



# The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

AN AFFILIATE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

- Volume 19, Issue 2 Summer 2017
- Editor: Joan Watroba • sunshinebb@msn.com • www.thebsp.org

## A Message from the President

Dr. Dean C. Rust, BSP President

*Frank M. Chapman, one of America's foremost ornithologists expressed his feelings poetically about the Bluebird in his classic 'Birds of Eastern North America': "The Bluebird's disposition is typical of all that is sweet and amiable. His song breathes of love; even his fall call-note — tur-wee, tur-wee — is soft and gentle. So associated is his voice with the birth and death of the seasons that to me his song is freighted with all the gladness of springtime, while the sad notes of the birds passing southward tell me more plainly than the falling leaves that the year is dying".*

Greetings from your BSP President! I LOVE being your President and enjoy every moment spent in helping promote Bluebirds in Pennsylvania. This President's Message is going to be a bit different from past issues. ENJOY!! On April 15th (the Saturday before Easter) my son, Shaun, and I were planting some trees and doing general lawn work at the back of our property. It was a gorgeous spring day and we were enjoying every minute in the fresh air.

About 3PM we started hearing a male Bluebird singing from somewhere above us? We couldn't see him but we certainly could hear his soft enchanting warble and it became nonstop. It was the middle of April and still no Bluebird nest in our backyard nest box — no reason to panic but most of my trails had Bluebird nests already and all of our neighbors did as well!! Shaun & I listened to this male Blue belt out notes for more than an hour finally spotting him sitting alone in an old maple tree along the river. I told Shaun I thought the male Bluebird was lonely and that he was putting on this concert in hopes of attracting a beautiful female.

About 4:30 PM we finished our work and took a break

up on the porch to watch birds and enjoy a snack. As soon as we got settled on the porch, we saw a female Bluebird in the same tree as where the male had been singing. She was 50-60 feet from him and he was not singing quite as lustily as before. For two hours they changed positions in the tree but never really got close to each other. My thought was — are they ignoring each other? Is this our new pair?



*Bluebird Romance  
photo by Shirley Rust*

About 6:30PM both Bluebirds landed on our nest box a couple times but never showed signs that they were going to reside in our box. Darkness fell and the backyard got quiet. Another day was over for birds in Lancaster County.

The next day was Easter Sunday, April 16th. I still am not quite sure what happened that Saturday evening but at 8AM the female Bluebird was "on a mission" to build a nest. Every 5 minutes she arrived with pine needles and the male just "wing-waved" her from a mealworm feeder about 10 feet away

as she zoomed by. Could it be that we really have a pair of Bluebirds? I think so. We were away the whole day on Easter and only got home after dark at 9PM. I couldn't wait to see

*A Message from the President continues on next page* 📖

## A Message from the President continued from page 1

her nest. On Monday morning an early check on the nest revealed — a finished pine-needle nest in a 4" jiffy cup. Eggs started appearing on Thursday April 19 and on April 24 incubation began with 5 eggs. Today is now Mother's Day, May 14th, and the 5 chicks are 7 days old having hatched on May 8th. It all started with a male Bluebird singing with hope.

In Larry Zeleny's book, *The Bluebird – How You Can Help Its Fight For Survival*, 1976, Ruth Thomas writes: "Several other birds sing plaintive or wistful songs, but the Bluebird's warble is sometimes a yearning, other times an all but unbearable ecstasy!"

Dr. Zeleny writes: "The eastern bluebird's song is one of love and persuasion as he tries to entice his prospective mate into accepting him and his chosen home. He may interrupt his singing occasionally to bring her a choice caterpillar which she passively accepts. It is hard to understand her apparent indifference at first as she sits quietly on a nearby branch or fence post listening to his passionate appeal and watching him pop in and out of his doorway obviously imploring her to try it for herself. One wonders if she is really as indifferent as she pretends to be, or whether she is simply enjoying the show and trying to prolong it as long as possible!"

This phase of the courtship may last an hour, a day, or even a week depending largely on how well the female is able to resist the entreaties of the male. During this period his hope and enthusiasm never wane. At last she will probably relent, fly to the cavity or nesting box, and examine it inside and out, speculating as to its suitability. This simple act of hers is evidently interpreted by the male as an outright acceptance of his proposal. His emotion then knows no bounds, his wings quiver with excitement, and his soft but beautiful love song swells in a great crescendo and is embellished with wild new notes of pure joy and unrestrained passion. His exquisite rhapsody is often sung on the wing as he flutters fitfully in circles around the lovely mate who has just accepted him. This is the song that Ruth Thomas so aptly called "an all but unbearable ecstasy".

To witness a bluebird courtship in early spring is well worth watching and waiting for. It contains all of the elements of tenderness, love, and devotion of the finest human relationship."

Dean C. Rust  
President of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania  
May 14, 2017

## Attention Woodworkers

**BSP is experiencing a severe housing shortage! Our supply of nest boxes and kits is very low, and we are in desperate need of volunteers to cut out individual nest box pieces for bluebird boxes.**

**Please volunteer your woodworking skills!**



BSP will supply the lumber and the plans for each nest box part.

We will also need volunteers during the summer to pack up the nest box parts into individual kits. With just a few volunteers working in an assembly line fashion, this activity will only take a few hours of one morning, and will take place in the Mechanicsburg, PA area.

Bill Strauss, who currently serves as Woodworking Chairperson is also seeking someone to take over this position, and he would be happy to talk with you about how you can serve in this important role. Bill will continue to be involved to assist, and will continue to cut out nest box parts.

To volunteer to help out in any of these important activities to provide nesting sites for the bluebirds, please contact :

Bill Strauss  
717-541-9168  
e-mail: [mbstrauss@verizon.net](mailto:mbstrauss@verizon.net)

**See Bluebird Day at Cabela's on page 7**

## BSP Officers

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photo by Dick Hess

## 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

### Bluebird Trails Forever...

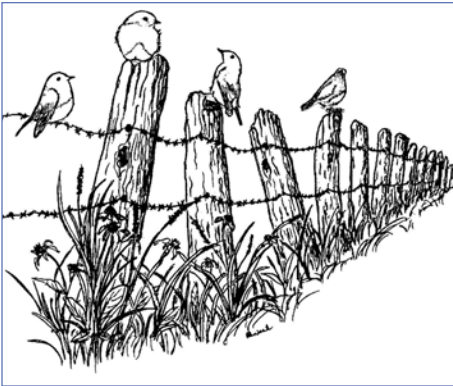


Illustration by Susan Renkel

With life being so busy with work, chores, and family activities, I like to think of my weekly trail monitorings as “nature walks with a special purpose”. With binoculars and a trail bag with supplies in hand, I am ready to experience the wonders of nature and to see what is going on inside of the nest boxes. I also enjoy observing the beauty within the nesting environments, as many other bird species, mammals, trees, flowering plants, and insects all share the same habitat.

Binoculars are very important in order to observe the nesting activity from afar. When the young birds are almost ready to leave the nest box, the parents feed their young at the entrance hole, which is a confirmation that they are getting ready to fledge. At that time they are between 14 and 17 days old, and to open the box then may cause them to fledge prematurely.

In order to insure that our nesting trails receive continuous monitoring in future years, it is vital for active trail monitors to share the many joys of bluebirding with others. It is especially important to inspire young persons to become actively involved in bluebirding, so that they can have the knowledge and motivation to

continue this conservation effort which is so important to the bluebirds and the other native cavity-nesting songbird species. I am so happy that BSP now offers Junior BSP Memberships for young people ages 8-16 at no cost. If you are a BSP member and would like to sponsor a young person to become a Junior BSP Member, a printable membership form can be found on the BSP web site: [thebsp.org](http://thebsp.org)

I have found that the best way to share the joy of bluebirding with others is to invite them to walk the trail with me. It may be a family member, a friend, or a co-worker who is interested in nature and the outdoors. Sometimes when I am checking the boxes, people ask me about what I am doing, and then I have the opportunity to share information with those who ask me questions. A major misconception is that if you open the nest box, you will scare the adult birds away and that they will abandon the nest. Field experience has demonstrated that even if the adult bird briefly leaves the nest box during the nest box check, they will return soon after the monitor leaves. This applies to all of the cavity-nesting species which utilize the nest boxes. In some instances, the adult female may even stay on the eggs if the box is opened.

In that case, I just note on my report that the female was on the eggs and that I did not check, and I will be able to count the eggs during the following weekly check. Seeing the nesting cycle from nest-building, to egg-laying, to the young birds hatching, then fledging, is a powerful reminder of the miracle of life. The occasional disappointment of a nesting failure can be put in perspective better if one is monitoring an entire bluebird trail instead of just

one nest box.

The placement of nest boxes in suitable habitat and regular monitoring of nest boxes is the main reason that bluebirds are still a common sight in our counties. Here are some reasons why a bluebird trail that is not being monitored and maintained is a detriment to the nesting birds:

- Rotten roofs can cause rain to get inside of the box and the young may die of hypothermia in cold weather
- Enlarged entrance holes may make the nest box prone to predation
- Leaving used nests may attract insect pests, and also cause the nest to become too high to the entrance hole if a new nest is built on top of a used nest
- Leaning mounting poles make the nest boxes more prone to predation
- A productive trail can become a House sparrow trail if House sparrows are allowed to nest, as they are more aggressive and will drive away the native birds — *Note that House sparrows are non-native birds, not protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, so it is legal to remove their nests, eggs, and birds.*

The main lesson that I have learned from bluebirding is the resilience of the birds in spite of the many nesting challenges. If they first do not succeed, they usually try again, which is an important lesson for all.

Let's all keep this important conservation effort going strong by motivating others to get involved!

*Joan Watroba*

Joan Watroba  
Editor

## Mailbag

### Mealworm Redo

Another great issue! I have a suggestion you and the members might consider for using dry mealworms. I boil a cup of water, then add the dry mealworms to it and cover. (Think cup of soup). After about 10 minutes the worms have rehydrated nicely, giving a sheen and a little flexibility to the treat. The pickiest of my bluebirds didn't seem to mind at all! Thanks again for sharing your newsletter.

Sincerely,  
Terry McGrath  
SCBS/Editor

.....

I read your article on the dried mealworms in the latest newsletter and wanted to share a tip with you if you aren't already familiar with it. Last fall, one of the new members of our West Branch Bird Club shared that he had started putting out dried mealworm cakes. They are available in Lock Haven at both WalMart (7.99) or Lowe's (9.99). They also carry a special larger (than the standard suet cake holder) holder for the cakes. Unfortunately, it is SO popular we can't keep up with the demand!

Our early pair of bluebirds, all of the woodpeckers, the nuthatches, titmice, chickadees and various finches including the cardinals, love it.

You might give one a try!

Linda Frye

### Editor's Reply:

Thanks, Linda - I had not seen the mealworm cakes - happy to hear that they are a hit with the bluebirds and other songbirds. With your permission, I would like to share your tip with our readers. And thanks for helping the bluebirds and other songbirds with their nutrition needs!

Joan Watroba

### From Terry Lobdell:

April 2 at 11:30am -- My bluebirds have been following me around my yard hinting with their excited chatter that I should put out more mealworms!

## Mailbag

### Mister for the Birds

Enjoy Carol's Mister for the Birds. I met Carol in NC where my one daughter used to live. She often makes Youtube videos entitled: [Providing Water for Wildlife with a Mister](https://youtu.be/2EAdsRTMDXo) is at: <https://youtu.be/2EAdsRTMDXo>.

Sincerely,  
Harry Schneider

### Tribute to Bob Allnock

To all, It is with deep regret that I need to mention this, but Bob Allnock of Portersville PA, a long time Bluebirder and Purple Martin landlord, and a mentor to perhaps hundreds of people passed away on Sunday, February 12th. Bob did many Bluebird presentations and was good friends with Harry and myself. At this point, his sons will be cleaning out his bluebird houses this week in preparation for his nesting bluebirds.

Bob and I spoke frequently, and he has had some bluebirds in the last several weeks checking out this houses. He probably had 10-15 bluebird houses on his farm, as well as a large purple martin colony. He enjoyed watching all birds, those mentioned above as well as Baltimore Orioles and hummingbirds. He also took care of a large martin colony at Moraine State Park. Bob was out on his quad working in his field, enjoying life like he did every day, when his big heart gave out.

He will be missed by all. Any questions, let me know.

Thanks, Bill Wenger

### Editor's Reply:

Thanks, Bill for letting us know of Bob's passing, and Thanks, Harry Schneider for your thoughtfulness and generosity for your donation to the BSP Conference in memory of Bob Allnock. We were very sorry to hear of his passing.

Joan Watroba

# Bluebird Day at Cabela's — March 25th, 2017

BSP volunteers helped the children and family members assemble 60 nest boxes from 11am to 3pm. Our BSP Mascot, BlueBelle greeted the visitors at the store. Ron Leh, Cabela's Retail Marketing Manager, was very pleased.

Dean Rust  
BSP President



Thank you so much for making yesterday a success. Look at the smiling faces and you can see numerous memories will be had for a long time. Please keep in touch and if we can assist you with anything in the future please reach out.

Ron Leh  
Retail Marketing  
Manager, Cabela's



## BSP recognizes the following recipients of the 2017 BSP Awards:

### 2017 Bluebird Appreciation Award

#### Presented to Dean Rust



*Shirley Halk and Dean Rust, BSP President*

With our deepest gratitude for your loyalty, devotion, guidance, outstanding leadership, and dedicated service as the Bluebird Society President

The BSP Board

Shirley Halk, Awards Chair

### 2017 Blue Feather Award

#### Presented to Jay and Marcel Smullen

In the Fall of 2015, I was approached by the Environmental Action Committee of West Hanover Township and was asked if it would be possible for me to look at the Roland Bergner Trail located at the Skyline Commons Park and give some suggestions. Roland was retired from the PA Game Commission and had taken care of the trail up to his passing, and as with all trails, when a monitor is lost, the trail was in some disrepair. We needed boxes, a plan for placement of the nest boxes with much consideration being given to the mowers, and a monitor(s). Not too hard of a task. The EAC and I met, walked the park, and came up with a battle plan. Nest boxes and posts were obtained, the committee did all the work, and bluebird training was planned.

Going forward in time, we were blessed with a father and son team who would monitor the trail. In March of 2016 we held a bluebirding class at the park that included the committee and our future monitors. Everyone wanted to learn the basics.

Jay is 11 years old and is a member of Scout Troop 27 in West Hanover Township. He came prepared with tablet, pen, ideas, and was a delight. He took his job very serious-

ly, keeping weekly records and solving problems that occurred. There was no doubt in my mind that the trail was in good hands. Along with monitoring the trail, Jay also plays piano and is a Safety Officer at his school. Behind every successful child is a parent(s) who cares. His father, Marcel, along with his son, have taken over the maintenance and monitoring of the Skyline Trail. Together they provided an informative and in depth year-end report. Marcel is a Naturalist who enjoys studying and watching birds, particularly bluebirds. He also performs stream assessments on numerous West Hanover Township streams using FISH Protocol (First Investigation Stream Health) as part of the township's MS4 permit. Marcel was appointed to EAC in January 2017 and is Sargeant-at-Arms for the PA House of Representatives. Both Jay and his father, Marcel, have demonstrated their love for bluebirds, and have a deep appreciation for Mother Earth and all her living creatures. It is with great pride that the Bluebird Society of PA honors this son and father team with a Blue Feather Award.

Dean C. Rust, BSP President

### 2017 Blue Feather Award

#### Presented to Jim and Darlene Crone



*Shirley Halk with Jim and Darlene Crone*

It was about 4 years ago that Jim and Darlene Crone were asked if they would be interested in taking responsibility for monitoring a bluebird trail at Brookside Park. This is a township park located in Dover Township, York County. Originally the trail's nest boxes were made and installed by a local Girl Scout Troop under the guidance of Phil and Susan Durgin. Over time, the trail had been vandalized,

*BSP Awards continues on page 8* 

## 2017 Blue Feather Award continued from page 7

poles knocked down and boxes stolen. Jim and Darlene, being recently retired, agreed that they had the time and were interested in taking care of this trail. Jim, being a retired building contractor, built durable nest boxes and refurbished the trail. Both have a great interest in wildlife conservation and enjoy visiting and monitoring the trail that is close to their home. Along with monitoring a trail, they have been volunteering as a team for three years at the PA Garden Show of York, the PA Farm Show of Harrisburg, and the Codorus Blast Festival in the park.

They enjoy talking with people about bluebirds and have been extremely helpful in the setting up and tearing down of the BSP booth at these events and hauling everything back to the BSP storage unit. Jim also gives of his time as a volunteer with the Woodworking Committee of BSP.

For their willingness to help with various BSP activities, and for diligently monitoring and caring for bluebirds, BSP is honored to present Jim and Darlene Crone with a BSP Blue Feather Award.

Dean C. Rust, BSP President

## 2017 Bluebirder of the Year Award Presented to Harold Lebo



Shirley Halk with Harold Lebo

When Harold and Opal Lebo moved to their new home in the early sixties, Harold recognized that there were no bluebirds to be seen. He decided to combine bringing back the bluebirds with his missionary project to meet his neighbors. In 1963, Harold started the first bluebird trail in Berks County. He says at that time there were no bluebirds, and it took a few years for the first pair to nest. At its height, Harold's bluebird trail spanned 5 square miles in southern Berks County. He has befriended farmers and homeowners all throughout that area

as he would install, check on broods, and clean out his boxes every year.

He has cared for as many 90 boxes per year. The last 33 years he has consistently cared for 60 nesting boxes. He has built them all by himself using an estimated 1000+ running feet of lumber and gallons of dark brown paint.

Over the last 53 years of maintaining the bluebird trail, Harold has found a variety of different squatters in his houses. The list includes wasps, spiders, deer mice, flying squirrels, red squirrels, snakes, Tree Swallows, and House Wrens. Many of the houses would host two or three broods of bluebirds per year, and Harold estimates that he has been instrumental in helping 5,000 bluebirds to fledge.

Harold's hobbies besides bluebirds include birdwatching, maintaining a large feeding station in his back yard, going on bird tours to different countries of the world, planting and working in his garden growing vegetables, fruit, and nectar and food plants for butterflies. He also gives private garden tours in the summer to show his plants and butterflies. For 5 years, he has hosted garden tours for the public. He serves as Deacon of his church, has been asked to give bluebird house building workshops in his barn, and has taught bird feeder building classes to 9th and 10th graders. Every other Thursday he teaches a Kindergarten class about various topics in nature, and at other times, you will find him teaching the Boy Scouts and Pathfinders Archery skills.

Harold is a member of the American Birding Association, Bluebird Society of PA, PA Society of Ornithology, Baird Ornithology Club, and the Mengel Natural History Society.

Needless to say, Harold's family is very proud of the impact that he has had on the bluebird population. For Harold's dedication to the bluebirds, for his caring about the natural world, investing his time and efforts in future generations giving them skills and memories that cannot be replaced, and for caring and making this world a much better place, the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania is honored to bestow on him the 2017 Bluebirder of the Year Award.

Dean C. Rust, BSP President

*Note: Each year, the Bluebird Society of PA recognizes those who have demonstrated significant contributions to bluebird propagation and educational outreach by honoring them with a BSP Award. If you would like to nominate someone whom you feel is a good candidate for an award, please send a brief write-up regarding their contributions to bluebird conservation and send to:*

*Shirley Halk, BSP Awards Chair,  
42 Park Drive, Grantville, PA 17028*



## Events Report

### 05/14/2017 Audubon Field Day at Pinchot Park

Hello All,

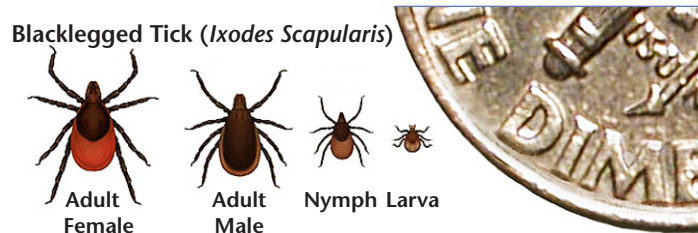
BSP volunteers from York Co. participated in an Audubon sponsored "Field Day at Pinchot Park" today. This was an event for Harrisburg students to get outdoors and learn about the natural world. Dale Cook and Jim Crone (with Darlene assisting) directed the box building and Nancy gave a presentation. A total of approx. 64 with 8 sets of 8 kids in rotation - they built a total of 16 kits (that were paid for by Audubon and donated to Pinchot Park). The kids enjoyed the outdoor experiences, we visited a few nest boxes to find bluebird activity and watched the video, "Inside Nest box".

The snakes that were up in a tree right near our pavilion were the high point of the day!

Nancy Putt  
BSP County Coordinator

## WARNING

For the past five years, Pennsylvania has reported the most Lyme disease cases nationwide.



The infection can cause fever, fatigue, headache, muscle aches and joint pain. The study says blacklegged ticks also can transmit the parasite causing Babesiosis, which can cause anemia and potentially be fatal. Anaplasmosis, another blacklegged-tickborne infection, causes fever, headache, chills and muscle aches, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states. If you experience any of these symptoms, you may want to check with your doctor to rule out or to confirm a diagnosis of Lyme disease. The administration of antibiotics is the most common treatment mode. To avoid such infections, wear light-colored, protective clothing outdoors, use insect repellents, and do a full-body check after being outside.

## New Bluebird Trail added in Butler County by Kimberly Springer

Our Bluebird Trail project took flight (pun intended) last Wednesday. The Bluebird Trail is a series of strategically-placed nest boxes for the native Eastern Bluebird. This bird species often loses its home to European Starlings & House Sparrows - 2 extremely aggressive, non-native species.

Enclosed is a map showing the location of all 7 boxes & pictures of each box that we installed.

The project was headed by our Buhl Wildlife Committee Member, Kim Springer (also a member of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania).



We'd like to thank: Kraynak's & Hermitage Agway for each donating 1 box; Mary Miller of Sharon, PA for donating 4 boxes; & Bill Wittey of Harmony, PA for donating 1 box (& making his & the other 4 for Mary Miller). We'd like to thank Chris Bradac & Jody of C. Bradac Electric for installing all of the boxes & donating the poles onto which they are mounted. A big thank you goes out to Ed Palmer of Grove City, PA (the Mercer County Coordinator for the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania) for all of his expertise & help with the location choices. Thank you also to Tom Kuster & Bill Drolsbaugh for their support.

We will be adding more boxes to the Park & Golf Course in the near future to ensure the survival of this beautiful bird species. Please come visit our Trail - & look and listen for the bluebirds.

Thank you Kimberly and Ed Palmer for this report.

Ken Leister  
State County Educational Coordinator for BSP

# 2016 Annual Nest Box Report

The 2016 BSP Monitor’s Report is posted on the BSP web site: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org). To view the detailed nesting report, select **More...** then select **2016 BSP Monitors Report**

### Summary of Nesting Results:

Nest Boxes Reported. . . . .	2,494
Bluebird Eggs . . . . .	6,194 (6,102 Blue, 92 White)
<b>Bluebirds Fledged . . . . .</b>	<b>4,820</b>

### Other Species Fledged from Nest Boxes

Tree Swallows . . . . .	2,794
House Wrens . . . . .	1,422
Black-Capped Chickadees . . . . .	236
Tufted Titmouse . . . . .	41
Carolina Wrens . . . . .	22
Great-Crested Flycatchers . . . . .	4

Report to: Shirley Halk, State Monitoring Chairperson, 42 Park Drive, Grantville, Pa.17028

Both Weekly and Annual Report Forms are available to print from the BSP web site:[www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org)

Reports received by October 15, 2017 will be included in a random drawing for prizes from the BSP Merchandise Site posted on the BSP web site, but Annual Reports can be submitted up to 12/15/2017 and your data will still be included in the compiled statewide report for 2017.

### Editor’s Note:

*It takes much time and effort to put this report together, and we are very appreciative for Shirley’s detailed and dedicated work to compile this important report. Whether you monitor one nest box or 100, please report your nesting activity to BSP at the end of the nesting season.*

***Please keep a record of your nesting activity and submit your Annual Nesting Report***

## A favorite tree for all birds including bluebirds



*Serviceberry photo by Terry Lobdell*

April 2017 - Come June, serviceberry trees will be loaded with berries and all kinds of birds - especially cedar wax-wings, will be feeding on them.

## Susan Renkel Presented with BSP Honorary Membership

The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania is proud to honor Susan Renkel by presenting her with an Honorary Membership to BSP. Susan has served as BSP County Coordinator for Snyder County for many years, and she has contributed so much to educating the public about bluebirds.

She served as the Editor of the BSP Newsletter for several years, and she also compiled the wonderful, comprehensive guide to bluebirding, ***“Everything You Need To Know About Bluebirds...and Much More”*** which is



*photo by Susan Renkel*

a highly recommended resource on how to assist bluebirds and other native cavity -nesting species. This book is included in every packet given to new BSP Members.

Susan continues to contribute her beautiful photos and illustrations to BSP, and many of them appear in the BSP Newsletter.

For all that she has done for BSP and for the bluebirds throughout the years, Susan Renkel is most deserving of this special honor.

## Mailbag continued from page 5

Hello Dean,

I am a long- time Bluebird Society of PA member. Back in 2008 I was a recipient of the Blue Feather Award as a result of establishing a 16 box bluebird trail on the 23 acre campus of The Williamsport Home...a retirement facility. We have been successful in getting some of our residents involved as well as propagating bluebirds. Also there have been articles about our success in our newspaper, The Sun-Gazette.

House sparrows are a nemesis. At age 96yrs, I am no longer able to participate in the monitoring but able to coordinate activities of other residents and compile weekly stats and send them to the administration and others. I read your article about this box on page #15 of the Spring issue.

Can you tell me the source and cost of your twin wall carbonate material and do you have any info on continuing success in deterring house sparrows for 2016? We are very interested in this new idea.

Don Eister

### Dean's Reply:

Don

I just did some checking. I think you can buy twin-walled polycarbonate panels or sheets at 24" by 96" at Home Depot or Lowes (even if they have to order it in for you). It will save lots of driving. I am sure you have one of these stores in the Williamsport area. It can easier be cut to size with a table saw. I like the 1/4" thick poly. Good Luck.

I am impressed with you guys and your energy! I hope you are abundantly successful with this project.

Dean

## PA Garden Show of York

### March 3, 4, & 5 – Memorial Hall, York Fairgrounds

The PA Garden Show of York was in full bloom and attracted many people to a preview of spring. This year we had a great location and everyone at the show must have stopped at our booth!

My presentation on Friday, "Attract Bluebirds to Your Back Yard", attracted about 100 attendees. I also talked about my experiences with bluebirds on my trails and had

## PA Garden Show of York continued

a Q & A session. Most everyone participated with questions and telling their stories. People who are interested in gardening and making the most of their outdoor spaces, also want bluebirds and songbirds to visit their yard!

Many questions and stories about bluebirds kept all 16 volunteers from Cumberland and York Co., who worked in shifts at our booth, busy the whole time. We signed up a total of 42 new members for the BSP. Most new members did purchase a kit for \$5 for new members only during this special event.

We welcome all who signed up and are happy that you have chosen to help the bluebirds and other cavity- nesters. Your BSP friends are here to answer questions and help you to learn more about these beautiful birds!

Thanks to all volunteers who helped at this event! Dale Cook, Cindy Self, Joyce Horner, Anetta Dimm, Joanne Slavinski, Joan Watroba, David Price, Kathy Clark, Doris Hoffman, Phil and Susan Durgin, Barb and Dave Cox, Darlene and Jim Crone. It's a lot of work but very rewarding for the bluebirds!!!

Nancy Putt-Event Chairperson

## Event Report—Annual Conference

This year's BSP conference was held at the Toftrees Resort in State College, PA. It was a well-attended event, with more than 100 attendees. The Friday evening programs and all-day Saturday presentations and activities were very interesting and entertaining, and the Silent and Live auctions were both enjoyable and profitable. Thanks to those who donated such a beautiful assortment of nature-related items to this important conference fundraiser. Thanks to the many BSP Members who assisted us with auctions, the BSP Store, and performed other important conference functions

Special Thanks to David Birmingham, Auctioneer, Pat Larthy, Clerk, and to Scott and Amanda Russell who also assisted with the live auction. Phil Durgin, Conference Chair did a great job of setting up this special event—THANKS, Phil! We hope you can join us next year at a date and location to be determined soon.

## A Summary of Bob Early's Bluebird History

Bob Early has a long history of helping the bluebirds in PA to make a strong comeback. He had been referred to as "Mr. Bluebird" even before the formation of the Bluebird Society of PA in May of 1998. He served as one of the original Directors of BSP and was instrumental in assisting the young BSP organization to become an active affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society.

Starting in 1982, Bob has built and monitored more than 300 nest boxes throughout seven Dauphin County townships and also in Huntington County, PA. He had designed a number of experimental nest boxes, including PVC, hanging boxes, and double-decker models, which successfully fledged bluebirds, and other native songbirds. He also made and maintained nest boxes for larger cavity-nesting species, including wood ducks, kestrels, and screech owls. He welcomed all native species to utilize his nest boxes, and referred to his nest box trails as "Early's Inns".

Bob's interest in nature and the outdoors inspired him to obtain a Degree in Forestry from Penn State, and he enjoyed many seasons of hunting and fishing throughout the rural areas of PA. Bob retired as a Construction Inspector and Nurseryman and then devoted most of his free time to bluebirding. It would take three full days each week to check all of his nest boxes. He became involved in bluebird conservation for many reasons, and said: "I knew bluebirds were threatened and I had studied wildlife conservation in school."

He was also prompted to get actively involved in bluebird conservation when he read Dr. Lawrence Zeleny's article, "Song of Hope for the Bluebirds" which appeared in the June, 1977 issue of the National Geographic maga-

zine. The article told of the plight of the bluebird due to the competition for nesting sites from non-native species, including the House Sparrow and the European Starling, and how the placement of nesting boxes in suitable habitat could promote successful nesting of bluebirds and other native songbirds. The article sparked his interest, and after his wife bought him a bluebird box for Christmas, he made his first 20 nest boxes. That first nest box gift became the first of hundreds of nest boxes which he would make during the winter months and then would place on his bluebird trails located on both public and private land with express permission from the landowners. This is a summary of Bob's bluebird history!

### Editor's Note:

*I first met Bob in the early days of BSP, and he always shared his knowledge and joy of bluebirds, his nest box designs, and his monitoring tips with all of us. He continues to be a member of BSP, and enjoys reading the BSP newsletter to keep up with current trends and bluebird activities. Due to the many years of Bob's efforts and inspiration, bluebirds are back, and he continues to be inspired by the beautiful bluebird which he occasionally sees at his current residence at Frey Village.*

### History of NABS:

BSP salutes Dr. Lawrence Zeleny and Mary Janetatos, then President of the Audubon Naturalist Society in Chevy Chase, Maryland who co-founded the North American Bluebird Society. On March 20, 1978, she and Dr. Zeleny served as the first Executive Director of NABS. Many BSP members are also members of NABS, which includes a beautiful seasonal publication, "Bluebird." Contact NABS for membership and educational information about all species of bluebirds: <http://nabluebirdsociety.org/>

## BSP Newsletter Submission Contest

### BSP Newsletter Submission Contest Winner - Congratulations! Patty Early

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.

**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 To submit by e-mail, include Newsletter Submission Contest in the subject line of your e-mail and e-mail to: [sunshinebb@msn.com](mailto:sunshinebb@msn.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 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 e-mail address (optional) with your entry

## New Bluebird Trail at the VA Hospital in Lebanon, PA

Thanks to Dean Rust and Bill Strauss, VA Administrators, and volunteers at the Lebanon VA Hospital, a new bluebird trail of 10 nest boxes was installed on April 5th. It is now a productive trail with active nestings of native songbirds, including bluebirds, tree swallows, and house wrens.



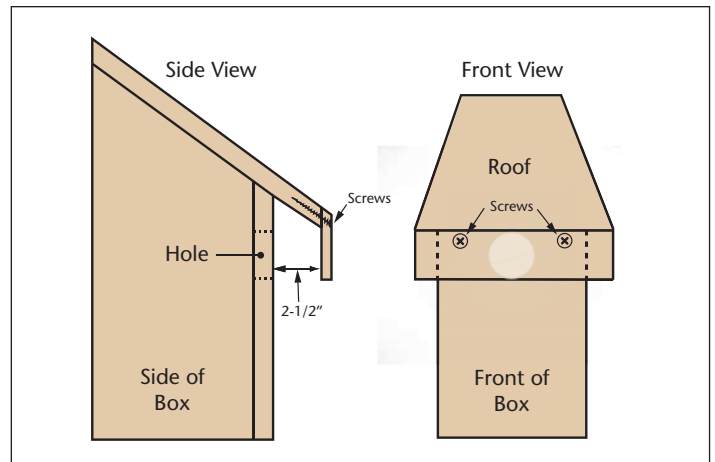
*Bill Strauss assists volunteer to set up the nest box trail at the Lebanon Veterans Hospital*

Volunteer monitors Ted Nichols and Jeremy Fees will monitor it for the remainder of this nesting season, and next year they will decide how to integrate the trail monitoring activities into the rehabilitation program with Veterans. At that time, they will also decide if additional nest boxes will be added.

This is a good habitat for bluebirds—open, mowed areas, and as we all know, Bluebirds are very Patriotic Birds, for they are RED, WHITE, and BLUE!

## Wren Guards to Deter House Wrens

House Wrens- native species, very territorial, often place sticks in all nesting boxes in their territory. May peck the eggs of other native species and may also remove very young birds of other species out of nest boxes. Best to keep nest boxes away from brushy and wooded areas, which are preferred by House Wrens.



*This Illustration is based on one originally done by Yvonne Domings*

Wren Guards may help to deter them from using nest boxes.

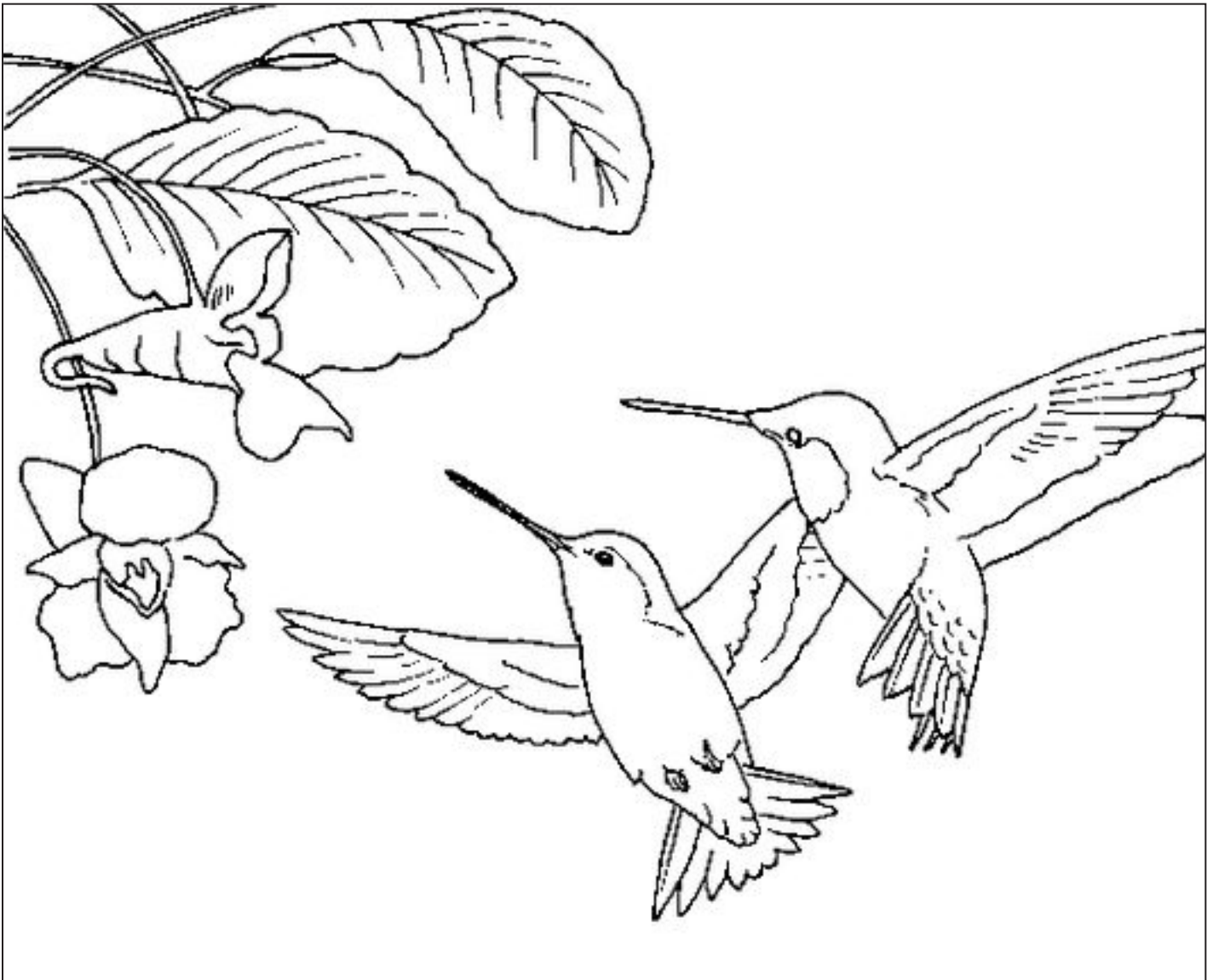
1. Guard should be made of a similar material as the nest box.
2. It should be long enough to block the hole and be 2.5"-3" away from the entrance hole.
3. Best time to install guard is during the egg laying of the other species, although some have installed it during the nest building and the bluebirds have readily accepted it.
4. Observe after installing it to make sure that the adult birds are accepting it.
5. Remove it when the hatchlings are between 4 - 7 days to make it easier for the parents to feed them and easier for the young to leave the box.

Since House Wrens are native species, do not interfere with their active nests. It is acceptable to remove loose sticks, but if there is a nesting cup, let it be.

### Editor's Note:

*I placed a Wren Guard on two of the nest boxes in my yard this season, and successfully fledged two broods of chickadees. We live in a wooded habitat, and the House wrens usually peck and remove the chickadee eggs. This year, I installed the wren guards after the chickadees had laid at least one egg, and they adapted to it without any problems. I left it on during the entire nesting cycle. May be worth trying on some of your nest boxes located in wren habitat.*

## Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds for You to Color



## Bluebird Photos by Our Readers



*photo by Robyn Waugh —  
I took this photo on Pinkerton Rd. Mount Joy, PA*



*photo by Terry Lobdell*

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 yr. -\$12	1 yr. -\$15	1 yr. -\$100
3 years -\$25	3 yrs. -\$30	3 yrs. -\$40	3 yrs. -\$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: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate preferred delivery method of your newsletter by checking off one of the following options:

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Member Interest Survey:

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 Events 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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Event dates-Sept. 29-October 1, 2017

Scott Weidensaul , Keynote Speaker-  
Project SNOWstorm (Topic-Snowy Owls)  
Saturday, September 30th, 6 p.m.

Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, Oaks, PA  
(18 miles NW of Philadelphia, PA)

See more at:

//www.americanbirdingexpo.com/#sthash.PUunmJ4.dpuf

**BSP RENEWAL DATES/Mailing Address Changes - Please check your mailing label on your regular mailed copy to see your renewal date. You can renew for one year or for multiple years, which will provide a discount. Both e-mail and regular mail members will also receive a letter by regular mail notifying of your renewal date.\* If you need to update your mailing address , please send changes to: BSP, P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055**

#### **From the Editor:**

We would love to share your beautiful photos of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds with our readers.

Please e-mail jpeg files of your photos to me at: [sunshineebb@msn.com](mailto:sunshineebb@msn.com) In the Subject Line, flag as: Photos for BSP Newsletter

Please provide the name of the photographer, a caption for the photo (optional) and your County so that we can credit you with the image.

## **BSP County Coordinator Updates:**

### **CLEARFIELD COUNTY**

**Norm Bloom**

his correct e-mail address is: [ngbloom@comcast.net](mailto:ngbloom@comcast.net)

### **LAWRENCE COUNTY**

**Bill Wenger**

**412-720-0766**

The following counties need a BSP County Coordinator.

**Bradford, Cambria, Greene, Lackawanna, Mifflin, Snyder, Susquehanna, and Wayne**

If you are an active BSP Member and live in or near the above counties and would be willing to be a contact person for persons to ask questions regarding bluebirds and their nesting and habitat needs, please contact : Ken Leister, BSP State County Coordinator. [kenapeg@aol.com](mailto:kenapeg@aol.com)

**A complete list of BSP County Coordinators is available at the BSP web site: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) Select More...then select County Coordinators from the drop-down box**



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