



# The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

AN AFFILIATE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

- Volume 19, Issue 3 Fall/Winter 2017
- Editor: Joan Watroba • bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com • www.thebsp.org

## A Message from the President

*Dr. Dean C. Rust, BSP President*

ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS POSED TO ME IS: “What makes Bluebirds so special?” An article written by Bet Zimmerman, “Why We Get Goopy Over Bluebirds” immediately comes to mind. You can find this entire article on her Sialis website: [www.sialis.org/goopy.htm](http://www.sialis.org/goopy.htm). Synonyms for goopy are sentimental, emotional and tearful. As a member of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania here are some bullet points from her article which will help you articulate why Bluebirds are so revered and beguiling when you are asked this same question.

- Bluebirds are beautiful.
- Bluebirds are considered harbingers of spring.
- Bluebirds are associated with hope, happiness and things we love.
- Bluebirds are unique to North America.
- Bluebirds remind us of simpler times.
- Bluebirds are family oriented.
- Their song (warble) is enchanting.
- Bluebirds are friendly and seem to almost enjoy human company.
- Bluebirds do no harm and are beneficial to farmers and vineyards.
- Attracting Bluebirds is a challenging hobby.
- Bluebirds remind us of both the bad and the good humans are capable of.



*photo by Dick Hess*

One of the early pioneers of bluebirding in Pennsylvania was William L. Highhouse from Warren County, PA (1915-2003). He lived his entire life of 88 years in Warren County. He graduated in 1937 from Penn State College with a B.S. in forestry and worked for Struthers Wells Corp and National Forge Company. He was a member of the Audubon Society, Roger Tory Peterson Ornithological Club, Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology, Northern Allegheny Conservation

Association, Sierra Club and the Bird Observatory. He was a member of a Warren group that counted Bluebirds for the Cornell University Bluebird study and their Christmas bird count. Mr. Highhouse was a participant with the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas and did surveys for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Bill Highhouse is best known in Warren County for his 22 year crusade for Bluebird conservation.

## A Message from the President continued from page 1

1956 seems to have been a watershed year for Highhouse and Bluebirds. While leafing through an Audubon magazine, he noticed an article about the population decline of the Eastern Bluebird telling why this species needed help. He teamed up with some friends in 1957 and placed 74 nesting boxes around Warren County, Pennsylvania known as “Operation Bluebird”.

The sense of aiding the Bluebird’s recovery and the joy of learning the habits and songs of other species plus the camaraderie of good friends coalesced to make Bill Highhouse a Bluebird devotee for life. He gradually increased the number of boxes reaching a peak of 400 in 1973-74. Ninety percent were affixed to utility poles along miles and miles of Warren County roads. He initially made the boxes from old lumber he found around his place of employment. As the word spread of the success of Warren’s bluebird trails, 30 other people from the region volunteered to place additional boxes, monitor them, and report the results to him.

“Operation Bluebird” in Warren County fledged more than 14,500 Eastern Bluebirds as a direct result of Highhouse’s endeavors. Bluebirds almost always arrived in Warren County by March 21, produced two broods and all the young fledged by mid-August. Highhouse also helped place 24 American Kestrel nesting boxes from which 100 Kestrels fledged in 8 years. He would set aside at least two days each week “just for birding”.

Thanks to Bill Highhouse for the example he set for others, for the 14,500 Bluebirds given a chance for life and for allowing Bluebirds to come to him. Today there are Bluebirds in the northwestern sector of Pennsylvania because of his pioneering conservation of Bluebirds almost 60 years ago. Bill Highhouse accomplished these fantastic results without a North American Bluebird Society (1978) or a Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania (1998) for support.

Don’t forget to “winterize” your bluebird nestbox or boxes this year. It is easy and simple to do. 1) Make sure that all ventilation holes are sealed, especially along the roof. Foam insulation, Mortite caulk or small wood strips can be tacked into place. 2) cut a removable wood floor 4” x 4” or the exact inside floor dimension and insert it to cover the corner drain holes. 3) add a 1” layer of cedar wood chips or pine needles. Do NOT use sawdust. Now you have a created a cozy “roosting box” that may attract and protect Bluebirds during cold winter nights insulated from the wind, ice and snow.

Attracting Bluebirds in the winter months is easy as **1, 2, 3.**



*photo by Dick Hess*

**1.** Provide a heated birdbath for your feathered friends. Birds get thirsty in the winter as it is dry. If they eat snow, that lowers their body temperatures and burns up valuable heat calories. They enjoy fresh water in winter.

**2.** Serve mealworms – Bluebirds love dried or live mealworms -- their No. 1 snack.

**3.** Serve peanut butter suet. Once they find it – they will be there every day.

Having bluebirds in the winter is a treat well worth investing in. It will give you some photographic opportunities, and winter will turn into spring much faster.

As your President, I want to encourage each of you to be pro-active this coming year regarding membership in BSP. Renew promptly when your own membership expires. You can check your expiration date next to your address on your hard copy newsletter. Ask your neighbor, friend or family member to join—or give a gift that keeps on giving in a BSP annual membership. Share the gift of Bluebirds with those you love.

“Always keep in mind that the nestboxes you build, install and monitor today, may well be your very real connection to friends and loved ones long after you are gone.” *David Gwin, Bluebird\_I, 2006.*

Dean C. Rust, DDS

President of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

September 2017

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## Our Mission Statement

To take all action deemed by the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania to be beneficial to the protection, enjoyment and propagation of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity nesting species in Pennsylvania and elsewhere.

- Provide and promote educational activities relating to bluebirds, birding, conservation and related subjects.
- Monitor and conduct research relating to bluebirds, other cavity nesting birds, food sources, habitats, and trails
- Build, maintain, and monitor bluebird boxes and trails.
- Provide opportunities for people to become involved in efforts that assist bluebirds and other native bird species.
- Provide social opportunities to share information and experiences relating to bluebirds and related conservation topics.

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## From the Editor

Since so many active bluebirders live long and productive lives, I really think that bluebirds keep us young! Bluebirds may not only be the Bird of Happiness and Hope, but also may be the Fountain of Youth!

Now that the nesting season has ended, it is a good time to look back on some of the interesting observations along my bluebird trails, and also to think about how to increase nesting success by making some changes for the next season. One of the most surprising experiences this season was that two bluebird pairs nested in boxes placed only 25 feet from each other, with no physical barrier or habitat separation. This is significant, as the recommendation is to allow at least 100-150 yards between nest boxes if the goal is to attract a second pair of bluebirds. These two pairs started their nesting activity at the same time, and I did not observe any display of territorial behaviors to the other nesting pair.

Last year I moved several of the nesting boxes to more open areas, with positive nesting results, and due to changes in habitat and mowing patterns on some of my trails this past year, I will need to relocate a few more boxes in the Fall. At the end of every nesting season, it is important to review the production of your nest boxes and trails and to consider adding, removing, or relocating some of the boxes for optimum results. Due to the increase in Lyme disease caused by deer tick bites, and the higher risk of predation to the nesting birds in non-mowed areas, it makes sense to move nest boxes away from wooded and non-mowed habitats. Habitats of mowed, open areas seem to be preferred by the bluebirds and reduce the predation by raccoons and snakes and interference by the native songbird,

house wrens, which prefer wooded habitats.

Sadly, there were two nest failures/loss of young bluebirds – one was in the early part of the season, maybe due to hypothermia or lack of food supplies, and one brood was lost due to blowflies. Some bluebirders, including Andrew Troyer, routinely change the nests when the young are a few days old to prevent the blowflies from forming larvae during the nesting time frame, but that can be a chore when monitoring more than 80 nest boxes, as I do.

All in all, it was a productive nesting season, and there were a couple of third nestings this year. The arrival of hot and humid weather seemed to reduce the number of bluebirds which nested for a third time. We also enjoyed observing the successful nestings of Carolina wrens in our window flower box and Brown thrashers in our Pyracantha Firethorn bush.

If you have not yet done so, please submit your Annual Nest Box Report to BSP. It is important that we include your data in our report so that we can learn trends in nesting activity and evaluate nesting success due to our efforts. Reports received by November 15, 2017 will be entered into a contest of a random drawing for prizes from the BSP Merchandise Store, but data from reports received by December 15th, 2017 will still be included in the compiled report.

Annual Nest Box Report forms were included with the Summer issue of the newsletter, but they are also posted on the BSP web site: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org)

Thanks for your continued support and for all that you do to promote bluebird nesting success!

We were thrilled to witness two

Monarch Butterflies emerge from the Swamp Milkweed in our yard in September!

Metamorphosis is so fascinating, as it is a profound change in form from one stage to the next in the life history of an organism, as from the caterpillar to the pupa and from the pupa to the adult butterfly.

*Joan Watroba*

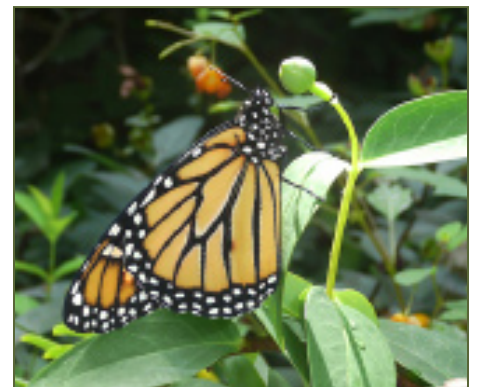
Joan Watroba  
Editor



*Monarch caterpillar (larva stage) on milkweed*



*Monarch Pupa (chrysalis stage) on milkweed*



*Monarch butterfly (adult stage) on milkweed*

## Using a Nest Box Camera in a Bluebird Nesting Box

KEN LEISTER AND NANCY FRAIM, of BSP submitted a request for a mini-grant from BSP for \$249 to purchase a nest box camera (\$199) and a solar panel (\$50) to power it. The box is located at an elementary school, and the students are involved with monitoring it and eight other boxes which are placed on the property. They are able to view the nest cam video on a classroom smart board.

Per Nancy Fraim: We did a tremendous amount of research about this camera and how it works before we applied for the grant. We wanted to make sure we were on the right track.



Ken Leister's and Nancy Fraim's nesting box. Side is opened to view the inside of the box without the camera.



*Solar power is used to energize the camera, and the bluebirds think it's a great perch*

This camera is motion-activated, records sound and video, and has night vision. It captures activity from 3" to infinity and is powered by a solar panel-that was a big plus! The security systems at the schools will not allow an extension cord to be hooked up to go outside of the building, and we were able to design a nesting box that the camera would easily fit inside the box. When the camera is activated by motion, a smart phone will send you a signal.

If any of you have any questions about this project. Please contact: [nancyfraim@comcast.net](mailto:nancyfraim@comcast.net)

Thanks to the BSP Board who voted yes to allow us to do this interesting and educational project.

### Editor's Note:

*Since young people are so interested in technology, the use of a camera inside of a nest box is a very important way to capture their enthusiasm and to motivate them to become actively involved in bluebirding. Nancy shared details about this special technology and the students' experience with it during the Friday evening program at the BSP Conference in April of 2017*

### Note:

Here is the vendor for the items used to create a Web Cam for Bluebird Boxes:

[ring.com](http://ring.com)

**Ring Stick Up Camera \$175-\$200**

**Ring Solar Panel \$48.00-\$50**

Thanks to a grant from The Bluebird Society of PA, Downingtown Area School district was the first school district to have a camera placed inside of a nest box. The entire staff and students were treated to daily viewing of their bluebirds. They watched the process of nest building and egg laying and waited patiently to see "their" babies hatch. Even though the school year was finishing, students and staff were "invited" to view the box from home to observe the remainder of the process. The bluebirds fledged and a second nesting cycle of bluebirds began. Because of the success of this program, the school district has purchased two more cameras for next year's nesting season. A big thank you goes out to Ken Leister for designing a special nest box that was able to hold the camera and still provide optimal viewing of the bluebirds. If interested in further details, contact Ken Leister, BSP State CC or Nancy Fraim, Chester County CC.



*Looking inside the nest box you can see that the camera is well above the bluebirds entry hole*

To view several videos of nesting bluebirds captured by these nest box cams, check out: you tube nancy fraim  
To view the activity of birds captured by other bird cams, check out:

<http://www.audubon.org/birdcams>



## Leucistic Bluebird Nestling

*An e-mail from Dean Rust, President of BSP 07/28/2017*

Guess what? I have a Leucistic Bluebird Nestling in Box No.38 at Lancaster Country Club. It has one sibling.

*Dean Rust, Lancaster County*

### Editor's Reply:

Wow!!!!!!!!!!!! What a surprise!

Confirmation of leucistic vs. albino:

Hello Dean, Thank you for sharing the photos. Great find! That chick appears leucistic based on its muted colors and dark eyes. The speckles are still present and it appears more of a gray-out color instead of a stark white. If it were a true albino, the eyes would be pink and the feathers would be all white instead of speckled. FeederWatch has a good synopsis of color variants.

Would it be okay if we shared your photos on the Nest-Watch Facebook page?

Chelsea Benso, Project Assistant, NestWatch  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods  
Road, Ithaca, NY 14850, 607.254.2427 (2429)

[www.nestwatch.org](http://www.nestwatch.org)



## Ned Smith Festival – July 29

BSP participated in the annual Ned Smith Nature and Art Festival event in Millersburg, PA. It was a gorgeous, sunny day, so it was a very well-attended event. MYO Park is located along a beautiful stretch of the Susquehanna River. This is an annual event, and offers programs, demonstrations, and children's activities related to nature, wildlife, and art. It celebrates the life of Ned Smith, who was a native of Millersburg and was an Artist and Naturalist. BSP presented a bluebird program, "How To Attract Bluebirds" to approximately 25 persons from 9-10 a.m. Those who attended were very interested in bluebirds and were eager to learn more about them.



*Ned Smith*

Many people stopped by the BSP booth after the program to ask questions, to share their experiences in bluebirding, and to pick up some educational handouts. BSP volunteers also assisted the PA Game Commission to help children assemble nest boxes which were donated by the PA Game Commission.

Thanks to Phil Durgin, Event Chair and his wife, Susan, who assisted at the booth and four other BSP volunteers, including Joan Watroba and David Price, BSP Co-County Coordinators from Cumberland County.

### Editor's Note:

For more information about the life and art of Ned Smith, view this beautiful and inspiring video which recently aired on PBS: <http://video.witf.org/video/3003781510/>  
The story of self-trained artist, writer and naturalist Ned Smith :

## Educational Outreach – June 3 & 4

For two days, Ken Leister managed our BSP box-building table at Steel Stacks in Bethlehem, PA. I joined him on Saturday June 3rd, for an exciting afternoon with many children building nesting boxes. Even with a cost of \$10 per box, we had a lot of participants. I became familiar with two types of box constructions – thanks to Ken’s help! We had many instructional conversations with a steady stream of families interested in the Eastern Bluebird.

In May, Ken Leister and Nancy Fraim managed a BSP Booth at the Sheep and Wool Festival. Ken can provide an update on the crush of people he and Nancy spoke with about bluebirds. It was an incredibly busy day – and a worthy place to be – on behalf of the beautiful blues.

This afternoon, June 6th, Ken Leister and I are meeting with an Eagle Scout who built ten nesting boxes and installed them at Pocopson Park, in Pocopson Township – a new Bluebird Trail. We will help him adjust and monitor these boxes. Finally, after two months of thwarting House

Sparrows, the residents of Simpson Meadows Retirement facility have one pair of Eastern Bluebirds that have a nest with 3 eggs (one egg was destroyed by House Wrens), and a pair of Tree Swallows. This bluebird trail had been neglected for two years (no one monitored it), and, as we know so well, House Sparrows took over every single box. As their new Bluebird Trail Monitor, I work every week at this facility, and Nancy Fraim has joined me whenever possible. The essential work of monitoring is obvious to everyone attempting to help the Eastern Bluebird.

Without the regular monitoring of nest boxes, bluebirds are placed in harms’s way.

Marilyn Michalski

**Editor’s Note:** *Marilyn Michalski and Nancy Fraim serve as BSP County Coordinators for Chester County, and Ken Leister serves as BSP State County Coordinator.*

## Educational Outreach/Event Report– June 3 & 4

It was a busy weekend for bluebird events in Cumberland County. On Saturday, June 3rd, from 10-1, I hosted an educational booth at the Family Garden Day event, sponsored by the Penn State Master Gardeners of Cumberland County in Carlisle, PA. Many families stopped by the booth to view the posters, videos, nest boxes/guards and the display of the nests and eggs of the songbirds which use nest boxes. The children especially enjoyed looking at the nests/eggs and watching the videos. Many people expressed their interest in bluebirds, shared stories of their experiences with their nest boxes, and appreciated receiving the educational handouts to take home with them.

It was a beautiful setting for this event, surrounded by beautiful flower and vegetable gardens. There was an active tree swallow nest with eggs next to the booth, and I was able to show interested visitors the inside of this nest box. The tree swallows were very well-behaved and they did not divebomb any of the visitors, but were actively flying around feeding on insects.

On Sunday, June 4, from 11-12:30, at Simpson Park, in Mechanicsburg, PA, I hosted a bluebird program,

demonstration, and bluebird trail walk for about 15 attendees, many of them were students of Trinity High School, ages 14 and 15, who are also members of a bird club formed by BSP Junior Member, Dominic Mirarchi. They were very interested in bluebirds and songbirds in general, and were actively engaged and attentive during the program. They asked many thoughtful and important questions about bluebirds.

The highlight of the experience was checking all of the 14 nest boxes along the trail and noting and photographing the activity. We were able to view nests, eggs, young birds, and fully-feathered bluebirds and tree swallows. Binoculars, cameras, IPOD’s and cell phones were in constant use capturing the songbird activity. One particular male bluebird posed for us, and some of the students captured beautiful images of the songbirds.

Joan Watroba  
BSP County Coordinator  
Cumberland County

**“It’s faith in something and enthusiasm for something that makes a life worth living.”**  
*Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.*

## BSP Newsletter Submission Contest Winner

### **Congratulations! Kim Springer Winner of the BSP Newsletter Submission Contest**

Kim, please select an item from the BSP Store at [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) and then call BSP Merchandise Manager, Susan Durgin at (717) 732-5325 to arrange for the delivery of your prize.

The Newsletter Committee is very excited that many BSP members are submitting material for the BSP newsletter, and we want to encourage more members to do so. By submitting your questions, nesting experiences, and field observations, we will be able to offer a wider variety of articles and materials that are of interest to our readers.

#### **Contest Rules:**

1) Your entry can be a general question or article about bluebirds or other nature topics, a write-up about something that you observed in your yard or on your trail, an original poem, a trail monitoring tip, or any non-copyrighted material. *Please send copies only of printed materials or PDF's/ word documents of electronic submissions and jpeg files of photos.*

2) To submit by regular mail, write: Attn: Newsletter Submission Contest on the front of the envelope and send to: BSP, P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756

3) To submit by e-mail, include Newsletter Submission Contest in the subject line of your e-mail and e-mail to: [bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com](mailto:bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com)

One submission will be randomly drawn at the cut-off date for each newsletter edition, and the person whose entry was randomly picked will have their choice of any item offered in the BSP Merchandise Store website: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org)

The latest date to submit items is the following:

**Spring - January 7**

**Summer- May 7**

**Fall/Winter- September 7**

The Newsletter Editor will then review the items and reserve the right to include your submission in an upcoming edition. Since we cannot return any items, please send copies only of materials and/or photos. Please include your contact information-name, address, phone number or email address (optional) with your entry.

## **WE NEED YOU!** Please Consider Serving as a BSP Board Member

If you are an active BSP Member who has an interest in becoming more involved with promoting the goals of the Bluebird Society of PA on a statewide level, we encourage you to become a candidate to serve on the BSP Board of Directors. We would welcome and appreciate your ideas and planning skills.

As a Board Member, you will become part of a dedicated team of volunteers who work together to make BSP an organization that we can all be proud of. BSP Board Members serve for a 2 year term, and meetings are held quarterly. You can attend meetings by phone from the comfort of your own home via conference call, so no travel is needed.

For more information about becoming a candidate, please contact:

**Peter Reinhart , BSP Nomination Chair**

**610-247-5256**

[preinhart@fast.net](mailto:preinhart@fast.net)

If you would like to apply by regular mail, please provide your name, contact information (phone number, address, email address) and background and interest in bluebirds or other native songbirds, and your prior involvement with BSP along with a brief bio and mail to:

**Peter Reinhart, BSP Nomination Chair**

**3520 Devonshire Road**

**Allentown, PA 18103**

We thank you in advance to consider joining the BSP Board. Also, if you know of someone who you feel would have an interest, you can also nominate them, with their permission.

## **New Bluebird Trail – MERCER COUNTY (Correction)**

On Page 9 in the Summer edition of the BSP Newsletter, there was an article regarding a new bluebird trail. The trail is in Buhl Park, 715 Hazen Road, Hermitage PA. and this trail is located in Mercer County, (not Butler County, as stated in the article). See the article "Bluebird Trail Updates" by Kimberly Springer on Page 11.





**Just to give everyone an idea of just how very tiny day old hatchlings are, I placed a nickel in the nest. The last egg hatched later that day.**

**Photo taken by Vickie Lykens, Berks County**

## BSP Calendar of Events

### BSP Board/Membership Meetings:

Thursday evenings at 6:00pm

January 25, 2018  
 April 26, 2018  
 July 26, 2018  
 October 25, 2018

All Members are invited to attend board meetings to learn about upcoming BSP activities and events and

to share your ideas about a variety of issues related to bluebird conservation.

If you cannot attend the meetings in person, we can arrange for you to attend via conference call. Contact Dean Rust, BSP President to make arrangements to join BSP meetings by phone right from your home. Dean's contact number 717-669-0167 e-mail Dean at: [july7ds@aol.com](mailto:july7ds@aol.com)

Come join us at our meetings.

#### Location:

**Giant Conference Center  
 Upstairs Community Room  
 Camp Hill Shopping Center  
 3301 E. Trindle Road  
 Camp Hill, PA 17011**

### 2018 PA Farm Show -January 6 -13, 2018:

#### Nest Box Building Activity

January 11th

**Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex,**  
 2300 N. Cameron Street  
 Harrisburg, PA

Website:

<http://www.farmshow.state.pa.us/>

#### Hours:

January 6-12: 9 a.m.-9:00 p.m.  
 January 13- 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Volunteers are needed to host the BSP Educational/BSP Store Booth This may be the 16th year that BSP has been participating in this event!

Our box-building event will be held on Thursday, January 11th.

Contact Nancy Putt, Event Chair at 717-432-2647 or e-mail: [bluebirds@pa.net](mailto:bluebirds@pa.net) to volunteer for a time slot. BSP will refund parking fee for those who can fill a 4 hour time slot. THANKS in

advance for helping to educate others about bluebirds. New volunteers are always welcome, and you will be assisting another one of our volunteers who have helped us in the past. It is a great opportunity to learn about bluebirds! It is a fun event for the entire family, with interesting events, demonstrations, a variety of animals, vendors, and offers wonderful Pennsylvania food choices in the Food Court.

### BSP Annual Conference- April 6 and 7, 2018

**Eden Resort-Lancaster, PA**  
 222 Eden Road, Lancaster, PA  
 1-855-214-4563

<https://www.edenresort.com/>

The BSP Annual Conference offers excellent speakers, demonstrations, vendors and an opportunity to learn

from and socialize with people who share your love of bluebirds and enjoy the wonders of the natural world. A special mailing regarding the conference, including registration information and itinerary will be sent out to all active BSP Members in January 2018.

More information will also be posted in upcoming newsletters and on the web site: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) as details become available. BSP will reserve a block of rooms at the Eden Resort, so please let them know that you are attending the BSP Conference.

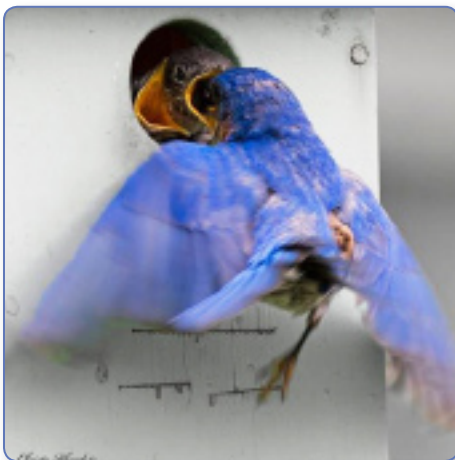
## Bluebird Photo Essay by Christy Rhoads



*Pictures taken yesterday-08/04/17 of bluebirds at Box #1 by Christy Rhoads. Bluebird nestlings are about 17 days old. Could be Tartarian Honeysuckle berries—there are a lot of those bushes on the high bank behind the Skilled Nursing Facility and the hedge row separating the Shangraw property.*

### **Editor's Note:**

Tartarian honeysuckle is a non-native, invasive plant, and the berries are not edible for humans. Pokeberries are also consumed by songbirds, but are not to be eaten by humans, as they can make you sick.





## Bluebird Trail Updates!!! by Kimberly Springer

May 24th, 2017, the Cub Scout Pack #5 came to see all of the Bluebird boxes that they built. Each child was eager to see what was in their individual box. They got to help monitor the boxes along with Kim Springer, Sue Ann Herald, & Mimi Hoffmaster. See pictures at right of the eventful day.

Also on May 24th, Jim Springer of Hermitage, PA volunteered his time to install the Predator Guards (cone-shaped baffles) on 25 of the poles. Then on July 23rd, 2017 Jim installed the final 10 Predator Guards. These were all purchased by using the Grant Money received by Kim Springer from the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania.

Monitoring of the 35 nest boxes has been performed weekly by these trained individuals: Kim Springer, Mimi Hoffmaster, Sue Ann Herald, &/or Jim Springer (or help from one another).

Monitoring involves checking the nest boxes for moisture/cracks, to make sure no wasps have made nests on the inside ceilings, to check for ants, to insert hardware screens under nests to keep blowflies away from baby birds, to make sure poles are steady & secure, etc.

During monitoring, we also keep a spreadsheet of each box & log: dates of nest construction, by what species, what material is used in the nest building, if there are eggs &/or hatchlings - & how many, how many birds have fledged, & when we clean out the boxes.

So far, we have had small success...We've fledged: 18 Eastern Bluebirds, 12 Tree Swallows, 13 Black-capped Chickadees, & 7 House Wrens. We have many nests still in progress. Unfortunately another monitoring job is to remove the invasive House Sparrow - it's nests, eggs, &/or young. This



species kills our native birds we are trying to attract, their young, & their eggs! We are CONSTANTLY removing House Sparrow nests or eggs, but this is the reason for a Bluebird Trail...to help them as best we can.

Thank you to everyone involved in this project for all of their time & effort. Also thank you to the Buhl Park Maintenance Department for their help when it was needed.

If anyone would like to volunteer their time by helping to monitor, please contact Kim Springer of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania.

\*Look for our new Bluebird Trail SIGN on Pokorney Dr., Hermitage, PA - across from the wetland area by box# 22. (Each box is numbered on the back or side.)



## Bluebird Chat



*Ken, in the green shirt on the right, meets every other week with Bluebird enthusiasts at Ace Hardware. The retail store provides doughnuts and coffee and a table for interested people to sit and ask Ken about Bluebirds. The store also gives a 10 percent discount on any bird items purchased during the Bluebird Chat.*

The bluebird Chat has been a brainstorm of mine for a long time. I began by approaching the people at Ace Hardware in Pocopson, PA. What a relief: they loved the idea!. So we got together and formulated a plan which has been very successful.

At our last Chat meeting, I asked one of the attendees if she would write her thoughts about the chat. In her e-mail to me she said, "I am talking for our community, the Crosslands; any one of them who attends would say he/she enjoys the Chat and looks forward to the next session."

Ken Leister  


### **The Bluebird Chat by Dale Kendall**

The Bluebird Chat started at the Brandywine Ace Hardware Store in West Chester in November of 2016. As a

customer of the store, and one who is interested in birds, I have found a fascinating event to attend with Ken Leister, a member of the PA Bluebird Society, leading the group. During bluebird season, there is a Chat on the first and third

Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. This goes from March to July. Starting in August, the Chat is only the first Wednesday of the month as the season slows down.

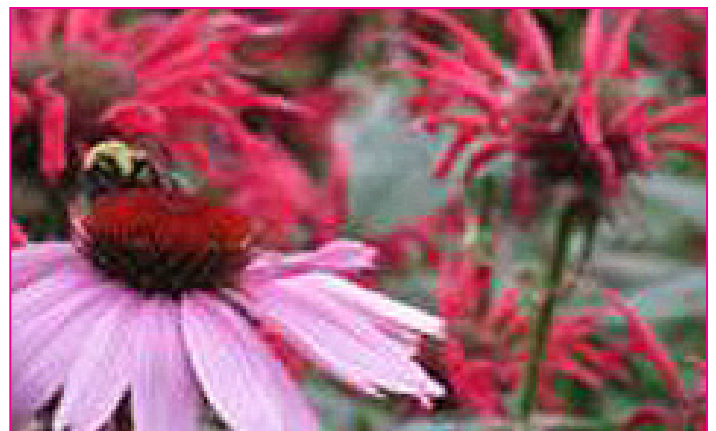
There are usually seven to 18 people in attendance, and questions are shared with the group by Ken and others. It has been helpful in so many ways; each time we learn something new and meet new friends who also love bluebirds.

Our sessions last about an hour and a half. There is no registration required; refreshments are provided, and discounts are given on bluebird houses, feeders, and seed to those in attendance.

Right now the most exciting thing is the camera in the bluebird nesting box. With this camera we can watch what is happening at the nest by using a computer or iPad. The Fraims, members of the Bluebird Society of PA, have been instrumental in this new technology. How exciting it is to share what brings so much joy - bluebirds!



*The Brandywine Ace Hardware Store in West Chester, PA where the Bluebird Chats take place*



*The bees and butterflies are all over our coneflowers, bee balm, and swamp milkweed. Photo: Phil Durgin, Cumberland County*

## Mailbag

The Mailbag below is Regarding Pecked Eggs from the Bluebird Monitors group at yahoo [BluebirdMonitors@yahoo-groups.com](mailto:BluebirdMonitors@yahoo-groups.com)

**Q** We have a pair of Bluebirds that've been with us for the entire season. For the past several days, the pair and their last brood of four youngsters have been hanging around, learning how to negotiate our feeder, all doing very well.

Late last week, Mrs BB completed a new nest in a secure 5" x 5" x 12" nestbox mounted on a utility pole. Yesterday, she produced a third egg. Today should've been number four.

When I checked early this afternoon, I was dismayed to find an empty nest. Looking around, I discovered a single egg in the grass, with a hole poked in the tiny shell. No sign of any other eggs. GR-r-r-r-r....

There have been a pair of House Sparrows around the yard. The HOSP have not been seen both-ering the solitary nestbox in our yard. We did have a wren in the area two weeks ago. Haven't seen or heard any wren activity recently. I'd removed all the available boxes with the single exception of the box on the utility pole.

Is there a difference (in size) between a HOSP punched hole or a hole made by a wren...??

Any suggestions...?? Advice....??

**Bruce** from SW Ontario

**A** Hi Bruce,  
Yes, the house wren leaves a small triangular shaped hole in the egg. When they fly out of the box with the egg, they drop it either right away or soon afterwards and I usually find them within 10 feet of the box, if I do find them. I agree with what Mary stated about what the house sparrow does and that it was probably a house wren.

**Shari** in New Berlin, WI

**Q** Dear Joan Watroba,  
The bluebirds have moved out of my bluebird box. I intend to clean the nest out of the box as soon as winter starts. I enjoyed sharing my experience with you, and I intend to share many more with you as the years progress..

**Suhaana** >>>

## Mailbag

**A** Editor's Reply:  
Hi Suhaana-Good to hear from you. Happy to answer your bluebird questions, and glad that you enjoy the bluebird newsletter! Please continue to share your interest in the bluebirds with us, and we hope that the bluebirds will nest in your nest box next season.

If the bluebirds were successful in raising their young, you may want to clean out the box right away, as they may still return to build another nest and raise another brood this season. I am on my 3rd nesting for the season in some of my nest boxes. The reason to clean them out is to remove the used nest which will attract ants and other insects, and if the bluebird builds on top of the old nest, the nest may be too close to the top of the box and may allow predators to reach the eggs and young birds.

Please send in a Nest Box Report to let us know how many eggs the bluebirds laid and how many young bluebirds successfully fledged from your nest box. Thanks!

Reply from Suhaana:

The pictures of the bluebirds in the newsletter are beautiful and so are the articles. I also love this BSP website. It helps me a lot. I now understand on why we need to clean the nest box so I will do that right away. Thank you for letting me know this.

### Note:

*Suhaana is one of our BSP Junior Members, and we are happy to report that there are now 114 Junior Members of BSP! Junior Memberships are free for children ages 8-16 if sponsored by an active BSP Member. For more information about Junior Membership opportunities, and to obtain an application, go to the BSP web site: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org)*

Hello Dean,

I was delighted to get your email and read about your sister Barbara's success with bluebirds. It is such fun to watch the whole process from nest building to fledging. I've had quite a bit of luck too from never having seen any in my neighborhood to enjoying 3 nests this year. The last one just fledged around the 9th of this month. Unfortunately, I did not get to see this one, but there are a few very little >>>

## Mailbag continued

ones hopping around the yard. The mother guarded the nest continually so I did not get to see how many eggs were in the nest. Every time I even got close to the box she swooped back and forth over my head so I left the box alone. The first hatching there were five nestlings but one was gotten by a hawk which sadly my husband witnessed. The second one had three eggs and all fledged. Now I am seeing the older ones, the juveniles, and the just hatched. It is wonderful to watch. We are going broke buying mealworms, lol.



My husband fixed our BB box with a "skylight" according to your specifications in your BB book. It worked perfectly! Before he did, I was having trouble with the house sparrows trying to build a nest. It's a great feeling to know that I have helped the bluebirds to populate my neighborhood and be able to enjoy watching and photographing the action.

Thanks for sharing your story and keep in touch.

Best Regards,  
**Sandi**, Lancaster County

## Mailbag

### A very large Tree Swallow nesting forwarded by Kathy Clark from a posting on the Bluebird Monitors Group

Take a look at this! Hard to believe! Kathy Clark



I checked my trail today, and all of the Tree Swallows in the nest of 10 have hatched. When they get bigger, I will move them in to a bigger nest box. Amazing that the female or females were able to properly incubate all 10 eggs.



Unbelievably, a friend of mine monitored his Bluebird trail this week and found a nest of 12 Tree Swallow eggs! This has to be two females laying eggs in the same nest box. How weird is this, that we both have large numbers of TRES eggs at the same time! If all of his eggs hatch, he will make a larger nest box too.

Mary , River Falls, WI

#### Editor's Note:

Yikes – What a large TS family! This may be the result of a second female dumping her eggs in this nest. I would not want to clean out the nest box after this brood leaves. TS can really make a mess out of the nest boxes!



## Excerpts from Bluebird Essays from Young Students

**Topic: Convince your parents why they need to put up a bluebird nest box in your back yard.**

**Leah Conde** - Delaware County Christian School wrote:

A great thing about having a bluebird house is that we can see how the bluebird lives. I think that it would be amazing to see eggs and fledglings! I would love to see them learn to fly. In the winter, we can feed the bluebirds mealworms and suet. The plus about that is that the bluebirds learn to trust us...God created people to make bluebird houses. God created bluebirds and I don't think that He would want them to become extinct. So, we have to protect them, just how God protects us.

**Aubri Farrell** - Springton Manor, 5th grade, Downingtown School District:

The bluebird population has decreased because people have been taking away their homes by cutting down old trees and replacing wooden fences with metal posts. In addition the bluebird has to compete with the House Sparrows and European Starlings to get a nest.

**Ethan Z.**- Downingtown School District

Seeing them meet, build a nest, eat and drink and learn to fly would be very interesting.

**Student** – from the Downingtown Area School District:

We can relax and watch them sing and do their silly acts if we take care of them properly. When we are sad, we can look outside and be in the peach watching them.

**Katy Cattell** - Downingtown School District

Chirp! Chirp! Do you know what that sound is? It's the happy chirps of baby bluebirds getting fed in a bluebird box.

**Nathan DeWall** - Downingtown School District

I would like a Bluebird box because Bluebirds are threatened birds that live in our area. They are migratory birds that need nesting sites. They are important to our ecosystem. Having a Bluebird box is a simple way to make a big impact on our environment.

## BSP Family Days on the Farm – July 28 & 29



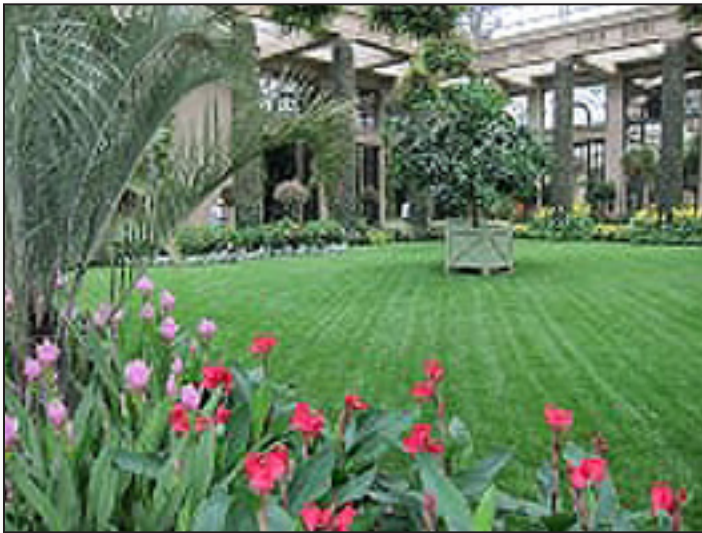
**Friday from 4-8 PM and Sat from 8 AM to 4 PM.**

2017 was our second year with a Bluebird Booth at Family Days on the Farm at the Elam J. Stoltzfus farm in Narvon, PA. We were there from 4-8 pm on Friday and from 8-4 on Saturday. Thanks to Marilyn Michalski, Ken Leister and Dean Rust for volunteering their time. Three new Jr. BSP memberships were signed up and there was a continuous showing of 2 DVD's both days with 30 to 40 children and adults watching the programs each time.

The video, Cornell's "Inside the Nestbox" was shown about 36 times. "The Bluebird Man" was shown about 7 times. Many BSP blue tri-fold brochures (approx 30+) went home with adults and some new members may result. Questions were answered and stories about Bluebirds were shared on both days. (It was an "Educational Outreach Day" and BSP was listed in the program as one of the 60 sponsors for the event). Many new friends of BSP were made. Next year's event will be held on July 27 and July 28 at the John Esh Farm in Quarryville, PA

## Longwood Gardens are now Bluebird Gardens, too!

Last year, Dean Rust and BSP volunteers assisted Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA to improve and expand their bluebird trails. Thanks to Bob Eaves and his team of bluebird trail monitors, they are now monitoring almost 200 nest boxes. They have three teams of two per team, and are doing a fantastic job and the trails are very productive. They have installed stovepipe baffles predator guards on 100 of the nest box poles, and are currently working on the next 100. They are an energetic group and LOVE bluebirds! 30.2% of their nest boxes have bluebirds nesting in them!



Dean met with Bob and the monitors on 5/18, and Dean shared the following monitoring tips:

- 1) Use House sparrow traps if needed
- 2) Save some old used bluebird nests this fall to use when needing to replace a wet or ant-filled nest.
- 3) Using peat pots to help bluebirds weave her nest may be worth experimenting with
- 4) Removing the old bluebird nest after each brood fledges seems to be best procedure
- 5) Building more roosting boxes for bluebirds may help save more bluebirds during the winter
- 6) Using Permethrin for tick prevention as well as purchasing clothes with it .
- 7). Procedures for dealing with wasps and ants

For more information about Longwood Gardens:

<https://longwoodgardens.org>

## Request for BSP Award Nominations

Nominate Your Favorite Bluebirder for a BSP Award  
Each year , BSP would like to recognize and honor individuals or entities who you feel have greatly contributed to bluebird education and/or who have promoted the nesting success of bluebirds and other native songbirds. Award categories are:

- Bluebirder of the Year
- Blue Feather Awards
- Letters of Commendation

If you would like to nominate someone for a BSP Award, please provide a brief write-up regarding your nominee, and include their name, county, and their contact information. Awards will be presented on the morning of April 7 at the annual BSP Conference. Recipients do not need to be present to receive their award, but it would be great if they can receive their award in person. Also, please include your name and contact information and send your nominations to:

**Shirley Halk**  
**BSP Award Nomination Chairperson**  
**42 Park Drive Grantville, PA 17028.**

Please submit your nominations for the BSP Awards by January 31, 2018 — Thanks!

BLUEBIRDERS FROM  
ALL OVER THE COUNTRY  
WERE VERY SADDENED  
TO LEARN OF THE PASSING  
OF MICHAEL L. SMITH  
ON APRIL 5, 2017.  
HE IS BEST KNOWN  
FOR HIS PHOTOGRAPH,  
"THE MAD BLUEBIRD."  
TO VIEW SOME  
OF HIS OTHER PHOTOS,  
GO TO

<http://www.themadbluebird.com/>

---

## Eastern Bluebirds Perched on Barbed Wire for You to Color





## No More Housing Shortage – Yeah!

On Saturday, September 16th, several members of the BSP Woodworking Committee and other BSP volunteers met at the Samuel S. Lewis State Park in York County overlooking Mt. Pisgah. The goal was to assemble and package 200 nest box kits to replenish the supply of nest boxes needed for bluebird trails and events in 2018. It was a beautiful, sunny day and prior to the task, we enjoyed a picnic lunch of covered dish items and grilled food that participants brought to share.

To quote John Heywood, “Many hands make light work”

An assembly line was formed, and it was a smooth and efficient process to assemble all 200 kits.

Thanks to all BSP volunteers who participated in this important activity!



If you would like to become a member of the BSP Woodworking Committee, please contact:

**Bill Strauss at 717-541-9168,  
[mbstrauss@verizon.net](mailto:mbstrauss@verizon.net)**

or **Dean Rust at 717-669-0167  
[July7ds@aol.com](mailto:July7ds@aol.com)**

*photos by Mim Strauss*



## BSP Membership Renewal Form

Send to: P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756

### 2017 BSP MEMBERSHIP RATE INFORMATION

Student	Senior	Regular/Family	Organization/Corporate
1 year -\$10	1 year -\$12	1year -\$15	1 year -\$100
3 years -\$25	3 years -\$30	3years -\$40	3 years -\$275
			Lifetime Sponsor -\$375

Renew for 3 years and take advantage of our discounted rates!

New Member  Renewal

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ County (if in PA): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ (Required if requesting e-mail delivery of seasonal newsletter, event updates)

Additional supporting donations are gratefully accepted and appreciated. Please make your check or money order payable to the "Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania" and return this application to:

Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania • P.O. Box 756 • Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756.

Additional Contribution (optional): \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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I/We would like to learn about assisting BSP with

Create/Monitor BSP Trails  Telephoning  Membership  Finance  Woodworking  Fundraising

State Monitoring  Education  Speakers Bureau  Photography  State Conference  Research

Publication/Artwork  Newsletter  County Coordinator  Publicity  Web Site/Web Content

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Event Help:

Garden Expo Booth @ Farm Show  Garden Expo Booth @ Hershey Gardens  Ned Smith Day @ Millersburg

Annual Farm Show @ Farm Show (January)  Tech Support @ State Convention  Other Special Events:

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*photo by Stephanie Kalina-Metzger*

\* \* \*

BSP was saddened to read of the passing of Melvin (Mel) Lantz of Enola, PA on September 29, 2017.

Mel was a longtime member of BSP and served as BSP County Coordinator for Cumberland County for several years. He was very passionate about bluebirds and other native songbirds, and he set up and monitored bluebird trails in the Summerdale and Enola areas. Mel enjoyed watching and feeding treats to the birds that frequently visited his yard. In recent years he resided in a retirement facility.

We will always remember Mel's sense of humor at events and his eagerness to share his joy of bluebirds with everyone he met.

\* \* \*



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