



# BLUEBIRD TRAILS & TALES

**Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania**

An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

**Volume 14, Issue 2**

**Summer 2011**

**Editor: Joan Watroba • sunshinebb@msn.com**

~ [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) ~

## *A Message from the President -*

First, I would like to thank everyone involved with the success of our 13th Annual Conference held on April 1 & 2, 2011 in State College, PA. Special thanks to our Conference Coordinator; Lisa Wheeler and the entire Conference Team in making this year's event a memorable one. To the guest Speakers and Vendors, thank you for sharing your knowledge and talents with us all. The attendees walked away with so much information and knowledge and commented on how much they enjoyed the entire conference. The Friday night Bluebird Roundtable Social, which was conducted by the 2010 Bluebirder of the year, Ken Leister and his team of experienced bluebirders, was a big hit. Please join us next year with another exciting conference at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel on April 13 & 14, 2012.

By the time you read this message, summer will be on its way. While I sit here writing, I can't help but notice all the rain we are experiencing this spring. The poor bluebirds are trying to find insects and keep their nestlings warm. Mother Nature can be cruel at times. If it's not the rain, then it's the cold or heat. Our bluebirds seem to be always struggling for existence. It's bad enough they must struggle to find a nesting site but they must deal with the climate, too. And to fully understand how bluebirds and their nestlings will

respond to climate change, we need to study not only how they themselves respond to climate, but how the plants and insects and other organisms that make up their habitats will respond. The optimal temperature range for a songbird's egg development is 96.8 to 104.9 °F. If egg temperatures are lower, embryonic development slows. Higher temperatures can be lethal for the embryo. Bluebird eggs and nestlings cannot survive temperatures exceeding 107 °F and prolonged excessive heat inside of a nest box can severely impact the health of nestlings due to dehydration and heat stress. Wooden nest boxes are found to be cooler with ¼ inch openings along the top sides near the roof and will create cross ventilation to allow heat to escape easily. Also heat shields and screens can be very effective in controlling temperatures inside the nest box. A second roof over the primary roof using styrofoam works well to reduce the heat inside a nest box.

We Bluebirders do all that we can to help these birds to survive. As the climate keeps changing and the heat index keeps rising, we must find ways to control the excessive buildup of heat inside of nest boxes. Let's be good landlords and monitor our nest boxes weekly this summer and even more often during extreme temperature changes.

In spite of all of the challenges, the bluebird population is rebounding thanks to the efforts of all of you who are involved in this important conservation activity.

Happy Bluebirding and Enjoy the Summer!

**Harry Schmeider**, BSP President



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# *From the Editor -*

April 2011- Ahh-SPRING! Even though it was not such a harsh or snowy winter, it seems like it has been a winter with long legs. And then the rain came-almost 7 inches of rain so far this spring in south central Pennsylvania. But as the weather gets warmer and the migratory birds return, it is even more of a special, welcome spring. As the tree swallows, house wrens, catbirds, Eastern towhees, hummingbirds, and wood thrushes return, so does the more consistent weather which is prompting the bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting songbirds to occupy the nest boxes. Wish all of you a successful nesting season!

**Joan Watroba**

*Editor*



## **PA Game Commission's Web Cam**

For the second year in a row, the PGC is featuring a live video stream of real time activity of nesting bluebirds from the bluebird box at its headquarters in Susquehanna Township in Harrisburg, PA. An infrared camera installed inside of the nest box allows visitors to view the activity both day and night. This allows viewers to observe the wonder of the full nesting cycle, from selecting the nest box, nest building, egg laying, incubation, brooding the young, feeding the young, and finally, fledging.

Check it out at PGA's web site:

**[www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us)**

*Click on the photo of the bluebird to view the live feed.*



## **BSP OFFICERS:**

### **Harry Schmeider-President**

724.285.1209

[harryschmeider@gmail.com](mailto:harryschmeider@gmail.com)

### **Barb Cox-Vice President**

717.938.8611

[dbnchess2@aol.com](mailto:dbnchess2@aol.com)

### **Nancy Putt-Secretary**

717.432.2647

[bluebirds@pa.net](mailto:bluebirds@pa.net)

### **Joyce Stuff-Treasurer**

717.328.3411

[bspcc@innernet.net](mailto:bspcc@innernet.net)

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## **BSP BOARD MEMBERS:**

### **Lisa Wheeler**

724.222.1311

[law64@hughes.net](mailto:law64@hughes.net)

### **Linda Frye**

570.769.7375

[vfrye@kcnet.org](mailto:vfrye@kcnet.org)

### **Ken Leister**

610.696.5271

[kenapeg@aol.com](mailto:kenapeg@aol.com)

### **Dan Thomas**

717.786.7893

[adthomas10@comcast.net](mailto:adthomas10@comcast.net)

### **Andrea Wyman**

814.734.1633

[awyman@edinboro.edu](mailto:awyman@edinboro.edu)

### **Phil Durgin**

717.732.5325

[pdurgin@comcast.net](mailto:pdurgin@comcast.net)

### **Shirley Halk**

717.865.2650

[zebraswallowtail@juno.com](mailto:zebraswallowtail@juno.com)

## • BSP CONFERENCE •

**Thanks again** to everyone who supported our fundraising efforts in conjunction with the annual BSP Conference held on April 1 & 2, 2011. Your contributions to the Amish Quilt Raffle and the Print Raffle and your donations of the beautiful and varied items to the Silent and Live Auctions provide much-needed funding for educational outreach and nest box building materials.

A special Thank You to our Auctioneer, David Birmingham and his Auction Clerk/Partner, Pat Larthey, who volunteered their time and talents to make our auctions so enjoyable and successful.

Thanks also to the following companies for their donations:

**Grubco, Inc.** - [www.grubco.com](http://www.grubco.com)

**Rainbow Mealworms** - [www.rainbowmealworms.net](http://www.rainbowmealworms.net)

**Giant Foods** - [www.giantfood.com](http://www.giantfood.com)

**Cornell Lab of Ornithology** - [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu)

**Wiscoy for Animals** – [www.wiscoypet.com](http://www.wiscoypet.com)  
State College, PA

**Tait Farm Store** - [www.taitfarmfoods.com](http://www.taitfarmfoods.com)  
Centre Hall, PA

### **Thank You to our Conference Vendors:**

**James Trail** - Wood Carpenter (For the Birds)

**Chuck Musser** BSP Research (Sparrow Solutions)

**Cornell Lab** of Ornithology (Citizen Science Project)

**Linda Frye** - BSP Board Member (Cavity Nest Display)

**PA Game Commission** (Managing wildlife and its habitat  
for current and future generations)

**Bluebird Society of PA Store** - Doris Hoffman  
(Bluebird Clothing, Hats, Books, Mugs, Sparrow Traps,  
Nest Boxes, and many other Gift Items)

Visit our online store at [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org)

### **BSP 2011 Conference –Raffle Winners**

- ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
- To view photos of the 2011 BSP Conference, go to the BSP Web Site: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) and select the link within the BSP Blog.
- ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Happy to announce that the Winners of the Amish Quilt Raffle are:

**1st prize- Quilt              2nd prize- Wall hanging              3rd prize- Pillow**

Clair Zinn - Dover, PA      Cheryl Washburn - Huntingdon, PA      Richard Bennet - Albion, PA

### **Print Raffle Winner**

**Al Delio** - Framed Print-*Country Mist/Eastern Bluebirds* by Stephen Leed  
(Graciously donated by the PA Game Commission)

**BSP Basket/ Door Prize Winner**  
Marilyn Wenger

**BSP wishes to especially Thank** Lisa Wheeler, BSP Conference Chair, and Harry Schmeider, BSP President and Key Conference Planning Assistant, who were instrumental in creating a wonderful conference experience for all attendees.

Some conference feedback:

*I wanted to send this out to thank you and all of the members of the BSP that were involved in putting together the conference and the various speakers. They were all good and very interesting. The two ladies from Shaver's Creek were very interesting, and having the different owls, kestrel and snakes were really the icing on the cake. To have the live exhibits is fantastic. Besides having a great day, it was topped off by Marilyn winning the Bluebird Basket door prize. She really liked the items in it and to find out that we could take them home was great. Thanks again to you and everyone else involved.*

Bill & Marilyn Wenger

Editors's Note: Happy that you and so many others enjoyed the annual BSP conference. For more information about Shaver's Creek Environmental Center's programs and resources, go to: <http://www.outreach.psu.edu/shaverscreek>



# 2011 BLUEBIRDER OF THE YEAR AWARD



*~ Nancy Putt ~*

Nancy Putt of Dillsburg, PA is presently serving as the Secretary of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania and has been actively involved in activities related to bluebird education for many years. She has demonstrated the highest level of service and commitment to promoting the nesting of bluebirds through her trail maintenance and monitoring. She has also served in the following positions within BSP: President, Secretary, BSP Board Member, and is currently BSP Secretary and County Coordinator for York County. She has chaired and volunteered at many BSP events and has presented many programs to educate the public of the need for habitat conservation and trail monitoring of nest boxes for the benefit of native cavity-nesting species. Nancy does not need to be asked to get involved, but she willingly steps up whenever needed. She is a PA Certified Horticulturist and majored in Biology at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania.

She shares her knowledge of these topics to help people to understand the benefits of creating landscapes which support and nourish wildlife by planting native plants which produce fruits and berries. Because of her high level of outstanding service, experience and knowledge, our Organization has grown strong and viable today. But more importantly the bluebird population has expanded because of her love and service.

Nancy, on behalf of the entire BSP organization and all the bluebirds across Pennsylvania, we are proud and honored to present you with the 2011 BSP Bluebirder of the Year Award.

Thank you for Your Service  
The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania



## BLUE FEATHER AWARD 2011



*~ Florence Pyle ~*

**Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Member - Fulton County Coordinator**

**April 2, 2011**

Florence Pyle is a longtime member of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania and has served as BSP Fulton County Coordinator for 8 years. Florence and her husband Bob live in Chester County and travel back and forth to the family farm in Fulton County and while there, they monitor a bluebird trail and educate the public about bluebird conservation.

The Fulton Fall Folk Festival is a large annual county event involving many small communities in Fulton County. One of these events is the Waterfall Festival where Florence and Bob have set up a bluebird table and inspired many people to become bluebirders and BSP members.

Florence has regularly attended the BSP Conferences, volunteered at the Farm Show, and attended County Coordinator Meetings. In recognition of her dedication of her time and energy to BSP and bluebird conservation efforts, she is receiving a 2011 BSP Blue Feather Award.

Thank you, Florence and Bob for all that you do to help BSP, the bluebirds and other cavity- nesting species.

Submitted by Joyce Stuff  
BSP State County Coordinator



# BLUE FEATHER AWARD 2011



~ *Dale Cook* ~

Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Member - Woodworking Co-Chairman

April 2, 2011

**Dale Cook**, a recently retired electrical worker lives in the Yocomtown, near Etters, PA with his wife. Although Dale is a fairly new member of BSP, he jumped into action head over heels. He willingly agreed to become the Co-Chairman of the BSP Nest Box Building Committee. He was a huge asset in preparing for the box building picnic and during the actual event held on Saturday, August 14, 2010.

Dale was also involved in both of the children's box building activity sessions held at the 2011 Farm Show. He went so far as to personally purchase several small battery- operated screwdrivers so that it would be easier for the children to hold the tool in their hands while assembling their nest box kits into bluebird boxes.

Dale has demonstrated a high level of dedication to the BSP and to the bluebirds. Another example is that he built and erected a total of 99 bluebird boxes along the bluebird trail within Gifford Pinchot State Park. These new boxes replaced the old boxes which were deteriorated or were missing. He added the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania identification on the front of each box with a branding tool to inform people that BSP is a resource of information about bluebirds.

In order to enhance his knowledge of bluebirds, Dale chooses to attend BSP Board Meetings. Whenever he is asked to lend a hand, Dale is always willing to say "yes" for the benefit of the bluebirds.

In addition, Dale won the Hershey Rose Garden's, 1st First Place Honor Award for building the best bird house, which was a replica of a PA Railroad Caboose. He also made and donated two of the beautiful train nest boxes with commemorative Penn State branding to the live and silent auctions during the annual BSP Conference, and they were a great hit!

Dale Cook, on behalf of the entire Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, BSP is honored to present the 2011 BSP Blue Feather Award to you.

Submitted by Bill Strauss

Chairman of the Woodworking Committee



~ *Ron Freed and Bill Moyer* ~



Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Members - Bucks County Coordinators

April 2, 2011

**Ron Freed** and **Bill Moyer** are well known for establishing the Two Churches Bluebird Trail in Bucks County. The two-mile long trail consisting of 30 nest boxes is situated between two churches. In 2009 Kendrick Fowler, under the guidance of Bill and Ron restored the bluebird trail as an Eagle Scout Project. Kendrick was honored at the 2009 BSP/NABS Conference with a Letter of Commendation for the trail restoration and monitor training.

In 2008 Bill and Ron conducted a box building workshop with the Bucks County 4H clubs to replenish 30 nest boxes on a bluebird trail along State Road 611. In 2006 they held a bluebird workshop with the Delaware Valley College science biology department and provided instruction on how to properly install nest boxes in orchards, fields and on campus. They have worked with other clubs and organizations in Bucks County and have helped them to establish and monitor individuals nest boxes and trails.

Ron and Bill, who are members of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania and also serve as BSP County Coordinators for Bucks County are receiving the 2011 Blue Feather Awards in recognition of their outstanding dedication of time and energy by providing numerous informative bluebird programs and workshops to groups of persons of all ages.

Respectfully submitted for recognition by Joyce Stuff, BSP State County Coordinator

# *It's True!*

By Marsha Harris

I have loved the color blue since I was a little girl. So, it was only fitting that a 5th grade report subject of mine was "The Eastern Bluebird". I remember my dad also putting up a nest box.

In recent years, my husband and I have had nest boxes on our property. For many years, we were not successful for one reason or another, but in recent years we have drawn at least one pair of the beautiful colored blues for one or two nestings.

Every winter we would take in the boxes to protect them from the Western Pennsylvania winters, and put them out in late April or May. Yes, I had read that bluebirds scout out a nesting place in March or so, and then return, but I'm thinking "Not in Western PA! We folks who live here barely go out in March!"

For some reason last fall, we did not get the boxes taken in and they remained there all winter. As I was walking out the driveway to the mailbox one bitter cold day in March, I caught a flash of blue out of the corner of my eye. No, can't be. Yes, a bluebird on top of the nest box! And then another flash of a more subdued blue on the electric wire above. His mate!

Now, in the middle of April, they are back and are building in the nest box.

So, lesson learned. Keep the boxes up. It's true!

*Editor's Note:* Marsha is the BSP Coordinator for Jefferson County. Thanks, Marsha for all that you do for the bluebirds.

Bluebirds often roost in nest boxes in extreme weather, which is another reason to keep them up throughout the year.

## *The Importance of Wildlife Rehabbers*

From time to time, BSP County Coordinators receive frantic phone calls from members who report an injured bird or mammal and ask what they can do to help. By law, the only persons who are allowed to treat or rehabilitate injured birds and mammals must be trained and licensed to do so. In these cases, the caller is then referred to the closest licensed rehab center and they can then arrange for the animal to be treated.

Wildlife rehabilitation involves caring for injured, ill and orphaned wild animals with the goal of releasing each into its natural habitat.

The BSP web site, [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) has a link to the licensed Wildlife Rehabilitation Centers in each county. The PA Association of Wildlife Rehabbers is an organization that has the goal to further wildlife rehabilitation and rescuing wildlife in the state of Pennsylvania. On their web site, [www.pawr.com/rehabbers.htm](http://www.pawr.com/rehabbers.htm) there is a Locater Map to help you to identify and contact rehabbers in your area. The Commonwealth of PA also offers training to prepare people to become licensed rehabbers.

We are happy to learn that there is a new wildlife rehab center in Schuylkill County:

Red Creek Wildlife Center, Schuylkill Haven, PA

Contact: 570-739-4393

Web Site: <http://redcreekwildlifecenter.com>



Artist - Susan Renkel

## BLUEBIRD TRAILS WANTED & BLUEBIRD TRAIL MONITORS NEEDED

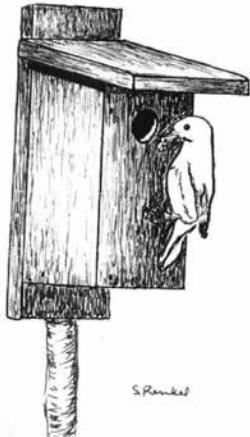
There are many BSP members who would like the opportunity to monitor a bluebird trail in their area, and other bluebirders who already have a trail and would need to get a monitor to take over their monitoring activities on an existing trail. BSP can post this information in the newsletter so that nest boxes on bluebird trails will be able to be monitored on a continuous basis.

If you would like to monitor a bluebird trail or want to find someone to monitor your trails, please submit the following information:

Name, Phone Number, E-mail Address, Number of nest boxes requested to monitor or need to be monitored – requested location - Town, County and State.

\*Indicate whether you are requesting a trail or need a monitor for an existing trail

To submit your request: e-mail to: [sunshinebb@msn.com](mailto:sunshinebb@msn.com) or send to: BSP, P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
Attn: BSP Newsletter Editor



### **Bluebird Trail Monitors Needed**

Approximately **12 Boxes**

Location: Little Buffalo State Park (Perry County)

1579 State Park Road, Newport, PA 17074

Contact: Ben Ranney, Environmental Education Specialist

Phone: 717-567-9255 • E-mail: [branney@state.pa.us](mailto:branney@state.pa.us)

### **Natural Lands Trust**

Contact: Darin Groff, 610-827-0156, e-mail- [dgroff@natlands.org](mailto:dgroff@natlands.org)

Number of boxes-To be determined

Locations -Binky Lee preserve-- Chester Springs

--Sadsbury Woods Preserve --Coatesville

--Willisbrook Preserve-- Malvern

County--Chester • State--PA

### **75 Box Nest Box Trail-Dickinson College Farm Property**

Boiling Springs, PA (seeking 1-3 monitors)

Wonderful variety of habitats

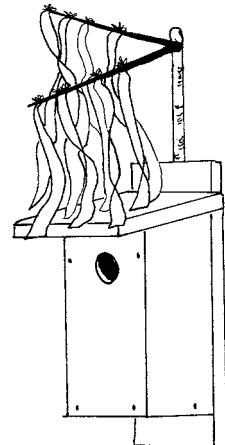
Contact: Gene Wingert , [gwingert@verizon.net](mailto:gwingert@verizon.net) 717-732-3377 or 717-254-8939

## BLUEBIRD TRAILS WANTED & BLUEBIRD TRAIL MONITORS NEEDED

# Use of Predator Guards

By Joan Watroba

Bluebird trail monitors experience both the highs and lows of bluebird activities on their trails during any given nesting season. Checking nest boxes from week to week and seeing the complete nest-building and egg-laying sequence with no loss of eggs or young birds is very satisfying. Checking the nest box after 22 days of hatch date and seeing a flat, used nest, is a good indication that the young have successfully fledged. It is a real bonus if the bluebird pair returns within two weeks and the female bluebird starts building another nest. But if we notice that eggs or young birds are missing during the nesting cycle and see that nesting material has been pulled out through the entrance hole, we can assume that a predator has visited that box.

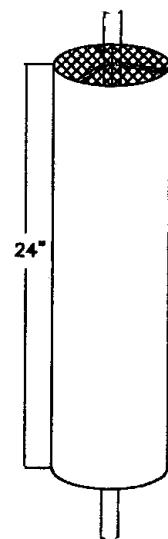


Sparrow Spooker

To experience such losses is very disappointing and upsetting, but there are some methods which may help to reduce the problem with predation. Snakes, cats, and raccoons are some of the major culprits in nest activity disturbance. In some locations, bears have destroyed nest boxes to obtain the eggs and young songbirds. Bears are often attracted to yard bird feeders, so be aware that feeding the birds outside of the winter months may draw them to your yard. Once bears are accustomed to a food source, they may return and destroy your nest boxes to get to the nest box contents. For smaller animal predators, predator guards can be installed on either the pole or post that the nest box is mounted on and/or can be placed directly on the front of the nest box. Some devices are available commercially, but others can be made using basic materials.

## *Some of the most common predator guards include:*

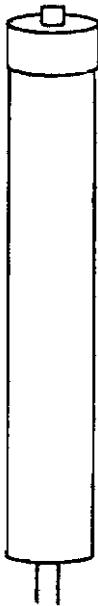
- **Stovepipe or PVC pipe**, which makes it more difficult for the climbing animals to reach the nest box. If a wooden post is used to mount a nest box (which is not recommended) the addition of metal flashing around it may make it harder for animals to climb up. **Important: If using PVC or Stovepipe on the mounting poles, be sure to install a cap or netting on the top of the open space to prevent small predators from climbing up from the inside or to keep curious songbirds from entering the tube and becoming captured and not being able to get out.**
- **Install a 3 liter soda bottle with the bottom cut out directly under the nest box with a hose clamp around the opening of the bottle and the pole** –This can prevent small climbing animals such as mice and chipmunks from reaching the nest box.



Stovepipe  
Pole Guard

*(Note: If you ever find an old mouse nest in a nest box, use caution and remove it only after spraying it down with a solution of 10% bleach/water solution and letting it get saturated. Then use disposable gloves and keep the contents away from your nose and face. Inhaling rodent nest particles can be dangerous as those materials may contain the Hantavirus, a rare but deadly virus to humans.)*

- **Install a Noel Guard**-One of the most effective additions to the front of the nest box is a **Noel guard** constructed with hardware cloth. This device can be very effective because it increases the distance that predators such as cats or raccoons would need to reach in order to access the eggs or young inside the nest box.



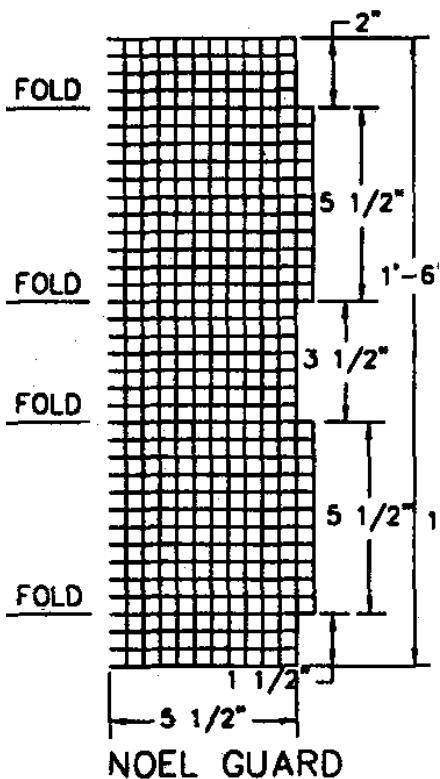
PVC Guard  
with Cap

I have observed that the bluebirds seem to like this device and seem to use it like a screened-in porch during the summer months.

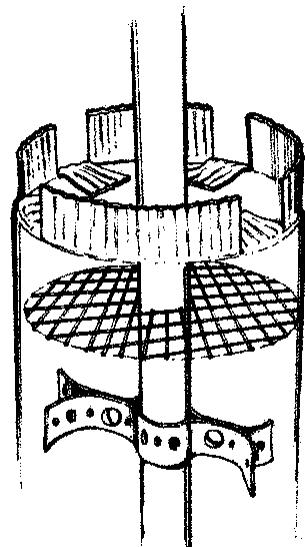
- Adding a **round, metal disc** in the middle of the mounting pole may block snakes from having easy access to the contents of the box. **Keep the grass around the nest box mowed or weed wacked, as snakes seem to prefer high grass to hide from their predators.**
- **Carpet Tack Strips**-I have even added carpet tack strips around the circumference of the mounting pole or PVC pipe to prevent snakes and other animals from climbing up the pole. Because the tacks on these strips are so sharp, it is important to wear leather gloves while installing it with strips of duct tape, and do not install it on nest boxes that can be easily accessed by children.

*Note: A major predator of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting species is the non-native house sparrow. They will not be deterred by the above predator guards, but by repeatedly removing their nests, you may discourage them from trying to use the box again. Some local bluebirders, like Chuck Musser and Phil Durgin report that house sparrows seldom nest in their PVC -style nest boxes.*

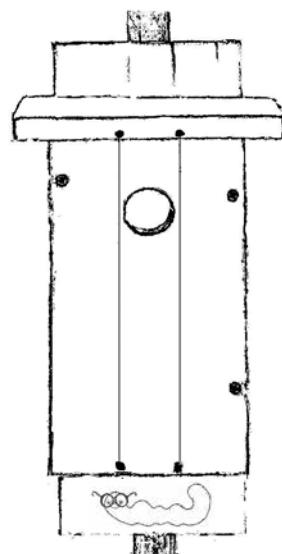
*Others have found that placing monofilament line in specific configurations on the front of the nest boxes and/or installing a sparrow spooker seems to keep them from entering the box. But active methods like trapping them with either a trap placed inside of the box or using a ground trap are the only methods to insure that the house sparrows will not return.*



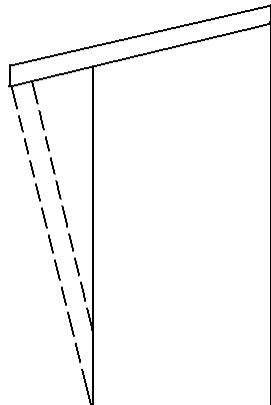
Pattern for Noel Guard using  
Hardware Cloth



Installation of  
Stove Pipe Baffle



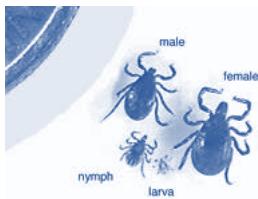
Monofilament Line  
Installation  
Front View



Monofilament Line  
Side View

# Be Careful of Deer Ticks - Carriers of Lyme Disease

By Joan Watroba



It's wonderful to be outdoors in nice weather. Spring and fall are two of my favorite seasons. Hiking in the woods with members of a local hiking club and walking through fields to check the nesting boxes along my bluebird trails offer a wonderful escape from my 9-5 work schedule. However, these seasons are the highest for the incidence of Lyme disease, which is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted by deer ticks. Lyme disease is one of the fastest-growing infectious diseases in the U.S., especially in the Mid-Atlantic States and New England. You can decrease your risk of getting Lyme disease with some simple precautions:

**Wear long pants and shirts with sleeves.** When walking in wooded or grassy areas, wear shoes, long pants tucked into your socks, a long-sleeved shirt, a hat and gloves. Try to wear light-colored clothing which makes it easier to see the ticks, and stay on cleared trails instead of walking through low bushes and long grass.

**Use insect repellents.** Apply an insect repellent with a 10 to 30 percent concentration of DEET to your skin and clothing. Keep in mind that chemical repellents can be toxic, and use only the amount needed for the time you'll be outdoors. Don't use DEET on the hands of young children or on infants younger than age 2 months. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, oil of lemon eucalyptus, a more natural product, offers the same protection as DEET when used in similar concentrations. Don't use this product on children younger than 3 years.

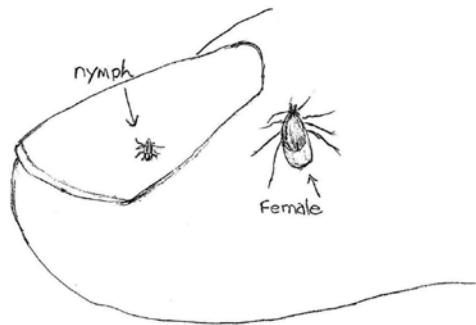
**Do your best to tick-proof your yard.** Clear out brush and leaves where ticks live. Keep woodpiles in sunny areas.

**Check yourself, your children and your pets for ticks.** Be especially vigilant after spending time in wooded or grassy areas. **Deer ticks are often no bigger than the head of a pin**, so you may not discover them unless you search carefully. It's helpful to shower as soon as you come indoors, and promptly launder the clothing items which were worn. Showering and using a washcloth may be enough to remove any unattached ticks. Then check again, especially the scalp, neck, and behind the ears. Ticks often remain on your skin for hours before attaching themselves.

**Don't assume you're immune.** Even if you've had Lyme disease before, you can get it again.

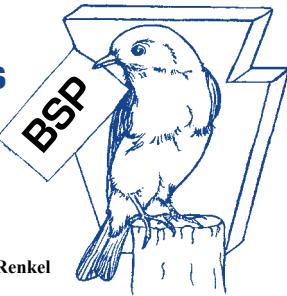
**Remove a tick with tweezers.** Get the tweezers as close to the head of the tick as possible and pull it out very **carefully, steadily and slowly**. Never grab the body of the tick, as the result would be to send the bacteria into the bloodstream. Once you've removed the entire tick, apply antiseptic to the bite area. You may want to place the tick in an airtight container to take it to the doctor for positive identification if you decide to seek treatment.

**Symptoms of Lyme disease:** Many people report feeling extremely fatigued and also experience flu and arthritis symptoms. Others may notice a bullseye-shaped red rash in the area of the bite. Diagnosis is made by a specific blood test, and the condition can be successfully treated with a strict regimen of antibiotics. If left untreated, it can seriously affect your health.



Artist - Susan Renkel

## Letters To The Editor



Artist - Susan Renkel

**Dear Editor:** We were so happy with the bluebirds that moved into our bluebird house that we put up another one. I think that we may have put the second house too close to the first, but a pair of tree swallows moved in. They all seemed to be sharing the space quite well. In addition, the bluebirds share their bird bath with house finches and goldfinches and a lone, female black poll warbler. We're delighted with the variety, but we also want to help the bluebird population. How close together can bluebird houses be mounted? What other birds (besides the dreaded house sparrows) might move into bluebird houses?

Pam - Newport, PA

**Editor's Reply:** I am thrilled that the bluebirds are nesting in your nest box. Tree swallows are also native cavity-nesting songbirds, so it is good that they are occupying your second nest box. Since tree swallows are more aggressive in defending their nest box, they may help to keep house sparrows away from both nest boxes if the boxes are placed close enough. I often erect nest boxes in pairs from 5-20 feet of one another, and find that in most cases the bluebirds and tree swallows do tolerate each other and nest successfully. Also, tree swallows nest once per nesting season, so the second box may be used later in the season by another native species. If you want to have more than one bluebird pair nest in your yard, nest boxes should be set up from 125 to 150 yards apart. However bluebirds might nest closer together if there is a natural barrier, like a swampy area with cattails or a structural barrier, like a building between the two box locations. Some people place one box in the front yard and another in their back yard to provide that separation. Other

native songbirds which may use your nest boxes are: chickadees, titmice, white-breasted nuthatches, house wrens, and occasionally prothonotary warblers. By providing a water source, you are helping the songbirds with a great resource for drinking and for preening their feathers. Enjoy your menagerie of birds!

**Question:** I am seeing that paper wasps are getting into some of my nest boxes and are starting to attach their papery nests to the ceiling of the box. I am afraid that they will scare away the birds and that they will not use the nest box.

### Suggestions from members of the BSP Newsletter Committee:

If the wasps are yellow and black, they are probably the invasive European Paper Wasp. You are correct that birds will avoid using a nest box with active wasp activity. The first step is to remove the wasps with a spatula or putty knife, scrape off the paper wasp nests, and remove the dead wasps and wasp nests from the box.

Then rub the ceiling and top portion of the nest box front and sides with unscented Ivory bar soap, Fels Naptha bar soap, canning wax, or household paraffin. This method applies a slick coating to the inside of the box which makes it harder for the wasp to attach its nest and they may stop trying. This coating may have to be reapplied during a future nest box check. Store the wax in a sealed container so that it does not dry out too much. ***Never use pesticides inside of a nest box, as that will be harmful to the nesting birds.***

*Editor's Note: I have found that rubbing the ceiling and upper surfaces of nest boxes with unscented Ivory soap bar has worked well to deter the paper wasps. If you are allergic to bee stings, you should also check with your doctor, who may recommend that you carry an EpiPen with you when you are outdoors.*

**Dear Editor:** 4/17/11-Boy, what an April shower on Saturday! Not so good for the birds. However, we have a box with 5

bluebird eggs. Just put up more boxes so that the bluebirds have more choices. My new boxes that I make are the slot boxes so the bluebirds can escape the intrusion by a house sparrow. Another style is making an extended roof on one side and drilling an escape hole under the roof in the upper corner. This hole also works as a vent hole for ventilation.

Lots of Joy - Mel, Enola

**Editor's Reply:** Hi Mel - You may also want to try putting up some PVC-style nest boxes in areas that have house sparrows, as some monitors are not experiencing any problems with house sparrows nesting in their PVC boxes, but the other native songbirds use them successfully. I currently have chickadees nesting in a PVC box on one of my bluebird trails.

**To the Editor:** My husband Sid Hostetter and I monitor blue bird boxes at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area in Klinefeltersville, Pa. in Lancaster-Lebanon counties. Today while monitoring our boxes, we spotted two bluebirds on a nest box. We discovered that the male bluebird is a Mountain bluebird. He was with an Eastern bluebird female. We had good views of the bird and called Randy Miller, a well-known and respected birder in Lebanon County. He came to meet us and was able to see the bird and get good pictures of it. He verified our identification. The Manager of Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Jim Binder also saw the bird and confirmed the sighting. According to the Sibley Guide, Mountain bluebirds have been known to hybridize with Eastern bluebirds. We will be eagerly monitoring to see what happens. A number of birders have been arriving to see the bird today, 3/29 and most have been successful.

**Editor's Note:** Wow! What a sighting! Thanks, Evelyn! I announced this sighting to the attendees at the BSP Annual Conference and would be eager to receive follow-ups. Mountain bluebirds are unusual to see in this part of the country. This male Mountain bluebird is way out of his normal breeding range.

## Update: BSP State County Coordinator

Joyce Stuff of Franklin County has served as BSP State County Coordinator for many years. In this position, she has inspired many BSP members to volunteer to serve as BSP County Coordinators. In their role, these coordinators educate people in their respective counties about how to provide for the nesting and habitat needs of bluebirds to promote nesting success. Thanks to her efforts, there are now 64 BSP County Coordinators in Pennsylvania.

At the Annual BSP Conference on April 2, Joyce announced her decision to step down from this position, but she will continue to be actively involved with a variety of other BSP activities, including serving as BSP Treasurer, BSP Franklin County Coordinator, and also BSP Board Member.

Ken Leister, who currently serves as BSP County Coordinator for Chester County and BSP Board Member has offered to serve in this position. Ken is a very experienced bluebirder and is actively involved in educational outreach and bluebird trail monitoring.

The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania thanks Joyce for her support and assistance with spreading the joy of bluebird conservation throughout Pennsylvania. During this transition, Ken and Joyce will be working together to insure that the BSP County Coordinator Program will continue to support the efforts of County Coordinators to educate the public about bluebirds.

We are currently seeking a volunteer to serve as County Coordinator in the following counties: **Clarion, Clearfield, Fayette, Forest, Lawrence, Lehigh, Northumberland, Sullivan, and Wayne.**

If you would like to learn more about serving as a BSP County Coordinator, please contact Ken Leister, BSP State County Coordinator:

Ken Leister  
1423 Gary Terrace  
West Chester, PA 19380

(610)696-5271 or by e-mail: kenapeg@aol.com

*Note: Joyce Stuff extends a sincere THANK YOU to all BSP County Coordinators who currently serve or have served as County Coordinators for BSP throughout the years and she expresses her pleasure in working with all of you who continuously and actively promote bluebird education.*

**Welcome - New County Coordinator- Mifflin County - Diane Ruth**

717-994-5669, gardeninggal50@centurylink.net

Ruth volunteered for the position at the annual BSP Conference.



*Don't Forget -  
BSP has a Facebook Page!*

*Google Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania / Facebook*

## BSP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thursday evening, June 16th, 7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

### How To Attract Bluebirds

Lower Allen Community Park Pavilion, Lisburn, PA

Residents: \$14.00

Non-Residents: \$17.00

Includes bluebird program and nest box activity

Register on line at [www.wsrec.org](http://www.wsrec.org) or contact:

West Shore Recreation Assn. 717-920-9515

BSP Volunteer Contact: Joan Watroba

Volunteers needed-please contact me at 717-766-2102 or

e-mail [sunshinebb@msn.com](mailto:sunshinebb@msn.com)

Saturday, July 30th, 9 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

### 2011 Ned Smith Festival

MYO Park, Millersburg, PA

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

This **FREE** annual celebration of nature and the arts features over 50 fun and educational programs on a huge variety of topics, live music, dozens of children's activities, vendors of beautiful nature items and delicious food choices.

**BSP volunteers will present a bluebird program, host an educational booth and will assist children and their parents to assemble nestboxes. VOLUNTEERS are needed. Please contact Phil Durgin at: (717)732-5325 or e-mail: [pdurgin@comcast.net](mailto:pdurgin@comcast.net).**

### Upcoming BSP Board Meeting Dates:

Thursday evenings @ 6:00 p.m.

Giant Foods Community Room , Camp Hill, PA

July 28th and October 27th, 2011

Plan to attend the meeting to learn about upcoming BSP activities and events and to share your ideas about a variety of issues related to bluebird conservation.

If you cannot attend the meeting in person, we can arrange for you to attend via conference call. Contact BSP President: Harry Schmeider [harryschmeider@gmail.com](mailto:harryschmeider@gmail.com) or (724) 285-1209 to make arrangements to join the conference call.



Artist - Susan Renkel

### PA Garden Expo-2011

The PA Garden Expo, held from February 24-27 at the PA Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg, PA was a very successful three-day event for BSP. Our educational displays attracted many people to our booth, and our volunteers were always busy! Thanks to all of our volunteers, **63** new members joined BSP. Total event sales were \$1285.25.

On Friday, Shirley Halk, BSP County Coordinator for Lebanon County, presented a program, "Bluebirds and You", which was a big hit. More than 40 people attended her program, and afterwards almost every one of them stopped by the BSP booth. Many people that we spoke with said that they already had nest boxes and the #1 question was about how to get rid of house sparrows. BSP volunteers shared information about both active control (trapping) and passive control (using monofilament line and installing sparrow spookers). On Saturday evening Dale Cook and Phil Durgin conducted a nestbox building event for the children. That event was also well-attended and enjoyed by the participants.

**Thanks** to the following volunteers: Dale Cook, Doris Hoffman, Debra Carmen, Shirley Halk, Ken Leister, Bill Frantz, Joanne Slavinski, Chuck Musser, Joan Watroba, Lindsay Delp, Phil & Susan Durgin, Dave and Barb Cox, and Randy & Nancy Shriver.

*Nancy Putt-Chairperson/Volunteer  
PA Garden Expo 2011*

# 2010 Nest Box Report

Thanks to everyone who sent in their Annual Nest Box Report results to BSP. This information is very useful in seeing nesting trends, and we are pleased to see that there is an increase in the number of bluebirds fledged from the prior reporting year. We hope that more BSP members and non-members will send in their nest reports. Both the weekly and annual nest box forms are available to print from the BSP web site [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org).

**Make sure that your bluebirds are not left out of the 2011 count!**

## Winners of the Nest Box Report Drawing:

1st Place- Marion Mamula/Allegheny County-Binoculars

2nd Place-Ida Parry/Beaver County-BSP Store Item

3rd Place-Alice Saunders/Huntingdon County-Choice of Book from the BSP Store

Of the reports that were received, here is a summary:

## 2010 Nest Box Report Summary

# Nest Boxes	# BB Eggs	# Bluebirds Fledged
3198	7755 (blue eggs)	6488
	127 (white eggs)	
7882 total # bluebird eggs		

## Other Native Birds Fledged:

Tree Swallows - 3099

Black-Capped Chickadees - 376

Tufted Titmice - 31

House Wrens - 1280

White-Breasted Nuthatch -16

Eastern Phoebe - 11

The main problem reported by monitors was the House Sparrow. Two monitors reported losses related to bears, one monitor reported problems caused by blowflies, and another had boxes affected by vandals.



Artist - Susan Renkel

To view the complete 2010 nesting report by County, see the listing at the BSP web site, [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org).

## 2010 Bureau of State Parks Cavity-Nesting Trails Summary

Also, the volunteers and staff at the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources report that nest boxes within PA state parks fledged an estimated **2300 Eastern bluebirds** and **3,130 other cavity-nesting species** in 2010, which is also an increase over the prior year. Volunteer monitors are always needed at the bluebird trails within the state parks. For more information, contact your nearest state park for trail monitor opportunities: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us>.

# Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania County Coordinators

Ken Leister, State County Coordinator, 610-696-5271, kenapeg@aol.com

## ADAMS

**Jon Weirether**  
717-677-4564  
jweirether@state.pa.us

## ALLEGHENY

**Edward Monroe**  
412-486-0766  
ewmonroe2@verizon.net

## ARMSTRONG

**Cathy Beer**  
724-763-8637  
bbeer@windstream.net

## BEAVER

**Scott Parry**  
412-841-5071

## BEDFORD

**John & Cathy Everhart**  
814-623-8852  
everjoh@centurylink.net

## BERKS

**Terry Gerhart**  
610-775-9474  
gerhartsat@aol.com

## BLAIR

**Kelly Baronner**  
814-696-3945

## BRADFORD

**Donald Bates**  
570-746-3803

## BUCKS

**Ron Freed**  
215-536-7293  
ronfreed@comcast.net

## BILL Moyer

215-536-7032  
wcpmoy@enter.net

## BUTLER

**Darrell Daubenspeck**  
724-735-2363  
daubie@zoominternet.net

## HARRY SCHMEIDER

724-285-1209  
harryschmeider@gmail.com

## CAMBRIA

**Phil Andraychak**  
814-886-7279  
PAGC221G@aol.com

## CAMERON

**Robert Kerner**  
814-486-3484

## CARBON

**Sandy & Don Bonett**  
610-681-8807  
don4nett@ptd.net

## CENTRE

**Deborah Escalet**  
814-238-3552  
d5me16@gmail.com

## CHESTER

**Ken Leister**  
610-696-5271  
kenapeg@aol.com

## CLARION Vacant

## CLEARFIELD Vacant

## CLINTON

**Linda Frye**  
570-769-7375  
vfrye@kcnet.org

## COLUMBIA

**Margret Pickin**  
570-784-2633  
mpickin@ptd.net

## CRAWFORD

**Bill Wenger**  
412-279-8732  
w.wenger@comcast.net

## CUMBERLAND

**Joan Watroba**  
717-766-2102  
sunshinebb@msn.com

## DAUPHIN

**Jan Kappenhagen**  
717-896-2745  
kiaa6@comcast.net

## DELAWARE

**Alice Sevareid**  
610-544-9057  
alicesevareid@hotmail.com

## ELK

**Wayne Bryndel**  
814-772-4604  
wbryndel@windstream.net

## ERIE

**Bernie Connelly**  
814-734-5446  
goldfinch@usachoice.net

## ANDREA WYMAN

814-398-8384  
awyman@edinboro.edu

## FAYETTE Vacant

## FOREST Vacant

## FRANKLIN

**Joyce Stuff**  
717-328-3411  
bspcc@innernet.net

## FULTON

**Florence Pyle**  
610-269-5571  
PYL1026@verizon.net

## GREENE

**Lisa Wheeler**  
724-222-1311  
law64@hughes.net

## HUNTINGDON

**Alice Saunders**  
814-667-4437  
**INDIANA**  
Michael Schmaus  
814-938-0928  
bluebird\_acres@yahoo.com

## JEFFERSON

**Marsha Harris**  
814-265-1231  
mlharris@penn.com

## JUNIATA

**Virginia Banks**  
717-436-6518  
sknabb@embarqmail.com

## LACKAWANNA

**Marcia Yatilla**  
570-451-5077  
ibbmatrix2@yahoo.com

## LANCASTER

**Dan Thomas**  
717-786-7893  
adthomas10@comcast.net

## LAWRENCE Vacant

**LEBANON**  
Shirley Halk  
717-865-2650  
zebraswallowtail@juno.com

## LEHIGH Vacant

**LUZERNE**  
James Trusky  
570-788-0883  
trusky5@ptd.net

## LYCOMING

**Fred Stiner**  
570-323-1313  
fritzst58@hotmail.com

## McKEAN

**John Barwin**  
814-929-5577

## MERCER

**Carol Gravatt**  
724-253-2254  
**ED PALMER**

724-458-5682  
plife@zoominternet.net

## James Weaver

814-332-6187  
sialia@infonline.net

## MIFFLIN

**Diane Ruth**  
717-994-5669  
gardeninggal50@centuylink.net

## MONROE

**Rose Schoch**  
570-992-7500  
rschoch@epix.net

## DERON ERNEY

610-657-4653  
derongolf@pga.com

## MONTGOMERY

**George Romasco**  
610-584-4357  
romageo@verizon.net

## MONTOUR

**Donna Kreischer**  
570-437-3649  
dkteacher@verizon.net

## NORTHAMPTON

**Doris Heil**  
610-262-5085  
heil18067@verizon.net

## NORTHUMBERLAND

Vacant

## PERRY

**Pat Kessler**  
717-589-3076

## PHILADELPHIA

**Irene Owens**  
610-399-1294

## PIKE

**Thomas Deluca**  
570-296-7638  
ladder173@aol.com

## POTTER

**David Hauber**  
814-274-8946  
haubers3@penn.com

## SCHUYLKILL

**Charles Trusky**  
570-773-2737

## SNYDER

**Susan Renkel**  
570-809-2585  
bluewings3@verizon.net

## SOMERSET

**Bill Cuppett**  
814-479-2230  
cuppets@verizon.net

## SULLIVAN Vacant

**SUSQUEHANNA**  
Amber Zygmunt  
570-869-2353  
perennialacres@epix.net

## TIOGA

**Dale Aulhouse**  
570-724-1962  
daulhou@epix.net

## UNION

**Cricket Klinger**  
570-966-9887

## VENANGO

**Carl Hohmann**  
814-676-2782  
hohmannc@comcast.net

## WARREN

**Alan Hillyard**  
814-484-0248  
earthn\_one@yahoo.com

## WASHINGTON

**Lisa Wheeler**  
724-880-5812  
dognurse64@comcast.net

## WAYNE Vacant

**WESTMORELAND**  
Joanne McIlhattan  
724-523-9203  
ejmci@comcast.net

## WYOMING

**Ray Massacesi**  
570-836-0173  
agnesma@frontier.com

## YORK

**Nancy Putt**  
717-432-2647  
bluebirds@pa.net

# *Build a Bond with Birds*

● By Jason Martin, *NestWatch*

Whether in a shrub, a tree, or a nest box, bird nests are all around us. By monitoring a nearby nest you can help scientists study the biology of North America's birds and how it might be changing over time. Every spring and summer, volunteers from across the country visit nests and report their findings to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's NestWatch program. As a NestWatcher, you keep tabs on bird family life, following the progression from incubated eggs, to fuzzy chicks, to gawky youngsters ready to take their first fluttering flight. All the information you gather is submitted online to the NestWatch database.

"NestWatch helps people of all ages and backgrounds connect with nature," says project leader Jason Martin. "The information that our dedicated citizen scientists collect allows us to understand the impact that various threats, such as environmental change and habitat destruction, have on breeding birds. Armed with this knowledge, we can take the necessary steps to help birds survive in this changing world."

Instructions and all the materials you need to participate are available on the NestWatch website at [www.nestwatch.org](http://www.nestwatch.org). You'll also get directions on how to find and monitor nests without disturbing the birds. It's fun, it's easy, and it's free.



*Eastern Bluebird chick hatching.  
Photo by Mary Thomson*

The Cornell Lab's immensely popular NestCams are back too. Cameras broadcast live video over the web from the nests of Barn Owls, bluebirds, wrens, Wood Ducks, and many other species. Our newest camera is focused on a Great Horned Owl family in Houston, Minnesota. Check it out at [www.nestcams.org](http://www.nestcams.org).

And please join us for NestWatch this season—you'll build a bond with birds and with nature in your own backyard.



*Eastern Bluebird nest. Photo by J. Brindo*

*The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Cornell Lab's website at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu>.*

*Editor's Note: BSP was thrilled to have representatives from Cornell attend the recent BSP Conference. They hosted an educational booth and also presented an interesting and enjoyable program and reinforced that we share a similar goal which is to encourage people of all ages to be actively involved with citizen science conservation activities.*

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## BSP is GOING GREEN!



BSP will soon be joining a national trend of organizations which are converting their newsletters from a printed version to an e-mail version, and BSP would like to offer to you the option of receiving your copy of the BSP newsletter, *Bluebird Trails and Tales* by e-mail instead of receiving a printed copy in the mail. This is a **Member's Choice Option**. This new option will provide several benefits, including faster delivery, conservation of natural resources, significant savings on printing and postage costs, and the ability to include colorful photos in each issue.

Thank you so very much for considering this Green option.  
*Please help us to SAVE THE TREES!*

To receive the e-mail version, please **send an e-mail from the e-mail address that you wish to receive your BSP newsletter to: BT&Tnewsletter@thebsp.org**.

In your e-mail, please include **BSP Newsletter Delivery** in the subject line of your e-mail, along with the following:

1. Your name as it appears on the mailing label of your newsletter
2. your current mailing address
3. your phone number
4. retype your e-mail address

Or: Please complete the attached form and return to:

BSP, P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756

\*\*\*\*\*

### Member's Choice Option

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check one to indicate your preference:**

E-Mail Delivery (If your e-mail address changes, please notify us at **BT&Tnewsletter@thebsp.org** to continue to receive your newsletter).

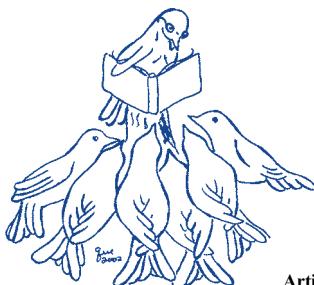
Regular Mail Delivery

## Request for Storage Space for BSP Trailer:

BSP has an enclosed 6'x 8' trailer which is used to transport BSP educational items and supplies to large events. We would like to get it under some cover-either a carport or enclosed space such as a garage or barn so that it can remain in good condition.

If any member could donate covered storage space in the Harrisburg/Mechanicsburg area, please contact: Bill Strauss at 717-756-5914 or e-mail: mbstrauss@verizon.net.

Thank you



Artist - Susan Renkel

## BSP is now updating our Speaker's Bureau List

If you enjoy speaking about bluebirds or if you feel you would like to get started as a speaker to educate others concerning bluebirds, the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania can assist you by providing a CD program with beautiful photos related to bluebird education. To be added to the BSP Speaker's Bureau List, please reply with the following information: County, Your Name, Address, Telephone Number and E-mail Address.

Please e-mail your information to Harry Schmeider at: [harryschmeider@gmail.com](mailto:harryschmeider@gmail.com) or call me at 724-285-1209.



## BSP Newsletter Submission/Wiggly Worm Contest Congratulations to the Contest Winner Marsha Harris

Please select a book from the BSP Store at [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org) and call BSP Store Manager, Doris at (717) 766-3877 regarding your book choice and to arrange delivery.

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

### Contest Rules:

1. Locate the illustration of the **Wiggly Worm** which will appear in the content of the newsletter and write that **page #** on the top of your item for the newsletter.
2. Your entry can be a general question or article about bluebirds or other nature topics, a write-up about something that you observed in your yard or on your trail, an original poem, a trail monitoring tip, or any non-copyrighted material.
3. Write **Attn: Wiggly Worm Contest** on the front of the envelope and send to: BSP, P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756.
4. One submission will be *randomly drawn* at the cut-off date for each newsletter edition, and the person whose entry was randomly picked will have their choice of any book offered in the BSP store- website: [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org)

### The latest date to submit items is the following:

Spring - January 7 • Summer- May 7 • Fall/Winter- September 7

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

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**BSP Membership Form**  
**P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756**

**2008 - 2011 Membership Rates**

	1 Year	2 Years*	3 Years*
Student (17 and younger)	\$5.00	\$10.00	\$15.00
Senior (65 and older)	\$8.00	\$15.00	\$21.00
Individual	\$10.00	\$19.00	\$27.00
Family	\$15.00	\$29.00	\$42.00
Corporate Memberships	\$100.00		

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

New Member  Renewal

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

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

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

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

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

Additional supporting donations are gratefully accepted and appreciated. Please make your check or money order payable to the "Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania" and return this application to: Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756.

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

**Member Interest Survey:**

**I/We would like to learn about assisting BSP with:**

Create/monitor BSP trail  Telephoning  Membership  Finance  Woodworking  Fundraising  State Monitoring  
 Education  Speakers Bureau  Photography  State Conference  Research  Publication/artwork  Newsletter  
 County Coordinator  Publicity  Web Site/Web Content  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Special Events Help:**

Garden Expo Booth @ Farm Show  Garden Expo Booth @ Hershey Gardens  Ned Smith Day@ Millersburg  
 Annual Farm Show @ Farm Show (January)  Tech Support @ State Convention  Other Special Events: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us how you learned about us: \_\_\_\_\_

**OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

Paid by: Cash  Check  Money Order

**2012 BSP MEMBERSHIP RATE INFORMATION**

\*\*\*Advance notice: Please note that starting on January 1, 2012, there will be uniform rates and renewal period options for both new and renewal memberships. Since the operating costs for the organization have greatly increased since its inception in 1996, there will be a slight increase in the rates for both new and renewing members. Please check the label of your most recent newsletter, as it displays your renewal date.

\*\*\*If you would like to renew under the 2008-2011 membership levels listed above, your current membership will then be extended to the renewal period of your choice.

***Renew for 3 years at the rates listed above to capture the discounted renewal rates in effect until 1/1/2012!***

**2012 BSP Membership Rates:**

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

Website: [WWW.THEBSP.ORG](http://WWW.THEBSP.ORG)

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 15  
Mercersburg, PA



PO Box 756  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756

## Larger Cavity-Nesting Species Need Our Help, Too!

Below is a list of links for instructions for building nesting boxes for other native cavity-nesting species. This resource list for Raptor Box information is provided by Shaver's Creek Environmental Center

### Barn Owl Box:

<http://www.scvas.org/pdf/cbrp/BuildingBarnOwlBoxes.pdf>

### Barred Owl Box:

[http://www.bioweb.uncc.edu/bierregaard/BDOW/nest\\_box\\_plan.htm](http://www.bioweb.uncc.edu/bierregaard/BDOW/nest_box_plan.htm)

### Eastern Screech Owl Box:

<http://gargravarr.cc.utexas.edu/owl/construction.html>

### American Kestrel Box:

<http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/wild/kestrel.pdf>



Artist - Susan Renkel



*BSP is a North American Bluebird Society Affiliate*

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