



# Bluebird Trails & Tales

The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania  
An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

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## A Message from the President

*Dr. Dean C. Rust, BSP President*

### GO NATIVE!!

**S**hirley & I joined BSP in 2010 and I started monitoring several Bluebird trails that year: Lancaster Country Club, Calvary Church, and Overlook Community Campus. Right from the beginning, I knew I wanted to develop a backyard that had native plants that would attract Bluebirds. After an inspection of our river property, we found that the previous owner had planted a Hackberry tree (*Celtis occidentalis*) and a Mountain ash (*Sorbus americana*) along with some walnut, maple and red oaks that must have been indigenous? My curiosity was piqued to explore how we could improve on the plantings that we already had. What native plants and trees would attract Bluebirds?

Landscaping for wildlife can restore critically needed habitat and cover and beautify your yard at the same time. Many excellent native trees, shrubs and vines offer interest with fragrant flowers, eye-catching fruit, and a diversity of colors in each season. We decided on a plan to research native plants and then chose two or three of our favorites to plant each year.

In 2014 we chose to add a Serviceberry tree (*Amelanchier arborea*), an American Linden tree (*Tilia americana*), and three Winterthur Viburnum Nudum plants. According to Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*, the American Linden tree (aka Basswood) supports over 150 species of caterpillars in North America. What are Bluebird parents looking for to feed their young? YES!! CATERPILLARS – it is like Filet Mignon to Bluebirds. The Serviceberry tree has

a sweet white bloom in early spring followed by red berries! BTW - Newsflash! If it is a berry, BLUEBIRDS usually love it! You name a berry tree or plant and the Blues are fond of it. The Winterthur Viburnum Nudum plant is a particularly showy specimen that has a gorgeous white spring flower. It produces a white berry that turns pink and then deep purple in the fall. The leaves are green in spring and summer and then turn purple in the fall.



*Juvenile Eastern Bluebird*  
by Richard Hess

Moving to an inventory of our front yard, we found existing fruiting trees that Bluebirds enjoy. White Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) produce a red berry that Blues savor. American holly (*Ilex opaca*) has red berries – a Bluebird favorite. A third variety was two Zumi flowering crabapple trees (*Malus zumi calacarpa*). Previous owners had planted these two trees. We have watched Ring-necked pheasants sit in these trees (not in the last 20 years!!) and flocks of Cedar waxwings devour the abundant fruits in the late spring when they are softened and fermented. In some respects, it “turbo-charges” the birds’ flying ability!!

Perhaps you have an Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) in your yard? This is an amazing specimen for Bluebirds, as it is a host for the Diprionid Sawfly

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## A Message from the President continued from page 1

larvae which is a favorite snack for Bluebirds! And you thought it was just a common old pine tree?! \*\*see photos

I have included a special listing for your perusal:

### Summer- and Autumn-Bearing Fruit Plants

Common Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)\*

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*)\*

Mapleleaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*)

Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*)

Witherod (*Viburnum nudum*)

Alternate leaf dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)

Highbush huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*)

Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)\*

Pin cherry (*Prunus pennsylvanica*)

Gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)

Common chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)

Roundleaf dogwood (*Cornus rugosa*)

Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

Red-osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*)

Greenbriar (*Smilax rotundifolia*)

Wild grape (*Vitis spp.*)

Highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

Red mulberry (*Morus rubra*)

Lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*)

American beautyberry (*Callicarpa dichotma*)

Carolina buckthorn (*Frangula Carolina*)

### Winter-Bearing Fruit Plants

Red chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*)

Silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*)\*

Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)

Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

Washington hawthorn (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*)

Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*)

Honey winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)

American holly (*Ilex opaca*)

Alder (*Alnus serrulata*)

Moonseed (*Menispermum canadense*)

Bayberry (*Myrica pennsylvanica*)

Sour gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhena*)

Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

Winged sumac (*Rhus copallina*)

Mountain ash (*Sorbus americana*)

Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*)

Blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*)

Red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

Southern arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*)\*

Poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*)

\*Top 5 Native Berries for Birds for the Northeast -  
Cornell Lab

It is beyond the scope of this President's Message to describe each and every tree, plant, and shrub in these two lists. It only serves as a guideline for you to select what you wish to plant.



*Carolina buckthorn*

Recently I have included this section into my PowerPoint program: "Native Plants That Benefit Bluebirds". The first viewing of this was at CNU's 24th Annual Gardening Symposium on April 22, 2023, in Newport News, VA. Although geared primarily for the Northeast, the following list of fruit-bearing plants can be adapted to many other parts of the country. These plants can be used to attract Bluebirds to supplement their diets of insects, especially in winter months.

One of our favorite trees is NOT on any of these lists. It is the Black locust tree (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) "The Tree on Which the US was Built". Wesley Greene is the garden historian for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and his article was adapted from the original, "Black Locust; an All-American Tree". \*\*See photo. This tree goes back to James Fort 1607 as the best choice of wood to build a fortress. To have one in our yard gives us a connection with that original settlement on the James River. When a male Bluebird sits in our Black Locust tree watching over his nest box (which happened two weeks ago), it takes us back 416 years. And to see the cascading blossoms and smell the

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*Many thanks to Joyce Stuff, who has retired after serving as BSP Treasurer for many years.*

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## Our Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania is simple, yet powerful:

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



*Three's a Crowd by Maria Prentice*

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*If you have an interest in serving as Committee Chair for any Vacant Committee Position, please contact us.*



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fragrance is an overwhelming experience.

Our second plant to highlight is the Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*) also known as Sweet Viburnum or Sheepberry. \*\*See photo. In 2016 we purchased 6 Nannyberry plants from a local native nursery. The plants were about three feet tall whips. They were planted in groups of three down near the river behind our home and protected with rings of field fence. The plants are in the understory of taller trees and get very little sunshine but the soil is "Garden of Eden" quality!! In 7 years, the Nannyberry plants are now 16 feet high and 10 feet in width. The blossoms are white in spring and the fruits are abundant. Western PA has a plethora of Nannyberry growing wild, but not so much in Eastern PA. The Nannyberry plant has been such a joy for us to watch grow.



*Nannyberry*



*White Pine*



*Black Locust*



*Diprionid Sawfly Larvae*

The third plant also on the coveted list is the Carolina buckthorn (*Frangula caroliniana*). We planted three small 2-foot specimens and look forward to their growth. \*\* See photo pg. 2. This plant can be found in the parking lot area at Longwood Gardens and caught my attention when we visited last fall.

May you all have a wonderful summer in 2023 and have one of your best years with Bluebirds that you can ever remember!!

Dr. Dean C. Rust

**Note:** The Bluebird Society of PA was registered with the AmazonSmile Charity Program and received quarterly donations from Amazon based on a percentage of purchases made by members who designated BSP as their charitable organization. BSP Thanks Amazon and all of our members who participated. However, as of February 20, 2023, Amazon discontinued this program, as they felt that the program had not grown to create the impact that they had originally hoped.

Note that BSP is a 501 (c) 3 organization and accepts donations of any amount to fund educational outreach programs and to establish and maintain bluebird trails.



# From the Editor *by Joan Watroba*

## Dealing with Nesting Failures

As a bluebird trail monitor, it is always a thrill to discover that a native songbird has chosen one of our nestboxes to raise their young. Songbirds are not only beautiful, they are also very important for insect control, pollination, seed dispersal, and for enhancing our enjoyment of

the natural environment. Studies have shown that spending time in nature improves both cognition and mental health, so our experiences monitoring nestboxes, feeding, or watching birds provide a wonderful opportunity to connect with nature.

Seeing the neat, cupped nest made of dried grass or pine needles made by the Eastern Bluebird, followed by the sight of blue (or occasionally white) bluebird eggs brings us joy. Discovering the tall nest made of moss topped with animal fur, and seeing the tiny Black-Capped Chickadee eggs is so special. The Tree Swallow nests are certainly a work of art. Their straw nests topped with feathers are a beautiful sight, especially with the white eggs arranged on top of the feathers.

In all of these situations, we envision a successful outcome

which produces young, healthy birds which will fledge and enhance our habitats with their beauty, song, and contribution to the natural environment. However, not all nesting attempts will be successful, and that can make us very disappointed and discouraged. Some novice bluebirders become so upset over a loss that they remove the nestbox and give up. That is the worst thing to do. **The songbirds will not give up, and we should not either.**

There are many factors which can cause a nesting attempt to fail. Below is a list of the main causes of nesting failures, and some ways to **reduce** the risk of these losses. **However, in spite of doing everything right, there will still be nesting failures, so avoid the trap of feeling responsible for the loss of eggs, young, or adult birds.**



*Baby Bluebirds*  
Photo by Rebecca McConnell



*Bluebird Eggs*  
Photo by Rebecca McConnell



*Bluebird Fledglings*  
Photo by Mike Dickie



*Tree Swallow Nest and Eggs*  
Photo by Larry Wevodau

## Dealing with Nesting Failures con't.

### Main causes of nesting failures:

#### **Competition from other species**

#### **Climbing Predators, raccoons, snakes, cats**

#### **House Sparrow attacks**

#### **Weather-Severe temperatures**

(excessive and prolonged periods of cold, wet weather or extremely hot temperatures)

#### **Cold/Wet Weather**

#### **Hot/Humid Weather**

#### **Lack of food supply**

(especially in early Spring or in Winter)

### Suggestions

Add more boxes in the same habitat for native species.

Add a hole reducer of 1 & 1/8" for chickadees to prevent larger birds from displacing them.

Place nestboxes in open habitats to reduce the chance that House Wrens will remove the eggs and young birds.

Never mount nestboxes on trees or on wooden posts. Install stovepipe baffles or use PVC pipe to cover mounting poles if the poles are not smooth.

Install Noel Guards.

Keep cats indoors.

Trap and Remove House Sparrows.

Install monofilament line and/or sparrow spooker.

Relocate nestboxes to better habitat.

Cover side ventilation gaps.

Replace roofs and other nestbox parts which are cracked or leak to keep the nest dry. A combination of cold, wet weather and low food supply can cause the young to perish from hypothermia.

Add more ventilation to nestbox.

Use light colors on roofs to reflect heat.

Provide supplemental food-suet, mealworms, fruit/nut blends, *shelled* seeds.

Plant native shrubs and trees which produce fruit and berries year-round.

*Note: Many bluebirders reported the loss of many young bluebirds this spring due to the prolonged period of rainy, cold weather, but the bluebird pairs are now renesting. However, if nesting failures are caused by predation, the bluebirds will probably select another nesting site, so in this situation, it is best to relocate the affected nestbox to another location with the hope that they will renest there.*



## You've heard of Boomerang Children ... what about Boomerang Chicks?

After feeding bluebirds for a few years, I put up my first bluebird nest box last spring. To my delight, a pair noticed my nest box fairly quickly and began nesting in April of 2022! I promptly joined the Bluebird Society of PA and began learning about how to be a good landlord. There were three broods last season and all babies fledged with the exception of one egg that did not hatch. The last nest of the season produced two chicks



**Bluebird Eggs - Photo by Lisa Fetterman**

which fledged on 8/25/2022. I also feed dried mealworms (and occasionally live mealworms) and noticed that those two young bluebirds from the last nest stayed with their parents all winter, and I still sometimes see them at the mealworm feeder or birdbath with the parents. The male parent started chasing other males away from the feeder and birdbath around February of this year, but he doesn't seem to mind these two females coming around. Could it be that since they fledged in late August, they are not mature enough to breed yet? Or, if they have nested somewhere, is it common for bluebirds to come back to their "birth territory" to feed, drink and will they bring their young to show them this food and water source? By the way, the original pair nested in that same box again this season, and as of 4/16/23 I am happy to report there are 5 eggs! I am totally enamored with these sweet little birds!

Thanks,  
Lisa Fetterman

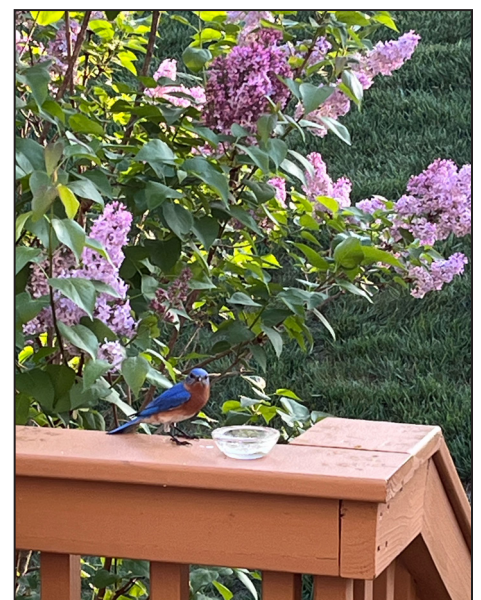
*From the Editor: Yes - It is common for the young to stay close to their parents for the first year for the reasons you mentioned. As the nesting season progresses, you may see less of the young as they mature and get ready to start their own families.*

*Per the informative bluebird web site, [www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org) most cavity nesters, like bluebirds, breed the year after they were born. House Sparrows are an exception. They can reach sexual maturity at 9 months, which gives them a competitive advantage. (McLoughlin)*

*Bluebirds breed in their second year and are generally 10-11 months old the first time they breed (if they can find a mate). They will breed annually thereafter.*



**Baby Bluebirds - Photo by Lisa Fetterman**



**Male Bluebird - Photo by Lisa Fetterman**



## Updates - *BSP County Coordinators*

THANKS TO **George Bloom**, County Coordinator of **CLEARFIELD** County [ngbloom@comcast.net](mailto:ngbloom@comcast.net). George, a gifted woodworker, donated parts for ten new bluebird nestboxes to BSP. These parts were delivered by George's daughter to the home of Nancy Putt, BSP Secretary. From there they went to Marilyn Michalski, who provided them to County Coordinators and BSP bluebird trail monitors.

THANKS TO Harry Schmeider for his service as Co-County Coordinator in **BUTLER** County for several decades. He is retiring from this position. We wish Harry well as he continues to enjoy Eastern Bluebirds on his home turf.

### OUR NEW COUNTY COORDINATORS:

**NEW** County Coordinator in **MIFFLIN** County: GORDON PARKER is a bluebirder and owner of the "Honey Creek Bill & Beak" store. Gordon accepted the position of County Coordinator in Mifflin County in early 2023. He is a photographer and monitor of a Bluebird Trail in Kish Park. 717-513-3980 or [localbirdsiview@aol.com](mailto:localbirdsiview@aol.com).

**NEW** County Coordinator in **SUSQUEHANNA** County— EVAN MANN. Evan is a former President of the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. He joined BSP in February of 2023. 570-663-2621 [7evanmann@gmail.com](mailto:7evanmann@gmail.com).

**NEW** County Coordinators in **BUCKS** County: New BSP member PAULA WALTER - [pwalter881@verizon.net](mailto:pwalter881@verizon.net) 610-246-5782. Paula is a BB Trail Founder and Monitor at Snipes Farm & Education Center. Also joining BSP and becoming Co-County Coordinator is CAROLYN DORPH, [dorph1@comcast.net](mailto:dorph1@comcast.net), a Master Gardener and President of Snipes Farm & Education Center. Paula and Carolyn work together on the Bluebird Trail at Snipes.

**NEW** Co-County Coordinator in **LYCOMING** County: JEAN M. DALTON [jklotz6@gmail.com](mailto:jklotz6@gmail.com) 570-777-0713. Jean is an experienced bluebirder, and she will make an excellent team with David Snyder to serve the bluebirders in Lycoming County.

**NEW** County Coordinator in **PIKE** County – CHERYL TOMLINSON, who joined BSP at our 2023 Bluebird Conference. Cheryl spends much of her time in PIKE County, although she lives in Chester County. [apolcat@hotmail.com](mailto:apolcat@hotmail.com). 610-724-9443.

**NEW** County Coordinator in **GREENE** County – SAM (SAMANTHA) LAMBERT. Sam is the Director of the German-Masontown Public Library 724-583-7030 [gmp1@german-masontownpubliclibrary.org](mailto:gmp1@german-masontownpubliclibrary.org).

**NEW** County Coordinator in **BUTLER** County-BROOKE KOSAR is also a new BSP member. [brookekosar1210@gmail.com](mailto:brookekosar1210@gmail.com) 724-766-1103

**NEW** County Coordinator in **JUNIATA** County-Tena Kauffman.  
Tena is a New BSP Member. 717-436-9643 [cats@nmax.net](mailto:cats@nmax.net)

**NEW** Co-County Coordinator for **CARBON** County-CAROL SCHNAITER 815-440-8640  
[schnaitercarol@gmail.com](mailto:schnaitercarol@gmail.com) Carol joins current County Coordinator, Don Bonnet [don4nett@ptd.net](mailto:don4nett@ptd.net)

**Franklin County** Coordinator- Mary Ellen Piper 717-494-9806

**PLEASE HELP:** In **SCHUYLKILL** County, our County Coordinator RICH RIEGER would appreciate having a "Co-County Coordinator" to help him with bluebird work in progress. Please contact him at [appleadayonsite@aol.com](mailto:appleadayonsite@aol.com). 703-969-0451

**The only county without a BSP County Coordinator is LACKAWANNA COUNTY.**

Please call me with ideas and suggestions. We urgently need BSP representatives here!

Marilyn Michalski, BSP State Coordinator 610-933-0497 [emeraldmm@verizon.net](mailto:emeraldmm@verizon.net).



## Create a Living Legacy For A Loved One *by Nancy Fraim*

Have you ever wondered how to honor someone who was a bird lover? Why not honor the person with a Bluebird nestbox and a plaque with their name?

Marilyn Michalski and I have established a Bird Team at Simpson Meadows Senior Living Home for the past 7 years. The team meets weekly during nesting season to monitor the seven boxes on their property.



One of the founding Bird Team members, Alice Smurthwaite recently passed away at the age of 93. In honor of her memory, we decided to place a nest box on the property across from Alice's apartment. We invited her children to be part of a short remembrance service which included a brief PowerPoint presentation and installation of the nestbox.

Her children were thrilled to know that their Mom would be remembered whenever anyone viewed the box, and the Bluebirds were thrilled to have a new nestbox to nest in.



*Alice Smurthwaites' Family*  
*Photo by Nancy Fraim*

## - BSP Conference 2023 -

The 23rd Annual BSP Conference was held in Downingtown, PA on March 17-18, 2023, and was a huge success! More than **150** attendees enjoyed the excellent presentations, vendors, displays, and auctions. Many were first-time conference attendees and were so inspired to learn more about bluebirds, that they became new members of BSP. The venue was great, and the luncheon was delicious! Thanks to Nancy Fraim, 2023 Conference Chair, to Phil Durgin for processing the incoming conference registrations, and to

all who pitched in to make the conference such an educational and fun event. Special thanks to BSP members who stepped up to help out during the conference. The special door prize, the President's Basket, is awarded by a random drawing of tickets at the end of the conference. It was won by BSP member, Kathy Spatz.

*Dear Dean,  
I was lucky enough to win the bluebird basket door prize. We just got home, and the first thing I had to do was to check out the basket. To my surprise and pleasure, I*

*discovered your book, **The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird**. I am thrilled and so happy that you signed the book. The basket of goodies is great, and the book is extra special. Bob and I had a great time. Thanks for all of your hard work.*

*Excuse me but I have to go now and read my book!*

*Sincerely yours,  
Kathy Spatz, Berks County*

## Benefits of Choosing Green Delivery of Your Newsletter

Many of our members already receive their seasonal newsletters by e-mail and these are some of the reasons they have done so:

- \*They receive their newsletters sooner by e-mail delivery
- \*Easier to access their issues in a digital folder, rather than having to file and store the printed issues

### Environmental Benefits:

- \*Eliminates the use of paper and ink products needed to produce a paper newsletter
- \*Eliminates the cost of postage to deliver the publication
- \*Eliminates the use of fossil fuels or EV energy needed to deliver the publication

BSP offers a Members' Choice regarding delivery methods, so we encourage you to choose the delivery method which you prefer when you join, renew, or anytime during the year.

***Delivery Methods are either Regular Mail or E-Mail Delivery-Your Choice!***

Thanks for your continued support to BSP and to the Bluebirds!

*\*To change the delivery method of receiving your newsletter, please contact Nancy Fraim, BSP Membership Chair: [nancyfraim@comcast.net](mailto:nancyfraim@comcast.net) or call 610-873-7454.*



## BSP Newsletter Submission Contest/Winner

Congratulations to: **Lisa Fetterman**

Your BSP Membership will be extended for a full year.

*Note: If contest winners are not currently members, BSP will provide a full year of Membership.*

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



To submit by regular mail, write: Newsletter Submission Contest on the front of the envelope and send to Joan Watroba, BSP Newsletter Editor, 2408 Bumble Bee Hollow Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.

To submit by email, include BSP Newsletter Submission Contest in the subject line of your email and send to: [bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com](mailto:bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com)

One submission will be randomly drawn at the cutoff date for each newsletter edition: January 7, May 7, and September 7.

**Bluebird Family**

**Photo by Richard R. Hess**



## *Request for Nestbox Report Forms summarizing Your Nestbox Results for 2023*

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING YOUR 2023 NESTBOX REPORT FORM: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2023**  
(Halloween)

If possible, please submit your results **ON-LINE**.

Here are the instructions for **ON-LINE** submission:

1. Go to [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) and click on "more" at the top right corner.
2. Scroll down to "Annual Nest Box Report Form" and click on it.
3. Then click on the Blue Rectangle and click on "Send Nest Box Report by email."
4. Fill out the form on your computer and check it over carefully. Then click SUBMIT at the end. Your report will go directly to my computer. You are DONE and NO stamps or envelopes are required.

Here are the instructions for **MAILING IN** (snail mail) YOUR REPORT:

1. **DOWNLOAD A COPY OF THE REPORT FORM.** To get the form, you can use the report form in this newsletter, or print out a copy of the form from our website. OR, you can call or email me: emeraldmm@verizon.net. or 610-933-0497 to request a form.
2. MAIL YOUR COMPLETED REPORT FORM TO Marilyn Michalski -- 31 W. Beacon Dr. -- Phoenixville, PA 19460 in a stamped envelope.

**IMPORTANCE OF THIS FORM:** We examine population trends in Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Black-capped Chickadees, and House Wrens, as well as documenting House Sparrow invasions. These results are submitted annually to Pennsylvania's DCNR (Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources) and to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.

**NOTE: THIS NESTBOX REPORT FORM RELATES TO BIRDS IN PENNSYLVANIA ONLY.**

Also, please use a separate Report Form for each County in PA.

Thank you for submitting your report! Marilyn Michalski, BSP State CC. 5/16/2023

## *Share Your Love of Bluebirds with Others!*

**A GIFT MEMBERSHIP TO BSP is the perfect gift for a special person in your life.**

It will bring them the seasonal publication, Bluebird Trails and Tales, and will deliver Bluebird Joy and Happiness to them all year long.

Membership Forms are available on the BSP web site: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org)



## Mailbag —

Hi Dean,

The Spring 2023 issue of Bluebird Trails and Tales was the best ever! As a NABS and PABS member for many years, this issue was chock full of helpful information, tips, and encouragement. I read it cover to cover as did my husband. Your article about House Sparrows was spot on. Every Bluebirder, or aspiring Bluebirder, needs to read and take heed. We've been active Bluebirders for almost 20 years. We use the Monofilament fishing line along both sides of the entrance hole. We use the "Sparrow spooker". We use the VanErt Trap. It takes constant vigilance for sure. We've

never lost a nest or brood to HS.

We had a problem with House Wrens for the first time last year, until we discovered the cause and used a "Wren Guard". We lost the first nest with 5 eggs but using the Wren Guard salvaged three more broods on the property. I am glad to see more emphasis on House Wren predation as I don't think this has been as widely known as HS. The article about "Nestbox Modification to Deter House Wrens from Using Nestboxes" by Wally Edsall was excellent. My husband made a copy of it for the exact dimensions of the Wren Guard specified. This was a very helpful article for us

Bluebirders.

On a personal note, two of our nestboxes have been claimed by Bluebird pairs but nestbuilding has yet to start. Thanks for the good work you do for our membership and kudos for a great spring issue.

Wishing you lots of Bluebirding success this season!

Sincerely,  
Ellen Seymour, Lebanon County



### March 22, 2023

Hi Joan! Thank you for the newsletter and it is awesome! I am so happy you can use my images to help inform your readers about the Eastern Bluebirds. I am attaching a picture of my nesting box with strands of fishing line attached. This worked late last season to keep the house sparrows away, and I fledged 4 new bluebirds from the box! This is the only fix I have found that works so far anyway. I have trapped male house sparrows and more come back, I tried the skylight and the house sparrows enjoyed it. The fishing line is hung in about 6-inch strands across the front of

the box hanging down over and around the entry hole. I kept the strands short enough so they could not accidentally be dragged into the nest and entangle the future babies. I currently have a pair of blues claiming the box but it is still a little too cold for nestbuilding in Michigan. Hope this information helps you and your readers!

Mike Dickie  
<https://mikedickiephotography.smugmug.com/>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mikedickie>



## *BSP Bluebirder of the Year*

### *Kim Springer*

**Kim Springer** is a resident of Transfer, PA and has been an active member of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania since 2017. She currently serves as BSP County Coordinator for Mercer County. Kim also serves as Co-Chair of the Publicity Committee and assists in the Administration of the BSP Facebook Page by posting interesting items and photos related to bluebirds and nature-related topics. Kim frequently attends BSP meetings and shares her ideas of how to promote BSP and the propagation of Eastern Bluebirds. She is also a member of her local Audubon Society, the Bartramian Audubon Society and is a member of the Buhl Park Wildlife Committee at Buhl Park, a 260-acre park in Hermitage, Pennsylvania (Mercer County).

Kim's love of birds started as a very young girl sitting on her grandmother's porch watching all of the colorful birds in her large pine tree. Kim has been watching birds for all of her life, but even more so for the past 27 years. Kim is an international birder and has birded in Mexico nine times, and has also observed birds in the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, the Virgin Islands, and in many other states in the U. S.

In 2017, Kim applied for and received a \$500 Grant from the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania to start a 35-box Bluebird Trail at Buhl Park. She had mostly monitored this by herself with help from a few volunteers for the past 5 years. In 2022, she presented multiple training seminars to interested individuals on bluebird box monitoring and recruited a good number of volunteers to share the monitoring activities. She has also sponsored many people in her community to become active members of BSP and has inspired many people in Mercer County to join BSP.

At home, she has a 10-box Bluebird Trail on her property which she has monitored for more than 19 years. She established and continues to maintain a great habitat for songbirds and wildlife which was designated as a Certified Bird Habitat by Audubon At Home/Audubon PA.

Kim shares her passion with birding with others and has led Bird Walks at Munnell Run Farm in Mercer, PA and has led, and continues to lead Bird Walks at Buhl Park where she helps participants to identify bird species and teaches people of all ages about the specific features of each species.

Among her degrees is one in Wildlife & Forestry Conservation. Since 2018, Kim has managed specific Christmas Bird Count routes in Grove City (Mercer County) & Pleasantville (Forest County), PA. In 2020, Kim created her own Winter Raptor Survey route in Forest County for the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology. Since February of 2013, she has industriously participated in the citizen science project, eBird and has achieved ranks to #1 in her home county of Mercer County and also #1 in Forest County, where she spends a lot of time at her mountain cabin.

For her extensive knowledge of bluebirds and her dedication of sharing it with others to inspire them to become actively involved in bluebird propagation and conservation, Kim Springer is a worthy recipient of the BSP Bluebirder of the Year award.

Submitted by Joan Watroba



*Kim Springer*





## Blue Feather Awards

### Cindy Vasiliu

Soon after she became a member of BSP in July of 2020, Cindy expressed an interest in becoming actively involved in bluebirding. She was somewhat familiar with the nesting and habitat needs of bluebirds through her brother, who lives in Virginia and tends to bluebird boxes in his area. As the BSP County Coordinator for Cumberland County, I was happy to learn that Cindy was eager to learn all about how to monitor bluebird boxes, as there is a great need for volunteers to monitor existing bluebird trails as well as new trails that are being set up in Cumberland County.

We arranged to meet every week during the nesting season, and together we monitored two local bluebird trails. She demonstrated that she was very enthusiastic and committed to learning how to monitor bluebird nestboxes. After the season ended, I asked her which of the two trails she would like to monitor on her own, and when she said that she would like to monitor both of them, I was thrilled.

When an Eagle Scout candidate, Nick Smeal contacted BSP with an interest in providing new nestboxes for one trail and to set up a new bluebird trail at Grantham Park, she was actively involved with that project and also expressed an interest in monitoring this new trail as well. Cindy continues to check all three bluebird trails and she submits the Annual Nesting Reports to BSP in a timely manner.

Recently Cindy contacted me to say that she was talking with a couple at her church who expressed an interest in learning how to monitor bluebird boxes.

I recently met with Cindy and the prospective new monitor at another local trail. We walked the trail and I shared information about monitoring activities.

Cindy has offered to mentor the new volunteers during the nesting season 2023 until they gain the experience to monitor it independently.

For all that she does to promote successful bluebird nesting and for sharing her joy of bluebirds with others to inspire them to become actively involved, **Cindy Vasiliu** is a worthy recipient of the **BSP Blue Feather Award**.

Submitted by Joan Watroba

*To Joan from Cindy:*

*Wow! I am honored to win the BSP bluebird award! Being a bluebird trail monitor has been a fulfilling volunteer effort and I love the bluebirds and being in nature. Thanks so much for nominating me.*



*Cindy Vasiliu*



**BSP** hosts a colorful and informative Facebook Page, and we encourage you to check it out and to submit items to post on it:



[www.facebook.com/bluebirdsocietypa](https://www.facebook.com/bluebirdsocietypa)

## *Blue Feather Awards con't.*

### **Ray Morris**

**Ray Morris** has been a critical part of the effort to relaunch the North Park Bluebird Monitoring Program in Allegheny County, PA which was restarted in 2019 by Ken Knapp. In the past three years, he, Ken, and other volunteers built and deployed almost 200 new bluebird boxes, while rehabbing countless more. Ray has attended almost every one of these building sessions and has been instrumental in us arriving at the box design that we currently use. Ray has also attended many of the winter sessions, where we installed boxes into new areas, often in difficult winter weather conditions.

Our first full year when we intended to restart weekly monitoring happened to be 2020, and we all know too well what happened then—the onset of COVID. As all group and indoor activities were on hold that March, we elected to still move forward again with relaunching the Bluebird Program. But to do so, we had to meet with all of the monitor volunteers one-on-one and outside to orient them to what a bluebird monitor does and to show them their new trails. Ray attended all of these many sessions.

Ray has also been the driving force in developing our outreach efforts to deploy boxes outside of the park boundaries. The first outreach trail was in the development that Ray and his wife Ginger live in called Alderwood. Ray worked with the Homeowner's Association to gain permission to install bluebird boxes. We then put up 8 boxes in Alderwood in the dead of winter. Ray then scheduled a bluebird education session in the pavilion in their common space, where we recruited six volunteers to monitor the new boxes.

Ray continued his outreach efforts the following year when he obtained permission to install 10 additional boxes in Pine Park, a nearby municipal park. This proved to be no easy task, as he was required to attend multiple Park and Recreation Committee and on-site meetings to gain their approval. Ray also gained approval that same year to install boxes in another adjacent municipality—Bradford Woods. Ray then attended the sessions to install all of these boxes and arranged a public informational meeting on bluebirds for the Bradford Woods community. We currently have 6 different outreach trails that total over 50 boxes. And if that isn't enough, Ray and Ginger are also bluebird monitors themselves monitoring boxes on 3 separate trails. They are faithful in checking their boxes weekly and keep meticulous monitoring records.

#### ***The North Park Bluebird Program has grown dramatically the past 3 years:***

Year	# Nest Boxes	# Bluebird Fledged	# Volunteers	*Total # of Songbirds Fledged
2020	288	106	15	251
2021	336	358	45	794
2022	361	384	77	942

\*In addition to fledging bluebirds, the North Park Bluebird Program successfully fledged other native cavity nesting species, including Tree Swallows, House Wrens, Black-Capped Chickadees, and other native songbirds.

None of this would have been possible without Ray's involvement. I view Ray as my partner in developing and managing the North Park Bluebird Program and infinitely worthy of recognition for his efforts on behalf of our beloved Blues.



*Ken Knapp and Ray Morris (right)*

Submitted by Ken Knapp

## Blue Feather Awards con't.

### Winnie Illig

Winnie Illig of Cambria County is a dedicated member of the Prince Gallitzin State Park Bluebirders.

She has worked diligently to educate trail monitors and volunteers for many years. She also serves as the BSP County Coordinator for Cambria County. Winnie is an outstanding leader, and she is most definitely eligible and worthy of the **BSP Blue Feather Award**.

Submitted by Judy Letso and Rich Shovestull

*To Dean from Winnie:*

*I have received the plaque in the mail. I would like to thank you and the committee that chose me for this award. I never expected to get recognition for something that I truly enjoy.*

*The numbers for the Cambria County Bluebirds fledged is low, even though I try to get people to monitor boxes and send in reports. Many people enjoy seeing bluebirds, but don't want to take the time to monitor them. I am very pleased to say that we had 269 bluebirds fledge from Prince Gallitzin State Park in 2022. Of the 58 State Parks that monitor boxes we came in second in the state. Which is an accomplishment! Again, thank you for my award.*

Winnie Illig



Winnie Illig

## Upcoming Events - Save the Dates:

**\*Check out the BSP Facebook Page for more bluebird events**

### **BSP Board/Membership Meetings:**

Thursday Evenings at 6:00 p.m. on the following dates:

- July 27, 2023 • October 26, 2023

Meeting Location: Giant Supermarket, 3301 Trindle Rd., Community Room, Camp Hill, PA

\* Meetings are also offered online via Zoom, but please contact Phil Durgin, at 717-732-5325 or email: pdurgin@comcast.net prior to the event to confirm the meeting mode and to receive an invitation to join the meeting.

### **July 29, 2023 (Saturday)**

#### **Ned Smith Festival for Nature and Art**

MYO Park, Millersburg, PA [www.nedsmithcenter.org](http://www.nedsmithcenter.org)

**FREE** event which celebrates nature and the arts; the perfect way to celebrate summer! Activities include the make-it-yourself bluebird boxes, live-animal demonstrations, nature programs and will offer delicious food items from local food trucks. BSP volunteers will host an educational display and assist with the nestbox building activity from 10 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**-Please contact Nancy Putt [bluebirds@pa.net](mailto:bluebirds@pa.net) or 717-432-2647.

### **24th Annual BSP Conference - April 19-20, 2024**

**Antiochian Village Conference Center (724) 238-3677**

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

**Route 711 North , 140 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA 15923**

BSP is happy to host the 24th Annual conference in Western PA, Westmoreland County. The meeting space, food, and lodging are all available at this beautiful venue. Hope to see you there!

More information will be available in future newsletters, on the BSP website: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) and on the BSP Facebook Page closer to the event.

Wilma Light, 2024 BSP Conference Committee Chair  
724-331-1800 [lightgarden515@gmail.com](mailto:lightgarden515@gmail.com)



## *BSP Events: Check out the BSP Facebook Page for more events and updates*

Our BSP County Coordinator in Schuylkill County, Rich Rieger, has been giving programs on Eastern Bluebirds and their nesting needs, plus offering nestbox building workshops to several



**Bluebird Program by Rich Rieger at Blue Mountain High School in Schuylkill County, PA)**

high schools in his county. This event was held on February 21 at 6:30 p.m. and was sponsored by The Green Club and was a great success! BSP provided 23 nestbox kits at cost to the Green Club which will be used

in fundraising to benefit the Green Club's worthy outreach programs.

Excerpts from letter to the Green Club:

*We wish the Green Club well in this undertaking, and we also thank them for helping our native American bird species who use nestboxes. The common species who nest in man-made boxes are: Eastern Bluebirds, Black-Capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, Tree Swallows, and occasionally Carolina Wrens. NON-native birds like House Sparrows (AKA English Sparrows) should never be permitted to nest, because they destroy eggs and kill other birds inside the nestboxes. Please refer to our website [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) for further information. When nestboxes are installed in open yards and fields, they attract beautiful bluebirds and provide us with inspirational sights. Nestboxes should never be attached to tree trunks or fence posts, as local mammals climb up and eat eggs/nestlings. Finally, all nestboxes should be monitored (checked) every 7 to 14 days. Monitoring will NOT hurt or drive away nesting birds.*

Marilyn Michalski, BSP Board Member and State County Coordinator

There was an excellent turnout this past Saturday (**April 8**) at Hope Hill Lavender Farm in Schuylkill County for "Ask Me About Bluebirds" presented by Rich Rieger, BSP Schuylkill County Coordinator. Attendees got to see a nest under construction!

Wendy and Troy, owners of Hope Hill love their Bluebirds and do a lot to support BSP - please stop in and visit.



**Bluebird Program by Rich Rieger Hope Hill Lavender Farm**

Thanks Rich, Hope Hill Lavender Farm, and everyone that attended.

Kim Springer, Facebook Administrator

4/11/23

Dear All,

Bob Goodhart and several members of the Willow Valley North Woodshop crew made easy work of 504 board feet of white pine from Lezzer Lumber on Monday & Tuesday mornings (**April 10 & 11**).

We now have another 100 kits ready for box building events or for future BSP programs. This is such a fun event at WV North Woodshop. Bob has 55 kits already pre-sold at CNU's 24th Annual Gardening Symposium on April 22. I think we are getting \$25.00 per box. I had 35 boxes in inventory. He thinks we will sell 15 or 20 more at the event for a total of 75. See photo - top pg. 19.

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## BSP Events con't.



*Nestbox building activity at Willow Valley North Woodshop*

From: Bob Goodhart

Subject: Thank you for a wonderful presentation yesterday-**April 22, 2023**

Dear Dean and Shirley,

I did not want to wait to thank you for your wonderful presentation at CNU yesterday. You held the audience in rapt attention. The comments from them were

outstanding. I am sure many came up to you to let you know. To put it mildly, you were a hit. The sale of your books is a clear indication of the impact your talk had. That we sold 78 of the 80

nesting boxes we took with us goes far beyond what I had anticipated. Since we severely depleted your stock, should I set up another nesting box building session with the North Woodshop folks? We have our quarterly membership meeting on Tuesday, I could bring it up to set a date if you want us to make more boxes.

Sally's and my only regret is that we were not able to spend more time with you. You are good friends, and we enjoy being with you. I hope your trip back to Lancaster went well with much less traffic. We thank both of you for sharing your time with us and

supporting the CNU Gardening Symposium.

Take care and God bless,

Bob and Sally Goodhart

*Note: The 24th Annual Gardening Symposium was held at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, VA. The event took place in the David Student Union on Campus in their large second floor auditorium.*

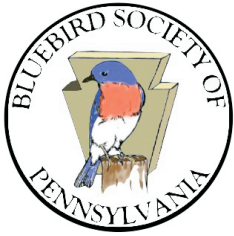
On Saturday, **April 29th**, BSP hosted a booth at the annual **Wetlands Festival** at Wildwood Park in Harrisburg, PA. This free event brought many families to the park, and many stopped by to learn about how to attract bluebirds. The songbird nest/egg display was a big hit, especially with the children. One common question was how to keep House Sparrows out of the nestboxes. We shared both active ways ( trapping ) and also passive ways ( installing monofilament line on the front of the boxes and/or adding a Sparrow Spooker) Several people purchased nest boxes and joined BSP during the event. Thanks to BSP volunteers: Nancy Putt, Event Chair, Bill Strauss, Charlotte Knudsen, Joan Watroba, and David Price.



*Bluebird Program by Dean Rust at 24th Gardening Symposium*



*photo by Mike Dickie*



PO Box 12  
Exton, PA 19341

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BSP RENEWAL DATES/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 or your email address, please send changes to: BSP • P.O. Box 12 • Exton, PA 19341 or email: [nancyfrain@comcast.net](mailto:nancyfrain@comcast.net)

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## Nominate your favorite Bluebirder for a BSP Award

Each year at the annual conference, the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania is proud to recognize those persons who have made a significant contribution related to bluebird conservation, propagation, or educational outreach by presenting them with a BSP award. There are three award categories:

### **Bluebirder of the Year, Blue Feather Award, Letter of Commendation**

We really need your assistance to identify the person(s) who you would like to nominate for one of these awards. To nominate someone who you feel has made a significant contribution to bluebird conservation or has inspired you or others to get involved in bluebirding, please complete the BSP Award Nomination Form posted on the BSP website [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) or send in the following information:

1. Name of person to be nominated
2. Contact information for you and them- addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses
3. A write-up of their activities related to bluebird conservation which would make them a good candidate for the award.

Please send this information by **December 31, 2023** to: Bluebird Society of PA, P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 Attn: BSP Awards Chairperson



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