



BLUEBIRD TRAILS & TALES

Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

Volume 17, Issue 3

Fall/Winter 2014

Editor: Joan Watroba • sunshinebb@msn.com

www.thebsp.org

A Message from the BSP President -



Photo
by
Susan
Renkel

As I sit on our back porch on a halcyon-type day in mid-August, I find myself reflecting on where the summer has gone. Looking down on our Troyer slot-box in our garden, many happy recollections of 3 bluebird nests and clutches of eggs and 10 nestlings with happy parents flood my memory and give me great joy.

Winter of 2014 brought an icy grip to Pennsylvania, and another late spring made nesting bluebirds a welcome sight. Bluebirds have the ability to help us forget the winter hardships and propel us into spring with a smile. Now is the time to think back over the spring and summer and ponder how things went. Please send in your Annual Nest Box Report Form to BSP so that we can compile a collective report of our nesting success. Gather any information you have compiled, whether it be an after-action report, a debrief, a summary, a recollection, a history, or a compilation of stats is important. Take a critical look at successes and failures, note any new techniques that were learned, and ask yourself, "Is bluebirding still a fun hobby?" After compiling this information, an action plan can be designed on ways to make 2015 the best ever. Maybe you will need to add a few new boxes to an existing trail? Perhaps you might want to start a whole new trail on a golf course or park in your area? You may feel like partnering up with a good friend and monitor a trail together. One of my favorite activities in which you may want to engage, is to "rebuild" an old trail that has not had a monitor for several years and bring

the bluebirds back. You may want to build a bluebird box for a neighbor and introduce them to the world of attracting/enjoying bluebirds in their own backyard. Last of all, something you will want to do is keep adding books to your library on bluebirds and continue learning from the experts. (One of my favorites is: Captivating Bluebirds by Stan Tekiela, Adventure Publications, Inc.)

I would encourage each BSP member to have a written goal for the next 12 months. That goal would be to enthusiastically share with friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors about bluebirding, and encourage them to join BSP. Please check out the TOP TEN REASONS for BECOMING A MEMBER OF BSP on our website. I will highlight #8. Members can feel good about supporting the goals of BSP through the payment of their annual dues, so that bluebird trails can be expanded, and they can receive the seasonal newsletter, "Bluebird Trails & Tales", which is very informative and enjoyable to read. Giving a one-year or three-year membership to BSP makes a wonderful gift for people for whom it is difficult to membership to BSP makes a wonderful gift for people for whom it is difficult to buy. It is a gift that keeps on giving.

One of my stated goals as your new BSP president was to double the attendance at our yearly state conference. We have been averaging about 90 attendees for the last few years, and I would like to see 200+ sign up for our March 27-28, 2015 BSP Conference to be held at the Eden Resort, Lancaster, PA. This is a very achievable number if just 20% of our membership attends (or 10% of our membership with a spouse or friend). I would like to request that every BSP County Coordinator attend this event, as I would like to meet you and ask how BSP can assist you in your county. Sixty-two County Coordinators

and their spouses or friends could really push us to a 200+ person conference.

Circle this event on your 2015 calendar and send in your applications just after January 1st. Please be intentional about this goal and together we can make it happen. We have an outstanding program planned for our 17th Annual BSP Conference, and it will be both entertaining and informative. Jack Hubley, Andrew Troyer, Bob Goodhart, Dr. Corinne Litzenberg, and Dick Tuttle are some of our featured speakers. Jack Hubley is a Master Falconer and will have live owls, hawks, and falcons on his arm, and he will be speaking on "Feathered Hunters". Jack hosts WGAL Channel 8 News "Wild Moments" and has "The Falconry Experience" each summer for Hershey Entertainment and Resort. Andrew Troyer is well-known to bluebird and purple martin societies. Andrew has two companies: Troyer's Bird Paradise and Troyer's Rope Co. in Conneautville, PA. He only speaks to a handful of groups each year and Andrew will be a special addition to our conference. Bob Goodhart will speak on "How to Attract Birds and Butterflies" to your garden. Dick Tuttle is from Ohio and is a respected authority on Kestrels. Dr. Litzenberg is an educator and will present on how to involve children with bluebird activities. You don't want to miss this conference. We are anticipating many out-of-state bluebird society enthusiasts from Ohio, NJ, Michigan, Maryland, Virginia, New York, South Carolina, Kentucky, and W. Virginia, as Lancaster County is a "destination place" for tourism. I want to welcome you in advance to Lancaster, PA in March of 2015.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dean C. Rust, BSP President
JULY7DS@aol.com - 717.669.0167

In This Issue:

Message from the President.....	1
Trail Tips - Happy Dust	2
From the Editor.....	3
BSP Officers & Board of Directors.....	3
Habitat Change Signals the Need to Relocate Bluebird Trails	4
BSP is Now Green!	5
Nominate Your Favorite Bluebirder.....	5
Birds & Bees	6-7
BSP Western PA Picnic	8-9
We are BSP	10
Mailbag	11
Implications of the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.....	12-13
Calendar of Events.....	14
BSP Event Reports.....	15
Golf Course Monitors Needed.....	16
Using the Cornell Nest Watch Program...	17
Wiggly Worm Contest.....	18
Membership Form.....	19
Trail Monitors Needed.....	20



Artist - Susan Renkel

TRAIL TIPS - *Happy Dust*

by Marilyn Michalski

As you clean out used nests from your boxes, you might find a layer of dusty particles on the bottom, underneath the grasses/pine needles. This material is usually a good sign – evidence of a healthy group of nestlings who were active inside the box, on their way to becoming fledglings. Developing feathers (often called pin feathers) are housed in a protective keratin sheath. As the growing feathers push through a follicle in the skin, the keratin sheath flakes and crumbles off and is removed during preening. These flakes sift down through the nest onto the floor of the box. The presence of this material is one indicator that your nestlings developed normally, and unless you see signs of predation, they made it safely into the world.

Before nestlings fledge, it is sometimes necessary to check underneath the nest if the presence of Blowflies is suspected. Blowfly larvae can result in death to nestlings, especially if food has been scarce and/or excessive rain has led to low temperatures and evaporative cooling. Blowfly larvae are 3/8ths of an inch long and tan in color. They attach to the nestlings and draw out the blood and bodily fluids and these larvae should be removed. If an infestation is suspected, the nest can be lifted up gently (with a spatula) to see if larvae are on the floor. Removing larvae from the box will help nestlings. The bottom layer of nesting material can also be removed – carefully. If the infestation is severe, bird experts should be contacted.

After nestlings have fledged, the old nest should be cleaned out. When removing used material and debris from a nesting box, be sure to stay “up-wind” – as it’s important to protect human respiratory systems from contaminants. You can also use a face mask during this activity. Nesting debris is so light and fine, it can become airborne quickly. A small brush in your tool apron will enable you to sweep out the box on all sides. During this clean-out, I occasionally find tiny specks of pale blue egg shell at the bottom of the nest. These pieces of egg-shell had been poked out by hatchlings on their way out of the egg, and the particles are so small they can easily be overlooked. If found, you know you had bluebirds in your box. I normally do not find egg-shell bits, but, if the nest was a shallow one, they can make their way through pine needles to the bottom.

But what if no flaky debris is found on the box floor under the nesting material? That’s a sign the nest was constructed – but probably abandoned. Perhaps re-locating that box will bring success the next time.

The goal of monitors is to stay abreast of nesting activity. Regular monitoring will provide information regarding the number and types of “youngsters” that fledged. For every nest box out there, either “On” or “Off” a “Bluebird Trail,” and either checked regularly or not, the appearance of this keratin debris is a welcome sign. To me, these transparent flakes are “happy dust,” and I’m always glad to find it at the bottom of my boxes – a confirmation of success.

From the Editor -



It is early August, and the second nestings of young bluebirds are leaving the boxes. Since they started a bit late this year, I do not think that there will be a third nesting cycle. The tree swallows started early this year and now seem to be done with their nesting activity. A Carolina wren pair has just started nesting in our potted geranium plant in a wicker stand on the front porch. The challenge is to keep the plant alive with careful watering so that the plant can continue to camouflage their nest. Since Carolina wrens may nest 1-3 times per season, this may be their third brood. Not sure if and where they nested before, but they always find unique places to build their domed, mossy nests. They have previously nested in potted plants as well as in our window box.

This year, like every year, there were both good surprises and some disappointing discoveries.

In mid-March, prior to the start of the nesting season, I found a dead female bluebird inside of a nest box on one of my trails. There was evidence that she was using the box for roosting and I guess that the winter was too cold and too long for her to make it to Spring. A good surprise was that the tufted titmouse nested in a nest box in the yard and successfully fledged young. This is the second year in a row that the titmouse nested, but they used a different box this year.

Enjoyed monitoring the two nest boxes behind my office in Harrisburg. There I was able to witness the effectiveness of the monofilament line to deter house sparrows from using the nest boxes. I observed a male house sparrow attempt to enter the box with the line installed. He hovered outside of the box several times and every time, he stopped short of entering the box. He finally gave up and did not try to bond to either of the boxes. One box fledged tree swallows and the other box fledged two separate nestings of bluebirds. Other trails also fledged bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees, tufted titmouse, and house wrens.

Joan Watroba

BSP Editor
sunshinebb@msn.com



Ready to Fledge!

Eastern Bluebirds
and
Black-Capped
Chickadees

Photos by
Marilyn Donak



BSP OFFICERS

President
Dean Rust
July7ds@aol.com

Vice President
Phil Durgin
pdurgin@comcast.net

Secretary
Nancy Putt
bluebirds@pa.net

Treasurer
Joyce Stuff 2013-2015
bspcc@innernet.net

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shirley Halk
zebraswallowtail@juno.com

Ken Leister
kenapeg@aol.com

Dan Thomas
adthomas10@comcast.net

Dale Cook
eagle17319@aol.com

Bill Cuppett
cuppetts@verizon.net

Terry Gerhart
gerhartsat@aol.com

Marilyn L. Michalski
emeraldmm@verizon.net

Habitat Change Signals the Need to Relocate Bluebird Trails

by Joan Watroba

Although bluebirds may nest in natural cavities such as snags and woodpecker holes, these kinds of nesting opportunities are decreasing due to land development and competition from non-native species such as the European starling and House sparrows. Secondary cavity- nesting songbirds, including bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees, titmice, and house wrens cannot excavate their own nesting sites, so the placement of man-made nest boxes in a suitable habitat has been instrumental in promoting their nesting success.

During the nesting season, bluebirds prefer open areas with occasional trees or posts to perch on. Their main feeding pattern is to perch on a tree or an elevated object and then fly to the ground to catch insects. Their eyesight is very keen and they can gather a lot of food to feed themselves and their young. Cemeteries, parks, and golf courses, which offer mowed areas with occasional trees have been very productive in promoting bluebirds to nest. A nearby water source such as a stream or pond is also a very important feature of good nesting habitat.

Throughout the years I have monitored several bluebird trails-some for many years in a row, and most of them are located on public land, private land (only when given express permission to erect and monitor the boxes) or parcels of land managed by educational institutions or organizations. I have found that as the years go by, it is important to observe the habitat changes of these locations and to evaluate how these changes are affecting the nesting activity and success.

For example, one bluebird trail, which was originally set up along a mowed nature path in a natural, relatively open area with a brook running through it, was very productive for several years in propagating a variety of native songbirds including bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees, titmice, and a few house wrens. In recent years, the habitat became less open, as small trees and bushes were allowed to grow tall, and the densely wooded habitat became more suitable for house wrens than bluebirds or tree swallows, which prefer more open areas. Although they are native birds, House wrens can interfere with other songbird nestings by pecking and removing their eggs and even their young. When the organization made the decision to stop mowing the nature trail, this was the most important reason to relocate the nest boxes. A trail located in tall grass with so many trees and bushes makes it a hazard to both the monitor and to the nesting songbirds. High grass and numerous trees and bushes can make it much easier for predators such as snakes, cats, and raccoons to access the nest boxes and remove the eggs, young, and adult birds. This habitat is also a hazard to the trail monitors, as deer ticks are often found in high grass and wooded areas. Lyme disease is a very serious medical condition which left untreated, can cause serious long-term health problems. Boxes located in high grass and fields also attract deer mice, and if they use the nest boxes, their nesting material may cause humans to contract a very dangerous viral disease, Hantavirus.

Since there are so many opportunities to monitor a bluebird trail in a suitable habitat, it is important to know when to relocate an existing trail if it is no longer providing a safe and suitable nesting site or is no longer producing good results. The difficult decision to relocate nest boxes reminds me of the country song, "The Gambler", by Kenny Rogers, which refers to making the correct decision while playing cards, he says "Know when to hold 'em.....when to fold 'em". This sentiment can also relate to the important decision to relocate nesting boxes to more suitable habitat if necessary.

Editor's Note: Golf courses can be very productive habitats for bluebirds to nest, and can be relatively easy to monitor. BSP is actively seeking trail monitors to check boxes on golf courses through the BSP's PA Golf Course Bluebird Trail Initiative. Many golf courses have already requested interest in establishing bluebird trails or in obtaining a monitor to check existing nest boxes. A list of these courses is posted on the BSP web site, www.thebsp.org

For more information on how you can get involved, please contact Dean Rust, BSP President.



BSP is NOW GREEN!

Benefits of receiving the BSP newsletter by e-mail:

- * Quicker Delivery of the publication
- * Reduction of the cost for printing and postage fees to deliver the newsletter
- * Reduce the use of natural resources-trees to make paper and fuel to transport mail to its destination
- * Ability to view photos in color

Please consider going GREEN as your newsletter delivery option!

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: btntnewsletter@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



****If you are already a Green Choice Member, and if you change your e-mail address, please send an e-mail to the above e-mail address and include E-MAIL CHANGE in the subject line-Thanks!



Nominate Your Favorite Bluebirder

*BSP is now accepting award nominations. Award categories are: **Bluebirder of the Year, Blue Feather Awards, and Letters of Commendation.** Please help us to recognize individuals or groups who you feel have greatly contributed to bluebird education and/or have promoted nesting success of bluebirds and other native songbirds. Please include a brief paragraph about your nominee, including their name, county, and their contact information.*

Include your name and contact information and send this to the BSP Award Nomination Chairperson: Shirley Halk, 42 Park Drive, Grantville, PA 17028.

Please submit your nominations for the BSP Awards by January 31, 2015-Thanks!



Birds and Bees

Recently, Honey Bees have been dying from Colony Collapse Disorder, which I have coined, “Insect Alzheimers Disease”. They leave the hive, with a memory wipe-out which includes finding their way back.

I was a Beekeeper for many years, as was my Granddad before me. Bees contribute many millions of dollars to our food chain. Without their pollination, many crops would be worthless. Honey Bees and most Wasps and Ants are social, meaning they work together to build a nest and raise their young.

Much better pollinators are the many species of gentle Solitary Bees, where each individual is responsible for perpetuating its kind. They range in size from the tiny Sweat Bee on your arm, to the big black Carpenter “Bumble” Bee.



The gentle female finds a pollen source and then searches for a nearby Tunnel to lay her eggs. After cleaning it, she backs into the Tunnel and lays one egg, then stores it with pollen. She constructs a partition and repeats the process, until the Tunnel is full and sealed from predators. She does not disturb nesting birds. Most of her time is spent inside the tunnel. Then she flies away.

Many people who erect Bluebird Houses are also Gardeners. You can easily improve pollination and your harvest. All you need is a Drill with a 1/4” Drill Bit, 6” long.



Drill 5” holes in the edges of boards which make up your bird houses or Feeders. An option is to drill holes in the edge of 2 X 6s and hang them under a roof for weather protection. Solitary Bees will use them for years to come.

You can learn more at my web site: <http://www.solitary-beekeeper.com>

Nevin Hawlman
Master Gardener

*Editor's Note: For more information about Solitary Bees, check out Nevin's web site:
<http://www.solitary-beekeeper.com>*

It's Time to send in your Annual Nest Box Report!

Please remember to submit your Annual Nest Box Reports to BSP. A report form was included in the Summer edition of the BSP newsletter, and printable forms are also available on the BSP web site: www.thebsp.org

If you submit your report by 10/31/14, you will be automatically entered into a random prize drawing for items from the BSP Store. Send in your reports to:
Shirley Halk, Annual Nest Box Reporter, 42 Park Drive, Grantville, PA 17028.

Please include your bluebirds in the count!

*Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania's
Western PA Picnic
June 28, 2014 · Moraine State Park
26 People attending*

Purple Martins – Plants – Butterflies – Dragonflies – Bluebirds - Hamburgers – Hotdogs with awesome dishes of food and a Nautical Boat ride on the Lake were shared by picnic attendees. Along with the beautiful weather, we gained 5 new memberships and many new friends. All reported a wonderful time at the BSP Picnic.

BSP door prizes were given away, and nature photographer, Dean Salisbury donated a beautiful bluebird picture on canvas. His wife, Alice also was a great help.

I would like to thank the Picnic Committee Members: Bill Cuppett, BSP Somerset County Coordinator and our Chef for the day, Bob Allnock, BSP Lawrence County Coordinator and Bill Wenger, BSP Crawford County Coordinator for the Purple Martin Nest Box demonstration and Ed Monroe, BSP Allegheny County Coordinator for serving as the Nautical Boat Ticket Coordinator. It was great to have BSP President Dr. Dean and Shirley Rust from Lancaster County attend the event. Special Thanks to Natalie Simon, Moraine State Park Environmental Specialist for her introduction and informational talk about Moraine State Park and Carol Bickel, from the Preservation Fund at the Park for contacting our tour guides for the Butterfly Walk and the Nautical Boat Ride on the Lake. A special thank you for our tour guides. They were interesting and very knowledgeable about plants, insects and the natural features of Moraine State Park. It was nice that Ida and Scott Parry, BSP County Coordinator for Beaver County and Ed Palmer, County Coordinator for Mercer County were also in attendance. Five New BSP Members received a free nest box kit with their membership packets and \$35.00 of donations were received.

I want to thank those of you for attending the picnic and for all of the e-mails sent my way thanking me for an educational and fun day with awesome food.

Thank You.

Sincerely, Harry Schneider , Event Chair

*Additional picnic photos can be viewed
on the BSP web site: www.thebsp.org
Select more...and then scroll to:
BSP Picnic Photos 2014*





Ed Monroe, BSP County Coordinator, Allegheny County (left)
Ed Palmer, BSP County Coordinator, Mercer County (right)



Harry Schneider, Picnic Event Coordinator and wife, Julie



Photos by Dean Salisbury



"We are BSP"

Terry Gerhart

Growing up on a farm in Lancaster County, I became interested in the outdoors at a very young age.

In 1956, when I was about 9 years old, I noticed the bird houses my grandfather had placed around the pastures. He told me they were for bluebirds and took me on his rounds checking the boxes and birds inside. (It amazes me to think that my grandfather was helping bluebirds more than 50 years ago, long before most people were paying much attention to their plight.)

Fast forward to 1993, my wife and I moved to Berks County and opened our own business, Wild Birds Unlimited, catering to "backyard birders." Naturally, this included bird houses and the native species that use them.

My special interest became bluebirds, which brought back many wonderful memories of my grandfather and what he had taught me on the farm. I learned all I could from books and some very knowledgeable people. We placed bluebird boxes on our property and I'm happy to say we fledge about 6 broods per year.

I joined the BSP almost at the beginning at the request of Kathy Clark and have been the Berks County coordinator since then. Through my association with the society I have learned more about bluebirds and how to keep their numbers climbing.

I give presentations about bluebirds at various Berks County organizations and have assisted several Eagle Scouts and the Berks County parks system in establishing bluebird trails.

All of these projects are very rewarding and bring back fond memories of my time on the farm, learning about bluebirds from my grandfather.

Terry Gerhart
Board of Directors
Berks County Coordinator

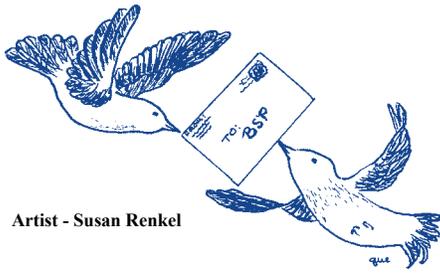
Dear Joan, I just sent my bluebird report in and it reminded me that I wanted to write you before and ask if you or anyone else that has a bluebird trail has found unusual nests in the box as I did this summer in several of the boxes. I never remember having this happen before. In about 4 boxes at least over the summer, there was bluebird nesting material and a nest started, then there was tree swallow nest material over that. One nest had a layer of sparrow nest material between the two other layers. The tree swallows won out with laying eggs and the babies hatched. Anxious to hear opinions from you and any other people who may have had this happen.

Thanks, Pat

Hi Pat-Nice to hear from you. From time to time, I have also found layers of different types of nesting material in nest boxes. If the boxes are monitored regularly-weekly or bi-weekly, it is a bit easier to know what happened. Other bluebirders have also reported this finding. In some cases, a more aggressive species will take over an active nest-one week there is a nest and eggs of one species and the next week the eggs are gone and another species is using the nest box. This often happens with chickadees, who are the least-aggressive of other species- I have had house wrens and also bluebirds take over their nesting sites. In some cases, one species starts to nest and then for some reason abandons the box so that there will be no changes in the nesting activity for a couple of weeks and then another species will build their nest on top of the original nest. In other instances, multiple species will compete for the same nest box, and the winner will be the one which successfully fledges their young.

In other cases, the new species will completely remove the nesting material of the original user and build their nest from scratch. House wrens usually will do so. This past nesting season seemed to produce more of that type of activity-this may be due to the weather and the time frame that the various species started to nest. Unique to me was that the tree swallows seemed to start nesting first, and then the bluebirds started after the tree swallows were done-usually that happens opposite-usually the bluebirds start first and then the tree swallows return and start after the bluebirds or they will nest at the same time.

Several years ago, Chuck Musser, BSP member from Brainbridge, PA -near Elizabethtown, had a bluebird female lay eggs in a nest box, she abandoned that box, and then a chickadee pair took over the box and laid their eggs, and the chickadee pair raised both the bluebirds and their own young. In bluebirding, everything is possible.



Artist - Susan Renkel

■ Willow Valley Bluebird Project

Dean,

Well, it has been a year since we met and you got Willow Valley Retirement Communities involved with bluebirds. With your encouragement, the residents of Willow Valley enthusiastically embraced the project. First, we removed all of the old, deteriorating bluebird houses and replaced them with 10 brand new ones made of western red cedar with skylight roofs to

discourage HOSP's. They were all mounted on steel poles with predator guards, as recommended by the North American Bluebird Society. A year ago, all of the old boxes had been taken over by HOSP's. This year with the skylight roofs, we have had no HOSP's. Two of the boxes had bluebird nests, and we had three nestings of bluebirds. One box had a nest of wrens and 4 boxes had nests of tree swallows. Each of the ten new boxes was sponsored by residents with the sponsor's

name burned into the box. The boxes were made by the Willow Valley Manor North Woodworkers. As the project moved forward, support and enthusiasm grew. The Woodworkers made more that they sold during a Christmas sale. Then, they made more boxes that were sold during a gardening symposium. In total they made and sold 40 bluebird houses. Below are pictured one batch. These did not have the skylight roofs.



--Bob Goodhart, Willow Valley Coordinator--

Editor's Note: HOSP's is the abbreviation of House sparrows. We are thrilled that Bob will be a presenter at our 17th Annual Conference on March 27-28, 2015.

■ Dean Rust reports: **My Favorite Bluebirder:**

I received a BSP membership application, check and letter in the mail today from a dear lady, Harriet Benchoff, who is 95 years old. She lives at Homestead Village, here in Lancaster. I made her a bluebird box last year and mounted it on a pipe so she could have one near her garden plot.

She writes, "Hi, Finally I'm getting this out, with company for a week and gardening, this year was a hard year to get every thing in, so late too, but its in full swing. I almost had a bluebird in my box after the other birds left. I cleaned it out and a pair of bluebirds came and went in the box, but the sparrows would come and sit on top, just follow them every where so I guess they gave up.

Hope you had a lot of bluebirds this summer."

Harriet

My Favorite Bluebirder, Harriet Benchoff at her garden plot at Homestead Village



Implications of the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Joan Watroba

The Federal Migratory Bird Act, which was implemented in 1918, was originally signed between the United States and Great Britain (acting on behalf of Canada). It was an important legislative act which was designed to end the extensive commercial trade in feathers. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, the long, plumed feathers of many bird species were used in the fashion industry, and thousands of birds were killed for their feathers for monetary profits. In 1918, the treaty was implemented which prohibits the hunting, killing, capturing, possession, sale, transportation, and exportation of birds, feathers, eggs, and nests. Amendments to the initial treaty has been extended to include other nations: Mexico (1936) Japan (1972) and Russia (1976). This treaty has international connections and its goal is to protect birds to ensure bird diversity for generations. **The Act makes it illegal to have possession of native birds, their feathers, their eggs, and their nests.**

If you are a bluebird monitor and someone who also educates others about bluebirds, it is important to know that **not all bird species are protected** under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Birds that are considered **non-native, human-introduced species include House sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and European starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*)**. House sparrows and European starlings were introduced to the United States from Great Britain in the 1880's. Due to their non-native status and aggressive behavior which threatens biodiversity, **it is legal** to remove and dispose of these birds, their nests, and their eggs from nest boxes.

It is fortunate that these two species were excluded from these protections, as they aggressively compete for nesting sites with native songbirds, including bluebirds, tree swallows, purple martins, chickadees, tufted titmouse, and house wrens. They will kill the adult birds and the young of native cavity-nesting species to take over their nesting sites. Bluebird monitors have found adult native birds and their young dead in the nest box with their heads pecked by the non-native House sparrow. Because European starlings are larger than the smaller cavity-nesting birds, they will not be able to enter a nest box with a standard-size entrance hole of 1 and ½ inches in diameter. They will, however, be able to enter the box if the entrance hole has been enlarged and are a serious threat to native songbirds nesting in natural cavities such as snags and old woodpecker holes.

As a trail monitor, it is important not to interfere with active nesting activity of any native songbird, and to never be in possession of any native songbird, feather, egg, or nest. The penalties are very severe-up to 6 months in jail and fines up to \$15,000 per bird. Special Salvage Permits are needed in order to collect or display non-viable eggs and abandoned nests of native species for educational purposes. The Bluebird Society of PA has been issued such a permit for a display to educate the public about how to identify the songbirds which are nesting in their nest boxes. The Bluebird Society must file annual reports to document what eggs and nests are added to the display, must document the location and circumstances that the items were collected, and only those persons named on the permit are allowed to collect items for these educational displays.

Some native species can also be very competitive in their nesting activities, but it is illegal to remove their eggs and nests from your nest boxes. In such cases, nest box placement can be effective. Some trail monitors use paired boxes to reduce competition between species. For example, I have had luck with paired boxes and have successfully fledged bluebirds and tree swallows in nest boxes placed within 10 feet of each other. This action reduces the chances that they will fight and injure one another to compete for the same nesting site. House wrens can be very aggressive and can peck the eggs and even remove the young of other songbird species. Since house wrens prefer wooded or brushy areas, do not install nest boxes within 200 feet of wooded or brushy areas to reduce the incidence of house wrens interfering with the nesting activity of other species along your trail. There has been limited success with using

a passive method, a wren guard, which makes the entrance hole less visible.

As a County Coordinator, I sometimes get calls from members who ask what they can do to help injured, sick, or abandoned young birds or mammals. In these situations, you should contact a licensed Wildlife Rehabilitation Provider. A good resource for obtaining assistance is the Pennsylvania Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators. Their web site is www.pawr.com and it lists the licensed wildlife rehabilitators by county and what species of wildlife that they can treat.

As bluebird trail monitors and educators, we must be aware of and adhere to the Federal Migratory Bird Act during the course of our bluebirding activities. It is also important to educate others about this Act, and to make them aware that this protection applies to native songbirds and that it does not apply to the non-native species, which includes House sparrows and European starlings, which are a major threat to the native, cavity-nesting species and they should not be allowed to nest in the nest boxes.

Editor's Note: The ratification of the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 was the direct result of intense lobbying by Audubon and other conservation groups. It is important for individuals to become actively involved in conservation issues, especially those related to climate change, which is affecting the habitat and the availability of food sources needed by both migratory and non-migratory birds.



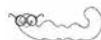
“Certain things catch your eye, but pursue only those that capture your heart.”

Native American Saying

Editor's Note: Bluebirds have certainly captured our eyes and also our hearts.

Editor's Note: Special Thanks to Bet Zimmerman Smith, who hosts a wonderful web site: <http://www.sialis.org/> I encourage you to check it out!

Bet is a knowledgeable and dedicated bluebirder who serves on the Board of Directors for the North American Bluebird Society and she is a great resource to affiliate Editors and to all who are interested in learning about bluebirds and other cavity-nesting species.



BSP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BSP BOARD MEETINGS

**OCTOBER 23, 2014 - THURSDAY EVENING AT
6:00 P.M.**

**GIANT FOODS COMMUNITY ROOM,
CAMP HILL, PA**

2015 Board Meetings:

Jan 22, April 23, July 23, and Oct 22

Please plan to attend BSP Board Meetings to learn about upcoming BSP activities and events and to share your ideas about a variety of issues related to bluebird conservation. If you cannot attend the meetings in person, we can arrange for you to attend via conference call. Contact Dean Rust, BSP President to make arrangements to join BSP meetings by phone right from your home.



Artist - Susan Renkel

**January 10-17, 2015 –Pennsylvania Farm Show
Week**

Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, PA

Farm Show website - www.farmshow.state.pa.us/

Hours:

9:00 am - 9:00 pm Jan. 10-16

9:00 am-5:00 pm Jan.17

**March 6, 7, & 8, 2015-PA Garden Show of York
York Expo Center- Memorial Hall, York, PA**

Hours: Friday, March 6: 10am - 8pm

Saturday, March 7: 10am - 8pm

Sunday, March 8: 10am - 5pm

The theme this year is “ My Own Backyard”. BSP will host our educational exhibit, offer a free nest box building workshop, and Nancy Putt, BSP York County Coordinator will give a presentation-”Attracting Bluebirds to Your Backyard”. Volunteers will be needed, and BSP members in York County are encouraged to help.....with free parking & entrance available for volunteers. This is a wonderful event with colorful landscaping exhibits, speakers, demonstrations, and programs to inspire people to think of Spring.

* Please call Nancy Putt- 717-432-2647 or e-mail her at: bluebirds@pa.net

to volunteer. For more information on this event, visit their website: www.pagsy.com

**March 27 and 28, 2015- 17th Annual BSP
Conference, Eden Resort & Suites, Lancaster, PA**
3/27-Friday evening: Programs and Social
3/28-Saturday: All-day conference/Luncheon

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this very special event. Lancaster County is a destination place for tourism due to the beautiful countryside and Amish communities and the Eden Resort is a wonderful venue to host this very special event.

Featured speakers include: *Jack Hubley, a resident of Central PA and the Host of “A Wild Moment”, a nature short which airs on Friday nights at 5:30 p.m. on WGAL TV

*Andrew Troyer, an Amish man who resides in Conneautville, PA , who is an experienced bluebirder and tree swallow landlord who designs and offers nesting boxes and trail supplies through his retail store, Bird’s Paradise

*Robert Goodhart, who is an excellent speaker regarding nature and wildlife topics.

BSP EVENT REPORTS

Subject: Girl Scout Mini-Grant Program-June 23-25

Susan and I offered the Girl Scout Mini-Grant Program this week in Dover, PA. Susan presented 7 bluebird talks to groups of 12-15 Girl Scouts on Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday evening, she, my son, and I did a bluebird box- building/decorating event with about 30 of the older girls who were staying at the camp overnight. We built 11 boxes from kits and decorated 10 Gilbertson nest boxes. The Gilbertson boxes will be set up at Brookside Park in Dover, and the park personnel are very pleased to be getting them. Looks like the park has recently put in two native plant gardens too, so a nice natural habitat is developing.

***We are seeking a trail Monitor for these boxes, and that is one reason why I thought they should put up Gilbertson nest boxes. I have 8 Gilbertson boxes up in sparrow-prone areas and have yet to have a House Sparrow use one. I've seen males on top of them trying to attract females, but the females don't seem to like them.

Phil and Susan Durgin

July 26-Ned Smith Festival, Millersburg, PA

BSP participated in the Ned Smith Festival by hosting an educational booth and presenting a bluebird program, "How To Attract Bluebirds." The event is held at MYO Park along the Susquehanna River. Nine persons joined BSP during this event. My wife, Susan presented the bluebird program and she and my son also assisted with the nest box assembly activity of 102 nest boxes provided by the PA Game Commission. It was a well-attended event and the Game Commission representatives expressed satisfaction for the number of volunteers which we provided to assist them. Thanks to other BSP volunteers, including Nancy Putt and Doris Hoffman, who stayed all day, and also Cathy Blair, a new volunteer for this event. One of the volunteers, Nancy Putt, was thrilled to see a bald eagle flying over the river at a distance, but then the raptor flew closer and directly over her head. She said that she was so enthralled with the sighting that she did not think to take a photo.

Hope that you can plan to volunteer or attend this wonderful event, which is a celebration of nature and art and offers fascinating programs, displays, entertainment, and vendors, and is usually held on the last Saturday of July.

Phil Durgin, Event Coordinator

July 26th- "Summer Garden Experience" Event

BSP presented a bluebird presentation and a box-building activity at this event which was held at the Penn State University Research Farm in Manheim, PA. This annual event is held on the last Saturday in July on a 155 acre farm tract. BSP volunteers were Bill Strauss, Bonnie & Chuck Musser, and Shirley and Dean Rust. Eleven people became new members of BSP. Next year we would also like to host a BSP booth (10x10 tent) from 9 -2 in order to obtain more visibility and be able to talk with more people about bluebirds. Currently we have a limited time slot of 1-2, as we only sponsor the box-building activity in the main tent. I will explore our options with the organizers regarding the possibility to reserve booth space for next year.

Dean Rust, Event Coordinator

BSP Monitors Needed for Golf Courses across the Commonwealth Listed Below

Spring Creek Golf Course

450 East Chocolate Avenue

Hershey, PA 17033 located in Dauphin County

717-533-2847

http://www.hersheypa.com/things_to_do/spring_creek.php

Monitor Needed Ask for; Aaron C.Snyder Superintendent 717-533-2847 or acsnyder@hersheypa.com

Monitor -- Please notify Dr. Dean Rust BSP President if you decide to monitor this Golf Course. Thank you. Contact Dean at 717 669 0167 or july7ds@aol.com

Whitemarsh Valley Country Club

815 Thomas Road

Lafayette Hill, PA 19444 located in Montgomery County

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

Monitor Needed - Ask for; Tony Gustaitis CGCS 215 233 3906

Monitor -- Please notify Dr. Dean Rust BSP President if you decide to monitor this Golf Course. Thank you.

Contact Dean at 717 669 0167 or july7ds@aol.com

Sunnehanna Country Club

1000 Sunnehanna Drive

Johnstown, PA 15905 located in Cambria County

<http://www.sunnehannacountryclub.com>

Monitor Needed, Ask for Ben Little Golf Course Superintendent Office 814 255 7444 Cell 412 610 9001

Monitor, please notify Dr. Dean Rust BSP President if you decide to monitor this Golf Course. Thank you.

Contact Dean at 717 669 0167 or july7ds@aol.com

3 Lakes Golf Course

6700 Saltsburg, Road

Pittsburgh, PA 15235 located in Allegheny County

<http://www.3lakesgolf.com/>

Monitor Needed - Ask for; Megan Hawk 412 793 7111

Monitor -- Please notify Dr. Dean Rust BSP President if you decide to monitor this Golf Course. Thank you.

Contact Dean at 717 669 0167 or july7ds@aol.com

Indian Springs Golf & Country Club

824 Indiana Springs Rd. Indiana, PA 15701 located in Indiana County

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

Monitor Needed - Ask for Matt Reed, Manager 724 465 2121

Monitor, please notify Dr. Dean Rust BSP President if you decide to monitor this Golf Course. Thank you.

Contact Dean at 717 669 0167 or july7ds@aol.com



Using the Cornell Nest Watch Program

by Phil Durgin

At the 2014 BSP conference, Robyn Bailey of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology encouraged us to participate in their citizen science effort by entering our nests into their NestWatch program. So I thought I'd give it a try.

First, you have to take a short online course (takes about 5 minutes) to orient you to how NestWatch wants you to monitor nests. For example, they suggest you monitor active nests every 3-4 days. But with four trails and almost 60 boxes, that was too much for me. I did the best I could, monitoring the boxes at least once every two weeks.

Entering 60 nest boxes into the NestWatch program is a bit tedious, but NestWatch uses a slick Google-earth program so you get a birds-eye view of where your nest boxes are located and you can place them at just the right spot. Sorta like pin the tail on the donkey. You then add a fair amount of data about your box (size of the hole, orientation, distance from the ground, etc.) and the nature of the terrain around where it's located (residential yard, school campus, golf course, etc.). Once you have all your boxes geo-located on the program, you're ready to start entering your monitoring data.

When a bird starts building a nest in one of your boxes, you find the box on the program, record the species, date and time of the monitoring visit, and number of eggs. There's quite a bit of other data you can enter, but I generally only entered the 4 or 5 required pieces of data. Each time you visit the nest, you enter a new line of data with all your update information. When the nesting attempt is over, you fill out a summary sheet indicating how many eggs were laid, how many hatched, how many fledged, and whether you lost any chicks to predation. Again, there is quite a bit of additional data you can enter (e.g., the dates the first egg hatched and when the chicks fledged) but as I was monitoring 60 boxes, I kept it pretty much to the basics. Once the summary is completed, you can enter a new nesting if you should get another one in that box that season.

The reward for entering all that data, other than having it available to Cornell for its research, is that you can print out all kinds of reports about individual boxes, trails, different species of birds, etc. For example, for one of the trails I monitor at the local high school, I had 8 tree swallow nest attempts, 7 of which had at least one successful fledging, for a 87.5% success rate. You can also get a report that shows all your active nests, grouped by trail if you have more than one trail. Next year should be quite a bit easier because I have all my boxes entered and have learned some shortcuts about how to enter the monitoring data and how the program works. On the whole, I'd say the NestWatch Program, while not difficult, is not exactly easy either. But if you are patient and have some extra time on your hands, and like looking at data, give it a try. You may like it!

Editor's Note: Here is the link for more information about the NestWatch Program. Check it out!

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citscitoolkit/projects/clo/NestWatch/>



BSP Newsletter Submission/Wiggly Worm Contest

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. We are also now accepting newsletter submissions by e-mail. Please enter **Wiggly Worm Contest** in the subject line and e-mail to the BSP Editor at: sunshinebb@msn.com.
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

The latest date to submit items is the following:

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

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

BSP NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION CONTEST WINNER:

Nevin Hawlman

CONGRATULATIONS!

Nevin - Please contact the BSP Store Manager, Doris at (717) 766-3877 and provide her with your prize choice.

Items can be viewed at the BSP web site: <http://www.thebsp.org/>
Select the link to: **BSP Online Store** to view the list of books available.



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

2014 BSP MEMBERSHIP RATE INFORMATION

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

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

New Member _____ **Renewal** _____

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ Middle Initial: _____

Mailing Address: _____

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

Telephone (optional) _____

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

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

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

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

_____ e-mail delivery Please enter your e-mail address here: _____

_____ regular mail delivery

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 ___

Website: www.thebsp.org

Website: 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



Don't Forget - BSP has a Facebook Page!

Google:

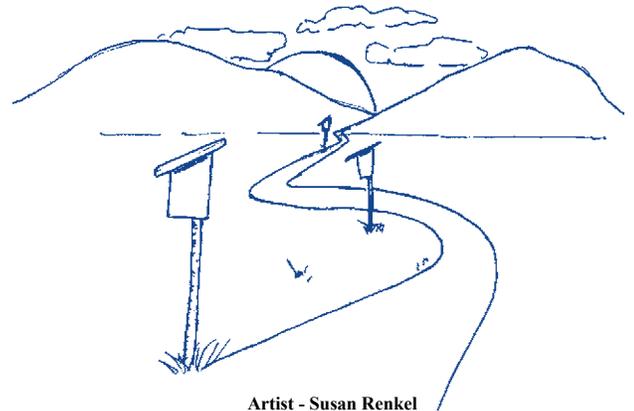
Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania / Facebook

Bluebird Trail Monitors Needed

Brookside Park, 4054 Fox Run Road, Dover, PA
Small trail, about 8 boxes
Contact: Nancy Putt, BSP County Coordinator, York County
717-432-2647
bluebirds@pa.net

Golf Course Trails in various locations

(See page 16 for a listing)
Contact: Dean Rust, BSP President
717-669-0167
July7DS@aol.com



For more information about the golf course trails which needing trail monitors, go to the BSP web site: www.thebsp.org, select **more.....** on the top right and scroll to the bottom of the dropdown box.



BSP is a North American Bluebird Society Affiliate

All contents in Bluebird Trails & Tales may not be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission. Copyright © 2009. All rights reserved. Contact the editor if you wish to reproduce something. Thanks!