



# Bluebird Monitor

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

Summer 2021



## Our June Bluebirds

By Linda Evans



During the spring of 2020, as I was cleaning out our garage, I came across a decorative birdhouse that used to sit in our family room. It had flowers and birds painted on it and a heart shaped hole. It didn't open up and was never intended for birds. I decided to put it on our deck as a cute decoration.

I set it on a deck post near where we had our kayaks resting against the deck railing. At the end of summer, I intended to throw the bird box out. Over the next few days, my husband and I noticed that a bluebird pair kept landing on our kayaks. Apparently they liked the view from there. We enjoyed watching them from our kitchen window and often saw them catching insects in the air and splashing in the birdbath.

A week after I put the bird box on the deck post, I peeked inside and saw a lovely pine needle and mud nest with one egg in it. Three days later, there were four perfect blue eggs resting in the nest. My husband and I had not seen any nest building activity going on, and we had no idea that blue birds had claimed it as their home.

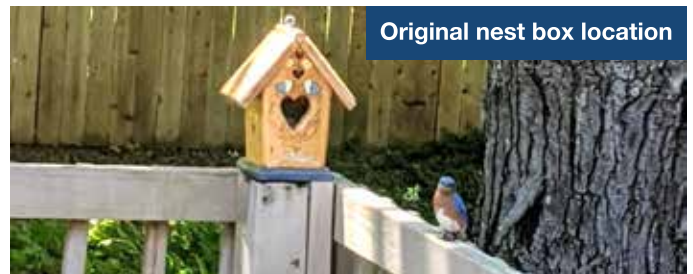


I immediately took a picture of the nest and eggs and posted it on Facebook. Within minutes, Darlene, our birding friend, commented, "Let's talk about getting a safer nest box with a baffle. Happy to help." The next day

we met her at her supply barn and picked up the necessary pole and baffle to keep our birds and their eggs safe from raccoons, snakes, cats, and other critters that prey on them. We also determined that we would have to keep the nest in its current decorative box because it had been stapled together and there was no way to safely remove the nest and eggs. Darlene explained how to secure the box to the bluebird pole and

stressed that we could not jostle the box as the eggs were very fragile. The only thing we needed was a flange. We purchased the flange from Wild Birds Unlimited the next day.

Until the birds were removed from the deck and secure in their new location, I kept my fingers crossed and checked constantly to see that the bird box was still on its post and that the mother was keeping her eggs warm. The next morning, before I even had coffee, I checked the box and saw the four blue eggs nestled down and looking just perfect. Yes! Today we would move them safely to another location in the backyard.



Darlene said our new location had to be within sight of the old nest, so we chose a spot about 50' from the deck post. We checked carefully to make sure there were no branches or bushes nearby. We didn't want to encourage squirrels or raccoons to make a leap for the babies when they hatched. It wasn't too hard to drill the post into the ground because it had an auger on the end and only went about a foot into the ground. It was harder to get the four stabilizing feet into the ground because we have so many mature trees and large roots in the yard. We got two feet in easily and did our best with the other two. The nest would be slightly tipped, but not very much.

The final step was to secure the nest box to the flange at the top of the pole. We had to screw the bottom of the box to the flange and discovered that the nest box was made of incredibly hard wood. We couldn't risk jostling the eggs by using a drill or an electric screwdriver. It took a while, but we got three screws in tightly and the fourth in half way. The box seemed secure and we went inside to see if the mother would find it quickly. Temperatures were in the high 80's so she could be off the nest for a while and not damage the eggs, but we hoped she would soon find the box and resume her duties.

*Continued on page 2*



Sight lines from old nest

I watched from the kitchen window and saw no sign of the bluebird pair. I checked their favorite branches and the shepherd's crook where they liked to land for a good view of the yard. After about 10 minutes, both the

male and female appeared over on the deck post. They spent a good minute looking around. I can just imagine how confused they were. Usually we didn't see the two of them together near the nest so I don't know if she told him he better have a look, but after a while, they went away. In a few minutes they were back, this time landing on tree branches. All the while, I was watching the box and willing them to see it. Suddenly the male swooped down and landed on top of the box and the female followed. She perched just outside the box and took a good look inside. Then she entered. The male came down and also perched just outside the entrance and seemed to check things out. I was inside our house so I couldn't hear if they were talking or how they communicated, but he seemed to think everything was okay and he flew away. She also flew away, but then came back and settled back in the box.



Male checking new location

I let Darlene know that the move was a success. Now we wait until the eggs hatch. Fingers crossed that we will get to see four baby bluebirds fledge.

Since the last egg was laid on June 7th, we could expect the eggs to hatch within 12-14 days. By June 21st (Father's Day) we saw mom and dad frantically flying back and forth to the nest box. We had babies! I hoped all four eggs had hatched, but since we couldn't see in the opening very well, we had no idea how many babies there were. At that point, the babies weren't cheeping either, so we just had to be patient and wait to see them.

For the next 17 days, we watched mom and dad flying back and forth feeding the babies. I kept the birdbath full of clean

water since we were in the middle of a heat wave. I worried that the parents would exhaust themselves, but they seemed able to keep up their feeding schedule. Darlene recommended I put out mealworms to make it easier for the parents to feed their young and to encourage them to nest one more time this season in our yard. It took a few days for mom to find the mealworms, but when she did, she seemed to appreciate them.



Seventeen days after the eggs hatched, we had our first fledgling. I just happened to be standing at the kitchen window with my camera and was snapping pictures as he moved his head farther and farther out of the hole. Suddenly, he put his feet out and then his wings. He held onto the perch and then tumbled away from the box. After a lot of fluttering of wings, he started to fly and

made it about 100 feet away to a burning bush. Right after that, his sibling came out of the box. I thought he was ready to fly also, but after a quick look around and a few flaps of his wings, he went right back in the box and stayed there.



The next day around 9:30 a.m., I watched two heads look out of the box over and over again. Mom was sitting on the branch of a nearby tree quietly vocalizing. Maybe she was encouraging them to fly? They didn't make any attempts though, and I watched her bring mealworms to them. Darlene had said the birds would fledge when they were hungry enough so it was surprising that the mother bird

was still feeding them. She must have fed them three or four times that morning. But they seemed reluctant to leave the nest.

Then around 1:30, the first one simply took off from inside the box and flew up on our roof. Within minutes, the next bird followed just as gracefully. No tumbling around or frantic flapping of wings. They were both pros. At this point, I thought the box might be empty. We had had four eggs, but I had never seen four little heads at the same time. Three heads, yes, but never four. I checked the box with my binoculars and after a few minutes saw another beak gaping at the hole. Our fourth bird had survived!

It was now afternoon and I had read that birds usually fledge in the morning. Our fourth bird would apparently wait until the next day. Since I had spent two mornings at our window, I decided to get a little work done. By dinner time, my husband and I realized that we hadn't seen the male and female for



several hours. Who was taking care of our last nestling? We both got out our binoculars and tried to figure out if he was still in the box. An hour later, I got up on a step stool and peeked in. No bird. He must have fledged when we weren't looking!

That evening, we took the decorative bird box down and put up a real bluebird box. The next morning I looked out and saw the female inspecting the bird box. She was making quite a racket, flapping her wings and cheeping just at the mouth of the box. When I looked with binoculars, I saw a head inside the box. One of the newly fledged birds had gone in and she really didn't want him there. He flew out and the nest has been empty today. We are hoping that she likes it well enough to come back and build a new nest for another brood.



*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.*

## Safari Golf Course

By Darlene Sillick

Safari Golf Course is managed by the Columbus Zoo and I have maintained boxes there over 30 years. The maintenance crew and golf starters have all taken an interest in what we do. Paula Ziebarth (Madame Wingnut) has been a huge help for over ten years. Since we added three of the 24 gourd martin rigs, we found out just how interested and caring the crew and staff have become.

Each season they put up the 72 martin gourds and add dried white pine needles to each gourd and put the baffles on. When the rigs first went up they dug the holes and cemented in the ground sockets. At the end of the season they take down the gourds and clean them out and store them for the winter.

If you have worked with gourds after nesting season, well, it just is not a pleasant job to clean them. I talked to the crew this spring and asked them why they do this. It is not in their job description and they all work early and very hard. I wanted to share some pictures and reasons they help with a special conservation project.

From Phil Oder, "It's enjoyable to watch nature prosper."

From Derek Calvert, "I was not in the photo, but I enjoy seeing the number of Birds return each year and am glad that I am part of their success."

From Nick Wilburn, "I do this in order to provide a safe place for the birds to raise their young and to inform others why these houses are important for the species survival."



The Maintenance Crew of Van, Derek and Phil should be proud of their handiwork. They provide clean gourds with nice dry bedding and about the end of March or first couple days of April, here come the martins to their northern breeding location. Pretty darn amazing. I wanted to say thank you to these dedicated workers for caring and going the extra mile to help the most sought after bird in North America – The Purple Martin.

To do this right, I need to make some homemade cookies and treat them to show our thanks for their dedication to conservation in southern Delaware County. You guys rock!!!

Darlene Sillick, SGC monitor with Paula Ziebarth and along Powell Rd, James Estep who monitors 18 bluebird and tree swallow boxes.

# Gabe Rich's Eagle Scout Award Benefits Bluebirds

By Gabe Rich, Eagle Scout Troop 64

My name is Gabe Rich and I am a senior at Westerville Central High School in Westerville, Ohio. I recently achieved the rank of Eagle Scout during the summer of 2020 as part of Troop 64.

My Eagle project really began when my parents and I took part in a project organized by Darlene Sillick to help the Ohio Blue Bird Society to repair and replace some bluebird houses at the Safari Golf Club near The Columbus Zoo. After the work was done, Ms. Sillick told us about what the OBS does and about birding, in general. By the end of the day, Ms. Sillick and I had arranged for support of an Eagle project to update my high school's nature preserve by adding some bluebird houses, a large bat house, a few trees and a bench where people could peacefully observe nature. The bat house and the birdhouses I used were donated by Ms. Sillick and the OBS. During the Eagle project we also constructed 20 additional bluebird houses to be returned to the OBS for future use.

In May, 2020, I gathered volunteers from my Troop, keeping in mind COVID-19 rules that required masks and social distancing as well as a limit to the number of people present at any given time/location to ten or less. Using separate stations and working outdoors, we were able to successfully install the birdhouses, the bat house, trees, and the bench. At another area of the preserve, volunteers helped construct the remaining 20 birdhouses. The entire project was completed in about 2.5 hours.

We delivered the completed bluebird houses to Ms. Sillick in September after my Eagle rank requirements had been finalized and I received my official certification.

I'm so grateful to Ms. Sillick and the OBS for their contribution and support!



# The Beautiful Stained Glass Art of Bob Bement

By Molly Wilsbacher, OBS Treasurer



***"Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time."***  
~ Thomas Merton

There are many different forms of art, like paintings, photography, and sculpture, all of which affect our emotions and feelings. Whatever form of art we see, its main characteristic is that it is pleasing to the senses. For the last 50 years, one type of visual art that has captured my imagination is that of stained glass. No one combines this medium with nature and birds better than Robert "Bob" Bement.



Bob is primarily a hobbyist who makes one-of-a-kind pieces for family and friends that he gives as gifts for special occasions and anniversaries. He also donates special pieces to fund raisers at local charities, including the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Berlin Heights, and the Ohio Bluebird Society for silent auctions at its annual conferences.

Bob's interest in stained glass art started in the early 1970's when he dabbled with pre-cut stained glass kits from a mail-order company (pre-internet). The kits arrived with the glass cut ready to wrap with lead and a solder included.



After serving in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in the early 1960's, Bob began working for the United Auto Workers at the Ford Motor Company in Lorain. Bob retired around 2006 after working for 40 years at Ford. Looking for something to keep him busy in his retirement, Bob remembered

his interest in stained glass, so he decided to take a stained glass class for seniors taught by Jon Reising. These classes offered tools, materials, and instruction at a reduced rate making the class affordable. The beginner projects made it easy for all, and helped students gain confidence in themselves.

Bob soon began to visualize projects and got more proficient at developing his own plans. Starting out with two dimensional projects and graduating to three dimensional projects was rewarding for him. His art progressed from flat window "sun catchers" to dimensional practical vases, boxes, lamp shades, dishes and more.

According to Bob, his stained glass projects keep him busy on cold wet rainy days. "Buried in my basement 'studio' (as I

jokingly tell my wife Barb) I can feel like I am not wasting away useful time. It keeps my creative juices flowing and gives me a sense of accomplishment."



Wood working is another talent of Bob's and he has spent a lifetime volunteering and giving back to the community. He is a volunteer with the Firelands Habitat for Humanity, and

he made four trips to Esperanza International, Tijuana, Mexico to help build houses. He also volunteered for 35 years with the Boy Scouts of America, including serving for 8 years as a Scoutmaster, as well as a trainer for the "EC-340 Woodbadge."

His love of woodworking eventually led Bob to becoming a monitor for two bluebird trails at the Dalton Community Park Preserve and the Augusta Anne Olsen State Nature Preserve. His journey toward bluebird box monitoring started in 2008 when he was asked to upgrade the existing bird nest boxes at Dalton Park. The four existing nest boxes were neglected with split wood sides and no predator protection, which made them unattractive to nesting birds.



In his search to build the perfect bluebird box trail, Bob stumbled across an article in the newspaper about Penny and Fritz Brandau who were doing a bird talk nearby. They in turn, got Bob in contact with the late Dean Sheldon who was a well known champion of the national bluebird movement. Bob will never forget the suggestions that Dean made to him (point the box holes to the direction of East/Southeast

so the morning sun can warm the box interior rapidly; and have a tree or shrub nearby in front of the box entry for fledglings to have a safe landing site) or the kind word of encouragement Dean made to him ("I am always excited when someone else comes through for the beautiful birds....and you surely have done that."). As with any good bluebird trail management, over the years Bob has experimented with nest box materials as well as box spacing and locations.

Hopefully we will see many more beautiful pieces of stained glass art from Bob Bement at upcoming Ohio Bluebird Society Conferences. If you are interested in acquiring any pieces that he has created, including lamps, suncatchers, or centerpieces, please reach out to Bob via email ([bobbement16@gmail.com](mailto:bobbement16@gmail.com)) and let him know you saw this article in the Ohio Bluebird Society newsletter.

# The 2020 American Kestrel Nesting Season

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



Monitoring 18 kestrel nestboxes and banding all nestlings provides a good hobby for Dick Phillips and me and the 2020 nesting season did not disappoint.

The small falcons did their part by attempting fifteen nests with eggs and thirteen (87.7%) families matured to fledge young. The sparrow hawks laid 71 eggs, 57 (80.3%) hatched, and 56 (78.9%) fledged.

Once eggs hatched, 98.2% grew to fly out of their nestboxes to continue their quest to mature and raise future families of their own.

Usually, fledged siblings form a flock for several weeks as they are mentored by their father. Sometimes, during monitoring, we hear fledglings begging while hiding in crop fields. This practice protects them from larger raptors that find the fledglings easy to harvest.

Dick and I did our part by traveling a nearly fifty-mile road trip ten times to monitor the boxes during the kestrel nesting season, and we revisited the boxes on October 5 and 6 to clean nest chambers and add new white pine bedding. On October 5, we found Box-3 (K-3) missing, and a new pole had replaced the original mount. After several days of phone calls we were told that a crew from outside the area had traded utility poles and left Box-3 at the foot of the new pole. We used to have laminated notes attached to the bottom panels that had contact phone numbers. Most of these messages have aged to drop off. Apparently, a passerby snatched the unattended kestrel box and I hope they offer it to their neighborhood raptors. We mounted a new K-3 on the new pole five days after the disappearance.

The kestrel nesting season was short compared to a standard that I compiled from 155 nests years ago. The first egg of 2020 was laid in K-7 on March 29 which is 15 days later than the earliest egg laid on March 14. Only ten-percent of first eggs are laid before March 29.

Then, the latest fledging took place on July 1, making the 2020 season 95 days long. The standard season length set by 155 nests is 166 days long, from March 14 through August 26, so the 2020 season was 42.8% shorter than the standard. When I did the calculations for 2020, I ignored what happened in K-15.

K-15 held a second clutch of three eggs on July 5. We always monitor all of the boxes sometime after our national holiday of July 4 so we won't miss counting a second clutch of eggs. We checked K-15 again on July 23 and August 3 and the eggs had still not hatched. To be really safe, we did not remove the eggs until we were cleaning and adding new white pine bedding to all boxes in October. I cracked open the overdue eggs to find that the eggs had partially developed. Apparently, they had been abandoned during the early days of the incubation phase. The box is close enough to a woodland for a hungry accipiter that might have been a factor in the nest failure.



A brave mother kestrel protects her young on May 20, 2019.

On October 31 an event took place that had many reasons; we removed K-16, its metal baffle, its cable and hand winch, from its free-standing pole at the Gallant Farm Park along Buttermilk Hill Road. We returned on November 12 to use a modified car jack to pull the pole from the earth for an effective job of salvaging.

So, what were the reasons for removing K-16? First, production had been unstable, and in 2019, only three young fledged, and in 2020, no eggs were laid. Then, the gate was usually locked when we had time to monitor, usually because of concerns with managing safe visitations around the pandemic.

But the number one reason for removing K-16 was the growing Purple Martins' colony at the farm. The Purple Martin Conservation Association has listed American Kestrels as a threat to Purple Martins. I don't raise martins, but I belong to the PMCA and they know what they are talking about. So, we thought it best, before any incidents are recorded, that K-16 should be moved to make the farm safer for the martins.

A rehabilitated box was painted with the number 16 on its front panel and now stands at a good site with no martin hotels in the area. Kestrel conservation will continue with a total of 18 boxes making for a stable project that has fledged 1,288 young falcons since its first productive family in 1995.

Two extremely positive events took place on June 7 and 17 when orphaned kestrels from the Ohio Wildlife Center were fostered. One orphan was added to a family of four nestlings, and the later one joined a second family of three nestlings. As far as fostering is concerned, I say that parent birds can't count and they always accept the fostered youngsters as long as they are of the same age as the original family. Once the fostered birds were added, the project fledged 58 young falcons.

Much is being reported on the decline of the kestrel population during recent decades, but every kestrel nestbox project that I am aware of has successfully raised our continent's smallest falcon. We need more conservation projects to answer the small falcon's need. So, conserve on!



# Ask Madame WingNut

## Dogwood Winter

By Paula Ziebarth



Indian Summer refers to warm summer weather in the fall and a Dogwood Winter is a time of unusual cold wintery weather during springtime. Dogwood Winter weather usually falls during late April or early May, around the time dogwood trees start blooming. Although short-lived, such weather can be devastating to our native cavity nesting birds.

When temperatures dip below the mid 40's, insects stop moving. Birds that rely on insects for their survival are in trouble. Even those that can sustain themselves on dried berries are in trouble because those food stores are generally gone by late April. Some of our Eastern Bluebirds begin laying eggs the first week in April, and they will struggle to feed themselves and their young when insect prey is unavailable.

During the early morning hours on April 21, central Ohio had several inches of snowfall. Fellow bird monitor and friend, Shawna Stambaugh alerted me that some of her Purple Martins at Stratford Ecological Center in Delaware were snowbound in their gourds. They had entered gourds to roost and stay warm overnight and some of them had become trapped by snow drifting and blocking entrances. I checked Purple Martins at three different colonies in central Ohio and released 6 ASY (after second year) birds trapped in their gourds. The high temperature for the day was only 37 degrees Fahrenheit and lows for the next two nights were in the low 30's so not much food was to be found for our native cavity nesting birds.

Later that week when the weather warmed up I monitored some of my Bluebird trails and discovered two nests had succumbed to the cold weather with young that looked to be about 7 days old. Their death was likely due to a combination of hypothermia and starvation. Eastern Bluebird eggs can easily survive weather like this, as can new hatchlings and older chicks that have their feathers. During those days when they are too large for the female to properly brood them (about 6 to 9 days), and too young to regulate their own body temperature (feathers have not emerged), they are in trouble. Additionally, parents will be desperate to find enough food for themselves and their young and will be off hunting while the cold temperatures chill down the young.

Things you can do to help native cavity nesting birds during a Dogwood Winter include providing well insulated, dry housing. Try not to monitor nests in cold or wet weather. Block any vents until weather warms up. Make sure the roof of the house does not leak. Supplemental feeding of mealworms or Bluebird suet mix crumbles can be a lifesaver also. I observed my backyard Bluebirds carrying suet mix crumbles into their nestbox to feed their young during this past week of colder weather. It's time to welcome warmer weather and a wonderful nesting season!

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

*An experienced monitor of over a dozen Bluebird Trails in central and northern Ohio, Madame WingNut enjoys all creatures that fly, regardless of their stage of development.*

Purple Martins at Stratford Ecological Center



Photo by Shawna Stambaugh

ASY (after second year) Purple Martin male released from snow impounded gourd



Photos by Paula Ziebarth

Gourd entrance (exit) blocked by snow



Purple Martin rig in Powell, Ohio with snow blocking gourds



# Whose nest is this?

By Darlene Sillick, OBS President



Ellie Nowels lives in central Ohio and is an avid gardener and birder. In her potting table, she opened a drawer and found this very cool nest but no eggs. It was made of dried leaves, pieces of moss and many pine needles with a cup in the back corner. She was going to check back and see if eggs appear and try to learn who the stealth nest builder might be. Do you know?

Another lovely bird nest was found in Paula Ziebarth's husband's motorcycle helmet. More dried leaves and a few pine needles. Can you imagine putting this on your head to go for a ride?



A photo of another nest found in a decorative yard art at Paula Ziebarth's home shows nesting materials again of more dried leaves and pine needles. Do you see a pattern? Do you have any idea what bird species made these nests?



Now for the reveal of the stealth year-round resident who likes to put nests in a huge variety of nooks and crannies. It is the lovely Carolina Wren. He is an amazing songster and has a large variety of repertoire. His loud and most common song sounds like 'teakettle, teakettle, tea'. He is slightly larger than the House Wren and has a strong white eyebrow stripe and a tail that cocks upward. Male and female look identical. They prefer shrubby, brushy habitat and have a fondness for exploring nooks and crannies.

Insects and spiders make up the bulk of this wren's diet. Common foods include caterpillars, moths, stick bugs, leafhoppers, beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, and cockroaches.

They have 1-3 broods per year. It is a delight to have this songster nesting. Carolina Wrens visit suet-filled feeders during winter. During cold northern winters, they will take shelter in nest boxes containing dried grasses, particularly boxes with slots rather than holes. Severe winters can cause a decline in populations of Carolina Wrens.

The house pictured below is on Al and Mary Vogt's property. Plans for this box design can be found here: <https://nestwatch.org/wp-content/themes/nestwatch/birdhouses/carolina-wren.pdf>

Al said he was surprised that the Carolina Wren in the box below was kicked out by a House Finch and they were incubating eggs. Can't wait to learn the rest of the story!



# Flying Squirrels, Predator or Not?

By Mel Bird



Three years ago, while checking an old bluebird box I had placed in the woods to attract house wrens and keep them away from my bluebird boxes in the open back yard, I found a strange looking nest made up of oak leaves and acorns. I reached in to see if I could feel any bird or eggs, instead a flying squirrel ran up my arm and scared the hell out of me. At the time I thought this was an anomaly and filed it away. This year, two years later, I found three flying squirrel nests in the Edison Ridge development portion of my trail. Picture one shows a flying squirrel climbing out of the wren box in the woods. The second & fourth pictures are flying squirrel nests with several young in them. The third picture is the strange nest I first found three years ago in the woods. I have now found out that flying squirrels are the most numerous variety in Ohio and because they are nocturnal no one sees them. Some articles on them say they raid bird nests for the eggs. If this is valid then we now have a new predator on our trail. On the last monitoring run of my trail we found two boxes filled with acorns, I assume the flying squirrels are using the boxes as barns to store food for the coming winter. I can see this as a new problem to contend with in the coming years. I would be interested to know if anyone else has them on their trail or is my trail unique in this respect?



# Member News

## Thank You to Our Donors!

Tom & Ling Hong Barber  
Bob & Sara Crist  
Gary Delost  
Rosalie Dolan  
Scheryl Fry-Rader  
Sandra Jessen  
Bruce Kramer  
George Pasipanki  
Jane & Bob Scott  
Judy Semroc

## Welcome New Members!

Deb and Harold Ackerman  
Rosamary Amiet  
Erin Arth Family  
Stephen Beiling  
Denise Blocker  
Richard Carlton  
Steve & Louise Gifford  
Sandra Grasso  
Chris Grau  
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## President's Report – May 1, 2021 By Darlene Sillick



Oh, how I love the month of May! It is amazing how sunshine and a nice warm up with flowers and trees blooming can create such bliss in my heart. For me, it is also the returning Tree Swallows and Purple Martins and the resident cavity nesters pairing off that says “SPRING” and puts a bounce in my step.

**I wanted to back up to Saturday, March 6, 2021 and share some wonderful words and comments from our Ohio Bluebird Society Annual Conference “Back to Basics”.**

Our newest board member, **Anna Rose**, designed our logo. We wanted to have basic information about bluebirds, tree swallows, woodland species and additional helpful information about dealing with the non-native house sparrow.

Due to Covid-19 this year we tried something different for our OBS Annual Conference. We went virtual with the help of co-worker **Josue Sanchez**. He took the power point recorded talks of the adult and youth speakers and converted them to Youtube videos which can still be viewed on our OBS website. Check it out!

I also need to thank the conference committee who tried to keep me from drowning in over-the-top conference to-dos.

- Thanks to **Tim Bischoff**, new board member **Stephen Bischoff**, Board member **Carl Gleditsch**, and membership chair **Pat Dutton**. Thanks to the committee and Josue for work on our virtual event.
- **Bet Zimmerman Smith**, web designer for Sialis.org did the “Bluebirding 101” and “NABS Introduction” talks.
- **Dick Tuttle**, our conservation guru presented “Wildlife Management for Tree Swallows”
- **Marne Titchenell**, OSU Extension Service presented “Woodland Cavity Nesting Birds” and “Woodpecker Use of Nestboxes”
- **Paula Ziebarth**, aka Madame Wingnut, presented “Don’t Pull That House Sparrow Nest!” It is important to understand the enemy and she does not mince words!

We are proud of the information on these varied topics by our featured speakers. If you haven’t viewed them yet, grab a cup of coffee and go to our OBS website page to watch the conference talks.

OBS is involving youth from Ohio Young Birders and there are excellent virtual talks from four young teens also included in the conference videos. Congratulations and thanks to Zak Beaver, Elizabeth Kanzeg, EJ Steele, and Hannah Thomas.

We would love to hear what you thought about the virtual conference and the topics presented. The next OBS conference is scheduled for March 5, 2022 at Ashland University. More details will be in future newsletters



## Learning About Nestbox Monitoring

By Darlene Sillick



Morgan and Sloane Kirk counting eggs!

In April I was so excited to have my daughter and two granddaughters from Colorado visit me for four days. April is a busy nesting season but we found time to go to Safari Golf Course with my granddaughters Morgan, (13 years old) and Sloane (11 years old) to count eggs in nestboxes. I drove the golf cart and recorded and the girls enjoyed their citizen science efforts helping Grandma Dar do monitoring. I would like to encourage others to take the time to do nestbox monitoring

with family or friends and teach others about why this hobby is so important. We welcome your suggestions for other things we can do to help you.

**See you on the trail!**

## In Memory of Jim Coffman



James R. Coffman, 72, of Tiffin, Ohio passed away unexpectedly on Thursday April 15, 2021 at his residence. Jim was a charter member of the Ohio Bluebird Society and the North American Bluebird Society. He was an OBS Area Contact for Seneca County and was a bird bander since 1974 and a Master bird bander since 1986. He managed as many as 128 bluebird boxes that produced more than 200 bluebirds and 300 tree

swallows annually. Jim willingly helped homeowners install boxes in their yards and helped landlords learn the latest management techniques. More than forty bluebirders have fledged with their new hobby because of Jim's help.

Jim attended all OBS conferences and was a frequent attendee of the NABS conferences too. He was the OBS Blue Feather Award recipient in 2017, the highest honor which can be awarded to an individual by the Ohio Bluebird Society.

OBS would like to extend our sincere sympathies to Jim's loved ones and friends. He was an incredible man who will be deeply missed.

## Treasurer's Report

by Molly Wilsbacher

- 1. The Ohio Bluebird Society's financial statement for the period ending March 31, 2021** reflected modest income for the 1st Quarter of 2021 of \$2,105.90. Almost all of our income came from membership dues amounting to \$2,975 and donations totaling \$340. Our expenditures over the first quarter totaled \$1,233.01 and included conference expenses (even virtual conferences cost money), publishing and mailing our quarterly newsletter, and our sustaining membership with the North American Bluebird Society. Thank you very much for paying your dues timely and for continuing to make donations!
- 2. The Board of Directors recently approved two small grants for the installation of bluebird boxes at two elementary schools that include cameras.** These grants will be reflected in next quarter's financial report and will be reported on in future newsletters. A portion of membership fees are devoted to our small grants program, which is intended to provide financial support to the creation and installation of new nesting habitat. Because education is such an important component of wildlife conservation, we are particularly focused on projects that combine on the ground conservation with education. Please visit our website to learn more or to apply for a grant: <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/grant-information>.
- 3. The Ohio Bluebird Society's bank accounts** currently reflect that we enjoy a checking account balance of \$12,827.18 and a savings account balance of \$ 24,781.9 for the period ending March 31, 2021. Our anticipated expenditures over the next quarter include publishing and mailing the Fall Newsletter, awarding two small grants (if not more), and our annual liability insurance payment.
- 4. Friendly reminders:** (1) Legacy Boxes are a great way to honor or remember bluebirders and bird enthusiasts, while providing nest boxes for cavity nesting birds you love and enjoy. For only a \$125 donation, Ohio Bluebird Society volunteers will build, erect, maintain, and monitor a bluebird box on prime habitat for bluebirds. For more information on the Legacy Program, please visit our website at: <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/obs-legacy-program/>. (2) When purchasing from Amazon, please do so through Amazon Smile and designate the Ohio Bluebird Society as your charitable choice. Since its inception, we have received \$400 from Amazon Smile through this program: <https://smile.amazon.com>. Thank you to everyone who currently uses it!



## **Ohio Bluebird Society Wildlife Conservation Award Theodore W. “Ted” Hunker March 2021**



In Loving Memory of  
Theodore W. “Ted” Hunker  
1958-2020

The award recognizes a strong conservation ethic throughout Ohio. The recognition is given to honor individuals and organizations who are committed to this concept but manage the expression of those concepts in many different ways.

This award is given to Safari Golf Course under management of the Columbus Zoo. Ted Hunker was the SGC supervisor there for seven years. Ted and Darlene worked to redo all the nestboxes as an Eagle Scout project. And we put up a total of 3 Purple Martin gourd rigs writing grants and sharing in the work to install. Ted and I worked for 3 years on the Audubon Sanctuary program. Safari Golf Course was certified a couple years ago. It is one of a few certifications in the country. We worked with another Eagle Scout to put up a Chimney Swift Tower and new design of bat houses.

Along the journey working with Ted, he was very helpful in all aspects of this conservation work and projects. With his support, these projects are in place and the public enjoys seeing the birds and chatting about our conservation work .

Congratulations to Ted and his team and to the Safari Golf Course. You are so missed.



## **Blue Feather Award Winner March 2021 Mike Watson**



This award was intended to honor an OBS member and was given in recognition of that individual’s extraordinary accomplishments in all areas of Bluebird conservation and management.

Mike unselfishly gave 10 years as president, helping to re-shape Ohio Bluebird Society and leading the board to help OBS grow. He is our data guru and analyzes all the fledgling reports he can get his hands on. He then creates these amazing graphs and shows how we are doing across the years and across the state.

It was because of Mike’s calm but strong leadership that I once again joined the OBS board. He is steady and convincing. Thanks Mike for all you gave to Ohio Bluebird Society!!

# OBS Small Grants Program Supports Nest-Camera Projects at Two Ohio Schools

By Mike Watson, OBS Area Contact

The OBS Small Grants Program, which was established to support projects that create or improve nesting habitat for native cavity nesting birds, has awarded funding to two pilot projects at elementary schools. These projects will install cameras into custom-built nest boxes, allowing teachers and students to monitor bird activity during the nesting cycle.

These projects, which are based on designs described in an article by Penny Brandau in the Summer 2020 issue of the Monitor, will allow remote monitoring of nesting activity using a smartphone app. Both projects will use Ring brand cameras, which can broadcast photos and videos via cable or WiFi. Teachers will be able to share saved or live-feed images and videos with students, fostering a better understanding and appreciation for those species that rely on cavities for nesting.

Pat Dutton, OBS Trustee and Membership Chair, will supervise the project at Millersburg Elementary and Carl Gleditsch, OBS Trustee, will oversee the project at Hopewell Elementary in Dublin, OH. OBS hopes that these projects will inspire others to use similar ideas to foster curiosity and interest in nature and bird conservation.

**For more information on the OBS Small Grants Program, visit our website: <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/grant-information/>**



## Ohio Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Conservation Award



A big congratulations goes out to our current OBS president Darlene Sillick for receiving this year's Ohio Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Conservation Award. Darlene has spent over 35 years doing bird conservation work in the state of Ohio eliciting the help of many volunteers known as Darlene's Army. She has also promoted both youth and adult education with various roles in organizations like Ohio Young Birders club

and the Audubon Society. Congratulations again to Darlene for an award well deserved. To see Darlene's acceptance speech, you can go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMh58MEcTVg>





To view the Ohio Bluebird Society Conference 2021 topics online go to [ohiobluebirdsociety.org/conference/](http://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/conference/)

The presentations are easily viewed in YouTube format and include the following topics:

- Bluebirding 101
- NABS Introduction
- Wildlife Management for Tree Swallows
- Woodland Cavity Nesting Birds
- Woodpecker Use of Nestboxes
- Don't Pull That House Sparrow Nest!

The topics presented by our Youth speakers include:

- Deer Creek State Park Monitoring
- Establishing the Minerva Park Bluebird Trail
- Opal Ashcroft: Birder, Artist and Friend
- A Home for the Swifts

Enjoy!

## 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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9500 Sperry Road, Kirtland,  
Ohio 44094

facebook

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



## Ohio Bluebird Society Membership Application

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

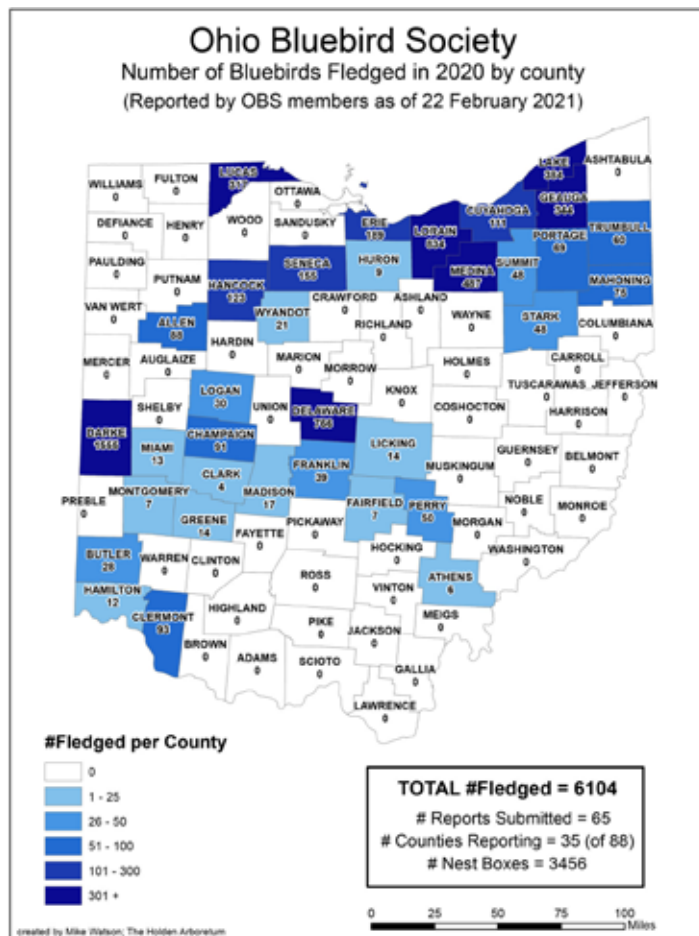
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
Ohio Bluebird Society

### Mail to:

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

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



## OBS FLEDGLING REPORT

Updated 02/22/21

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

Eastern Bluebird – 6104

Tree Swallow – 5569

House Wren – 2349

Carolina Chickadee – 67

Black – Capped Chickadee – 47

Carolina Wren – 108

Prothonotary – 101

Tufted Titmouse – 31

Purple Martin – 1852

American Kestrel – 178

Barn Swallow – 184

Osprey – 13

Wood Duck – 21

Northern Rough-winged Swallow – 6

House Sparrow Eggs Eliminated – 895

House Sparrows Destroyed – 1296

European Starling Eggs Removed – 1

European Starling Eggs Destroyed – 38

Total # of Reports – 65

Total # of Nest Boxes – 3456

## OBS Area Contacts (as of November 2020)

| County    | Name                    | E-mail                                             | County     | Name             | E-mail                   |
|-----------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------|--------------------------|
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|           |                         |                                                    | WYANDOT    | James R. Coffman | jrussscoff@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](http://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

## OBS – Next Generation by Monica Klarer, OBS Trustee

The Earth Day assignment from Kindergarten -currently online- was to go on a nature walk and check off natural items seen, e.g. an ant, a bird, a worm. My 5 year old grandson Callum was pleased to go, if he could be a birdwatcher like his Grannie. The outfit is some sort of safari costume, and NO, I do not dress like that when I birdwatch or monitor bluebird boxes! He has watched me monitor boxes on Facetime, wearing a big floppy hat so maybe... The butterfly net was his addition, although it was a bit hard to hold it while also holding onto his hat in a stiff wind! Apparently his plan was to catch a bird as it flew by, with his Mum holding the handle while he held the net itself. Rather fortunately, no birds presented themselves for an attempt at this! Even though some of us still can't get together in person to bird, clearly Facetime birding does create an impact on the young!

