



Jersey Blues

The Newsletter of The New Jersey Bluebird Society, an Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society ~Volume 3, Issue 1 - Spring, 2019

EARLY BIRDS!

ALLEN, ANDREW & GEMMA ALL REPORT NESTS WITH EGGS ON MARCH 21ST!



BUBBA SPEAKS:

A Message from our President, Allen Jackson

2018 is behind us as we look to 2019 with the return of warmer weather and bluebirds to their nesting boxes. If your boxes are in need of repair, now is the time to complete that chore. So far, I do not think the winter has been too harsh on our bluebirds that overwintered in NJ. In fact, I have been getting reports of

many bluebird sightings throughout the area. To me, this represents that our past efforts to benefit bluebirds are paying off. Enough said, if you have any questions about bluebirds please feel free to contact me at aljxn@aol.com or 609 805-4073. I try to make myself available to everyone that may have questions.

We recently held a Board of Director's meeting at Batsto on Saturday, February 16th. All but two Directors were present. Some of the things discussed included: voting Frank Budney VP North, voting Bernie Visalli to the Board - thus filling a vacancy, and voting to make Leo Hollein an honorary NJBBS member for his work and dedication to bluebirds. It was also decided to divide our New Jersey coverage into 3 sections with a VP North, VP Central (Laura Stone) and VP South which will be vacant for the time being. Boundaries will be delineated in the future. Most significantly, we also voted to change membership for first time applicants. If a new member joins at either the 1 year or 3 year level, the remainder of the year is gratis with the following year being counted as the first full year. So, joining in March 2019 gives a new member the remainder of 2019 and the full year thru 2020 for the low cost of a 1-year membership. The 3-year mem-

bership would result in 3 full years after the remaining initial partial year.

We recognized Lori Jo Jamieson for her efforts to acquire beautiful wooden book marks with bluebirds depicted on them to be used as tokens of gratitude. We also recognized the bluebird photographs taken by Jenn Nelson that she enlarged and matted. If any member wishes to recognize someone for their help regarding bluebirds, these matted pictures are available along with a certificate.

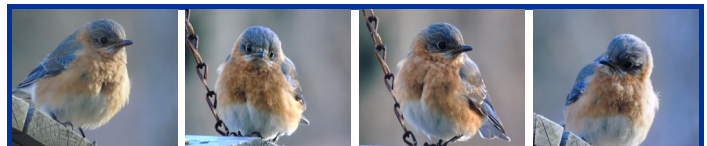


Editor's Note: Allen received our thanks and appreciation for serving as our President beyond his term. "When Bubba Speaks, NJBBS Listens!"

Our 2019 Annual Meeting

Our annual NJBBS meeting was held on Saturday, November 10th at the **Forest Resource Education Center in Jackson, New Jersey**. Certificates of Recognition were awarded to Jim Watson, Gail Fisher, Gary Pilling, Laura Stone and Richard Dutko for their accomplishments supporting NJBBS. Each award was also accompanied with a matted picture of a bluebird.

Thanks to efforts by Lori Jo Jamieson and Laura Hegyi, we are now in a position to honor various people involved in benefitting bluebirds with these Certificates of Recognition. It is now possible for County Coordinators to recognize monitors or the people who allow us to set up trails on their lands. Please contact me if you need a Certificate.



You Were Missed at Our Annual Meeting!

Save the date NOW for November 9th, 2019

Location: Forest Resource Education Center

495 Don Connor Blvd, Jackson, NJ 08527

Time: 10 am to 2 pm

(See related article and photos on page 4)

Another Success for NJBBS ~ by Allen Jackson

Jim Watson and I manned a table at the Eagle Festival at the Mauricetown Fire Station for the 7th year. Initially, Mike Golla (representing a local nature club) and I shared a table in 2013 but it was evident by the number of people interested in bluebirds that a full table was needed to promote the NJBBS. In the past other NJBBS members either participated (Dave Gilcrest is usually there representing Gloucester County) or made a display (Bernnie Visalli made a neat display about winter roosting boxes). This year's table display included Jennifer Nelson's matted pictures of bluebirds and Jim Watson's bluebird nesting and roosting boxes.

This annual event attracts thousands of people from all over New Jersey as well as other states (Pennsylvania and Virginia this year). It offers a varied menu of field trips, observation locations to view eagles, speakers on species like kestrels, falcons, and eagles, environmental subjects, events for the children and vending tables that promote environmental groups, merchandise (tee shirts and binoculars) and ample opportunities to interact with the public. We always have people waiting to ask questions, like why they lost their bluebirds or how to attract bluebirds to their yards. On site appointment requests are expected and inevitable. We also get requests to speak about bluebirds (I received 2 requests this year). It was here in 2014 that I was able to develop a partnership with the Gloucester County Nature Club who were interested in getting involved with bluebirds. This event has always allowed us to "Grow our Program," expanding into new areas and gaining new members.

We are always pleased to see NJBBS members stop by our table. Lori Jo Jamieson, Mary Miranda and Gary Pilling showed up at appropriate times to converse with bluebird enthusiasts from their area. Bernnie Visalli is a regular there. The event attracts a crowd from Gloucester, Camden, Cumberland, Atlantic and Cape May Counties. Not only do we promote NJBBS but we interact with schools and organizations that are enthusiastic about bluebirds. I am able to get complementary copies of Bluebird and flyers from NABS and hand out educational Fact Sheets. All in all, this event is a prominent engagement that we look forward to each February. It's always the 1st Saturday in February and only a (big) snow storm can keep people away. Please plan to visit our table in 2020!

NABS NEWS

I am proud to announce that Lori Jo Jamieson has been added to NABS' Journal Advisory Committee. The Committee now has 5 members who review and proof draft issues of *Bluebird* and make recommendations on its contents. Lori Jo's experience as editor of *Jersey Blues* offers an opportunity to provide input into what is being published for NABS' members to read. I look forward to sharing and developing thoughts with Lori Jo as I also sit on this Committee.



FFA Annual Spring Service Day Benefits Bluebirds - A Possible Future Partnership!

I just wanted to spread a little sunshine this morning and share the success of Friday's Annual Spring Service Day. This year's service day was made possible by a \$3,000 Living to Serve Grant from the National FFA Organization. FFA members, with the help of NTHS and Garden Club members, traveled to the Inn at Salem County Country Club to help the community by blazing a 2 mile nature walk through several acres of land that the country club donated to NJ Fish and Wildlife. Friday was a rainy, blustery, and cold day (with a real-feel temperature at 36 degrees), but the students were dedicated, and eventually, the sun did come out!

Our main objectives of the service day were to:

1. Provide a service to the community by trail-blazing a 1.5 mile (approximate) nature trail through the state grounds
2. Remove non-native or invasive vegetation along the trail and property
3. Plant native vegetation along the trail with possible signage indicating names of species
4. Construct and install bird/bat houses for local species
5. Install a pollinator garden near the Inn for aesthetics and functionality
6. Paint a nature mural on a 8' X 50' privacy fence

Due to the weather, we accomplished goals 1 & 2, and we will be going back again to finish the rest. Some highlights of the day included attending workshops led by Dr. Anne Nielsen, Dept. of Entomology, Rutgers University, and **Allen Jackson, Wildlife Biologist and President of the NJ Bluebird Society**. The students learned about local pollinators, such as native bee species and recovering bird species, such as the Eastern Bluebird. Overall, students learned and served a lot! The day was a huge success!

~ Keely DiTizio, Salem County Vocational Technical High School Agriculture Instructor & FFA Advisor



New Jersey Bluebird Society: Our Mission Statement, Goals & Methods

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 summer 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. Agricultural areas, parks, even back yards and cemeteries can provide this 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.



Eastern Bluebird at Suet, photo by Lynn Wood

NJBBS OFFICERS

President: Allen Jackson

Vice President, North: open

Vice President, Central: Laura Stone

Vice President, South: open

Treasurer: Gemma Major

Secretary: Jenyfra Nelson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Past President: Frank Budney

At Large: Shelly Cucugliello, Dave Gilcrest,
Lori Jo Jamieson, John Layton, Gary Pilling,
Bernadine Visalli, Jim Watson, Ed Zboyan

Jersey Blues

The newsletter of The New Jersey Bluebird Society

Editor: Lori Jo Jamieson BluebirdLJJ@gmail.com

Webmaster: Gary Pilling gpilling32@gmail.com

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(2019 Annual Meeting Report, continued)

The New Jersey Bluebird Society's Annual Meeting is always held on the 2nd Saturday in November at the Forest Resources Education Center, located at 495 Don Connor Blvd. in Jackson, NJ 08527. It's a very friendly and pleasant atmosphere with lunch for a nominal fee. This year's meeting was very poorly attended - only 20 members were there, and we can't figure out why. This is our only chance to meet with fellow members, to hear the nesting season's successes and failures, to exchange ideas, voice concerns, make suggestions and shape the future of NJBBS. There is always useful literature and other supplies to pick up as well. Let's all try to make it a priority to be there at the meeting on **Saturday, November 9, 2019 !**



At the 2018 Annual Meeting of the NJBBS, special recognition was given by Allen Jackson to (l to r): Laura Stone, VP Central; Gary Pilling, Webmaster; Jim Watson, Atlantic County Coordinator; and Gail Fisher, Cape May County Coordinator.



Congratulations on retirement and special thanks for coordinating our annual meetings were given to Richard Dutko, Facilities Manager at the Forest Resources Education Center.



Laura Stone, VP Central, introduced us to Sudha Kankanala, mother of Eagle Scout, Surya Ananthu, who consulted Laura for help installing a bluebird trail in a cemetery as his final project.

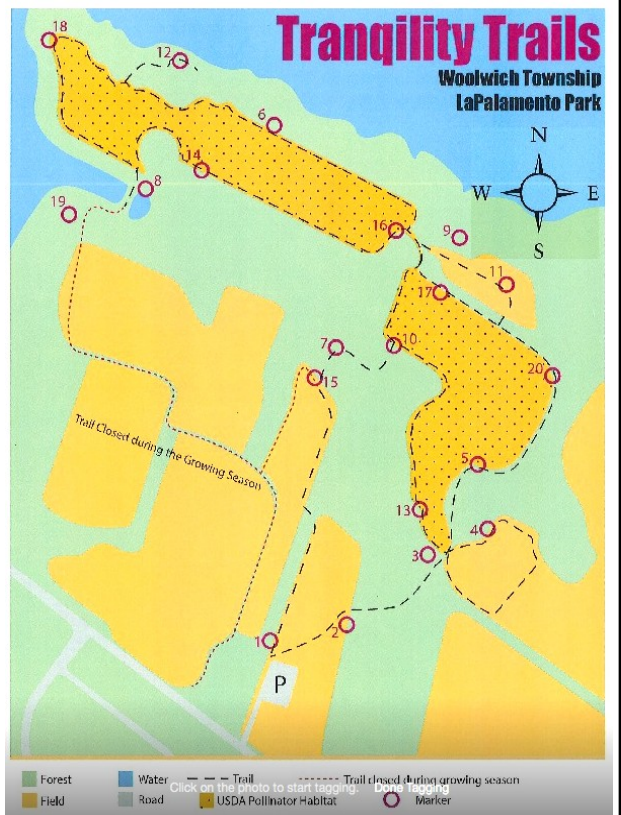
A Happy Update on Tranquility Trails in Woolwich Township ~ by Bernie Visalli

The Fall 2018 *Jersey Blues* featured an article on Woolwich Twp. approving two locations for the start of a bluebird trail. We were successful at Tranquility Trails with fledging 4 bluebirds last season. As we know in local government, things change, and a new group has become involved and they are very energized about the trail.

Lynne Bussott, the newly-sworn Chairperson of the Swedesboro Woolwich Environmental Commission, contacted me around the holidays and asked me to present at the meeting in January to state my case for adding boxes to the trail (currently have three boxes total). She wants to do something to get the community involved and not have it be a one-time project of putting up housing. During the meeting I gave a brief overview on bluebird-approved housing, predator guard necessity and more importantly, the need for the boxes to be monitored.

It turned into a lively discussion - and that night three people signed up to be monitors! They will be joining NJ Bluebird Society as "Swedesboro Woolwich Environmental Commission" and the housing will be up for a vote at the March meeting. We are in a go-ahead mode with adding 10 houses this year to the 180 acre tract - and if successful- will be looking at other open space in 2020.

(continued on page 5)





(l to r): Lynne Bussott, Carolyn Grasso and Ann Dorsett.

(Tranquility Trails, continued from page 4)

On March 2nd, three volunteers and I braved the cold rainy day to check on the two boxes we left to overwinter and check out the trail. Volunteers that came out for our first walk on the trail were (l to r in photo): Lynne Bussott, Carolyn Grasso and Ann Dorsett. It was flooded in a few areas, so we just did a quick check and moved over to the municipal building where I had installed two boxes a few weeks back. We know there is a nesting pair occupying an older nest box that has become unusable due to its age and location. So far no sign of bluebirds, but it is near the community garden so I am hopeful they will like their new and improved housing.

Later that afternoon, I did a site visit at Ann Dorsett’s 70- acre horse farm in the Township. She has older bird housing that wrens took over so we are going to install two new houses there as well!

The Swedesboro Woolwich Environmental Commission has revised their Earth Day activity on April 27th to now be “Earth Day Bluebird Grand Opening” (see www.facebook.com/events/320106381977821/.) It’s a day for trail clean up and I will be hosting a table with NJ Bluebird Society information and a tour to explain what the bluebird trail is all about.

The relationship with the commission is looking to be an exciting partnership as they have already started to publish New Jersey Bluebird Society information on their Facebook page! Now, that’s encouraging!

When you get the right people in a position to get the community involved only good things happen. Looking forward to a great 2019 BB season.

~ *Bernnie Visalli*



APR 27 Earth Day Bluebirds Grand Opening
Public · Hosted by Swedesboro Woolwich Environmental Commission

Verizon 7:48 PM 89%



Swedesboro Woolwich Environmental Commission

Yesterday at 9:39 AM

A link to the NJ Blue Bird Society - We will be promoting a project to monitor and add blue bird houses at the Tranquility Trail! <http://www.njbluebirdsociety.org/index.html>



Bernnie Visalli perfectly captured the blazing beauty of this male bluebird at Tranquility Trails, in Woolwich Township, Gloucester County.

GROWING THE PROGRAM



Atlantic County:

Allen removed all the tree swallow deflectors from existing boxes and relocated or removed some boxes at Batsto. 2018 saw only 4 broods fledged from 2 boxes. 5 boxes were removed and some relocated away from House Wren habitat.

Lori Jo Jamieson added a second box at Asbury United Methodist Church Cemetery. Last season a newly introduced box yielded 15 young. She is also pairing boxes at the Egg Harbor Township Nature Reserve in order to keep peace among the House Wrens, Tree Swallows and Bluebirds. Lori Jo is maintaining boxes at several vineyards, hoping that pests have been reduced by resident bluebirds. Her next project is in Linwood, NJ, in a municipal-owned vineyard, where two boxes will be installed.

Jim Watson and Allen gave a presentation to the Garden Club in Egg Harbor Township February 26. An onsite to assist one person at the talk was conducted a few days later.

Burlington County:

Allen conducted an on site October 22, 2018 at the Medford Leas residential complex to improve their bluebird trail on their property. Management improvements included upgrading the boxes to meet design standards, relocating and reducing the number of boxes to increase the chances of attracting bluebirds and working to find volunteers to monitor the boxes. Allen also did the same thing at their Lumberton Leas complex. A presentation to the Medford Leas Birders is scheduled for March 6, 2019

Camden County:

A Meet and Greet was held on Saturday, March 2, 2019 at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Cherry Hill. Allen and Chuck Kanupke were able to meet and answer questions about bluebirds. It is a nice way to meet people interested in bluebirds, promote NJBBS, bring customers into the Wild Birds Unlimited stores and promote our County Coordinators. I encourage NJBBS members to patronize the WBU stores in your area. We are working to develop partnerships with many of the WBU stores in NJ. It's a win-win for all involved.

Cape May County:

6 setups were provided to property owned by Yanks Marine on the Tuckahoe River.

Gail will conduct an on site at a student's property who was involved in making boxes for us. We also will meet with the wood shop teacher, Dave Moyer, to determine if the Middle School is suitable for the installation of a few nest boxes that the students will monitor.

Cumberland County:

Allen and Mary Watkins redid the trail at Harmony Valley Nursery and Haven Hill Farm in Deerfield. Some boxes were relocated, some had maintenance work and some were paired or removed. This site finally had bluebirds return to nest in 2018 after 2 years of inactivity due to the 2014-2015 winter kill.

Allen redid the bluebird trail at The Nature Conservancy on Silver Run Road, Millville. 2 of 7 were productive in 2018. Boxes were relocated in some instances and an inactive box was relocated and paired up with another box that had tree swallows for the past 2 years.

After habitat improvements were done at the Buckshutem WMA, Mike Golla and Allen were allowed to replace the bluebird trail. We had to remove all but 3 boxes in the spring 2018 so the habitat improvements could be done. 19 new boxes were used. It will be interesting to see what percentage of bluebirds return to the site after not being able to nest there during the season. The 3 boxes that were not taken down produced 5 broods of bluebirds.

Allen did an on-site at Helga Tscreiter's property on Roadstown-Greenwich Rd. Bridgeton and decided not to erect any bluebird boxes. She runs a cow sanctuary and has many other species there (horses, donkeys, rhea, pigs, sheep, etc). There is a lot of feed around that attracts house sparrows which she claims are numerous. She is opposed to eliminating House Sparrows so it was decided not to erect any bluebird boxes there.

Allen will give a presentation to the 4 Seasons Community in Millville. After conducting an onsite, recommendations will be given to make improvements for wildlife on their property.

A new box was located in Millville on a property adjacent to Union Lake.

(continued on page 7)

GROWING THE PROGRAM



Gloucester County:

Bernadine Visalli, Dave Gilcrest and Allen met in Swedesboro, Woolrich Twp. to conduct an onsite regarding the bluebird trail that Bernie has worked diligently to get approval for.

UPDATE! Bernie Visalli “took the bull by the horns” and attended the Woolrich Twp Commission meeting in January to speak with officials about promoting bluebird trails and future partnerships which included their assistance monitoring the trails. Her advocacy resulted in total support for the program. She was even asked to come speak to the Daughters of the American Revolution chapter in the near future. Bernie’s work is a monumental achievement which will open up many new opportunities for NJBBS. THANK YOU BERNNIE!

FOLLOW UP! Allen will give a talk to the Daughters of the American Revolution thanks to the efforts of Bernie Visalli when she promoted bluebirds to Woolrich Township officials. Bernie is doing a great job in Gloucester County along with Dave Gilcrest. There is a lot going on in Gloucester County.

Allen and Dave Gilcrest give a talk at the newly opened Wild Birds Unlimited store in Sicklerville March 23.

Salem County:

Allen manned a NJBBS display table at The Inn at Salem Country Club, Elsinboro October 7, 2018 helping celebrate the River and Nature Expo. The Inn was part of the Salem County Club which the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife purchased and separated the land from the buildings. Jim and Yvonne Grant purchased the building which is located on the Delaware River within site of the Delaware Memorial Bridge. It offers a beautiful environmental setting and promotes nature and the values associated with good stewardship on the 18 acres they own. Three bluebird boxes were added in 2018, of which 1 produced bluebirds that year. Sadly, House Sparrows and other nest competitors invaded the boxes in 2018 and steps will be taken in 2019 to better manage the situation.

Allen did an onsite at Debra Van Cleave’s property on Commissioners Pike, Alloway and erected 1 box.

6 boxes were erected along Sharpstown-Auburn Road, Featherbed Road and Kings Highway in Woodstown on lands owned by Grant Harris.

2 boxes were erected in Elmer on land owned by Jack Cimprich.

Allen will conduct an on site on Three Bridges Road to reset one box and add more on the property in Elmer.

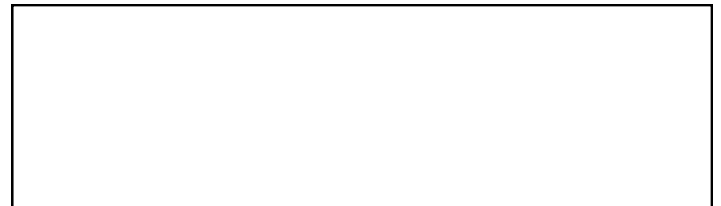
Miscellaneous:

Allen coordinated with interested people In Ellsworth, Maine and 2 people from Pennsylvania, providing info about bluebirds, including resources available from NABS.

3 loads of wood were delivered to Dave Moyer’s Woodshop class in Middle Township, Middle School. This will be enough for the woodshop class to make approximately 150 for NJBBS.

Allen filled out the 2018 banding report for the State of NJ, Div Fish and Wildlife and applied for the State banding permit for 2019. He also obtained a special use permit for nest monitors to go on Wildlife Management Areas in southern NJ. He also sent the Regional Superintendent a letter regarding results for 2018 on the respective lands.

Allen sent the Superintendent of Parvin State Park a letter with the results of the 10 boxes on or adjacent to Parvin.



Can you fill this spot? It should’ve been filled with your activities! All members and friends, please report your accomplishments and let others know what you’re doing! Send your items in an email to:

bluebirdLJJ@gmail.com. Thanks!

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 photos, where and when they were taken, and a description of each photo. I will do my best to use them in an upcoming issue of “Jersey Blues.”

Thank you! *Lori Jo, Editor*

PLANTING FOR WILDLIFE? BEWARE OF NEONICOTINOIDS!

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is an abbreviated version of an article in Fall 2018 Jersey Blues. It bears repeating!

Many of us plan our gardens according to the preferences of wildlife, including native plants that serve as a food source for birds, butterflies, and bees. Make sure when selecting your plants to avoid those treated with Neonicotinoid Insecticides. Neonicotinoids are systemic (get into every part of the plant, including pollen, nectar, *even dew*) pesticides **that are applied to many commercially-available nursery plants** and are harmful to bees, caterpillars, moths, and butterflies. To learn more read:

(1) Xerces Society's "Protecting Bees From Neonicotinoid Insecticides in Your Garden (includes list of products with neonics in them)" at: <http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/NeonicsInYourGarden.pdf>

(2) Xerces Society's "Neonicotinoids and Bees, and How Neonicotinoids Move Throughout the Environment" at: <http://www.xerces.org/neonicotinoids-and-bees/>

(3) Wild Ones' Journal article "Where have all the insects gone?" at: <http://www.wildones.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Neonics.pdf>.

COMMON NEONICOTINOIDS TO AVOID

Neonicotinoid: Imidacloprid - Bayer Advanced 3-in-1 Insect, Disease, & Mite Control, Bayer Advanced 12 Month Tree & Shrub Insect Control, Bayer Advanced 12 Month Tree & Shrub Protect & Feed, Bayer Advanced Fruit, Citrus & Vegetable Insect Control, Bayer Advanced All-in-One Rose & Flower Care concentrate, DIY Tree Care Products Multi-Insect Killer, Ferti-lome 2-N-1 Systemic, Hi-Yield Systemic Insect Spray, Knockout Ready-To-Use Grub Killer, Monterey Once a Year Insect Control II, Ortho Bug B Gon Year-Long Tree & Shrub Insect Control, Ortho MAX Tree & Shrub Insect Control, Surrender Brand GrubZ Out

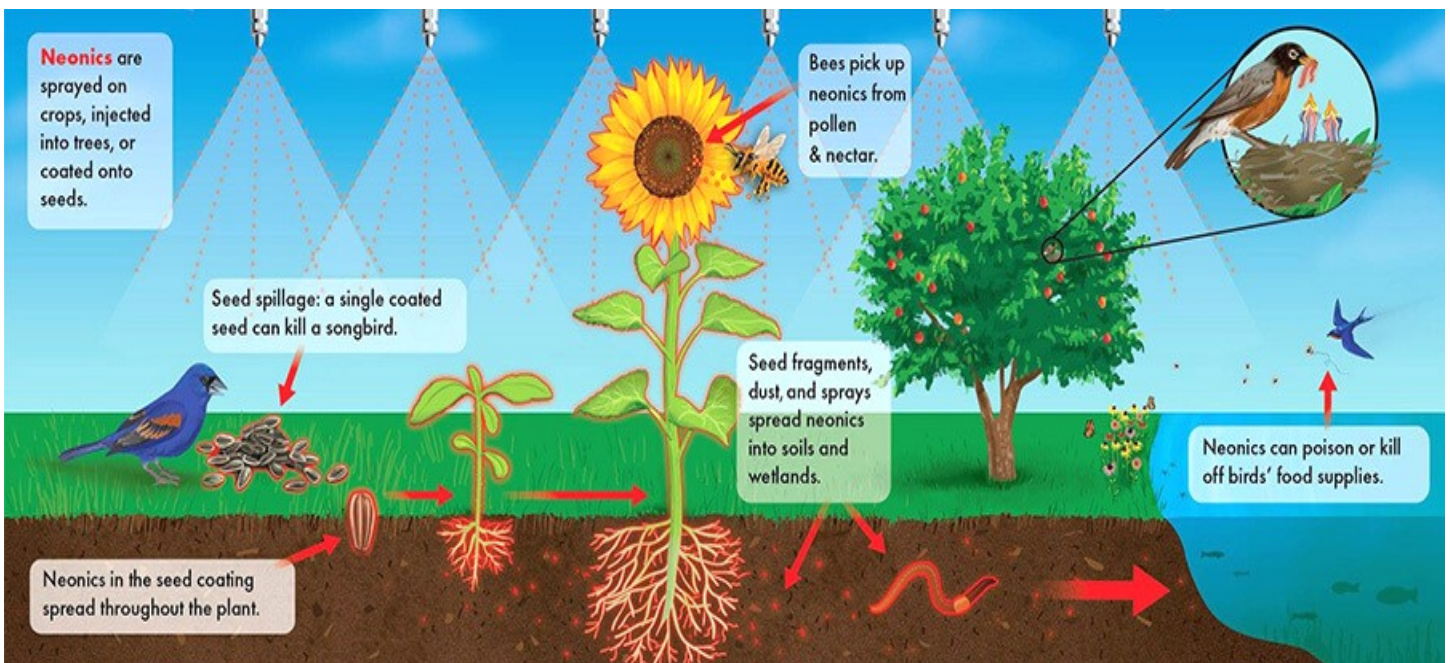
Neonicotinoid: Clothianidin - Bayer Advanced All-in-One Rose & Flower Care granules, Green Light Grub Control with Arena

Neonicotinoid: Thiamethoxam - Amdro Quick Kill Lawn & Landscape Insect Killer, Amdro Rose & Flower Care, Maxide Dual Action Insect Killer

Neonicotinoid: Acetamiprid - Ortho Bug B Gon Garden Insect Killer, Ortho Bug B Gon for Lawns, Ortho Flower, Fruit and Vegetable Insect Killer, Ortho Rose and Flower Insect Killer, Ortho Rose Pride Insect Killer

Neonicotinoid: Dinotefuran - Green Light Tree & Shrub Insect Control with Safari 2 G, Ortho Tree & Shrub Insect Control Plus Miracle Gro Plant Food

Thanks to Pat Sutton for supplying these important facts and links. For Pat's list of "Some Sources of Native Plants" go to: <http://www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/some-sources-native-plants/>.





Native Birds Need Native Plants

Suburban yards can be made into welcoming homes for many bird species. However, most nurseries and garden centers promote non-native plants for the landscape, based on the plants' aesthetic appeal to humans. Some bird species are very adaptable and can make a comfortable home among nonnative plants. But in order to make the space around

your home truly valuable habitat for native birds, you need to use native plants.

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. With fewer insects available to eat, native birds are less likely to establish a home

in your yard, and even if they do try to nest, they are less likely to fledge young because there are not enough bugs to feed the growing nestlings.

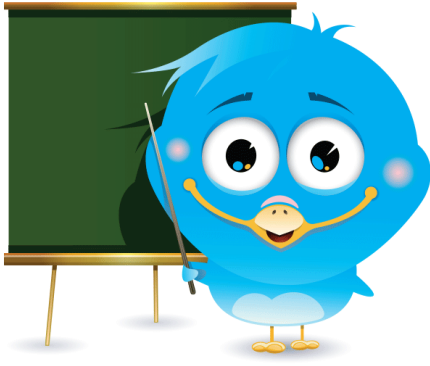
Some might argue that the berries produced later in the season by a nonnative plant must surely count for something, but the berries are of no use if the birds' nests fail earlier in the year—there won't be any birds around to eat the berries. A study of Carolina Chickadees (a native cavity nester) in suburban Washington, DC, confirmed the importance of native plants in the landscape. Yards with higher percentages of nonnative plants had fewer insects and fewer chickadees, and the chickadees that did attempt to nest had lower nest success. The study's authors found that the cutoff point is about 30%—yards with no more than 30% nonnative plants can still provide viable habitat for native birds.

Desirée L. Narango, Douglas W. Tallamy, Peter P. Marra. 2018. Nonnative Plants Reduce Population Growth of an Insectivorous Bird. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA 115(45):11549–11554.



Winter Wanderings - Eastern Bluebirds of Egg Harbor Township - photos by Lori Jo Jamieson





Tips for Giving a Bluebird Talk to Young Students ~ by Gail Fisher

During my career as a Primary teacher, I often invited guest speakers to my classroom. Now that I'm retired, I AM one of those guest speakers! I find it can be intimidating to face a classroom full of youngsters you do not know. What do you say to little kids? How do you keep their attention?

In my opinion, giving a talk to a group of kindergarten, first or second grade students is different than talking to older children, particularly in the areas of attention span, understanding concepts, content, and vocabulary. Another area you need to consider when you are including an activity is manual dexterity and how much time each step will take to complete. Whenever you talk to children, especially young ones, there will be surprises, and often, interruptions. Here are some

tips that may help you over-prepare and go with the flow, as a wise mentor once told me. As soon as you schedule a presentation, at any grade level, ask that the teacher contact you directly so that you can ask some questions that will help make your talk enjoyable for everyone. If you are unable to talk with him/her, it might still be helpful to consider the points below as you prepare for your visit.

Time: What are the beginning and ending times for my talk? Its important to know how much time you have to work with the children. You do not have the luxury of running over-time. Teachers and students are on a tight schedule. Make sure you show up early on the day of your talk. Allow time for security checks and the transportation of any equipment and/or supplies to your destination. Be ready and waiting.

Space:

How many students will be present? If you plan to give handouts or complete an arts/crafts project, you need to have the correct amount, plus a few extras for the "mess-ups" that usually occur. Where will I be giving the talk? Will you be in a quiet classroom with one class of first graders or a gymnasium with four classes of First Graders and a noisy gym class in progress on the other side of not-so-soundproof dividers! Knowing what your space will be like ahead of time can help you know what to bring or not bring and what you can use in your talk.

What are the classroom rules and/or signals students use when asking and answering questions? Do they raise their hands, use thumb signals, have a chant to get their attention or any other helpful tips the teacher uses in class. Crowd control is crucial. If you know these, and can use them, it provides continuity for the students and makes it easier to keep them focused. Also, try to be diverse in who you choose to answer questions. I have seen some presenters choose only boys or only the children in the front row, or only the loudest, bounciest ones. You may prefer to ask the teacher to be the one to call on the students for you. Understand, too, that when you ask if there are any questions, students at this age will not ASK you something, they are more likely to TELL you a story somewhat related to your discussion. When they do this, they are making a connection from something familiar (their story/experience) to something new (something in your talk). Do not dismay. If misconceptions need to be addressed, do so briefly and gently, and then move on. Keep you Q & A time short, or nearly every child will want to tell you something. One way to address this is to invite them to WRITE and/or DRAW a note/ letter/message to you. Arrange this with the teacher ahead of time, and work out the details.

Are there any accommodations I need to be aware of for students with special needs? You may encounter students with mobility issues such as wheelchairs, prosthetics, breathing apparatus, emotional and/or cognitive needs, or any number of situations which could pull your attention away from your presentation. The teacher will be there, of course, and there may be aides as well, but just knowing what to expect is helpful.

Content:

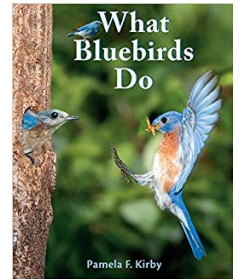
How does the topic of bluebirds support your current or recent classroom studies? Teachers are required to document that every lesson, every day, for every subject is focused on the content that s/he must teach for any given grade level. Each lesson should also show students how today's science lesson on bluebirds also relates to social studies, maybe through community bluebird projects. Another example is to show how the lesson is related to math through banding, fledgling data or using a calendar to predict when eggs will hatch. In reading you could read some great children's books on bluebirds. In writing, they could write about what they learn. In art, they could draw pictures of the birds that show what they learned from the talk. In music, you could teach bird vocalization recognition. *(continued on page 11)*

(Bluebird Talk, continued)

You don't have to put all that in your talk, but if it comes up in the conversation, you might be able to make a connection, now that you know. I will be giving a Power Point presentation. What technology arrangements do I need to make? I know about bluebirds, but I am not the most tech-savvy person. Would you be willing to assist me with running the equipment? Many classrooms have large Smart Boards that the teacher can control through the computer, and that the students know how to work with amazing precision. Some classrooms may have very little technology. Be prepared. Take along your own projection equipment, just in case. Know that the day you are there, the school's computer system could be down or the electricity could go off. If possible, have key photos from the Power Point printed out and laminated so that you can continue on with your talk, cool as a cucumber, no matter what technology snag you face. Why am I telling you this? Stuff happens!

By the way, NABS has a very well done, ready-made Power Point presentation available for \$10. It includes two programs - a long and short version. It also includes the printable dialog/talking points for both programs and printable versions of all the Fact Sheets. A really good deal, if you ask me. And...it runs on a MAC, too.

If you are not a technology kind of person, you might enjoy reading a nonfiction bluebird book to the class. Just know that this will work with a small group of maybe up to 20-25 students. It will NOT work with a large group. The book will be too difficult to see. A book that I have used often, and highly recommend is "What Bluebirds Do", by Pamela F Kirby. The book has beautiful photos, and the text is just right for reading to kindergarten, first and second graders. Even if you don't use this book in your presentation, it is perfect for showing you the level of content and vocabulary that works well for children of this age and its great for reading to grandchildren!



Visuals:

Bring "visuals"! If possible, bring along a clean, new nest box. Be sure to allow just a little time to "show and tell" it. If possible, allow the students to touch it and smell it. They will love that fragrant, rough-cut Atlantic White Cedar! My other favorite bring-along item is a little stuffed animal bluebird that sings his song when squeezed. You can find it through a Google search for 'Eastern Bluebird Plush'. If the group is small, I will allow it to be passed around while I'm talking, but usually this causes too much distraction and I just pick him up now and then so the students can hear his song several times. We're hoping for future bluebird monitors, right?

Handouts:

Does your district have rules about flyers/handouts that may or may not be sent home with the students? Some districts will not allow you to promote an organization, like NJBBS, to the students, while a page with a bluebird photo and a few bluebird facts with no specific references may be just fine.

Follow Up Project:

Communicate this to the teacher: "I am planning to do a follow up project with the students. Here's what I have planned: do you think this will work well with your class?" A craft or activity almost always takes much longer than you think it will. The younger the students, the simpler the activity must be and generally, the more preparation you need to do ahead of time. Decide if this activity is to be done while you are there, or if you will give it to the teacher to share with the students at another time. Students will likely have scissors and crayons, for example, but you will need to provide the supplies specific to the craft that you are presenting. Stay away from coloring pages and "activity sheets". BORING! You are likely to find these children researching bluebirds on their iPads, not notepads!

Privacy/Security:

Would it be okay if the teacher takes a couple photos? What is your school policy on this? School districts have specific rules/policies that restrict photography/video of students, for obvious privacy and security reasons. Do not ever take photos/videos in or near school or any other venue involving minors, without first checking with authorities there for permission and guidelines. You may ask a teacher to photograph YOU, but be sure you get a release from the office or security officer or whomever is in charge of this if you plan to submit any student photos for public viewing...such as in our newsletter.

In Conclusion: Having a conversation with the teacher ahead of your presentation day helps make the experience more enjoyable for the students, for the teacher and for you. Remember to always over-prepare and go with the flow!



Save the date: March 12-15, 2020!

Join bluebird friends for the migration to the 2020 North American Bluebird Society Conference in Kearney, Nebraska.

This exciting and educational event is being hosted by



Speakers:

Al Batt - Hartland, MN

Bernie Daniel - Cincinnati, OH

Myrna Pearman - Red Deer, Alberta, CA

Stan Tekiela - Eden Prairie, MN

Julie Zickefoose - Whipple, OH

Sandhill Crane - speaker TBD

Activities (more to come):

Sandhill Crane Viewing Blinds, Prairie Chicken Leks Viewing & Rainwater Basin Waterfowl Viewing Areas
Prairie Culture Tour, Workshops, Exhibits, Silent Auction, Raffle and time to socialize with birding friends.



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 & 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. **ADDED INCENTIVE TO NEW MEMBERS!** If a new member joins at either the 1-year or 3-year level, **the remainder of the year is gratis** with the following year being counted as the first full year. So, joining in April 2019 gives a new member the remainder of 2019 and the full year thru 2020 for the low cost of a 1-year membership. The 3-year membership would result in 3 full years after the remaining initial partial year. Now that you're thinking about it, why not go to www.njbluebirdsociety.org and become a member of both NJBBS and NABS?