

A Full Complement of Partners

Allen Jackson

Our interests varied but came together to benefit bluebirds: Allen Jackson, a wildlife biologist intent on helping bluebirds, and Dave Moyer, a wood-shop teacher determined to find meaningful projects for his students. Obviously, boxes were needed for bluebird trails and a supply of wood was necessary for the wood-shop class. However, some things lead you down unusual paths.

I received a call from Dave in the fall of 2011. He heard from a friend about my work with bluebirds and wanted his 8th-grade wood-shop classes at the Middle Township Middle School in Cape May Court House in southern New Jersey to make boxes for me. We scheduled to meet and discuss things further.



Dave Moyer (left) and Allen Jackson at the school's wood shop.

Being a biologist, proper management of bluebirds is paramount to me, including a well-designed box. Most boxes sold in stores or individually built do not meet current design standards, so I brought a NABS-style box to the meeting for Dave to replicate. What intrigued me was Dave's approach to teaching wood shop. He teaches wood shop as a life skill with an emphasis on paying attention to detail. Dave is very organized and follows a step-by-step process building the bluebird boxes. While I was easily convinced to move forward with the project, I needed to come up with some innovative ways to finish pulling the project together.

Aside from bluebirds, I was working on a mountain bike trail at Belleplain State Forest. I learned from Lorraine McCay, the superintendent, that her husband Ed owned a sawmill (McCay Wood Products in Nesco). When I found out he milled Atlantic white

cedar, a lightweight, disease/weather-resistant wood good for building bluebird boxes, things began to get more interesting. Ed has an appreciation of nature and gave me an exceptional estimate. Besides supporting a local business, buying directly from a sawmill offered greater savings. Now, all I needed was funding.

I had recently installed 13 bluebird boxes at Doug Mehaffey's Harmony Valley Nursery and Haven Hill Farm in Deerfield. When Doug inquired about the cost, I suggested he donate money to help fund the wood for Dave's wood-shop class. Doug's donation paid for the wood and other hardware. The cedar was milled and delivered in January 2012 and was enough to make 60 boxes. Dave took the opportunity to have me speak to his students about a career in wildlife biology and the importance of proper management to bluebirds. It also offered a unique opportunity to convince them of the importance of their efforts.

The 60 boxes were used in 2012 to help establish 12 new bluebird trails, which ultimately produced about 180 young bluebirds in southern New Jersey. In October 2012 another load of Atlantic white cedar was delivered to Dave's class, which made 90 boxes for the 2013 season. Those boxes helped add another 14 trails replete with monitors. Because I am responsible for and coordinate with people who monitor approximately 500 boxes, I also purchase boxes made with western red cedar from Builders' General Supply Company. The high-quality boxes are built at their store in Freehold but can also be purchased through request at their other stores in Edison, Little Silver, and Toms River.



Jackson with some of the students involved in making bluebird boxes.



This load of 30 boxes was quickly distributed throughout southern New Jersey.

In 2012 we fledged over 1,150 bluebirds. Prolonged adverse weather but more boxes resulted in fledging another 1300 bluebirds in 2013. Dave's 150 boxes have been an important part of my program within the newly established New Jersey Bluebird Society. In September 2013, the program continued forward when a third load of cedar was delivered for the 2014 season. Besides getting quality boxes, it provides a great opportunity to work with students who will be the next generation to help bluebirds. Dave expects that some of his students will continue their involvement with bluebirds.

An unexpected surprise were the number of people who came forward to support this program by providing funds or expressing interest to monitor a bluebird trail. Some of the partners include Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Atlantic Audubon Society, New Moon

Nursery, Harmony Valley Nursery, Builders' General Supply Company, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The volunteers who stepped forward to monitor a trail are too numerous to mention but their efforts put the finishing touches on a successful program. Without them the program would be extremely limited.

Partnering has turned out to be a great way to get more people involved and a better way to benefit bluebirds. Become an advocate of partnering!

Allen Jackson is a wildlife biologist retired from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He is vice president of the New Jersey Bluebird Society, which he helped establish in 2011. He is also a member of NABS, the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, and is extremely involved with promoting proper management for both bluebirds and Purple Martins.



Dave's class made and presented Jackson with a NJ Bluebird Society sign.

VEHICLE/PROPERTY DONATION PROGRAM

If you have a car, truck, motorcycle, RV, boat, or even an airplane that you no longer need, NABS would like to receive it as a tax-deductible charitable donation.

To donate, simply call this toll-free number: 866-244-8464. Our agents will have your vehicle, boat, RV, etc. picked up and taken to a facility where it will be evaluated by experts. A determination will be made regarding what should be done to maximize its selling price, thereby resulting in significantly higher value than it might otherwise generate so you will receive the maximum tax benefit allowable by U.S. law. For tax purposes you, the donor, will receive a formal Certificate of Donation complying with all State and Federal requirements for authenticating your donation to NABS, an IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charity.



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Thank you for supporting the conservation of bluebirds and other native cavity nesters!