old cans, pretty much anything that forms a non-collapsible cavity the right size. The pair will inspect the cavity, and if it meets their approval, the female will commence nest building. Although the bulk of the structure is small twigs & sticks, the cup is often lined with softer stuff like moss, bits of fur, and feathers. Great Cresteds also have the unusual habit of including shed snake skin in the outer layer of the nest. The birds are constantly on the lookout for nest-marauding squirrels and chipmunks, and the

snake skins may give these varmints pause enough to allow the flycatchers to chase them off.

Locally, Great Crested Flycatchers seem to favor riparian woods, possibly because of the abundance of cavities in sycamore trees found there. They'll also nest in suburban yards if some cavities are available, and seem to tolerate humans fairly well. They'll even use nest boxes, and have been seen competing with bluebirds and tree swallows for ownership of particularly desirable boxes. You can even construct boxes that are designed for *Myiarchus* flycatchers, with plans found here: nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/birds/great-crested-flycatcher. The boxes seem a bit larger than bluebird boxes, with the unusual prerequisite that they be hung in the air about 12 feet up; apparently the free-swinging motion discourages starlings and house sparrows (and bluebirds) from usurping the cavity. Some people swear that a hollowed out chunk of sycamore or oak can be hung instead of a box and is more attractive to the birds. In any event, you can use boxes to attract these cool flycatchers if you have any kind of trees or wood edge that they can forage.

Rob Thorn lives in the Columbus area and is an avid birder, field trip leader and writer for Columbus Audubon. He is also a National Audubon CBC compiler and it is a real treat to go for a bird walk with Rob. He is a true avian walking encyclopedia and he has a large following! We hope he will write for us and share about cavity nesting species.

Another good link to learn more is https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great_Crested_Flycatcher/id

Many of you remember OBS past president Doug Levasseur and Janice Petko and I were visiting him and he had Great Crested Flycatchers nesting in a Purple Martin gourd and fully raised their young to fledging.



Large flycatcher with a broad shouldered and big headed look. Note rusty primaries and tail feathers. Juveniles have more white edging on feathers than adults.

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Large flycatcher with a peaked crown. The underside of the tail has a very broad rusty stripe down the middle. Note bright yellow belly that goes farther up the breast than similar flycatchers.

© Ryan Schain | Macaulay Library

Above images borrowed with permission from the Cornell Macaulay Library.

Go Figure!

Calculating your bluebird's first egg date, hatch date and fledge date.

By Penny Brandau

Whether you have one bluebird box in your back yard or 100 bluebird boxes on trails it is VERY important to be able to calculate three important dates of each bluebird nesting attempt. It is recommended by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, North American Bluebird Society and many other bluebird conservation organizations that you check your bluebird boxes at least once each week but preferably twice a week during bluebird nesting season, from mid- March through August, and keep accurate notes of nest status, young and adult status each visit. This information will be critical in calculating your bluebird's first egg date, anticipated hatch date and also expected fledge dates. Here is a simple way to figure those important dates.

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

JUNE							JULY						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	28	29
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	30	31					

Use the information about nesting and the sample calendar above to figure a first egg date, expected hatch date, and also fledge date. Imagine that you checked your nestbox on

the 4th of June and found 2 eggs. You know that the female laid her first egg one day earlier, on the 3rd. This is first egg date! If you checked the nestbox again on the 8th and found 4 eggs you could figure that the mother must have laid her last egg on the 6th. First egg- June 3, second egg- June 4th, third egg- June 5th, fourth (Last) egg- June 6th. You know that the female started to incubate all of her eggs on the last egg date (June 6th) and that she will incubate them around 14 days before they hatch.

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

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

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

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

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



Ohio Bluebird Society 2022 Blue Feather Award Winners

By Darlene Sillick

The Blue Feather 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.

The winners this year are Fritz and Penny Brandau. The husband and wife team work together on this conservation hobby and have a strong passion for their work and hours they put in. Fritz says he is the "mud and sawdust" and Penny is the "communicator and cheerleader" of the team. They both enjoy teaching all aspects of 'bluebirding' - from working with new monitors at a "Bluebird Basic's" program to doing home visits, making and answering phone calls, writing computer emails and doing Nestwatch data entry.

Penny was an OBS Trustee for 4 years and our newsletter editor for 9 years. She has been the Lorain County Area Contact since 2013. What I found amazing is in 2010, only 6 bluebirds were reported to have fledged in Lorain County (this was when there was no Area Contact). Since Fritz and Penny joined OBS, there has been a steady increase of bluebird fledglings. In 2021, 719 bluebirds fledged from Lorain county, which is now second only to Darke county in numbers fledged. It is indeed amazing what they have accomplished in their county.



They have been members of North American Bluebird Society since 2010 and have traveled to 5 NABS conferences. If you have not attended a NABS conference you should try to go! You will be back. They are a lot of fun and very educational.

It is admirable what they have done in Lorain County. Fritz and Penny have both served two terms on the Black River Audubon Society board and as co-chairs for the social committee. They are recent recipients of the Jack Smith Conservation Award from BRAS. Since 2012 they have been coordinators of the Bluebird Program started many years earlier by visionary Black River Audubon Society founder Jack Smith. An astounding 17,957 native cavity nesting birds have fledged since 2012 from their bluebird program. WOW!! Fritz and Penny have been Purple Martin landlords for the past 2 years and they have monitored an American Kestrel nestbox for the past 6 years.

What is very touching about Penny's early years with bluebirds, was her father, Ford Smith, who shared his passion with his daughter Penny. He taught her many of life's lessons and she is forever grateful. He had the distinction of having the first bluebird eggs in Lorain County several times. He built many bird houses and feeders and he even contributed his data to Cornell Nestwatch and Project Feederwatch programs. It is said that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. This helps to understand Penny and her love of the bluebird that she learned from her dear father.

We wish to congratulate Penny and Fritz and encourage them to display their Blue Feathers with pride. This award was well deserved as they continue to teach and help many others who are interested in bluebird conservation. Thank you for the work you have done and continue to do for our native species! The bluebirds say thank you too with that special 'wing wave' we all know.

Sincere congratulations from OBS!

Ohio Bluebird Society Conservation Award 2022

By Carl Gleditsch



The Ohio Bluebird Society is honored to present the 2022 conservation award to Louise (Omie) Warner and Clyde Gosnell for their tireless work in preserving the land, conservation of wildlands, wildlife habitat (including cavity nest conservation) and most importantly engaging others in educational opportunities for young people in Ohio.

Louise, or Omie as her friends like to call her, grew up in Central Ohio. Both of her grandparents owned farms. In 1955 Omie and husband Jack Warner, who grew up on a dairy farm, graduated from OSU medical school and worked at Nationwide Children's hospital as anesthesiologists. They had two children (Gale and David) and while visiting their daughter at Stanford, they went to the farm where Gale was interning at, Hidden Villa in Los Altos California. They fell in love with the farming practices and education presented there and wondered if something like Hidden Villa could be duplicated in Central Ohio. With the help from the Ohio State University's Sustainable Agriculture Program, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and many other organizations and individuals, the 236-acre farm formerly owned by Omie's father, Galen Oman, was transformed into Stratford Ecological Center and Stratford Woods State Nature

Preserve. Omie's husband for over 40 years passed away in 1996. In their time together, Jack and Louise established the OSU Warner Endowment for Sustainable Agriculture, and they were founding board members for the Innovative Farmers of Ohio and the Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council.

In 2001, Omie met Clyde Gosnell at Stratford and found they had a lot in common. Clyde grew up on a family farm in Delaware County and they shared a passion for supporting organizations and programs that help preserve nature and the earth for future generations. Clyde, a Korean War veteran, went to OSU after the war and received a degree in architecture. He later founded the architectural firm Design Group, Inc. The two were married in 2001 and got to work helping to start a land conservancy, Appalachia Ohio Alliance, which has protected over 8000 acres of natural lands in central and southeastern Ohio along with two agriculture conservation easements totaling 565 acres. Omie and Clyde were also instrumental in establishing the John Glenn Astronomy Park in Hocking Hills State Park. The observatory will provide a venue for visitors to experience the night sky through a large telescope without the issue of light pollution.

It is with great pleasure the Ohio Bluebird Society gives the 2022 Conservation award to Louise Warner and Clyde Gosnell.

"Our mission has been to engage young people, bring them on board, and inspire them to understand the value, and respect the privilege, of living on this earth." – CLYDE GOSNELL

Wren Guards By Patty Dove

Here are pics of a couple of my "thrown together to save the chickadees" wren guards! Having lost a chickadee nest with nine eggs to wrens last spring, I was determined to get a plan. So far, so good!! I have guards on three houses that have chickadee nests, of which one has three eggs. The other two were mounted shortly post-construction just the other day. I have bluebirds in two houses - eight eggs total, and tree swallows have just set up shop in two houses, and are shopping for the third. The fishing line is great as a sparrow deterrent on all the nest boxes, and it snagged a starling by the ankle...lol. Lastly, I love when the orioles pass through so I had to share a pic of them too!



Wood Duck Box Has New Home In Mill Run Park

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



I am glad to report that most of the following events took place within the City where I live, Delaware, Ohio. On September 22, 2020, I received an email from Ted Miller, Parks and Natural Resources Director for Delaware. Ted's email had a photo of a horizontal Wood Duck box and he was trying to locate the box's owner since it

had been salvaged during the prior week by a Blue Limestone Park/Delaware Run clean-up team led by Caroline Cicerchi, Watershed and Sustainability Coordinator at the time. The box with its pole and baffle had been dislodged and pulled free by a flowing high water event. Ted was asking me if I knew anything about the box's owner so the box could be remounted, etc.

I answered that two boxes had been mounted in Delaware Run years ago and I had been assisted by one of Jed Burt's Ohio Wesleyan University students. I could not recall when and who and I have not been able to find my records of the event, but someday I'll uncover the needed historic documents.

I quickly retrieved the box with its post and baffle from the city's Public Utilities Department, but unfortunately, everything stayed on my back porch for more than 13 months. I went about exploring possible sites for the box and decided on a pond in Mill Run Park which is located along Mill Run Crossing behind a shopping center on the east side of Delaware.

This year, after contacting Ted to ask for help, things kicked into gear and arrangements were made for the box's installation on March 1 at 11:00 AM. I was dealing with healing issues after surgery and I did not trust strolling down a steep embankment while carrying a 28-pound post pounder. Most Wood Duck boxes are mounted on stop sign U-posts that are 3-1/4" wide. My pounder is made from a section of 4-inch steel pipe and works quite well once it is slipped onto the eight-foot long sign post.

Minutes before 11:00 on March 1, two city vehicles entered the parking lot at Mill Run Park and a very effective half-hour followed. As the city's Todd Millhoan and Chris Nelson slipped into their chest waders, I explained my limitations and we also talked about the highest level of pond water since we did not want the Wood Duck box to be flooded.

As we stood at the top of the pond's northern embankment, we discussed the possible location for the box, and we decided on a location where young Wood Ducks could drop from their box



A dedicated female Wood Duck incubates her eggs on May 21, 2011 at the Olentangy Environmental Control Center.

and immediately swim into vegetation that includes cattails. We descended to the pond and Todd, being the tallest, took the pounder and did a quick series of hits to drive more than three feet of post into the pond's bottom. We were at the edge of the pond and the water only covered our boots' feet.

The box faces east and everyone's hands were involved locating the baffle below the box, and tightening all nuts and bolts as all pieces were held in place. After all tightening had taken place, Todd added the white pine bedding for future nests. I used my camera to take photos to record the event's history and up the embankment we climbed for a quiet celebration of a job well done. Everything only took one-half hour.

During the time that we worked, the area was active with Canada Geese and Mallard Ducks, good indicators of excellent waterfowl habitat. I don't hunt ducks, but I belong to Ducks Unlimited, a very active conservation organization that preserves wetlands to enhance waterfowl hunting. In addition to creating nesting structures, there's a lot anyone can do to help waterfowl, such as purchasing duck stamps, etc.

Back to duck boxes, I have one in my backyard in Delaware. My backyard box used to be one made of wood, and it raised two families of Eastern Screech Owls. Jed Burt and some of his ornithology students visited the box on May 7, 2009 to add U.S. Fish and Wildlife leg bands to four owlets. It was a great activity.



Todd Millhoan (left) and Chris Nelson stand beside the reinstalled Wood Duck box at Mill Run Park.

When I had Screech Owls nesting in my backyard, I use to drop dead House Sparrows into the box after I returned from trapping them in my bluebird boxes. Well, I made one big mistake: one day, after dark, I visited my owl box to add several euthanized sparrows and I ended up learning why “screech” is part of the small owl’s name. The Screech Owl silently swooped above my head and SCREECHED, raising the hair on the back of my neck. This high intensity adrenaline event taught me to not approach a Screech Owl’s family once the sun sets.

Since I replaced my decaying wooden duck box with one that was made from a PVC water tank (that I got from the Ohio Division of Wildlife), only Carolina Wrens have nested in it. Tree Swallows, House Wrens, and many Wood Ducks have nested in other PVC duck boxes that I have monitored.

Between 1992 - 2004, I collected data from 39 duck nests that “fledged” 372 ducklings at the Izaak Walton - Columbus Zoo Nature Preserve. The earliest first egg appeared on March 16, and the latest first egg was laid on June 7. The first swimming duckling emerged on May 23, and the last duckling dropped from its box on July 17. Once ducklings swim, it is fun to watch them. Hopefully, Mill Run Park will offer this opportunity.

The park always has its share of walkers and dog-walkers. There is a dog park at one end of the parking lot. The ponds in the park have good vegetation that is attractive to waterfowl. The park has a lot of potential, give it a visit.

Conserve on!

Treasurer’s Report by Molly Wilsbacher

- A big thank you goes out to those who paid their membership dues, made donations, and used Amazon Smile** over the last quarter through March 31, 2022. We received \$1,995 in memberships, \$575 in donations, as well as \$30.96 from Amazon Smile.
- The Ohio Bluebird Society gladly accepts donations for a loved one who passes away throughout the year.** Most of our donations this past quarter were memorial donations in memory of Fred Nye (Area Contact who died unexpectedly), including one donation from Biglick Township in the amount of \$100 due to all of Fred’s contributions over the years. And the memorial donations are still coming in. Thank you!
- Our major expenses in the 1st Quarter of the year** included \$1,289 in awarding three small grants (which should be reported elsewhere in this newsletter), \$502 for our newsletter, and \$590 for conference expenses (yes, even virtual conferences cost money). Our bank accounts are healthy with our checking account reflecting \$7,512 as of March 31, 2022.
- We received two new Legacy box requests over the past couple of months:** one in honor of Krista Hyme and the other in memory of Fred & Edith Eads. The brass plates were ordered and the new boxes should be placed in the next month or two. A list of all Legacy Donations made over the last several years is listed here on our website: ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/obs-legacy-program.



Member News

Welcome New Members!

Howard & Elizabeth Bay

Ken Bowen

Andie Brown

Dave Gray

Nancy Henry

Carol Holmes

Kristen Lewis

Chance Patznick

Jackie Perucki

John Sanford

Julie Schwey

John Slanina

Michael Stropki

Karen Tuschman

Alice Tyrpak

Susan Vesely

Debra Woischke

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Don't forget to send your fledgling reports in for the 2022 nesting season! Each report is very important and appreciated. You can find the form to download and fill out on the Ohio Bluebird Society website.

<https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about-bluebirds/fledgling-report-2/>

By participating in the Ohio Bluebird Society Legacy Fund you can preserve the memory of dedicated bluebirders and bird enthusiasts, while providing nest boxes for the cavity nesting birds you love and enjoy.

<https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/obs-legacy-program/>

Notes from the president – by Darlene Sillick

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We waited all winter and a few surprise snows, for this time of the year. Ahhh spring! Birds are nesting and flowers are blooming. It is such fun to open a nestbox and count eggs and later those gaping beaks. But it is not always joy on the trail. Remember we are here to help you. Reach out to your OBS Area Contacts, board members and the many resources on our website. You can learn a lot from our educational videos and the last two years conference presentations.



At our next Board meeting, we will be discussing the 2023 OBS annual conference on March 4, 2023. Do you have conference topics you want to hear and learn from? Please send your speaker or topic suggestions to myself or any of the other board members by mid-July. We really like to hear suggestions and comments from our members. My email is dsillick118@gmail.com.



OBS awarded grants to several schools for various nestboxes and Ring camera boxes. It will be great to hear from them by the end of the season and read their reports and see the photos. I worked with Eagle Scout # 33 this spring and he funded and put up a new Troyer 24 gourd martin rig at Stratford Ecological Center. Then to complete his project he took down an awful trail at Hoover Meadows in Galena, Ohio. They were falling over, falling apart and boxes were painted some

gross colors. Charlie Thacker and his team got the area cleaned up and we added 6 of Charlie Zepp boxes. We have a new monitor and Paula is training her next week. Greg Baker, a new volunteer and monitor, was instrumental in cleaning up 2 trails and being persistent to return the Sunbury Rd trails back to native species including Purple Martins. Volunteers like Greg, Paula and Charlie are so valuable in OBS.

We had another special OBS project finally completed. We put up 40 nestboxes at the Wilds showcasing Tree Swallow grids. In 2019 we had a team put up 9 special designed American Kestrel boxes. I'm happy to say the birds are incubating eggs again this spring. Also, after our volunteers added some of the TRES boxes, before they even got to their cars, there were 6 to 8 swallows flying and swooping around a nestbox wanting it for their new home! We wish to share a hearty thank you to OOS, Ohio Ornithological Society for providing grants to complete these two big projects at the Wilds.

Do you want to work on a trail in your area? We have some experts who can make suggestions and provide some resources on trails in parks. Reach out and if it is a private trail, we can sell some set ups at a reasonable price.



Remember our area contacts are there to help you with some of your trail challenges. Most of the issues involve the House Sparrow and purchasing a couple Van Ert traps will help with that problem. Please don't let sparrows fledge from your boxes. We all know how beautiful it is to raise bluebirds and tree swallows. Such a feeling of satisfaction!

Wishing you nestboxes full of native species. Remember we will ask for your count on birds fledged in a few months. Working with Cornell Nestwatch is wonderful for compiling those reports for Cornell and OBS. If you have questions about using Cornell Nestwatch, we have several volunteers who can help you get started.

Wishing you a successful season, Watch and listen on your trails, the birds teach us so much!

The Passing of a Bluebird Hero – by Darlene Sillick



On March 8, we lost a dear Hancock County, Area Contact, Fred Nye. Many people knew Fred and his love and passion helping his beloved Eastern Bluebird. Fred had a love for the land he farmed and he was known for building boxes and taking loving care of his blues. He was a great teacher in his community first talking about the bluebirds and their life cycle and helping his neighbors and friends to get that first box up. He knew they would get hooked and it did his heart good to see others happy when the bluebird nested.

Fred was a member of Ohio Bluebird Society since 1985. I would get calls from Fred and he wanted to talk about a box idea or an issue on a trail. Sometimes it was a call just to say how happy the birds made him and about new trails with new friends he was making. He loved to attend the OBS annual conference in the spring and it was a treat to see his smiling face and get a gentle hug. Yes, he will dearly be missed.

Fred was the OBS Hancock County area contact and he touched so many lives to start the hobby of bluebirding. Indeed, he left a lasting impression on all he met. Fred always wanted to give back to the community and he served for 20 years as the Big Lick Township Clerk. He was married to Juanita "Pat", who was the love of his life and his very best buddy!

The Ohio Bluebird Society has recently received donations in memory of Fredric Nye. These heartfelt gifts support the important conservation and educational work undertaken by the Ohio Bluebird Society. We sincerely wish to say thank you to all who have graciously given in Fred's memory. He will so be missed by many, myself included!

Thank You to Our Donors!

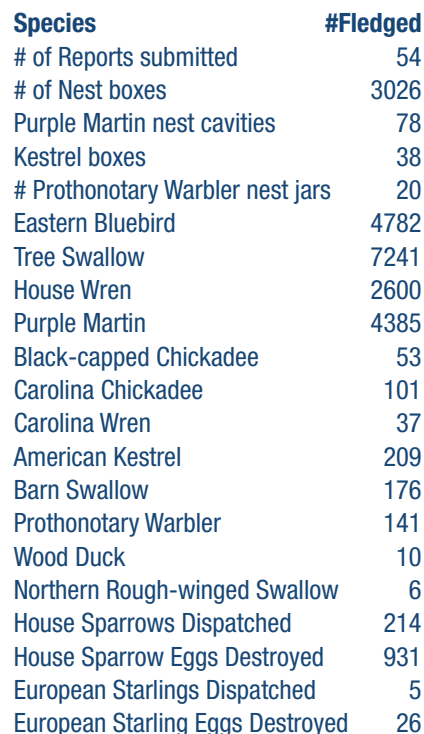
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We wish to thank the many people working with and for the Ohio Bluebird Society.
Without their help, we could never accomplish our mission.

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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

Gardening for Bluebirds - photo by Penny Brandau

As the bluebird's primary diet in the spring and summer consists of insects, it is critical not to spray insecticides or pesticides. Additionally, choosing native plants provides more and a greater diversity of insects for bluebirds and other species. In the winter months, bluebirds shift to a diet of berries and if you provide bluebirds with the right combination of helpful native plants, you'll be able to support and enjoy bluebirds all year round.

Plants to help bluebirds thrive:

- Flowering Dogwood
- Holly
- Eastern Red Cedar
- Elderberry
- Viburnum
- Bayberry
- Blueberry
- Serviceberry

Plants that cause damage to the bluebird habitat:

- Russian and autumn olive



- English Ivy
- Barberry
- Boxwood
- Japanese Honeysuckle
- Multiflora Rose
- Porcelain Berry

For more information on the benefits of native plants, visit the Midwest Native Plant Society. To learn more about the kinds of native plants that grow in your area, visit Audubon's native plant database.