



The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

• Volume 18, Issue 2 Summer 2015

• Editor: Joan Watroba • sunshinebb@msn.com • www.thebsp.org

A Message from the President

Dr. Dean C. Rust, BSP President

HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862) was one of America's greatest naturalists and a major figure in 19th century thought and literature. He wrote in journals for almost 25 years and they were published in 14 volumes. A search was done on the number of dates Mr. Thoreau mentioned the bluebird species in his journals. Lillian Lund Files found 38 references to the bluebird. Mr. Thoreau affectionately referred to the male bluebird in 1859 as: His Most Serene Birdship!

"March 15, 1852 - A mild spring day...The air is full of bluebirds. The ground almost entirely bare. The villagers are out in the sun, and every man is happy whose work takes him outdoors... I lean over a rail to hear what is in in the air, liquid with the bluebird's warble." *Vol 3 : Pg 350*

The first days of May have warmly settled in on Lancaster County as well as the whole Commonwealth of PA and all of the eastern United States. No one I know wanted winter to last a couple of more months! As our utility heating costs go down, our outdoor interest levels go up and we are spending more time seeing nature in full bloom everywhere. Our wardrobe change is noticeable and once again we realize why we love to live in a part of the country where all four seasons are vastly different. Spring is here. Days are longer. AND...best of all...it's Bluebird Time.

If you haven't checked your bluebird box yet, now IS the time. Bluebirds are looking for nesting sites right now – they are no longer sitting on the sidelines thinking about it, they are actively finding partners, building nests and laying eggs. Now is the time to be a good neighbor and offer to check your neighbor's box, too. Perhaps it has not

been checked for 5 years? It may have a 3" diameter wasp nest complete with petiole on the ceiling, a mouse family may have taken up residence, a bird may have died inside, the roof may be split and leaking, the floor of the box could be gone, a large ant colony might be established, nesting material could be packed so tightly that it seems impossible to pull it out, or best surprise of all... the box looks great from the living room! Maybe some repair work can patch it up for one more year?...or better yet, suggest a new box, a booklet and a 1-3 year BSP membership. Ask your neighbors to join our wonderful organization so they, too, can have as much fun as we do.

In 1978 Dr. Lawrence Zeleny met with a group of friends in Chevy Chase, Maryland, to discuss the idea of a continent-wide program that would restore the dwindling bluebird population. Dr. Zeleny's study of the eastern bluebird revealed that their drastic decline had begun in the 1920's and continued into the late 1970's. Upwards of 90% of their total population was lost to various causes. One of the main reasons was the proliferation of two non-native bird species that were also cavity-nesters; the European Starling and the English House Sparrow. These two species (introduced from Europe in 1850's) out-competed the bluebirds for nesting sites by aggressively attacking them, driving them off their nests, destroying eggs, killing nestlings and sometimes even killing the adult bluebirds if caught inside their box. Farming practices had changed and locust wood fence posts with nesting holes were no longer found. Pesticides became a big problem after WWII and toxic insects or no insects at all was a

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A Message from the President

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factor.

At that meeting, when some attendees expressed doubt that the public cared enough to make the effort worthwhile, Dr. Zeleny produced grocery bags of letters written to him. Over the years bluebird enthusiasts had written him letters describing enchanting encounters with bluebirds and each letter expressed the joys that this little bird brought them. Each letter expressed the sadness that their own children might not witness this magical little bird. With the letters people asked two questions: 1) Where have all the bluebirds gone? 2) What can I do to help them? Dr. Zeleny's committee was moved by the volume of letters and the North American Bluebird Society was born. Some 350 charter members responded to a letter of solicitation to help start NABS...and under Dr. Zeleny's steady leadership, the daunting task to insure that bluebirds would be here for future generations was accepted. It is one of the great citizen-science conservation success stories of our time.

It was Dr. Lawrence Zeleny, an influential bluebird promoter and author of what many people consider to be the finest bluebird book ever written, *The Bluebird: How You Can Help It's Fight for Survival*. He influenced thousands of people to build bluebird nest boxes and also establish and monitor bluebird trails from coast to coast. Today there are over 60 NABS Affiliate Bluebird Organizations in the US and Canada thanks to his groundbreaking work for Bluebirds.

Number 1 Bluebird Tip for this summer. Two weeks ago I was on one of my trails and I noticed a box in a good location but no songbird had made a nest in it for three years. I took the box down and replaced it with another bluebird box model. Upon inspection there was nothing wrong with the box other than being unproductive. Switching out one box for another takes me about 5-10 minutes. This past week I checked the box and

discovered a Full BB pine-needle nest ready for eggs. Now I am excited!! Same location as old box ...all I did was change out the old box to another model. This illustrates that bluebirds have preferences to not only location but to style of boxes. If you have a nest box in your backyard, and ALL birds are ignoring it...make a quick change and see what happens. Those of you who have trails can do the same thing. If one location is not working out, move it 75 or 100 feet away...you may find success? I try to make one or two key changes on each of my trails each summer. This one tip may just make you look and feel like a genius.

Our 2015 Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Conference was a huge success. We had 185 registered conference attendees on March 27 & 28. The Eden Resort, Lancaster, was a great location for our BSP membership and was a fine venue. I want to thank everyone on our BSP support staff who donated countless hours to make this conference a reality. I want to thank all our County Coordinators, BSP members-at-large and those from other states who attended this year's Conference. Our 2016 BSP Conference will be in Harrisburg at the Best Western Premier on April 1 & 2, 2016.

"March 17, 1853 - Henry David Thoreau, I no sooner step out of the house than I hear the bluebirds in the air, and far and near, everywhere except in the woods, throughout the town you may hear them, the blue curls of their warblings ...harbingers of serene and warm weather, little azure rills of melody trickling here and there from out of the air, their short warble trilled in the air reminding of so many corkscrews assaulting and thawing the torpid mass of winter, assisting the ice and snow to melt and the streams to flow."

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Dr. Dean C. Rust,
President of BSP

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Artist: Susan Renkel

From the Editor

IT'S VERY EASY TO LOVE bluebirds and other colorful songbirds. It is fascinating to watch their endearing courting behaviors, such as wing-waving, so enjoyable to listen to their songs and calls, and

insects which feed on foliage trees. Songbirds can protect trees by reducing the level of deforestation by eating these insects and can serve as “an ecologically correct form of pest management”.

...songbirds can have a significant ecological and economic importance by devouring insects which feed on foliage trees

fun to identify them by their distinctive vocalizations, even before we see them. Seeing a bluebird at any time of the year can elevate our mood and help us to rise above any minor challenge of the day.



I recently read an article which appeared in The New York Times, entitled “*More than Decorations, Songbirds Are Essential to Forests’ Health*” by Carol Kaesuk Yoon: <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/11/08/science/more-than-decoration-songbirds-are-essential-to-forestshealth.html>

This article documents a study which demonstrates that songbirds can have a significant ecological and economic importance by devouring

Suggestions for increasing the number of these forest species, especially the migratory forest birds, including red-eyed vireos, American robins, and scarlet tanagers

is to prevent the fragmentation of forest tracts, as these species prefer forest interiors.

Songbirds are both Beautiful and Beneficial, and those are good reasons to preserve their habitats and to promote their nesting success.

Joan Watroba
 Joan Watroba,
 Editor

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Great News



Photo by Susan Renkel

Many of you have requested articles from past issues of the BSP newsletter. To meet this need, we are happy to report that BSP has

added a new feature-**NEWSLETTERS** on the BSP web site: www.thebsp.org. There you can view the seasonal newsletters of prior years, and they are in a printable PDF format so they can be printed directly from the web site.

Thanks to *Harry Schmeider*, who continues to serve as BSP Webmaster and does a great job of keeping our web site current and looking great!

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The layout and design of this Summer Newsletter was the work of BSP member, Charles J. Lucas, a bird lover from Allegheny County.

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County Coordinator Update

BSP Co-County Cumberland County:
David L. Price
E-mail address: David17007@aol.com
717-245-2926 (home) or 717-576-0726 (cell)

Don't Forget - BSP has a Facebook Page!



Google: Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania/Facebook

Masonic Blues

by Mary Ellen Tarman - March 3, 2015

MASONIC BLUES IS not a term for winter doldrums at Masonic Village in Elizabethtown, nor is it a group of Penn State fans who live there. In this case, Masonic Blues means Masonic Village residents who are interested and committed to the well being of bluebirds on their 1400+ acre campus.

Chuck and Bonnie Musser made their annual presentation to a group of about 30 people at Masonic Village on March 3. Despite the prediction of inclement weather, the folks in attendance came out to see a Stokes video on bluebirds and to hear Chuck's commentary on taking care of our bluebird population.

The attendees had excellent questions and observations of their own. One man told how

a bluebird became stuck in a water dish clasp but was finally freed and flew away. Another resident explained how birds can get caught in monofilament landscape cloth and how he rescued a bird from that peril.

Chuck gave advice on proper feeding, including providing a recipe for a homemade suet mix, advising that mixed seed with millet is not appropriate, and how mealworms and sunflower chips or hearts are the best selections. There were questions about how to clean nesting boxes, what is the purpose of monofilament fishing line across the opening, where to place boxes and protect them from predators, and other matters of interest.

Another resident asked Chuck about bluebird "sociology" and how the

parents tend to the nests and the role of the juvenile birds. Chuck made a point to recommend that membership in the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania gives great value and that Villagers should consider attending BSP's 17th Annual Bluebird Conference in Lancaster on March 27 and 28. Masonic Village would provide transportation if at least 10 people signed up.

Thanks to Chuck's guidance and wisdom which he willingly shares, and dedicated enthusiasts at Masonic Village, the bluebird population has grown measurably over the years and everyone gets to enjoy the beauty of these lovely birds.

Mary Jane Tarman

BSP GO 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.
- *If you are already a Green Choice Member, and if you change your e-mail address, please include E-Mail Change in the subject line, and send an e-mail to: btntnewsletter@thebsp.org.

We Are BSP

by Joan Watroba

I WAS BORN IN THE SMALL town of Great Barrington, located in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, and have always enjoyed nature, birds, and the outdoors. However, I never really got hooked on bluebirds until my husband and I moved to Elizabethtown, PA and we saw the most wonderful blue bird perched on a fence near our apartment. We looked in the bird book and identified it as an Eastern bluebird. From that time, we were hooked! We quickly purchased a standard bluebird box and within a week we had bluebirds nesting in our yard. When I heard about a

meeting at Messiah Village in Mechanicsburg in 1998 to discuss the possibility of starting a local Bluebird Club, I attended all of those meetings, and these activities blossomed into the incorporation of the non-profit organization, the Bluebird Society of PA, which is an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society. Since then I have joyfully served as BSP President, Board Member, and currently serve as BSP Co-County Coordinator for Cumberland County and also Editor of the BSP Newsletter. I love to monitor my bluebird trails, talk with people about

bluebirds, and discover new wonders of bluebirds and other native songbirds each nesting season. When we purchased our current home, the main factor was that it provided a good habitat for putting up nest boxes for songbirds. It was a good choice, as we have had bluebirds, titmice, chickadees, house wrens, and even white-breasted nuthatches using the nesting boxes in the yard.

Happy Bluebirding!

Joan Watroba

Event Report

Pennsylvania Garden Show of York - March 6, 7, 8, 2015 - Memorial Hall, York Fairgrounds, York, PA

WE BROUGHT THE BSP educational display and some store items to this annual event and spoke with many people about bluebirds. It was fun sharing our bluebird stories! Twenty-eight new members joined.



Box builders Dale Cook, Phil and Susan Durgin helped 28 children build 28 nest boxes. Total sales from BSP store items and new memberships was \$750.82.

Volunteers at our booth were: Dean Rust, Doris Hoffman, Joan Watroba, Marilyn Donak,

Barbara Brown, Joanne Slavinski, Nancy Putt, Dale Cook, Phil and Susan Durgin, Dave and Barb Cox, and Jim and Darlene Crone. We had several new volunteers help out at our booth. Thanks to all volunteers and special thanks to new volunteers, Jim and Darlene for helping me to take down our display and deliver everything back to our storage unit.

Nancy Putt, Event Coordinator
BSP County Coordinator -York County

Master Gardeners of York County, March 14, 2105

I took the BSP educational table to this all-day symposium, "Garden Wise". Many people visited the booth to learn about how to attract bluebirds and other native songbirds.

Over 300 attendees were at this event, which was held at the Central York Middle School in York, PA.

Nancy Putt, Event Coordinator
BSP County Coordinator -York County

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BSP Annual Nest Box Report

Submitted by Shirley Halk, Annual BSP Nest Box Reporter

- Total number of Boxes Monitored: **3244**
- Number of bluebird eggs: **7308** (7172 blue and 136 white)
- Number of bluebirds fledged: **6042** Bluebirds (increase of 199 from 2013)

Other species fledged:

- **3744** Tree Swallows
- **1576** House Wrens
- **337** Black Capped Chickadees
- **40** Tufted Titmice
- **8** White Breasted Nuthatch
- **28** Carolina Wrens
- **5** Great Crested Flycatchers

Thanks to everyone who submitted their end-of-year reports to BSP. The compiled

Annual Nesting Report for 2014 by County is posted on the BSP web: www.thebsp.org. It is in a PDF format and can be printed directly from the web site.

If you would like to receive the 2014 report by regular mail, please send a request to: Shirley Halk, Annual Nest Box Reporter, 42 Park Drive, Grantville, Pa.17028

Note: The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania thanks Shirley Halk for her time, energy and hard work in compiling all of this nesting data and information.

Included with this issue is an Annual Nest Box Report Form. Please keep a record of your nesting activity so that we can measure the collective results of our efforts. By sending in your end-of-year report to BSP, you will be entered into a random drawing of reports received for prizes from the BSP Store. Printable blank report forms to keep track of your Weekly Nest Box Checks and also the Annual Nest Box Report Forms are also available on the BSP web site: www.thebsp.org Scroll to More...then select-Download Weekly and Annual Nest Box Report Forms.

PA State Parks Nesting Results

Excerpts from Resource-Newsletter of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources:

THANKS TO THE EFFORTS of volunteers as well as park staff across the state, the bureau's cavity nesting program successfully fledged 6,260 birds last year, according to Bureau Natural Resource Program Specialist, Carly Hitzfeld.

"Fifty state parks fledged 2,429 Eastern bluebirds and 3,831 other cavity-nesting species during 2014," Hitzfeld said. "Despite colder than normal temperatures early in spring and above normal precipitation late in the season, there was a slight increase in fledgling numbers compared to 2013."

Since the program's beginning in 1980, volunteers have helped fledge over 61,000 Eastern bluebirds and 48,000 other cavity-nesting species. Commitment in the monitoring program is not rare, Hitzfeld notes. More than 15 of the volunteers have been checking nesting boxes; cleaning and repairing them; jotting notes; and hiking trails for over 20 or more years.

Data gleaned from state park observations is shared with the Pennsylvania Game Commission; North American Bluebird Society; the Bluebird Society

of Pa.; and the Bureau of State Parks' Resources Management and Planning Division.

Editor's Note:

For more details on the Cavity-Nesting Trail Program, and how you can become actively involved in monitoring bluebird boxes in PA State Parks, contact Carly Hitzfeld at (717) 783-3344.

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/>

17th Annual BSP Conference

The Eden Resort - Lancaster, PA - March 27 & 28, 2015



Dean Rust and Ken Leister



James and Robin Trail



Doris Hoffman

*We thank all of you
for your support by
attending this event...*

THE CONFERENCE WAS a wonderful event, with record-breaking attendance of 185 persons. The Eden Resort venue offered wonderful accommodations, delicious food, and quick and friendly response time to service requests. All of the speakers on Friday night and Saturday addressed interesting and timely topics. The vendors offered quality items and services, and the live and silent auctions generated a lot of bidding activity. Special Thanks to Liz Stamm, Auctioneer of E.J. Stamm Auction Service of Jonestown, PA (e-mail: ejstammsauctionservice@gmail.com) and Barb Elliott, Auction Clerk, who have kindly offered to handle our live auction for the second year in a row. We appreciate their willingness to assist us with this important conference fund-raising effort.

We thank all of you for your support by attending this event and all who have made monetary donations or have donated a variety of wonderful items and services for our live and silent auctions. We are happy to have received so many donations from individuals, businesses and organizations who generously support our educational outreach and bluebird propagation efforts.



Andrew Troyer



Isaac Eldeen



Jack Hubley with red-tailed hawk

Photos of the 17th Annual BSP Conference are now on the BSP Website: www.thebsp.org/ Scroll to More... and then select 2015 Conference

BSP Conference Feedback

Dear Dean,

By now I am sure you are home, have collapsed and your proverbial feet are in the air. Karen and I found the meeting, not only quite successful for our first, but filled with interesting people. I know you met your goal of doubling last year's attendance. We found the accommodations quite wonderful, and probably one of the best luncheons we could have possibly had. I certainly could see future meetings at Eden Resort. Congratulations to you and your officers!

Earl

Dear BSP Board,
Now that I'm back home, I'll share a few of my thoughts on the outstanding Bluebird Conference of 2015. I am truly proud of what BSP members and Board Members were able to

accomplish! A great conference in every way – with something for everyone! Plus, it was well-coordinated and organized. A smooth operation from start to finish.

While I confess this was my first time attending, I was impressed with the way everyone worked together - creating a wide sphere of benefits and opportunities. The talks were outstanding, and the auctions (and sales tables) provided a huge array of useful and decorative items. I think the atmosphere was positive, friendly, and informative. I am inspired by what can be achieved when we each add in our abilities and talents. In my opinion, the BSP generated a worthwhile, exciting, and educational experience for everyone who attended!

Marilyn

Marilyn: I agree with everything that you stated about the 2015 Conference. It is worth letting you know that the past 16 Conferences that you did not attend were equally great. Out of the 17 conferences that my husband and I attended, we cannot not say one was better than all of the rest.

Joyce Stuff

I have attended almost every conference and have never regretted going. This conference was no exception. Great job by the conference committee and thanks to Dean for setting up great speakers.

Terry Gerhart

Congratulations to the Winners of the Amish Quilt Raffle!

- 1st Place: Full- sized Bluebird Quilt:
Barb and Dave Cox - New Cumberland, PA
- 2nd Place: Bluebird Wall Hanging:
Leroy Bittner - Meyersdale, PA
- 3rd Place: Bluebird Pillow:
E.F. Huguenin - Skippack, PA



A BIG THANKS to all of you who participated in the Amish quilt raffle. Proceeds from the raffle will be used to fund educational outreach programs related to bluebirds and other native-cavity nesting species.

Editor's Note:

The beautiful Amish quilt items were made by Brubaker's Quilts in Port Trevorton, PA

Nancy Putt, Quilt Raffle Chair

BSP Awards

Shirley Halk, BSP Awards Chair presents the Bluebirder of the Year Award to Denise and Peter Reinhart

DENISE AND PETER Reinhart have been monitoring bluebird boxes for well over 20 years. They began their adventure in Carbon County, where they belonged to a hunting and fishing club located near Hickory Run State Park, where they monitored 15 boxes for nearly 10 years. That was in the early 1990's. They eventually took over for Peter's parents who initially started hanging bluebirds boxes many years prior to that.

Peter's Dad taught him how to build boxes and he still has the original plans which were from the PA Game Commission. The plans were simple and effective. Nothing fancy! During those years, they kept track of the houses, but unfortunately, did not keep any formal records. As Peter tells it, they still had fun in the spring cleaning out the houses. They would find deer mice that had holed up over the winter, bluebirds nests from the previous year, and even a few flying squirrels.

In 2006, they joined Mink Pond Club in Pike County. Their new club had zero bluebird trails or nesting boxes. Denise and Peter embarked on a program of trying to establish a trail, and the needed habitat to attract bluebirds. Keep in mind that what they were working with was nothing but forest and swamp land. Initially, Denise



Denise & Peter Reinhart receive the Bluebirder of the Year Award from Shirley Halk (left) BSP Awards Chair

and Peter began with 25 boxes, posting them in any clearing they could find.

They also applied for and were approved for two Federal grants for wildlife habitat improvement projects :(WHIP) Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program) and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program). These grants allowed Mink Pond to enhance their acreage and property for wildlife habitat improvement.

As a result, Denise and Peter were able to increase their initial monitoring of 25 boxes to 48 boxes. Because of the distance and time, they cannot commit to a weekly bluebird nesting activity count during the nesting season. However, that does not lessen their desire to maintain and monitor the boxes.

What they do is nothing scientific, they simply do this

for the propagation of bluebirds. Keeping weekly records and publishing the results is not in their interest. Seeing bluebirds circling around the various houses during spring and summer provides them the greatest satisfaction. As Peter would say, "I guess one can measure one's involvement in bluebird nesting activity in the number of trails, the number of boxes, and the weekly count and monitoring activities, but in our minds, nothing compares to going to the extra effort in turning forest land into prime wildlife improvement area for nesting activities."

In addition to bluebirds, Denise and Peter actively monitor 20 Wood Duck boxes on 2000 acres. Recently, Peter was instrumental in applying for having Mink Pond being accepted in a 30 acre program for the Golden Winged Warbler Project administered by the NRCS in Pike County.

Bluebirds are obviously the focus, but being good stewards of any land, public, or private, is the key element for birding propagation. It is with great honor and pride that Denise and Peter Reinhart, County Coordinators for Lehigh County, have been chosen for the Bluebirder of the Year Award.

Dean Rust, BSP President & The BSP Board of Directors

BSP Awards

2015 Blue Feather Award

PATRICIA GREENAWALD has been a dedicated member of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania since 2004. She is an active volunteer at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, helps with nest box building events, conducts seminars at local senior- assisted living facilities, and helps at various other BSP events. If BSP is in need of help, you will find Pat volunteering her time and talent for the bluebirds.

She also monitors several bluebird trails, with the largest one being the Colonial Country Club trail. This trail covers

approximately 1/2 mile and will be expanded upon this year.

Pat's second love is flower gardening and she is very knowledgeable about the plants she grows and is willing to share that knowledge. As a gardener, she is very generous with seeds, cuttings, and plants so that others may enjoy their beauty. Since gardening and birding go hand-in-hand, it is no wonder that bluebirds flock to her garden.

Pat is active in her church and Co-Chairs a special Christmas Nativity event. This nativity display contains over

200 scenes and is enjoyed immensely by the local community and many nursing home residents who come to see her talented work.

Pat's enthusiasm, dedication, and desire to conserve and protect our native species and their environment makes her a Blue Feather Award recipient. It is with great pride that the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania presents Pat Greenawald with this award.

Dean Rust, BSP President & The BSP Board of Directors

How to obtain help for abandoned, sick, or injured birds or mammals

THE PENNSYLVANIA Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators is a network of individuals and facilities which provide rehabilitation services and care for injured, sick, and orphaned birds and wild animals with the goal of releasing these animals back into their natural habitat. Wildlife rehabilitation is also a public service, providing the public with a humane, legal way of dealing with wildlife in need that they encounter. If you come across a bird or animal in need of such services, contact the nearest Wild Rehabilitator Center in your county.



A list of providers is listed on their web site: www.pawr.com and a link to these services is posted on the BSP web site: www.thebsp.org Scroll to More... then select: A Bluebird Needs Help

Editor's Note:

If you would like to learn more about becoming a Wildlife Rehabilitator, the web site: www.pawr.com offers a free class on line, "Introduction to Rehab" hosted by the Red Creek Wildlife Center. The class includes four movies which can be viewed at your convenience. In less than two hours, you can learn about this wonderful and challenging vocation and can decide if you would like to become involved in providing this interesting and needed service.

You Have to Love Bluebirds...to Raise Mealworms!

by Shirley Rust

I LOVE RELATING TO OUR backyard bluebirds with a little whistle and a live mealworm treat! The DRIED mealworms are a great treat if that is all that you have around. The bluebirds do love them and you can attract those lovely creatures to one of your boxes by placing them in a little plastic salad dressing cup secured on top of the box you want them to adopt. But compared to LIVE mealworms, it is like offering crackers when you could be serving them prime rib steak!

So why not grow my own mealworms? Then I would have plenty of live juicy mealworms to encourage and entice bluebirds to pick our back yard to make a nest, lay a clutch of eggs, and hatch a family of chicks.

This is the question that I answered with an action plan! There is nothing sweeter than having a bluebird family in your back yard! It makes me smile just thinking about it now! But you have to really love bluebirds to get involved in raising the snacks they love best...live mealworms! And I do love these birds!

This past winter proved to be very hard in Lancaster County with all the snow and ice. Starting my own mealworm farm gave me something to nurture and observe each evening as the weatherman was predicting yet another snow storm. The winter flew by as I watched the life cycle of the darkling beetle.

Another bluebird lover, Carolyn Martin, shared some of her live worms with me to start my farm. You may have a friend like Carolyn or simply purchase one or two hundred live meal worm larvae at your local pet store to get a culture started. For less than \$10, you can create your own farm.

I provided the worms (actually they are larvae) a comfortable home in a 9X12 plastic container with small holes drilled into the lid for air and added an inch of wheat bran, oat meal, or chicken feed to the bottom. A few small pieces of carrot, apple, potato, or lettuce were needed to supply moisture.

Then I watched the larvae eat, molt and grow into adults who would soon change into pupae. After the pupae lay dormant for a week or two, they

magically change into darkling beetles. For the next several months these beetles would eat and mate and lay thousands of eggs to start the cycle all over again.

Carolyn suggested that the beetles love to lay those hundreds even thousands of eggs on pieces of wool. So I cut up my husband's wool socks and watched tiny eggs accumulate on those 4"X 4" wool pieces. Those tiny eggs after about two weeks hatched into teeny, tiny, almost microscopic sized larvae. I needed a magnifying glass to even see the baby hatchlings. I guess I should not have been so surprised that those little larvae took up to two months to eat, grow, and molt into an adult size that would make a decent Bluebird snack!

To speed up the cycle, I kept the larvae farm on a heat vent in my dining room during the colder winter months. Room temperature is adequate for all stages of the cycle. When the larvae finally become feeding size, the cycle can be slowed down by placing the adult larvae in the refrigerator with plenty of wheat bran in a smaller container. Then they are readily

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You Have to Love Bluebirds...to Raise Mealworms!

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available for the bluebirds you wish to please. And they will not so quickly turn into the pupa stage when they are in a cooler environment.

It is so interesting and enjoyable to watch the Cycle of the Darkling Beetle...so much fun that two of our grandsons, Isaac Eldeen (15 years old) and Reece Readinger (12 years old) picked up on the idea and

started their own little farms in their own homes. Reece's little sister Mallory (6 years old) decided she wanted a farm also!

Children of all ages can enjoy and learn the mystery of the Darkling Beetle Life Cycle. Isaac took his project to the 17th Annual Pennsylvania Bluebird Conference on March 27-28, 2015 at the Eden Resort in Lancaster, Pa. He offered starter

kits for those attendees who found raising mealworms as fascinating as we all did.

Having a mealworm farm of your own does not take a lot of time or money....just a real LOVE FOR BLUEBIRDS!

*Happy farming from a
"Happy Farmer!"*

Shirley Rust, Lancaster County

We Need You

Please Consider Serving as a BSP Board Member

IF YOU ARE AN ACTIVE BSP Member who has an interest in becoming more involved with promoting the goals of the Bluebird Society of PA on a statewide level, we encourage you to become a candidate to serve on the BSP Board of Directors. We would welcome and appreciate your ideas and planning skills.

As a Board Member, you will become part of a dedicated team of volunteers who work together to make BSP an organization that we can all be proud of. BSP Board Members serve for a 2 year term, and meetings are

held quarterly. You can attend meetings by phone from the comfort of your own home via conference call, so no travel is needed.

For more information and to become a candidate, please contact:

**Marilyn L. Michalski, BSP
Nomination Chair
email: emeraldmm@verizon.net
phone: 610-933-0497**

If you would like to apply by mail, please provide your name, contact information (phone number, address, email address) and background and

interest in bluebirds or other native songbirds, and your prior involvement with BSP along with a brief bio and mail to:

Bluebird Society of PA
P.O. Box 756
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
Attn: Marilyn Michalski,
Nomination Chair

We thank you in advance to consider joining the BSP Board. Also, if you know of someone who you feel would have an interest, you can also nominate them, with their permission.

Cats Indoors PLEASE!

by Joan Watroba

WITH THE NESTING season in full swing, songbirds become more vulnerable to predation by both domestic and feral cats. The feeding habits of bluebirds make them even more susceptible, as they drop down to the ground to retrieve insects.



When adult birds are preoccupied with gathering food for their young, they may be even more at risk. When the young songbirds of all species first leave the nesting cavity or from an open nest in a tree or bushes, many times they do not yet have the ability to fly, and can become easy prey to a cat.

Cats can also climb a wooden pole and reach into the nest box, or can jump onto a nesting box and reach in and destroy the nesting attempt. For that reason, it is important to mount nest boxes on smooth metal poles, never wooden posts or trees, and also to add a Noel wire guard, which was discussed in the Spring 2015 BSP newsletter issue.

An excerpt from "Gone for the Day" by Ned Smith 1971 documents a lost clutch of bluebirds: July 27-I certainly got a jolt when I lifted the lid on the bluebird house this morning. My bouncing brood of nestlings was gone! Hairs still clinging to the rough wood told me a house

cat had fished them out through the entrance hole. Judas, how I wish people would keep their cats at home!

Many people have misconceptions about the danger that their domestic cats have to songbirds. Here are some of them:

- Our cat is well fed, so it does not catch birds or mammals. FALSE-Cats hunt by instinct, not only hunger.
- We put a bell on our cat, so the bell will warn the bird and it will fly away. FALSE-Cats will learn how to move in a way that will reduce the ringing of the bell.
- Our cat likes the fresh air outdoors, which keeps him healthier. FALSE-Cats outdoors are susceptible to many dangers, including rabies, feline leukemia, injury from other cats and wild animals, and also being hit by cars.

Per the American Bird Conservancy: "In the U.S., free-roaming domestic cats kill an estimated 1.4-3.7 billion birds and 6.9-20.7 billion mammals.



Domestic cats are recognized as a threat to global biodiversity. Cats have contributed to the extinction of 33 species across the world

and continue to adversely impact a wide variety of species, including those that are threatened or endangered. The ecological dangers are so critical that the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) now lists domestic cats as one of the world's worst non-native invasive species."

For more information about the importance of keeping cats indoors, for the safety of songbirds as well as cats, go to the American Bird Conservancy web site: www.abcbirds.org/cats/

Editor's Note:

In the past when we had a cat, we acclimated her to using a harness leash and we would walk with her. We will never forget when we were hiking with her along a local rail trail and so many people were impressed how well she adapted to it. It is important to start that habit when the cat is very young when they are more easy to train, but even an adult cat can be trained to use a leash.



For information on how to train your cat to use a leash: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/cat-behavior/teaching-your-cat-walk-leash>

Small Backyard Spaces can be Havens for Wildlife

by Amanda Yeager, Lancaster County, PA

DURING A RECENT meeting of my local bird club, when club members shared their bird sightings, my favorite story came from a local resident who reported seeing a dozen bluebirds at once enjoying her birdbath. This would always be a welcome and beautiful sight, but what excited me most about her story was that her birdbath is situated on the balcony of her retirement community apartment. Stories like these are a fantastic reminder that even small spaces can provide valuable habitat for the birds and other wildlife in our neighborhoods.

Before moving to a home with a backyard, I spent several years attracting wildlife to the surroundings of my own apartment. I discovered I could still provide habitat and enjoy wildlife watching by making the most of my balcony and the tiny patch of earth around my apartment entrance. If you have an outdoor space available to you, whether it's a small backyard or simply a porch or balcony, there are ways to make efficient use of the square footage to provide food, water, and shelter for wildlife.

Today there are many products on the market that are designed for just this scenario. There are birdbaths specially-made to install on top of a deck or balcony railing – another option is to suspend a hanging birdbath tray from a porch ceiling or other hanger. And just as you can find all shapes and sizes of shepherd's crooks to hang bird feeders or baths in a garden, there are also freestanding units and



railing mounts to create feeder hanging options on a porch or balcony. By diversifying your offerings of seed, suet, and sugar water (or treats like fresh and dried fruits, peanut butter, or mealworms), you could attract a variety of the songbirds, woodpeckers, hummingbirds, and other species present in your neighborhood. If you have an upper-story balcony, using hulled sunflower seeds and trays below your feeders can help keep things tidy – or you can simply forego seed for other food options.

Since natural foods are some of the most attractive to wildlife, even if you have a limited area, small-space gardening is a great way to support feathered friends and pollinators. Look

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Small Backyard Spaces Can be Havens for Wildlife

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to lower-maintenance native plant species that fit your space requirements and provide habitat value. If you have a small garden plot, compact plant varieties allow you to provide cover and food for birds with small-stature evergreens and deciduous shrubs, some of which may also be grown in containers with the proper ongoing care. Gardeners in our region often have success with potted dwarf spruce, lowbush blueberries, chokecherries, and

petite viburnum and winterberry varieties. Porch containers and hanging pots of annuals can also offer a lot of wildlife value and beauty – think nectar-producing plants like salvias, verbenas, lantanas, and zinnias, and small-size butterfly host plants like dill, milkweed, and parsley.

These are a few possibilities to make small spaces count, but the options are endless. There are many great ideas that can be found in wildlife gardening and backyard birding books,

bird and gardening magazines, and online – one great place to start is the National Wildlife Federation website at www.nwf.org, which offers backyard gardening and habitat ideas, some specifically for apartment dwellers and small backyard owners. There's no property size requirement to enjoy home wildlife watching – here's to many memorable stories of wildlife flocking to your place.

BSP Mailbag

March 4, 2015

Dean,

Thanks for the information. I found the Bluebird Society membership application on line, and my money is in the mail. Thank you so much for your interest. We live at the foot of the Blue Mountains with open fields around the house. We noticed the bluebirds in the summer of 1960. Boxes went up and they spend the year. Unfortunately, I'm not a good record keeper, but I've been a birder ever since. Even raised mealworms for a time. Anxious to get my first newsletter. Thanks again, Elsie

Elsie, Here is your 1ST BSP Newsletter. How did you happen



*to email me? I am really happy to have you as a new BSP member. Tell me if you like the Newsletter. Best,
Dr. Dean C. Rust, BSP President*

Dean, Thanks for the Spring newsletter. I read it top to bottom and found it very informative. Found your information somewhere on line. Many thanks. Elsie

Dear Dean,

In April 2014 Chuck and I moved into a new cottage at Brethren Village. Once we moved into our cottage, the first birds that we saw in our backyard were two bluebirds, as they would perch on a fence post then dive into the retention basin area for insects then come back to their perch. We were so excited, as we knew what bluebirds looked like but hadn't ever lived where we would see them in the yard. They were just another reminder of how right the decision was to move to BV into a new cottage!!

A few months later, Chuck met someone in Fieldcrest

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BSP Mailbag

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who was looking for someone interested in bluebirds and who would like to monitor the bluebird boxes located around campus. Since that time I have tried to learn as much as I can about bluebirds, and with the help of a neighbor we have made two trips to some of the boxes on campus. Someone else tends the boxes up next to the gardens.

Today we found two nests that we are certain have bluebird eggs in them of the 16 boxes that we checked. The most helpful information that I have has been on the North American Bluebird Society website. Connie told me yesterday that she attended a presentation that you gave at Overlook last weekend. I wish I had known something about it as I would have tried to attend. I am eager to have more information on bluebirds and all that that entails, and would appreciate any information that you can recommend. Thanks for whatever you might have to suggest.

Gloria, Lancaster, PA.

Editor's Note:

The following is a list of very informative web sites about bluebirds and other cavity nesting species:

- North American Bluebird Society- <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/>
- Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania-<http://www.thebsp.org/>
- Another very useful web site- <http://www.sialis.org/>

I learned about BSP last Summer when I attended the Penn State/Manheim Extension Campus Open House. I signed up for a class taught by Dean Rust and built a bluebird box. The highlight of the day was seeing the baby bluebirds. Dean said, "get your boxes up by March." As you know, it was quite a Winter! I finally put it up in April.

To my surprise, that week a bluebird was in my back yard, then another. They flew through the air, landed on the trees, then investigated the box, flying in and out. They love perching on the grapevine posts and raspberry stakes. Those beautiful little birds are quite defensive when another bird came to check out the box. The bluebirds fought him off...what a match to watch! Another larger bird tried to get in the hole to no avail. He gave up and flew off. That was funny!

How did all these birds know I put up a box? My daughter loves to watch them from her

room. (She's supposed to be studying.) When she's eating in the dining room, the blinds are up and she's fixed on the birding activity, and I watch from the kitchen. (a mother's place)

Here are 2 limericks-one that rhymes, one does not:

*There once was a Doctor
named Dean,
Who gave of his time and
his talents,
Bluebirds he did love,
Built houses just for them,
And said, "Put them up
by March first".*

*There once was a Doctor
named Dean,
Who gave of his time,
know what I mean?
Bluebirds he did love,
Built houses he's proud of,
And said, "once a year,
please do clean."*

Respectfully Submitted,
Beverly Brown, Lancaster

Editor's Note:

Dean, the BSP President is a retired Dentist. Beverly, I love your newsletter submission and limericks.

Upcoming Events

BSP Board Meetings:

July 23, and Oct 22, 2015
6:00 P.M.(Thursday Evenings)

Giant Foods Community Room, Camp Hill, PA
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, 717-669-0167 or e-mail him at JULY7DS@aol.com to make arrangements to join BSP meetings by phone in the comfort of your home.

Ned Smith Festival July

25-Saturday 9:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M. MYO Park and the Ned Smith Center, Millersburg, PA
<http://www.nedsmithcenter.org/festival/>

FREE Annual celebration of nature and the arts along the beautiful Susquehanna River in Millersburg! Fun for the

entire family. Featuring over 70 programs and performances, the Nature and Arts Festival is the perfect way to celebrate summer! BSP will host an educational booth, a bluebird program, and a nest box building activity.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Please contact Phil Durgin at 717-732-5325 or e-mail: pdurgin@comcast.net.

On the Horizon:

18th Annual BSP Conference 2016: April 1 and 2, 2016 - Best Western Premier, Harrisburg, PA

Nest Box Monitors Needed

If you live anywhere around SGL 151 Celery Swamp, or SGL 284 Black Swamp or the **Muddy Creek** area of **Moraine State Park**, Butler County, and you'd like to monitor some nest boxes, please contact me. If you'd like to help nature and have great personal experiences while doing it, here is the chance. Thank you.

Jerry Kruth-(412) 709-6433 or e-mail: GKruth@aol.com

Spring Creek Golf Course

450 East Chocolate Avenue
Hershey, Pa.17033

(located in Dauphin County)
http://www.hersheypa.com/things_to_do/spring_creek.php

Ask for: Aaron C.Snyder
Superintendent 570-764-05395
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

Hershey County Club

1000 East Derry Rd.
Hershey, PA. 17033
(located in Dauphin County)
<http://www.hersheycountryclub.com> 717-533-2847

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

Event Report

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On Sat - April 25th, Chuck & Bonnie Musser along with Shirley (Rust) & I hosted a booth at the Lancaster Native Plant & Wildlife Festival from 9 am-4 pm. It was a chilly Spring

morning, but we talked with many people about bluebirds and 10 people joined BSP. Dean Rust, Event Coordinator and BSP County Coordinator, Lancaster County.

Everyone loves bluebirds!

The Eastern Bluebird appears on the cover of the March 2015 **Pennsylvania Game News:**
<http://penngamenews.com/>

BSP Membership/Renewal Form

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



2015 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

Member Interest Survey:

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

Create/monitor BSP trails Telephoning Membership Finance Woodworking Fundraising

State Monitoring Education Speakers Bureau Photography State Conference Research

Publication/artwork Newsletter County Coordinator Publicity Web Site/Web Content

Other _____

Special Events Help:

Garden Expo Booth @ Farm Show Garden Expo Booth @ Hershey Gardens Ned Smith Day @ Millersburg

Annual Farm Show @ Farm Show (January) Tech Support @ State Convention Other Special Events:

Please tell us how you learned about us:

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

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Website: WWW.THEBSP.ORG

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BSP Newsletter Submission 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. Your entry can be a general question or article about bluebirds or other nature topics, a writeup about something that you observed in your yard or on your trail, an original poem, a trail monitoring tip, or any non-copyrighted material.

Send to:

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

One submission will be randomly drawn at the cut-off date for each newsletter edition, and the person whose entry was randomly picked will have their choice of any item offered in the BSP store website: www.thebsp.org We are also accepting newsletter submissions by e-mail. Please enter Newsletter Submission Contest in the subject line and e-mail to the BSP Editor at: sunshinebb@msn.com The last 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.

Congratulations!
Newsletter Submission Contest, winner: Amanda Yeager, Lancaster County

Amanda, 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. Select the link to: BSP Online Store at www.thebsp.org to view the list of items available.



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