



Bluebird Monitor

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

Spring 2024



Did You Know?

A Message from the President of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, Dr. Dean C. Rust

In Volume 22, Issue 3 Fall/Winter 2020 Newsletter "*Bluebird Trails and Tales*", I wrote an article entitled "Did you Know?". This will be 2.0 of that missive.

1. All Bluebirds, both male & female, are born with a white eye ring. As the fledglings mature during molting in the fall, the male white eye ring fades away but the females keep their white eye rings their entire life.
2. Bluebirds can fly at speeds up to 45 miles per hour if necessary.
3. Bluebirds raise their young in old or pre-existing nesting cavities, i.e., they are "secondary cavity-nesters" They have an average nesting success rate of about 60%.
4. Eastern Bluebirds live in most of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains plus Bermuda and in Southern Canada. There are also native populations of Eastern Bluebirds in Mexico and Central America.
5. Eastern Bluebirds eat mostly insects, and they tend to spy on them from above and then catch them on the ground. Spiders, grasshoppers, beetles, caterpillars, and crickets are all favorite foods for them. During the winter months when insects are hard or impossible to find, they will eat a wide range of fruits and seeds. Juniper berries, Holly berries, Winter berries, Dogwood



Bluebirds in Winter, by Richard Hess



Young Bluebird Fledges, by David Kinneer

berries, sumac, and mistletoe are all on the menu... plus mealworms and peanut butter suet treats at your bird feeder.

6. Eastern Bluebirds that survive to adulthood can live for 4-7 years. That is unusually long for a native songbird, but many Bluebirds do not survive their first year.

7. Bluebirds don't typically mate for life, although it's not uncommon for a breeding pair to spend more than one breeding season together. During the breeding season, they are monogamous, meaning they form a "pair-bond" and work together to raise their chicks. Whether they "reconnect" the next season after the winter is over is questionable.

8. Females never turn bright blue, instead staying a dull blue-gray for their whole lives, although they do have some bright blue feathers. The males will begin to develop bright blue feathers when they molt in the fall. They may appear especially blue during the mating season in April-May & June-July.

9. Bluebirds and migration. Do they migrate? YES and NO. In the northernmost areas of their range, Canada, and the northern tier of states in the US, many do migrate. They are present only during the breeding season in these uppermost regions. Large portions of Texas, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and other southern states are wintering grounds for these migrating birds. Bluebirds that live in the Southeastern US, Central Mexico



Bluebird in Cavity, by Richard Hess

and Central America do NOT migrate and enjoy a much longer breeding season with plenty of insects all year long.

10. A female Bluebird will typically lay between 3 and 5 eggs in her nest. Pennsylvania Bluebirds on average have two nests each season, divided into brood periods of April-May and June-July. Three nests are very special and usually found in more southern states.

11. There are seven subspecies of Eastern Bluebirds.

Sialia sialis is the most common in the US, *sialis bermudensis* in Bermuda, *sialis nidificans* in central Mexico, *sialis fulva* in southwestern US and Mexico, *sialis guatemalae* in southern Mexico and Guatemala, *sialis meridionalis* in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and *sialis caribaea* in Honduras and Nicaragua.

12. The Eastern Bluebird's Song is very distinctive. They make a call that sounds like "chur lee" or "chir we". To be exact, it is a "warble". Many birdwatchers describe it as sounding like they are singing the words "truly" or "purity".

13. Bluebirds are very social and their flocks can number from a dozen to over a hundred. However, they do not live in flocks, only during the fall and winter seasons. During the breeding months is when you will see Bluebirds alone or in pairs and will be close to their nesting sites.

14. Bluebirds are highly territorial. During their breeding season, the males will protect their nesting sites even before they have found a female to mate with. The male Bluebird is a sentinel/guardian and he is very adept at protecting the nesting site, especially when the female is incubating eggs or feeding chicks. She is most vulnerable at this time and the male is willing and ready to take on any predator or another male Bluebird!!

15. A Bluebird can spot caterpillars and insects in tall grass at the remarkable distance of over 50 yards (that is half the length of a football field).

16. Three species of Bluebirds are found throughout North America, including the **Eastern, Western and Mountain Bluebirds**. All Bluebirds are cavity nesters and will use an artificial nest box. Bluebirds have made an incredible comeback since the early 1970's as a result of thousands of Bluebird

nestboxes being installed across the country and with the inception of the North American Bluebird Society in 1978.

17. An active Bluebird nest and/or clutch of blue or white eggs is a wonder of nature. The female turns the eggs many times each day while incubating them under her body without even looking!! This turning of the eggs keeps the temperature even and prevents the yolk inside the eggs from sticking to the shell. It also polishes the exterior of the eggs so they are shiny from the oils on the female's belly. She also orients the eggs so that the rounded end is up (air sac is here) and the pointed end is down. She does that without looking as well!! If you find a clutch of Bluebird eggs that are dull, not warm, and pale, they are probably abandoned.

18. Two states have the Eastern Bluebird as their state bird: New York and Missouri.

19. Bluebirds consume about 4 grams of food per day, or about 12% of their body weight. This is equivalent to a two-hundred-pound human eating 24 pounds of food each day.

20. As the days grow longer in the spring, a male Bluebird's brain releases hormones that stimulate the production of testosterone. This hormone in turn stimulates the area of the brain responsible for singing behavior, thus triggering the male to begin his mating song.

21. Unpaired male Bluebirds may sing up to 1,000 songs per hour, but males as a group average a more reasonable rate of four to five hundred songs per hour.

22. The first Bluebird Nesting Box Trail was established in Adams County, Illinois in 1934, by T.E. Musselman.

*"For Bluebirds hold a special place
In all that view and watch them grow
They occupy a rare exclusive space
That lifts and sets our hearts aglow
Other birds bring smiles and grins
But none can bring that sense of cheer
For none seem quite so close as friends
As ones in blue we hold so dear"*

Poem by David L. Warbritton, Greensboro, North Carolina



Bluebird in Flight, by Mike Dickie

The Making of Centerpieces

By Molly Wilsbacher, OBS Treasurer



Following up on last quarter's article on gardening, and in light of Ohio Bluebird Society's upcoming conference on March 2nd, I thought I would feature the art of making centerpieces. All photographs included in this article were actual table displays used at previous OBS conferences, which were made and donated by Mary Lee Minor and other

members of the Earth Wind and Flowers Garden Club of Bucyrus. Below is an example of one centerpiece from last year's conference, while others featured a variety of birds and complimentary colors frequently found in gardens.



Although you don't necessarily have to have a theme to create a standout centerpiece, it can help you more effectively make your vision a reality. It all comes back to the details. Creating a centerpiece can be as easy as choosing an arrangement that you like or as complex as incorporating a variety of details that turn it into more of a work of art. There are no rights or wrongs — it's about having fun and expressing yourself while giving your friends and colleagues a reason to smile.



The definition of centerpiece in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary reflects: "an important item of a display, usually in the center of a table setting." However, an alternative definition is: "one that is of central importance or interest in a larger whole."

I really appreciate the second definition because Mary Lee and her garden club continue to come up with unique centerpieces that fit the theme of each year's Bluebird Conference.

So what makes a good centerpiece? One that sets the theme of the event or conference and brings extra decorations to the room. It also refers to any central or important object in a collection of items. A truly noteworthy and memorable centerpiece stands out for the details that contribute to its design. It's all in the color, the texture, and the variety. After all, a centerpiece can incorporate more than just flowers and our beloved bluebirds, as the examples in this article demonstrate.



While you can definitely play along with the room's overarching theme, you can also have a little bit of fun by straying in a slightly different direction, as the garden club did with the above example.

I don't know about you, but I am really looking forward to seeing what Mary Lee and her garden club come up with this year for our table centerpieces in light of the conference's theme: "Bring on the Bugs!"

Bach and Bluebell

By Guest Author Lisa Maas



To all my fellow Friends-of-Bluebirds: We are all having empty-nest syndrome. Bluebird withdrawal. Allow me to share my true short story, and hopefully bring a little therapy and perhaps a smile.

I've had several Bluebirds over the years raising their babies in my nest boxes, but no other couple has had such contrasting masculine and feminine qualities. Bach is

Mr. Macho Man. Bluebell is Miss Girly-Girl. If they were people, Bach would flex his muscles and, in a deep voice, boast about all the squirrels he's kicked to the moon. Bluebell would turn her face and giggle at her mate's audacity, then pat him on the shoulder and tell him he's the bravest.

As Bluebirds, Bach's xy plays counterpoint to Bluebell's xx as follows...

When Bluebell visits the Bluebird Café, she first lands on the shepherd's crook in front of it. We talk to her from just inside our window, and she tilts her head to one side, calmly sitting and listening. If there is another bird in the café, she waits until it leaves before entering. She looks into all the little dishes, picks one morsel of crumbled suet or one mealworm, and flits away with it to feed a baby.

When Bach comes, he does not sit still. He wiggles, puts his head up, and puffs out his chest. He kicks any birds in HIS Bluebird Café OUT! He snarfs down some suet crumbs, stuffs his bill with as many mealworms as will fit, then jets away to feed the kids.

When Bluebell arrives at the nest box with a bug or caterpillar, she first perches on the crook in front for quite a while, looking around cautiously for any lurking predators.

Bach rockets straight into the hole with the food, then straight out after the feeding, not stopping to rest. (It was easy to get a photo of Bluebell. Bach was a challenge.)

I recently purchased a solar birdbath fountain. It took about one month for my birds to overcome their apprehension of the bubbling enigma. Not Bach. He jumped right in for one of his vigorous baths. Miss Bluebell prefers a safer, gentler bathing experience in my shallow, fountain-free La-La Bath.

Bach acts as if he is sovereign over our property. Purple Martins checking out the Martin house? He races over to boot them off. Even though the Blues don't nest in it, he still wants control. Chickadee inspecting her designated A-frame? "Away!" says King B. That is, until he discovers he is too big to squeeze into the Dee-Dee hole. (He tried several times.) Only then does he magnanimously allow the Chickadees to use it.

When I splurged one nesting cycle and bought some live mealworms, I thought how excited my Bluebirds would be. Wrong. There were so many goodies in the wild that Bach and Bluebell turned up their noses. Fine. I put the dish where I'd



seen my pair of Carolina Wrens playing around. Those little cuties were ecstatic! One was perched on the dish relishing the rare treat when Bach spotted it. "Oh no you don't! Those are mine!!" Mr. B. bumped Carrie Wren off the dish and quickly gobbled every last one.

Occasionally Bach meets his match, and then some. When a Cooper's Hawk, a terrorist from a songbird's perspective, is skulking in the trees, why is it that Bluebirds call the alarm with such a lovely song? How can they sound so distressed and yet so heartbreakingly beautiful?

Then there was the time Bach and Bluebell had a nest of young just ready to fledge, and something very big and loud was coming to get his babies. It was the boy cutting our grass on a riding mower. He'd misunderstood my instructions to stay clear of the Bluebird house. In less than five seconds Bach was on the crook next to the window, jerking and hopping up and down, and glaring straight at me with the "Mad Bluebird" look. I could almost hear him yelling, "Get him out of here!! My babies are about to fledge!"

I don't know if he perceives himself as boss over me and was giving me orders, or if he thinks I'm actually the one in charge and was informing me that I was sleeping on the job. I myself am unsure of who is boss. He does seem to have me wrapped around his little claw.

There is one special creature over whom King Bach definitely does not rule. Do you know who it is? Little Miss Bluebell, of course. She's the one who decides when it's time to begin nesting, and if they'll have a second or third brood. (True for all Bluebirds.) Also, no matter how doggedly Bach works to sway her to choose one of his favorite nest boxes for raising chicks, in the end, after all the shopping around, it is Bluebell who has the final say.

Papa Bach is without question the best Daddy Blue I've ever had. Whenever Bluebell begins nest building, or the first egg is laid, or the first egg hatches, or the young begin fledging, you can read the exhilaration in his every movement. He works with enthusiasm and energy from sunup to sundown. He feeds, hunts, defends,

and removes diapers with zeal!! Daddy Bach is totally focused on taking care of babies. He loves it and lives for it.

Which is why he has stolen my heart. That and the fact that he is THE most social Bluebird I've ever had. Sometimes he drops by the Bird Garden next to my window and just perches in front of it, looking at me. No food, no drink, no bath. I chat with him, praising his hard work and complimenting his beauty. He expands his chest and flutters his wings a little. Merely a friendly visit, then he's off.

I love to watch Bach and Bluebell at the end of the day, when the sun is sinking below the horizon. They like to perch on the double shepherd's crook in front of their nest box. Now and then, one drops down for a bug. Bach sometimes feeds it to Bluebell, but they are finished feeding babies for the day. I really don't know how advanced their thought processes are, but as they are perched facing the nest box and are gazing at it, I can't help imagining that they are thinking about those tiny, fuzzy babies, and that they are content, maybe even happy. I know I am.

If it is a cool night and the chicks are on the young side, Bluebell slips into the box to keep her babies warm. Bach continues his watch on the house from the crook for a couple more minutes, then glides to the hole. He pokes his head inside for quite a while. What is he doing? I tell my family he is



giving Bluebell a kiss, and issuing orders to the kids to settle down and go to sleep. But what is he really doing? He is there for a long time. I think he is admiring his lovely little family, and that he truly is happy.

A Colorado native, Lisa headed east at age 20, alone in a VW bug, stopping first in Kansas to pick up a husband and a degree in Horticultural Therapy from K-State. She has now lived in Indiana for 40 years, enjoying the Midwest lifestyle, four distinct seasons, and myriads of birds!

Tough Women Warblers

By Dan Best, former OBS Trustee

I think that all of us have known some tough-as-nails women in our lives. Maybe you're one of them.

My Irish grandmother comes to mind. Long ago, some punks picked a fight with my younger brothers and I. I lured the leader of the pack into my grandma's front yard before turning on him, knowing that if I didn't prevail, our mighty mite grandmother would box his ears. Turning on the porch light, Grandma's gruff "What's going on out here?!" sent them fleeing into the night.

Any nest box monitor can attest to a range of reaction from defensive parent birds. While some birds sit passively by muttering mild protest calls, others are much more aggressive. How many of us have been dive-bombed by feisty female or inflamed male bluebirds or tree swallows? Heard that wisp of wingbeats near our ears or even had our hair combed or cap knocked askew by bird feet?

Likewise, varying degrees of aggression are demonstrated in territorial defense. Such is the case with our decades of banding prothonotary warblers in the swampy stretch of the Upper Cuyahoga River in Geauga County. Bands include a USGS Bird Banding Lab metal band and colored plastic leg bands for individual identification, the color bands facilitating our study of longevity, nest site faithfulness and pair bonding. To catch a male warbler, a decoy bird and an audio call of their song is used to lure territorial males into a mist net.

Some males immediately charge the decoy like a missile. Frequently however, there are males that are circumspect and



Photo by Dan Best

cautious. They fly back and forth from perch to perch above the mist net nervously twitching and singing, showing much trepidation before making passes at the decoy before finally getting caught ... or not.

There have been a few instances when fearless females joined in the fray and were subsequently netted along with their mates.

There were a couple of quite memorable instances in which timid male warblers were goaded and scolded by their female partners to go after the artificial interloper. A berated husband would immediately recognize this nagging behavior and empathize.

So, no matter how dainty and darling our nest box tenants seem to us, they can be quite formidable when necessary, females no less than males. I admire such female ferocity in both warblers and women ... except when it's aimed at me!



Ask Madame WingNut

The Saga of The Hole

By Paula Ziebarth



Our home in Powell, Ohio is located in an area that is populated by many woodpeckers. For many years we had cedar siding on the house and woodpeckers would renovate the west and northwest corner of our house every year as they excavated holes to nest (late winter/early spring) and to roost (fall). I left stands of dead ash trees and nest boxes for them to use, but they insisted on assaulting the siding... every year...

Life is a little messy, and I have a sense of humor when it comes to the antics of wildlife in my yard, which is their home too. This was written a while back in 2006. We still live in the same house today, but the installation of HardiePlank concrete siding has finally thwarted the woodpeckers. For those of you that have cedar siding, you may commiserate and laugh... or cry...

Saturday morning on the first week of March, 2006 dawned bright and sunny. Snuggled under a down comforter, I was awakened abruptly. This morning, there arose such a clatter, I literally sprang from my bed to see what was the matter. It sounded like a very agile gnome was defying gravity and working on the side of my house with a jackhammer. The sound resonated loud and fast, almost mechanical. It would stop for a few seconds and then repeat. I could feel the vibration.



Downy Woodpecker - photo by Gina Swindell

I raced to the northwest corner of the house, tore open the shutters and threw up the sash. I saw pink insulation fluttering to the ground and a busy bird body out of the corner of my eye. I popped out the screen and stuck my head out. Off flew a male Downy Woodpecker. There was a nice 3-inch diameter hole in the cedar siding and pink fiberglass insulation floating on the breeze. Apparently, this bird had not seen my last gas bill.



Northern Flicker - photo by Penny Brandau

As I was contemplating the hole and wondering where the big ladder was, I heard another loud banging. It was so loud and persistent, surely the neighbors would come running to see what was happening? I jumped into my clothes and ran downstairs. I walked the perimeter of the house and finally located a Northern Flicker on my roof. When establishing territory for breeding, Northern Flickers will often drum on hollow trees to attract a mate and keep other males out of their territory. This particular bird had discovered the metal flashing on my roof which explained the machine gunfire that had startled me awake. I did not get a good look at his head, as he decided to simply moon me and fly to a nearby tree, emitting a laughing, cackling call. He was doing that jungle bird laugh that Flickers do so well.

I decided to check on the new hole and walked around the house. I was greeted by the incessant cheeping of a male House Sparrow (non-native bird). He was firmly planted in The Hole and announcing to the bird world that it was now his. He looked rather smug and proud of himself.

I went back in the house and took the stairs two at a time to retrieve my BB-gun. I decided a few BB pits in the siding would not be noticed with the new gaping hole next to them. My shot was off, but I hoped that he had bits of fiberglass insulation in his rump that would cause him discomfort for the rest of the day.



Male House Sparrow - photo by Paula Ziebarth



As I walked back in the house, I heard the jungle laugh of the Flicker in the stand of trees behind our house.

Several days passed and a new bird entered The Hole. I was listening to the birds outside on another cold, sunny Ohio morning. They were getting restless as spring is just around the corner. I was listening to a bird with quite a repertoire. Then I heard the scuffling in the wall and the plaintive cries of a European Starling (EUST).

I tore open the shutters and threw up the sash (again) and removed the screen. I poked my head out the window hole, but was not greeted with a EUST head poking out the bird hole. I banged on the wall and continued to hear the scuffling and EUST calls.

I still believed the EUST was being obstinate so I went outside with the BB-gun to give him some incentive to leave The Hole. I walked out and watched, but no EUST head poked out. I even aimed a shot at The Hole (we can patch that up later), but no EUST head poked out.

He is stuck! I am certain. He entered the hole and became enmeshed in the fiberglass insulation or stuck some other way. It has been an hour and he is still calling in there. The big ladder is not home right now. It is at our vacation house. Maybe hose extension and shop vac? That is not here either - at the vacation house. My husband is still soundly asleep. Perhaps we will conceive of a viable plan together to extract the EUST from inside the walls of our house when he awakens.

The saga continues.....

3-8-06 (later that morning)

I sat in the kitchen sipping my morning coffee, but my heart was troubled. I imagined that poor creature struggling in the walls, that black bird in the walls. I began thinking of Edgar Allan Poe

tales: "The Raven" (black bird), "Cask of Amontillado", and "The Telltale Heart". Maybe Poe had a EUST stuck in his walls that served as the inspiration for some of his stories...

Would it be possible to remove him? Depending how far in the walls he was, I thought a shop vac might have possibilities. The hole was not quite big enough to use the barbecue tongs. If I could not get him out, should I name him Fortunato and seal him in the walls? Would he remain forever to rest in the pink prickly down that lay behind the walls of that upstairs bedroom? For both hygienic and humane reasons, I really did not want to do that. I did not want an ornithological "Cask of Amontillado".

It was with heavy steps that I climbed the stairs once more. I entered our bedroom and greeted my husband with those five words that husbands worldwide hate to hear. "Honey, we have a problem." I escorted him to the location of the EUST entombment. We listened at the wall. We pounded and tapped nothing. After over an hour, the EUST had escaped all on its own.

I borrowed a ladder from our neighbor. My husband stuffed in some more insulation and used wood putty to seal up "The Hole". "The Hole" is no more.

Today, I looked out the window and saw a Downy Woodpecker perched in the tree behind our house staring at me with his head tilted just so. His eyes did not appear to be focused quite on me. Surely, he is not eyeing up another spot on the northwest corner of my house? Definitely not. I'm sure he was looking at me.

The End (?)

3-17-06

God and the birds are not done with me yet. First, I would like to mention that a friend dropped by to take a little field trip in my backyard and see "The Hole", or at least where it used to



Red Bellied Woodpecker - photo
by Penny Brandau

be. She told me “The Hole” intrigued her and she had to come see it for herself. She wanted to see where the drama unfurled. As you may remember, the original hole was excavated by a Downy Woodpecker, appropriated by a male House Sparrow (HOSP), and finally discovered by a European Starling (EUST). We sealed up “The Hole”, but things are happening in my backyard once more.

You may also recall that another bird was hammering on my house one morning. It was a Yellow-shafted Flicker (YSFL). I sometimes name the most interesting wildlife that comes across my path. Last year, I was entertained by a pair of Carolina Wrens (CARW) that were tenaciously building a nest inside my husband’s motorcycle helmet on the top shelf of the garage. I named that pair The Hell’s Angels. This morning I named the YSFL. I named him Al.

This morning dawned like so many do in central Ohio in late winter: crisp, bright, and cold with a dusting of snow. I was snuggled under my down comforter, sleeping soundly and dreaming pleasant dreams. My colorful dreams quickly shifted to black and white. The scene was pierced by brilliant flashes of light and a loud rat-a-tat-tat. Al Capone was assaulting someone with a machine gun.

I awoke with a start, but the machine gunfire continued. He was back. It was not the slower, duller drum roll of the Downy. It was the impossibly fast and incredibly loud machine gunfire of the YSFL who I have now named “Al”. I ran to the window and saw him fly by me just beneath it. I opened the window and he flew into the trees emitting his jungle laugh.

11-16-06

The Hole returned. Last month, my son was home from college one weekend, trying to sleep well into the afternoon (which is his custom), but he was disturbed by Mr. Downy. “What IS that?” he asked me.

“Ahhhhh.... the Saga of The Hole continues”, I thought to myself. Mr. Downy and I proceeded to annoy one another. He assaulted the siding with his loud hammering and I responded by opening the window and shooing him away. He gave me “the look” as he flew to the nearby maple tree, waited patiently for the crazy lady to stick her head back in the big tree, and then returned to his work. Little tufts of pink fiberglass floated lazily to the ground and The Hole was complete. The new hole was exactly 3 inches to the left of the one he excavated last March.

I filled The Hole with Great Stuff, which apparently is not that great. I heard more battering and walked outside to see Mr. Red-bellied taking over. He removed the Great Stuff and filled it with empty space and a slightly larger diameter hole than Mr. Downy. While he worked, a male House Sparrow sat perched on the gutter directly above him, head cocked, with great interest. He definitely had ulterior motives.

Yesterday, I was reading a book in the back bedroom and heard the twittering, squealing cries of a flock of EUST in the backyard. Then I heard a plaintive cry close to where I sat and then a scuffling in the wall. Damn! There was a EUST in The Hole! Another cry followed that one and some scolding ensued. I peered out the window and saw two EUST in the maple. They were fighting over hole rights.

Since I own the big tree and live in the darn thing, I reclaimed hole rights and plugged up The Hole once more. I stuffed insulation back in the wall and wood puttied it shut. For good measure, I tied a Sponge Bob Squarepants smiley face mylar balloon filled with helium to the downspout near The Hole. We’ll see if it holds. I have my doubts as hole history dictates that it shall return.....

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.

February is National Bird Feeding Month

By Pamela Route, OBS Trustee

There are many backyard birders who fill their feeders and heated birdbaths to help our feathered friends find food and open water when the weather is harsh. Feeding the birds provides the energy they may need for winter fuel or migration. And it provides us with endless hours of entertainment. But filling our feeders comes with an important, often neglected responsibility. Our feeders and bird baths must be kept clean to ensure that the birds are not spreading contagious and harmful bacteria and viruses amongst the flocks of visitors. Did you know that filling dirty feeders could do more harm to hungry birds than leaving the feeders empty?

How often should seed feeders be cleaned, you ask? The National Audubon Society recommends cleaning 1-2 times per month and more frequently when the weather is hot or wet (rain and snow). How do we best clean our seed feeders and birdbaths?

Feeders and birdbaths can be cleaned with either a 9:1 water to bleach solution OR 3:1 water to white vinegar solution.

You will need these supplies:

- Bottle brush for cleaning feeders
- Old dish brush for birdbath scrubbing
- Old toothbrush for scrubbing bird feeder parts
- Deep bucket or medium trash can for soaking feeders, trays, baffles

Bird Feeder Cleaning Steps:

- Empty seed and scrape remnants from seed tray and disassemble feeder if appropriate.
- Rinse feeder
- Submerge in bleach or vinegar solution and soak to release dirt and debris.
- Scrub vigorously! A bottle brush and a toothbrush are great tools to use.
- Rinse
- Rinse again
- Thoroughly dry and then air dry until thoroughly dry! Never fill a damp feeder as the risk of mold is very real.
- Take the opportunity to check the health of the feeder and verify that there is nothing that could injure a bird.

The steps for cleaning a birdbath are the same. If running water is not available, a stock pot works! Rinse and rinse thoroughly!

Why is keeping our feeding stations sanitary so important?

There are dangers in not managing our feeding areas; those being the risk of the birds orally transmitting harmful bacteria amongst one another through accumulated fecal matter and rotting food debris. We are trying to prevent the spread of these contagious diseases, viruses, bacteria, and fungi:

- Trichomoniasis-a parasite that causes inflammation in the bird's crop and mouth. Ulcers become masses and masses become blockages. These birds will succumb to starvation.



- Salmonellosis-birds become dehydrated and die of starvation due to inflammation in the mouth and esophagus.
- Aspergillosis- is a fungus that causes fungal plaques that will eventually compromise the bird's respiratory system.
- Mycoplasmal Conjunctivitis- is a disease that is marked by red, swollen, crusty eyes that can cause blindness and primarily affect Finches.
- Avian Pox- is a virus that is marked by warty growths on any unfeathered area including eyes, beak, legs, feet, and face. These growths affect vision, breathing and feeding.

In nature, it would be rare for so many varieties of birds to congregate at congested feeding stations. The risk of contagious disease, virus and bacteria spreading when bird species are intermingling while feeding in such close quarters, is a very real possibility. It is important for us to observe the birds that are feeding in our yards. If you see listless or lethargic birds pay special attention to any other physical characteristics. If there appears to be a breakout of illness at your feeder, it is recommended the feeders be taken down and sanitized and not replaced for a few weeks.

Happy National Bird Feeding Month!



Member News

Notes from the president – by Darlene Sillick

The OBS board has been busily organizing the Saturday, March 2, 2024 Ohio Bluebird Society annual in-person conference. Please be sure to register either on our website or from the 2 page registration form in this newsletter. Our final day to register is February 16.

We are very excited with our speaker line up.

- Jim McCormac – Mysterious Moths and their outsized ecological roles
- Chrisula Stone – Bluebirds 101: The Species that Started it All
- Matt Shumar – Bugged by the lack of bugs: a Look at the Decline of Aerial Insectivores
- Awards – To be announced – Darlene
- Bet Zimmerman Smith – Aerial Acrobats: All About Tree Swallows
- OBS panel – To be announced – Dan Best, emcee
- Marne Titchenell – The Woodland Secondary Cavity Nesting Birds

We will have education table set ups. One group is traveling from PA. The Troyers Rope Company, who also sells Purple Martin

nesting rigs and housing supplies will have an educational set up. Manon VanSchoyck will be back this year again to share a few educational critters from Ohio Nature Education. The educational tables by Jamey Emmert are always very interesting too.

We wish to thank our sponsors for their support with our conference. Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Cardinal Health have helped OBS for years to put on our conference.

Please note, we are in search for a couple of new trustees. Please let Darlene Sillick know if you are interested in serving on our board. Dsillick118@gmail.com

It has been exciting for me the past couple months to have an Eastern Bluebird family feeding at my condo patio feeders. I feel blessed to see them daily during our winter months. By sometime in March, they will be off to local nestboxes and preparing to pair off for the nesting season. Then we go to them and do our best to keep them safe. At the March 2nd conference in Ashland, Ohio we will learn many more tips to help our native cavity nesters.

See you on March 2!

Save the Date!

The Ohio Bluebird Society is helping to sponsor Mosquito Lake's Big Birding Weekend that is being held May 17th - 19th, 2024 at Mosquito Lake State Park in Trumbull County. There will be birding hikes, pontoon excursions, photography programs, live bird exhibits, and much more for both beginner and experienced birders! All programs are free and open to the general public. Sign up forms for specific events will begin on Friday evening, May 17th. There is a lovely campground at the State Park for those that would like to hang out for the whole weekend! Come see what this beautiful Ohio inland lake has to offer, you won't want to miss it!

Basic Information:

May 17, 2024 - May 19, 2024
Mosquito Lake State Park
1439 Wilson Sharpsville Rd
Cortland, Ohio 44410
Price - Free

For more information, or if you would like to help volunteer or sponsor this event, please contact the Mosquito Lake Park office at 330-637-2856

Mosquito Lake's Big Birding Weekend

When: May 17-19th 2024

Where: Mosquito Lake State Park

What: A weekend of bird hikes, pontoon excursions, photography programs, live bird exhibits, and much more for any level of birder.

For more information, check the park program webpage at www.tinyurl.com/lakeprograms and click on the Big Birding Weekend



Ohio Bluebird Society Legacy Fund Honoree Designation Form

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Name of person you wish to honor: _____

Name as it should appear on nest box plaque: _____

Legacy Fund Donation, check where appropriate:

_____ 1 nest box @ \$125
 _____ Number of additional nest boxes @\$100 each
 _____ Total number of nest boxes requested

Preferred location of Legacy Box. Please specify city in Ohio. If no preference, please indicate: _____

OBS Honoree Grant Amount: _____

Make checks payable to:

Ohio Bluebird Society

Mail to:

Ohio Bluebird Society
 The Holden Arboretum
 9500 Sperry Road, Kirtland, OH 44094

(We will contact you to discuss further).

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

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

Welcome New Members!

Rebecca Dobson
 Kristin Driscoll
 Kim Lacey
 Liz McQuaid
 Bettyann Nagy
 Brenda Nickol
 Lisa & Tim Wendt

Thank You to Our Donors!

Judy Semroc
 Susi Brown
 Patty Dove
 Bill & Jo Fedor
 Kathryn W. Maddy, in honor of Bethany Gray
 Mike Sapp / Kelly Thiel
 Debbie Smilek
 Ed & Brenda Young
 Elizabeth Zimmerman Smith

Legacy Fund:

Stephen Habash and Jean Luczkows
in honor of John and Mary Lou Habash
 Stephen Habash and Jean Luczkows
in honor of Gabe Habash and Julie Buntin
 Robbin Johnson,
 Johnson Lifegroup' Christway Church
in memory of Dorothy June Warner
 Ben Warner
in memory of Dorothy Warner

Treasurer's Report by Molly Wilsbacher

1. Thank you to everyone who made (or anticipate making) donations for our upcoming silent auction at the annual Bluebird Conference on Saturday, March 2, 2024. With the conference just a few weeks away, if you would like to donate anything, please bring it with you to the conference and drop it off at the silent auction table. If you can't make the conference this year, but would still like to donate something, please send me an email at OBSTreasurer@gmail.com and I will make arrangements for pick by me or another OBS Member. Thank you!

2. We received several donations or grants in the 4th Quarter of 2023: (1) Thank you to Stephen Habash who made two Legacy donations in honor of Gabe Habash & Julie Buntin, and in honor of John & Mary Lou Habash. (2) Thank you also to Ben Warner who made a donation in memory of Dorothy Warner. (3) And finally, we received a \$3,500 Cardinal Health Foundation grant in the honor of

Board Member Lee Johnson, who also recently became our much needed (and beloved) secretary.

3. For the quarter ending December 31, 2023, the Ohio Bluebird Society's checking account held \$11,833.46 and savings account held \$13,115.72. Our upcoming expenditures for the 1st Quarter of 2024 include costs associated with our conference (including paying the remaining 50% of the estimated cost for food), costs of maintaining and updating our website, and costs related to this newsletter. If anyone would like to see any of our quarterly financial reports, please let me know.

4. We also intend on awarding a few grants for the Spring nesting and planting season. If you are interested in applying for a small grant, please visit the website for the grant application and instructions: <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about/grant-information/>.



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Bring on the Bugs!

March 2, 2024

SPEAKERS —

Jim McCormac	Mysterious Moths and their outsized ecological roles
Chrisula Stone	Bluebirds 101: The Species that Started it All
Matt Shumar	Bugged by the lack of bugs: a Look at the Decline of Aerial Insectivores
AWARDS	to be announced - Darlene
Bet Zimmerman Smith	Aerial Acrobats: All About Tree Swallows
OBS panel	to be announced - Dan Best, emcee
Marne Titchenell	The Woodland Secondary Cavity Nesting Birds

LUNCH HOUR BREAK

Silent Auction – Our biggest fundraiser!
Educational table demonstrations and posters
OBS display table – Van Ert traps for sale (\$10)

CONFERENCE LOCATION & TIME

Check-In: 8:00am
OBS Annual Members Meeting: 8:30 - 9:00am.
Conference: 9:00am – 4:30pm
Non-members plan to arrive by 9:00am main conference start time
Ashland University
John C Myers Convocation Center
638 Jefferson Street, Ashland, Ohio, 44805

COST

\$30 OBS member, \$40 non-OBS member, \$15 student (21 & younger), \$20 seniors 65+ OBS members
Includes Conference and Lunch (please pre-register using attached registration form) (No Walk-ins)
- **Registration Deadline: February 16, 2024. Register Online at <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/conference/>**
- **Or Mail to: Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair, 7747 Township Road 103, Millersburg, OH 44654**

Awards, educational displays, silent auction and much more!

Visit our website for more information, to see program updates and hotel information!

<https://www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org/>



Ohio Bluebird Society presents –
Bring on the Bugs!!

Original artwork by Anna Rose

If you become sick with Covid-19,
please do not attend the conference.
A full refund will be provided with
proof of a positive Covid-19 test.

THANK YOU



SPONSORS!



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Bring on the Bugs!

March 2, 2024

REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Deadline: Friday, February 16, 2024

Register Online at <https://ohiobluebirdsociety.org/conference/>

(Please pre-register, space is limited, NO Walk-in's)

Name: _____ OBS Member? YES / NO
Organization: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
E-mail: _____ Phone: _____ County: _____

I AM REGISTERING AS (DEADLINE TO REGISTER IS FEBRUARY 16, 2024) (NO WALK IN'S)

____ OBS Member (\$30) ____ Non-OBS Member (\$40) ____ Student = 21 & younger (\$15) ____ Seniors 65+ (\$20)
(SR. OBS MEMBERS)

MAIL REGISTRATION

Pat Dutton, OBS Membership Chair
7747 Township Road 103
Millersburg, OH 44654
OBSMembershipchair@gmail.com

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO

OBS
or register online!

LUNCH SELECTION – BRING YOUR OWN COFFEE CUP AND WATER BOTTLE FOR A SUSTAINABLE CONF.

Name on Name Tag: _____

Check Lunch Choice: w/broccoli salad, pasta salad, chips, apple, cookie, and water:

- ____ Smoked Turkey and Gouda
- ____ Roast Beef and Cheddar
- ____ Ham and Swiss
- ____ Italian Sub
- ____ Vegetarian Wrap

Salad's w/cookie and water:

- ____ Chef Salad with Chicken
- ____ Strawberry, Spinach, and Candied Cashew Salad



Thank You Sponsors!



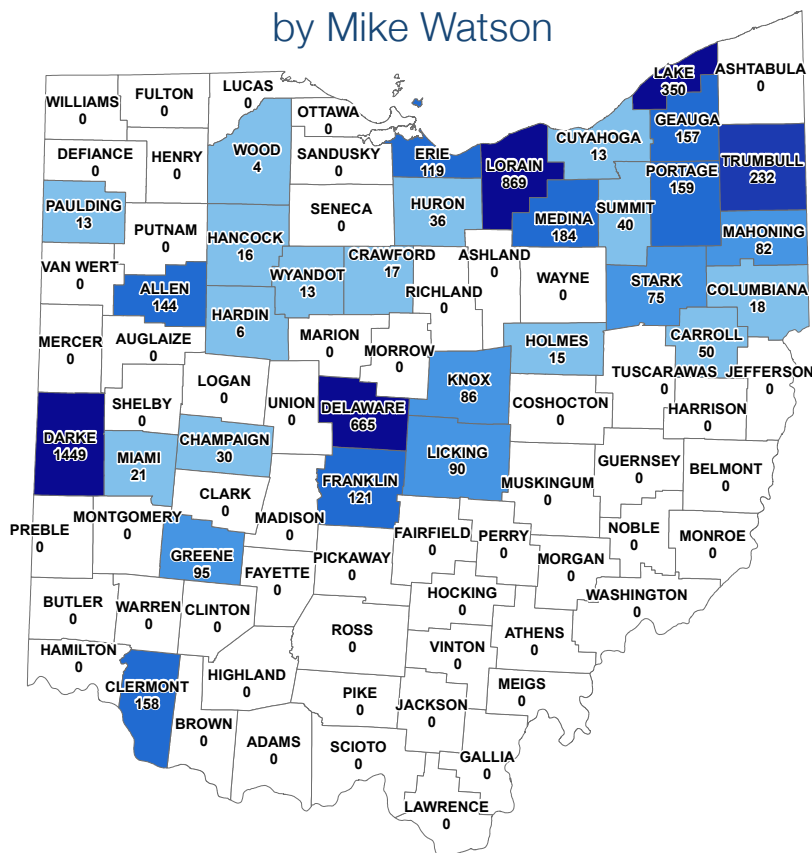
Photos by Katelyn Shelton
OYBC Junior

Please download and send your 2023 fledgling reports to OBS.
ohiobluebirdsociety.org/about-bluebirds/fledgling-report-2

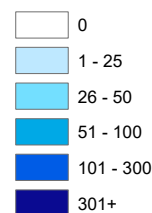
Species	#Fledged
Eastern Bluebird	5327
Tree Swallow	5511
House Wren	1913
Purple Martin	2089
Black-capped Chickadee	78
Carolina Chickadee	69
Carolina Wren	44
American Kestrel	106
Barn Swallow	27
Prothonotary Warbler	37
Tufted Titmouse	11
Wood Duck	23
Great Crested Flycatcher	5
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	11
House Sparrows dispatched	694
House Sparrow eggs removed	980
European Starlings dispatched	59
European Starlings eggs removed	28

OBS 2023 FLEDGLING REPORT

by Mike Watson



#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.

TRUSTEES

Jeff Blosser
Blosserj62@gmail.com
614-214-6537

Heather Harris
bluebirdsacrossohio@yahoo.com
440-264-3820

Lee Johnson (Secretary)
msleedj@gmail.com
330-284-4664

Anna Rose
annarose7@att.net
614.263.7479

Pamela Routte
sproutte@att.net
216-272-8212

Judy Semroc
rainefox51@gmail.com
330.612.0391

Darlene Sillick (President)
dsillick118@gmail.com
614.288.3696 (text preferred)

Molly Wilsbacher (Treasurer)
OBSTreasurer@gmail.com

ADVISORS

Mel Bolt
mellen@sssnet.com • 330.262.0448

Linda Lang
lindaflang@gmail.com • 419.651.4196

Loyd Marshall
llmarsh@aol.com • 330.876.7895

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRS

Dave Dutton – 330.674.7585
Pat Dutton – 330.763.0474
obsmembershipchair@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Penny Brandau
pennybrandau@gmail.com
440.670.3684

E-mail:

ohiobluebirdsociety@gmail.com

Phone:

440.462.9084

Website:

www.ohiobluebirdsociety.org

Address:

The Holden Arboretum
9500 Sperry Road, Kirtland, Ohio 44094

facebook

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

OBS Area Contacts (as of May 2023)

County	Name	E-mail	County	Name	E-mail
ALLEN	Mohr, Mark	mohrbluebirds@hotmail.com	HOLMES	Hawkins, Marcella	gofish710@gmail.com
ASHLAND	Lang, Linda	lindaflang@gmail.com	LAKE	Watson, Mike	mwatson@holdenarb.org
ATHENS	Caldwell, Reid & Teresa	freidc@yahoo.com; teresacaldwell@athensswcd.org	LICKING	Joann Kale	joann.kale@gmail.com
AUGLAIZE	Mark Mohr	mohrbluebirds@hotmail.com	LORAIN	Brandau, Penny	pennybrandau@gmail.com
CHAMPAIGN	Rutan, Jean	cpjrutan@gmail.com	LUCAS	Seaman, Tammy	erictammy@sbcglobal.net
CLARK	Gray, Bethany	ohiobluebirder@gmail.com	MEDINA	Rabung, Dale	twodr@zoominternet.net
COLUMBIANA	Short, Jason	bigbirdnerd_j@yahoo.com	MIAMI	Peters, Teresa	tm_peters@yahoo.com
	Susan Nutter	SusanNutter11@gmail.com	MONTGOMERY	Romeo, Sam	sromeo@audubon.org
CRAWFORD	Minor, Mary Lee	chickadee@columbus.rr.com	OTTAWA	Ziebarth, Paula	paulazbird@gmail.com
CUYAHOGA	Barber, John	jcbarker27@gmail.com	OTTAWA	Rock, Lisa	snowbunting123@gmail.com
DARKE	Luttmer, Bob	bonnie561@roadrunner.com	PICKAWAY	Hill, Carrie	hillteach@gmail.com
DARKE	Smith, Tom	bluebirdman@embarqmail.com	PORTAGE	Gammon, Darrell	invisibleman53@yahoo.com
DELAWARE	Ziebarth, Paula	paulazbird@gmail.com	ROSS	Hill, Carrie	hillteach@gmail.com
DELAWARE	Veronica Oblak	veronica.oblak@gmail.com	SANDUSKY	Rock, Lisa	snowbunting123@gmail.com
ERIE	Bird, Mel	mrbird90@aol.com	STARK	Gammon, Darrell	invisibleman53@yahoo.com
FAIRFIELD	Kale, JoAnn	joann.kale@gmail.com	STARK	Semroc, Judy	rainefox51@gmail.com
FRANKLIN	Aldridge, Julie	juliealdridge10@gmail.com	SUMMIT	Grande, Marcy	mgrandesign@yahoo.com
FRANKLIN	Sillick, Darlene	dsillick118@gmail.com	TRUMBULL	Loyd Marshall	llmarsh@aol.com
GEAUGA	Brindo, Jay	jbrindo@aol.com	UNION	Darlene Sillick,	dsillick118@gmail.com
GREENE	Gray, Bethany	ohiobluebirder@gmail.com	WARREN	Jeffries, Art	gonebirding@hotmail.com
HAMILTON	Romine, Jim	jimdromine@gmail.com	WAYNE	Bolt, Mel	mellen@sssnet.com
HURON	Bird, Mel	mrbird90@aol.com	WOOD	Hamlin, Terry	veronica.oblak@gmail.com



OHIO BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

The Holden Arboretum
9500 Sperry Road
Kirtland, Ohio 44094

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Mission Statement

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

ohiobluebirdsociety.org

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Affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society

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Deadline for Submitting Articles:

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

Nest Box Nuggets – from Richard Tuttle



“To sum things up, I frequently announce that as a conservationist, I do what I do for the birds, and when people also benefit, that is icing on the cake. The icing this time included teachers and young carpenters at Tolles Career and Technology Center (vocational high school) staff members at London Correctional Institution, and perhaps, most important, fellow human beings that are in the process of rehabilitation and reentry into our society. If you are reading this, you know that your interactions with the natural world are therapeutical. You can't help but smile when peering into a nest cavity to see eggs, hatchlings or nestlings of any of our native species.”

– From an excerpt taken from an article in the Spring 2017 *Bluebird Monitor* titled *Prisoners Restoring Ohio's Owls and Falcons (PROOF) program at the London Correctional Institution (LoCI) London, Ohio* .