



Jersey Blues

The Newsletter of The New Jersey Bluebird Society, an Affiliate of the
North American Bluebird Society ~Volume 4, Issue 2 - Fall, 2020

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A juvenile eastern bluebird holds a spotted lanternfly in its beak.
See story on page 4. IMAGE: DEBRA BANGASSER WAXLER



Eastern bluebird enjoys a meal at Washington Lake
Park, Gloucester County. IMAGE: MATTEO IADONISI

BUBBA SPEAKS - a message from NJBBS President, Allen Jackson

The 2020 nesting season is now history, and we are still crunching numbers to evaluate our year. From my observations, I believe there is both good and bad news. The good news is we continued to establish more bluebird trails, adding boxes throughout NJ. We expanded our banding program (2,541 banded), fledged more young bluebirds (5351 and counting) and added more County Coordinators - all for the benefit of bluebirds. The bad news is climate change may be working against us. Not as many eggs hatched, many of the bluebird young we banded were undersized and not as many fledged per box. It was evident to me that the food source for the bluebirds (insects) was not sufficient. See my article about insect decline in this newsletter. Also see Bernie Daniel's (president of NABS) message in the Fall issues of Bluebird where he references what some NABS Board members reported to him.

(continued on page 2)

(Bubba Speaks, continued from cover) The first egg reported laid was March 16th and many landlords reported 3 broods (more than usual). The last young fledged in September - the season is getting longer. I had 4 broods of young in my back yard. This is not uncommon down south where nesting begins in February but this is extremely unusual in NJ. All the young (19) from the 4 broods were undersized and fledged but I do not know how many survived after fledging. They were noticeably smaller than the parents and begged for food longer than usual after fledging. Time will tell.



John Layton's Passing We lost a good friend when our past Treasurer and Charter Member John Layton passed in April. I and other NJBBS members were invited to attend family services on October 17. At John's request, a number of people donated a total of \$1,845 to the NJBBS. His legacy will carry on in a number of ways: a John Layton Excellence Award was established with Gail Fisher being the first recipient (see story on page 19); we are progressing with establishing a memorial bluebird trail in his honor near his residence in Egg Harbor Township, and, Duffy Barrow donated a flowering dogwood to be planted in his honor. The money will go a long ways in NJBBS to support our mission benefiting bluebirds.

I also recently learned that **Catherine Mercogliana** of Vineland passed in September. Cathy monitored an 11 bluebird box trail in Newfield. About 7 of those boxes were active with bluebirds thanks to her efforts. She was employed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the Philadelphia Regional Office. She was an Emergency Management Specialist involved with community outreach and multi-agency planning for emergency events or incidents such as oil spills or hazardous waste releases. That she came to bluebird monitoring late in life is not surprising as she was a life-long learner, animal and nature lover, and an adventurer. Bless her for her work and passion.

Road to #1

* I have mentioned NJ is #1 in NABS members. While this includes all people from NJ, NJBBS has played a major role in achieving this designation. As recently as 1/2015, NJ was ranked 18th among the states with 33 members. We increased slowly with 42 by 3/2016; 50 by 7/2017; 55 by 12/2017; and 64 by 10/2018 when we were ranked 7. In the 2 years since (by 7/2020) NJ more than doubled its membership in NABS with 147 and is now #1 in North America. Next closest was Virginia with 127, Pennsylvania with 117, and Tennessee with 114, the only other states with over 100 members. Thanks can go to NABS for working hard to find better ways to improve relations with the affiliate organizations but also to the many members in NJBBS who are strong advocates promoting our bluebird program. We promote through training sessions, speaking engagements, tables at various events, on-site bluebird management recommendations, and coordination with landlords through our banding program. Our County Coordinators also work hard advocating memberships in our organizations.

We are making people take notice of what we are doing. I heard one lady say she had not seen bluebirds on her property in the 34 years she has lived there - at least not until I did some house sparrow control and personal management at her bluebird box. (Have you heard me say that bluebirds thrive on active management? It is so true.) That was just one comment among many. Interestingly, NJBBS membership is now at 178, so keep up the good work! New members, whether in NABS or NJBBS, are the life blood of both organizations. My approach is two fold - when I do on-sites and install boxes, rather than charge the people for the setups, I give them a complimentary copy of Bluebird, some NABS Fact Sheets, and info on joining NJBBS and NABS, requesting they join rather than pay me for the setups. A \$30 membership total in both organizations is still less than the cost of the setup. I have also gifted memberships to various people, deciding rather than joining NABS at a "life membership" cost of \$500, I have used that money and more to gift people memberships instead.

Speaking of #1

* According to the Breeding Bird Survey, NJ is also #1 in the United States for eastern bluebirds with an annual increase trend of 7% for the years 2005 to 2015. Each year in North America since 1966 the U.S. Geological Survey oversees a program that collects information on breeding birds. There are over 4000 routes (NJ has 33). Each route is 25 miles long and an experienced birder drives the route, stopping every 1/2 mile to record every bird they see or hear during a specified time frame. This information is entered into a computer program and specific data can be extracted. For instance, Bernie Daniel, President of NABS, requested information on bluebirds for every state or province in North America. 60% of our bluebird population is in the southeastern states but the trend shows the bluebird population is not increasing in those states. NJ's trend of 7% increase annually may come to an end with the climate change issues, *(continued on page 6)*

Jersey Blues

The newsletter of The New Jersey Bluebird Society

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**new members*

WELCOME THESE NEW MEMBERS TO NJBBS!

Atlantic: Peter Bagby, Anne Marie Leone, Darin Pfeifer, Stephanie Sanchez, Steve Whitford

Burlington: Harry Bratty

Camden: John Casanova, William Critchfield, Erika & Matthew Giovetsis, Cindy Parise, Jennifer & Karl Wicks

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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 secondary cavity-nesters, meaning they cannot excavate their own nesting sites in trees. They have struggled to survive due to loss of habitat to development and changes in land management. 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. 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 are places to perch and structure for fledglings to fly to on their first flight. Agricultural areas, parks, even back yards and cemeteries can provide this habitat.



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, 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. Please consider joining both organizations today.

Bugs, Bugs Everywhere, and Yet Nothing to Eat? Meet the Spotted Lanternfly.

In the year of Covid-19, our time is being spent differently than before. We inhabit a smaller footprint of space, and frequently, we do so with many of the same people. For some, this is a welcomed change that has provided a slower pace of life and a chance to reorder our priorities. The hobby of bird watching has increased across all age groups, and we already know the peace that it brings. But there's no peace in watching an invasive insect with few known predators munch through ones backyard flora.

I am writing here about the **Spotted Lanternfly** (*lycorma delicatula*), indigenous to parts of northern China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, where it has natural predators and pathogens. It is generally believed that egg masses present on woody plants or wood products imported from Asia were accidentally introduced into Berks County, PA in September of 2014. New Jersey populations were first detected in 2018 in the Pennsylvania adjacent counties of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Mercer, Salem, Somerset, and Warren. As of 2020 it is also considered an invasive species in the Delaware Valley, eastern Pennsylvania, southwestern New Jersey, northern Delaware, eastern Maryland, and northern Virginia.



A bitter bug to swallow?



Nymph instars



Tree-of-heaven (*ailanthus altissima*)

Spotted lanternflies are of the same order as cicadas, leafhoppers, and aphids. They prefer to feed primarily on the sap of a non-native host plant, tree-of-heaven (*ailanthus altissima*), but will feed on a wide range of fruit and ornamental trees as well as wild and cultivated grapevines. Their feeding preferences change as they mature. This insect has the potential to greatly impact agricultural crops and hardwood trees. Vineyards in infected regions have already experienced its impact as have commercial farms and landscapers.

In October of 2019, I first discovered, reported, and squished adult Lanternflies in Silver Maples, Black Walnuts and Wild Grape on my property in Warren County. Yes, this leafhopper bug crossed the Delaware River from PA easier and quicker than Washington ever thought possible, traveling up and over Marble Hill and down to my little pastoral acre on the other side. Throughout the winter, I searched and destroyed any egg masses I could find but most were high in the trees. The eggs masses look like mud or gray putty, and can be hard to spot (see photo on next page).

With April came the nymphs, three instars, or stages, of them. These are incredible hoppers, requiring a cymbal-playing sort of action to catch and crush them. I sprayed Neem oil on them, pulled out the beautiful wild grapevines they inhabited, and cut down several small Black Walnut trees, all to make their world much smaller. Hoping to minimize the effect on resident birds, I waited until nests were inactive. There is a Catbird who still scolds me, and I'm taking it personally, and with regret.

In NABS' Fall issue of "Bluebird", President Bernie Daniel's article includes how Allen Jackson believes the availability of insects could be the cause of smaller clutches and lower weight of bluebird chicks in New Jersey. It makes sense that a reduced food source spells trouble for many bird species. In the case of lanternflies, there is no bug shortage. There just aren't many takers when it comes to choosing them as a food source. When a bird attempts to catch them, the bugs spread their wings to expose red hindwings. This is a universal symbol in nature of "you won't like how I taste," and birds that have swallowed a bitter lanternfly usually spit them out.

According to a recent study, when spotted lanternflies suck juice from the specific tree species that they like, the tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), the bitter juice (the main chemicals is "ailanthone") from the tree comes into their body. This makes them distasteful indeed: birds do not like them and may vomit after eating them. "You really can taste the bitterness yourself if you lick or bite on the insect yourself" -- says Dr. Piotr Jablonski, who actually tasted both the surface of the insect cuticle and the interior of the insects. ⁽¹⁾ (*Let's just take his word for that, shall we?*)

Further studies are uncovering exceptions to this rule. While spotted lanternflies change to red coloration when they narrow their host plant preferences to primarily the tree-of-heaven, (chemically defended by quassinoids) experiments showed that birds taste-avoided lanternflies collected on this primary host, but not those collected on the secondary hosts. ⁽²⁾ In this study, the other hosts were Korean willow and persimmon.

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page) As I gathered citations for this article, a new one appeared online, posted just minutes before my search. From September 17th's "Penn State News", written by Amy Duke, it is the most promising and encouraging news yet. How perfect, too, that the lead photo of her article (our "cover bird") is of a juvenile bluebird holding a lanternfly in its beak! Could this new bug be a new food source? ⁽³⁾

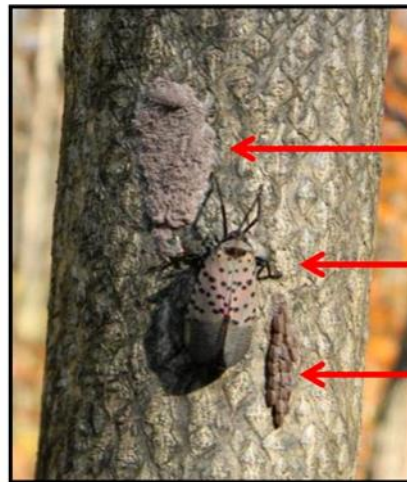
Kelli Hoover, professor of entomology in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, and Anne Johnson, a doctoral candidate in entomology, are studying the potential for native birds and insects to feed on the spotted lanternfly. The team, which includes Margaret Brittingham, professor of wildlife resources, and Allison Cornell, assistant professor of biology at Penn State Altoona, will study spotted lanternfly specimens that have been raised in a quarantined laboratory with tree of heaven as their food source. Later this fall, at The Arboretum at Penn State and Millbrook Marsh Nature Center in Centre County, and at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center in Huntingdon County, PA, suet containing ground spotted lanternfly adults that have fed on tree of heaven or grapevines will be placed side-by-side in suet feeders attached to trees. Video cameras will record birds that visit the feeders and the suet cake they prefer.

HOPEFUL UPDATE: Here's an excerpt from a *Penn State News* article from Friday, September 25, 2020: Recently, researchers from Penn State Berks, the College of Agricultural Sciences, Penn State Extension, and Cornell University came together after a previous Cornell-led study showed that two fungi, *Batkoa major* and *Beauveria bassiana*, were decimating SLF in the woods of Berks County, near the Pagoda. These fungi cause disease in insects but are harmless to humans. When a SLF encounters these fungi, it picks up fungal spores, which germinate and colonize the body, killing the insect in days. A telltale sign of fungal infection is a white fuzz that emerges from the cadaver days after contact. That fuzz, in turn, contains more spores that can infect other insects. ⁽⁴⁾

Stay tuned for updates here in "Jersey Blues." ~ Lori Jo Jamieson

YOU CAN HELP! The Penn State researchers are enlisting the help of citizen scientists, preferably bird watchers, in the spotted lanternfly quarantine zone, to post reports, videos and photos of birds they see feeding on spotted lanternflies, where and when they saw them, and whether tree of heaven is located nearby.

Post your observations on their Facebook page, "Birds Biting Bad Bugs," or email them to birdsbitingbadbugs@gmail.com.



In the photo to the left you can see:

Covered Egg Mass

Adult Spotted Lanternfly

Uncovered Egg Mass

Please get involved. More information is available here:

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/prog/spottedlanternfly.html>

<https://extension.psu.edu/controlling-tree-of-heaven-why-it-matters>

<https://gardenerspath.com/how-to/disease-and-pests/spotted-lanternfly>

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/plant-pest-and-disease-programs/pests-and-diseases/sa_insects/slf



REFERENCES:

⁽¹⁾Laboratory of Behavioral Ecology and Evolution at Seoul National University. "You are what you eat: A color-changing insect modifies diet to become distasteful: Lanternflies change diet and color to become distasteful and signal distastefulness." *ScienceDaily*, 11 February 2019.

⁽²⁾ Song S, Kim S, Kwon SW, Lee SI, Jablonski PG. Defense sequestration associated with narrowing of diet and ontogenetic change to aposomatic colours in the spotted lanternfly. *Sci Rep.* 2018;8(1):16831. Published 2018 Nov 15. doi:10.1038/s41598-018-34946-y

⁽³⁾ Penn State News, "Study at Penn State to examine potential for birds to eat spotted lanternfly" Amy Duke - September 17, 2020

⁽⁴⁾ Penn State News, "Penn State Berks center studies methods to eradicate spotted lanternfly Fungus found in Berks County has potential to be the answer" Lisa Baldi - September 24, 2020

(Bubba Speaks, continued from page 2)

Feral Cat Impacts - NABS is working on establishing a position regarding the “trap, neuter, and release” (TNR) program instituted in many areas for feral cats. The big problem with this approach centers with the release of cats back into the outdoors where they can continue to have major impacts on birds, small mammals and reptiles. Health issues are a factor as feral cats are the major domestic animal to carry rabies. Toxoplasmosis is another dangerous health concern. TNR does not control feral cat populations and the program continues to be a black cloud in efforts to benefit natural resources. (In addition, homeowners who have house cats, need to keep their cats indoors. This results in healthier cats that live longer.) As President of NJBBS, I recently recommended denial to the State office on bill A4339 which is being proposed to fund TNR. Millville alone has over 50 cat colonies and there is no requirements for the program to provide annual reports or communicate whether the program is successful or not. Go to www.abcbirds.org for more information.

Camden County Bluebird Trails - Last year we got involved with bluebirds in Winslow Township, Camden County. We established trails in New Brooklyn Park (19 boxes) and Frank Donio Park (4 boxes) which were monitored by Jim Priest, Mike Chezik, Bonnie and Dom Patricelli, and Matt Giovetsis this season. In September Jim, Chuck Kanupke, Bob Barsotti and I added a total of 4 boxes at Calabrese, Iuliucci, and Sirolli Parks (also in Winslow Township) for next year.

New Board of Director Members - Jim Priest and Harry Bratty were recently elected to our Board of Directors. Nels Anderson (past Burlington County Coordinator and Board member) nominated Harry, Chuck Kanupke nominated Jim Priest. Jim is extremely active doing bluebird work in Camden County, banding, monitoring, making boxes, promoting NJBBS, etc. He does extremely well in the field. Harry Bratty will assume responsibility representing Burlington County on the Board and also as County Coordinator. Welcome to both. If any members have a desire to be on the Board or hold an office please let me know. It takes many members and their enthusiasm to make NJBBS better. Consider becoming a leader in our organization. We really do have special talent in the NJBBS.

Saved by the Box - Jim Priest and Dan Angeline each made over 30 bluebird boxes as our supply of boxes dwindled after Dave Moyer’s woodshop class in the Middle Township Middle School closed in March because of the coronavirus. I did pick up 30 boxes from Dave’s class the last day of school before the school closed but it became evident they would not last through the season. A special load of wood was delivered to Jim in Williamstown and Dan in Vineland. Dan’s work was overseen and quality controlled by Millie Rial who made sure the boxes were made properly. In a few days we had a supply of boxes to use in southern NJ. Not surprisingly, those boxes are pretty much used up and I wait for word from Dave Moyer when and if school is back in session and the wood shop class is building boxes again.

~ Allen “Bubba” Jackson



*Bluebirds will feed on suet cakes when they are hungry enough. Fat is vital.
(Photo by Jenyfra Nelson)*



Mealworms can be a valuable food source for bluebirds, especially in times when insect populations are down. Here are some rather large chicks enjoying them, thanks to dad! (Photo by Cathie Skinner)

WHERE HAVE ALL THE INSECTS GONE? LONG TIME PASSING?

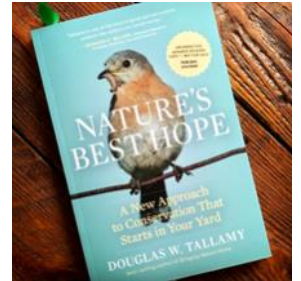
Think back to this past summer. Did you happen to notice:

- Less fireflies in your back yard this season? Fewer tent caterpillars on black cherry trees?
- Less butterflies / bees pollinating your flowers? Hardly any gulls feeding on flying swarms of ants?
- Fewer grasshoppers emerging during June and July? Less insects splattered on your car windshield?

These are all things that were evident to me and others during the 2020 nesting season. This was in conjunction with: 1) undersized bluebird young noticed during banding (over 2000 banded) and, 2) bluebird parents being more reliant on mealworms and currants in my bluebird feeder rather than catching insects to feed the young. I also noticed the undersized young begging for food longer from the parents after fledging. All this likely corresponds with reports of insect declines. I read articles about a 1% decline annually, a 25% decline in the U.S., and a 45% decline globally. I believe we may be at the 25% or higher decline in our area?

Bluebirds are ground feeders and rely on insects for as much as 90% of their diet during the nesting season. Insects (especially caterpillars) are extremely nutritious and easily digestible for the young. If drought conditions persist, bluebirds have to rely on berries such as black cherry and pokeweed; However, berries provide energy rather than protein. Protein is needed for development. Even in the winter, bluebirds scratch in the litter for insects.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? We do not know if this trend is seasonal in NJ or reacting to climate change. But be aware of what may be happening in your area. All is not lost - plant native vegetation. Douglas Tallamy's recent book, "Nature's Best Hope" promotes conservation beginning in your back yard. Property owners can collectively create a "home grown national park" by converting some of their lawn to native plants suitable for our insects. It is impressive how much can be done to help nature on your own properties. Parent bluebirds need to feed each young 30-50 times a day. Multiple that by the number of young and broods during the season. That is a lot of insects but points out how dependent birds are of insects and the valuable control they can provide rather than using chemicals.



Planting native vegetation (flowers, shrubs, vegetable gardens) all produce insects that birds rely. Oak trees are notorious for the number of caterpillars they support - over 200 different species in the northeast. Black cherry and willow are also an important source for insects. There is lots of information available online regarding native plants. Locate and patronize a nursery that offers native rather than ornamental plants. Our insects have evolved on specific vegetation over thousands of years. They do not or can not utilize most of the ornamental vegetation.

Think about it. If you love bluebirds you also need to be an insect conservationist. Now is the time to start thinking and acting intelligently. Educate yourself to benefit bluebirds. ~ Allen "Bubba" Jackson



YOU SAY YOU DON'T HAVE PREDATORS? MAYBE NOT TODAY BUT WHAT ABOUT TOMORROW? ~ by Allen Jackson

In this day of an educated public, I find it amazing how many people still mount their bluebird boxes on wooden posts, telephone poles or trees, setting the stage for encounters with ground predators. If I had a nickel for every time I heard "We don't have predators here"... Predator issues are usually infrequent but certainly not uncommon. A swift response is needed to prevent continued predation, but an ounce of prevention can virtually eliminate predator issues.

Rat snakes and raccoons are two prevalent ground predators in NJ. Both are active at night and are very efficient hunters. Landlords have a responsibility to prevent unnecessary bluebird loss. The accompanying two incidents is followed by a suggestion how to make an effective predator guard.



(snake photos by Pete Bozak)

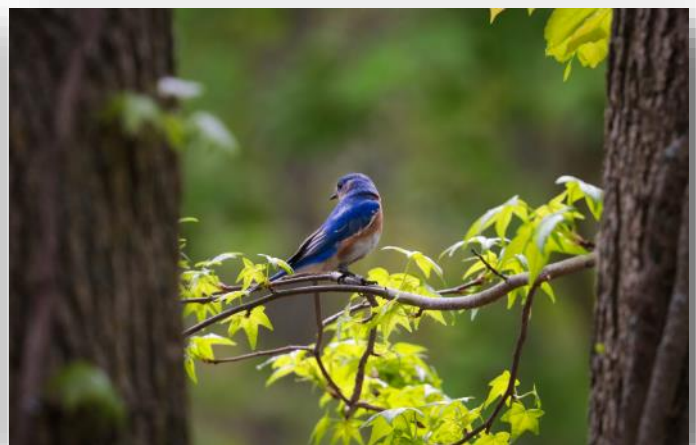
SNAKE INCIDENT

I wanted to share these pictures with the readers, hoping it will encourage everyone to make sure predator guards are on every box. The two dramatic pictures show a large rat snake that found easy access to a bluebird box mounted on a wooden post. The box was actually being used to trap house sparrows but a pair of bluebirds commandeered the box. There are 4 other bluebird boxes on the property with predator guards that are the primary bluebird producers. I do not want to deal with a snake of this size. What would you do? Don't be caught having to deal with a snake the size of the one pictured. Snakes can have attitudes. They bite, poop on you (the smell is worse than horrible), and may likely cause nightmares.

RACCOON PREDATION INCIDENT

Raccoons also create problems for bluebirds. In early July, I conducted a site visit that had 4 boxes. The landlord stated he had lost all 25 bluebird eggs in 2020, not a single bluebird hatched. All 4 boxes were mounted on wooden posts and had some sticky "Tanglefoot" on the post to ward off predators (not effective). Each post and box had claw marks from raccoons. Claw marks are easy to spot if one simply looks for them. I erected 2 boxes with predator guards and asked the landlord to remove his boxes. He has good habitat that I expect will host 2 pair of bluebirds next season - successfully of course. Update: A pair of bluebirds nested in the new box within the month. Three eggs were laid.

(photo on right by Karen Legg; photos of nest box setup on next page by Allen Jackson)



Photos taken at Washington Lake Park in Gloucester County by Matteo Iadonisi - <https://www.matteoiadonisi.com>

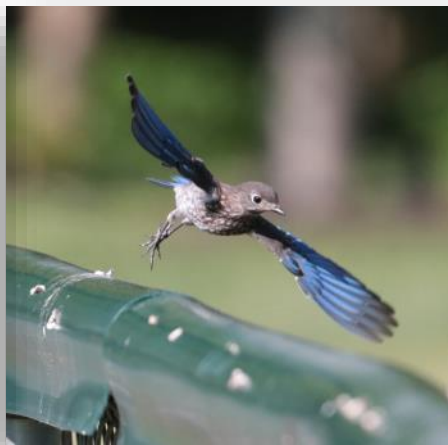


MY PREDATOR GUARD PREFERENCE - It should go without saying that each and every bluebird setup should have a predator guard. Installing predator guards is not hard. I have reverted to using the best protection I can muster. While there are a number of types of guards, the one pictured has been extremely successful for me.

The materials include: a 6' heavy duty T-post, a 48" long piece of 4" PVC sewer pipe (from Lowes), a 4" end cap drilled with a 7/8" hole, a 1/2" x 8" galvanized threaded pipe held on the T-post by 2 hose clamps (size 3/4" to 1 3/4"). I screw a 1/2" threaded galvanized flange to the bottom of the bluebird box and simply screw the box onto the mounting pole after the post and guard are ready. This requires little maintenance other than occasional steel wooling of the PVC pipe, followed by some Turtle wax to keep it smooth. The 48" length and the fact that it wobbles on the post make it hard for predators to climb. Personal experience and recommendations from the Purple Martin Conservation Association indicate that a 4' rat snake can extend out 3' to get by cone guards, so consider not using cone guards if you have rat snakes. However, a rat snake can not go up 3' if there is nothing for it to cling to (like screws that hold metal guards together). Most metal guards are only 2' long which snakes have gotten by too many times on purple martin setups I have monitored.

My setup is somewhat costly (~\$35) but well worth the effort to make the box safe and should not be a concern for most people that host a bluebird box in their yard. Bluebirds have many factors to overcome for a successful nesting. Protecting them from predators is a simple step to keep your bluebirds around and productive. Needing multiple boxes for a trail adds to the cost but there are ways to reduce things. I purchase Atlantic white cedar from a local saw mill, deliver the lumber and hardware to a school wood shop class that build 150 boxes per school year, and receive financial assistance from local environmental groups. Partnerships are a great way to go.

Common sense tells you it is better to be proactive and prevent the problem than to suffer the consequences.



ATLANTIC COUNTY

Coordinator, Jim Watson



Jim Watson, Allen Jackson and Jim Priest put up a new box at David Pfeiffer's house in Galloway, Atlantic County, one day early in March, around 11am. These two photos were taken in the afternoon. Truly a great start for a nesting pair! (photos by Jim Priest)



This protective hen in Egg Harbor Township was not letting anything (or anyone) prevent her from raising her second brood. Her first clutch was destroyed by HOSP. (Photo by LJ Jamieson)



Photo by Jen Nelson



Eastern bluebird banded by Jim Watson, assisted by Jen Nelson. Bluebird from her nest box, photo by Jim Watson.

A Note of Gratitude - Special thanks to NJBBS member **Diane Kady** for taking over the monitoring and maintenance of my bluebird trails in Atlantic County. Already busy enough with Stockton trails, Diane expertly banded 77 bluebirds in Egg Harbor Township this season.

This year was tough for me. Moving is never fun, but during covid-19 it is insane. I also missed the guidance and friendship of my Mentor, John Layton. We always rode together to the Annual Meeting and the conversation was always entertaining - and even educational!

I now live in Warren County, and look forward to starting over in this gorgeous area. If anyone knows of bluebird contacts I should be making here, please send a note to me at bluebirdljj@gmail.com. ~ Lori Jo Jamieson

BURLINGTON COUNTY

Welcome to New Coordinator, Harry Bratty

Franklin Parker Preserve Nest Box Trail

~ by Nels Anderson

This is a huge area (13 square miles) but much of it is wetlands, and not suitable for bluebirds. Tree swallows love it all, so half the task is placing boxes in suitable areas for bluebirds. With the mild winter bluebirds got an early start. Even though there were cold mornings in the high 30's there were no nest failures due to cold.

The midpoint of nest activity has usually been July 1; that is, as many fledge before that date as after. July 1 is also about the time tree swallows end their nesting season so bluebirds can nest without much competition through July and August. Predation wasn't a big factor, but infertile eggs continue to puzzle.

The first BB egg was observed April 1 and the first to fledge May 5. The last to fledge did so September 2 so under favorable conditions they can enjoy a long nesting season. Over the years Carolina chickadee production has faded from a high of 139 in 2008 to zero in 2013 and 2019. Something is going on with them, but they are doing well elsewhere.

60 boxes in place

Total Bluebirds Fledged: 134

Tree Swallows Fledged: 122

Carolina Chickadees Fledged: 5

This photo is of a male bluebird, 17 to 18 days old, which flew the coop a few minutes after the photo was taken. I was in my truck noting what I saw and a bluebird flew by. I checked the box again and it was empty. Over the years I have had thousands fledge under my care but have witnessed maybe a double handful doing so.

An empty nest flattened out, dust from the feather sheaths, a few poops, no feathers or dead bodies is what success can look like.

I also have a **Pinelands Bluebird Trail** that fledged 224 bluebirds this year with seven people assisting, including two Girl Scouts.

Total Bluebirds Fledged: 224

Tree Swallows Fledged: 16

Carolina Chickadees Fledged: 13



CAMDEN COUNTY Coordinator, Chuck Kanupke



Keeping Busy in Camden County - by Jim Priest

Allen Jackson, Jim Priest, and Cedric Smith, Foreman of Winslow Parks Department, with Chuck Kanupke, NJBBS County Coordinator



Matt Giovetsis and Allen Jackson work hard to remove posts and old nest box setups at Donio Park

On June 2, Allen, Matt Giovetsis (a young volunteer who has been a great help to us) and I went to Donio Park in Winslow Township, Camden County. We removed six old set ups. It took a lot of work getting the old posts out, since they had been in there for many years. We then put up two new boxes at the park. Matt monitors the existing 4 boxes there. Around 6/20 we had a nest and on 6/30 there were 4 eggs. We put up the first two boxes in February. We have had 2 nests with chicks that we have banded. So far, the new boxes have done well this year.

We stayed busy the last few weeks of the summer. I banded this last batch of bluebirds at New Brooklyn Park on August 8th. (photo above left)



On August 31st, Matt and I had a busy day. We put 2 boxes up at New Brooklyn Park, then we went to get supplies at Lowe's and Home Depot to make more set-ups. At my house we cut, drilled and made up 20 predator guards. When I'm done we will have enough to put up 38 boxes with parts left over.

We have added boxes in 3 additional Winslow Township parks: Calabrese, Iuliucci, and Sirolli Parks for next season, with the help of Chuck Kanupe and Cedric Smith, Foreman of Winslow Parks Department. Allen and I put up 4 boxes - 2 in Daniel Calabrese Memorial Park, 1 in each of the other two.

I banded 99 bluebirds for the season, which I was very happy with. Hopefully next year we will do even better. We have removed old boxes and moved some around to help for making a better 2021.



Jim Priest and Allen Jackson install new nest box set ups at Donio Park



Gratitude in Time of Quarantine

"I just wanted to thank you guys once more. My mating pair of bluebirds was a highlight of this quarantine time. I hope to welcome the same pair back in the spring!"

~ Quote and photo by Rich Bobbe, Camden County Bluebird Landlord

CAPE MAY COUNTY

Coordinator, Rae Griffiths

2020 End of Season Summary Cape May County – Rae Griffiths, Coordinator

TOTAL Bluebirds Hatched – 386 TOTAL - TOTAL Bluebirds Fledged – 352 TOTAL
Hatchlings Lost to Predation/Weather – 34 including 5 banded
Bluebirds Banded – 319 TOTAL Bluebirds | unbanded – 38
Cape May County – banded: 280 | unbanded: 30 - Atlantic County – banded: 39 | unbanded: 8

Despite the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 bluebird season in Cape May County was a resounding success. Together, we fledged and banded more birds than ever before, so I would like to start by thanking everyone for your hard work. Your keen observations and timely communication with Gail and me made this season the success that it was! I also want to thank Gail Fisher for her five years of dedicated service as Cape May County Coordinator and for expertly easing me in to the role this season. I feel so fortunate to have had this season to learn from her experience and wisdom.

32 active monitors monitored 116 boxes in Cape May County and 10 in Atlantic County. Six new households were added as monitors/sites this season. Welcome to Carolee Drinkard, Carol Porter, Les Frie, Jason Hearon, Erik Van Horn and the Griffiths family. Of the new sites, two of these saw bluebird nest activity. Congratulations Carolee and Jason. Here's to more next season for all!

4 sites had HOSP predation with at least 5 other sites having HOSP presence in boxes. 2 sites had HOWR predation and at least 2 other sites had HOWR competition for the box(es). At least 4 sites had issues with snake predation and snakes were observed near boxes at 3 other sites, but the birds were unharmed.

The first chicks of the season were banded on April 19th at the home of Jen Creamer and family in Belleplain. The last chicks were banded on August 15th at Head of the Cemetery in Estell Manor in Atlantic County.

Shellbay Family Camping Resort in Cape May Courthouse, monitored by Richard Ryder, continued to be a productive site this season. Richard added three boxes to the three he already monitors on the property, and the three established boxes produced two broods each, while two of the new boxes each had a brood as well, resulting in a total 27 fledglings!

In the early spring, it was noticed that many bluebirds were hanging out around the Amanda's Field Recreation Complex so a fourth box was added to this site in early summer. The four boxes, skillfully monitored by Tom Berger, produced 17 bluebird fledglings including 2 from the new box! There were also successful chickadee and tree swallow nests in a couple of the boxes as well. Tom also monitors boxes at his home in Ocean View, and a box at the Gandy Farmstead Historic Site. After one successful brood of bluebirds at Gandy, a second nest was predated by house wrens so Tom and I chose to move the box to the back corner of the property where it is more secluded. Time will tell if this helps the bluebirds thrive there!

The five boxes at Head of the River Cemetery in Atlantic County produced 30 bluebird hatchlings between them, however, one whole brood was lost post-banding to severe weather, and one brood was lost to predation, (most likely snake), leaving 20 successful fledglings from this site, including one clutch of six eggs (*see photo next page*)! These boxes also fledged three successful broods of tree swallows this season.

Besides the new box added to Amanda's Field, an additional box was added at Belle Plain State Forest next to the Interpretation Center, and after a slow start, a nest was discovered in late June in this box that produced a brood of 5 chicks. These chicks were banded in front of several visitors and BSF staff members during a socially distanced, impromptu education moment. It was nice to share the world of bluebirds with the public after so many months of isolation!

(continued on next page)

Number of boxes producing three broods: 7 Number of sites producing three broods between paired boxes: 3
Number of boxes with two broods: 14 Number of sites producing two broods between paired boxes: 2
Number of new sites added: 6 Number of new boxes placed: 14 Number of boxes removed: 3
Number of boxes moved at same site: 2

CAPE MAY COUNTY

Coordinator, Rae Griffiths

(continued from previous page)



The site at the Calvary Baptist Church in South Seaville was plagued with house sparrow and house wren issues for a good part of the season, but after a strategic replacement of one of the boxes, a successful clutch of rare white eggs was banded there in late July!

All of the boxes at the local schools were very productive this season. At the Dennis Township Primary School, while one box kept the tree swallows busy, the other two produced three broods each for a total of 26 fledglings at the school! A box at the Upper Township Elementary School also had two successful broods, the first one being one of only two nests of white eggs in Cape May County this season (*see photo*)! The second brood was blue, indicating that at least one of the parents was a different bird! Dennis

Township Middle School had two successful broods in the box by the ball field. Thank you Carol Porter for monitoring the boxes there despite school being on hiatus!



OTHER INTERESTING NOTES:

- Monitor Chris Devany had bluebirds build their nest in one of his Purple Martin houses . . .twice!
- I observed a nest of bluebirds in a newspaper box in a neighborhood close to me while I participated in the World Series of Birding on May 9th (*see photo below*).
- At one point, house sparrows killed an adult female in one of the boxes at Shellbay Camping Resort, and laid an egg in her nest. Strangely, the sparrows seemed to abandon the nest, allowing bluebirds to return, where they built a nest on top of the dead female and the partial house sparrow nest! Once discovered, the dead female and old nest underneath were removed, and the second brood of bluebirds was ultimately successful.
- Richard also had a cowbird in one of his bluebird boxes at Shellbay. It fledged a couple of days before we banded the bluebird chicks, and they seemed to be fine despite their unexpected sibling!

• We experimented with some HOSP egg oiling this season in response to an article on this subject by Facundo Fernandez-Duque in the Spring 2020 issue of *Bluebird*, the Journal of the North American Bluebird Society. It seemed to help keep HOSP busy while reducing the number of hatchlings of this invasive species. We will continue to see how this method works to reduce HOSP predation on EABL.

As I write this, a downy woodpecker has taken up temporary residence in my bluebird box to escape the rain. Wishing you all a wonderful fall and winter. I look forward to connecting with you next season! ~ *Rae Griffiths*



GLOUCESTER & SALEM COUNTIES

Coordinators, Dave Gilcrest, Allen Jackson and Bernie Visalli



Juvenile EABL with leg band.
Photo by Bernie Visalli

Gloucester/Salem County Update ~ by Bernie Visalli

This year saw some highs and lows.

Gloucester County - We lost a monitor to the Covid virus. Phil Bellace was very excited to start the year off with a nest and eggs already in his box by early March. He was a big part of the community and will be greatly missed. I have asked his son to take over and he has been very enthused to help monitor the boxes and is learning fast.

New sites -This year added 6 new sites with multiple boxes at most locations.

New monitor spotlight - Samantha Chovanes of Sewell lives on 13 acres (lots of open space) on a wonderful property bordering a 100+ acre park. We installed a box in the beginning of May and they had two nests with a total of nine fledged. Great start! Best part is getting the younger generation involved. Samantha's son Henry, was able to be on hand during our first banding and asked some very good questions. This site will be expanded next year.



Phil Bellace



Henry the Helper



Bluebird Pair. Photo by Bernie Visalli

Salem County – Expanded Cowtown site for a total of 14 boxes. There was an issue with theft of nests with eggs. Fish and Wildlife is involved and at the time of this newsletter, no one has been identified. Records indicate 36 eggs were lost, but if you include the nests that were due to have eggs, that number is much higher. After much thought and great expense I was able to get it under control and fledged 40+. If anyone experiences theft at sites, contact me directly and I am happy to discuss.

Due to Covid shut downs, most of the Salem County sites I am involved with needed me to take over the monitoring which I was happy to do. I was able to get the sites under control with non-natives and mediate some of the other issues plaguing those sites. Looking forward to 2021!

Super Human Effort: Congratulations to **John Clending** who built, established a trail and fledged over 1100 bluebirds this season. John lives on the Gloucester Salem County line. Of the 194 boxes he set up on his trail, 157 were used by bluebirds. 1150 of 1373 eggs hatched and 1105 young fledged - 602 in Gloucester County and 503 in Salem County. Any takers willing to try and top that? ~ Allen Jackson



Beautiful nest with 6 bluebird eggs.
Photo taken by Peg Urban, in Mullica Hill, Gloucester County.



Male bluebird carries food for young. Taken at Washington Lake Park in Gloucester County
by Matteo Iadonisi - <https://www.matteoiadonisi.com>

Farewell to Gail and Jim Fisher - A small farewell gathering was held recently at the home of Ellen Seward and Tom Poussart. Gail and Jim have sold their home and will be moving to a continuing care retirement community in Virginia. Gail is the first recipient of the John Layton Excellence Award. Her work as Cape May County Coordinator has forged many new and valuable relationships and partnerships, all "for the birds," and NJBBS's mission to help bluebirds thrive. New Jersey's loss is certainly Virginia's gain! Best wishes from NJBBS!

JOHN LAYTON EXCELLENCE AWARD

PRESENTED TO

Gail Fisher

Since the NJ Bluebird Society became established in 2011, no member has done more to organize their area to benefit bluebirds than Gail Fisher. She volunteered to be the Cape May County Coordinator, scheduled speaking engagements and developed plans to promote the bluebird population. Her teaching experience and personality proved invaluable as she coordinated with the public, encouraging them to host bluebirds and become involved with the NJBBS. Our program is recognized throughout the State because of the work Gail has done. She is particularly adept at working with children, helping to influence an appreciation of the values of nature.



ALLEN JACKSON, PRESIDENT, NJBBS



Ellen Seward gives a framed bluebird photo to Gail. (photo by Rae Griffiths)



Allen Jackson presents the first John Layton Excellence Award to Gail Fisher. Standing from L to R are: Tom Berger (CMC monitor), Tom Poussart (CMC monitor), Jim Watson (Atlantic County Coordinator), Jean Reeves (CMC monitor and Gail's mother). (photo by Rae Griffiths)



Gail delights in her gift of bluebird earrings. At right is Rae Griffiths, the new Cape May County Coordinator. (photo by Ellen Seward)



A special Farewell Edition of "Jersey Blues" with all articles by Gail was presented via Zoom by Lori Jo Jamieson. (Photo by Rae Griffiths)

MORRIS COUNTY

 Submitted by Leo Hollein & Tom Gula

2020 BLUEBIRD NEST BOX REPORT

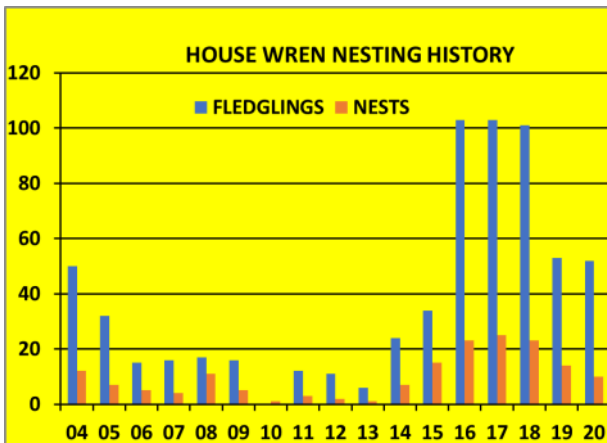
The current objective of the Refuge bluebird nest box trail is to provide nesting habitat for eastern bluebirds to ensure a healthy population of bluebirds exists for the enjoyment of the Refuge visitors. The nest boxes are also used by other cavity nesting native birds such as tree swallows and house wrens. The Refuge population of bluebird nesting pairs is estimated to be in the range of 35 to 43 for 2020. The average number of bluebird pairs nesting in the refuge boxes is 39 for the last 6 years. The range of bluebird nesting is based on active bluebird nests after June 13 and on empty bluebird nests counted when monitoring began on June 13 visits.

Covid-19 Limits Nest Box Monitoring in Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

All volunteer activity was suspended in the Refuge from mid-March to mid-June. This eliminated monitoring the nest boxes during the most pleasant and productive time of the nesting season. The vegetation in the fields is minimal, temperatures are cooler, insects are less numerous and migrating birds are arriving or passing through. By monitoring weekly, the nesting history from the number of eggs to the outcome of the nesting attempt is available. The lack of weekly visits for three months prevented an accurate count of nesting activities especially for bluebirds who are the first species to nest in the boxes. These weekly visits also create paths from the roads to the boxes. Their absence for three months required bushwhacking through waste high brush to inspect some of the nest boxes.

Due to Covid-19 limitations, an accurate count of bluebird nests, eggs, hatchlings, and fledglings was not possible this season. Many bluebird clutches started and fledged before the first nest box monitoring visits started on June 13. The average bluebird egg laying peak date for the Refuge is April 27. Nesting with eggs laid April would fledge in early June.

The notable events during this nesting season of limited monitoring were: Over 90% of the monitored tree swallow nests fledged young. Neither bears or raccoons depredated any nest boxes. House wren nests and fledglings declined for the second consecutive year.



House Wren Nesting Declines for Second Consecutive Year

House wrens had ten nestings this year, and 14 last season. Hopefully, house wren nestings in the Refuge will continue to decrease in future years. Several box pairs will be moved to more open areas to discourage house wrens from nesting in these boxes.

House sparrows were seen at several locations from public roads and trails during the volunteer lockout. Only one house sparrow nesting was reported when monitoring restarted. **No house sparrows have fledged from the Refuge boxes this century.**

Five Volunteers Monitor Nest Boxes in 2020

The trail provides volunteer opportunities for those who wish to work with wildlife. Since the Friends of Great Swamp National

Wildlife Refuge became responsible for the bluebird trail, eighteen different volunteers (7 male and 11 female) have monitored part of the bluebird trail for at least one season. This is a significant commitment of time because volunteers visit their nest boxes once per week from early April through mid-August. The data (nest, species, eggs, hatchlings, fledglings, and observations) from the visit is entered into a spreadsheet and sent to the coordinator who summarizes the data and distributes it weekly to the nest box monitors.

This season there were with five monitors. Each is assigned a part of the nest box trail. Unfortunately, the limited timing of nest box monitoring this season due to COVID-19 resulted in no interested individuals accompanying the monitors on their visits. Many thanks to Jim Mulvey, Nancy Felicito, Tom Gula and Christine Pirog (first year) who monitored nest boxes and reported their findings during the 2020 nesting season. A special thanks to Tom Gula who helped with maintaining the bluebird boxes as well as recording the GPS locations of boxes with new locations for 2020 and developing the map on page 17. ~ Leo Hollein & Tom Gula

MORRIS COUNTY

Submitted by Leo Hollein & Tom Gula



This map put together by Tom Gula shows the location of the nest box pairs for the 2020 season. Box pairs used by bluebirds are indicated by blue dots. Those shown in red were used by house wrens. The grassy areas around the Visitor Center and off Woodland Road are the prime bluebird nesting territories in the Refuge.



Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge exists to conserve its natural resources for the America public while protecting threatened and endangered species for future generations. Located in Morris County, New Jersey, about 26 miles west of Manhattan's Times Square, the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System that is administered by the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Today the refuge consists of 7,768 acres of varied habitats, and the refuge has become an important resting and feeding area for more than 244 species of birds. Fox, deer, muskrat, turtles, fish, frogs and a wide variety of wildflowers and plants can be found on the refuge. **For more information, please visit https://www.fws.gov/refuge/great_swamp.**



Birds and Smoke - by Dr. Roger Lederer

There was a recent report (August 2020) of hundreds of thousands of birds found dead in New Mexico. Biologists figure it has something to do with the wildfires that are plaguing the western states. Dead birds are also being found in Colorado, Texas, and Mexico. Many of them were migratory insectivorous birds. Live birds were seen picking insects off the ground when they usually feed in the air. Even swallows that can't walk on the ground were feeding there.

Apparently some birds were driven by the fires to migrate early or at least leave their breeding grounds to escape the flames. Others changed their migratory routes, perhaps taking pathways that offer little food. The extreme heat in some areas added to the mortality. Then there was an extreme temperature plunge in Colorado one evening, dropping from the 80s to freezing and snowfall overnight. Biologists are collecting data now to see if they can determine the cause of these mass deaths, perhaps numbering in the millions of birds, but smoke seems to be a major factor.

Birds are probably more sensitive to smoke inhalation than humans because they have a more efficient respiratory system. They are certainly more sensitive to gases such as carbon monoxide and methane which is why canaries used to be installed in coal mines as warning instruments. And we know from veterinarians that pet birds kept in houses can be killed by fumes associated with cooking. Over-heated cooking oil will produce smoke that will cause a bird to gasp and choke. Teflon-coated saucepans, if over-heated or allowed to burn dry, will release toxic fumes that will kill a bird in minutes.

There is a lot known about the effects of smoke and other pollutants on caged and pet birds, but a search of the scientific literature tells me that there has been very little research done on the effects of smoke on wild birds. There is a lot of research on the effects of wildfires on bird populations and their recovery but not what happens to birds during a fire.

Resident birds have to leave the areas which are familiar to them and migratory birds have to change their routes to avoid fires. But can they actually avoid the effects? Rising up to 14 miles in the air, smoke from the U.S. west coast has reached as far as New York and Washington D.C. on the east coast. Fires in Siberia have sent smoke to Alaska.

Wildfires release tiny lightweight particles of soot termed particulate matter or PM, especially large quantities of fine particulates called PM2.5, particles 2.5 micrometers in diameter. (The average human hair is 70 micrometers in diameter, 30 times as wide.) PM2.5 particles can penetrate lung membranes and pass into the bloodstream. These smoke particles also undergo chemical changes that convert them into highly reactive compounds with deleterious effects on cells and tissues.

Satellite monitoring and modeling have determined that smoke from the 2017 Pacific Northwest fires remained in the stratosphere for 8 months. We don't know much about the effects of smoke on birds but it appears we will have plenty of reasons and opportunities to study it in the near future. Meanwhile, many genuine thanks to all the firefighters and other first responders who are risking their lives to protect us and our wildlife.

Dr. Roger Lederer | September 21, 2020 at 9:35 AM | Categories: Uncategorized | URL: <https://wp.me/p5wx9Z-30m>



Fly, Bluebirds, Fly!

If you've captured great images of bluebirds, send them in an email to BlubirdLJJ@gmail.com. Include image credit with location details. I may use them in an upcoming issue of "Jersey Blues." Thank you! *The Editor*

Photos taken at Washington Lake Park in Gloucester County by Matteo Iadonisi - <https://www.matteoiadonisi.com>

OCEAN COUNTY Coordinator, Laura Stone



My 2 cents Worth on Bluebird Trails ~ by Andrew Major

This season, I experimented with various box designs (1 hole, 2 holes, Troyer box). I use the latter two in places where bluebird predation (by house sparrow or flying squirrel) is a possibility. It gives the bluebird a chance to escape. The bluebirds accepted all these boxes. I find that the side opening boxes or the ones hinged at the bottom provide the best access to the nest.

Now I also place a small plastic tray (mushrooms or blueberries are sold in them) in the nest box for easy access to the nest. I punch a large hole in the center for drainage, in case there is a downpour. The tray can be removed and the contents of the nest inspected. It also makes it easier to keep the box clean.

On two occasions I found all the nestlings dead, with no sign of trauma except that they were all bright red. On closer inspection it became evident that they were practically skinned alive - by tiny ants. Now I apply 'Tanglefoot' glue on the post at the first sign of ants.

In my area the biggest challenge to nesting success is the presence of house wrens. They seem to be ubiquitous. Eggs or hatchlings disappear, twigs are found in the box. The use of decoys (plastic gourds) had limited success. The wren stuffed the gourd and still vandalized the nest. At locations with a history of wren predation, I pre-emptively use Noel guards, as soon as a bluebird egg is laid. So far none of the bluebirds abandoned the nest and the predation almost always stopped. I made a large supply of Noel guards and always have them with me.

I try to maximize the number of bluebird nests in a field by first placing 2 boxes (in suitable spots) as far from each other as possible. If a tree swallow occupies one first, I place another box next to it. I find that the two species get along (at least in my area) if there are enough boxes.

In several fields of the Whiting Wildlife Management Area prescribed burning is practiced. To prevent damage to the boxes or to the baffle, I cut the vegetation along the perimeter, using a battery operated string trimmer.

At the end of the nesting season I used to take the boxes home to scrub them but now I just use a brush and clean the boxes with hand cleaners. In locations where flying squirrels are present, I cover the hole for winter with a plastic shield to prevent the little rascals from enlarging it.

Let's get ready for the next season!



SOMERSET COUNTY Coordinator, April Tarantino



We're Getting Results! ~ by April Tarantino

Mark Timari, manager at Camp Oak Spring, a Girl Scout camp in Franklin Township, did a fantastic job this season monitoring the nest boxes there. He patrolled every night to make sure no other birds made nests in the boxes. There were 48 fledglings for the season. Mark is now making more boxes.

Monitor **Mike Connley** had 11 nest boxes in Colonial Park, 7 on Cottontail Lane in Somerset, and 2 in Hillsborough. He counted a total of 30 fledged. 9 bluebirds fledged from my nest boxes.

Stay tuned for more exciting news from Somerset County in the Spring issue! ~April



NJ Bluebird Society

Caring for the Bluebirds of New Jersey

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. 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. A seasonal form is sent out to our members.

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?

New Jersey Bluebird Society: Submitted Data for 2020 Season*/ Bluebirds Fledged - Results for Last 4 Years

County	Bluebirds Fledged 2020*	Bluebirds Fledged 2019	Bluebirds Fledged 2018	Bluebirds Fledged 2017	Bluebirds Fledged 2016
Atlantic	554	575	684	536	514
Bergen	0	0	0	0	0
Burlington	468	268	352	320	142
Camden	137	59	45	0	0
Cape May	357	210	203	235	75
Cumberland	845	786	649	603	407
Essex	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucester	1064	684	387	261	208
Hudson	0	0	0	0	0
Hunterdon	30	35	21	0	0
Mercer	0	0	0	0	0
Middlesex	5	28	61	50	55
Monmouth	61	51	86	88	162
Morris	163	214	265	286	291
Ocean	668	266	737	730	219
Passaic	0	0	0	0	0
Salem	904	540	243	222	112
Somerset	95	79	15	55	43
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0
Union	0	0	0	0	0
Warren	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	5351	3795	3748	3386	2228

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

*2020 Includes all reports received as of 10/19/2020.