In the 2016 summer issue of Living Bird from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology there is an interesting article entitled, “The State of North America’s Birds”. A study was compiled of data from conservation groups that assessed the abundance and status of all 1,154 bird species in Canada, United States, and Mexico. This report assigns a “Concern Score” for each species that denotes the relative level of that bird’s conservation status.

In assessing the report data, it was noted that 37% of the 1,154 species are on the Watch List as being in need of urgent conservation. Generally these were birds with concern scores of 14 or higher. The respective concern scores for the three bluebird species were: Eastern (7), Mountain (12), and Western (9). It wasn’t that long ago that bluebirds were solidly on that Watch List and it has taken decades of work by dedicated bluebirders all over the US and Canada to bring their numbers back to where they are today. We can celebrate but we still must all be diligent and strive to help bluebirds as we have in the past. Continue working hard on your backyard box or your bluebird trails to insure our beloved bluebirds’ future. To view the report, go to: www.stateofthebirds.org

Now is the time to plan for success with bluebirds in 2017. Here is my ultimate plan for insuring your best year ever with bluebirds! I encourage you to try this next season so let’s get started. Find an old forgotten bluebird trail and breathe new life into it. This is my all-time favorite thing to do and anyone can implement this plan. Your new bluebird trail can be as few as 4 bluebird boxes or as many as 20 plus boxes. Size has very little bearing on how much fun you are going to experience.

You may have to do some research to find your “diamond in the rough” old bluebird trail. When driving near your home check out small parks, schools, churches, golf courses, athletic fields, green space near housing developments (retention basins), hiking or rail trails, or wherever there are acres of mowed grass and open space. If you spot some old bluebird boxes along a fence row, be bold and check out their condition. Are some packed with nesting material? Are roofs missing? Are sides and floors missing? Is the roof cracked? Is the entrance hole enlarged to 2-3 inches? Are there recent cup-shaped nests or even bluebird eggs in some nests? Are many of the boxes on posts that are tilting 25-35 degrees out of plumb? Are some boxes...
on the ground? One can soon determine if this trail of boxes has been neglected and forgotten. If so, now you have to obtain permission to be the “new monitor”. Whether you are on private or public property, you need to have permission to be the new trail caretaker. This might take some time and energy but it will be worth it in the end.

Once you are given permission, it is time to assess which boxes need repairs, which boxes need to be replaced, and which are acceptable as is? Are they mounted correctly on smooth pipe and do they have predator guards? Do you want to add a couple of boxes to enlarge the trail? Number each box and get a trail notebook to keep records. You are now on-track for your best bluebird year ever. GOOD LUCK!!

Remember to mark April 7-8, 2017, on your calendar for the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Conference at Toftrees Resort, State College. Plan to attend next year’s conference and kick off your spring Bluebird season with educational speakers and fun auctions. Come and be a part of the excitement!

I would like to announce something special that the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania has achieved in the summer of 2016. When I became your BSP President in 2013, there were 15 counties in PA without a County Coordinator. One of my goals was to recruit 15 new C.C.’s and that has now been accomplished. 10 C.C.’s were contacted and signed up in my first year. This summer we still needed 5 additional County Coordinators: in Warren, Forest, Luzerne, Northumberland, and Philadelphia. Many of these counties currently had zero or few BSP members which made it a daunting task. I appointed a committee of three: Bill Wenger (Crawford Co.), Peter Reinhart (Lehigh Co.) and myself to follow leads, make contacts, and recruit those 5 at large C.C.’s. In about one month (June & July) we had the job completed as 5 outstanding bluebirders were signed up: Ben Rissinger (Northumberland Co.), Mark Ritke (Warren Co.), Margaret Rohde (Philadelphia Co.), Jim & Flo McGuire (Forest Co.), and Dr. Jeffrey Stratford (Luzerne Co.). I am very excited to welcome these fine people on board with BSP as they will make a measureable difference in their respective counties as C.C.’s. A big THANK YOU to Bill and Peter as it was a team effort to fill out our BSP C.C. Roster for ALL 67 counties.

May your days be filled with Blessings, Blue Skies and Bluebirds.

Dean C. Rust, DDS
President of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania
It has been a very active nesting season, and my six trails have produced many successful nestings of bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees, and house wrens. The weather was variable, starting with a very early warming trend, followed by lower temperatures with rainy periods, followed by several weeks of extreme heat, humidity, and then drought. This variable weather highlights the importance of nest boxes having adequate venting, roof overhang, and also drainage holes at the bottom of the box to allow any rain water that may get in, to drain out.

Through it all, the native songbirds managed to nest and to fledge their broods. Some trails had higher productivity and some had reduced number of bluebird fledges as compared to last year. Long periods of high temperatures and humidity followed by pop-up thunderstorms made it a challenge for the nesting songbirds to conduct their nesting activities, and for monitors to check the nest boxes. The most surprising of my nestings was a House wren nest in which the female only laid one egg and it hatched and successfully fledged. Since House wrens usually lay 6-8 eggs, seeing only one House wren egg was a big surprise.

The highlight of my nesting season happened on my birthday, July 9th, when I did the weekly check of the nest boxes in our yard. In the nest box in the front garden within 10 feet of the front porch, I discovered a full grass nest with one bluebird egg. The female laid a total of 3 eggs, all 3 hatched, and all 3 young successfully fledged—Yeah! Our yard is very wooded, so it is marginal bluebird habitat, and there is a lot of house wren activity.

This bluebird pair waited until the last broods of house wrens left, and then selected the nest box closest to the house. It was a pleasure watching the parents perch on the telephone line with their beaks full of insects and then enter the nest box to feed their young while I was enjoying my breakfast on the front porch. My best Birthday present ever!

In the Fall, I will need to relocate several nesting boxes, as the mowing practices on two of my trails have changed. I will no longer monitor nest boxes which are located in unmowed fields. Boxes located in high grass are more prone to predation from snakes, raccoons, and feral cats. High grass and wooded areas also increase the chances of picking up Ticks, which can cause a variety of serious medi-

**Newborn Tree Swallows in their feather bed**

Artist: Susan Renkel

continued on page 4
cal conditions. Before establishing new bluebird trails, in addition to receiving permission to place them, try to obtain a commitment from the landowner or park that the habitat will continue to be mowed or that they will provide mowed paths to and around the nest boxes to promote a safe location for the songbirds and for the people who will be checking the nest boxes.

I hope that your nest boxes were productive. Please remember to send in your Annual Nest Box Report to BSP, so that we can measure the collective results of our trails. The Annual Nest Box Report Form was included in the Summer issue, and is also available as a printable document on the BSP web site: www.thebsp.org Scroll to More...and then select Download Weekly and Annual Nest Box Report Forms by Clicking Here in the drop-down box. Then select the Annual Nest Box Report. Three reports received by October 15, 2016 will be included in a random drawing for your choice of prizes from the BSP Store.

Thank you so much for being an active member of BSP and for helping the bluebirds. People across PA and in neighboring states are reporting that they are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of bluebirds in their areas year-round. Other than providing nest boxes, two other vital needs of cavity-nesting songbirds are water and food sources. If you are planning to add any landscaping to your yard, please consider adding some native plants which produce fruits and berries. That will insure that a food supply will be available to the songbirds after the insects have become unavailable during the colder months of the year. Mealworms and suet during harsh winters are also good sources of nourishment. A water source, such as a heated birdbath will provide them with water to drink and also a place for them to bathe and preen their feathers. For a list of native plants which produce fruits and berries, view: http://www.sialis.org/plants.htm or www.nwf.org/garden

by Joan Watroba, BSP Editor

### BSP is 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**

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: sunshinebb@msn.com

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 ADDRESS CHANGE in the subject line-Thanks!

### House Wrens Paired Boxes Experience

This nesting season I have noticed that in three different trail locations, House wrens allowed other songbird species to nest in a nest box which was installed back to back to theirs. This has happened on three separate trails in 2 different counties: HW and TS-Cumberland County

HW and TS-Dauphin County

HW and BB -Dauphin County

However, they have removed nests/eggs and even young of other species if the boxes were placed individually. Not sure if pairing the nest boxes is the factor, if it is a timing issue, or if it is related to the level of aggressiveness of the individual House wrens.

If any of you have observed this behavior on your trails, please let me know-Thanks!

Joan Watroba, Editor
Eastern Bluebirds at Meadowlands Country Club located in Blue Bell, PA (Montgomery County) had a great nesting season this year! Of sixteen nesting boxes set up for native American birds, half were used by bluebirds. From April to August, female bluebirds laid a total of 44 blue eggs inside these nesting boxes (4-5 per each nesting). All but two of these eggs hatched – a high percentage of success. As soon as their eggs hatched, parent bluebirds began feeding their babies and the hatchlings grew into nestlings. Bluebird parents spent over two weeks feeding these nestlings, who grew large and strong. As soon as their feathers developed, the young bluebirds flew out under their own “wing power.” This is a remarkable and happy achievement, and it means that around Meadowlands fairways and adjacent areas, there are 42 new bluebirds. I saw one of the newly-fledged bluebirds when I monitored boxes on August 22nd.

It is a tribute to Superintendent Jim Lynagh and his team – especially Pat Madden, Jr. - that the grounds are kept as beautiful and Nature-friendly as they are. Birds at Meadowlands have access to food (insects and berries) and fresh water – which keep them healthy. Besides bluebirds, another bird species uses our nesting boxes – the Tree Swallow - a bird with dark blue feathers on its back and white feathers on its belly. Tree Swallows used the other half of the nesting boxes. We currently have about 30 new Tree Swallow youngsters that are dipping and swooping in flight to capture flying insects. Tree Swallows are dependent on “food in the air” – bugs, including mosquitoes, that have wings. Both bluebirds and swallows are beneficial to humans, as they eat all stages of insects. Golfers may have noticed the absence of mosquito bites – a result of Tree Swallows’ eating many of these annoying pests. Bluebirds are with us all year, while Tree Swallows fly south for the Winter.

The reason I keep the number of nesting boxes below 20 is that Eastern Bluebirds need large distances between nesting boxes. Bird experts have found that 300 yards of space should separate bluebird boxes from one another. Otherwise, the extra boxes may be taken over by non-native species such as House Sparrows. With regular monitoring (once a week), I was able to prevent the nesting of birds that are NOT native to this country. Before any eggs are laid by these species, I remove their nesting material. No eggs or birds are harmed. European Starlings and House Sparrows were brought in illegally to the U.S.A. and, unfortunately, both of them are destructive and wide-spread; they often kill bluebirds and swallows. Last year one of our Tree Swallows was decapitated by a House Sparrow. My monitoring resulted in NO bluebirds or swallows being harmed this year.

I thank everyone who supported my work at Meadowlands this summer. I also thank Ann Goodman, who helped me with monitoring throughout the summer. It is a pleasure to work with all of you – to contribute to the lovely terrain and natural environment – and to add to the enjoyment of playing golf by attracting some of our most treasured birds – the Eastern Bluebird and the Tree Swallow.

Marilyn Michalski
Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania
BSP Board Member & Trail Monitor


Hosted by Steve Gilbertson-Includes the following nestbox plans: • Gilwood Nestbox plans • Gilfort Nestbox plans • Xbox Nestbox plans • PVC nestbox.
Upcoming Events

Pennsylvania Farm Show
January 7th – January 14, 2017
Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex
2300 N. Cameron Street
Harrisburg, PA,
Website: http://www.farmshow.state.pa.us/
Hours:
January 7-13: 9 a.m.-9:00 p.m.
January 14: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Volunteers are needed to host the BSP Educational/BSP Store Booth
This may be the 15th year that BSP has been participating in this event!
Set-up of the BSP Booth will be on Wed. Jan 4th.
Our box-building event will be held on Friday - January 13th.
from 12 noon to 2pm.
Contact Nancy Putt, Event Chair at 717-432-2647 or e-mail: bluebirds@pa.net to volunteer for a time slot.
BSP will refund parking fee for those who can fill a 4 hour time slot.
THANKS in advance for helping to educate others about bluebirds. New volunteers are always welcome, and you will be assisting another one of our volunteers who have helped us in the past. It is a great opportunity to learn about bluebirds!
It is a fun event for the entire family, with interesting events, demonstrations, a variety of animals, vendors, and offers wonderful Pennsylvania food choices in the Food Court.

BSP Board Meetings for 2017
Location: Giant Foods-Upstairs Community Room
Camp Hill Shopping Center,
3301 E. Trindle Road, Camp Hill, PA
January 26-Thursday evening-6:00 p.m.
April 27- Thursday evening-6:00 pm
July 27- Thursday evening-6:00 pm
Oct. 26- Thursday evening-6:00 pm
Please plan to attend 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.
Dean’s contact phone number 717-669-0167 or e-mail: july7ds@aol.com
• Come and join us at our meetings.
All meeting dates listed above and below are open to all members and to the public.

Next BSP Board 2016 Meeting
October 27, 2016 6:00 p.m.
Giant Community Room, Camp Hill

BSP Annual Conference
April 7-8, 2017
Save The Date!
Toftrees Resort
State College, PA
www.toftrees.com
The BSP Annual Conference offers excellent speakers, demonstrations, vendors and an opportunity to learn from and socialize with people who share your love of bluebirds and enjoy the wonders of the natural world. A special mailing regarding the conference, including registration information and itinerary will be sent out to all active BSP Members in January 2017. More information will also be posted in upcoming newsletters and on the web site: www.thebsp.org as details become available.

County Coordinator News

Happy to report that all 67 counties in PA now have County Coordinators who volunteer to assist those in their counties by providing information regarding bluebirds and their nesting and habitat needs.

NEW BSP COUNTY COORDINATORS:

Forest County:
Flo and Jim Mcquire 814-755-3672
e-mail: fmcguire1@verizon.net

Luzerne County
Dr. Jeffrey Stratford, PhD
570-332-2942
jeffrey.stratford@wilkes.edu

Philadelphia County:
Margaret Rohde 973-271-4375
margaret@wwwa.org

Northumberland County:
Ben Rissinger
570-758-4771
570-850-8418
e-mail: jer43@comcast.net

Warren County:
Mark Ritke 814-676-4747
Bluebirdsunlimit@aol.com
TODAY AUGUST 11th about 11:30AM, I stepped outside and felt the suffocating oppressive heat on a full sunny day. I thought about Bluebirds on this day and how HOT it may be?? inside a box in full sun. Immediately I went over to check my neighbor’s bluebird box with three, 10 to 12 day old nestlings. I took my Craftsman Infrared Thermometer along and a large golf umbrella. I “shot” the back wall temperature of the box...105.4°. Tried a 2nd reading ...104.8°. Not good!

I put up the umbrella with 3 elastic cords and shot the temps again. After 10 min I got a 103.6° and a 103.2°. Then I cracked open the side door and temps were still over 100°+ after ten minutes.

I went home and got some hardware cloth and opened the door full open and screwed the metal screen in place. Temps immediately went to 98.8°, 97.6°, 96.8°. This is good.

I left the umbrella in place and the door fully open to get ambient temperatures inside the nest box.

Fully-feathered nestlings in this heat are very vulnerable to high heat. Remember 106° is lethal!

Some days we get very comfortable in our air-conditioned homes and cars and we forget about the temperatures our bluebirds are dealing with. The forecast for the next several days is even higher temperatures! You can bet I am going to be checking box temps daily.

Dean C. Rust
President of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

Editor’s Note: Per Dean, the three bluebirds successfully fledged—Yeah!

With global warming, excessive heat in nest boxes will be a growing concern for cavity-nesting songbirds and will also have a dramatic effect on the food supply and migration patterns of songbirds.

A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken.

James Dent
BSP Mailbag

To BSP:
Two beautiful blue miracles appeared in my yard and set up a nest in my nesting box in my the field, which is close to my home, so I had entertainment watching them with binoculars all day long for three weeks...Noticed house sparrows, made a sparrow spooker, which worked perfectly! Monitored the nest, went to the hardware store and got an Audubon baffle which kept raccoons away! Went on vacation to our camp on an island but came home every day in the boat to make sure bluebirds had two servings of mealworms to help them feed their babies! Oh yes, I am totally committed to helping these beautiful magical whimsical birds.

The babies fledged, when I was at work. I was so sad I did not get to see this beautiful wonder that I had worked so hard on to ensure their safety, I only saw the parents getting meal worms for them and flying up into the heights of trees to feed the babies, they were here for four days and then completely disappeared, do you know where they went? I thought I would see them around–we have 5 acres of land and live in the country–I have not seen them or heard them–any ideas? I'm always walking, I'm always listening, and I have not heard any bluebird chatter!

Wish someone could tell me where they went! About a week after they left I looked up on a particular dead limb in a Pine Tree where they would always sit together and watch their nesting box and there was a bluebird looking at me fluffing his feathers as if to say we are all OK, I only had 10 seconds to watch him and then he flew away. I pray they come back, where did they go? And will they come back?

Julie from Maine

Hi Julie,
I enjoyed your email and wanted to respond. They may return in the Fall, but rest assured they are happy and free. I know how you feel, we fall in love with them and want to see them around. Seek great satisfaction that they fledged and that you were a part of their lives and success. Whether the same bluebirds return or not, just remember you did your part and now the bluebirds will live on, see, these bluebirds would not exist if it weren’t for wonderful landlords like you.

Harry Schmeider,
BSP Webmaster

Dear Joan,
Here’s a small note from my neck of the woods… This is the first time in many years that I have had no bluebirds in my boxes. This is really unusual, but I did have swallows in one box—they dive-bombed me every time I came near their box, but I think that their babies successfully fledged. However, I have had bluebird joy after all. Bluebirds keep coming to the bird bath and feeder and surprisingly on June 8th, there appeared two bluebird fledglings waiting to be fed. They have kept coming ever since, and are now almost as big as their parents. They are precious, and make me so happy. I did have a pair of house sparrows early in March and took care of them right away. Thankfully, I have not had many sparrows this year and also tried the monofilament method on one box. So far so good. House wrens have been busy building dummy nests in one Box-Grrrr! They are very persistent and can do a lot of damage to other birds-double Grrr. I keep hoping I might have bluebirds later this summer—we’ll see.

Gail Getz,
Juniata County
BSP Mailbag

I loved the Summer BSP newsletter, particularly the bluebird coloring page. I started this hobby in March and have enjoyed the time spent. I particularly like when flowers are in the picture. I thought you might like to see what I just finished and I wanted to extend my appreciation for including this opportunity in the newsletter.

Best wishes,
Mary Ellen Tarman

Hi Mary Ellen-Love your completed coloring page! Gorgeous! Thanks for sending it to me. I would really like to post your rendering in the Fall/Winter issue along with your message. It will inspire others to get out their coloring supplies and create their own beautiful images. We hope to include the coloring page as a regular feature of our publication.

Joan

Hi Joan, thank you for your nice letter. Chuck Musser stopped by Friday morning and I showed it to him. He said he had made copies for his grandkids to color so your page is apparently very popular. The flowers I colored are supposed to be rugosa roses. It was a bit hard to get the vibrancy of the roses and the bluebird and the effort makes one appreciate what artists are capable of...I just color between the lines. The pencils I used were Prismacolors and Faber-Castell polychromos. They are soft and blend well. Again, thank you for the wonderful newsletters. They just keep getting better in appearance and the information is so important.

Best wishes,
Mary Ellen
Hi Joan.
Is this new egg a problem? It’s the speckled one on top. I’m concerned as the parents aren’t around. Please advise any recommendations. Thanks.
Sincerely, Sue Zalesky Date: 6/13/16

Sue,
That large speckled egg was laid by a Brown-headed Cowbird. Brown-headed cowbirds are considered brood parasites; they lay their eggs in the nests of other species and have completely lost the ability to construct nests and incubate eggs. The female cowbird lays eggs in the active nests of many songbirds, both in open nests and even in nest boxes. They may remove one or more eggs of the host species and replace them with their own eggs. If this happens, the original nesting parents may remove the speckled egg(s) from their nests, some will abandon their nesting activities altogether, and in other cases, the songbird will incubate the cowbird egg along with their own eggs and will even feed and fledge the young cowbird(s). The incubation period of the cowbird is shorter than that of the host species, so it will hatch first and grow faster. This may cause the smaller nestlings to starve.

A common sight is to see a small songbird parent feeding a much larger, vocal bird which is the young cowbird fledgling. I have seen both Goldfinches and House finches feeding this much larger cowbird fledgling. The cowbird does not depend exclusively on a single host species; it has been known to parasitize over 220 different species of North American birds and therefore spreads its impact across many populations. In many cases, the female will dump individual eggs in multiple nesting sites.

Since Cowbirds are primarily seed eaters, avoid offering millet or other types of small seeds found in the less-expensive bird seed blends so that they will not be attracted to your habitat by your bird feeders. Offer a supply of mealworms so that the bluebird parents will have an easier time feeding their entire brood. Let me know if the bluebird parents return.

Joan

Follow up:

Hi Joan.
I’m happy to report that the bluebirds did return. They built a new nest on top of the old one (eggs and all). There are four new bluebird eggs. I will keep you posted. We have 4 bluebird nestlings!

Susan Zalesky
Greetings to you, Dean.

Brethren Village is alive with bluebirds this year! We have 22 boxes on our trail and have or have had a total of 6 bluebird nests. I have counted 20 bluebird eggs.

One nest has fledged 3 young bluebirds. We have seen an adult male and female feeding young, fluffy bluebirds as they light on top of the shepherd’s crook that holds our feeders. There are 2 nests with young ones, one of which had 4 eggs; the other 5. When I opened the one with 5 on Tuesday, mama wasn’t anywhere in sight, but there were 3 little beaks opened up waiting for something to eat.

One box had a partial bluebird nest in for 3 weeks, unchanged, so I cleared it out. The next week there was a full bluebird nest in that box with 4 eggs and the mama flew out of the box when I opened it.

I don’t know what to do about the one bluebird nest in a box up by the BV garden and the tree line behind the garden. When I opened the box I discovered a bluebird nest with 3 bluebird eggs and lots of small ants swarming over the box. I brushed off as many as I could but I don’t know what to do to get rid of them without interfering with mama bluebird and her job. I hope she doesn’t abandon the eggs because of the ants. Any suggestions?

We also have 4 tree swallow nests and 2 wren nests. If I see one of these flying around I don’t bother to open the box as Marion and I got dive-bombed by one of the tree swallows last year.

A few weeks ago I found a dead adult tree swallow in one of the boxes on the retention basin along Fieldcrest Drive. Not sure what happened there.

Hope you are enjoying monitoring your hundreds of boxes. You are much stronger physically than I, that’s for sure!

I love the surprises each time I open a box and find bluebird eggs. It is always a pleasure to return a week later to see nature’s progress.

Thank you for your guidance and support of bluebirds.

Gloria

Mountain Bluebird in Idaho
I got to see my first Mountain Bluebird in Idaho and got lucky. I took a new nestbox along that Phil (Durgin) made for me to give to her. I’ll let you know if she gets a bird in it. Probably will get Tree Swallows first, as she lives on a lake. I really was thrilled!

Kathy Clark

How to deal with ANTS in active bluebird nests when nestlings are present.
This is a common problem bluebird monitors face quite often and quick action is mandatory.

1 - remove the whole nest with the nestlings from the nestbox and place in a small 6” x 6” cardboard or plastic container

2 - remove the nestlings one by one and place them in a 4” peat pot or nesting cup away from the old nest

3 - direct your attention to the nestbox and whisk away ALL ants from the interior and exterior with a 3” paintbrush and then dust the floor of the box with Diatomaceous earth and place some at the base of the mounting pole

4 - now check the nestlings and make sure all ants are brushed off of them
BSP Mailbag

5 - check the old nest and shake ants from it; if the nest is just rolling and moving with ants, discard that nest; now is the time when you can use that nest that you saved from last year when it was late in the season and no eggs were laid or you can fashion a new “cup-shaped” nest from some dried grasses

6 - lightly dust some Diatomaceous earth into the new nest and place it back the nestbox

7 - gently add the nestlings back into the nest one by one

8 - final step is to add a 1 inch band of sticky Tanglefoot to the pole just beneath the box; just under the stovepipe baffle is a great place; this will stop any ants from entering or exiting the nest box area

9 - check the nestbox within 24 hours to see how the nestlings are doing and if your ant technique was successful; repeat some of the steps if there are still some troublesome ANTS present

Dean

Hey Joan,
Here’s a pic of some baby bluebirds nesting in one of our boxes. I thought you’d like to see it. Thanks for introducing me to the world of Bluebirds!

Nick Furfaro

photo by Nick Furfaro

BSP Newsletter Submission Contest

BSP Newsletter Submission Contest Winner

Congratulations! Gail Getz

Please select an item from the BSP Store at www.thebsp.org and then call BSP Store Manager, Doris at (717) 766-3877 to arrange for the delivery of your prize.

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 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.

2 To submit by regular mail, Write: Attn: Newsletter Submission Contest on the front of the envelope and send to:
BSP, P.O.
Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-0756

To submit by e-mail, include Newsletter Submission Contest in the subject line of your e-mail and e-mail to:
sunshinebb@msn.com

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

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.
A Bird’s Eye View for Downingtown Students

This spring, approximately 600 Downingtown 4th and 5th grade students learned all about the plight of Bluebirds as well as other small cavity nesters. A slide presentation was given by Nancy Fraim, Chester County Coordinator for the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania. Fifty-three nest boxes were made and donated to the schools by Ken Leister, BSP State Coordinator.

The project didn’t end there. For twelve weeks, students monitored each box and recorded their observations of nest building, egg laying and finally fledging.

Students were encouraged to submit an essay convincing their parents why they needed a nest box in their backyard. A total of twenty-four more Bluebird boxes were donated to the essay winners. Through this program, BSP hopes that the students gain a lifelong love for Bluebirds.

Nancy Fraim-BSP County Coordinator/Chester County

Nominate Your Favorite Bluebirder for a BSP Award

Please help us to recognize individuals or groups who you feel have greatly contributed to bluebird education and/or who have promoted the nesting success of bluebirds and other native songbirds. Award categories are:

- Bluebirder of the Year
- Blue Feather Awards
- Letters of Commendation.

Please include a brief write-up regarding your nominee, and include their name, county, and their contact information. Awards will be presented at the annual BSP Conference to be held on April 7th and 8th, 2017. Recipients do not need to be present to receive their award, but it would be great if they can receive their award in person during the Award Presentation on April 8th. Also 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, 2017 — Thanks!
Reason why Junior Members joined BSP:

“I would like to find out how I can make our yard more bluebird friendly.” Emma

“I want to learn more about bluebirds.” Amber

“I like bluebirds” Jackson

“Interested in birds.” Julia

“I like birds and learning about them.” Suhaana

“Help the bluebirds.” Rhiannon

“Interest in bluebirds.” Brady

“I would like to be a junior member because I like birds and would like to help them.” Ishika

“I like bluebirds and want to help them.” Ishmael

“To help bluebirds in need of homes and shelter.” Gavin

“I want to get a bluebird box for my house.” Ryan


“Because I would love to observe these fascinating creatures in my very own backyard.” Sophie

“So I can increase the population of the bluebirds.” Nolan

“I want to help the birds because we really need them and they are pretty.” Jake

“Because I get to learn all about bluebirds.” Rylee

“to help the population of bluebirds increase.” Benjamin

“Fun and interesting.” Preston

“Because I care for bluebirds.” Cassy

“I would like to be a member because I really enjoy birds. I have two of my own. I would like to stay in touch if I have any questions.” Leah

“I would like to be a member because I would like to learn and save the Eastern Bluebird.” Jessica

“I love bluebirds! And I really want to help them and other birds get their homes. I love researching and science too.” Faith

“I love all birds.” Megan

“I want to help and protect bluebirds.” Ava

“I want to help them to survive.” Alex

First Bluebirds

Hi Mrs. Michalski,
I wanted you to know that there is a bluebird family living in a hanging gourd at my house. We have never had bluebird family live here before.
I did receive my first newsletter.
Thanks,
Gwenyth Fitzpatrick

Editor’s Message:
A hanging gourd provides a nesting site for bluebirds as long as the entrance hole is large enough-1 and 1/2 inches in diameter. However, most of the decorative ones do not have an opening to allow monitoring or cleaning out and may not have drainage holes to allow rain water to drain out. Due to their placement high in a tree, it may also be difficult to reach them to monitor.
Other than that, they can provide a suitable nesting cavity. The ones designed for Purple Martins do have a large access opening to allow for monitoring and cleanout. The one in the photo looks like a decorative one, but it is successfully hosting a bluebird nesting pair.
More Junior Member reasons for joining BSP:

Colby Welsh
“So I can learn more about, how to take care of bluebirds, and learn about different birds.”

Beracah Peng
“I like taking care of the bluebird boxes at school.”

Hazel Roane
Why I Should Have a Birdhouse:
“I think I should have a bird house because since I’ve been 4 years old my grandma’s been teaching me all about birds. We also used to have a birdhouse that I took care of every day, but since we moved, we decided to leave it at the old house to make the birds happy. Even though we don’t have any birdhouses or nests, I still check around my house every day to check on the birds. I record their sounds and take pictures. The one I take the most pictures of is a group of chickadees living in our neighborhood. I just love the chirp, chirp patterns of the birds’ songs. I can even talk to mourning doves; they say ‘who-who-who-who’. I will be one of the people to try to make the world a better place, and tell friends too. Thanks for helping, your nature-care girl. Hazel.

Leah Lacovara
“I would like to be a Junior Member because I have two birds at home and a bluebird box soon, so I would like someone to ask if I have any questions.”

“I, My name is Leah Lacovara in Mrs. Martin’s class. I have a couple reasons why I think I should have the lovely bluebird house you made. First, I have two parakeets at home that sometimes get very lonely. So I was thinking if I put it in my backyard and keep my window open they could have someone to talk to (One of my birds is named Blue.) Second, my family is quiet and very respectful to nature. Third, the place where I am thinking about putting it is quiet with lots and lots of trees, grubs, and space. Last, Nature has always made me happy, especially birds. That’s why I have two of my own. I know I want to do something for them, and this is it. From a bird fan, Leah.

P.S. My neighborhood is coyote and fox-free.

I saw a bluebird on my deck.”

Drawing of male bluebird saying “I want a home.”

Thank you again, BYE, Chirp”

Connor Riley
“Bird Box Essay: I would like to have the bluebird box because I want to help the backyard bird count; I think I would be a responsible person because I’m in Scouts. I would like to help scientists know the bird population. By getting the bluebird box, I can give scientist the information I got from the bird box. That will help them learn more about this little bird and get them closer to knowing the bird population. I know I’ll be responsible for taking care of the bluebird box because I take care of my Grandma’s dog. I have to feed the dog, give her water, play with her, take her for walks and pick up her poop. All of that is hard work, even picking up her poop. So I take full responsibility and a bonus is that I can earn money, but most importantly, I get to spend time with my Grandma’s dog.

Scouts teaches kids how to help take care of the environment, nature, animals, and ourselves. I also love to learn and explore nature and I am always interested in many different species of animals I come across when exploring. I think that being in Scouts gives me a lot of experience in caring for Mother Nature and it is something I love to do.

Wanting to help scientists, being responsible, and helping the environment and animals are all the reasons why I would like to have the bluebird box, and I feel that I would do a great job with the bluebird box.”

Joao Dias
“Because I like watching birds.”

Isaac B. Beiler
“Wish to learn all I can about bluebirds.”

Samuel F. Stoltzfus, Jr.
“I have a trail and monitor the boxes. I am still learning but want to learn more.”

Ivan Volkov
“I Love Nature and Birds!”

Ethan David Burda
“We all love birds and nature.”

Mallory Readinger
“I like to check bluebird boxes with my neighbor Kate. I also raise mealworms in my room for the bluebirds.”
Flipper House Sparrow Trap

Research Updates — Chuck Musser, BSP Research Chair

The flipper trap is an inbox, repeating, self-setting trap. It is designed to catch house sparrows when they try to take over bluebird boxes, any time of the year. Its size is designed so that bluebirds cannot enter (entrance hole is 1 and 3/16 inches in diameter) but House sparrows can. The new design will let smaller, native songbirds, such as wrens and chickadees enter and exit safely. This design shouldn’t allow too many non-targeted birds to get caught. This is a live catch trap. I have caught 6 or 7 house sparrows in the same nesting box in one day. When house sparrows try to take over, it’s best to let part of the nest in the box. Usually you will end up getting both male and female sparrows within a day. The newest trap is constructed with Trex material which decks are mostly made out of.

Please let me know if you need any additional information. Thanks!
Chuck Musser (717) 367-3548

Editor’s Note:
Per Chuck, it is extremely important to closely monitor any type of House sparrow trap to make sure that you have not captured a native species and also to quickly remove and dispose of the House sparrows to avoid prolonged stress to the captured bird.

What’s Sitting on Your Bluebird Box?

Submitted by Dean Rust
BSP President

Editor’s Note:
Dean had asked Jack Hubley, noted Naturalist, for confirmation of identifying this hawk. Per Jack-Yes, that’s a young red-tailed hawk - not much of a threat to your bluebirds. Redtails don’t have the acceleration and agility to catch small songbirds. The smaller, bird-catching accipitrine hawks - Cooper’s and sharp-shinned hawks - are the species your bluebirds need to be on the lookout for.

Red-tailed Hawk at Lancaster Country Club Bluebird Trail
Maddie the Coonhound
Old Stove-Bluebird Theme
Hi Joan,
This old stove is over 100 years old. It is one of many antiques that decorate the historical setting at the 419 Market Cafe & Eatery in Orwigsburg, PA (Schuylkill County)

photo by Kathy Miller

You will love this video!
Check out this wonderful video from the Cavity Conservation Initiative, which highlights the importance of retaining dead or dying trees to preserve cavity-dwelling species and their habitats. Brian Paige’s voice is perfect in this story. Enjoy.

Family bath!
Hello Dean,
I hope you like this photo. I was super excited to see these beautiful birds again. I also wanted to Thank you again for showing me the nest box and the eggs that day! It meant the world to me!

I became a member back at the Native Plant sale at the Overlook park and was down there on Saturday the 18th and was able to get these shots of the bluebirds.
Sincerely,
Robyn Waugh, Bluebird Society Member

Greg Pearsall

photo by Robyn Waugh
Mountain Bluebird Coloring Page
BSP Membership/Renewal Form

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

2016 BSP MEMBERSHIP RATE INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>Regular/Family</th>
<th>Organization/Corporate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year -$10</td>
<td>1 yr.-$12</td>
<td>1 yr.-$15</td>
<td>1 yr.-$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years-$25</td>
<td>3 yrs.-$30</td>
<td>3 yrs.-$40</td>
<td>3 yrs.-$275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime sponsor</td>
<td>$375</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 __________ Country (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

Paid by:  ☐ Cash  ☐ Check  ☐ Money Order

Website: www.thebsp.org
Recipe for Yummy Suet for Birds

- 1 pound of lard (available in a tub)
- 18 ounces of crunchy peanut butter
- Heat the above ingredients in a large pan on the stove on low heat until they are mixed together. Remove from heat.
- Mix in: one 2 lb. bag of yellow corn meal.
- Optional add-ins: raisins, shelled sunflower seeds.
- Refrigerate until using.
- Serve in a log feeder or on a flat tray from October through April.

Photo and Recipe submitted by Chuck Musser