



Bluebird Trails & Tales

The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania
An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

• Volume 26, Issue 1 Spring 2024 • www.thebsp.org • Editor: Joan Watroba • bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com



See you at the BSP Conference April 19-20! Pages 10-11 and www.thebsp.org

A Message from the President

Dr. Dean C. Rust, BSP President

BLUEBIRDING BLUES

I would like to share one of my favorite quotes. These words were penned by Dorene Scriven in her book, *Bluebird Trails – A Guide to Success*, 1999. I closed the last page of my own Bluebird book with her most eloquent words.

“Be forewarned: once you have attracted the first beautiful devoted pair of Bluebirds, you are trapped! Your life will change! You will be beguiled by their beauty, their courtship and their loving care of their young. The ‘time you couldn’t spare’ will be spent watching them, worrying about them, constantly improving your trail, moving your boxes, solving problems, outwitting predators and boasting to anyone who will listen that you have helped bring “your own” beautiful blue thrushes into a better world!”

~ Dorene Scriven

When you make that first decision to put up a Bluebird nest box, you are embarking on a foray into a challenging and incredibly rewarding effort of grassroots Bluebird conservation. Like Dorene Scriven, I want to give you some advance warning. You are going to experience some incredible highs on your journey of Bluebirding as well as some serious heartache and low points. Just be prepared for a gratifying experience overall with some dark times sprinkled in.

My first recommendation is to install a certified Bluebird nest box on a smooth conduit pole in an open area where Bluebirds can fly in from 360 degrees. The

box can be a height of 5 to 6 feet so you can monitor the box easily. Be sure to add a predator guard such as a cone or stovepipe baffle – this will deter snakes and raccoons. Another device that will ensure a safe nesting experience is to add a second line of defense -- a Noel Guard. This “dual protection” will give your box the absolute best chance of FLEDGING Bluebirds without a sudden and demoralizing “predation raid” on an innocent nest of eggs or chicks!!

Even when all technical precautions are taken when installing a nest box or a series of nest boxes, we still have to deal with the wiles of Mother

Nature. At times she can be unreasonably cruel. For instance, in early spring (April) in Pennsylvania, we can have three complete days of incessant rain. Raining all night and then raining all day for days on end is a big problem! Adding to the rainfall is a companion of brisk wind and low temperatures (45 to 48 degrees). Nests



Male Bluebird
by Mike Brown

>> A Message from the President continues on page 2

A Message from the President continued from page 1

can get damp from the blowing rain and bird food is diminished. All insects, spiders and caterpillars have been washed down into the mud and the Bluebird parents can barely find food for themselves and they begin to panic. THIS IS A DANGEROUS PERIOD OF TIME.

Nestlings can get chilled and they become hypothermic as their body temperature drops. They are weak, hungry and start to slip away. Normally they need to be fed every 10 minutes and it has been 24 hours since they had any nourishment. The parents become frantic not knowing what to do. Like a general anesthetic, the whole group of nestlings fall into a permanent sleep simultaneously. This can happen in your back yard with a single box or it can happen on a Bluebird trail. Incessant rain, low temperatures, wind in the early spring plus lack of insects is a deadly combination to lose a clutch of young chicks.

Sometimes humans get involved with your Bluebird trail! Two years ago at Lancaster County Central Park where I have a trail on Golf Road, a tree needed to be trimmed near one of my boxes. The park maintenance staff dropped some limbs from the tree and a big 8" limb struck my Bluebird house and knocked it to the ground. It also split the roof in half. The timing was unfortunate in that I had a full Bluebird nest in that box with eggs. As I walked up to see my "grounded box", I noticed it was twisted on its side with half of the broken roof in the grass. To make things even more interesting, a House Wren had already started building a stick nest filling in the gap in the roof.

I opened the box and peered inside. All 4 eggs seemed fine with none broken? That was amazing to me! I installed the box back up on the post and pulled out the sticks. I repaired the broken roof with Gorilla tape and cleared away some of the broken limbs. Everything seemed to be in order and I decided to wait and see what happens next?

In about 45 minutes a mother Bluebird visited the box and went inside. My work was completed and now it was time to see what nature can do. In checking that

box one week later the chicks had hatched and were growing. Two weeks later four Bluebirds FLEDGED!! Another success story!

Sometimes avian predators attack your precious, serene, family Bluebird nest. This attack occurred four years ago at the Lancaster Country Club on box #27. It was an early spring morning and I was at the halfway mark of my trail at LCC. When I approached the box it seemed that there was something blue just inside the entrance? As I got closer, I saw that it was the exact color of a male Bluebird. When I opened the side door, I noticed that the nest had been "roughed up" and I saw the dead father Blue at the top of the nest almost blocking the entrance. I removed the deceased bird and was surprised to see a baby chick about 7 days old in the nest. Now I am really intrigued as to what exactly is going on??



Bluebird Eggs

After some housekeeping on the nest itself, I put the youngster back in the nest and waited. I parked my golf cart about 20 feet away and pondered what I had just encountered. 15-20 minutes later a visitor showed up and sat on the roof. It was a female Bluebird – it was the mother and she had something in her mouth. This mother survived the "predatorial raid" and had been feeding the nestling for a whole week. Unable to remove the deceased father, she just worked around him and continued to feed the sole surviving young Bluebird. She probably had even "brooded" the nestling at night for the first week. This story describes the love, resiliency, "never give up attitude" and dedication that Bluebird parents have for their young. I often ponder this entire scenario and how the mother could not lift the deceased father so she just ignored

>> *A Message from the President continues on page 5*

In This Issue

A Message from the President1-2, 5

In This Issue 3

BSP Officers/Board of Directors 3

BSP Chairpersons..... 4

Our Mission Statement 4

BSP Newsletter Submission Contest/Winner 5

From the Editor (Why Some Bluebird Eggs Don't Hatch)6-7

Tributes to Doris Hoffman and Ernie Laslow8-9

Mailbag 9

Upcoming events - Mark Your Calendars10-11

Events Report.....12-13

New Payment Option for BSP 14

New Bluebird Trail Near King's College 15

2024 BSP County Coordinators16-17

My Little Buddy - This Carolina Wren..... 18

BSP Financial Report 18

New BSP Bluebird Guidebook is Available..... 19

Bluebirds hold a key towards a happier and healthier life20-21

Excerpts from the 2023 Bureau of State Parks Cavity-Nesting
Trails Summary Report..... 21

2023 BSP Nestbox Report Results22-23

BSP Membership Form..... 24



Photo Credit - Sheryl Smith

BSP Officers

President
DEAN RUST 2024
 July7ds@aol.com
 717-669-0167

Vice President

Secretary
NANCY PUTT 2023
 bluebirds@pa.net
 717-712-3951

Treasurer
PHIL DURGIN 2025
 pdurgin@comcast.net
 717-732-5325

Board of Directors

NANCY FRAIM 2024
 nancyfrait@comcast.net
 610-873-7454

KEN LEISTER 2025
 kenapeg@aol.com
 610-696-5271

MARILYN MICHALSKI 2025
 emeraldmm@verizon.net
 610-933-0497

DAN THOMAS 2024
 adthomas10@comcast.net
 717-786-7893

*BSP Thanks **Terry Gerhart** for his many years of service as Board Member and BSP County Coordinator. He and his family have relocated out of state to be closer to their children and grandchildren.*

BSP Chairpersons

Newsletter Editor/Auction

JOAN WATROBA

bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com
717 766 2102

State Coordinator

MARILYN MICHALSKI

emeraldmm@verizon.net
610 933 0497

PA Farm Show

NANCY PUTT

bluebirds@pa.net
717 712 3951

Nominations/Elections

VACANT

Membership

NANCY FRAIM

nancyfrain@comcast.net
610 873 7454

Finance

PHIL DURGIN

pdurgin@comcast.net
717 732 5325

2024 Conference

WILMA LIGHT

lightgarden515@gmail.com
724 331 1800

Annual Report Chair

MARILYN MICHALSKI

emeraldmm@verizon.net
610 933 0497

Research

CHUCK MUSSER

chasmusser@aol.com
717 367 3548

Merchandise Manager

SUSAN DURGIN

susandurgin@gmail.com
717 614 7077

Promotion/Ned Smith Day

PHILIP DURGIN

pdurgin@comcast.net
717 732 5325

Publication

TINA KAUFFMAN

717 328 3902

Our Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania is simple, yet powerful:

1. Provide and promote educational activities relating to bluebirds, birding, conservation and related subjects.
2. Monitor and conduct research relating to bluebirds, other cavity nesting birds, food sources, habitats, and trails.
3. Build, maintain, and monitor bluebird boxes and trails.
4. Provide opportunities for people to become involved in efforts that assist bluebirds and other native bird species.
5. Provide social opportunities to share information and experiences relating to bluebirds and related conservation topics.



Male Bluebird with Claim Straw
Photo Credit: Maria Prentice

Webmasters

LISA FETTERMAN

lfette7464@aol.com
484 354 8705

and

NANCY FRAIM

nancyfrain@comcast.net
610 873 7454

Speakers Bureau

JOANNA TAYLOR

bluebirdjoanna@gmail.com
772 559 3216

Website Videographer

SHIRLEY RUST

july7ds@aol.com
717 669 0167

Website Photographer

DICK HESS

aa3hv1@verizon.net
570 437 2755

Junior Membership

MARILYN MICHALSKI

emeraldmm@verizon.net
610 933 0497

Woodworking

DEAN RUST

july7ds@aol.com
717 669 0167

Publicity

NANCY FRAIM

nancyfrain@comcast.net
610 873 7454

BSP Awards

DEAN RUST

july7ds@aol.com
717 669 0167

and

KEN LEISTER

kenapeg@aol.com
610 696 5271

If you have an interest in serving as Committee Chair for any Vacant Committee Position, please contact us.

A Message from the President continued from page 2

him and carried on with her maternal instincts.

The end of the story is happy. The young Bluebird FLEDGED about two weeks later. When I visit this particular box at LCC, “happy-sad memories” always flood back into my consciousness. I will never forget the experience!

***Check out my website:

www.bluebirdconservation.com and read my article on “How to Monitor a Bluebird Box or Trail”

“The warm and rewarding feeling of regularly checking the Bluebirds through their nesting cycle should be reason enough for monitoring your backyard box or trail. Bluebirds are one of the few birds that readily accept human help and continuous observation. They enjoy human interaction and can even be trained to come to your yard for mealworms at the ringing of a bell or whistle. Walking your trail should not be considered work, but a privilege. It is rewarding to know that you are really making a difference.

Finally -- it is time for the real excitement. Spring comes and nests are built, eggs are laid and the life they contain bursts out! You get to witness it all!”

EXPERIENCE THE JOY THAT ONLY A BLUEBIRD CAN BRING!

Dean C. Rust, DDS

January 2024

President of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania



Female Bluebird incubating eggs



Male Bluebird
by Mike Brown

BSP Newsletter Submission Contest/Winner

Congratulations, Holly Merker! You will receive a full year of BSP Membership.

We encourage our members to submit newsletter items to us. To submit by regular mail, send to: Joan Watroba, 2408 Bumble Bee Hollow Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 or submit email submissions to: bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com

One submission is randomly drawn at the cutoff date for each seasonal issue: January 7, May 7, and September 7.

From the Editor *by Joan Watroba*

Why Some Bluebird Eggs Don't Hatch

Although I have been monitoring bluebird boxes for more than 25 years, I am still thrilled by the sight of light blue, or sometimes white bluebird eggs cradled in a cupped nest made of fine grass or pine needles. For the past two nesting seasons on one of my bluebird trails, a female bluebird laid two clutches of white eggs. Per NABS, about 4-5% of bluebirds lay white eggs. If a female lays white eggs, she always will.

Each bluebird egg is very special, as it represents the potential for a new bluebird to be born, successfully fledge, and even reach maturity to bring even more bluebirds into the world. When all of the eggs in a clutch **do** hatch, it is a wonderful sight. However, in many instances, some eggs **don't** hatch. It may be that some eggs in the same nest **do** hatch and others **don't**, or it may be that **none** of the eggs in the clutch hatch. In Eastern bluebird nests, about 17% of eggs **do not** hatch.

Cornell's The Birdhouse Network says that 10-15% of nests contain unhatched eggs. By monitoring the nestbox every week, we are able to verify if the eggs hatched or not, because sometimes the parent removes the unhatched eggs.

The number of eggs laid per clutch varies -the average number is 5, but it can be 3, 4, or even 6. If there is another female in the habitat, she may "dump" her eggs in another nest if her nesting site is no longer available to her. In those instances, there may be even more than 6 eggs in a nest.

There are many factors which affect the hatching of eggs:

Weather-Extreme temperatures-either cold or hot can affect the viability of the embryo and prevent it from developing. Since the female bluebird lays one egg per day until the clutch is complete, she will usually not start to incubate the eggs until all eggs have been laid. The result is that all of the eggs will hatch on the same day or within 24 hours of one another. After she lays the last egg of the clutch, the female may delay incubating the eggs for a few days or immediately start the incubation process. The female has a brood patch which keeps the eggs at a consistent temperature and maintains stability of the embryo. **However, if there are extreme temperatures between the time that she lays her first and last egg, some or all of the initial eggs laid**

will not hatch. Unfortunately, the weather patterns in recent years have been very inconsistent, and extreme temperature changes negatively affects the development of the chick. Very cold, wet Springs and record-high temperatures in the Summer are not conducive to the successful hatching of eggs. This past Summer many bluebird eggs laid in the second nesting cycle on my trails did not hatch, most likely due to the extreme heat.

Infertility-In some instances, either the male or female bluebird will be infertile. The female will lay eggs and incubate them, but they will not hatch. She might remove the eggs and lay more eggs in the same nest, build another nest on top of the original nest and lay another clutch of eggs, or will abandon that nestbox altogether and start over in another nearby nesting box. For two years in a row on one of my trails, a bluebird pair completed nesting activity in three different boxes in the same vicinity and unfortunately experienced the same disappointing result. *Note: The only way that one could verify that it was the same pair would be to band the adults, but it probably was the same pair, as they nested so close to the other non-productive nestings.*

Predation/Abandonment-House Wrens will peck eggs of other species, and if the bluebird eggs get pecked, they will no longer develop. If a snake or other climbing predator interferes with

Why Some Bluebird Eggs Don't Hatch con't.

the nest and eggs, the bluebird pair will usually abandon the nesting and remaining eggs.

Placement of Eggs in the Nest-If an egg is placed outside of the nesting cup -if it rests on the rim of the nest, it will not hatch, as it will not be incubated.

Death of the Female-Although the male bluebird may sit on the eggs for short durations, only the female has the brood patch which keeps the eggs at a consistent, safe temperature which promotes hatching. Unfortunately, if the female dies, the eggs will not hatch.

Malformed Eggs-In rare circumstances, there will be a dwarf bluebird egg-one which is much smaller than the others, and it will not hatch as it does not have a yolk. In 25 years, I have only found one dwarf egg in a clutch of normal eggs.

As Bluebird monitors, we must accept the disappointment of unhatched eggs and circumstances which cannot be controlled. However, we must do our best to provide well-maintained nestboxes, deter predators and to provide supplemental food during extreme weather events so that the adults can use their energy to perform the activities which will help them to keep their clutch of eggs safe and provide the best chance of them hatching and developing into beautiful bluebird fledges.



White Bluebird Eggs



Hatch Day



Female bluebird incubating eggs
Photo by Regina Lembo

Tributes to Doris Hoffman

We were sad to hear that Doris "Sis" Hoffman, a longtime BSP Member and volunteer passed away at age 85 on November 11, 2023.

Here are some tributes to her from those who knew her well:

Doris Hoffman, Energetic Bluebird Lady by Kathy Clark

Doris came to our Bluebird Society and was just in love with the bluebirds. She set up a trail in Lower Allen Park which is still there and has many pairs of bluebirds, tree swallows, a chickadee or two and one or two wrens. It's a gorgeous trail that BSP put up. She had a problem one day and called me on the phone. I went with Doris to this particular nestbox. All bluebird babies had fledged but one. Doris was very concerned, so I went there to take a look. Normally, we don't look inside the nestbox after day 10 or 12 because the young will flee and can't fly. Doris was sure of the age of the nestlings. You gotta remember how insistent Doris could be, and gosh I'm gonna miss her. Well, I went with her and we watched mom and dad bluebird coming to the box to this singular one who didn't fledge. I opened the box and there was the nestling. I picked it up, and the whole nest came with it. It was STUCK TO ITS NEST!! Doris got her bottle of water in the car, and we washed its foot to loosen it from the nesting material. It was like glue but didn't give us a hard time too much. Then we coated its leg with Neosporin, as it had raw spots. We put the baby bird back into the nest. Joan Watroba was there with Doris when the baby fledged the following day. I know Doris was thrilled. She was a real character and full of life and enthusiasm and she was my friend, too. I'll miss her very much. Doris really loved her bluebirds. She was our BSP Store Manager and she always got great items for sale and had the strength of Hercules for a woman in her 70s. There's nobody like her. She gave her whole heart.



Doris Hoffman

Here is a link to a song, *Beautiful Bluebird* by Neil Young:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zIGLHLLrpQ>

Thanks to all of you who attended Doris' memorial service and viewing. We thank God for the wonderful life that Doris lived & her love for Bluebirds.

Dean Rust

Susan and I stopped by during the visitation and talked with some of her relatives, so BSP was well represented and honored her.

Phil and Susan Durgin

I will always remember Doris's smile and laughter. I met Doris through the Bluebird Society of PA and we volunteered at many events. She was very passionate about teaching people about how to help the bluebirds and she was a wonderful and cheerful person. Loved her disposition and will miss her.

Joan Watroba



Tribute to Ernie Laslow

BSP wants to honor longtime Bluebirder, Ernie Laslow who passed away on December 12, 2023 at the age of 102. Our deepest sympathies go out to his family.

He was a World War II veteran, carpenter, and Bluebird enthusiast. Mr. Laslow's interest in Bluebirds had begun about 35 years ago when he had read a book about the declining Eastern Bluebird population, which inspired him to make a bird house at his home. The next day, there were Bluebirds in it!

He built many Bluebird houses and installed them at Linden Pointe, Hermitage, PA. He monitored these houses daily on walks with his daughter. There are 21 numbered Bluebird houses throughout Linden Pointe along with an educational placard. The family will continue to care for and monitor the "Ernie Laslow Bluebird Trail". Ernie has greatly contributed to the increase in the Eastern Bluebird population!



Ernie Laslow



Dean Rust, BSP President met Ernie's son, Keith, at the PA Farm Show on January 6, 2020 when Ernie was 98 years old and still actively involved in bluebirding. Dean gave Keith one of his books, *The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird* to give to Ernie as Thanks for all that he did for bluebirds.

Submitted by Kim Springer, BSP Mercer County Coordinator

— Mailbag —

From: Joan Watroba Nov 2, 2023

To: Cheryl Tomlinson

Hi Cheryl - Happy to tell you that your wonderful article, Bears vs. Bluebirds-Pike County-Bluebirds Win in Overtime won the BSP Newsletter Submission Contest. It appears in the Fall/Winter issue, which was just released. Your BSP Membership will be extended for a full year. Thanks for submitting this interesting and inspiring article!

Joan Watroba, Editor, BSP Newsletter

Reply From Cheryl:

Really!!! I'm so excited!!! Thank you so much!!!

What an amazing newsletter you all put together for us!!

There would be no feathers in my cap if it weren't for my wonderful mentor, Marilyn!

Editor's Note: (Marilyn Michalski serves as BSP State Coordinator and mentors many bluebirders)

Thank you!

Cheryl ♥



Upcoming Events - Mark Your Calendars:

***Check out the BSP Facebook Page for more Bluebird Events**

BSP Board/Membership Meetings

Thursday evenings at 6:00 P.M. on these dates:

- April 25, 2024
- July 25, 2024
- October 24, 2024

Please contact Phil Durgin at 717-732-5325 or email: pdurgin@comcast.net or Nancy Fraim at 610- 873-7454 or email: nancyfraim@comcast.net prior to the event to receive a link to participate in the meetings, which are conducted via Zoom or phone.

March 2, 2024 -Saturday- Bluebird Workshop

Nimick Family Education Center of the Loyalhanna Watershed Association
6 Old Lincoln Hwy West, Ligonier, PA
www.loyalhannawatershed.org

Wilma Light, BSP County Coordinator for Westmoreland County will host this educational event which includes a bluebird program, "Calling All Bluebirds" followed by a hands-on nest box building activity. **This is a FREE event, but Registration is required.** To register, contact Susan Huba, Executive Director of the Loyalhanna Watershed Association at 724- 238- 7560.

Note: Participation is limited to 50 family units with one box per family unit. Participants help each other assemble the BSP kits purchased by the LWA and we also provide educational information on Bluebirds for participants to take home as well.

March 9th - Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Nature Works

Bottle Works Ethnic Arts Center,
411 & 413 Avenue, Johnstown, PA
<https://bottleworks.org/>

This is a **FREE** family-friendly event bringing more than 20 nature or conservation-based organizations to this nature expo. Wilma Light, BSP County Coordinator for Westmoreland County will be hosting a bluebird table and display on how to attract bluebirds. She will answer questions about the nesting and habitat needs

of bluebirds and is also looking forward to talking with other Bluebirders about their bluebird experiences.

March 22 (Friday) 2:20 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Bluebird Program - *Enjoying Life More Through Bluebirds* Presented by Cyndy Marks

Erie Home and Garden Expo

Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier, Erie, PA
Event Materials: Joanna Taylor, Bluebird Society of PA
Speaker's Bureau

April 13, 2024 -Saturday, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Welcoming Bluebirds to Your Landscape

Longwood Gardens, Visitor Center Auditorium,
1001 Longwood Road, Kennett Square, PA
<https://longwoodgardens.org/events-performances/events/welcoming-bluebirds-your-landscape>

Register by April 7, 2024 -Registration Fee: \$39

For Innovators, Gardens Preferred, and Gardens Premium Members: \$35

Dean Rust, President of the Bluebird Society of PA will present a program featuring how to welcome bluebirds into your landscape. Dean's program will include the ideal native plants which produce natural food for songbirds, building and installing bluebird nest boxes, protecting them from predators, and tips regarding monitoring nest boxes.

April 19 & 20, 2024 - Bluebird Society of PA's 24th Annual Conference (Friday evening and Saturday)

2024 Antiochian Village Conference Center, Route 711 North, 140 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA 15949

This venue is located in Western Pennsylvania in the beautiful Laurel Highlands, about 18 miles from the Donegal Exit of the PA Turnpike. The Annual BSP Conference offers excellent speakers, demonstrations, vendors, a live and silent auction, a delicious luncheon, and an opportunity to learn from, and socialize with people who share your love of bluebirds

Upcoming Events - Mark Your Calendars:

***Check out the BSP Facebook Page for more Bluebird Events**

and enjoy the wonders of the natural world. The event will feature a Friday evening program and Social and a full day of activities on Saturday.

Registration can be done online at www.thebsp.org under the BSP Upcoming Events Tab.

Note: A 3% fee will be charged at checkout to cover the Square processing fee for online registration.

Registration Forms are posted on the BSP website for those to register by mail.

Friday evening: Laura Jackson from Bedford, PA will present a program, *Birds In My Backyard*. Laura is also very knowledgeable of and interested in native plants and how they are so important to the ecosystem. She and her husband are also excellent photographers. Following Laura's program, The Friday night Social provides a great opportunity for bluebirders to share bluebird stories and monitoring tips.

Topics may include information about setting up the QR codes for trail monitoring and a tutorial video demonstration by **Wilma Light** about how using a Sandmarc phone stick to make checking nest boxes easier when it is hard to view the inside of nest boxes.

Saturday: Dean Rust, President of the BSP, will give a keynote program to help to guide us in how we can help our Bluebirds. **Lucas Degroote** from the Avian Research Center in Stahlstown, PA will deliver an interesting program on his research of birds. After the live auction, **Andrea Kautz**, an Entomologist with the Powdermill Nature Reserve in Rector, PA., will present a program about the importance of insects for our ecosystem. As we know, Insects provide a vital food source for Bluebirds.

The Avian Research Center in Stahlstown, PA and the Powdermill Nature Reserve are both located in the Laurel Highlands and are part of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

Conference Chair: Wilma Light, 724-331-1800
lightgarden515@gmail.com

April 27, 2024 - (Saturday) Wetlands Festival
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Wildwood Park, Harrisburg, PA

<https://explorewildwoodpark.org/event/wetlands-festival/>

Explore Wildwood Park's treasured wetlands for the 24th Annual Wetlands Festival! A day of free, fun, and educational activities with special musical guests and food trucks. Enjoy wildlife exhibits, walks, and a wide variety of local and regional environmental organizations. Interact with live animals and make crafts to take home! There is something for everyone! Bluebird Society of PA will host an exhibit, and BSP members will be available to share information about how to increase bluebird nesting success. Hope to see you there!

Volunteers are needed. Contact: Phil Durgin, Event Chair, pdurgin@comcast.net or 717-732-5325

May 18, 2024 -Saturday, Bald Eagle State Park's 2024 Spring Birding & Activity Fair

12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Beach Area in Bald Eagle State Park,
149 Main Park Rd, Howard, PA

Joanna Taylor, BSP County Coordinator for Centre County will host a BSP Bluebird Booth at this family-oriented event and will provide information about the nesting and habitat needs of bluebirds. This event will include activities for children, birding/ bird-related informational tables, and also a turkey calling competition. The 5,900-acre Bald Eagle State Park is in the broad Bald Eagle Valley of northcentral Pennsylvania. The 1,730-acre lake laps the flanks of Bald Eagle Mountain, surrounded by forests, fields and wetlands. With two campgrounds, boating, fishing, swimming, the Nature Inn, and diverse habitats that are excellent for wildlife watching, Bald Eagle State Park is a great destination in the heart of Pennsylvania.



Event Reports —

On 10/21/23, I presented a Bluebird Basics program to 12 members of the Bird Club at the Essex House Retirement Center in Lemoyne. The club organizer, Art Straub and the attendees were very happy to learn about bluebirds and were actively engaged during the Power Point program and asked many follow-up questions. After the program they invited me to a delicious lunch at the facility, and we continued to talk about bluebirds and other songbirds. Since the facility



is in town, there are many House Sparrows. I explained about the danger that House Sparrows pose to native songbirds. Since they feed the birds, I suggested that they avoid using the cheap seed mixes that attract House Sparrows and use black oil sunflower seeds instead, which will attract a larger variety of songbirds. I distributed handouts and BSP brochures and hope that some of the members of their Bird Club may join BSP.

Joan Watroba, BSP County Coordinator for Cumberland County

12/7/23-The members of the Willow Valley North Woodshop at the Willow Valley Community in Lancaster conducted a nestbox building activity from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

What an operation! 55 - 1"x6" 8' pine boards, 11 - 1"x8" 8' pine boards

Magically turned into **100** bagged nest box kits and all are packed back in my truck. Our inventory of nest box kits has been replenished!!!!

Kudos to Bob Goodhart and his Merry Band of Christmas Elves!!

Super fun to be a part of this Special Event!!! *Our inventory of nest box kits has been replenished!!!!*

Dean Rust



Event Reports con't. —

2024 PA Farm Show-Thursday Jan. 11 -Saturday Jan. 13, 2024

This 2024 Farm Show, with weather cooperating, was probably the busiest year that I remember. We talked to so many people of all ages about bluebirds, and they came from all over the state and beyond. It was a good time all around with lots of food and animals and so many interesting things to see! The nest/egg displays and the “Inside the Nest Box” video had a magnetic attraction for the kids. On Friday, our volunteer box builders helped visitors, young and old to “Make and Take” 35 nest boxes for the bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds. **We welcomed 36 new members** to BSP with our own NEW and enhanced full-color bluebird guidebook, **Success With Bluebirds**, which was included along with one of our tri-annual newsletters. These new booklets were best sellers, along with assembled nestboxes and kits.

Thanks to all volunteers for your help, and especially Susan and Phil Durgin who worked triple shifts all three days, Bill Strauss, Deb Hershey, Susan Wesley, Bill Franz, Dale Cook, Dave Price, Mark Matthews, Carol McCall, John and Kristi Smith, Bonita Noll, Dean & Shirley Rust, Wilma Light, and Dave and Barb Cox.

Nancy Putt, Event Chair




New Option

The BSP Can Now Accept Credit Cards for Payment

The Bluebird Society of PA has set up a payment processing account through the Square platform that allows us to accept credit cards, either online or using a physical card and the Square card reader. The online option is currently available for memberships (go to thebsp.org>Join/Support BSP>>online membership form) and for the BSP annual conference (go to thebsp.org>BSP Upcoming Events>Conference Update>online conference registration form). We have the Square card reader at the Farm Show so we can take credit card payments there.

Square charges us 2.9% plus 30 cents for each transaction. To offset these charges, we are charging a “digital service fee” of 3.6% for online memberships and 3% for the annual conference. So a 1-year membership (\$15) will cost an extra 54 cents if done online (less than the price of a stamp!). A \$40 3-year membership will cost \$41.44 if done online.

The fee for a double occupancy room (and all meals) for the conference is \$266, so it would be \$274 if done online with a credit card. We’re still new at this, so fees may be adjusted after we see how things are working out. Of course, we will continue to take mail-in/check membership applications and conference registrations at no additional charge.



Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

NEWS FLASH!

Membership Renewals can now be filled out Online!

New Renewals or Gift Memberships

Paper and Online forms are found at: www.thebsp.org

Renewal notices will still be sent to your home

Bluebird Society Membership
\$15.00 - \$375.00

Your membership in BSP provides educational activities which promote the conservation of bluebirds and other native songbirds for generations to come.

Benefits:

- New members receive a welcome packet which includes the BSP's new booklet "Success with Bluebirds: Helping Bluebirds Survive & Thrive," the latest copy of the "Bluebird Trails and Tales" our seasonal newsletter, and an invitation to attend our annual conference.

Membership Types *

Select one

How would you like to receive your newsletter? (Select One)

Select one

New Membership or Renewing (Select one)

Select one

Which PA county do you live in? (Select one)

Select one

Donation (Select individual amounts to create your desired amount (\$5 - \$10 - \$15 Donates!)

Select all that apply

- \$3 Donation (+ \$3.00)
- \$5 Donation (+ \$5.00)
- \$10 Donation (+ \$10.00)
- \$20 Donation (+ \$20.00)
- \$30 Donation (+ \$30.00)
- \$50 Donation (+ \$50.00)
- \$100 Donation (+ \$100.00)

How did you hear about BSP?

Select all that apply

- Event
- BSP Website
- Facebook
- County Coordinator
- Friend

I would like to help with. (Select all that apply)

Select all that apply

- County Coordinator
- Local Events
- Nestbox Construction

Nestbox Construction

Photography

Speakers' Bureau

Nestbox Monitoring

Technology

Social Media

Web Design

Newsletter

Research

Fundraising

Gift:

Select all that apply

If gift, list name, address, phone, and email at checkout [In "add a note for the seller" or send to nancytrain@comcast.net]

- 1 +

Subtotal

Total will be calculated at checkout

Checkout

New Bluebird Trail Near King's College

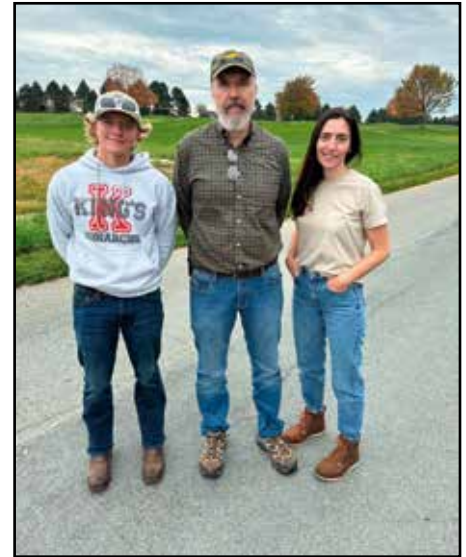
by Dean Rust

This is Dr. Brian Mangan, Professor of Biology & Environmental Science at King's College, Wilkes-Barre, PA, his daughter, Tara Mangan, Environmental Professor, and Nathan Ridgley, a Senior in the Environmental Studies Program at the college.

They are planning to establish a 48-box Bluebird trail near the college. They picked up the 19 Bluebird boxes gratis from Mike Connelly today, 10/27/23, and we spent two hours checking out the Lancaster Country Club Bluebird trail this morning. Brian is a new BSP member and he will be a great contact in the Wilkes-Barre area.

From: Brian Mangan November 2, 2023 To: Dean Rust Subject: Poster Presentation

Hi Dean, We are presenting a poster about the bluebird project at Bucknell University's Susquehanna River Symposium on Friday night. I've attached the poster for your perusal.



On the Trail of Bluebirds: Where Conservation Meets Education

Dianna L. Duncan, Nathan R. Ridgley, Tara K. Mangan, and Brian P. Mangan
King's College Environmental Program, Wilkes-Barre, PA



Introduction

Bluebird populations declined by as much as 90% in the early 20th century (Rust 2016). Factors contributing to this decline included widespread use of DDT and the introduction of invasive bird species that outcompeted bluebirds for nest cavities. Regulators, organizations, and many individuals rallied to the cause of bluebirds with protective legislation, as well as the design and deployment of manmade nest cavities. Contemporary champions of bluebirds include the North American Bluebird Society and Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania (BSP), which freely share bluebird conservation information and experience with the general public.

We formed an alliance with a local corporate landowner to establish a bluebird trail on their property. In addition, we partnered with the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania who, in addition to providing us with excellent advice and many nest boxes, will also serve as a permanent repository for the data collected at our boxes. Conservation goals and practices can best be achieved when they involve multiple stakeholders in projects. This project will directly benefit bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds in our area while simultaneously training students on conservation practices and alliances, as well as avian natural history.



Figure 1. King's faculty and students visit a BSP bluebird trail with BSP president Dr. Dean Rust.

Trail Location

King's students and faculty toured an established bluebird trail with BSP president Dr. Dean Rust (Figure 1). In addition to excellent advice regarding trail monitoring and maintenance, Dr. Rust provided our team with 19 nest boxes to supplement those that we will deploy this fall.

King's faculty, along with a representative of our corporate partner, toured hundreds of acres of land owned by the corporation for nest box sites. Both parties agreed upon the nest box distribution depicted in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Bluebird nest box distribution on the King's College Bluebird Trail along the Susquehanna River. The trail encompasses some land open to the community for recreational purposes and will allow King's to interpret conservation information for the public.

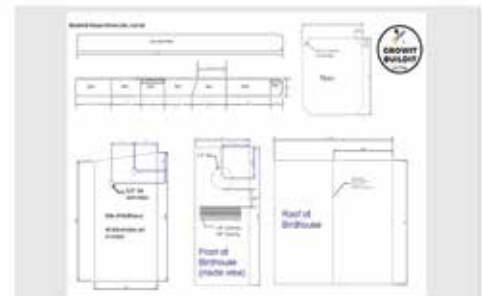


Figure 3. Nest box plans used in the construction of our boxes (Grow It Build It, accessed October 2023).

Nest Box Design and Data

We are using the nest box design depicted in Figure 3. Cedar wood will be used because of its resistance to decay. Boxes will be mounted on a metal post with the box attached five to six feet above the ground. Noel guards and pipe baffles will be used to deter predators.

Boxes will be checked weekly during the nesting season. The number of nests used and young produced per nest will be recorded. All data will be submitted to BSP annually.

Student researchers will be responsible for monitoring and upkeep of the trail. In addition, the trail will be incorporated into weekly laboratory sections of the Environmental Science II laboratory, which is required coursework for environmental majors at King's College.

This project provides manageable, repeatable, and real-world conservation opportunities for college students, while simultaneously benefiting a native bird species. It also presents the corporate landowner with an opportunity to add value to land used for industrial purposes. Moreover, in select areas open to the public, King's students and faculty will be able to share with the public numerous conservation principles and practices, perhaps leading to establishment of additional bluebird trails in this area.

References

- Rust, D.C. 2016. *The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird*. 151pp. ISBN: 978-0-692-55863-8.
- Grow It Build It. (Internet, accessed October 2023) <https://growitbuildit.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Bluebird-House-Plans-DIY-Free-Front-Door-Open.pdf>

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Dr. Dean Rust, president of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania for his generosity of time, knowledge, and materials.

2024 List of BSP County Coordinators

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

Select **About BSP** then scroll down to **BSP County Coordinators**

Adams

John Gabreski
717-337-2851
johngabreski@gmail.com

Allegheny

Ken Knapp
724-831-3156
kcknapp50@gmail.com

Armstrong

Lynn Ramage
724-763-7540
lnjramage@comcast.net

Beaver

Scott Parry
412-841-5071
spip15026@yahoo.com

Bedford

John & Cathy Everhart
814-623-8852
cathyeveryhart3088@gmail.com

Berks

Kathleen deHaan
484-336-3390
kathleen.dehaan1991@gmail.com

Blair

Kelly Baronner
814-932-4100
rkbaronner@gmail.com

Bradford

Richard Gulyas
570-596-2720
rgulyas2@outlook.com

Bucks

Paula Walter
610-246-5782
pwalter881@verizon.net

Carolyn Dorph
215-219-1909
dorph1@comcast.net

Butler

Brooke Kosar
724-766-1103
brookekosar1210@gmail.com

Cambria

Winnie and Bob Illig
814-533-9237
winillig@hotmail.com

Cameron

Robert Kerner
814-486-3484

Carbon

Sandy & Don Bonett
610-681-8807
don4nett@ptd.net
Carol Schnaiter
815-440-8640
schnaitercarol@gmail.com

Centre

Joanna Taylor
772-559-3216
bluebirdjoanna@gmail.com

Chester

Ken Leister
kenapeg@aol.com
Nancy Fraim
610-873-7454
nancyfraim@comcast.net

Clarion

Charmaine Borza
724-873-1402
damyahid@yahoo.com

Clearfield

Norman Bloom
ngbloom@comcast.net

Clinton

Mary Hirst
814-435-2218
mhirst60@gmail.com

Columbia

Margaret Pickin
mpickin@ptd.net

Crawford

Bill Wenger
412-720-0766
w.wenger@comcast.net

Cumberland

Joan Watroba
717-766-2102
bluebirdhappy365@outlook.com
David L. Price
717-245-2926
david17007@aol.com

Dauphin

William Strauss
717-541-9168
mbstrauss@verizon.net

Delaware

Margaret Bue & Frank Steinmiller
610-789-9333
margaretbue@hotmail.com

Elk

Wayne Bryndel
814-335-7746
wbryndel@windstream.net

Erie

Bernie Connelly
814-734-5446
bbconnelly1@gmail.com

Andrea Wyman
814-722-8043
awyman@edinboro.edu

Fayette

Arnold/Gloria Burchianti
724-317-1747
agburchianti@msn.com

Forest

Mark Ritke
814-676-4747
bluebirdsunlimit@aol.com

Franklin

Mary Ellen Piper
717-494-9806
ford.creek@gmail.com

Fulton

Florence & Robert Pyle
610-322-7031
bluebirdflo@yahoo.com

Greene

Samantha Lambert
724-583-7030
gmpl@german-masontown-publiclibrary.org

Huntingdon

Jennifer Moore
814-667-1800
jennmoore@pa.gov

Indiana

Michael Schmaus
814-952-2004
mspaelk@yahoo.com

Debbi Barate
814-446-5661
ridgebackqueen@aol.com

Jefferson

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

Juniata

Tena Kauffman
717-436-9643
cats@mmax.net

Lackawanna VACANT**Lancaster**

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

Dean Rust
717-669-0167
july7ds@aol.com

Lawrence

Bill Wenger
412-720-0766
w.wenger@comcast.net

Lebanon

Susan Wheeler
609-224-0813
drglenw3@verizon.net
John Stoltzfus
610-781-1098
jwstol@gmail.com

Lehigh

Denise/Peter Reinhart
610-965-5389
parrots@ptd.net

Luzerne

Jeffrey Stratford
570-332-2942
jeffrey.stratford@wilkes.edu

Lycoming

David Snyder
570-419-4584
dsnyder824@gmail.com

Jean M Dalton
570-777-0713
jklotz6@gmail.com

McKean

Gregory Dean
646-750-6576
austan@prontonmail.ch

Mercer

Kim Springer
724-977-3246
springer0707@gmail.com

Mifflin

Gordon Parker
717-513-3980
localbirdsiview@aol.com

Monroe

Maryann Custard
mtcustard@gmail.com

Montgomery

Richard Leatherman
215-723-6476
richardrach@verizon.net
Darlaine Manning
267-606-5633
darlainemanning@hotmail.com

Montour

Donna Kreischer
570-951-2518
dkteacher@verizon.net

Northampton

Rebecca Patrick
484-256-7490
beccapattick@yahoo.com

Northumberland

Ben Reisinger
jer43@comcast.net

Perry

Larry & Cheryl Gross
717-756-6975
lcg1112@comcast.net

Philadelphia

Marie Raupp
718-249-5898
marieraupp@yahoo.com

Pike

Cheryl Tomlinson
610-724-9443
apolcat@hotmail.com

Potter

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

Schuylkill

Rich Rieger
703-969-0451
appleadayonsite@aol.com

Snyder

Tom Clark
570-765-1856
tcclarkbars@gmail.com

Somerset

Bill Cuppett
814-421-9795
grammied34@gmail.com
Simeon Yoder
814-267-9932

Sullivan

Kat Clark
570-928-8952
hayes.clark@frontier.net

Susquehanna

Evan Mann
570-663-2621
7evanmann@gmail.com

Tioga

Leslie Clifford
lcliffor@mansfield.edu

Union

Betty Staebler
570-246-5774
bjscats@att.net

Venango

Mark Ritke
814-676-4747
bluebirdsunlimit@aol.com

Warren

Mark Ritke
814-676-4747
bluebirdsunlimit@aol.com

Washington

Gigi Gerben
412-973-9760
kasgerb@yahoo.com

Wayne

Barb Korteling
570-470-1580
barbkorteling@gmail.com

Westmoreland

Wilma Light
724-331-1800
lightgarden515@gmail.com

Wyoming

Dave Brown
570-836-4199

York

Nancy Putt
717-712-3951
bluebirds@pa.net
Ken Smith
410-299-4670
ken.smith124@verizon.net

State County Coordinator
Marilyn Michalski
610-933-0497
emeraldmm@verizon.net

My Little Buddy, This Carolina Wren

by Kathy Clark

I have a little buddy who loves my house, a sweet Carolina Wren. We had construction done on our home in 2005 and the deck was torn off and she took interest in the old double doors that were still there and built her nest. She sits on the in-window air conditioner and sings her heart out, and she's **loud!!**

Well, I also have this huge, giant dog who destroyed both screen doors, and there is no glass or screens in them. Now she, Ms. Carolina Wren, comes into our living room to visit and she's never confused about how to get out. Who ever heard of a bird adopting a home? Well, she's ours and she's been around for many years. Luckily, when she comes indoors, our dogs are sleeping and she does not sing then. She lands on the couch where we are or on a table and then flies back out of the missing window. What a smart girl! Never runs into windows, etc.

I still have a pair of bluebirds in my yard every year. I kinda left BSP abruptly, but so happy it's still here and doing so well. I wish you all bluebirds!



Bluebird Society of PA Financial Report

Submitted by Phil Durgin, BSP Treasurer

Income

CD interest	594
Conference	8,487
Donation	4,261
Membership	10,362
Store	
- Kits/Built boxes	3,431
- Other sales	1,390
- - Total Store	4,821
Total BSP Income	28,525

Expenses

Administration

- Administration (Other)	-1,589
- Internet/Technology	-159
- Postage	-579
- Insurance	-1,178
- Storage unit	-1,701
- - Total Administration	-5,206
Conference	-8,166
Education	-3,451
Membership	-1,839
Newsletter	-5,020
Store	-765
Woodworking	-3,466
Total BSP Expense	-27,913

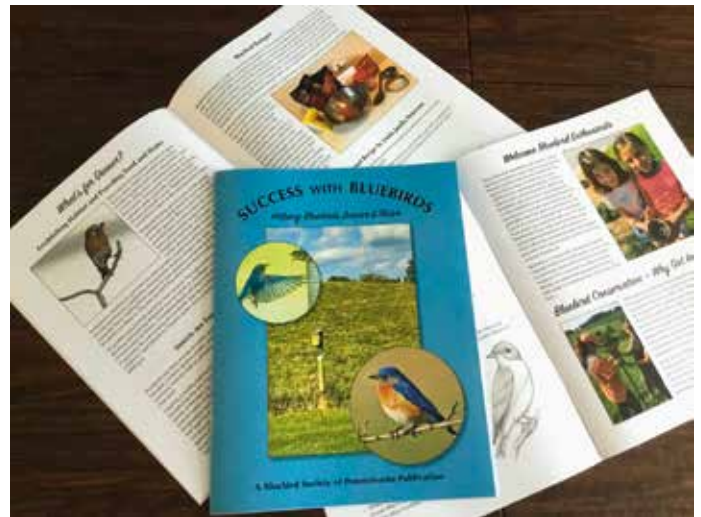
Total Gain (Loss)	612
Dec 31, 2022 checkbook balance	50,916
Dec 31, 2022 CD investment	0
Dec 31, 2023 checkbook balance	20,134
Dec. 31, 2023 CD investment	31,394
Total 2023 assets	51,528
Change in total assets from 12/31/22 to 12/31/23	612



NEW BSP Bluebird Guidebook is Now Available

A revised and redesigned guidebook, *Success with Bluebirds*, replaces BSP's original publication, *Everything You Need to Know About Bluebirds*, which was first published in 2009. *Success with Bluebirds* will be included in the BSP New Member welcome package, and while much of the information regarding bluebirds remains the same, the new guidebook includes full color photographs of bluebirds, nest boxes, and more. Readers will find information about native plants and an expanded discussion on various ways to help bluebirds thrive. Also included are illustrations and descriptions of the other cavity-nesting birds that may use the nest boxes. Lastly, there is a shout out to the many dedicated volunteers that make up the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania who continue to help bluebirds survive and thrive.

This book was made possible through many hours of work by our designer, Melissa Gallagher, and myself, Susan Durgin, author of some of the articles and editor of the project. Inspiration for topics comes from past issues of BSP newsletters, from *Everything You Need to Know About Bluebirds*, and from many discussions with folks who visit the BSP booth at the Farm Show and other events. We are fortunate to be able to include photographs from professional photographers: Mike Dickie, Richard Hess, David Kinneer, and Kathy Miller as well as photographs from a number of BSP members, all of which make this book meaningful and informative.



You can purchase a copy of *Success with Bluebirds* by sending a check payable to BSP for \$8 with your name and address to: The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, P.O. Box 756, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
Attention: Susan Durgin



Seasonal Newsletters for 2023 Are Now Archived

Now that the year 2023 has passed, we have posted the Spring, Summer, and Fall/Winter issues of the 2023 Bluebird Trails and Tales on the BSP website:

www.thebsp.org

They are filed under the **About BSP** tab, then select **Archived Newsletters**.

Bluebirds hold a key towards a happier and healthier life

by Holly Merker

Mounting research is spotlighting the wellness benefits wild birds offer us. Science shows us that being surrounded by biodiverse habitats with lots of birds and listening to birdsong can provide relief from stress, anxiety, lower our cortisol levels, while boosting our feelings of wellbeing.

Arguably more than other bird species, bluebirds bring gratification and joy with immediate results. When we invite bluebirds in closer and they accept our RSVP by coming to our feeders, native plants, or becoming tenants in the boxes we offer, they are connecting to us in a way that often becomes personal. In fact, some would say, they become part of our extended family. I'm sure many of you can relate to this!

As bluebird lovers, the positive effects on our physical and mental wellness are probably something easy to recognize in our own lives when we think about it. Perhaps it's the joy they bring, or the acting of stewarding boxes, that makes us feel positive and hopeful for the future. Maybe it's the simple act of walking outdoors, from box to box, or to fill a feeder that just makes us feel better. And after all, when a bluebird captures our attention, we temporarily forget about what's going on in our own lives for a few minutes, and instead find a smile in sharing that moment with the bird. Research demonstrates that this sort of "attention redirection" through nature is positive for our busy minds.


One thing that makes Pennsylvania special for all birds is the people who love them. This society is one fine example of this! But even beyond bluebird stewardship, Pennsylvanians love paying forward towards bird conservation through backyard-level observations. Take the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's two most popular community science projects: The Great Backyard Bird Count (<https://www.birdcount.org/>) or eBird.org (<https://ebird.org/home>): for both of these community science projects, Pennsylvania ranks high in the volume of data contributed by people like you and me – in fact in the top tier of contributing regions, globally. It's a winning situation for birds and for us, because studies show that when people participate in volunteer projects such as bluebird stewardship, there are marked positive outcomes not just for the birds, but also for human wellbeing.

So, when we think about our bluebirds, and the caretaking we provide to encourage them to thrive, consider that this is a reciprocal relationship. That bluebirds are taking care of us as much as we are taking care of them, and they help us thrive, too. These special birds indeed hold a key for a happier and healthier life.

Citation: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37876142/#:~:text=There%20were%20stronger%20positive%20effects,well%2Dbeing%20and%20nature%20relatedness>

Note: Holly Merker is a bluebird lover, professional birding guide, podcaster, nature-based wellness specialist, and author living in Pennsylvania. She's co-authored two books on the wellness benefits wild birds offer us, including the award-winning *Ornithotherapy: For Your Mind, Body, and Soul* (Crossley Books, 2021) and *The Power of Birdwatching/ Die Kraft der Vogel Beobachtung* (Freya, 2023 - only available in Europe) In her free time, Holly spends every moment practicing Ornithotherapy, which she credits to helping her recover from cancer - mind, body, and spirit.

Editor's Note: BSP was thrilled to have Holly present a wonderful program at our annual conference held in Downingtown, PA in April of 2023. We attendees loved her presentation, and many of us purchased the beautiful and reflective book, *Ornithotherapy for Your Mind Body Soul* by Holly Merker, Richard Crossley, and Sophie Crossley. I refer to this book often, which reminds me to take the time to enjoy the beauty of songbirds and Nature. I am so happy that she wrote this article for our publication. Also Thanks to Penny Brandau, Editor of the *Bluebird Monitor* of the Ohio Bluebird Society where another version of this article appeared in their Winter 2023-24 issue.



Bluebirds: Harbingers of Hope

33

A gardener's companion, the bluebird is not only one of the most colorful, but arguably the most desired yard resident in North America. Adorned with sapphire blue feathers, folklore deems bluebirds as messengers of happiness and hope.

In addition to their beauty, bluebirds are beneficial neighbors. All three species, Eastern (featured here), Western, and Mountain Bluebirds, provide excellent insect control for our gardens. Bluebirds became scarce due to decline of natural nest cavities. People recognized this problem and then jumped into action to restore populations. Luckily, it worked. With targeted marketing, these cavity nesters can be lured onto our properties with boxes, if nesting habitat is optimal.

In an era where we are constantly reminded of the negative impact we have on our environment, it's equally important to look back at our conservation accomplishments. In your own area, consider ways to change landscapes to benefit native wildlife. Simple practices will lead to thriving habitats for birds and people. Consider selecting native plants and trees to provide ample food buffets for birds and other wildlife. If possible, leave dead trees standing, as they offer natural nesting and roosting sites for birds.

Be inspired and empowered to make a difference for our future generations. Believe in hope.

Exploring Ornithotherapy

- Looking around outside your door, do you think the habitat is functional to local birds and other wildlife?
- Could you create or design a natural habitat that supports wildlife?
- What could you change?

“Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all...”
 ~ Emily Dickinson

Journal (page 184)

Ornithotherapy For Your Mind, Body, and Soul, by Holly Merker, Richard Crossley, Sophie Crossley, 2021 Crossley Books

Excerpts from the 2023 Bureau of State Parks Cavity-Nesting Trails Summary Report

12/19/2023 Per Teresa A. Kromel , Chief Outdoor Programming Services Division: *Thanks to our dedicated volunteers and staff, 57 state parks monitored 2,896 man-made nesting cavities (including nest boxes, gourds, and purple martin houses) and fledged over 9,800 birds, including Eastern bluebirds, Purple martins, Tree swallows, Wood ducks, American kestrels, House wrens, and several other species. This year saw an increase in the number of boxes monitored, as well as number of birds fledged. The nesting season also saw many challenges, as birds (and monitors) dealt with a variety of extreme weather conditions across the state – including but not limited to cooler spring temperatures, abnormally dry conditions, tornados, severe storms, and smoke from Canadian wildfires.*

Species	Number Fledged	Species	Number Fledged
Eastern Bluebirds	3128	Titmouse	6
House Wrens	2112	American Kestrel	12
Other Wrens	12	Purple Martin	731
Tree Swallows	2930	Wood Duck	503
Non-Native	127	Common Grackle	6
Chickadees	112	Merganser	136

Editor's Note: *Many individuals were honored by the Bureau of State Parks cavity-nesting program for their many years of service monitoring nestboxes within PA State Parks. BSP salutes all of them, including BSP Members Shirley Ann Halk for 35 years of service at Memorial Lake and Swatara State Parks, and Susan Wesley for 5 years of service at Gifford Pinchot State Park.*

Monitors Needed: If you have any interest in monitoring nestboxes in PA State Parks, please contact Carly Broder at cbroder@pa.gov or 717-783-3344.

RESULTS: 2023 NESTBOX REPORTS from The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

P. O. Box 12, EXTON, PA 19341

* SUMMARY OF REPORTS FROM 187 INDIVIDUALS REPORTING ON-LINE or BY MAIL.

* 38 of PA's 67 COUNTIES ARE REPRESENTED (57% of PA Counties).

TOTAL NESTBOXES MONITORED & REPORTED IN 2023: 4,399.....(3,938 IN 2022)

I. EASTERN BLUEBIRDS FLEDGED: 8,260..... (7,165 in 2022)

NUMBER OF BLUEBIRD EGGS LAID:..... 10,787.....(9,000 in 2022)

NUMBER OF WHITE BB EGGS: 147.....(155 IN 2022)

TREE SWALLOWS FLEDGED:..... 3,696.....(3,329 in 2022)

HOUSE WRENS FLEDGED:..... 2,578.....(2,002 in 2022)

CHICKADEES FLEDGED:..... 413.....(342 in 2022)

HOUSE SPARROW NESTS REMOVED: 992.....(876 in 2022)

II. FLEDGE NUMBERS BY COUNTY – 2023.

1. LANCASTER 1857 (1851 in 2022)	16. FRANKLIN..... 105 (144 in 2022)
2. CHESTER..... 1263 (1082 in 2022)	17. SCHUYLKILL 97 (74 in 2022)
3. DELAWARE..... 593 (564 in 2022)	18. LEBANON 70 (33 in 2022)
4. DAUPHIN 526 (433 in 2022)	19. CLARION 61 (60 in 2022)
5. YORK..... 522 (400 in 2022)	20. BUTLER..... 60 (49 in 2022)
6. CUMBERLAND 488 (402 in 2022)	21. BLAIR..... 51 (53 in 2022)
7. ALLEGHENY 472 (442 in 2022)	22. PERRY 34 (30 in 2022)
8. MERCER..... 458 (382 in 2022)	23. ERIE..... 31 (12 in 2022)
9. MONTGOMERY 401 (225 in 2022)	24. CRAWFORD 16 (14 in 2022)
10. CENTRE 268 (233 in 2022)	25. BUCKS 13 (21 in 2022)
11. WESTMORELAND 194 (203 in 2022)	26. ADAMS 12 (11 in 2022)
12. FULTON..... 171 (166 in 2022)	27. JEFFERSON..... 10 (3 in 2022)
13. LYCOMING..... 163 (83 in 2022)	28. CARBON..... 9 (new in '23)
14. BERKS 154 (32 in 2022)	29. HUNTINGTON 8 (21 IN 2022)
15. BEAVER..... 124 (94 in 2022)	30. SULLIVAN 8 (5 IN 2022)

In addition to the 30 Counties listed above, we had reports from Cameron, McKean, Washington, Cambria, Clearfield, Pike (new in '23), Armstrong, and Philadelphia. Thank you! ** Sadly, we had no reports from these Counties: Bradford, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Greene, Indiana, Juniata, Lackawanna, Lawrence, Lehigh, Luzerne, Mifflin, Monroe, Montour, Northampton, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Somerset, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren, Wayne, and Wyoming.*

III. CONCLUSIONS

1. 2022 & 2023 nestbox reports show that the Eastern Bluebird population is rising slowly.

2. The number of Chickadee fledges (413 this year) is an increase of 71 over 2022's report. We should promote the nesting of this small black and white bird. While we applaud this year's increase, Chickadee numbers are, on average, declining.

3. The rising population of House Wrens is alarming, because they destroy nests of Chickadees and other cavity-nesters. Our data shows that their numbers grew by 576 this year. This expansion reduces nesting success by Tree Swallows and Chickadees. We also lose clutches of bluebird eggs and young to House Wren predation. If you find your bluebird eggs missing or on the ground, you are (most likely) the victim of wrens.

4. Our increase in BSP membership is excellent! As of December 1, 2023, our BSP membership total is 900 individuals! In addition, during the last 24 months we have acquired 15 new County Coordinators, who are doing excellent work.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We should monitor our nestboxes regularly and invite others to join us. We will replace nestboxes that are darkened with age and/or no longer protecting eggs and nestlings.

2. We should invite interested friends and neighbors to become BSP members.

3. We will share information about Eastern Bluebirds and their needs whenever the opportunity arises.

4. We will learn how to terminate House Sparrow adults. House Sparrows and European Starlings are destructive – they kill native birds. For information, go to www.sialis.org. and click “House Sparrow Control” in the left column. Then click “Euthanizing,” where a complete discussion of the topic is found.

5. We will communicate with other members of BSP and join them in outreach programs such as the Farm Show, Box-Building events, bluebird talks, and the BSP Conference.

This report was written by Marilyn Michalski, BSP State CC and Nancy Fraim, BSP Membership Chair. They collected data and summarized results. Questions? Contact Marilyn at emeraldmm@verizon.net. or 610-933-0497. Publication date: 12/7/23.

NOTE: *This report has been sent to Carly Broder at DCNR, the PA Game Commission, Hawk Mountain Executive Dr. Laurie Goodrich, and Bet Zimmerman-Smith of the North American Bluebird Society.*

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BSP PRESIDENT:

THANK YOU to our BSP State CC, Marilyn Michalski and Nancy Fraim, our BSP Membership Chair, for compiling these important statistics for 2023. We had a marvelous year with native songbirds in 2023.

As President of BSP since 2012, I am reminded each year of all the hard work that our BSP members accomplish across the 67 counties in our great Commonwealth. I am truly grateful for the thousands of hours dedicated to nest box monitoring, care and maintenance by our volunteers. But we can do even better!!

Perhaps you noticed the 26 counties above with the RED LETTERS. Those are the counties who did not submit any nest box reports this year. To me that is sad - I think we can do much better going forward. I would like at least 13 counties to step forward and make a firm commitment to submit a nest box report next year. This must start with CC's making some contacts in their county as to who is monitoring trails and then encouraging them to file a report at the end of the season. Check our BSP website for details.

Thank you in advance for helping us make 2024 the best year ever for BSP.

Dr. Dean C. Rust , President of the Bluebird Society of PA

Non Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit N. 15
Mercersburg, PA



PO Box 12
Exton, PA 19341

BSP RENEWAL DATES/Address Changes - Please check your mailing label on your regular mailed copy to see your renewal date. You can renew for one year or for multiple years, which will provide a discount. Both e-mail and regular mail members will also receive a letter by regular mail notifying of your renewal date. *If you need to update your mailing address or your email address, please send changes to: BSP • P.O. Box 12 • Exton, PA 19341 or email: nancyfrain@comcast.net

Bluebird Society of PA Membership Form

Regular (single/couple)

1 year- \$15
3 years- \$40

Organization/Corporate

1 year- \$100
3 years- \$275

Lifetime

\$375 (individual only)
*Renew for 3 years & Save

Mail to: Bluebird Society of PA, P.O. Box 12, Exton PA or complete the **NEW** online form at www.thebsp.org

New Member Renewal Donation

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ County: _____

Phone: _____ (required) Email: _____ (required if email delivery or ?s)

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

If you are a new member have you received your Membership Packet? Yes No

How would you like to receive your newsletter? Email (saves trees) Regular mail delivery

Please consider sharing your talents by volunteering to help with:

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> County Coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Nest box Monitoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nest box Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photography | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speakers' Bureau (education) | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology |

BSP is a North American Bluebird Society Affiliate



All content of the publication may not be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission. Copyright © 2018. All rights reserved. Contact the editor if you wish to reproduce something. Thank you.