



Bluebird Monitor

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

Fall 2021



Pampered Purple Martins By Madame WingNut



When July rolls around, our Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows are finishing up their nest season, but Purple Martin young are in various stages of development with most fledging by the end of the month. Purple Martins only have one brood per season. In over 20 years working with this species in different colonies throughout the state, I have

learned that diligent monitoring and nest changes are very important for the success of these birds. Every year during hot and humid weather, I have discovered life threatening conditions in many nests due to wet nests. Nests will look dry on top, but when I feel with my fingers at the base of the nest, they are wet. This wetness wicks up into the top layers over time, causing wet filthy undercarriages on the young, feather degradation and often death if left unmanaged. I monitor many different styles of housing and have found the problem worse in plastic gourds and aluminum housing. This problem is especially bad in horizontal plastic gourds (long tunnel entrances).

For years, I had operated on the recommendation that housing should not be lowered after eldest young were 22 days of age (Purple Martins generally fledge at day 28) to prevent premature fledging. Operating this way involved some significant chick mortality due to wet nests and “jumpers” – birds leaving housing before they could fly due to poor nest conditions and poor health. Purple Martins that leave nests before they can fly will generally not survive as adults usually will not feed them on the ground. For the past several years, I have monitored nests every 5-7 days regardless of age, changing nests on 28-day old birds if they need it. To safely do this, you need to have good data, quickly blocking any compartments where young are 22 days or older as you lower housing. I use rags with a long string attached to block entrances; it is very important to leave those in for about 5 minutes after housing is raised again. When performing nest changes, young over 10 days of age are gently placed in a deep 5 gallon bucket lined with pine straw and a towel placed over the top. This keeps older young from pre-fledging, calms them down, and keeps birds out of the sun. Some of my favorite moments during nest changes on public sites involve the helping hands and wonder of children that drop by to see what we are doing.



This year, I was determined to figure out what was causing wet nests and life-threatening conditions at the end of the nest cycle. In true citizen science fashion, I embarked on an experiment that I hoped would show me. I had two hypotheses:

- 1) The young themselves were causing the moisture buildup due to runny feces -or-
- 2) Rain water was getting in the gourds.

The little experiment I did during the end of July proved that both of these hypotheses were incorrect. I kind of love it when I'm wrong... science.

Results were consistent in different colony sites, but the 24-gourd rig (Troyer vertical gourds with short tunnel openings) I monitor at Deer Haven Park in Delaware, Ohio showed me what was happening. Fellow Purple Martin monitor Jim Lane and I instituted the “pamper protocol”. On Monday, July 19 we cleaned out old wet nest material from active gourds. Then we put diapers on the floors and covered them with dry white pine straw. Half of the gourds had the diapers placed absorbent side down and the other half had them placed absorbent side up. I thought this would help show us where the moisture was coming from. On Friday, July 23 I checked nests for moisture. I was careful to do this during a span where there had been no rain. Not a drop, so that variable was not part of the experiment. What I found surprised me.

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Equipment needed for nest changes includes good data, a deep bucket, and... diapers?

Gourds with absorbent side down had diapers soaking up some dampness and you could feel it in only four days time. Pretty wet actually. The water barrier on the top of that diaper seemed to keep the nest dryer and keep it from wicking into the material so these nests and young looked good.

Gourds with absorbent side up had moisture trapped on the floor under the diaper and some pretty damp nests starting. The absorbent side of the diapers were relatively dry so that wetness was not coming from bird excrement. I was still flummoxed because where the heck was the moisture coming from if it didn't rain? Then I touched the inside wall of the gourd and felt the moisture there. The inside of lids were also wet.



Copper mug with cold drink at outdoor bar shows condensation at work.

Condensation! In Ohio, we get some extremely warm and humid weather during late nest season. We also get some cool nights and when the dew point is reached, water vapor from the air will change to its liquid form and condense on any slick surface like the inside of a plastic gourd. Have you ever sat on wet plastic lawn furniture on a summer morning? Have you grabbed your binoculars from your air conditioned house to spot that elusive rare bird in your yard on a hot, humid summer day only to have them fog up on you?

Appreciate the condensation shown in the picture of this copper mug at an outdoor bar. The very cold drink inside and warmer humid air outside caused major condensation on the outside of this slick surface with water running down the sides of the mug and pooling on the bar. Flip this picture in your mind and think about cooler air on the outside of that gourd and warm bird bodies and warmer air on the inside pulling the moisture out of the air and doing the same thing on the inner surfaces of gourds.

I consulted Purple Martin landlords on some of the Facebook groups and they were seeing the same thing in their plastic gourds. Brad Biddle introduced an interesting insight, "The amount of moisture released from the birds lungs from respiration is tremendous. I learned all about that working in the poultry industry. It's a staggeringly large amount of water." So things that exacerbate the condensation problem inside slick walled plastic gourds or aluminum housing could be bird respiration (additional humidity), bird body heat (higher air temperatures inside gourd),



Left: Young Purple Martin is getting its first nest change. This bird is in excellent condition.

Right: Older Purple Martin young getting late nest change due to filthy wet nest. You can see the dirty undercarriage on this bird.

number of birds (larger broods = more humidity and body heat), high humidity of ambient air, and some bird excrement perhaps. Morning dawns bright and clear and the older young pack themselves into the tunnel of the gourd, begging to be fed and essentially blocking off most of the ventilation that would help dry out the nest. While they are in the tunnel, they defecate and run their damp undercarriages into the mess. All of these things create a miasma within that gourd that is most unpleasant, and life threatening if left unmanaged.



Pampered Purple Martins in experimental gourd with diaper under nest material. Birds and nest are dry.

I am not suggesting that people put diapers in their gourds. This was an experiment and not a solution. The best mitigative measures I can think of are to increase ventilation during warm humid months and raise the nest off the floor and away from the walls of the gourd to prevent condensation from soaking into nest material and allow better drainage. Good ventilation will reduce the temperature and humidity differential between the outside

air and the inside air of the gourd, reducing condensation and increasing airflow to dry out some of the moisture in the gourds. Next season, when hot, humid weather begins in mid-June, I plan to put vent caps on all my plastic gourds and install a fine mesh hardware cloth platform under the nest change material to keep nests dryer and allow for better drainage.

Are my Purple Martins a little pampered? Yes! They Depends on me (sorry).

Bluey yours, Madame WingNut

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.

Appreciation for a Bygone Era: the Everlasting Art of Mabel Rollins Harris

By Molly Wilsbacher, OBS Treasurer



In my first article for the Bluebird Monitor on vintage art, I concluded the article with “Girl Painting Bluebird,” by Artist Mabel Rollins Harris because she knew the difference between an eastern bluebird and other types of blue birds. I will not reprint that illustration in this article due to the multitude of other artworks painted by her with our beloved bluebirds and other bird species, such as “Good News Today” that is depicted below. [I am curious how many Ohio Bluebird Society members have observed similar bluebird nests in their own mailbox or a neighbor’s mailbox?]



Mabel Rollins Harris is an American illustrator who worked during the 1920’s and 1930’s. One of the most admired, if not the finest, illustration artists of the Art Deco era, she was born in 1896 in Bradford, Massachusetts and graduated from the Lynn Classical High School, in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1913. Many of Harris’s most famous pieces are known

for effectively expressing the magic and mystery inherent in the romantic themes that were so popular during the era. Her subjects were often posed with moonlit streams or ponds as backdrops, and rendered with her characteristic soft, yet brilliant glow.



Beginning in the 1920’s, Harris provided illustrations for many well-known calendar companies, including the Thomas D. Murphy Company, which is considered the birth place of the art calendar. An example of her calendar work is reflected below in “Health and Happiness.” Such calendars were given out to customers of various companies including American Packing Co., in Coshocton, Ohio.

Harris also painted many pieces for calendars that Brown & Bigelow published in the 1930’s featuring delightful portrayals of children, often in gardens featuring birds and pets. “Spring Song” (below) is one exemplary example.



It is worth noting that Brown & Bigelow inaugurated a tradition of publishing calendars for the Boy Scouts of America, which included artwork of Norman Rockwell and Maxfield Parrish. By the late 1940s, the company was one of the largest printers of calendars in the world, selling calendars to an estimated fifty million homes.

Due to the distinguished softness of Harris’ pastels, her work was extremely popular in the mainstream illustration and publishing community. Major magazines such as The Saturday Evening Post commissioned Harris to paint pastel illustrations for their covers. “Springtime Melody” (below) is only one example of such work.



Harris also did freelance work for the Rustcraft and Norcross greeting card companies, who specialized in religious and Christmas subjects.

The original paintings for the illustrations Harris painted were executed in pastels, on stretched canvas. Regardless of the subject matter, her paintings averaged 18 x 22 inches. Today, most canvasses

prints are appraised by auction houses between \$1,500-\$2,500 and I observed the below “Mother and Child” framed painting recently sold for \$5,900!



After viewing the illustrations in this article, you can see why the artwork created by Mabel Rollins Harris has lasted more than 100 years and have been immortalized, not only on magazine covers, calendars and greeting cards, but on puzzles, fans, and candy boxes throughout the years. If you own anything depicting Harris’s artwork, please

drop me an email with a snapshot of it! You can reach me at lilmissmolly1@gmail.com.

The 2021 Carolina Chickadee Nesting Season

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



On October 17, 2015, I presented “An Analysis of 313 nest attempts by Carolina Chickadees in Central Ohio” at the Ohio Avian Research Conference held at Denison University in Granville.

During 46 years, from 1969 through 2014, chickadees attempted 313 nests with eggs in bluebird nestboxes, plastic nestjars and other structures that were

managed and monitored on a regular basis in Delaware and Marion counties. I will use values attained in this study to make comparisons with the chickadee’s 2021 season.

First, I was very satisfied with the chickadee’s 2021 season because the same species only raised a total of eight fledglings from two nests during the previous season. In 2021, seven nests raised a total of 47 fledglings. I will describe the nest locations and encourage some good conservation goals at the end of this article.

The earliest first egg date (FED) in the 313 nest studies was April 3, 2012. The earliest FED among the 2021 nests was April 9 in Box-3 on the Ohio Wesleyan University campus. Box-3 stands at the southwest corner of the student observatory near Stuyvesant Hall. The chickadees there also raised the largest family of nine young from nine eggs. I did not expect all of the eggs to hatch, but they did.

A second chickadee nest on the Wesleyan campus also had a large clutch of eggs but not all hatched. Box-2 is located in the side yard of the Tree House, a small living unit for students that are expressing their love of nature by majoring in courses that will prepare them for nature related careers. Box-2 is visible from the sidewalk along Rowland Avenue to enable students to see it as they walk to and from their campus homes and their classes. The FED of the chickadee nest in Box-2 was April 17 and they raised five fledglings from a clutch of eight eggs.

The latest FED took place in Box-3 in Delaware State Park north of Delaware where I have been managing nestboxes since 1977. April 28 was Box-3’s FED and it was the latest chickadee egg start in 2021, whereas the latest FED in my 313 analysis was June 6, 1982. Unfortunately, Box-3’s chickadee nest attempt failed sometime after May 1 after four eggs had been laid at a rate of one laid per day. The villain was a House Wren that pecked and evicted each chickadee egg. Wrens also usurped a second chickadee nest in the park sometime after May 10, but the good news is that two park boxes supported successful chickadee nests that fledged six and seven offspring, respectively.

Two additional chickadee nests fledged seven and six young at the Olentangy Environmental Control Center, a Delaware County



Seven chickadee nestlings are close to fledging from their log nestbox.

sewage treatment facility north of Mt.Air along State Route 315. Part of my management responsibility has been to avoid flying squirrels that have become quite common in the riparian zone along the Olentangy River during recent years. While checking the twelve boxes in the wooded zone I must watch where I walk so I won’t trip on exposed tree roots and other hazards. I checked the boxes twice this past spring before I was informed that there was a new eagle nest on the center’s side of the river across from Highbanks Metro Park.

When I checked the riparian zone boxes on April 25, I would occasionally look up and around as I walked. I did not want to act sneaky to spook an alert eagle. So, when I reached Box-8, there stood a riverside sycamore tree about 25 yards directly east of the box, and an adult eagle was perched above a large stick nest. I proceeded to check my box to count five chickadee eggs, then after I reattached the box’s top, I continued on my way. As I walked, I glanced up and the eagle remained in place above its nest.

Years ago, I became convinced that the Highbanks eagles accept people since they rarely fly when they see me, and after all, I didn’t talk since I have always been alone. And, hearing people talk inside the park and seeing and listening to kayakers on the river is fairly common for the eagles, so they have become accustomed to peaceful members of our own species.

The chickadee nest that I am most aware of is in my backyard inside Delaware, Ohio. They nest in their log nestbox almost every year. This year, they raised seven after laying eight eggs. Their FED was April 10, and after laying one egg per day, 13 days of incubation and 16 days of feeding nestlings followed to raise seven young chickadees that fledged to continue their lives as entertainment for their human landlord.

The 2021 chickadee season included 63 eggs laid, 53 (84.1%) hatched, and 47 (74.6%) grew to fledge. After the eggs hatched, parents did an excellent job to feed and fledge 88.7% of their nestlings. Nests were active with eggs and nestlings for 45 days from April 9 through May 23.

Data collected for the 313 nest study recorded active nests during 94 days from April 3 through July 5.

One type of conservation for chickadees is quite simple: if chickadees visit your bird feeder, then they will also nest in your yard. It is that basic. If you feed birds, I urge you to add a nestbox for chickadees. If you have bluebird nestboxes in your yard, great. Also, make sure the chickadee box has a 1-1/8 inch entrance hole. All of my nestboxes inside Delaware City have patches that reduce the entrance hole to 1-1/8" so I don't worry about alien House Sparrows attacking our smaller native birds.

To avoid usurpations by House Wrens, put up boxes for them near brushy habitats while erecting the chickadee boxes in open areas near mature trees, etc.

I make my own hole reducers by drilling through sheets of plastic, Masonite, and Ohio DNR plastic signs that have been retired due to obsolete text. For nestjars made from plastic drain pipe, I drill holes in other drain pipes, saw out sections with my band saw, and drill and rivet the hole reducers in place on the drainpipe nestjars.

If you don't have a workshop, birdseed supply stores, such as Wildbirds Unlimited, sell copper plates, each with a "nesting box entry hole" of the appropriate size for \$2.99 each, and squirrels can't chew the hole larger. There are many merchants with appropriate solutions out there, so have fun helping our chickadees. Conserve on!



This log nestbox with its plastic 1-1/8" hole reducer raises chickadees every year in my backyard. Woodpeckers continue to whittle the log behind its hole patch.

Treasurer's Report by Molly Wilsbacher

1. **Thank you very much, members of the Ohio Bluebird Society, for paying your dues timely and for continuing to make donations!** The Ohio Bluebird Society's financial statement for the period ending June 30, 2021, reflected net income for the 2nd Quarter of 2021 of \$568.98, not counting two grants that we received (see below). We received \$1,745 in membership dues and donations totaling \$848.72, which included \$375 in Legacy Fund donations. Our expenditures over the second quarter totaled \$2,053.92 that comprised of (1) awarding two small grants for the installation of bluebird boxes at two elementary schools that included cameras, (2) publishing and mailing our quarterly newsletter, and (3) ordering brochures for the organization.
2. **The Ohio Bluebird Society received two grants this quarter from the Cardinal Health Foundation, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Division of Wildlife.** ODNR granted us \$500 to offset the costs associated with our virtual conference in March 2021. And Cardinal Health Foundation granted us \$4,000 for general purposes because one of its employee's is an active member on the board of trustees (thank you, Darlene Sillick). If a company you work for encourages civic involvement and provides grants to non-profit organizations because of your participation, please consider becoming a trustee for this outstanding organization.

Ohio Bluebird Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all trustees are volunteers serving a 3-year term, which can be extended one additional term.

3. **This past quarter Carol Sheldon honored Dave Gray with a Legacy Box and memorialized Ron Duecker with one, both of which were placed in Sheldon Marsh.** Stephen Habash also memorialized Mille Klopfenstein with a Legacy Box that will be placed in one of Hilliard's parks. Legacy Boxes are a great way to honor or remember bluebirders and bird enthusiasts, while providing nest boxes for cavity nesting birds you love and enjoy. For only a \$125 donation, Ohio Bluebird Society volunteers will build, erect, maintain, and monitor a bluebird box on prime habitat for bluebirds. For more information on the Legacy Program, please visit our website at: <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/obs-legacy-program/>.
4. **Friendly reminder:** When purchasing from Amazon, please do so through Amazon Smile and designate the Ohio Bluebird Society as your charitable choice. We received over \$25 this past quarter through this program: <https://smile.amazon.com>. Thank you to all members who currently use it!

Finally, Carolina Wrens

By Bob Orthwein – Originally printed in the OBS Bluebird Monitor Winter, 1997

Over the years, I have seen several T.V. nature programs showing Carolina Wrens nesting in Bluebird-type nesting boxes, but I've never had them nest on my bluebird Trails. My "in the woods" chickadee and Titmouse Trails have never attracted Carolinas. Even productive OBS trail operators Dean Sheldon and Richard Tuttle, who annually fledge hundreds and hundreds of Bluebirds and Tree Swallows, have never had Carolinas nest in their Bluebird boxes.

In the past several years, OBS member Jeff Davis has had Carolinas nesting at his scenic 8 acre residence near Perrysville, Ohio. The successful nesting locations were:

- In a 12 compartment aluminum Martin house stored inside an open door horse barn.
- In a large stick-wreath hanging under the front porch roof.
- In a pickup truck bumper leaning against a wall inside a covered open shed.
- On a shelf inside an open shed.

I have seen other Carolina Wren nests and ALL were under the roofs of open porches, open barns or open sheds.

This spring I sketched out an experimental Carolina Wren box and Jeff built two of the boxes, placing one on his covered back porch and one inside an open horse barn.

The Carolinas nested in the box under the back porch roof and fledged 5 young. They were very tolerant of human activity, and continued their nesting activities unconcerned about their human neighbors.

Carolina Wrens are one of the few birds that regularly sing during the winter months, and their songs are more melodious and varied than the monotonous song of the House Wren. The Carolina is sometimes called the mocking wren because it often mimics the songs of Cardinals, Titmice and other birds. Called

the "good citizen wren" by Dr. Wayne Davis because, unlike House Wrens, Carolinas do not destroy the nests, eggs and small young of Bluebirds, Chickadees and other birds.

Carolinas spend the winters in Ohio and survive by eating mostly hibernating insects and their eggs. Their food habits are very beneficial to man and to the environment because of their almost 100% insect diet. Their populations crashed due to the severe winter of 1978. They are making a comeback and can be found in many areas of Ohio in both winter and summer.

Last winter I had a pair of Carolinas frequently visit my backyard feeders in the city. They ate small bits of suet, but their favorite food was very small pieces of English walnuts placed on a windowsill that they shared with the Chickadees and Titmice.

The Carolina's habit of hunting insects in ground cover and low shrubs makes them vulnerable to cat predation. If you have a cat that is allowed outside, you really shouldn't try to attract Carolina's.

Jeff Davis practices House Sparrow control on his property and his big Labrador Retriever discourages raccoons and feral cats.

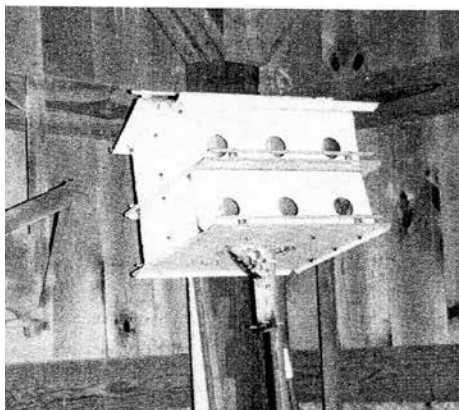
The dimensions of the successful box shown in the photo are 4"x 5-1/2" inside floor, 2-1/2" 5-1/2" entrance opening and 5" inside height.

If you install a safe, secure Carolina Wren box this spring, you could be rewarded with delightful songs and fewer insects.

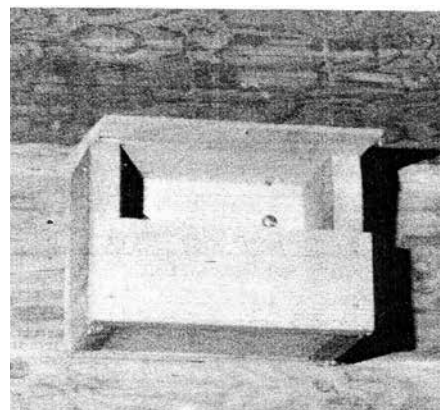
Here is a link to find the plans to build Bob's Carolina Wren box. His nestbox plans have stood the test of time and are currently listed on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Nestwatch website: <https://nestwatch.org/wp-content/themes/nestwatch/birdhouses/carolina-wren.pdf>



A Carolina Wren feeding its young. This nest was on a shelf inside an open shed.



Carolinas nested successfully in the bottom right compartment of this Martin house stored in an open barn.



5 young Carolina Wrens fledged from this box placed 7 feet up on an inside wall of a covered porch.

Novice Kestrel Project By Mary Reid



What kind of bird is a Kestrel? I asked myself this question when one of my brothers installed a Kestrel nest box on another brother's property. This started my research adventure into this interesting, beautiful, petite falcon.

Late winter 2021, my husband and I saw what I thought to be a Kestrel on one of our daily country-road walks. Soon after, I began seeing them on the wires in front of our home. I researched Kestrel nest boxes and contacted Darlene Sillick for guidance. Great news! Darlene had an extra nest box!

Armed with the needed nest box, we headed home to plan the location and pole. On a windy, cold day, Tom, my brother, recommended the perfect spot. We even saw a few Kestrels kiting in the wind that day.

Nest box up in mid-April but a wee bit too late for the early nesting season. We spent the rest of April, May, and some of June trying to keep the Starlings at bay. In mid-June, quite a few Kestrels were perching on the wires in front of our home. They were checking out the nest box. As we sat on the front porch during the evenings, we had the pleasure of watching their courtship. Soon after, a pair had selected our nest box! We checked the box on July 3. Sure enough, there were three light reddish-brown eggs with brown speckles.

A view from our porch afforded an opportunity to watch them hunt and eat from time to time. At dusk one evening, the male was perched on the wire calling to his mate in the nest box. She flew to him and took the offered food. It was dusk, and there were many bats flitting around our front yard on a mission for their dinner. From a high perch, the female finished her meal. Suddenly, she flew toward us and snatched a bat right out of the air with ease. She flew across the street over a field, dropped the bat, and swooped down and around to recapture it. Amazing evening!

The eggs had not yet hatched when we checked the box on July 24. We checked again on July 29, and there were three white, fuzzy baby chicks.

We thank God for His amazing creation and our Kestrel experience!

Pole-mounted Box

An adjustable pole?! How do you buy or build one that is inexpensive yet sturdy? Enter my husband's genius, mechanical mind.

- Two 30-inch pieces of 4"x6" of pressure treated lumber
- One 30-inch piece of 2-inch PVC pipe
- One 40-inch piece of 2-inch galvanized water pipe
- One 10-foot piece of 1-1/2-inch EMT conduit
- One 6-foot piece of 2-inch gray electrical conduit
- Two stainless steel u-bolts
- One 2-inch stage light clamp (Amazon ASIN #B085DQQ5G5)

1. Cut a v groove in the two pieces of pressure treated lumber.
2. In the v groove, sandwich and lag bolt the 30" piece of PVC pipe.
3. With a post hole digger, dig a hole just wide enough to press the treated lumber and PVC pipe assembly in the ground. Using a rod, pack the dirt around the assembly.
4. Insert the 40" piece of galvanized water pipe.
5. Into the galvanized water pipe, insert the 10' piece of EMT conduit.
6. Use two stainless steel u-bolts to clamp the back of the nest box to one end of the 6' piece of gray electrical conduit.
7. On the other end of the gray electrical conduit, make two, 1/8"-wide, 6" vertical saw cuts on opposite sides of the pipe end.
8. Put the stage light clamp on the saw-cut end.
9. Slide the nest box assembly piece over the EMT conduit.

Slide the gray pipe up/down to desired height and lock the clamp into place.

Note: at this writing, Mary knows they forgot the baffle. A critical component for the American Kestrel's safety. We are on it. Pics of the banding will be in the next issue. - Darlene

Bluebird Babies Again

By Linda Evans



After a successful brood of four fledglings left our decorative bluebird nest in early July 2020, we put up a standard bluebird box and hoped the birds would choose to nest in our yard again. The new box went up on July 8 and the next day, the female bluebird and a fledgling were checking it out.

We made sure to have mealworms and

water nearby to encourage the birds to make a nest. As far as I can tell, they began building a nest in our new box on July 15 and it was completed when I opened the box on July 19.

I checked the nest again on July 23 and there were three eggs in it. My husband and I were excited for our next brood and pleased that the bluebirds had chosen to nest again in our yard even though we had put up a different box. Mom and dad continued to fly in and out of the box and everything went well with the eggs. We did have some deck work done in the backyard and workers were there the entire day. Both mom and dad spent a lot of time away from the nest, but that didn't affect the eggs. The temperature was in the high 90's that day, and that was enough to keep the eggs viable.

Last egg laid on July 23rd



On August 6, the parent's behavior changed. They were making more trips in and out of the bird box and after a few days, we could hear the nestlings crying as the parents approached the box. Our three eggs had hatched!

Within days, house sparrows showed up in the yard and caused great alarm for the parents and for us. I went out and tried to chase the sparrows away. That did no good. The male and female both worked together to chase the sparrows, but the sparrows kept returning. Then, I went out and put pinwheels on the bird box to scare the sparrows. That also did no good.

As it turned out, the bluebird parents were relentless in protecting their babies. Time after time, they attacked the sparrows and chased them into a neighbor's yard. By the next day, I put up



Recently hatched chicks

another bluebird box hoping that the sparrows might use that instead of taking over the inhabited nest. While the sparrows showed no interest in the box, the female bluebird checked it out and then went back to feeding her babies. After a two to three day attack on our bluebirds, the sparrows moved on.

The parents remained vigilant, however, and chased rabbits and squirrels from the yard before they had time to get the mealworms or the babies. There is no doubt in my mind that they worked together to keep their babies safe. They also continued to feed the babies and after a time, dad started carrying away the fecal sac as well.

As things settled down in the backyard, we went on a short vacation and hoped that the birds would not fledge before we returned. We got lucky. On August 21st, I saw one of the babies flying from the nest around 9:00 in the morning. The next one went at about 11:30. Both just looked out the birdhouse entrance and took flight with great ease. One went up on our gutter near the roof and the second one went to a blue spruce tree. I wasn't sure if the third bird was still in the nest, but I had to leave the house and I missed seeing him fledge. I checked the nest the next afternoon, when I was pretty sure it would be empty, and confirmed that the third nestling was gone.



About five days old

Dad chasing sparrows away



Just like our first brood, the bluebirds and their babies disappeared from the backyard as soon as they fledged. But on September 11, mom and four fledglings made a visit to our mealworm feeder. I'm not sure but I think they were the four fledglings from our first brood. They took turns at the feeder and enjoyed the birdbath as well. At times all five birds were at the feeder, sometimes with two or three sitting right in the mealworms.

Toward the end of September, a few bluebirds made a visit to the yard, but

the squirrel had eaten all the mealworms and the bluebirds quickly left. A couple of days later, a Carolina chickadee and small woodpecker both checked out the nest box. We are trying to encourage the bluebirds to overwinter with us by having water and mealworms nearby. I have also put some white pine needles in the nest as an incentive for them. While we are crossing our fingers and hoping the bluebirds stay, we would be happy if any bird nested there. However, we are thinking of getting a heater for our birdbath as I hear that attracts bluebirds in winter. We are looking forward to a busy winter in the backyard!

Linda Evans is a former middle school and high school English and reading teacher now exploring the joys of retirement. In addition to reading and walking, she has added other activities including hiking, biking, kayaking, camping and birding. Biking and kayaking as a volunteer at the Adaptive Sports Connection in Shawnee Hills has been an enriching experience that brings great joy. In the coming years, she looks forward to more adventures with friends, family and the bluebirds in her yard.

Thank You to OBS

By Lynda Park

I want to give a very heartfelt thank you to all of your members for selecting Millersburg Elementary School to be a pilot school for your new bluebird house with camera project. It has been an absolute joy to see its impact on the learning of the students in our school.

We began this project in late March of this year with the installation of the bluebird box and camera in a grassy space on the north side of our elementary school. After some assistance from our technology coordinator, we were able to get the camera up for the viewing of any new activity in the nesting box.

Initially, when our first guests arrived, I shared several videos by email with our classroom teachers in the building. After a little online research, I discovered that individual teacher computers could be set up for live viewing of the nest and its inhabitants at any time throughout the school day. Teachers began viewing the nest activity and discussing the life cycle of the birds with their classrooms in real time. I would walk down the hallway and hear the chirping of the birds on the smartboards as classrooms were viewing the nest. Students would stop me in the hallway and give me updates on our newest arrivals as they watched the parents build the nest, lay the eggs, care for the baby birds after they hatched, and then encourage the hatchlings to fledge from the nest. Students in my own small groups would request to view the nest and abundant language-rich discussions about the lives of the



birds ensued. I know we are developing some future birders as students have become very curious about the nesting habits, diet, and care of different types of birds.

Thank you for enriching the lives and learning of our elementary students with this project. Many of our children would not have had an opportunity to view the live development of the life cycle of birds were it not for this project. I look forward to many future discussions with my students as we use this bluebird box and camera in the years to come. Thank you all for the blessings of this amazing gift!

Sincerely,

Lynda Park, Speech-Language Pathologist
Millersburg Elementary School and The Garden of Hope
430 East Jackson Street
Millersburg, Ohio 44654



Member News

Welcome New Members!

Deb & Harold Ackerman

Michael Beatty

Kathy Brown

Amy Collini

Rhea Dunsford

Elizabeth Jane Durkin

Jenni Gebbie

Dorsey Gilliam

Olin Hotchkiss

Lisa Hovanec

Bette Klein

Veronica Macko

Kimberley Miller

Virginia & William Sterling

Christie Vargo

Carol Watson

Thank You to Our Donors!

The Blackburn Giving Fund,
PPG Industries Foundation

Laura Brown,
Canton Audubon Society

Bethany & Jordan Gray

Veronica Macko

Alfred & Patricia Perry Jr.

Vicki Puster

Ohio Association of Garden Clubs

Janice & Chris Speckman

Emily Sandman
Cardinal Health Foundation Grant

Kendra Wecker
ODNR Division of Wildlife Grant

Stephen Habash
In Memory of Millie Klopfenstein

Carol Sheldon
In Memory of Ron Duecher

Carol Sheldon
In Honor of Dave Gray

The President's Bird Tracks by Darlene Sillick, August 2021

Can you believe we are about to wrap up another season of monitoring our trails and boxes? Why does it go so fast? I am sure Mike Watson has something in the newsletter asking for your fledgling reports for 2021. It is time to evaluate your box placement and box condition. If you are so moved and had some special things happen on your trails, be sure to write to Penny Brandau, our editor, and send her your story and include photos. We would love to hear from you!!

This year, many of us had the treat of experiencing the 17 year periodical cicadas. I was so fascinated to watch and listen and marvel about their lifespan and barely 2 months with us vs the 17 years they are underground. Truly amazing. As many of us have discussed, there was something causing some birds to go blind and die. The cause is still being studied around many neighboring states and some all the way to the Atlantic. This article from Cornell and the Ithaca Times paper made a lot of sense to me. I have devoured every article I could find and this one made a lot of sense.

Cornell experts not overly alarmed by mysterious songbird sickness: https://www.ithaca.com/news/ithaca/cornell-experts-not-overly-alarmed-by-mysterious-songbird-sickness/article_ae73fa12-efc6-11eb-9a3f-ef82b40e923f.html

One quote "The distribution of states where this spontaneously popped up was an exact match for the cicada emergence map. The decline in cases corresponds with the retreat of the cicadas." "But we are very thankful that people are paying attention. This is exactly what we need to have happen when we see things in wildlife that are concerning." Please take the time to read this and never be afraid or timid to speak up. I am sure we will hear more about this.

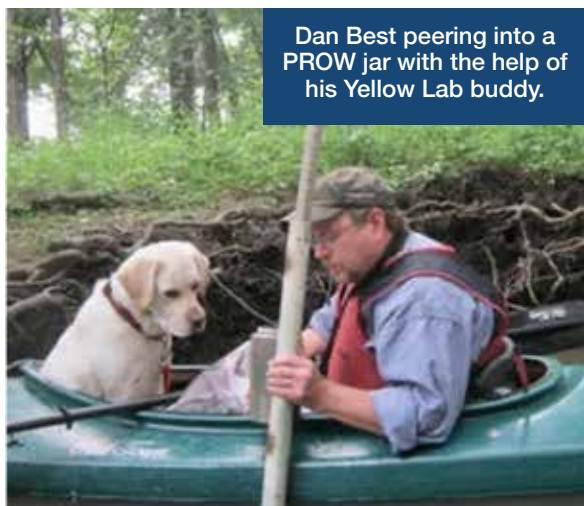
As with any good non-profit, we must constantly think about succession. Next year we will have at least 2 openings on our board. We have 6 meetings a year for a good 2 hours at a time and run a very full agenda. We have committees too and hope you might think about volunteering some time to help OBS. Please let any of the board members know if you are interested or know of someone we can chat with.

We would like to take a few minutes to thank my employer Cardinal Health for their non-profit grant program. Each year, I fill out an application and annually the non-profit I donate time to, receives \$3,500.00 to be used as we determine. There are no stipulations. A big shout out to my employer who does this for many other non-profits. I have 24 bluebird/tree swallow boxes on the grounds and I enjoy answering their bird related questions. Also, a big thank you to ODNR who also gives us a grant for our use with the conference of \$1,000. This is so very helpful and this year since our conference was virtual, we did get \$500. Many thanks to ODNR and Cardinal Health for their financial help to our bottom line.

This leads me to the Ohio Bluebird Society annual conference March 5, 2022 at Ashland University. At our board meeting last Saturday, July 31, we planned and discussed what we hoped to have at the same venue as in past years. With the recent uptick in Covid Delta Variant cases, we are evaluating the situation. By no later than November 1 we will decide if the conference is in person or virtual. Our next OBS board meeting is early October. Our theme is 'Beyond Back to the

Basics'. Anna Rose is creating a new conference logo and as with her other pieces, the draft had us all gasping at her amazing art work. You will see it this fall. Anna has agreed to emcee for 2022.

We hope to have speakers discussing 'how to with bluebirds' and learn more about some other cavity nesting species. Confirmed is Dan Best who is talking about Going for the Gold: Three Decades of Prothonotary Warbler Husbandry This year was the 30th field season for the Upper Cuyahoga River Prothonotary Warbler Nesting Project in Geauga County, Ohio. Dan Best and Rachel McKinney will give a fact filled talk on the Golden Warbler of the Swamp, our only cavity nesting warbler here in the east.



Dan Best peering into a PROW jar with the help of his Yellow Lab buddy.



Once upon a time, this was a Metamucil jar in your cabinet. Dan found a new use for these jars.

I will speak on Creative Conservation Projects and how to take ideas and get funding and volunteers pulled together for the good of Best Practices for conservation projects.

Bethany Gray will give a wonderful talk on Bringing Back the Bluebird. The board unanimously asked for her to present again.

Megan Shave was a MSU 2018 graduate student who worked with American Kestrels and nestboxes in an orchard setting. We are very pleased she will present for OBS and share her findings.

We are looking for 1 or 2 more speakers and we will have the flyer and information ready early October. We again would have the educational table displays with a fun way to visit the tables and get a 'table display' passport book for each to receive either a stamp or a sticker. The high number of visitors will go in a basket for some special prizes. We will also present the Blue Feather and Wildlife Conservation awards. Stay tuned for more updates and be sure to get your vaccine to be safe.

The Silent Auction would be back too and a big thanks to Molly, our treasurer who runs this so well.!

We love to hear from you, our members and guests. Please share your ideas for the conference and website and also articles you would like to read about. You can email me or our newsletter editor, Penny Brandau, or any of our board members.

Thanks for all you do to keep the OBS non-profit doing so well. We can't do it without all of you.

Many thanks,
Darlene Sillick, OBS president, dsillick118@gmail.com

In Memory of Theodore W. "Ted" Hunker



On July 4, I met with Ann Marie Hunker to present her the Wildlife Conservation Award from the Ohio Bluebird Society. Her husband was the golf course supervisor at Safari Golf Course and he passed of cancer December 2020.

Anne Marie arranged for their 4 grown children and extended families and other relatives to meet at the SGC Pro Shop at 8am. The VP of the golf course is Ty Day and he helped to coordinate the event. It was a very moving tribute to Ted and his family.

They very much appreciated the award and the time we spent working together on projects at the golf course over the 5 years. Sometimes it is not about the nestbox or gourds where birds are raised. It is so much more important for the lives we touch and people we educate with our conservation efforts.

Humbly,
Darlene Sillick



Canton Audubon Program and Project

By Darlene Sillick



In May 2021, I gave a virtual Zoom talk to the Canton Audubon about the how to's of conservation projects. I shared many projects I've worked with around the state and how to work on funding and recruit help to get the projects completed. During the Q&A session, I shared I had some Osprey platforms and nestboxes that need homes. There were

many emails back and forth and a meet at the barn day with my dear friend Charlie Zepp was finally arranged.

What they asked for and what they got were 2 different things. I wanted to mention the names of the folks I worked with and hope if OBS members are interested to help, then please reach out to one of them. Also, OBS trustee Judy Semroc has coordinated with them to encourage them to do assessments and survey's of their sites. They are in the process of doing the science survey's.

What makes this so interesting is they are with the US Army Corp of Engineers in watersheds and hope to stop doing so much mowing and use areas for homes and habitat for native cavity nesting species. It would save taxpayers lots of money. Be sure to mention this to OCVN volunteers too as well as scouts.

Scott Kraynak, Natural Resources Management Specialist (ECC), Muskingum Area Office
Scott.P.Kraynak@usace.army.mil • 330.365.4251 (Office)

Stephen M. Ecrement, Natural Resources Specialist
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lower Tuscarawas Projects
740.829.2056 (Office)

Linda Chen
President of the Canton Audubon Society
CantonAudubonSociety@gmail.com

Charlie Zepp and I wanted to pack the nice pick up truck full. I think mission was accomplished!!

They received 4 Osprey platforms, 5 American Kestrel/screech owl boxes, 2 flicker boxes and 2 Merlin Tuttle multi compartment bat boxes and 8 bluebird boxes. In turn, I asked that they put these up this year, keep non-natives out, keep Cornell Nestwatch data and provide data to OBS. I also want all poles baffled and monitors to go out weekly during nesting season. I then asked for updates and photos and hope to have more articles in the OBS newsletter. With the cost of wood and cedar doubling in price, let's say Steve and Scott did very well on their project donations.

I was interviewed for the Canton paper about the project and have permission to share it here. I have attached some photos from the barn and loading the truck. For some reason these photos were not used in the article.

Here's the link to the story: <https://www.cantonrep.com/story/news/2021/07/29/army-corps-engineers-audubon-birds-dam-volunteers-ohio/8064301002/>

Hi everyone,

I just wanted to share this article I found today in which our own Darlene Sillick is interviewed. This sounds like a great project for Ohio, and less mowing indeed!

Darlene, thank you for your continued work. And to others who are working on similar projects, don't forget to share your successes with us so we can amplify them.

Nesting season is winding down, but I still have Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens, Carolina Wrens, and American Goldfinch active. I hope you all are having a good season!

*Best,
Robyn Bailey, NestWatch Project Leader
Cornell Lab of Ornithology*



2020 Ohio Bluebird Society Nest Box Reports

By Mike Watson

Last year was, of course, an unusual year in many ways. Covid changed many things about how we live and work, and nest box monitoring was no exception. Travel and work restrictions meant that some trails could not be monitored for part or all of the season. Some organizations were forced to reduce or suspend volunteer programs focused on nest box monitoring. So I expected to receive fewer reports this season than in past years. OBS received 66 reports for the 2020 season (10-year average = 76 reports) totaling 6141 bluebirds fledged (10yr average = 6305). It should be noted that although the number of reports submitted was below the 10-year average, it falls right on the average for the past 5 years (67 reports) during which time reporting has been very stable.

In 2016, OBS added 'number of nest boxes monitored' to our reporting form, which helps us account for changes in total number of reports submitted and the vast differences in the size of programs (from single backyard nest boxes to programs with hundreds of nest boxes). The number of bluebirds fledged per nest box has, in fact, been increasing for the past 5 seasons, with 2020 being the best season in that time period.

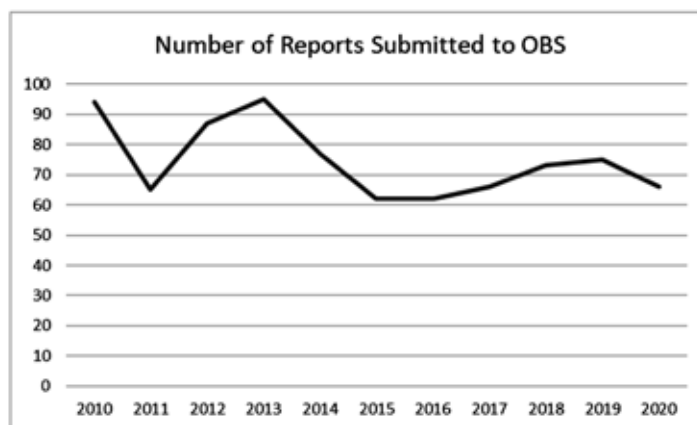
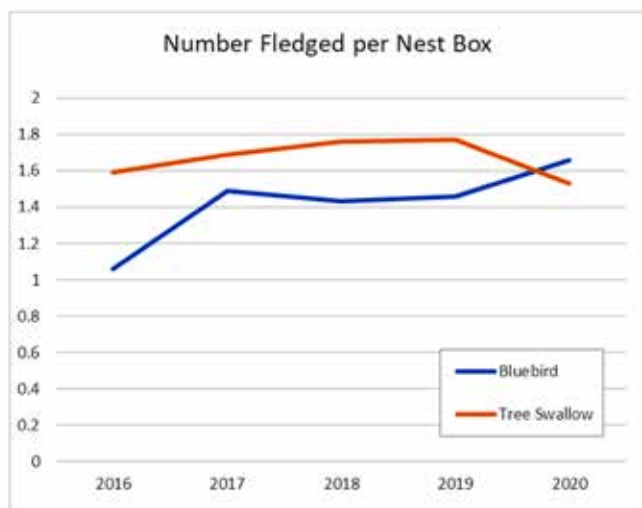
Although there are many factors affecting bluebird nesting success and it is challenging to collect and present data in a way that shows the state-wide status of our bluebirds (and other cavity nesting species), it appears that 2020 was a successful year, despite many challenges.

Thank you to everyone who submitted reports for the 2020 season. If you have not yet submitted data, we are still accepting data. And please remember to submit 2021 data as the season winds down.

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



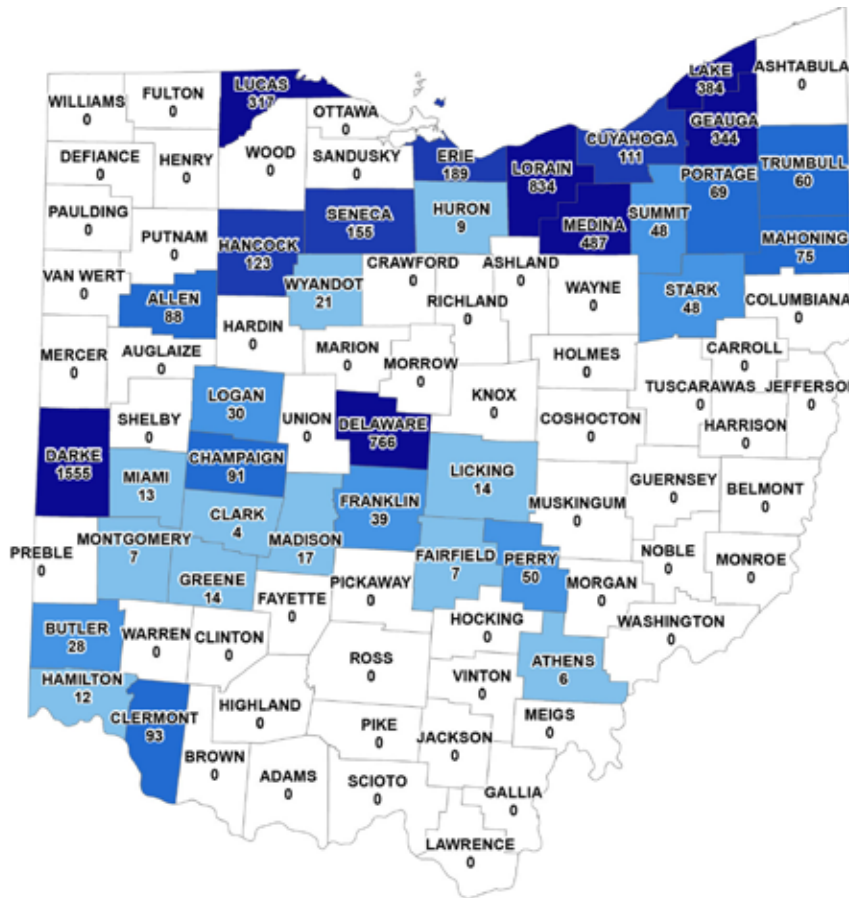
Species	2020 Total	10-yr avg
Eastern Bluebird	6141	6305
Tree Swallow	5610	6562
House Wren	2365	1859
Purple Martin	1919	2563
Black-Capped Chickadee	47	106
Carolina Chickadee	71	148
Carolina Wren	118	35
American Kestrel	233	111
Osprey	13	10
Barn Swallow	274	117
Prothonotary Warbler	101	66
Tufted Titmouse	31	15
Wood Duck	63	6
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	10	0
House Sparrows dispatched	895	711
House Sparrow Eggs destroyed	1318	1023
Starlings dispatched	1	32
Starling Egg destroyed	38	28



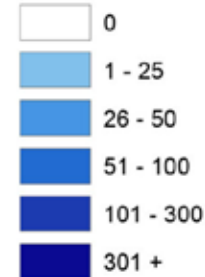
Ohio Bluebird Society

Number of Bluebirds Fledged in 2020 by county

(Reported by OBS members as of 22 February 2021)



#Fledged per County



created by Mike Watson; The Holden Arboretum

TOTAL #Fledged = 6104

Reports Submitted = 65

Counties Reporting = 35 (of 88)

Nest Boxes = 3456



Ohio Bluebird Society Membership Application

Membership Class	Annual	3-years
☐ Student (under 21)	\$10	\$25
☐ Senior/Sr. Family (over 60)	\$15	\$40
☐ Regular/Family	\$20	\$50
☐ Organizational	\$50	\$140
☐ Life	\$300	
☐ Tax deductible gift to OBS \$ _____		
☐ Membership renewal ☐ New membership		
☐ I am interested in participating in OBS activities		
☐ Email Newsletter OR ☐ Print Newsletter		

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

County: _____

E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to:
Ohio Bluebird Society

Mail to:

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

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

OBS 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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facebook

Like us on Facebook! Search for
Ohio Bluebird Society to join our group.

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			WYANDOT	James R. Coffman	jrusscoff@gmail.com



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

The Holden Arboretum
9500 Sperry Road
Kirtland, Ohio 44094

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Mission Statement

The Ohio Bluebird Society was formed in 1987 to support the return and the perpetuation of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) and other native cavity nesting birds in Ohio. To this end, the Ohio Bluebird Society will strive for the best methods to use, conserve and create habitat for the protection of these species.

ohiobluebirdsociety.org

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Affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society

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Deadline for Submitting Articles:

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

Thank you Susan and Krista for caring for this young nestling. Krista brought the nestling to Susan and I on the evening of 7-12-21. The nest had been attacked by a house sparrow which had killed all the Young except this survivor.

Susan and I were monitoring Safari golf course and hoped we could find a match for it. Unfortunately, this late in the season that proved to be difficult. Ohio wildlife Center was closed and we had little choice but to put this young one in a nest of tree swallows to warm it up and get it fed. It remained there until the following afternoon. The attached pictures show the Bluebird in the Tree Swallow nest (bottom middle of picture). There were bruises on its backside from the house Sparrow attack. Tree swallows fed and kept it warm for almost 24 hours.

Susan and I were able to foster it into a nest on a local Bluebird trail in Powell on 7-13-21. Looking at it closely we realized that it was undersized for its developmental age. We wondered if the house sparrows had been harassing the parent bluebirds to the point where they could not feed the young properly before the big attack happened. Krista also reported that the father had gone missing. The picture on the top right shows the foster chick on the right and the natural young on the left.

Thank you to all of you that worked so hard to find a foster match for this young bird. I am happy to report that all five Bluebirds fledged from the nest (4 natural young and the foster chick). Parents were very attentive and took great care of these young.

– Paula Ziebarth

