



Bluebird Monitor

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

Summer 2023



What do you do if your nestlings have lost a parent?

By Heather Harris, OBS Board Member



Things can go wrong with a bluebird nest, and it is in our human nature to immediately want to try and help these wonderful birds. We work so hard to monitor the box to check on the overall well being of the nestlings, and when things do not go as expected it is sometimes hard to remember to let nature take its course and leave things

alone. Every year, many thousands of young wild birds (either still in the nest or out of the nest on the ground), are “rescued” by kind people wanting to help them. Ohio rehabilitators receive hundreds of calls during the breeding season from people with good intentions seeking guidance for their nestlings that have lost a parent. Unfortunately, many of these birds do not need to be rescued. They do not need help and, in fact, moving them means that they are being separated from their parents. So, when should you intervene?

The practice of placing nestlings from one nest into the nest of another female of the same species is referred to as wild-fostering, and is a tactic that should only be used by wildlife



rehabilitators to raise abandoned nestlings. Unless you are a licensed and permitted wildlife rehabilitator, you should not attempt wild-fostering yourself for the following reasons:

If one or both parents are dead, there may be infection, disease, or parasites in the family, and it's possible the nestlings and nest are contaminated too. Moving nestlings from one nest to another can spread the disease and leave all the birds worse off than before.

The addition of hungry mouths to feed can also put undue stress on the foster parents. Each Eastern Bluebird nestling, for example, requires several insect feedings a day from their parents, and even with both parents helping out, the effort can be exhausting for a large clutch. Too many nestlings can leave adults susceptible to illness and predation. In addition, for wild-fostering to be successful, the orphaned nestlings must be placed with a foster family of the same age. More than a single day's difference in either direction, and the foster parents may reject the new nestlings. Trained rehabilitators are better able to match the nestlings in need with a foster family that will accept them and that can handle the added stress, or to raise the nestlings in a captive facility until they can be released.

The most important thing to remember is that the nestlings may not need their mother. In most bird species, both the male and female care for their young. If one parent dies the other parent will often continue to care for the nestlings. At



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about 7-8 days old the nestlings are able to regulate their own temperatures, and no longer require their mother's brood patch to survive. Bluebird males help in the raising of nestlings, and members of previous broods may give some assistance too, so it's quite probable the nestlings are being fed even without the female.

Before you take any action

Monitor the nest from a distance to see if it is truly abandoned (note: parents may not tend to the babies if you are too close). Watch the nest for a half hour to an hour, or, if that's not possible for you, wedge a small piece of grass or weed stem in the entrance hole and return later to see if it is still there. If one parent shows up during that time, you may choose to put out live mealworms to help the remaining parent, but no further action is required on your part. If no adults have shown up during that time, the nest itself will need to be checked. Are the nestlings still alive? Are they feathered? Do they gape their mouths when you whistle, or are they lifeless? Older nestlings tend to hunker down and will not move, but their eyes are usually open and alert. Take mental notes on their condition. Remember that it is illegal under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act for anyone to touch or handle the eggs, nests, or nestlings of any native bird without a proper permit.

Contact your local wildlife rehabilitator as soon as possible. The rehabilitator will come pick the nestlings up themselves or give you careful instructions on how to properly bring them in (remember, baby birds can die from the stress of being handled, so do not handle them unless instructed to do so). Once in the care of the wildlife rehabilitator, the nestlings will be examined, warmed, and fed. If the rehabilitator does choose to foster your nestlings, rest assured they are in the hands of trained professionals, and every step will be taken to ensure both nestlings and foster family are safe. If you cannot find a

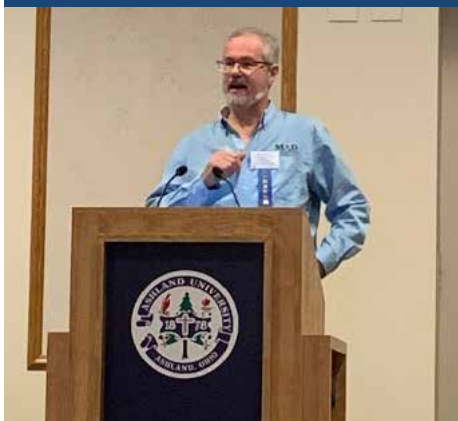


wildlife rehabilitator in your area, call the Ohio Division of Natural Resources at (800) 945-3543 for guidance. The Ohio Bluebird Society has area contacts to call in the event of a problem. Area contacts are available to answer questions and provide advice for those needing help with bluebirds or other cavity nesting bird species. You can also find this list on the OBS website by visiting <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/area-contacts-by-county/>

Do not try to raise the nestlings yourself. Remember, while it's natural to want to lend a hand, it is also extremely important for baby birds that they do not socialize with humans at a young age, as this can interfere with their normal learning and make it impossible for them to survive in the wild, and it's also illegal.

Photos from the 2023 Conference *See more on page 13*

Keynote speaker Mark Dilley



Mary Lee Minor with her generous donations of table centerpieces.



Conference logo artist, Emcee and OBS trustee Anna Rose.



Wren Guard By Pam Route, OBS Trustee



In NE Ohio, the House Wrens return from their winter migration in the southern US and Mexico, in early to mid-April. Their return is a time of mayhem for other native cavity nesters because the House Wrens are scoping out cavities to call their own. If they enter a nest box with eggs, they will pierce the eggs and if there are young nestlings (younger than day 7), they will also get pierced

and tossed from the nest. This is not to say that House Wrens are evil, it is simply how they have evolved. With a fine bill, not made for excavating holes, like a woodpecker, for instance, House Wrens must search for and snag cavities to nest in, regardless of another bird already using it. Not to be confused with the House Sparrow, House Wrens are native and protected.

So how do we protect Bluebirds, Chickadees and Nuthatches from their marauding ways? In addition to not placing our nest boxes in preferred House Wren territory (edge of tree lines or scrubby foliage), we install homemade wren guards on the nest boxes, in hopes of blocking the sight lines to the hole. I like to block the front hole(s) and the periphery as well.

A wren guard can be made from any material. Some use cardboard, some use wood. I use Vinyl gutters and gutter caps, (available at any home improvement store) measured to fit the face of my nestbox and then some, and attached with small “L” brackets. I make sure that there are 2.5-3” of space between the wren guard and the hole. Like the Sparrow Spooker, the wren guard should not be applied until the first egg has been laid and unlike the Sparrow Spooker, should be removed around day 8 for Bluebirds and day 11 for Chickadees and Nuthatches. It can be used in conjunction with the Sparrow Spooker.

The wren guard does make it more difficult to visually monitor the nest box and it's more of a challenge for the adults to feed the nestlings. Its presence would also impair fledge, so it is of critical importance that the wren guard be removed in a timely manner. Please visually make sure the parents will accept the guard after installation. Also know that Wren guards may not work once a wren has discovered the nest box hole or may not even work at all. It is a layer of nest box protection from House Wrens, but to say it is 100% effective would be an exaggeration. Knock wood, I've had good luck using them, but collective knowledge says that once House Wrens have “discovered” a hole, the wren guard will no longer act as a deterrent. In addition to using a wren guard, I have about 6 wren houses strategically placed around the property to give them nesting options other than my nest boxes.



The Delights of Donna Gleditsch

By Molly Wilsbacher, OBS Treasurer



Those of you who attended our most recent Bluebird Conference saw the delights of this month's featured artist, Donna Gleditsch. She donated two suncatchers that she designed and created, one of them being the delightful bluebird that is depicted below.



Although Donna enjoys working with acrylic paint, watercolor, pencil and charcoal, Donna is now primarily focused on stained glass and works out of her home studio. Her strength lies in developing her own patterns and designs, along with using the unique color and textures of the glass. You will often hear her describing the process as "painting with glass".



Donna holds a B.S. degree in Art Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and is currently employed at the Dublin Community Recreation Center (DCRC). Over the years, she taught beginning watercolor, beginning, intermediate and advanced drawing, as well as stained glass. Her position at DCRC gives her an outlet to not only express her personal interest but to help members discover new talents or grow as individuals.



Besides teaching art classes at DCRC, Donna offers classes in painting, drawing, and stained glass through Gleditsch Studios, which became an LLC a few years ago. She also sells her original work and will do commissions. If you are interested in any of her stained glass suncatchers, please visit her shop on Etsy: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/GleditschStudios>

Donna's stained glass is also currently sold at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge's gift shop, which is well known for bird lovers across Ohio. For those unfamiliar, it is located on Lake Erie near Oak Harbor and Magee Marsh (<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/ottawa>). I hope you enjoyed getting to know Donna and her art!



Hidden Species in Bluebirds? By Rob Thorn



We've all been drilled with the idea that there are 3 species of Bluebirds in North America. There is the Eastern Bluebird, found throughout most of the U.S. east of the shortgrass prairies of the Great Plains. Then there is the Western Bluebird, found in much of the low elevation areas of the Great Basin and the West Coast. And finally there is the Mountain Bluebird, found throughout higher elevations in mountains

all over the Western U.S. But what if we've missed a 'species' because it was so similar to one of the others that it escaped our notice. That might be the case with one of these bluebirds.

I was startled to discover the Eastern Bluebirds are also found in southern Arizona, quite a distance from their normal range edge in southern Texas. They kind of looked & sounded like Eastern Bluebirds, but many of the birders there insisted that they had lots of differences. They call them Azure Bluebirds or Mexican Bluebirds, and they seem to have lots of subtle differences from their eastern cousins. They are longer and paler, and appear to have lighter blue on the head and wings. The calls actually sounded different when you listened carefully. They don't migrate at all, and are the northernmost outpost of a range that extends far down into the mountains of Mexico and northern central America. Arizonan birders are even monitoring them with an eye towards their uniqueness (see <https://aziba.org/?p=1227>)

Could this be a species hidden in plain sight? Is there precedent for this? Plenty of other birds found in the Mexican highlands have analogues in other parts of North American, but have been deemed separate species. Night birds, for instance, have Mexican Whip-poor-will, Mexican Spotted Owls, Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, and Whiskered Screech Owls, all of which are now deemed species different from their northern counterparts despite similar appearances. But those are birds where their different calls clued researchers in that there might be different species.

For diurnal (day) birds, the situation is more complex. There are multiple examples of 'sister species' between Mexico and the



eastern U.S.. Even among cavity nesters, you can quickly think of Mexican Chickadee vs. Carolina Chickadee, or Brown-crested Flycatcher vs. Great Crested Flycatcher. You can also mention the messy group of Melanerpes Woodpeckers (Red-bellied, Golden-fronted, Gila, and Yucatan Woodpeckers) found all over Mexico and the southern U.S.. But for every one of those distinct species pairs, there are birds that have Mexican versions not so different from their eastern cousins. House Wrens were formerly thought of as distinct in Mexico, and called Brown-throated Wrens, but several studies concluded they are just an extreme variant of normal House Wrens. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers have a similar pattern. Carolina Wrens even have distinct, isolated populations in Yucatan and central America, but birds from these isolated groups look & sound like Carolina Wrens.

So what to make of Mexican Bluebirds? If you visit southern Arizona, make sure to search them out, and see for yourself. For definitive proof, however, we'll have to await some genetic & DNA studies, but keep your fingers crossed. The bluebird family tree might just sprout a new branch.

Rob Thorn lives in the Columbus area and is an avid birder, field trip leader and writer for Columbus Audubon. He is also a National Audubon CBC compiler and it is a real treat to go for a bird walk with Rob. He is a true walking avian encyclopedia and has a large following.

At this time of year many bluebird landlords offer dry and/or live mealworms to supplement the diet of their bluebird parents with chicks. A timely link about offering eggshells when feeding mealworms can be found at sialis.org/calcium.htm For a very complete discussion about supplementing bluebird diets this site has great information: sialis.org/feeder.htm





Ask Madame WingNut

Lower Insect Populations

By Paula Ziebarth



In Dick Tuttle's 2019 Columbus Audubon article, "Heavy Rains Challenge Tree Swallows", he wrote "On June 16, I received a communication from fellow bluebirder Darlene Sillick who reported that three rainy days with one day of cold temperatures grounded flying insects to cause greater than normal death rates among Tree Swallow nestlings. I agreed with Darlene's explanations and during the following days more and more trail monitors

were reporting similar bad news detailing swallow deaths.

With bad news on my mind, I went about checking my 166 boxes in Delaware State Park. During two days of monitoring, I counted 90 boxes that had been claimed by swallows, and I recorded 88 swallow nestlings that had died among 32 nests."

He stated "During past years of normal weather patterns, I could, with confidence, announce that once eggs hatch, 90% of the young will live to fledge. Not anymore!.. Of the season's eggs, only 77.2% hatched, and only 61.4% of the original eggs developed to fledge young. The number related most to the adverse weather that grounded flying insects is the percent of hatchlings that grew to fledge: 79.5%. The more significant news is that more than two of every ten hatchlings failed to fly from their nest, a truly tragic reality.

Heavy rains during the nesting seasons affect our birds' ability to feed their young. But I am also concerned about what warmer weather does to our nesting birds, starting with winter weather. For instance, for the last three or more years, I have argued that when we can stand outside in February, and we are comfortable while not wearing a coat or jacket, some insects are wiggling out of hibernation. Then, a polar vortex, or other cold front, returns to wipe out or stress the exposed creatures to lower their populations prior to spring.

During recent seasons, tree swallow egg clutches are becoming smaller, and of course, so are the numbers of fledglings. Compared to past years, I am convinced that the number of insects have been lowered by warmer winter temperatures that made it easier for June rains to afflict havoc on our birds.

I will conclude with a very relevant observation. When I clean out a nestbox after its occupants fledge, I always remove the used nest, and before I return it to the surrounding environment,

I methodically pull it apart to search for past histories, including evidence of blowfly infestations. For 2019, I found no blood-sucking blowfly larvae or pupae in the nests. No blowflies!.. I am convinced that recent weather trends are lowering insect populations that result in lowering bird populations."

Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Amy Suggars, entomologist. Dr. Suggars is monitoring one of the Purple Martin rigs at Gallant Farm Park in Delaware, Ohio this year.

I asked her how insects survive the winter. She stated that "to avoid exposure to extreme cold temperatures and/or fluctuating temperatures, many insects overwinter under plant debris (such as leaf litter) or burrow into the soil. As air temperature changes, the leaf litter provides a layer of insulation that gives the insects a more stable environment.

However, extended warm weather into the fall and winter could cause insects to be slow to seek out protection in leaf litter or the soil. Thus they could be more susceptible to a cold snap."

Leaving leaf litter and other cover in our yards over winter is a wonderful way to help insect populations. Hollowed out dried perennial stems remaining in the landscape will harbor overwintering insects also. Many of us like a neat yard, but keeping shelter for insects in winter months is important so save the landscape cleanup for later in the spring if possible.

Planting native flowering plants for pollinators is another great idea to help insects during the growing season. Tree pollen is one of the first foods available for bees.

Pesticides reduce insect populations outright; fewer insects are available as food and consumption of dying insects can poison birds and/or their young. Eliminating the use of chemicals in your landscape will make for a healthier environment for everyone.

When temperatures get warm enough for insect eggs to hatch and insects begin moving in great numbers, our native cavity nesting birds access this bounty and begin their nest cycles. The three species I work with most are Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds and Purple Martins. All three species consume different kinds of insects... and a lot of them.

Tree Swallows catch small insect prey on the fly. They sweep the air within forty feet above open wetlands, ponds, lakes and moist soils to catch tiny flying insects including flies, mosquitoes, leaf-hoppers and midges. Each adult swallow

TRES (Tree Swallow) female sitting on her eggs



consumes 2,000 insects per day and they feed 6,000 insects per day to their nestlings. Adults forage for small insects, packing 19 to 34 at a time in their bill and throat in a “bolus”. They feed this to their young. Each swallow family consumes more than 300,000 insects during the 45-day period when their nest box is used.

Eastern Bluebirds eat a lot of ground dwelling insects: caterpillars, beetles and their larva, crickets, grasshoppers, spiders, etc. They also eat earthworms during extended wet periods.

Purple Martins are also aerial insectivores and they will often hunt at altitudes over 150 feet from the ground. Purple Martins are the largest member of the swallow family in North America. Purple martins can handle larger insects than their Tree Swallow cousins including dragonflies, Japanese beetles, wasps, bees, mayflies and ballooning spiders.

Unsurprisingly, Tree Swallows seem most affected by cold and extended rainy weather. Nest success rates for this species are below what I see for the other two. Rain, wind and cold just knock small flying insects out; both adults and nestlings can succumb to hypothermia and starvation. Because Tree Swallows often exhibit broods with an asynchronous hatch (some hatching a day or more after the first one), the youngest and weakest nestling succumbs first. The longer the bad weather event lasts, the more young will perish. Looking at NestWatch data for the past 8 years on my City of Powell trails, nest success rate for Tree Swallows was 64%. At Scheeff East Point Nature Preserve on South Bass Island, the average nest success rate for the same timeframe was 82%. Insect populations on the island are substantially better than I see in central Ohio. NestWatch defines nest success rate as the fraction of observed nests that fledged at least one offspring.

Eastern Bluebirds had an average 8-year nest success rate of 72% on City of Powell trails. There are no Bluebirds nesting on my trails on South Bass Island. During extended wet weather events, Bluebirds may feed earthworms to their young (readily available as they emerge from ground to avoid flooded areas). This can cause “earthworm disease” in young. Ingesting too many earthworms with a high moisture content can cause young to develop loose droppings and they die from dehydration. Cold, wet weather also will result in death by hypothermia in young about 6-9 days of age. At this age, they are too big to be brooded properly by their mother and have not developed feathers yet so cannot regulate their own body temperature. I am worried as I write this (May 1, 2023) that monitors will be finding some dead Bluebird nestlings next week.

Purple Martins have the best nest success rates of these three species. When it is too cold, windy or raining, insects are not flying. Purple Martins will starve after several days if weather conditions do not improve. Because this species does not start egg laying until the end of May, the adults surviving the early spring cold, wet weather are generally very successful. Purple Martin 8-year average nest success rate on City of Powell trails was 88% and 95% at Scheeff South Bass Island colony.

Climate change in Ohio seems to include extended mild fall into winter which may cause insects to seek insufficient shelter. I believe spring climate exhibits more extended cold, wet weather which stresses birds and their young as they try to raise their families. We are certainly seeing this in late April/early May, 2023.

As I write this, warm weather teases, then eludes us once again. Our birds are in trouble this week and hoping for some much needed warmer temperatures and lots of wonderful insects!

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.



PUMA (Purple Martin) female with her young

When Gold Was Re-discovered in Geauga County

By Dan Best, OBS Trustee



In Ohio, the prothonotary warbler, also known as the “golden swamp warbler” for its dazzling plumage, is found where swamp habitat occurs. A swamp is an area of standing water shaded by trees and shrubs, a wooded wetland. Since Ohio has lost 95% of its historical wetlands, prothonotaries

are found in scattered populations across the state. These birds are not only adaptive in their use of cavities to nest in, lending them to nest box husbandry, but in colonizing wetlands as they are created. The prothonotary warbler’s history in Ohio is tied to the conversion of natural lakes to canal feeder lakes in the 19th Century and reservoir building for flood control and public water supply in the 20th century. In fact, the prothonotary warblers’ first documented occurrences in Ohio were in the 1850’s on canal lakes. Human-created bodies of water tend to feature swampy coves on their undeveloped margins that were not developed into marinas, cottage communities or amusement parks. Prothonotary warblers readily homesteaded in these situations as they occurred.



Prior to the inception of databases, most notably Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology’s eBird program, knowledge of bird occurrence in Ohio was documented in regional ornithological publications. *The Ohio Cardinal*, published by the Ohio Ornithological Society, is a surviving example of a statewide ornithological record. For Northeastern Ohio, the *Cleveland Bird Calendar* published by the Kirtland

Bird Club is another regional example. Although eBird, in documenting shifting bird ranges and abundance, is surpassing such publications in scope, the regional publications of decades past hold great historical value in collectively documenting a century or more of changes in avian life.

Another historical benchmark is provided by *Birds of the Cleveland Region*, a book published by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History in 1950, edited by renowned mid-20th Century Cleveland naturalist Arthur B. Williams. The entry on prothonotaries in this book was especially intriguing to me since I have maintained a nesting project using plastic nest jars for prothonotary warblers for 30 years on the Upper Cuyahoga River in Geauga County. According to this publication, the first occurrence of prothonotary warblers in the Cleveland region was at Bass Lake in Geauga County in 1907 and 1910, before being recorded as a breeding bird in 1912.



Bass Lake, near Chardon in Geauga County, is a natural glacial lake rimmed by swamp forest. As a preserve of the Geauga Park District, it is home to nesting bald eagles, river otters, the now state-endangered long-eared bat and is a migratory stopover for tundra swans, common loons and various waterfowl. Streams entering Bass Lake form the headwaters of the Chagrin River. This includes

Spring Brook, an adjacent State Nature Preserve, which harbors Ohio’s only known native brook trout population, a tremendous wildlife prize – and responsibility – for Geauga County.

In August of 2015, Chris Parker, naturalist and resident of the Bass Lake Community, sent me a photograph that he took of a fledgling prothonotary warbler being fed by an adult. Although quite late in the nesting season, this photo documented the presence of prothonotaries as a breeding bird at Bass Lake. This was the first record of this bird’s occurrence at Bass Lake in over a century.

As a Geauga Park District Naturalist (now retired), I installed nest jars around Bass Lake in 2016 with the help of Chris Parker who dutifully monitored the nest jars by canoe throughout the duration of our project. The Bass Lake prothonotary population was small, perhaps four or fewer pairs. At the height of our efforts, we had 8 nest jars out. In time, we came to recognize the mouths of the lake’s two stream inlets and the outlet stream as the “hot spots” for prothonotaries and pared our number of nest jars down to four. Although prothonotaries readily used nest jars on the Upper Cuyahoga River for decades, our success on Bass Lake was limited. From 2016-19, our housing project only yielded two broods. House wrens thwarted warbler nesting attempts, tree swallows competed for nest jars, even though effectively excluded by entrance hole size. The warblers also displayed a preference for natural cavities which were found in good numbers around the lake.

So, as with most “gold rushes”, our attempt at fostering the golden swamp warbler at Bass Lake petered out. However, there are still prothonotary warblers at Bass Lake, albeit few, that seem to be doing fine on their own. After more than a century, their presence continues to add to the wonderful biodiversity of Bass Lake and, by extension, Geauga County. Elsewhere in Geauga County cavity nesters are well provided with housing: not only prothonotary warblers but bluebirds and tree swallows in parks and on private properties; the Amish with their purple martin colonies and a successful kestrel nest box program in their community.

Timely Tips

by Bethany Gray, Area Contact for
Greene & Clark County

Bluebird Trail Monitoring Supply Kits

In some programs I assist with (involving adults or school children), we coordinate teams to share responsibility monitoring a trail. We put together monitoring supply kits that the volunteers enjoy using. The supplies we use in our kits are below:

a small plastic bin with lid to carry supplies on the trail when monitoring; small screwdriver; scraper for cleaning; disposable or garden gloves; automotive telescopic mirror for viewing inside nests; petroleum jelly (deterring ants on the pole); Ivory soap (deterring wasps); Van Ert trap; white drawstring laundry mesh bag; rubber drain plug in case hole needs temporarily plugged; clipboard with data sheet & photos of nests from North American Bluebird Society's website. We also try to purchase at least one Sparrow Spooker per group, sometimes more, for bluebird nests.

Other helpful personal supplies for new bluebird trail monitors to bring on the bluebird trail include: sunscreen, bug spray (not on hands where they may touch a nest); hat/sunglasses; water; binoculars; field guide or bird ID app on phone

Native Plants for Supporting Bird and Pollinator Habitat

June is National Pollinator Month! More and more people who attend my bluebird presentations or walks are asking about resources for native plants to support birds and other pollinators. They are realizing that some of the plants we have introduced into our landscapes are no better than plastic when it comes to providing a source for food and reproduction of pollinators. For example, native milkweed plants are the only plants on which Monarch butterflies lay their eggs, so no milkweed, no Monarchs. Birds also need caterpillars and insects attracted to these plants for food. Consider a native oak tree that hosts hundreds of species of caterpillar eggs, compared to a non-native, introduced Ginkgo tree that hosts a handful of species. The following Website has information about native and invasive plants, as well as where to purchase them across the state: www.ohionativeplantmonth.org Check with your local nature centers, land trusts, tree committees and soil/water conservation district offices since they typically host native plant sales, too. Some nurseries are integrating more and more native plants & trees---ask them about a native plant section! For those interested in restoration of prairies larger than a suburban yard, the Ohio Prairie Nursery is a resource for consultation: www.opnseed.com/

The National Wildlife Federation has an online regional native plant finder---search by zip code: www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder/

Another valuable resource for viewing which plants host certain species of caterpillars is ODNR's "Backyards for Butterflies" - available digitally on ODNR's website.

Treasurer's Report

by Molly Wilsbacher

- 1. Thank you to everyone who donated their time, talents, and silent auction items for our annual Ohio Bluebird Conference in March.** The 75 silent auction items raised \$1,680! For those who were wondering, the cost of holding our conference at Ashland University only cost us the price of food and linens, which was \$2,755 in 2023, compared with the conference registrations that brought in \$2,665. So, yes, our conference registration is a true bargain. We were able to provide this amazing training to you in large part due to the \$1,000 grant that we received from the Ohio Department of Natural Resource, Division of Wildlife. Thank you, ODNR!!
- 2. It's not too early to plan for our next conference on March 2, 2024.** If you have any suggestions for topics at the conference, please send a quick email to any board member. Please also keep the silent auction in mind when cleaning out rooms, or bargain hunting at a thrift shop.
- 3. Since the last newsletter, the Ohio Bluebird Society's Board of Directors approved two small grants for the installation of bluebird boxes in the Village of Plain City, as well as the Licking Park District in Granville.** 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>.
- 4. Sadly, Amazon Smile is no more. We were told Amazon closed the program to focus its philanthropic giving to programs with greater impact.** However, the OBS Legacy Program is still up and running! If you would like to honor or remember bluebirders and bird enthusiasts, 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/>.



Member News

Welcome New Members!

Ashley Bahrey
Lindsay Baker
Joseph Brett
Paul & Kathy Burkart
Catherine Chiovaro
Michael Conway
Rohn & Claudia Craig
Mark Dilley
Lois Edwards
Amanda Engen
Carolyn Fannon
Sandra Kantelas
Robert & Joan Kincer
Doug King
Laurie Lambert
Jason Lee
Glenda Leuthold
Bill McKinney
Beverly Morrissey
Susan Nutter
Dan & Patricia O'Connor
Ric Saurer
Beverly Sipe
Jamie Smith
Letetia Villalobos
John Wagner
Denise Woodward

Thank You to Our Donors!

Ruby Barck
Carolyn Fannon
Heather Harris
Amy Hoegler
Paula Kramer
Todd & Courtney Lorentz
Wayne County Community Foundation
on behalf of Lee Peart and Tim
Mendiola
Don & Diana Plant
Gretchen Reeder (*In honor of Lucinao
Lovano's First Birthday*)
Paula Ziebarth
*In Memory of Camryn Artz;
In Memory of Jim and Doris Arim –
Stephen Habash and Jean Luczkows*

Notes from the president – by Darlene Sillick

For those who attended the OBS annual meeting in March, huge thanks for attending our big day. The speakers, the board, volunteers, education table folks and our attendees who traveled from around Ohio, we thank you all. The big disappointment for me was not being able to attend at the last minute due to a medical surgery issue for me at the last minute, which came as a surprise with the timing. We work the year before, trying to put together an annual conference that will be interesting, educational and have some surprises and light-heartedness to the day. I humbly thank all the board members who stepped in to keep the day running smoothly and it stayed on time! Sincere thanks to Judy Semroc, Anna Rose and Stephen Bischoff who flawlessly ran the front of the conference. All the other board members and some volunteers kept the Silent Auction packed with items to bid on. Thanks to everyone bidding and helping us with our biggest fundraiser of the year. Our newest board member was voted in at the conference and she came and helped and met many people. Thanks Pamela Route for all your help!!

Membership was handled smoothly. We are always grateful for all our new and renewing members!! Loyd Marshal and Donald Althoff were quite surprised with their OBS awards. The award surprises can be a bit tricky and we pulled it off this year. Every speaker knocked it out of the park and one speaker (Timothy McDermott, DVM) managed to freak everyone out describing all the ticks we must avoid this season. Be safe in the field!!

The educational displays were interesting as always and a huge thank you for spending the day with us and sharing your passion for your non-profit. It would be helpful if you would let us know who you would like to hear from as speaker or an educational display table. What topics for future conferences interest you? Yes, we are working on our March 2, 2024 OBS annual conference. We will develop a theme in the next month or two. Any suggestions? We do have a couple speakers lined up for next year. Jim McCormac will be our keynote speaker. He will spend the day with us and will sign his books on the breaks. Marne Titchenell from the OSU Extension Service will talk about 'the woodland cavity nesters.' Manon VanSchoyck, my dear friend and her education critters, will be back as our guests. I heard Manon was a bit of a hoot at this conference. Hmmmmmm, I am curious... We are working on other speakers and the Fall 2023 OBS newsletter will introduce our 2024 full line up. I hope to hear from some of you with your suggestions and ideas. My email is dsillick118@gmail.com.

A hearty thank you to Mary Lee Minor and her gifted garden club for the beautiful centerpieces that graced the tables. The club has done this for the conference for years. I'm sure you were delighted if you got to take home one of the bluebird wreaths.

Ashland University is a wonderful host. Molly Wilsbacher has a great contact; they are always helpful and the food is good. We feel welcome and thank you Ashland for everything.

As I write this note, I ponder our crazy May weather and what it is doing to the birds we are trying to help. Offering food and a warm place to raise their young is tough in these conditions. Monitoring over the next week will be tough for some species and sadness will overcome some of us. We know the weather is fickle and staying on top of our monitoring is crucial. Take along zip lock bags just in case and small trash bags if a whole nest needs to be cleaned up. More birds will show up and fill

In Memory of Ronnie Edward Kingston October 9, 1943- March 25, 2023

the niche where we lost birds. Julie Zickefoose was sharing on Facebook today how she makes a bug omelet and spends a couple days feeding starving young. We care and try so hard to help the native birds. Mother Nature is not always the kindest lady in the neighborhood. I don't mean to sound harsh but time marches on and it will warm up soon.

Try your best to go out and enjoy spring when it finally warms up. Migration is so amazing. Scientists and biologists are still learning where some birds go and how they figure out their routes and timing. To me, it is one of the greatest mysteries and such an exciting time of the year. I call it a rebirth and from plants to birds to mammals, it is a time to seek and learn and help be engaged in community science. We used to call it citizen science but last week I learned from Michael Kreger, VP conservation at the Columbus Zoo, that it is now called community science. No matter what it is called. I applaud you for your time and passion in the field helping our native cavity nesting species to survive. Keep learning and sharing. Nothing better than seeing a new fledgling bird fly for the first time. It makes our hearts soar! Best to you this season. If you have a story to share, we would love to hear from you.

Thank you Madame Wingnut, my trail buddy, for sharing these pictures from the end of April 2023. An early nest of bluebirds and a nest of tree swallow eggs.



Ron's passion was for birds, especially cavity-nesting birds and bluebirds, a devotion he shared with Priscilla, his wife. They were very active in the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) and the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS) and traveled throughout the United States and other countries to promote education about their conservation. They attended over 30 annual NABS conferences. Ron was the chair of the speaker's bureau for many years and volunteered for many projects for VBS. Their volunteer work of 38 years included presentations, educational workshops and slide shows at many venues, including state fairs. Ron also supplied and assembled bluebird houses/boxes, which they placed and monitored at many locations around the Commonwealth. They were both charter members of the Piedmont Virginia Bird Club (formerly Monticello Bird Club) of Charlottesville. For their many contributions to the conservation of bluebirds for decades, Ron and Priscilla were the recipients of the 2015 Virginia Bluebird Society Heritage Award, presented by VBS. Ron was especially fond of the bluebird trail they established in the mid-1980's at Ivy Creek Natural Area, which continues to provide homes and protection for generations of bluebirds to this day. He loved to walk at Ivy Creek and found it peaceful and restorative to his spirit.

One of Ron's major contributions was the invention of the Kingston Stovepipe Baffle, a simple and inexpensive, yet very efficient, deterrent against predators such as snakes and raccoons when placed on the pole of a nest box. The spread of the use of his idea has saved many thousands of cavity nesting birds. He was highly intelligent and loved to share his wealth of knowledge as a generous and kind educator. He is missed by many friends.

Plans for Ron's Stovepipe Predator Guard can be found at this link: sialis.org/baffle.htm

On March 30. Carl Gleditsch, OBS board member, helped me to get the new Legacy plates on 5 boxes at Safari Golf Course.

Box 11 is Jim and Doris Arim

Box 27 is Mary Lou and John Habash

Box 28 is Mary Lou Dick

Box 29 is Francis Julian Habash

Box 30 is Camry Arim

We sincerely thank you for your dedication to your family members by honoring them with these memorial boxes.

The fishing line is being used to deter the non-native House Sparrow. Different areas are having success with this practice. You can read more about it on our OBS website.

Many thanks!!

Darlene Sillick



Welcoming Our New Trustee



At the 2023 OBS conference the OBS membership voted in a new Trustee, Pam Routte. Pam is a native Clevelander who lives in beautiful Chagrin Falls, Ohio. This area is surrounded by dedicated parks, 1 mile in every direction! She has been a self-proclaimed bird nerd for 40+ years, back in the days when birders traveled with Peterson Field Guides, in their back pockets. This was a

time well before cell phone technology! Pam started birding in the Shaker Lakes area where migratory irruptions are rich, and the birding is fruitful. Soon she was stalking and spotting Snowy Owls on the Lake Erie shores. The rest is history.

Pam enjoyed several fulfilling professions before becoming semi-retired. She worked as a cardiovascular technologist at both Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, has been a project manager for Progressive Insurance, a business owner (Picky Pam Lice Removal), and finally, a candy buyer for Heinen's.

Pam had Eastern Bluebirds on her property for at least 10 years. Her first nest attempts, years ago, were unsuccessful, due to rat snake depredation. From that point, Pam's mission was to learn as much as she could about Bluebird conservation. She discovered a treasure trove of information on Sialis.org and soon discovered several Facebook groups dedicated to Bluebird Conservation and predator mitigation. She was mentored by some stellar humans and learned so much.

After building snake baffles and wren guards and eradicating non native species, Pam was finally ready to host native cavity nesters on her property and educate and guide others on how to do so with the utmost responsibility. She is lucky to participate in the 3 clutches of 5 EABL nestlings each, fledging from her property's nest boxes, in addition to a yearly nest of Black Capped Chickadees, for years running.

A stroke of good fortune put Pam in a position where she was invited to monitor a 12 nest box trail of Bluebirds and Tree Swallows, just 1 mile from home! The land is owned by the Western Reserve Land Conservancy and houses the South Russel Village Park. This beautiful meadowland is the home to Geauga County's largest Bobolink population and the meadow is the most exciting place to be in the months of May and June! Pam is honored to be able to give to her community in such a profound manner.

Pam, a mother of 4, can be found either in the candy aisle of Heinen's, on the nest box trail, in her kayak, on her snowshoes, or chilling at home, working in her vegetable garden, hosting her beloved native cavity nesters, and loving on her kids, dogs, cats and hubster extraordinaire.

Photo of Ohio Bluebird Society Trustees and Officers March 2023



Front row, left to right: Pamela Routte, Judy Semroc, Lee Johnson, Monica Klarer

Top Row, left to right: Anna Rose, Pat Dutton, Heather Harris, Carl Gleditsch, Steven Bischoff, Dan Best, Molly Wilsbacher

Absent from photo: Darlene Sillick

We would like to thank Carl Gleditsch whose term as OBS Trustee expired on March 1, 2023 for his many years of service to OBS!! We are glad to hear that he is planning to continue working behind the scenes in many capacities in the future for the benefit of OBS! Thank you Carl!

Afternoon OBS Panel discussion with experts Carl Gleditsch, Mark Dille, Paula Ziebarth and moderator Dan Best



From the 2023 Conference

Pictured to the right are the winners of the two special awards which are given each year by the Ohio Bluebird Society. These awards are usually presented at the yearly OBS conference. Pictured on the left is Don Althoff, recipient of the OBS Wildlife Conservation Award and on the right is Loyd Marshall, recipient of the OBS Blue Feather Award! Congratulations to both men for outstanding excellence in their dedication and work for the benefit of native species.

OBS Wildlife Conservation Award

Donald P. Althoff is a Certified Wildlife Biologist and Professor Emeritus of Wildlife Conservation at the University of Rio Grande. He earned his B.S. in wildlife management from the Ohio State University, M.S. in Wildlife Sciences from the University of Nebraska, and Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from Pennsylvania State University. He has conducted research in forest and grassland ecosystems with the focus on a variety of species ranging from vertebrates and plants to nematodes. One of his main endeavors since the mid-1990s has been southern flying squirrel in southeast Ohio—including evaluation of an aging technique and the influence of annual hard mast production on local populations. That effort is a component of the Rio EcoMonitoring Project that provides hands-on learning opportunities for University of Rio Grande undergraduates participating in inventory and monitoring of local flora and fauna.

2023 Blue Feather Award

Loyd Marshall has always had a love for nature and grew up spending the majority of his childhood out in the woods, pastures and fields of Farmdale, Ohio. In his 20s he moved to Gustavus Ohio, where he still resides today with his wife Irene. In 1968 Loyd graduated from Youngstown State University with a Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree. Loyd then went on to work for Packard Electric for 36 years and retired in 2001.



After retirement, Loyd wanted to stay active, so in the Fall of 2009 he started volunteering at the Army Corps of Engineers at Mosquito Creek Lake. In 2010 Loyd started leading the cavity nesting bird projects at the lake, which include routine monitoring and maintenance of the nesting boxes for about 8 different cavity nesting species, with the main focus being the Bluebirds, Prothonotary Warblers, and Purple Martins. Today Loyd's team consists of about 17 volunteers, who all work together to regularly monitor the boxes as well as record and submit data to the Ohio Bluebird Society and Nestwatch at the end of each season. In 2022 alone, Loyd and his team fledged a total of 742 birds around the lake! Loyd Marshall's continued dedication to the birds at Mosquito Creek Lake is without a doubt making a beneficial impact for Bluebirds and other second cavity nesting bird species around the lake for generations to come!

In addition to Loyd Marshall's dedication to the birds at Mosquito Creek Lake, he is also an active member of the Ohio Bluebird Society, generously served 3 years on the board, and is a current area contact advisor for Trumbull county.

Educational vendor tables throughout the room included this ODNR table with panelist Jamey Emmert



Silent Auction Tables

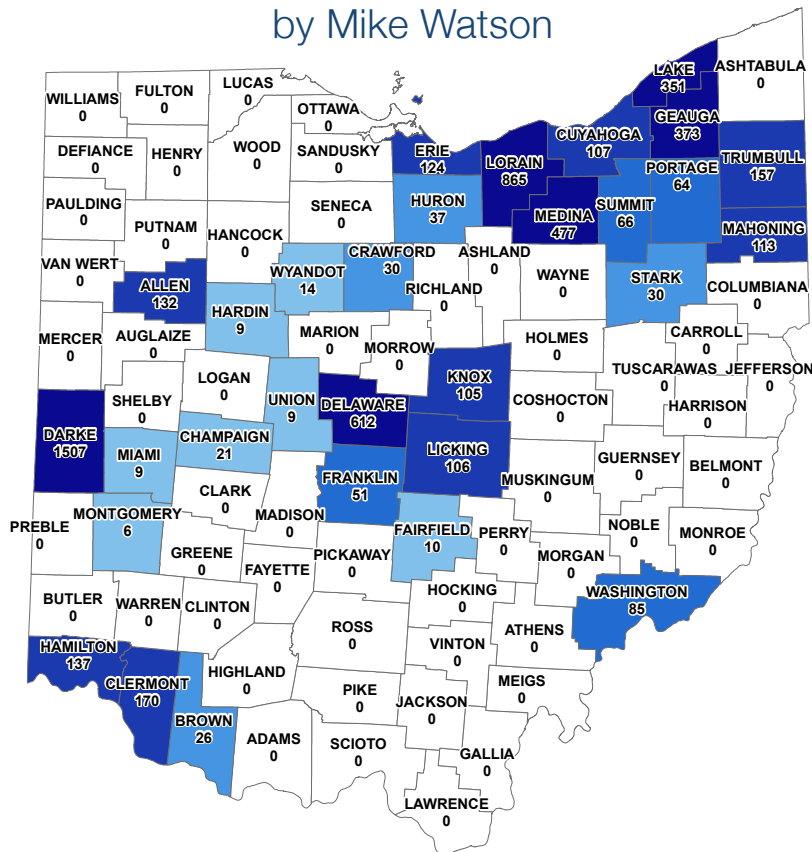


Behind the scenes tech guru Stephen Bischoff and father



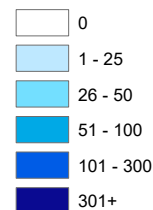
OBS 2022 FLEDGLING REPORT

by Mike Watson



Species	#Fledged
Eastern Bluebird	5803
Tree Swallow	5698
House Wren	1973
Purple Martin	2149
Black-capped Chickadee	75
Carolina Chickadee	99
Carolina Wren	74
American Kestrel	118
Barn Swallow	53
Prothonotary Warbler	65
Wood Duck	33
Great Crested Flycatcher	7
House Sparrows dispatched	595
House Sparrow eggs destroyed	1060
European Starlings dispatched	0
European Starling eggs destroyed	170

#Fledged per County



created by Mike Watson; The Holden Arboretum



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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Ohio Bluebird Society to join our group.

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OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

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9500 Sperry Road
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Mission Statement

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

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

Veronica Oblak is one of the new monitors Madame WingNut is working with in Powell City Parks trails. Here she is at Arbor Ridge Park in Powell, standing in front of one of our "trap" boxes (thus smaller 1-1/4" hole and no baffle).

She is doing a wonderful job entering data into NestWatch and keeping House Sparrows out of nest boxes here.

Regarding this picture and her monitoring experience so far, Veronica says "I got myself this vest to wear. I found people are approaching me when I wear it which is nice... Some people who talked to me were so happy to hear the Bluebird and Tree Swallow babies are in some boxes. They said they can't have boxes in their yards because of House Sparrows and they love coming to Arbor Ridge to see all the Bluebirds and Tree Swallows."

