



Jersey Blues

The Newsletter of The New Jersey Bluebird Society, an Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society ~Volume 4, Issue 1 - Fall, 2019

BUBBA SPEAKS

At the annual *Awe Why Knot BBQ* May 18, I presented a Certificate of Recognition to Citizens United Maurice River (Jane Galetto, Doreen Homan, Karla Rossini and Meghan Thompson) for their support (financial and promotional) to the NJBBS program over the years. Without their support, the NJBBS would not have the bluebird program we have. At the BBQ, Dave Moyer was presented CU's *Awe Why Knot* award for his contribution to building the boxes we need so desperately to promote our program. Partnerships are great ways to get people involved.

The 2019 has reaped NJBBS's previous efforts to benefit bluebirds in NJ. Proper management throughout the State, especially in the southern counties, has been the major factor. The number of bluebirds fledged should once again increase over the previous year. (Dave Gilcrest's summary for 2019 can be found on page 4.) Weather was on our side this season, along with our increasing bluebird box program.

The first eggs this season were reported by Andrew Major in Manchester, Ocean County and Allen Jackson

in Millville, Cumberland County on March 21, 2019. Both Andrew and Allen fed their bluebirds during the winter. Carrie Cahill had the last reported bluebirds fledging on 9/16/19 in Landisville, Atlantic County.

According to the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) House Sparrows are on the decline at a rate of 3% per year since the BBS started in 1966 (that will make many monitors smile). The latest BBS trend installment for the Eastern Bluebird shows the population has slowed to only about 0.1% per year (this was unexpected). The 15 Southeastern states have 60% of the breeding population, the Midwestern states 20% the Northeastern states 13% and the western states (N. Dakota, S. Dakota and Nebraska) have about 6% and Canada 4-5%. NJ is gaining ~7% per year while DE is gaining 5.77% annually. NJ is once again a leader. See the accompanying article regarding the BBS on page 2.

I recently got a membership list (thanks Gary) and I was pleased to see the number and distribution of our members. NJBBS has 119 members from 15 counties. The following counties were represented with members in parenthesis: Cumber-



land (21), Gloucester (20), Atlantic (15), Ocean (12), Cape May (10), Salem (8), Burlington (7), Camden (7), Somerset (4), Monmouth (4), Union (3), Hunterdon (3), Morris (2), Sussex (1), Passaic (1). We are well represented throughout the state which indicates a positive trend. As word spreads about our organization and our membership continues to be well represented, it can only mean good things for us. Thank you for all of you who promote NJBBS. We have come a long way, baby!

(continued on page 2)



**November 9, 2019 is our NJBBS Annual Meeting
in Jackson, NJ - Have you saved the date?**

Our meeting usually last from **10 am to 2 pm** with lunch available for a nominal cost. It's a nice opportunity to converse with your fellow members, compare notes from the past season and make some new friends!

**Forest Resource Education Center
495 Don Connor Blvd, Jackson, NJ 08527**

("Bubba Speaks", continued from front page)

Our *Jersey Blues* Editor, Lori Jo Jamieson, is now serving on NABS's Journal Advisory Committee! Congratulations Lori Jo - you are a leader both in NJ as well as North America.

Don't forget our Annual meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2019 at the Forest Resources Education Center (FREC) from 10 to 2. Get the complete GPS address from the front cover. An agenda with more information is forthcoming.

Allen Jackson, President, NJBBS



Allen Jackson aboard 2019 CU Maurice River Purple Martin Cruise



**New Jersey
Bluebird Society:
Our Mission,
Goals & Meth-
ods**

Our mission is to provide education and guidance in order to conserve and promote bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds in New Jersey. Our primary goal is to produce a healthy and productive bluebird population in New Jersey by establishing trails that are located in suitable habitat while utilizing and promoting recommended bluebird management practices (proper housing, protection from predators, and nest monitoring). We also recognize the importance and necessity to promote management of bluebirds in backyards. We provide expertise and guidance to trail monitors and backyard bluebird enthusiasts, monitor yearly population trends by surveying the number of young fledged from nest boxes, and provide public education about bluebirds to interested people in the state of New Jersey.

So...Why Bluebirds? Bluebirds are primarily ground feeders, with insects making up as much as 90% of their diet during the spring and sum-

mer months. They perch to hunt the ground for grubs, grasshoppers and caterpillars. Open areas with sparse or low vegetation provide the best potential habitat for bluebirds to find insects. Other important factors like places to perch and structure for fledglings to fly on their first flight help identify good habitat. Bluebirds have struggled to survive due to loss of habitat to development and changes in land management. Bluebirds are secondary cavity-nesters, meaning they cannot excavate their own nesting sites in trees. Since they readily accept nesting boxes humans provide and because they respond well to habitat management, we are in a unique position to benefit these beautiful birds. The campuses of schools, community parks and cemeteries provide suitable habitat. A grassy backyard can be a great place for a bluebird nest box.

CREAM RISES TO THE TOP AGAIN

According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), New Jersey's Eastern Bluebird (trend) population is increasing at a rate of 6.97% annually. While this is not an indication of actual numbers, it is positive news that what we are doing in the state is making a difference and should show even better results in the future. (See NABS' Bluebird -

Summer 2019 (Vol.41 No.3, pages 21-25).

The BBS was begun in 1966 as a long-term, large-scale international avian monitoring program to track the status and trends of North American bird populations. Each year during the height of the avian breeding season, June for most of the U.S. and Canada, surveys are conducted. Participants skilled in avian identification collect bird population data along roadside survey routes. Each survey route is 24.5 miles long with stops situated ideally 0.5 miles apart. At each stop, a 3-minute point count is conducted. During the count, every bird seen or heard within a 0.25 mile radius is recorded. Surveys start one-half hour before local sunrise and take about 5 hours to complete. Over 4100 survey routes are located across the continental U.S. and Canada. NJ has 33 routes but only about 20 were recently surveyed.





North American Bluebird Society News There are lots of advantages to being a member of both **NJBBS** and **NABS**. Joining NABS entitles you to receive "Bluebird", their colorful quarterly publication. This is a quality

periodical of interest to anyone who appreciates bluebirds and other secondary cavity nesters. The North American Bluebird Society organization supports and helps unify the work of state chapters across America. For a small membership fee (\$15 special price the first year, then \$20 per year), everyone in NJBBS is encouraged to also join NABS and get a better understanding of what our bluebird friends are doing in North America.

Go to our NJBBS website, www.njbluebirdsociety.org and look for NABS's membership form that accompanies the NJBBS membership form. If you are new to the world of bluebirds, NABS's website, www.nabluebirdsociety.org is a goldmine of information, including printable (PDF) **fact sheets** on getting started, nestbox plans, predator control, monitoring guides and feeding recommendations. Even those of us who consider ourselves "experienced" find these resources to be very useful for our own use and as information for new monitors.

BRAGGING RIGHTS - NJ is now ranked second in NABS members in North America. It could easily be #1 by the publication of this newsletter. NABS is approaching 1700 members nationally and NJ has more than 100 members. Pennsylvania is first with 112. We can surpass that. NJ is a leader in so many ways! Way to go NJBBS and NJ residents!

CORNELL'S NESTWATCH PROGRAM At a June meeting with Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (CLO) in Ithaca, NY, members of the NABS' Board of Directors (including Allen Jackson) discussed ways to partner to better benefit bluebirds. CLO is gathering nesting data on cavity nesting birds and we are being asked to assist by entering information collected when you monitor your boxes. This Nestwatch program is readily available on CLO's website and they offer a tutorial as a convenience to understand the program. Some of our members already use the program but it also has some disadvantages.



Above: Photo of female Bluebird taken by Cheryl Osolinski, monitor at Estelle Manor, Atlantic County. Note the band on her right leg. **On the Cover:** Photo of male Bluebird also taken by Cheryl Osolinski. Bottom photo taken by Lori Jo Jamieson.

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Jersey Blues

The newsletter of The New Jersey Bluebird Society

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Lori Jo Jamieson, John Layton, Gary Pilling,
Bernadine Visalli, Jim Watson, Ed Zboyan

New Jersey Bluebird Society Summary Form: Submitted Data

Reported # of Bluebirds Fledged - Results for Last 4 Years

County	2019	2018	2017	2016
Atlantic	580	684	536	514
Bergen	0	0	0	0
Burlington	268	332*	320	142
Camden	59	13*	0	0
Cape May	210	203	235	75
Cumberland	786	649	603	407
Essex	0	0	0	0
Gloucester	684	387	261	208
Hudson	0	0	0	0
Hunterdon	15	21	0	0
Mercer	0	0	0	0
Middlesex	28	61	50	55
Monmouth	51	84*	88	162
Morris	214	265	286	291
Ocean	266	694*	730	219
Passaic	0	0	0	0
Salem	540	243	222	112
Somerset	65	15	55	43
Sussex	0	0	0	0
Union	0	0	0	0
Warren	0	0	0	0
Total	3764	3651	3386	2228

*2018 Revised with Late Report

A big thank you goes out to Dave Gilcrest for compiling, updating and submitting these important statistics!



Photo of Bluebird chicks nesting in a Kestrel box, taken by Steve Eisenhauer, Regional Director, Protection and Land Stewardship for Natural Lands Trust.

**No "Bull" About It: We Need County Coordinators!
Call Allen at 856-327-4861 for more information.**



Photo taken at Cowtown by Bernie Visalli



BLUEBIRDS AND COWBOYS

BERNNIE VISALLI

This past spring, Allen Jackson was contacted by Steve Eisenhauer, Regional Director Protection and Land Stewardship for Natural Lands Trust to discuss the possibility of setting up a Bluebird trail at Cowtown Rodeo, located in Pilesgrove Twp. Steve monitors the Kestrel boxes there, and he noticed after the Kestrels were done nesting, the Bluebirds would then use the boxes.

The new trail was an experiment with a new box type and new box placement/set-up since Grant Harris, owner of Cowtown, put some restrictions on how the boxes could be used due to farming and animal activity.

After Allen created the trail of six boxes, he asked if I would take over the monitoring since it is a bit of a hike from his home base. We have since decided to split Salem County into two quadrants for coverage and new site selections.



(Photo – Bernie and the Bulls! The gate was not closed, and they often would come just close enough to see what was going on)



(Photo from the "Merlin" app, note the "uncommon" status)

Little did I know this would turn out to be my favorite place to visit. Every time I monitor, there is something new and excited going on. Cowtown has interesting habitat comparable to prairie open grassland that attracts otherwise uncommon species to South Jersey.

On one of my first visits, I was able to add a new bird to my list when I saw a very unusual "skunk" marked bird on a fence near one of the BB boxes. A quick check in *Merlin*, an app run by The Cornell Lab, came up with the Bobolink!

The trail had a slow start but then really picked up in May. Of course there was competition with Tree Swallows, but for the most part the Bluebirds showed me that it was a great opportunity to expand in this part of Salem County.

The cows, bulls and horses proved to be very interested in my bi-weekly visits. The Bulls especially found me entertaining, with one fellow coming over to inspect the box I had brought out. After a thorough box check, with a few licks thrown in, he strolled away. Thank goodness there wasn't a nest in there, though I would have liked to have witnessed what the bluebirds would have done in that situation.



The count for the trail is 19 eggs and 19 fledged, with one nest of 4 eggs still waiting to hatch at the time this article was submitted. The take away is, with good trail management and being open to challenges with new habitat, a new trail can be a big success.

****A special thank you to Grant Harris and Cowtown Rodeo for allowing this great opportunity****

New Jersey Bluebird Society 2019 End of Season Summary for Cape May County - Gail Fisher

Bluebirds fledged: 210 Cape May County 200 were banded, 10 were unbanded.

Bluebirds fledged: 38 Atlantic County 33 were banded, 5 were unbanded.

Note: there were likely several more unbanded CMC fledglings that are not included here due to some too-late updates.

94 boxes in Cape May County were monitored, as were 12 boxes in Atlantic County. 36 of the 94 CMC boxes (38%) had nests/eggs/fledglings and for those I monitored Atlantic Co it was 6 out of 12 (50%). 4 sites had HOSP issues. 2 sites had HOWR issues. 2 sites had eggs disappear and in both cases a snake was the likely cause. One site had an entire clutch that did not hatch. Several nests had one or two eggs that did not hatch. 4 sites that had been very productive in the past had low productivity this season. These were Annie Becica's trail, Cape May Co. Mosquito Commission, Head of the River Cemetery and on my trail at Calvary Baptist Church. However, newer sites were very productive. 8 sites (22%) in CMC produced three broods in the same box, and another produced three broods which alternated between the paired boxes several feet apart. 11 boxes (7 in CMC -20%, 4 in AC -33%) had two broods.

I am happy to be working with 26 private home owners/monitors with one or two boxes on their property. I'm also pleased that the NJBBS has seventeen partnerships with a variety of organizations in Cape May County, and two that I work with in Atlantic County. These include: Clemenson Farms Native Nursery and Head of the River Cemetery, both in Atlantic County, Amanda's Field Recreation Complex and the Historic Gandy Farmstead through the Upper Township Green Team, Belleplain State Forest and Cape May Point State Park, Cape May County Mosquito Control, Avalon Golf Club, Big Timber Lake RV Camping Resort, Shellbay Camping Resort, Willow Creek Winery and Farm, Sunset Flower Farm, North Country Knits Sheep Farm, Jalma Farms, Woodbine Equestrian Center, Calvary Baptist Church, Upper Township Middle School, Dennis Township Middle School, and Dennis Township Primary School. The Nature Conservancy has taken over the monitoring of nest boxes at South Cape May Meadows on Sunset Blvd. and at the Garret Preserve at Cape Island Creek in Cape May.

The most outstanding site this season was Shellbay Camping Resort, just south of Cape May Court House. All three of the boxes on this trail produced 3 clutches of eggs (9 total clutches), 8 of the clutches hatched and fledged, with one clutch being (probably) lost to a snake. Great job monitoring, Richard Ryder! Interestingly, this is the southernmost site in CMC where I know of BBs nesting. It is possible that there are others farther south, and it would make sense that there would be, given the high number of birds produced at this site, not only this year but also in 2018, but I have had no reports of this.

First and Last

The first chicks banded for the season in in CMC were on May 1 at the home of Chris Devaney and the last banded were on August 19th at the Dennis Twp Middle School. 8 new sites were added this season totaling 11 new boxes, with three of these producing fledged chicks. 7 sites were discontinued for various reasons totaling 19 boxes. 5 new monitors were added. Welcome to Frank Hoff, who had nesting birds within a week,



Lynn and Mike Houdart, Phyllis Day, Grace Traa, and Anthony Barrett. (photo, right) Anthony graduated from 8th grade this June, and in 7th grade he was in the Middle Twp Middle School wood shop, building some of the boxes used by NJBBS! There are 28 active monitors (couples count as 1). Ten more are either inactive, or discontinued and will be removed from the records for the 2020 season.



Sustainable New Jersey Grant Recipient, Grace Traa

Through the Upper Twp Green Team, I was introduced to Grace Traa, a very talented veteran teacher at Upper Twp Middle School, who was awarded a \$10,000 "Cultivation Education" grant from Sustainable New Jersey and the New Jersey Education Association. She reached out to the NJBBS to establish a two-box trail at the school. This partnership provides an opportunity for students to connect gardens and wildlife and also allows the Upper Township Middle School to move forward with its qualifications as a designated New Jersey Sustainable School.

(continued on next page)

(continued from last page) I represented the NJBBS at two table events this season. The first was on May 11 at the Clemenson Farms Native Nursery Spring Plant Sale, and the second was the 30th Annual Strawberry Festival and Craft Show at the Gandy Farmstead. I also had a table at the Green Fair & Fall Festival on September 21 at the Seaville United Methodist Church.

Interesting events occurred at a Steelmantown site. ...which happens to be the home of my brother, Craig Reeves and sister-in-law, Alex Hamilton. This site is deep in oak woods, with just an acre cleared, but has two active BB boxes. One box had white eggs - the only occurrence in Cape May Co this season. Two BBs also spent part of the summer roosting at night on a 1" sheltered second story window ledge on their newly constructed log home. Craig put up an open sided roosting box, thinking that narrow ledge was not very comfortable, but the BBs ignored it. One nest box stands only about fifty feet from the house, and during the third round of nesting the female helped herself to the coconut coir lining from one of the hanging baskets on the front porch. It looked like a great resource to her!



In May, following a driving rainstorm, they found a dead banded male bluebird in their front yard. It had been banded almost exactly one year earlier, on May 24, 2018, the third of four chicks in a nest, just two miles away (as the BB flies) at the Belleplaine State Forest office. (see related photo)

Finally, I want to thank all my dedicated monitors this season for their prompt nest check updates, which helped me schedule the banding days. I would like to especially thank Ellen Seward and Ruth Bergstrom who have been faithfully monitoring Cox Hall Creek, Willow Creek Winery, Cape May County Mosquito Control, Bennetts Bog WMA and several private homeowner sites, despite the fact that there have been no nesting bluebirds there (except CCMC) since the 2014 winter kill. Nevertheless, they maintain the boxes and keep records so that those boxes will be available when the birds do nest there again. They have reported numerous sightings during the winter months, but so far, no nesters. This really takes dedication! Congratulations on the first successful nesting season to Annie Becica, who monitored three consecutive broods at Big Timber Lake RV Resort - a great surprise, following the first two years with no birds. Her home trail had no residents this year so she was super happy about these. I would also like to recognize Steve and Edith Roach. Their year-long wait was also rewarded with their first BBs this year! *Gail Fisher, Cape May County Coordinator*



First Banding at Amanda's Field

The first brood of Eastern Bluebird chicks were banded in July at Amanda's Field Recreation Complex in Upper Township, by Gail Fisher, Cape May Co. Coordinator for the NJ Bluebird Society. The trail began with one nestbox, set up in March. It was first occupied by Tree Swallows who raised their young there. The old nesting material was removed and then the bluebirds moved in. Seeing that there were bluebirds in the neighborhood, on July 9th two more nestboxes were added. Within 10 days, one of the new boxes had 4 eggs! Many thanks to Ralph Cooper, of the Upper Township Green Team, for arranging the partnership between Upper Township and the NJ Bluebird Society.

Assisting Gail Fisher with banding are (left) Tom Berger, an Upper Township resident who faithfully monitors the trail, and Ed Carter, of the Upper Twp Recreation Department.

Special thanks to Tom Berger, who not only monitors his own boxes, but did a great job here at Amanda's Field in its first season. Thank you, too, to John Adams the Rec Supervisor, and to Ed Carter of the Rec Dept, who has helped keep an eye on the boxes.

Gail Fisher, Cape May County Coordinator



Join the Migration to Kearney, Nebraska

NABS Conference, March 11-15, 2020

What is the most impressive sight you've seen? If you've ever visited Kearney, Nebraska, in March, your answer might be viewing 80 percent of the world's Sandhill Cranes converged upon one 80-mile stretch of land. Yes, that's right – 500,000 cranes visit the central Platte River every spring to fuel up on grain from nearby cornfields in preparation for the long journey to their Arctic and sub-Arctic nesting grounds.

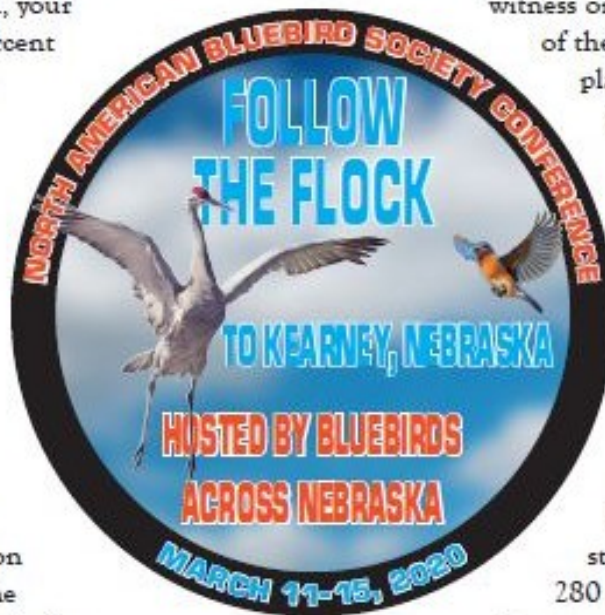
This epic migration of the cranes – a species that has existed since the Eocene 34 million years ago – represents one of the world's great natural spectacles, luring more than 70,000 birdwatchers from every state in the union and 47 countries annually to the Kearney, Nebraska, area.

This picturesque landscape makes for the perfect backdrop to the North American Bluebird Society's March 11-15, 2020, conference in Kearney. Hosted by Bluebirds Across Nebraska, attendees will enjoy crane

viewing led by experienced staff and volunteers at the National Audubon Society's Rowe Sanctuary to witness one of the great birding wonders of the world. Viewing blind trips are planned for the morning – when the cranes wake up and take off from the river sandbars – and evening – when they return to roost – so conference attendees are encouraged to experience both.

But spring in Nebraska isn't just about the cranes. According to Smithsonian.com, 20 million other migrating birds belonging to about 300 species stop along the Platte, including 280 of the world's remaining whooping cranes, 90 percent of white-fronted geese, thousands of endangered piping plovers, 30 percent of northern pintails, 50 percent of mallards, as well as bald eagles and about 2 million snow geese.

Attendees will have the option of seeing many of these during our birding field trip or to learn more about Nebraska through our Prairie Culture tour.



The birding field trip will include:

- Viewing Prairie Chickens through spotting scopes and binoculars.
 - A visit to the Funk Lagoons rainwater basin to see waterfowl and other birds.
 - A tour of Harlan Reservoir, which can feature waterfowl, eagles, snow geese and pelicans, depending on migration.
 - A prairie dog village.
- The Prairie Culture tour



The birding field trip includes viewing Prairie Chickens.

will include stops at:

- The G.W. Frank Museum of History & Culture (unk.edu/offices/frankhouse), one of the first electrified houses in the American West, it offers a window into Kearney's past, its early rise and fall, and rebirth as a center for health and education.
- The Archway (archway.org), a museum that spans I-80 saluting the pioneers of the past.
- Museum of Nebraska Art (mona.unk.edu), which celebrates visual artwork that reflects the state's culture.



The Prairie Culture tour includes a stop at the Archway monument and museum.

Lunch for both field trips will be at Burchell's White Hill Farmhouse Inn (burchellfarmhouseinn.com).

But wait, there's more! Much more! The conference also includes workshops, educational exhibits, live and silent auctions, a raffle, vendors and fun socializing with new and old birding friends. Dinners on Friday

Save the date!

What: NABS 2020 Conference, hosted by Bluebirds Across Nebraska
When: March 11-15, 2020
Where: Holiday Inn Convention Center, Kearney, Nebraska (Call 308-237-5971 for reservations)

and Saturday will include a cash bar. In addition to Friday's live auction, we'll also be entertained by Al Batt (albatt.com), Minnesota writer, speaker, storyteller and humorist. On Saturday evening, awards will be presented by NABS, and entertainment will be provided by Ron Cisar of Omaha, Nebraska. His program, "Earth Music," is a celebration of the Earth through song.

Our event speakers are sure to entertain and educate attendees. They include:

- Naturalist, wildlife photographer and field guide writer Stan Tekiela (naturesmart.com), who will present "Captivating Bluebirds."
- Writer, artist and naturalist Julie Zickefoose's (juliezickefoose.com) talk will be based on her latest book, "Saving Jemima, Life and Love With a Hard-luck Jay."
- In addition to providing Friday night's entertainment, Al Batt will again lend his nature-related storytelling skills on Saturday.
- Bernie Daniel, NABS president, will discuss distribution and trends for the population of the three bluebird species based on data from the Breeding Bird Survey.
- Biologist, author and nature photographer Myrna Pearman (myrnapearman.com) will give a short history of Ellis Bird Farm, a conservation, research and education center. She will talk about how the natural assets of the old homestead have been used to address engaging children in nature.
- Bill Taddicken, director of Rowe Sanctuary's Iain Nicolson Audubon Center (rowe.audubon.org) will discuss the Sandhill Cranes' annual migration.

The conference will occur at the Holiday Inn Convention Center, 110 S. 2nd Ave., Kearney, NE, 308-237-5971. When calling for hotel reservations, attendees should mention they are with the NABS/BAN conference to receive their room discount.

More details and registration form will soon be available on line at bbne.org and nabluebirdsociety.org/conference.



Sandhill Cranes converge upon the Platte River

GROWING TH

ATLANTIC COUNTY

- Atlantic Audubon Society made a major financial donation to NJBBS in June. The money will mostly be used to purchase materials (wood and necessary hardware) to get more bluebird boxes out there, especially in Atlantic County. Thank you AAS!
 - 2 boxes were added adjacent to the Atlantic City Country Club.
 - NJBBS, promoted by Cape May County Coordinator Gail Fisher, set up an educational table May 12 at Clemenson Farm Native Nursery.
 - A box was added in Hammonton at the Healey's in June which had bluebirds banded on July 24.
- Allen located a box in Port Republic at Steve Whitford's residence. He also left another box for Steve to set up at his neighbor's house. Steve showed interest in assisting monitoring bluebird trails in Atlantic County.
- Jim Watson and Allen put a box at the PAL EHT Farm, on Leap Street in Egg Harbor Township. We will also put a box at Ron's house, the maintenance person at the farm.

BURLINGTON COUNTY

- 2 boxes were added on a blueberry field in Chatsworth; 1 box produced bluebirds.
- A box at the Atsion Lake office had a pair of bluebirds which were banded June 19.
- Allen met and visited with Harry Bratty to talk bluebird management and potential trails. He has interest in monitoring some boxes. He will work with Nels on potential projects, taking over a 12 box trail in Tabernacle. Harry came to Atsion to learn bluebird management and how to band bluebirds.
- Batsto had at least 6 pair of bluebirds this year but all 8 box locations were bluebird active.

CAMDEN COUNTY

- Eagle Scout Magnus P. is working with NJBBS to redo New Brooklyn Park in Winslow. On sites with Chuck Kanupke and I were done in March and followed up late in the season. There is some lack of coordination with the scout which will be improved upon.
- Chuck and Allen completed repairs to 5 boxes adjacent to the Atlantic city Expressway.
- A table was set up at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Cherry Hill to meet and greet people interested in bluebirds.
- Chuck Kanupke, Jim Priest and Allen met with Adam and Ryan, employees of Frank Dornio Park in Sicklersville to evaluate an old bluebird trail that needs improvement. The 56-acre park offers good potential for bluebirds. 3-5 set-ups will be located properly after the old boxes are removed. We will work with Wild Birds Unlimited to find a monitor for the trail for 2020.

CAPE MAY COUNTY

- 43 boxes were picked up from Dave Moyer's wood shop class 5/2/19. Dave's class will produce 150 boxes per school year for us. This is a major reason our program is successful - the availability of boxes. We honored Dave Moyer at CU Maurice River's annual *Awe Why Knot* barbecue. Dave was also presented with a decoy of a Red Knot.
- NJBBS, promoted by Cape May County Coordinator Gail Fisher, set up an educational table at the Green Festival, which was held at Seaville United Methodist Church on August 21st.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

- Allen did an onsite at Four Seasons development to evaluate potential natural resources improvements followed by a talk on bluebirds, purple martins and barn swallows.
 - Allen installed a box on Frank Poloff's farm in Millville at noon 3/30/19. Frank called to say there were bluebirds on the box the next morning. A nest check on 4/9/19 yielded a bluebird nest. A month later he added a second box. Both boxes have produced bluebirds this year.
 - Allen located a box on Shelly Hare's property after she reported seeing bluebirds trying to get in a box that had a hole too small. Forested areas with lots of American holly and water provided cover, food and water for the bluebirds to overwinter. 2 broods were banded there during the season.
 - Allen located 2 boxes at a residence in the Woodruff area (Jean Edwards)
- Cindy Berry is taking over the Landis Sewerage Authority bluebird trail. All 10 boxes have produced bluebirds this season. On August 4 more boxes were added for the 2020 nesting season.
- Mike Golla checked the 18 boxes at the Buckshutem WMA. In 2018 we had to remove all the boxes so they could do habitat improvements. 18 boxes were put back up in late fall 2018. A 19th box was added in April. A 4/9/19 nest check had 10 of 18 boxes with nests in them. Mike knows how to "Bring Back the Bluebirds!" (*continued next page*)

THE PROGRAM

(Cumberland County continued)

- Allen located 2 boxes on Tom T's property in Millville.
- A box was added on Cathie and Bob S's property in Vineland.
- 2 boxes were added at 4 Seasons development in Millville
- Located boxes at residences on Park Ave and Main Road in Vineland.
- Allen located boxes at 3 more sites along South Main Road in Vineland.

GLOUCESTER COUNTY

- Bernie Visalli and Allen set up a NJBBS table at Scotland Run Park to distribute information to the public on June 2. Bernie had people sign up for on-site visits which will lead to more boxes. From that event, Allen located a box in Hamonton, Atlantic County. Bluebirds nested in the box and Allen banded the young in July.
- Allen gave a presentation at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Sicklerville which resulted in site visits and gaining new members who are interested in assisting with bluebirds.
- While banding young bluebirds at the Atlantic City Expressway exit 33, a man stopped to ask Allen about bluebirds. He had a box in his back yard but no bluebirds. I followed him home, gave him and his wife some recommendations and placed a setup in a good location for them.
- Allen met with John C. to coordinate with him on his bluebird trail. He lives on the border of Salem and Gloucester County and has a relatively new bluebird trail of 88 boxes. His production for 2019 was 220 bluebirds fledged in Gloucester and 138 in Salem County.

HUNTERDON COUNTY

- Allen met Bill Bange from Stockton in Bellmawr who made his own variation of a bluebird feeder. He did an excellent job and after painting it, it will be used this winter. Thank you Bill!

OCEAN COUNTY

- Allen and Frank Budney conducted an on site and located a bluebird box at Mike C's residence in Bayville.

SALEM COUNTY

- 1 box was replaced and 2 new boxes were added on Three Bridges Road in Monroeville.
- Allen spoke to the bioscience class at the Salem County Vocational Technical High School on box design, predator control and proper management. The class had completed a community service day at the Inn at Salem County Club, removing invasive plants, constructing a nature trail and planting for a pollinator garden. The school will build boxes to design specifications and locate them at a second community service day event.
- Allen donated 3 Indigo plants to the Inn as part of an ongoing project with the VoTech High School and NJ Division Fish and Wildlife's Salem River WMA. 2 bluebird boxes were added to the site: 1 to replace a box, the second to pair a set of boxes. A third will be added in a new location.
- Western Red Cedar was delivered to the Salem County Votech High School in September to make bluebird boxes which will primarily be used in Salem County. The wood was milled and donated by Jack Cimprich.
- Allen donated 14 PVC predator guards to John C. for his bluebird trail which spans Gloucester and Salem Counties. Read more about John C. under Gloucester County above
- Added a box in Pittsgrove Township on Lower Mill Road that had a nest and eggs in about 2-3 weeks.
- Bernie and Allen met onsite with Phil Arsenault of the Oldmans Creek Preserve of the South Jersey Land and Water Trust to discuss a bluebird trail associated with a Boy Scouts of America project. We evaluated the habitat, looked at a second parcel of land in Pennsville and provided Phil with box designs and information about bluebirds.
- There are plans to add ~6 more boxes at Cowtown Rodeo area. See Bernie's article on page 5.
- Bernie Visalli and Allen conducted an on site at the Woodstown High School to view their 3 bluebirds boxes and got to band 4 chicks in box 2. Since the boxes were put up a few years ago the wetland vegetation has grown and made it necessary to relocate them to better, more open habitat. Science teacher, Michelle Williams, has developed an environmental program any organization would be proud of, let alone a school. Interested students are getting quite the education. Bernie will be working with the school in the future.
- Allen and Bernie will meet with representatives at Appel Farm to set up a trail for next year/
- Allen put 2 boxes at Appel Farm in Elmer. This starts a partnership with their charter school opening there.

Have something to add to "Growing the Program" for Spring Jersey Blues? Please send it to bluebirdljj@gmail.com

News from Sussex County, NJ

NJBBS Member Robin Tosti shares his bluebird activities in the most northwest area of New Jersey.

“ I got the ok from Frankford township to put up bluebird houses on the Dry Brook Preserve which is about 230 acres, half of which is farmland. I managed to find time to put up 12 bluebird houses and only found the time to get back once and check on them as my work is very demanding. I spotted bluebirds on one house and some tree swallows on another but did not see if they nested. I also put up two houses on a piece of property I have in Frankford township and have spotted them nesting in one of the two houses. The other house has a tree swallow nest.

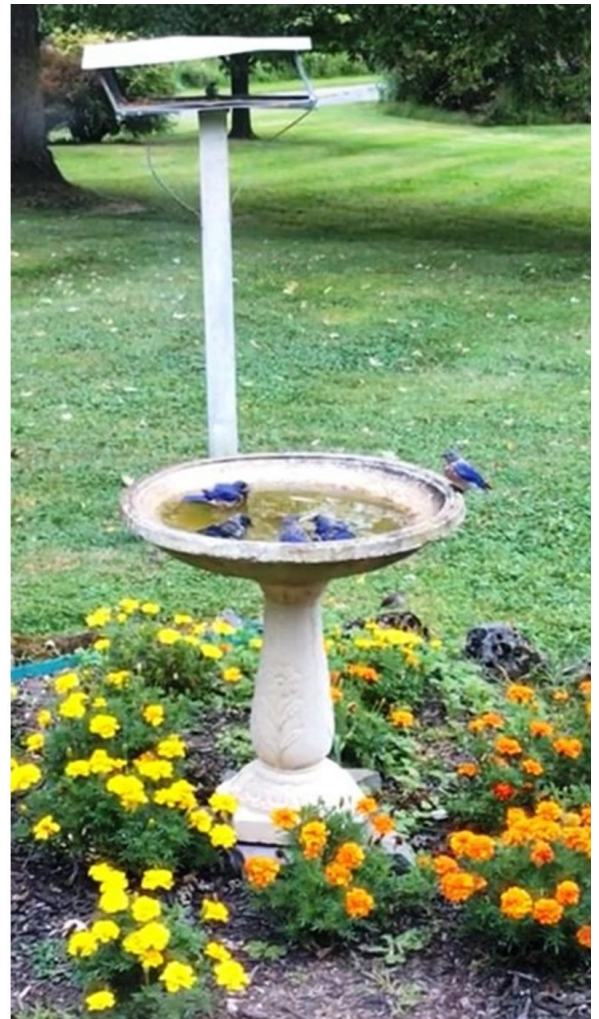
At my mom’s home in Layton there are 5 acres and I have 3 houses there. Two houses there are nesting tree swallows and one box has bluebirds nesting. Overall I’m not seeing as many bluebirds as I spotted last year and am definitely seeing a lot of tree swallows. I know I should be looking at the nests but like I said, I’m really tied up with a huge project at work this spring. When you work in Information Technology it’s always crazy. It will slow a little but then it’s back nonstop. So I don’t monitor the houses like I should. 2 up in Layton had a pair of bluebirds in one box and tree swallows in the other. The bluebirds successfully raised the young I believe but I never did see the young fledge.

The 4 houses I have on a separate piece of property I own I observed bluebirds around the area but never saw any in the houses. House wrens nested in two of the four and then the wrens filled up another house completely with twigs. I cleaned out but they kept filling it up. The 4th house has had the tree swallows nesting every year for the past 3 years now.

I put up a trail camera to monitor a house that I thought might be active with bluebirds but got nothing. Well I can’t say nothing. Got some interesting wildlife on the camera. Got the usual, fox, opossum, raccoon, squirrels and such but to my delight got a nice shot of a bobcat and also a coyote! Forgot to mention too I was cleaning one of the houses early this spring and something jumped out at me and landed on the roof of the blue bird house. It was a flying squirrel! Their big bulging eyes were crazy looking. Guess they need to be since they are nocturnal. Sure scared me. Got a picture of it sitting on the house, but I can’t seem to find it.

The Green Acres track of woods and fields (Dry Brook Preserve) – those 230 acres in Frankford Township - required a vacation day from work to put up a trail of 12 houses early this spring. Results were just ok. I saw one nesting pair, never got the chance to see the young and the rest of the house were occupied by house wrens and tree swallows. We seem to have an abundance of them in Sussex County and it’s very annoying, especially the house wrens when they keep filling up the house with twigs so no other birds nest near them. If I had the time, (maybe when I retire) I could keep up on them. I plan on putting up 12 more houses this coming late winter or early spring on the Preserve.

As I stated in another email I had bluebirds at my house last year in Branchville, NJ and they successfully raised young. This year, nothing. Didn’t see them anywhere in Branchville this year and very sparse at my mother’s property in Layton this spring/summer. Layton always seemed loaded with them other years, though just this past weekend I noticed about 6-8 bluebirds flying and sitting on electric wires that run up my mom’s long driveway to her house. That was encouraging. I plan on cleaning out all the houses that I (try) to maintain this fall. Thanks, Rob.”



P.S - I did see some encouraging signs of bluebirds last week at my mom’s house in Layton, NJ. She has a bird bath and there were up to 5 at once taking a bath! I enclosed a couple of those photos taken from her window inside the house. Yes that bird feeder in the background is bent up due to a bear! ~ Rob



Bluebirds at Batsto, Atlantic County

The Atlantic Audubon Society maintains one trail of bluebird houses which are located in Batsto. Batsto is located in Wharton State Forest just off of Route 542 and east of Pleasant Mills, NJ. Allen Jackson has been working with Batsto personnel and coordinates with them on a regular basis. Originally there were 40 nest boxes, which proved to be too many for the area and tree swallows took over. The boxes have been reduced to 13 now, hopefully reducing the number of tree swallows nesting by reducing the number of boxes available for them to nest in. As this is done, the bluebirds should increase in numbers. There is a monitor who contacts Allen when it is time to band.

In addition to bluebird boxes, there is a wood duck box and two nesting towers for purple martins. The trail is monitored by volunteers. Nesting season is late March thru late August, so if you visit the trail during those months, observe the birds from a safe distance of 20' or more, and please do not open the boxes. It is very easy to dislodge the nest or prematurely let the nestlings fly out and they would not survive. So, be respectful to the birds and help them survive. If you are interested in helping with the bluebird nesting trails, please contact the Atlantic Audubon Society (609 384-4599) or Allen Jackson at the New Jersey Bluebird Society at (856)327-4861 for more information.

Unusual Nesting Behavior in Egg Harbor Township, Atlantic County

I'm always glad to add a nestbox to my bluebird trail here. This year I paired an additional box at Ocean Heights Presbyterian Church to keep a pair of aggressive tree swallows from taking over an existing, producing box. After much nosiness from both pairs, the bluebirds built nests in both boxes. Two females were laying eggs in the same box. Monitor Barb Bennett reported an additional egg each day until there were nine eggs in the original box - and one egg in the new box, which was later abandoned. Final total: 10 eggs, of which only 4 hatched. Just for fun, and for the second year, a tree frog cohabitated with the active nesting bluebirds and their eggs. ~ Lori Jo Jamieson, EHT, Atlantic County



2019 Nestbox Results – John Layton, Atlantic County

This season had a very slow start but very good second brood success. Third broods proved to have poor fertility at 30%. Extra thanks to great work by monitors Diane Kady, Linda Mancuso and Lori Jo Jamieson. They went out of their way to help me, due to my poor health. ~ John Layton

Stockton University: 27 Boxes
Monitors: Diane Kady and Linda Mancuso
(4 third broods)

Eastern Bluebirds 88 chicks banded and fledged	
Tree Swallows	5
House Wrens	14
Chickadees	4
Carolina Wrens	5

Personal Trail monitored by John Layton
Eastern Bluebirds - 30 banded and fledged
(3 third broods)

Egg Harbor Township Retention Basins: 24 boxes
Monitor: Lori Jo Jamieson
Eastern Bluebirds - 131 banded and fledged.
(7 third broods)

House Wrens	15
Chickadees	8
Tree Swallows	6

SEASON TOTALS FOR 2019

Eastern Bluebirds (banded and fledged)	249
House Wrens	29
Chickadees	12
Carolina Wrens	5
Tree Swallows	11



A Story of First Timers

How satisfying it is to peek in at your new bluebird nestbox and see those beautiful blue eggs! First Timers Tom and Jane Verba met Allen Jackson at Clemenson Farms in May. He gave them information about the NJBB Society and they were hooked, (like the rest of us are). The Verbas invited Allen out to their home in Vineland to set up a nesting box, which he did on May 20th. Within hours of installation, a male bluebird began scouting the box.

After several false starts with house wrens nesting, a pair of bluebirds began nesting on June 7th. Five eggs were laid between June 10th and June 14th.

On July 8th, Allen stopped by to band the five chicks. A young neighbor, Anabel, was interested in helping, and Allen showed her how to tell the age of the chicks by comparing them to a photo chart.

Tom sent an email on July 14th: "Five fledged a short time ago. Looking good in the tree tops." Great job, everyone!



Bluebirds Return to Leisure Village West - but not to retire!

Ocean County has its share of retirement communities. Six years ago I moved into one of them, (Leisure Village West in Manchester) that had a nearly abandoned small bluebird trail; boxes needed upkeep and there were no monitoring records.

The next year a friend and I decided to take it over, starting by upgrading the boxes and doing weekly monitoring, and we thoroughly enjoyed our first foray into seeing the process of nesting birds up close and personal. We were happy to have 20 bluebirds fledge that year.

Like most retirement communities we don't have an abundance of open space that would be suitable bluebird habitat, but we searched for new areas to relocate existing boxes or insert new boxes on our village property, and over the years we have reaped the benefits of our efforts. Each year our number of bluebirds fledged has increased, from 20 birds the first year, to 28 the second year, 31 the third year, 41 the fourth year, and holding steady at 40 birds fledged this past year.

Next year we hope to get up to 50 birds fledged and to improve on our 68% fledge success rate. The lesson from our experience is that with persistence and judicious choice of box locations, even in a relatively crowded community, we can help to expand the bluebird population near our homes. - Submitted by Greg Prelich, Manchester NJ





Cindi Berry bands a chick

BLUEBIRDS AND A SEWERAGE AUTHORITY - PERFECT TOGETHER?

by Allen Jackson

I have to admit, my favorite bluebird trail is on land owned by the Landis Sewerage Authority (LSA) in Vineland, Cumberland County. Cindi Berry (the monitor) and the bluebirds will probably back me up!

The LSA is nothing like what people would think. It is a 1800-acre expanse of land that is managed as a public utility while providing special benefits to the environment. Dennis Palmer is their Executive Director/Chief Engineer. Our involvement with LSA has resulted in a unique partnership. For this article, I will just discuss the bluebird trail and purple martin gourd rack that have been located on their property.

In 2017, Jane Galetto of Citizens United Maurice River put me in touch with Dennis to conduct an onsite for a bluebird trail. The LSA office is located on Mill Road and has a varied habitat, offering environments for many species.

I originally located 5 boxes on their property near their office building on Mill Road. 4 of the 5 boxes were productive that year, so 3 more were added for 2018, of which all were productive. In addition, I added single boxes at their substation on Bartholomew Avenue and on Lori Moore's (employee of LSA) residence in Millville. 2 more boxes were added for the 2019 season at LSA and another single at Steve and Raelene Smith's residence (Lori's mother) - all were successful. That is, 13 boxes, all of which were productive in 2019. LSA's 10 boxes fledged 63, the Bartholomew box fledged 8 young from 2 broods, Lori's box fledged 5 and Steve and Raelene's box fledged 3 for a total of 79 bluebirds for 2019.

Let's bring Cindi Berry into the picture. Cindi was the most influential environmental science teacher I was aware of in the Millville school system. This Holly Heights Elementary School teacher monitored a productive bluebird box at the school which offered tremendous teaching opportunities to her students. Due to health issues she had to retire but desperately wanted to continue working with the bluebirds. Since she lived near LSA, it was a perfect opportunity for her to take my trail over (which I hated to give up but was thankful for the help). I have told Cindi many times that I was giving her my best bluebird trail and she would be spoiled by its productivity.



Cindi has become very adept in monitoring and banding the bluebirds at LSA. As

I promised, she is spoiled by having each and every box productive. She has encountered white eggs, multiple broods and enjoys banding the bluebird chicks. She has also helped monitor the purple martin colony which produced 34 young in 10 of the 12 gourds on the rack.

For the 2019 season we fledged 63 bluebirds at LSA - over 6 fledged per box for the 10 boxes there! We have already added 4 more boxes at LSA and thanks to Cindi's contacts, we will be conducting an on site at the Cumberland Christian School in Vineland to establish a trail there. Cindi already is monitoring 23 boxes plus however many more boxes we put up at the Cumberland Christian School. Life is Good!

Were you there at just the right moment? If you've captured great images of bluebirds with your digital camera or phone, send them to me attached to an email in jpeg form, to BluebirdLJJ@gmail.com. Please include who took the photo, where and when they were taken, and any background information, if desired. I will do my best to use them in an upcoming issue of "Jersey Blues." Thank you! *Lori Jo*



NATIVE BIRDS NEED NATIVE PLANTS!

Think about it! The importance of having native plants in your yard is more important than most people realize. Native plants attract more insects than invasive plants and subsequently provide more food for those insect eating birds. Most caterpillars and other herbivorous insects (more than 90%) are specialists - they eat only a few kinds of plants, and some are restricted to a single type of plant. A yard full of nonnative plants is a "food desert" for native insects, and has been shown to contain fewer insects overall and fewer insect species.

In a study it was found that the cutoff point is about 30% - yards with no more than 30% nonnative plants can still provide viable habitat for native birds. Since bluebirds depend heavily on insects and frequent our back yards, planting native plants makes a lot of sense, especially when it has been documented our insect population is in decline. I have observed the impact of insect availability on bluebird nesting and can speak to how important insects are to our bluebirds. If you are going to be involved with bluebirds, you need to be an insect conservationist.

Allen has been improving his garden with native plants and the number of pollinator bees (mason, bumble bees) butterflies, and hummingbirds has been significantly more than expected. He also has had his pair of bluebirds fledge 3 broods of young in each of the last 3 years - that is 9 broods in 1 box over 3 nesting seasons (45 young).

Desiree L. Narango, Douglas W. Tallamy, Peter P. Marra. 2015. Nonnative Plants Reduce Population Growth of an Insectivorous Bird. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA 115(45):11549-11554.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

EVENTS

Saturday, October 26th - Native Plant Society of New Jersey FALL CONFERENCE - at Raritan Valley Community College, Grand Conference Center, 118 Lamington Road in Branchburg, NJ COST: \$45 Members \$65 Non-members . Conference Speakers & Topics include: **"Breaking the Rules: Ecological Landscape Design and Traditional Landscape Methodology,"** by Larry Weaner; **"Three Case Studies in Ecological Restoration; Designing for Wildlife,"** by William E. Young, and **"Rare and Endangered Plants of New Jersey,"** by Jason Hafstad, with the NJDEP Division of Land Use Regulation | Bureau of Technical Services | Endangered & Threatened Species Unit. Visit www.npsnj.org for details.

Monday, November 25th - 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. "Plant Wars: How to Recognize and Deal With Invasive Nonnative Plant Species" - Pat Sutton (see links to her website below) will present this program at the Cape May Court House Library, 30 Mechanic Street, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210, in their downstairs Storytime Room. FREE.

BOOKS - see page 17

WEBSITES

Native Plant Society of New Jersey Plant Lists - www.npsnj.org/pages/nativeplants_Plant_Lists.html

Neonicotinoids Facts - <https://xerces.org/neonicotinoids-and-bees>

Jersey Friendly Yards - www.jerseyyards.org

Pat Sutton's 2019 Sources of Native Plants - www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/category/native-plants

Rutgers Website - "Incorporating Native Plants in Your Residential Landscape" by Meredith Melendez, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, Mercer County and Deborah Pinto, Horticulture Consultant, Burlington County

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1140>

STATE REBATE PROGRAM (limited counties) <http://savethesource.org/landscape-makeover-program>

**Some of the very basic BACKYARD HABITAT Resources OR
★“Best Books for a Backyard Naturalist’s Library”**

recommended by Patricia Sutton
patclaysutton@comcast.net
www.patandclaysutton.com

FOUNDATION of Backyard Habitat

RETHINKING THE AMERICAN LAWN:

- ★ Any / All of Sara Stein’s books: *Noah’s Garden (Restoring the Ecology of our own Back Yards)*, *My Weeds (A Gardener’s Botany)*, *Planting Noah’s Garden (Further Adventures in Backyard Ecology)*.
- ★ *Urban and Suburban Meadows, Bringing Meadows to Big and Small Spaces*, by Catherine Zimmerman. Matrix Media Press, 2010. Step-by-step process detailed and explained; emphasizes natives. EXCELLENT read for all gardeners, not just those with a spot for a meadow.
- ★ *The Green Garden, A New England Guide to Planning, Planting, and Maintaining the Eco-Friendly Habitat Garden*, by Ellen Sousa. Bunker Hill Publishing, 2011.
- ★ Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes – www.for-wild.org/ This website addresses problems homeowners have with local weed control ordinances and shares a “model municipal ordinance” and ways to implement it in your community.
- ★ Cape May Point’s model Landscape Ordinance (<http://www.anjec.org/pdfs/CoastalHabitats2007.pdf> – see pages 20-21 – or print pages 22-23) has kept stone lawns and cleared lots at a minimum. The result has been a rural seaside community where wildlife has a chance.

NATIVE PLANTS ARE KEY:

- ★ *Bringing Nature Home, How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*, by Douglas Tallamy. Timber Press, 2007. Powerful & compelling read about how we impact the diversity of insects, birds, and all wildlife when we plant and nurture natives as opposed to non-natives.
- ★ *Designing Gardens with Flora of the American East*, by Carolyn Summers. Rutgers University Press, 2010. This excellent guidebook for garden professionals (and the general public) is an in-depth look at our love affair with nonnative plants; showcases eastern native plants that can correct this situation.

INVASIVES

- ★ *Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants, Brooklyn Botanic Garden All Region Guides*, by C. Colston Burrell. Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 2006. A must for the naturalist gardener’s library.
- ★ *Invasive Plants: A Guide to Identification, Impacts, and Control of Common North American Species*, by Sylvan Ramsey Kaufman and Wallace Kaufman, 2007. Excellent in-depth guide sharing plant origin, problems, solutions, and advice!
- ★ Websites: (1) <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Gardens/invasives.html> (2) <http://www.invasive.org/>
(3) www.invasiveplants.net (4) <http://npdc.usda.gov/> (5) <http://www.newfs.org/protect/invasive-plants>
(6) www.npsnj.org/invasive_species_0103.htm (7) www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/unitedstates/state.shtml
(8) www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/ (9) http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/aquatic_invasives.htm

Singing for Fun

In 1889 a religious book emphasized the spur provided by the possession of a song. This notion matched the quotation under examination:



“A bird sings because it has a song and must sing it.”

In 1902 a column in “The Brooklyn Daily Eagle” of Brooklyn, New York suggested that duty was not the key motivator:

“The spring does not pour forth because it is its duty, the little bird does not sing because of duty, but because its little heart would burst if it did not sing.”

In 1949 a biographical work called “The Sage of the Hills” highlighted the importance of having a song in the heart:

“It should be remembered that the Nightingale does not sing just because we listen; it sings because it has a song in its heart.”

I have had conversations with a few naturalists and philosophic minded folks who construe bird song anthropomorphically, stating that birds sing because they are happy and enjoy singing. I always hate to disabuse them of this interpretation, but as a scientist, I know natural selection rarely allows frivolous behavior. It’s nice to think that birds sing because they are happy, and we’ve created lots of songs and greeting cards to reinforce that view. Unfortunately, if there ever was any bird that spent time singing for pure enjoyment, it was removed from the gene pool.



If birds sang because they are happy, then half the birds in the world are depressed, I guess, because they are not songbirds and have no song. Then there are the songbirds like jays and crows and magpies who are apparently unhappy souls, merely squawking rather than singing.

The problem with the idea of a bird singing for pleasure is threefold:

First, it’s usually only the male singing; why not females? Are they unhappy? What about juveniles? Are they unable to express their glee? There are exceptions. Female Northern Mockingbirds, Northern Cardinals, and Black-headed Grosbeaks have songs as complex as the males’. In the phalaropes, with reversed sexual dimorphism, courtship roles are reversed and the female advertises her presence to males with calls. After the female lays eggs, the male takes over the nest and incubation duties while the female seeks other males to mate with.

Second, singing is usually restricted to breeding season. Does that mean birds are not happy the rest of the year? Some do sing most of the year, so are they happier than birds that become reticent in the winter?

Third, singing advertises a bird’s presence, which is ok if a female notices, but risky if a predator does. So, in the non-breeding season, a singer would be telling predators he’s there for the taking. There are some exceptions such as the European and American Robins which hold winter territories and sing to defend them.

Singing has two major functions: to attract a mate and defend a territory. There has to be a balance between those purposes and making oneself known to predators.

So singing "just for fun" is just not adaptive, it's downright dangerous.

Posted July 13, 2019 by Dr. Roger Lederer on <http://ornithology.com>.
Reposted with permission.



Bird Mites

From the Middle English meaning very small or Middle Dutch meaning small copper coin, we get the term mite. Mites are small arthropods (joint-legged animals like insects, crayfish, and spiders) belonging to the class Arachnida (spiders and allies). Most mites are tiny, less than 1 mm in length, and have a simple, unsegmented body plan. Their small size makes them easily ignored; some species live in water, many live in soil as decomposers, others live on plants, while others are predators or parasites. Most species are harmless to humans but a few are associated with allergies or may transmit diseases.

There are several species of bird mites that are parasites on birds and usually found on birds’ nests. They suck the blood of birds, extracting the protein. Migration by bird mites is common when baby birds leave the nest. If the bird nest is built on or near human habitation, mites that migrate away from the nest might be found anywhere in the buildings. Sparrows, starlings and pigeons are most often associated with bird mite infestations in buildings.

Bird mites can briefly live without an avian host, but they can make their way indoors where they can crawl on and attempt to bite humans and pets. You can recognize them as jittery pepper flakes.

(continued on next page)

(continued from page 18)

While the mites can be an itchy nuisance, they are unable to survive on humans or in homes for any length of time, usually a matter of weeks only under ideal conditions. In most cases survival is limited to a few days, especially in a home with air conditioning.

Bird mites can bite humans but are not a health threat; they are mostly a nuisance. Bird mites do not attack nor harm food, plants or anything else although they might infect pet birds.

If mites are found, removing the bird nest once the birds have left is the single most crucial step. Drying out is probably the biggest threat to bird mites, so running an air conditioner and/or dehumidifier may help. Vacuuming, using sticky tape or wiping up mites with a damp soapy cloth can all help eliminate any additional stragglers that made it inside.

Besides the skin mites that suck blood, there are also feather mites. Once thought to eat feathers, "feather

mites help to remove bacteria and fungi from the feathers of birds, according to a new study by University of Alberta biologists. In fact, the relationship between these mites and their hosts could be considered mutualism, with bird feathers collecting food for mites to eat and mites providing the birds with healthier plumage." (reference in quotes from *Science Daily*)

The common explanation for bald Northern Cardinals, which are occasionally sighted bald or nearly so is that feather mites were the cause. But examination of these birds yielded no or few mites. The general conclusion now is that this is just an unusual molting pattern. That fits with the new information on feather mite foods. *Posted August 13, 2019 by Dr. Roger Lederer on <http://ornithology.com>. Reposted with permission.*



Nest box sales

 <p>\$17</p> <p>Gilwood Bluebird (All Cedar)*</p>	 <p>\$15</p> <p>Troyer Bluebird (All Cedar)*</p>	 <p>\$18</p> <p>NABS-style Eastern/ Western/Mountain Bluebird Box <small>All-cedar front opening, 1 9/16" hole, additional ventilation can be added on sides upon request</small></p>
 <p>\$13</p> <p>PVC Bluebird <small>Sparrow-resistant</small></p>	 <p>\$13</p> <p>PVC Chickadee <small>1 1/8" hole</small></p>	 <p>\$20</p> <p>Barnwood Chickadee <small>1 1/8" hole & wood-burned chickadee on door</small></p>
<p>All boxes come with roofs unattached. Gilwood, Troyer, NABS-style and PVC boxes come with roofs treated with product to increase longevity. Gilwood, Troyer and PVC boxes built to mount with Gilbertson conduit rebar system.</p>		
		 <p>\$30</p> <p>Mealworm Feeder <small>All cedar with treated roof, lift-up side allows easy access</small></p>

**Offered by
Bluebirds
Across Nebraska**

**Visit bbne.org
to order boxes;
printable order
form may be
downloaded.**

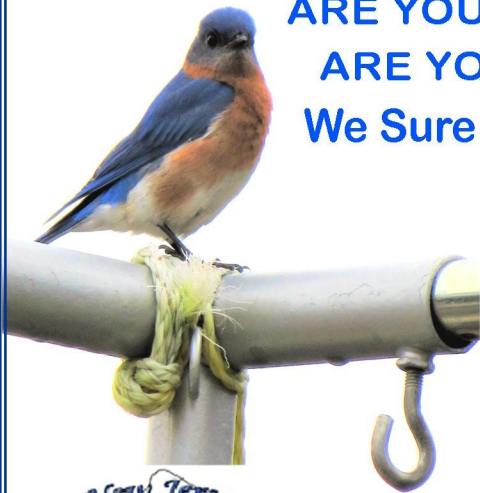
**Order form
available upon
request, contact
Steve Eno at
402-783-3011.**

**Shipping not
included in price.**

**One free box
with every
10 ordered.**

**BAN will be hosting NABS 2020 conference in Kearney, Nebraska, March 11-15.
Anyone purchasing or renewing a NABS membership at the conference
will receive one free bluebird box or kit.**

ARE YOU CURIOUS about Bluebirds?
ARE YOU HOOKED on Bluebirds?
We Sure Are! Come and Join Us!



NJ Bluebird Society

Caring for the Bluebirds of New Jersey

Membership Has Its Rewards!

Sometimes we just need nature to get us motivated. In this case, we hope your concern for the well being of our native Eastern Bluebird has motivated you to join the New Jersey Bluebird Society. Bluebirds are one of our most desirable species. If you are reading this newsletter and still aren't a member, here's why you should be:

Many factors impact bluebird survival, including weather, food/cover, predators, nest competition, pests, and disease. Proper management can be the key to maintaining a healthy and productive bluebird population. By joining the NJBBS we can provide you with that up to date information. As members we can:

- ~ Provide education about bluebirds to interested people like yourself.
- ~ Provide expertise and guidance to trail monitors and backyard bluebird enthusiasts.
- ~ Provide data forms to help document the bluebird activities in your boxes. We encourage you to submit the number of young bluebirds fledged from your boxes at the end of each season. This precious data is used to monitor early population trends in New Jersey.

Now that you're thinking about it, why not go to www.njbluebirdsociety.org and become a member?



North American Bluebird Society

There are lots of advantages to being a member of both **NJBBS** and **NABS**. Joining NABS entitles you to receive "Bluebird", their colorful quarterly publication. This is a quality periodical of interest to anyone who appreciates bluebirds and other secondary cavity nesters. The North American Bluebird Society organization supports and helps unify the work of state chapters across America. For a small membership fee (\$15 special price the first year, then \$20 per year), everyone in NJBBS is encouraged to also join NABS and get a better understanding of what our bluebird friends are doing in North America.

You can go to our website, www.njbluebirdsociety.org and look for NABS's membership form that accompanies the NJBBS membership form. If you are new to the world of bluebirds, NABS's website, www.nabluebirdsociety.org is a goldmine of information, including printable (PDF) fact sheets on getting started, nestbox plans, predator control, monitoring guides and feeding recommendations. Even those of us who consider ourselves "experienced" find these resources to be very useful for our own use and as information for new monitors.