



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

Considerations for Nest Box Site Selection



Our president, Dean Rust checks one of his nest boxes at the Lancaster Country Club

Bluebirds love open areas – parks, golf courses, schools, churches, large lawns, orchards, “right-of-ways” along interstates, country roads, water retention basins (both residential and commercial), cemeteries, small farms, horse farms and pastures all provide excellent habitat to attract our beloved Eastern Bluebirds. Even your own private backyard might just be the perfect

home setting for a pair of Blues. You never know for sure until you try. ***I hope this article gives you information and helps you decide on the perfect spot to install your Bluebird nest box.*** And if you live close to one of the special habitats mentioned in the very first sentence, then your chances of success with Bluebirds is vastly improved. Let’s go!

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A Message from the President continued from page 1

With some fear and trepidation, I take on this President's Message. I would be the first to admit that I am not a guru or wizard in selecting amazingly productive locations for Bluebird nest boxes. I have picked locations that I thought were stellar and they turned out zero nests over a 5 year period. And alternatively, I have utilized what I thought were poor locations, and they turned out to be superb in producing Bluebird nests. What is the common thread running through all successful Bluebird locations? This is the question begging to be answered. An article about site selection will be a great help to novice Bluebirders as well as experienced ones.

"Location, Location, Location" is a pillar of real estate decision making as to where to live or build. I think it should enter the equation for Bluebird site selections as well and must be considered as a prime factor. It is NOT so much the model of nest box you choose but where you place it.

Some basic guidelines:

- 1) Install your box on smooth metal 3/4" conduit about 5' high
- 2) Choose the most open & sunny area of your yard
- 3) Do not install on a tree or wood split-rail fence – these invites predators!
- 4) Bluebirds like to fly to and from their box in all directions (360 degrees)
- 5) Utility lines overhead definitely increase the quality of a site
- 6) Position the box entrance to the south-east
- 7) Choose a location away from encroaching deciduous shrubs and vines
- 8) If your house is on a small lot (1/4 acre), one box is enough
- 9) Add baffle for protection from climbing predators (raccoons & rat snakes)
- 10) If there are NO perching points nearby, add a green garden stake 12' away
- 11) Monitor your box weekly and keep it absolutely vertical
- 12) Bluebirds primarily feed on the ground and must have access to insects they can see from a perch or by hovering
- 13) Space your nest boxes 100 yards apart (300')
- 14) Select open or semi-open grassland habitat with no understorey



One of Dean's nest boxes with a disc predator guard

Eastern Bluebirds are typically found in open habitats with scattered trees and shrubs. Such habitats provide good foraging for bluebirds, which usually capture their insect prey on the ground. The trees and shrubs provide good hunting perches, and tree cavities can be used for nesting during the breeding season and for roosting during the nonbreeding season. Bluebirds can be less discriminating during the nonbreeding season, when the presence of a nearby cavity is not essential. They are sometimes found in more wooded habitats during winter. These areas may provide fruits, nuts, & berries and also provide greater protection from the elements (wind, rain, and deep snow).

A Michigan study revealed that Eastern Bluebirds were found in a variety of habitats during the winter, including pastures, open pine-oak woodlands, residential areas, farmland, cattle ranches, golf courses, orchards, clear-cut areas in forests and reclaimed surface mines. These diverse habitats share one characteristic of great importance to foraging bluebirds: low or sparse ground cover.

Bob Peak, Cadiz, KY, recently emailed his observations of over 30+ years. ***"One of his most important criteria for site-selection is making sure there is a bush, shrub or some kind of foliage 25-50 feet directly in front of the nest box.*** This is so young fledglings have a better chance of landing in a safe spot during their "fledging flight". (Although I have read

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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, habits, 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.

Welcome Spring



photo by Maria Prentice

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If you have an interest in serving as Committee Chair for Nominations/Elections, please contact us.

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reports about fledgling bluebirds being able to fly over 100 feet on that first flight, my observations seem to indicate the majority of them are not able to make it quite that distance). Since the mortality rate for fledgling bluebirds has been estimated to be as high as 50%, I think anything we can do to help the juvenile birds stay off the ground can only ensure a greater chance of survival. As you know, the first 12-24 hours outside the box are critical."

Bob also mentioned a recent article he had read about choosing nesting sites on a suburban college campus that ties into this message. Bob writes, "The article points out some of the factors you and I keep in mind when selecting nest box sites. However, one thing mentioned in this piece that I think is a definite "no-no" would be mounting nest boxes on trees.... even in suburban settings, I think that's a recipe for disaster'.

If you have a Bluebird nest box that has been "unproductive" for more than three years, consider moving it! It will only take about 10 minutes to pull up the pipe or conduit and find a more suitable location for your box. If you are rethinking your backyard, you are going to be limited on how far you can move it. On a Bluebird trail at the local park, golf course or school, move it a hundred yards or more. It is surprising what a simple change of location can do. Two summers ago, I moved our backyard box only 15 feet. The old location had been productive with Bluebirds for 8 years but three oak-leaf viburnum plants, honeysuckle vines, and sunflowers had encroached on the box. Those plants did NOT scare me, but the Bluebirds sensed danger. They just don't like foliage creeping up to their front porch. Something scary might launch from the greenery and predate their nest! After relocating the box, the Bluebirds were happy again and moved right in. Happy tenants – Happy landlords!

An old adage comes to mind: "If you build it, they will come". This saying is very apropos to Bluebirds, and their nest box can bring much happiness when a pair chooses it for their new nesting site. No one says it better than Harry Krueger, a pioneer in Bluebird conservation in Texas. Harry writes, "The personal satisfaction and pleasure derived by participating in monitoring nestboxes is a reward money cannot buy. Whether you have one box or fifty, the joy and excitement of seeing a new nest, then blue eggs, and observing the nestlings, is almost



One of Dean's nest boxes with a stovepipe predator baffle

beyond description. Observing Bluebirds in the nestbox is a celebration of life – one of the many miracles afforded us in this world."

It is my hope that 2022 will be your most exceptional, memorable, and inspiring year ever with our favorite **SAPPHIRE** visitors of spring & summer.

"The bluebird is like a speck of clear blue sky seen near the end of a storm, reminding us of an ethereal region and a heaven which we had forgotten. His soft warble melts in the ear, as the snow is melting in the valleys around. The bluebird comes and with his warble drills the ice and sets free the rivers and ponds and frozen ground."

So wrote Henry David Thoreau in 1859 concerning the spring arrival of Eastern Bluebirds after a long Concord, MA winter.

Dr. Dean C. Rust
President of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania
January 22, 2022

From the Editor *by Joan Watroba*

Non-native House Sparrows

Non-native
female house sparrow



Non-native
male house sparrow



Non-native
full house sparrow nest



House Sparrows certainly give all sparrows an undeserved bad rap. House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) are one of the main threats to cavity-nesting songbirds. They were intentionally introduced to the United States from England and were released in New York City in 1852 to control linden moths. They are aggressive competitors of nesting sites and will kill adult and young songbirds of all species and will take over their nests.

House Sparrows are often referred to as English Sparrows and are not related to our native sparrow species. They are actually in the Weaver Finch category of Old World birds. Native sparrows, including the Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and the Song Sparrow do not nest in cavities and are not a threat to cavity-nesting songbirds.

Because of the serious harm that House Sparrows pose to native birds, they are not protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, so it is legal to remove the nests, eggs, young, and adult birds from the environment.

In the nesting season 2021, 86 out of 129 (67%) of BSP Bluebird Trail Monitors reported that House Sparrows created problems for the native nesting songbirds along their bluebird trails. It is important to make sure that House Sparrows do not nest in your nest boxes. House Sparrows can nest multiple times per season and that accelerates the problem.

Non-native
house sparrow eggs



From the Editor continued from page 6

vs. Native Sparrows

Native
chipping
sparrow



Native
white-
crowned
sparrow



Native
white-
throated
sparrow



Native
song
sparrow



Some of the ways that can be effective to control House Sparrows include:

- Avoid placing nest boxes in urban settings or near barns or sources of food or feeding areas
- Avoid placing nest boxes near bushes or dense vegetation, as that is where House Sparrows often congregate
- Monitor nest boxes frequently -every 2 days -if you observe House Sparrow activity and repeatedly remove their nests
- Avoid feeding the millet, cracked corn and other low-quality seeds which House Sparrows prefer. Black oil Sunflower seeds are a better choice and will attract a large variety of native songbirds.
- Try adding a Sparrow Spooker or Monofilament Line to the nest box to deter House Sparrows from using it. However, once the adult House Sparrow bonds to the nest box, these two methods may not be as effective, so install them early in the nesting season before nesting activity begins.
- Try trapping the adult House Sparrows and removing them from the habitat.
- In-box traps, including the Van Ert Traps work well.
- If these methods do not work, either take down the nest box and relocate it, or add a hole reducer of 1 and 1/8" in diameter, which will allow Black-capped Chickadees to use it. Try to place the nest box away from wooded habitats to avoid attracting House Wrens, which are native birds, but will interfere with your chickadee nestings by removing their eggs, young, and nests.

For more information about deterring House Sparrows and for diagrams of the Sparrow Spooker and the Monofilament Line Installation:

www.thebsp.org (Select Detering House Sparrows)

www.sialis.org (Select- House Sparrow Control)

Joan Watroba, Editor

Chuck Musser is Honored by the Masonic Village Birders Club

Members of Masonic Village Birders' Club and others recognized long-time supporter Chuck "Bluebird Man" Musser recently for his work bringing bluebirds to Masonic Village's campus. Since 1996, he has helped install more than 60 bluebird boxes and coordinated monitors to ensure the boxes are safe and intact. The campus has welcomed more than 1,000 blue-feathered friends, thanks to Chuck and other volunteers! "All the people here should get an award for what they're doing," he said "I'd like to thank all the monitors. Let's get more people and keep it going."

Masonic Village at Elizabethtown is a continuing care retirement community located on more than 1,400 acres of Lancaster County farmland.



ways to deter House Sparrows from using bluebird nesting boxes.

Thanks!
Debra L. Davis, Public
Relations Manager

Masonic Villages,
One Masonic Drive,
Elizabethtown, PA

Editor's Note:

We are so proud of Chuck. He is a longtime member of BSP and has served as BSP Research Chair for many years. He has done so much over the years to promote the successful propagation of bluebirds at numerous bluebird trails. He has taught many people how to monitor nest boxes and has conducted many experiments with the gadgets that he has designed. Main areas of study were effective raccoon predator guards and various

A Rushton Nature Keeper "Graduate" Restores Historic Bluebird Trail to Willistown-October 25, 2021 *Story and Photos by Blake Goll, Education Programs Manager*

Almost ten years ago, a little girl named Siana Christaldi and her brother began religiously attending the Trust's nature programs that were then part of the nascent Junior Birding Club. Siana especially loved the adventures in which she and her family enthusiastically participated: watching the dazzling courtship flights of the American Woodcocks at Rushton Farm in early spring, exploring a local vernal pool for spotted salamanders one rainy night in early April with Education Programs Manager Blake Goll, and even lending an eager hand for local

stream cleanups at the Trust's nature preserves.

Siana's passion for nature flourished over the years as she continued to participate in Rushton Nature Keepers program that was established in 2018 as the Trust's holistic approach to environmental education, encompassing major conservation themes of healthy habitat, birds and wildlife, watersheds, and regenerative farming. In 2019 Siana and her family also dove wholeheartedly into the Trust's Homeowner Bird Box Program—

receiving their own bluebird box to monitor in their yard. A bluebird family quickly took up residence, and Siana was hooked. Naming the dad Blueberry and the mom Muffin, she bravely inspected the nest regularly despite having her hair tousled by the chastising dives of the parents.

It was this personal connection to the bluebird box in her backyard that inspired her to build bluebird boxes for her Girl Scout Silver Award project last winter. Siana (now 14

>> **A Rushton Nature Keeper continues on page 9**

A Rushton Nature Keeper continues from page 8

years old) first met with local bluebird box builder, Ken Leister, better known as The Bluebird Keeper; he has built close to 1,000 boxes in the past ten years for homes, schools, golf courses, local businesses, and nonprofits like Willistown Conservation Trust. And his boxes are crème de la crème if you are a bluebird; they are equipped with thoughtful features that many commercial boxes lack, such as an extra-large roof and ample ventilation to help prevent the chicks from overheating during hot summer days.



Siana with Ken Leister, State County Coordinator for the Bluebird Society of PA

After collecting free scrap wood from a local fencing company, Siana worked with Ken to learn the dimensions and to cut all the parts for ten bluebird boxes. She took these parts back to her building team of two friends and instructed them on how to assemble a “Ken Leister bluebird box.” Siana reflects, “We all had fun learning and building these boxes, and the whole experience felt like a special gift during the Covid-19 quarantine.”



Siana and her team building the bluebird boxes for her silver award project.

In early spring, Siana worked with Blake to install the ten boxes at a private property in Willistown. This was significant because the farm’s current owner is keen on reestablishing the bluebird box trail that her grandfather, Hardie Scott, had lovingly established in the 60’s. In those days, concern was growing over the declining bluebird



Blake Goll and Siana adjusting a bluebird box during monitoring this summer.

populations; threats included non-native competing species like House Sparrows, widespread pesticide use, and habitat loss from development. With the help of compassionate citizens establishing nest box campaigns and well monitored bluebird trails beginning in the 60’s and 70’s, Pennsylvania is once again



Blake Goll mentored Siana in how to monitor the bluebird boxes this summer.

home to healthy populations of these stunning backyard birds.

Siana helped monitor the bluebird trail this summer with Blake and found that the boxes were also being enjoyed by Tree Swallows, native birds that hunt insects on the wing. Since bluebirds hunt insects by diving into the grass from a hunting perch, they are not a direct competitive threat to Tree

>>A Rushton Nature Keeper continues on page 10

A Rushton Nature Keeper continues from page 9

Swallows. Consequently, a swallow will generally allow a nearby bird box to be occupied by bluebirds but not by other swallows. As such, the boxes were cleverly paired at a private farm in Willistown to hopefully allow Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows to live and breed harmoniously.

The new bluebird trail now lies vacant under the crisp autumn sunshine in the wide-open rolling hills, wild meadows, and fields of Willistown. The boxes hold the promise of many more broods of baby birds in the spring to come. When the Tree Swallows return to somersault through the honeysuckle-scented air and the bluebirds' sweet songs bubble forth from the new leaves, Siana's boxes will again come to life. Note: About Willistown Conservation Trust: Found 20 miles west of Philadelphia, Willistown Conservation Trust focuses on 28,000 acres within the watersheds of Ridley, Crum and Darby Creeks of Chester and Delaware Counties. Since 1996, the Trust has permanently conserved over 7,500 acres, including three nature preserves open to the public: Ashbridge Preserve, Kirkwood Preserve, and Rushton



Siana and her brother Daniel monitoring the bluebird trail this summer

Woods Preserve, which is home to Rushton Conservation Center and Rushton Farm. The Trust offers six nationally renowned programs for public engagement and research: the Bird Conservation, Community Farm, Education and Outreach, Land Protection, Stewardship, and Watershed Protection Programs. Learn more at <http://wctrust.org>

Blake Goll serves as Education Programs Manager and plays a big role in the Trust's **Bird Conservation Program**, as well as the outreach

and educational initiatives as the Coordinator for the **Rushton Nature Keepers program**.

Ken Leister serves as the State County Coordinator for BSP and is also a BSP Board Member. He does an amazing job of sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for bluebirds with people of all ages. He also applies his woodworking skills to construct quality nesting boxes for bluebirds and other native songbirds.

photo by Leslie Thompson



Seasonal Newsletters for 2021 Are Now Archived

Now that the year 2021 has passed, we have posted the Spring, Summer, and Fall/Winter issues of the newsletter on the BSP web site: www.thebsp.org Scroll across to **More...** and then select **Past Newsletters** from the side bar on the right

BSP and Bluebirds were featured on TV

Thanks to Joanna Taylor, new BSP Board Member & Co-Chair of the BSP Speaker's Bureau for sharing information about BSP and how people can get involved in bluebird conservation activities. Her presentation appeared on the Good Day PA program on WHTM ABC27 on 2/23/22.

Check out the video: <https://fb.watch/bnteG0xBle/>

Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Financial Report 2021

Submitted by Joyce Stuff, BSP Treasurer

Revenue

Administration	0.00
Store.	336.96
Membership Dues	10,855.20
Donations.	3314.28
Speaker Income	637.69
Fundraising.	0.00
Woodworking.	971.00
Conference.	0.00
Total Revenue.	\$16,115.13

Expenses

Administration	2,572.83
Store.	1,086.75
Membership.	1380.96
Fundraising.	0.00
Woodworking.	2,934.03
Conference	225.88
Education.	2,248.97
Newsletter	4,054.84
County Coordinator	111.00
Research.	90.00
Total Expenses	\$14,705.26

BSP Financial Statement Summary for 2021

Checking Account Balance 12/31/20	\$49,113.82
2021 Revenue	+16,115.13
2021 Expenses	-14,705.26
Checking Account Balance 12/31/21	\$50,523.69
Cash On Hand (store cash box)	+100.00
TOTAL CASH ASSETS 12/31/21	\$50,623.69

BSP Nestbox Results for 2021

Compiled by Marilyn Michalski, BSP Nestbox Report Coordinator

Summary of data:

- 129 reports were submitted
- 33 counties were represented in this report

Bluebird Nesting Activity:

- Number of Nestboxes Reported: 3749
- Number of Nesting Attempts: 2534
- Number of Successful Nestings: 2004
(produced at least one fledgling)
- Number of bluebird eggs laid: 9385
- Number of eggs that hatched: 7660
(number of nestlings)
- Number of bluebird nestlings that successfully fledged in PA (2021): **6992**

In Pennsylvania, BSP bluebirders fledged almost 7,000 new bluebirds in 2021!

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS to those who submitted reports to BSP IN 2021

Other Species Fledged:

- Tree Swallows: 3292
- House Wrens: 1907
- Black-capped Chickadees: 200

Conclusions:

- 1) ABOUT HALF OF ALL PA COUNTIES DID NOT SUBMIT NESTBOX REPORTS FOR 2021
Of 67 counties, only 33 counties are represented by at least one nestbox report.
- 2) 86 MONITORS OUT OF 129 REPORTED THAT HOUSE SPARROWS (HS) WERE A PROBLEM—67%. We must continue to reduce HOSP (HS) numbers & nestings.
- 3) THE NUMBER OF HOUSE WRENS that fledged IS VERY LARGE (1,907), compared to the NUMBER OF Chickadees that fledged, which is very low (only 200). We should make every effort to support Chickadee nesting attempts.
- 4) Weather had an impact on fledge results. The major storm that hit Pennsylvania over Memorial Day weekend in 2021 caused many eggs not to hatch and also resulted in nestling deaths.

>> **BSP Nestbox Results for 2021 continues on page 12**

BSP Nestbox Results for 2021 continues from page 11



Bluebird Pair by Dave Pursel, Lancaster County

- 5) The end date to submit the BSP Annual Nestbox Report Form will be revised to October 31, 2022
- 6) The number of WHITE EGGS remains low (only 94).

Number of Bluebirds fledged per county:

Perry **50**, Lancaster **2134**, Crawford **29**, Chester **1026**, Lebanon **26**, Delaware **726**, Fayette **24**, York **459**, Northampton **18**, Allegheny **427**, Indiana **14**, Cumberland **372**, Adams **12**, Dauphin **350**, Butler **10**, Franklin **242**, Westminster **9**, Center **211**, Lawrence **9**, Montgomery **204**, Sullivan **7**, Fulton **178**, Mercer **5**, Beaver **140**, Bucks **4**, Lycoming **97**, Cameron **4**, Berks **87**, Somerset **4**, Clarion **58**, Blair **3**, and Westmoreland, **53** = **TOTAL 6992 reported fledged!**

Counties with ONE Nest Box Report Each:

ADAMS, BLAIR, BUCKS, BUTLER, CAMERON, CLARION, CRAWFORD, FAYETTE, FULTON, INDIANA, LAWRENCE, LYCOMING, MERCER, NORTHAMPTON, PERRY, PHILADELPHIA, SOMERSET, SULLIVAN= 18 COUNTIES

Counties with ZERO Reports:

If you monitor nest boxes in the following counties, please submit nesting data for 2022 to BSP so that your county can be represented: ARMSTRONG, BEDFORD, BRADFORD, CAMBRIA, CARBON, CLEARFIELD, CLINTON, COLUMBIA, ELK, ERIE, FOREST, GREENE, HUNTINGDON, JUNIATA, LACKAWANNA, LEHIGH, LUZERNE, McKEAN, MIFFLIN, MONROE, MONTOUR, NORTHUMBERLAND, PIKE, POTTER, SCHUYLKILL, SNYDER, SUSQUEHANNA, TIOGA, UNION, VENANGO, WARREN, WASHINGTON, WAYNE, WESTMORELAND, WYOMING = 35 COUNTIES

Thanks to Shirley Halk for excellent work tabulating Nestbox Results in previous years!

Thanks to Nancy Fraim for helping develop a spreadsheet for nestbox data for 2021!

*Please e-mail me with questions or suggestions. If you want a printed copy of the spreadsheet (5 pages on 8.5 x14" paper), please email me. This is the first year a spreadsheet has been used for compiling BSP Nestbox Reports. In my opinion this is the best way to summarize Nestbox Reports.

Marilyn Michalski,

Nestbox Report Coordinator
emeraldmm@verizon.net.

610-933-0497

We encourage you to submit your data for the 2022 nesting year to BSP BY 10/31/2022.

Congratulations to the Winners of the 2021 Nestbox Report Submission Contest:

Nick Kerlin, Centre County

Ralph Dietrick and **Cindi Frysinger,** Lancaster County

Anita Culp, Dauphin County

Winners: Please contact Marilyn Michalski, her contact information is above, regarding your choice of an item from the BSP Merchandise Store.

Educational Bluebird Trail Signs Now Available

Since I have already obtained and placed two beautiful educational signs on two separate bluebird trails, I thought it might be helpful to include a short writeup for this newsletter. As part of our Educational Outreach, new Bluebird Society signs have been added to each trail that I



help to maintain – one has 22 boxes and the other has 10 boxes. I have attached two photos. It is important for our members to know that these Bluebird Society educational signs are available for public trails under the BSP Mini Grant program. By doing this, we can reach a larger audience when we are not personally on site. These signs are made of a sturdy material that can take the weather, or they can be placed inside of existing kiosks with permission if space is available.

Wilma Light
Westmoreland BSP County Coordinator

Editor's Note:

Thanks, Wilma! If anyone is interested in applying for a BSP Grant for this or another project, go to the BSP web site, www.thebsp.org then scroll across to More... and then select BSP Grant Application from the list and download the form.

If you wish to install signs or nest box trails on public property, you must first obtain express permission from the applicable property owner/manager.

Contact:
Phil Durgin, BSP Mini Grant Program Chair
pdurgin@comcast.net
717-732-5325

My Sun-Shaded Central Florida Bird House

by Jon Lange, BSP Member in Orlando, Florida — photos by the author

The summers in central Florida are brutal regarding the constant heat and humidity – at least for me. Like most Floridians, I stay inside in the comfort of air conditioning. For our wildlife it's a different story, including the bluebirds that decide to stay in central Florida for the summers.

I thought I would try to make their lives a little bit more comfortable in

my yard where I have three bluebird nestboxes on my five acres. To accomplish this, I decided to add exterior panels to the outside of a standard nestbox. The sole purpose of the panels would be to protect the majority of the box from direct sunlight which heats up the inside. Five or six years ago, I built one prototype box, which I now call "Old Dependable"

with a top and side sunshades. Since then, lucky me, I've had a family in that box every summer! When I first installed it outside, and prior to a family adopting it as home, on several days over various times of the day, I measured the temperature inside the box in full sun compared to one of my boxes without the shades. Not surprisingly, the interior temperatures

My Sun-Shaded Florida Bird House continues from page 13

were anywhere from three to six degrees cooler than in the un-shaded boxes!

As far as construction is concerned, my version is simply a regular nestbox, but with two or three wooden panels attached to the outside with plastic PVC spacers in between



Starting out as a regular nestbox



The three panels

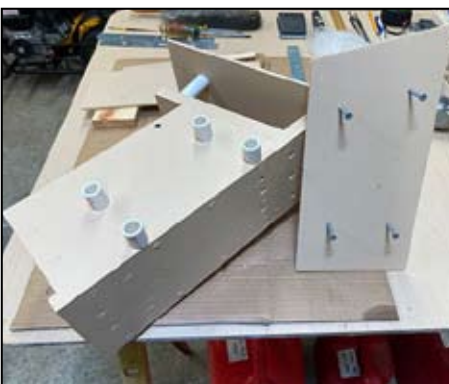
the box and panels to allow for air circulation. Deciding which sides the outer panels would be located was



Test fitting the top

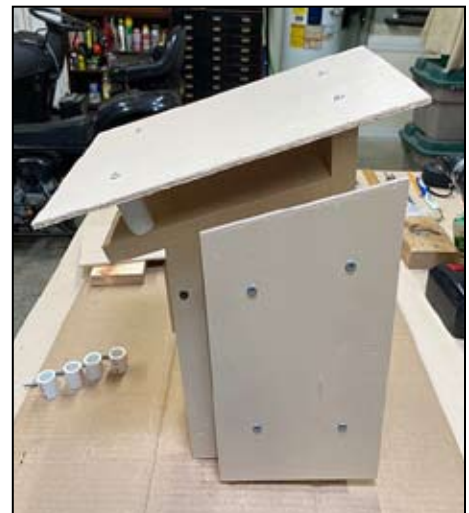


The PVC spacers with their drain slots



Getting ready to assemble a side

quite simple. Since my box will be facing east, I attached the panels to the top, west, and north sides of the box. The top panel needed to be the largest as it will provide most of the protection from the sun. The panel facing west will be just as important because in central Florida the sun is still intense at 6:00 pm. The northern side is optional; Orlando summers have the



Assembled



Top and rear panels before painting

sun setting in the west northwest, and if I were to re-position the face of the box to the northeast then the northern panel becomes effective. In northern areas such as Pennsylvania or Ohio, mounting the optional panel to the south side of the box is obviously preferable.

For the panels themselves, I used quarter-inch plywood. Yes, it's true, not the best choice for outdoor use, but inexpensive. With a coat of primer and

My Sun-Shaded Florida Bird House continues from page 14



Final assembly after painting

a quality latex-based paint, it should be good for two or three years. For extra longevity, another option would be to apply a fiberglass resin or epoxy over the plywood. Either way, using nothing but screws (no nails) to attach the panels allows for easy removal and reinstallation at a later date. For the spacers, I used half-inch Schedule 40 PVC plastic pipe, but any rigid plastic tubing will work.

I am not a carpenter, but rather consider myself one of those, “jack of all trades, master of nothing” kind of person. So, in deciding where and how to drill the holes and mount each panel (and its spacer) to the box for optimum rigidity, I simply went with my, “seat of the pants” method. The shapes of the panels themselves are basically a mirror of the sides of the box itself – the top larger, and the sides the same to slightly smaller.

For the spacers of the north and west panels, I cut the PVC pipe to one-inch lengths for each corner and placed them between the box and panels, attaching them with 1- 5/8-inch deck screws. The screws go directly through the spacers. To attach the top panel, I cut the pipe (spacers) to

1-7/8-inches in length matching the height that the rear of the box extends above the roofline. Incidentally, I cut the top of the backside of the box 15 degrees inward so as to match the slope of the roof. I used 2-1/2-inch round-head screws for the front attachment points, and in the rear where the panel attaches directly to the back of the box, I used 3/4-inch roundhead screws. Whew! If you made it through this paragraph, then you’re hired!

In some of the photos, you’ll notice a small semicircular cutout at the bottom of each spacer. This will allow for drainage if rainwater seeps into them. The cutouts were made simply by holding the pipe to the round edge of a belt sander for a few seconds. Other tools that made this project easier were a miter saw and a table saw. A drill and drill-bits are a must.

One issue that caught me off-guard was when I realized near the end of the project that mounting the box has limited options. Normally I would mount the box on a round pole with two U-clamps screwed to the back of the box, but since the backside panel is only one inch from the box itself there isn’t enough space to do that. I finally decided to go with three tie-straps mated together - one half screwed to the back of the box (not the panel) and the other half to a 2-inch square wooden pole. Another solution would be to mount one half of a long L-bracket to the 2”x 2”, and the other half to the box. The top half of the bracket would need to be trimmed so that it would fit between the box and panel. Either way should bear up against all but gale force winds. And there you have it! This is just one of many different designs and/or styles that one could build to provide some



Jon Lange with his move in ready nestbox

comfort for our bluebird friends. The main point is that sunshades work. Hopefully, Jon’s “shady” version will inspire the creative nature in all of us to start a fun and productive home project.

Editor’s Note: Thank you, Jon, so much for submitting this interesting article along with the excellent and informative photographs to illustrate this nestbox adaptation. Here in PA, we have recently been experiencing prolonged periods of high temperatures in the Summer-this past Summer was the hottest on record - and many of us have discussed ways of reducing the temperatures inside of the nestbox. I am not a carpenter or a wood-worker (although I am a carpenter’s daughter) but understand both the concept and the construction of the sunshades, and I feel that our readers will be eager to try this box design.

For more information about making this sun-shaded Bird House:

Jon Lange

higherpower@mindspring.com

919-971-8880

We are BSP – Deb Smith by Nancy Fraim

Although relatively new to the Bluebird Society of PA, Deb Smith has taken on the massive task of promoting our organization. As the Publicity Chairperson of BSP, Deb contacts local media outlets to make sure that BSP's events are announced and covered with articles and pictures in print.

Thanks to Deb's posts, BSP has more than 1,500 Facebook followers. Followers enjoy the many bluebird photos, learn from informative articles, but more importantly, feel connected to someone who can help them with their Bluebird questions. If Deb does not have the answer, she contacts a BSP expert who does. All of this happens within hours of the request from this new and dedicated Bluebirder.

As our Facebook extraordinaire, Deb has spent many hours learning to utilize the platform's capabilities,



Deb Smith, BSP Facebook Administrator

expanding BSP's online presence, and growing its audience.

Thanks to Deb's dedication to monitoring our Facebook site, updating its content, and announcing our events and Board Meetings, BSP is reaching many potential new members and Bluebird enthusiasts.

Thank You, Deb, for sharing your expertise and commitment to help grow our organization! Reply from Deb: "I wish to sincerely thank and applaud everyone who goes out in the field - in all types of weather - to perform "hands-on" Bluebird conservation services. YOU are the real heroes!"

Editor's Note:

We encourage everyone to check out the Facebook Page for the Bluebird Society of PA It is Awesome!!!!!!

A Joyful Bluebird Nesting Season 2021 by Sheryl Smith, York County

I have two bluebird houses in my yard. In early April of 2021, I noticed the bluebird checking out one of the boxes. In mid-April, I checked the box to find five bluebird eggs. I don't have the nerve to open the boxes for fear of a baby falling out, so I waited until the babies fledged to my nearby feeder and saw that there were three fledglings.

I then cleaned out the bird house after there was no more activity, and then the bluebirds were again building a nest. I didn't open the box, so I don't really know how many eggs were



there, but once again I saw three fledglings at my nearby feeder.

I guess that I was not quick enough to clean out the bird nest this time, because the bluebirds started to use my second bluebird house at the other end of the yard.

Again, I did not open the house to check on the number of eggs. I saw three fledglings at my nearby feeder.

It certainly was a joy to watch these beautiful birds. I have never had three nestings in a summer before this year. I have had only one nesting in previous years, and none last year. (2020)

I always have the mealworms out to attract my bluebirds all year long, keeping them fresh in the feeder. I am hoping for a return of the bluebirds next spring and summer. (2022)



up the nest box if they know that there are young ones in the box. Keep in mind that it is safe and even recommended to open up the nest box to check on the nesting activity every week until the young bluebirds are fully feathered and about 14 days old. After that time, it is best to monitor from afar to watch the parents feed their young through the entrance hole of the box. They will then coax them out of the box by calling to them. If you



I first became involved in bluebirds from an OLLI class at Penn State /York when Dr. Dean Rust was the speaker. One of my bluebird boxes was from that class in 2015. I enjoy the BSP magazine/newsletter on bluebirds and always pick up new ideas for attracting them.

Editor's Note:

Hi Sheryl-I really enjoyed your writeup about your productive bluebird nesting season. Thank you for sharing it with us and for including your beautiful photos. Some bluebird monitors, as yourself, are reluctant to open



are really lucky, you will be able to watch the young exit the nest box. Most bluebirds will fledge between 18-21 days after they were born, so if you monitor them every week, you will be able to predict when they will leave the box and be able to clean it out in preparation for the next nesting cycle, which can start within two weeks after the completion of the prior nesting cycle.

All photos in this story are by Sheryl Smith

Wildlife in Need PA Program

Wildlife in Need PA, (WIN) was founded in 2017 and is an all-volunteer service that captures and transports injured and orphaned wild animals to rehabilitation centers throughout PA. Their team of 60 permittees are the first responders for fawns, raccoons, eagles, rabbits, snakes, skunks, squirrels, hawks, and hundreds of other species.

Over 100 WIN couriers pick up contained animals from the public and ensure prompt delivery to a wildlife rehabilitation center. Last year WIN volunteers responded on behalf of over 2700 animals. There is a great need in PA for volunteers to serve as Capture and Transport permittees and couriers.

To find out more about the roles and responsibilities of WIN volunteers, and to attend training workshops: www.winemergencyresponse.com

If you see an injured or orphaned animal, please follow these important steps:

Note: If the animal is already captured/contained, go to the Pennsylvania Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators website: www.pawr.com to locate your nearest wildlife rehabilitation center. (This link for the PA Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators is also posted on the BSP web site.) They will advise you on transport options. If the animal needs capture/containment, please contact WIN.

Wildlife in Need is not permitted to capture deer, bear, adult otters, fishers, bobcats, or venomous snakes. Locate your regional PA Game Commission at: <http://www.pgc.pa.gov> for mammals listed and to your regional Fish and Boat regional office at fishandboat.com for venomous snakes.

For more information: WIN Emergency Response of PA, Inc. 814-414-4224

Email: win@rescuingwildlife.com

BSP Newsletter Submission Contest/Winner

Congratulations to: **Sheryl Smith** for submitting her story, A Joyful Bluebird Nesting Season 2021 – See pages 16 & 17

BSP members-We really appreciate that you submit your nesting experiences, articles, photos, and field observations so that we can share them with our readers.

Submit by regular mail to: Joan Watroba, BSP Newsletter Editor, 2408 Bumble Bee Hollow Road,

Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 or submit by e-mail to bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com, include the digital files of photos, and note BSP Newsletter Submission Contest in the subject line of your e-mail.

One submission will be randomly drawn at the cutoff dates of each seasonal issue- January 7, May 7 and September 7, and will have a choice of any item offered in the BSP Merchandise Store.

BSP County Coordinator Updates/Contact/Information Changes

If you wish to serve as BSP County Coordinator, or if your CC contact information has changed, please contact Ken Leister: kenapeg@aol.com



Allegheny County: Ed Monroe, 412-486-0766, ewmonroe2@verizon.net

Centre County: Joanna Taylor, 772-559-3216, bluebirdjoanna@gmail.com

The full list of BSP County Coordinators is posted on the BSP website: www.thebsp.org

Adult Bluebird and Juvenile Bluebird by Susan Renkel

Upcoming Events – Mark Your Calendars!



WIN (Wildlife in Need) will be co-hosting two training workshops with Red Creek Wildlife Center:

March 12 & 13
Eastern PA and
March 26 & 27
Western PA

The training agenda and registration information can be found at:

www.wildlifeedu.com

BSP

2022

ANNUAL

CONFERENCE

MARCH

18 & 19

Annual BSP Conference
March 18 & 19, - 22nd
(Friday evening and full day Saturday)

Best Western Lehigh Valley
300 Gateway Drive,
Bethlehem, PA

BSP has reserved a block of rooms at the Best Western/ Lehigh Valley at a group rate until March 6th, so please let them know that you are attending the BSP Conference when you reserve your lodging at 610- 866-5800. The BSP Annual conference offers excellent speakers, demonstrations, vendors, and an opportunity to learn from, and socialize with people who share your love of bluebirds and enjoy the wonders of the natural world. A special mailing regarding the conference, including registration information, speaker bios, and itinerary was sent out to all active BSP members.

Registration Forms and Itinerary are also posted on the BSP web site:

www.thebsp.org

We hope to see you there!!!

BSP Board/Membership Meetings

- April 28, 2022
- July 28, 2022
- October 20, 2022
Thursday Evenings
6:00 p.m.

Location: Giant Supermarket Community Room
Camp Hill PA

*Please contact Phil Durgin, BSP Vice President at 717-732-5325 or email: pdurgin@comcast.net

prior to the event to confirm attendance and to participate in the meeting.

Wetlands Festival
April 23, 2022-(Saturday)
10:00 am – 4:00 pm
(rain or shine)

Wildwood Park,
100 Wildwood Way,
Harrisburg PA
(located off of Industrial Road)

The Wetlands Festival is an annual, free event celebrating the importance of wetlands in the environment. For the estimated 1,200 to 2,000 visitors that enjoy the day, the Wetlands Festival features live animal presentations, hands-on educational children’s activities, live music, various displays from local environmental organizations and much more. Wildwood Park is a 229-acre wetland owned by Dauphin County. BSP will host an educational booth. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Bill Strauss, BSP Dauphin County Coordinator, 717-541-9168 or mbstrauss@verizon.net

Plant Fest & Sale
May 21, 2022- (Saturday)
8:00 am to 1:00 pm

Penn State Extension
Cumberland County
310 Allen Road
Carlisle, PA
717-240-6500

<https://extension.psu.edu/>
BSP will host an educational booth-Stop by for handouts and to say Hello!

Joan Watroba,
BSP Cumberland
County Coordinator

717-766-2102
bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com

Event offers for sale select natives-pollinators-sun-shade herbs-vegetables-trees-shrubs-bulbs for purchase and gardening advice from Penn State Master Gardeners, a gardeners’ yard sale, community organizations, a plant clinic, and ideas for children’s gardening. Find Your Treasures!

Ned Smith Festival for Nature and Art
July 30, 2022 (Saturday)
MYO Park, Millersburg, PA
www.nedsmithcenter.org

BSP will host an educational display and assist with the nestbox building activity.

FREE event which celebrates nature and the arts; the perfect way to celebrate summer! Since 1994, the Center has held its annual festival, which began as the “Ned Smith Tribute Festival.” This event is still going strong, bringing free family-friendly, educational entertainment to thousands of people. Activities include the make-it-yourself bluebird boxes, live-animal demonstrations, and fish-print t-shirts. BSP will present a bluebird program, host an educational booth, and assist in the nest box building activity.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED-
Please contact Phil Durgin at pdurgin@comcast.net or call him at 717-732-5325

Website: WWW.THE BSP.ORG

Return Service Requested



PO Box 12
Exton, PA 19341
Newsletter design by Charles Lucas

**We hope to see you at the
Annual BSP Conference
March 18-19, 2022!**

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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

Bluebird Society of PA Membership Form

Regular/Family (16-64yrs)	Senior/Couples (65+)	Organization/Corporate	Lifetime
1 year -\$15	1 year - \$12	1 year -\$100	\$375
3 years-\$40	3 years -\$30	3 years -\$275	

***When you Renew for 3 years, you can take advantage of our discounted rates shown above!**

*** See BSP website for Junior Membership opportunities.**

Mail to:
Bluebird Society of PA • P.O. Box 12 • Exton, PA 19341
 New Member Renewal Donation

Name _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____ County: _____
Phone No.: _____ (required in case newsletter is undeliverable)
E-mail Address: _____ (required if questions or e-mailed delivery of Newsletter)

Donation (optional): \$_____ Total Amount Enclosed: \$_____

If you are a new member, have you received your new membership packet? o Yes o No

How would you like to receive your newsletter? o Regular mail o E-mail

Please tell us how you learned about us: _____

I would like to help with: County Coordinator Nestbox Monitoring Nestbox Construction Newsletter
 Photography Research Speakers' Bureau Fundraising Farm Show (Jan) BSP Conference (March)

OFFICIAL USE ONLY: Check No. _____ Renewal year: _____