



Jersey Blues

The Newsletter of The New Jersey Bluebird Society, an Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

~ Volume 5, Issue 1 - Spring, 2021

Early Bird Gets the Worm!

First reported bluebird egg of 2021 - March 15th reported by Peg Urban of Mullica Hill

From the President's Corner ~ Allen Jackson

Not sure there is all that much to say at this time other than it's almost time to start monitoring our boxes. Nesting season is just around the corner. Check your boxes for damage to see if repairs are needed. We did exceptionally well in 2020 dealing with monitoring our bluebird boxes during the covid-19 pandemic. In many respects it gave us a chance to get outdoors while under safe conditions. Unlike most people

we were able to enjoy the outdoors which I am sure helped many stay sane. Thank you all for what you accomplished last year.

As we begin our 2021 nesting season, our hope is to continue increasing the bluebird population as we have every year. I asked Lori Jo to include our summary chart that Dave Gilcrest does each year (Dave's work is much appreciated). **This summary, found on page 5**, gives us something to compare our efforts to and realize the difference we are making. Just let me say, people are noticing more bluebirds and want to be a part of the NJBBS! Not only have our bluebirds numbers increased (from our efforts to add more nesting boxes) but our NJBBS membership is increasing. NJ is still number one in North America with NABS.

Lori Jo moved to Warren County from EHT in Atlantic County during 2020. While we lost a dedicated monitor in southern NJ, she wasted no time making inroads in Warren County. We have a new Warren County Coordinator in McKenna Kels who is working with Lori Jo to promote bluebirds in that area. I expect we will be seeing more bluebirds in our Northern Region. I look forward to seeing results at the end of the nesting season. Besides Warren County, keep your eye on Camden County. Chuck Kanupke and Jim Priest are finding new sites to establish bluebird trails. We added boxes at 3 more locations in Winslow Township last fall. And the big question is - can John Clendining match or exceed his 2020 results? I remain amazed that he personally was responsible for fledging over 1100 bluebirds last year.

FYI, I am working on a very controversial and emotional issue at the national level. I have been on a committee at NABS to produce a position statement regarding cats outdoors. While the main issue centers on the harm cats do to our wildlife in the outdoors, there are significantly more things to consider. I will explain to NJBBS members at the appropriate time. Briefly, please support American Bird Conservancy's "Cats Indoors" program. It is a win-win-win situation for the cats, wildlife and humans.

Stay Safe, *Allen*

Celebrate Ten Years of NJBBS with our Photo Caption Contest!



McKenna Kels, our new Warren County Coordinator, captured this great candid shot in her backyard using a Wi-Fi camera. Read more about McKenna's nest box cams on **page 10**.

See page 2 to find out how to submit your suggested captions for this photo. You may win a nice prize!

A BIG WING WAVE WELCOME TO OUR NEW NJBBS MEMBERS!

Atlantic County

Lees, Cheryl & Rich
McCay, Lorraine
Mealo, Julie & Frank
Pfeiffer, David

Burlington County

Gervasi, Bull
Grigorieva, Elena
Roberts, David
Skeels, Althea

Camden County

Kanzler, Don
Patricelli, Dominick & Bonnie
Pedersen, Eric
Rell, Barbara
Wright, Brenda

Cape May County

Oliver, Anne
Rinck, Joan

Cumberland County

Angeline, Daniel
Edwards, Jean
Fenton, Bill & Bonnie
Foster, Linda & Gus
(continued next column)

Fuller, Rich & Terri

Hannon, Tom & Forsyth, Jennifer
Hearing, Harry & Sandy
Howell, Cheryl
Loyle, Elizabeth
Manzelmann, Peter
Merighi, Suzanne
Pettigrew, Laurie & Walt

Gloucester County

Barsotti, Bob & Debbie
Bonafiglia, Kathleen
Franke, Paul
Miller, Elaine
Napoliello, Carly
Napoliello, Michael & Claire
Weisensee Family

Hunterdon County

Phillips, Steven & Barbara
Whittle, Marie & Kamal

Middlesex County

Phillips, Carol & Henry

Morris County

Ahmer, Bill & Mary Anne
Hollein, Leo

Ocean County

Hedden, Becky
Natale, Tracy

Salem County

Gandy, Oak & Jane
Mabey, Warren & Warren Jr.
Petrongolo, Anthony

Somerset County

Meaney, Susan

Warren County

Kels, McKenna
Merrill Creek Reservoir
*Tanya Sulikowski,
Environmental Specialist*

Jersey Blues

*The Newsletter of The New Jersey
Bluebird Society*

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ENTER OUR CAPTION CONTEST HERE!

Send your captions for McKenna's photo in an email to BluebirdLJJ@gmail.com. We will choose three winners and three prizes will be awarded.

Deadline for submissions is June 1, 2021.

NJBBS OFFICERS

President: Allen Jackson

Vice President, North: Frank Budney

Vice President, Central: Laura Stone

Vice President, South: Allen Jackson

Treasurer: Gemma Major

Secretary: Jenyfra Nelson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All Officers Above, and -

Past President: Frank Budney

At Large: Harry Bratty, Shelly Cucugliello,

Dave Gilcrest, Lori Jo Jamieson,

Gary Pilling, Jim Priest, Bernadine Visalli,

Jim Watson, Ed Zboyan



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.

Why not gift a friend with memberships to NJBBS and NABS?

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Photo of snowy owl taken on 12/30/2020 by Bernie Visalli at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, Atlantic County.

A Thank You from Gail

Dear Members of the NJ Bluebird Society, I am honored and deeply humbled to have received the first annual John Layton Excellence Award and monetary gift on October 4th. There are so many others of you who are equally, or even more deserving, I feel.

I enjoyed my years as Cape May County Coordinator and cherish that time spent creating the program, increasing the population and making so many wonderful friends!

It will be a few months yet until Jim and I get settled, but I've already seen some bluebird boxes around the retirement community campus! Yes!

With many, many thanks,

Gail Fisher



Reflections on Ten Years of NJBBS - *from some of our Charter Members*

Nels Anderson - "As we started the process it became a roller coaster ride in many respects especially with by laws and the 501 c3 (non profit status). Many involved would much rather be in the woods or fields than sitting around a meeting room table looking out the window at the sunshine and birds passing by. Frank and I had been discussing doing this for at least a year, maybe more. Frank was the driver in many respects and he was a police sergeant so somewhat suited for the job. I nominated him for president and he did well steering us."

Frank Budney - "Wow! We survived 10 years. Seems like only yesterday 5 of us were sitting on my porch in Lanoka Harbor discussing how to form a bluebird society in NJ. I'll check through my old notes looking for something of interest. The first think that comes to mind is how long it took us to obtain our 501c3 status. At that time the government was concerned about subversive groups seeking a political agenda. Bluebirds seem pretty harmless but we had to re-apply several times before the government approved us. Happy 10 Years to all our original members (the "Founding Fathers") and the many new members who have joined over the years."

Shelly Cucugliello - "I had been bluebirding for years....albeit on a very small scale! I had joined NABS and learned through them and on my own. I found a banded dead blue in one of my boxes that didn't make it to fledge, and that led me to Allen Jackson. Not too long after, there I was sitting at this ground-breaking meeting of NJBBS. Nels was taking notes but politely asked me if I wouldn't mind taking over the duties from then on. So there I was...the proud secretary of the newly formed NJBBS!"

Allen Jackson - "It just dawned on me a couple of weeks ago that we were at 10 years. I can remember going to a purple martin conference in Erie, PA in July 2011 in which Jonathan Ridgeway was speaking. He was NABS President at the time. I went up to him and introduced myself as NABS' newest affiliate representing NJ. We talked a number of times and he asked me to join the Board of Directors for NABS. I told him we needed to get NJBBS organized first. That has turned into both Lori Jo and I being very involved with NABS. What more could this turn into? We keep getting more county coordinators, getting more boxes/trails and increasing the number of bluebirds fledged each year. People are noticing what we are doing as I get more and more reports of people seeing bluebirds in their area.

(continued on next page)

Minutes

Organizational Meeting, New Jersey Affiliate Bluebird Society
24 February-11

Attendance: Frank Budney, Allen Jackson, Nels Anderson and Susan Wheeler
Location; Lanoka Harbor, Ocean County, New Jersey

Introductions: This being the first meeting to consider organizing a Bluebird affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS). The attendees introduced themselves and discussed their experience in establishing Bluebird trails in their respective areas.

Topics for Discussion:

1. Need and purpose for establishing a Bluebird affiliate in NJ.
2. Joining the North American Bluebird Society as an affiliate.
3. Setting up a web site.
4. Establishing the affiliate as a 501 c3.
5. Statement of purpose.
6. Name for the affiliate.
7. Creating a charter.
8. Establishing a membership list and recruiting members.

Findings: The general consensus was that a Bluebird affiliate would be a positive resource in NJ. And that a sufficient number of interested individuals are actively involved in Bluebird Trails. Contacts with the NABS Affiliate Vice President of Affiliate Relations, Phil Berry and Barbara Chambers, Virginia Bluebird Society and The NABS Speaker's Bureau Chairperson. After much discussion the attendees agreed to meet at a future date to set up a protocol for establishing an affiliate and reach out to NABS for acceptance as an affiliate.

Submitted by Frank Budney

*(Text of minutes submitted by
Frank Budney at the initial
2011 meeting of NJBBS)*



(Ten Years, continued from page 4)

We get donations and financial assistance from Atlantic Audubon Society, Citizens United Maurice River, as well as from individuals who believe in what we're doing. An Eagle Scout who built nestboxes for Cape Island Wildlife Management Area is donating remaining funds raised to NJBBS! I think our reason for success is the box program, most of which are given away if the people join NJBBS and maybe NABS. That along with many motivated members who do so much more than expected.

We've come a long way, baby!"

Left to right: Allen Jackson, John Layton, Frank Budney, and Shelly Cucugliello. Photo by

Below is our latest summary count with results for the previous four years. This data reminds us of the great work we've done, are doing and will continue to do as NJBBS. Give yourself a pat on the back! ~ Allen

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.*

ATLANTIC COUNTY

Coordinator, Jim Watson



John Layton

JOHN LAYTON MEMORIAL TRAIL ESTABLISHED in EHT

After an initial meeting for approval and a follow-up site evaluation in 2020, a trail of three bluebird boxes was installed at **Reed's Organic Farm** on March 12, 2021. NJBBS members Jim Watson, Cheryl Lees and Allen Jackson located the boxes just in time for this year's nesting season. Cheryl will monitor the boxes and Jim will band any nestlings. As the bluebird population increases, more boxes will be added as NJBBS partners with this organization to help educate others about bluebird management.

Cookie Till, along with some equally passionate partners, was inspired to form "**A Meaningful Purpose Collective**" (Reed's Organic Farm) at 5075 Spruce Avenue in Egg Harbor Township, Atlantic County. It is a nonprofit created with the mission to renew land, provide shelter to farm animals and produce quality organic food. John and Dotty Layton lived close to this property so establishing the bluebird trail here was a perfect selection.

The first box was placed next to their flagpole in a prominent location towards the front of the property. We have a plaque to be placed near the first bluebird box. NJBBS has established this bluebird trail and The John Layton Excellence Award (awarded to Gail Fisher in 2020) to ensure that John's work in Atlantic County continues in his memory in EHT.



<http://penzaspies.com/>

What Bluebirding Is REALLY All About

On Apr 5, 2021, at 3:46 PM, Karl Wicks wrote: *"Hello, I'm new to this group but happy to report we have sightings OF BB here in Hammonton. Additionally my Wife and I visited Atsion Lake Yesterday and saw three different pairs of BB but only two boxes..."*

Karl Wicks, Hammonton

On Apr 6, 2021, 2:34 PM, Allen Jackson wrote: *"This is for you Karl Wicks!!!*

You got me off my duff with your email. I was picking up some bluebird boxes in Newfield and was close enough to make the trip to Atsion Lake. A number of great things happened. First, I went to Atsion Lake's office on Rt. 206 and added another bluebird box, thanks to you Karl. In fact, if you want, you can monitor all 3 boxes that are there. The pair of boxes you talked about will only attract 1 pair of bluebirds as one is for tree swallows and the other for bluebirds. One of those boxes had 2 broods each season. I added a third box near the outside restrooms further east of the pair. We had one there previously but had nothing but house wren issues so it was removed. Now that there are more bluebirds in the area, let's see what transpires.

I then stopped at the Red Barn for lunch and can announce I have graduated into a magical level of bluebirding. I got talking with the owner who was asking me what I was doing. Well, I ended up trading her a bluebird setup for a blueberry pie. If any of you know about their pies, you know I got the best of the deal. I located a box near the windmill so if any of you stop by their place on Rt. 206 to eat, notice the bluebird setup. I figure if we are lucky enough to get bluebirds nesting there, it may be worth a few free lunches. Eric Pederson, I know you are aware of the treasure I came across as you ride your bike there on occasion just for a piece of their pie.

I then drove down RT 54 to the milepost 28 onramp for the AC Expressway and relocated the bluebird box there. Last year we had 2 broods of bluebirds in one of the 2 boxes for the first time. By moving the second box away from the forest edge, I hope to get bluebirds nesting there.

So, a bluebird day, a blueberry pie and another bluebird house. What more could you ask for? Bluebirding is more than just bluebirds."

Allen

BURLINGTON COUNTY Coordinator, Harry Bratty



Mike Cashen of Medford, Burlington Co. shares some pictures from a morning of bluebirds scouting out his nesting boxes.

Thoughts on Bluebirds

Bluebirds are all around and have been so through winter. We almost always get to see and hear bluebirds during the Christmas Bird Count. They do bunch up during winter and seem to get along quite well at the feeders. One of the potential dilemmas they have is ice storms when all the food is encased in thick ice, so feeders might be their main source of food. The getting along will end soon as nesting season approaches. Bluebirds do roost communally and I have had reports of as many as seven roosting in a Peterson box. Evidence of this is the double handful of poop when cleaning out boxes. Food, and in my case cornbread, seems to be the favorite as well as water, especially when all is frozen. Their soft calls will change soon into the mating and territory defense songs. They don't like seeing blue around during nesting season unless it's their sweetheart.

I was watching a Carolina Wren yesterday with mouthfuls of stuff entering the bottom of a folded deck umbrella. Beauty is often in the eye of the beholder. Here we go again. - by Nels Anderson

Just Birds

Many people notice the arrival of birds in spring as they in their own way mark the progress of the warming season. "Hey! I saw a hummingbird today." We all know when a bird returns for the summer season as its presence, activity and song provide a constant reminder. Some birds such as the pine warbler and tree swallow arrive here in March, others wait until May and I'm sure we all have our favorites. Two of mine are the wood thrush with its flutelike song floating out of the woods and the whippoorwill with its singing insistence, beginning at dusk and through the night right up to dawn. This bird is nice to hear from a distance but can be overpowering near a bedroom window.

This year at our feeders a special effort was made to log and determine the departure date of some common winter visitors which include hermit thrush, red breasted nuthatch, brown creeper and junco. Our main feeders are right outside the kitchen, visible through a six foot double slider so observation is easy. Beginning in mid-March, each day these guys showed up was noted so even though they never said goodbye it would be fairly easy to determine when they left. I don't know who named the hermit thrush but it's appropriate since over the years there has never been more than one at our feeders. We named ours "Hermie." It is fond of peanut butter, baked goods, water, and an occasional holly berry and content all by itself. This year it was last seen April 9. The brown creeper stuck around until the following day. There were two now and then but the steady guy had its favorite spots and was very bold. It was not uncommon for me to have to say "Excuse me" so I could continue filling feeders. The brown creeper didn't seem to be overly concerned by this Big Monster. In the woodlands they will circle a tree as they feed, spiraling up to the top, and then drop down to the base of another tree and on and on. Our steady visitor confined itself to two or three trees, each with a suet feeder attached or peanut butter smeared at the base. There seemed to be enough table scraps stuck here and there so it would "do" the same tree over and over. Years ago I thought with no specific food item placed for them, how could I feed them? I began spreading peanut butter on the trunks of trees and branches in a very thin layer. Both brown creeper and red breasted nuthatches almost fly under my arm to get to it on cold hungry days. Two red breasted nuthatches are still here as I write this on April 22. Juncos thinned out in April and the last was seen April 15. They will be back in mid-October with a lot of juveniles tagging along. The timing and navigation of all birds never ceases to amaze me.

Someone might ask why not include robins since hasn't the first robin always been a sure sign of spring? The first and last robin have become a thing of the past as they remain throughout winter, sometimes by the hundreds feasting on holly berries, lining up for a drink and turning over leaves in search of food. Since they never leave, there can be no first or last robin, which is fine by me. ~ Nels Anderson (2011)

CAMDEN COUNTY

Coordinator, Chuck Kanupke



Eric Pederson and Allen Jackson at Cooper River Park installation



Allen Jackson and Jim Priest at Cooper River Park installation



Allen Jackson and Jim Priest at Cooper River Park installation

Photos on this page taken by Eric Pederson and Jim Priest.

Updates from the Field - by Jim Priest

The season is starting to pop! Lots of folks are reporting bluebird activity in and around their yards. A new bluebird landlord reports three eggs in his nestbox as of Tuesday. My pair have been back a few days and checking out their box. I'm starting to get excited about the season!

Lots going on in Camden County! I recently worked with Allen Jackson, putting up three new nesting boxes at Cooper River Park in the Camden County Park System. A gentleman named Eric Pedersen is the one who helped us connect with the park system and will be monitoring the boxes this season.

The Cooper River Park installation makes six new Camden County sites with boxes in the past year. Last month, Allen Jackson, Chuck Kanupke and I put 4 boxes at each of the following three parks in Winslow Twp., Camden County: Mark A. Sirolli Memorial Park, David Luliucci Memorial Park, and Daniel Calabrese Memorial Park. It is nice to be getting more people involved with our program.

I have been busy building nesting boxes. With help from Eric Pedersen, we have already made 60 boxes and another 35 are coming. Allen distributes them throughout the state.

I'm also working on a cold weather cover for boxes with eggs or young to get through a cold spell. The cover may also protect the nest on hot summer days. Stay tuned! - JP



Box cover prototype



Allen Jackson stands next to one of three boxes installed at a 14-acre organic farm in Waterford.

Learn more about bluebirds!
FREE TRAINING MEETING

Saturday, April 10th, 10:30 a.m.

**Frank Donio Memorial Park
665 Chews Landing Road
Sicklerville, NJ 08081**

Monitoring - Predator Control
Nest Types, MORE!

Please register by emailing
jimpriest1@me.com

Come visit us!

NJBBS will be at the
EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

Saturday, April 24th, Noon to 4

**Scotland Run Park
980 E Academy Street
Clayton, NJ 08312**

celebrate nature and
environmental sustainability

CAPE MAY COUNTY

Coordinator, Rae Griffiths



Photo of bluebird at suet by Devin Griffiths

Suet, Anyone?

Cape May County Coordinator, Rae Griffiths, reports that up to five bluebirds have frequented her suet feeders this winter, more and more regularly as spring has approached. Here is a beautiful male getting a quick snack back in January.

Interloper Operating in Cape May County!

In January, the Creamer family in Cape May County noticed some activity at one of their bluebird boxes. Upon inspection, they discovered that a white-breasted nuthatch had taken up residence inside the box.

It is not unusual for bluebirds or birds of other species to seek shelter in our bluebird boxes periodically during the winter months, and the Creamers said they usually get bluebirds using the box on cold winter nights.

This little nuthatch has persisted at the Creamer's bluebird box for two months now, and is so attached to the box that they have been able to open it and even pet the bird without it flying out! Needless to say, the returning bluebirds are none too pleased with this interloper. It remains to be seen how this little spring drama will play out. - *Rae Griffiths*



Photo of nuthatch by Kendall Creamer

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Coordinator, Allen Jackson



Mauricetown Trail Improvement a Group Effort

A successful partnership in February led to new nestbox setups in Mauricetown, Cumberland County. **Peter Manzelmann** and **John Nardone**, both members of the Commercial Township Environmental Commission, worked with **April Sooy** and **Justo Lucena** from nearby **U.S. Silica** to improve a set of 6 boxes at the Ella Morie Park.

Peter had worked with Dave Gilcrest at the Friends School in Mullica Hill and is now retired and living in Mauricetown. He noticed the existing boxes at the park were made out of plywood, mounted on pipe with no predator guards and in need of major improvements. Peter and John contacted April and Justo about the sad condition of the boxes. After an onsite with **NJBBS's Allen Jackson** to evaluate what could be done, it didn't take long to replace the 6 boxes with new ones.

U.S. Silica provided the poles and some of the mounting hardware. Allen provided the boxes, predator guards and recommendations for placement of the boxes. The habitat will produce nesting for bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees and maybe house wrens. Peter and John will monitor the boxes during the season.

Why I Use A Nest Camera - McKenna Kels, New Warren County Coordinator

The very first time I saw a bluebird, I was instantly captivated and fascinated with their radiant colors and delightful presence. From that first encounter, I knew then I wanted to learn more about them and attract them to my yard. Along with providing nest boxes for our beloved bluebirds comes many uncertainties of what exactly is happening inside the box. "Is the nesting pair going to be successful in providing healthy offspring? Will there be any issues or problems that arise during the entire nesting period? Is there anything else I can do to help improve and ensure the best outcomes for their success?" These questions cross my mind every time bluebirds use my nest boxes.

Each nesting season I learn more, but my decision to install a nest box camera has led to enriched appreciation and knowledge of this beautiful species. It gives me a glimpse into the very intricate and beautiful process, from the first day the bluebirds bring in nesting material to the final day when the last nestling fledges and leaves the nest. With my camera, I have been able to observe and learn so many fascinating details that I would have never been able to witness without a real "peek" inside.



The wireless nest box camera I use is made by Green-Backyard. I installed one of these cameras last year, and now have a total of three nest cameras because I enjoy them so much. Unlike other cameras that I had tried, this device transmits using Wi-Fi and not a video cable. The tiny camera connects to my home's Wi-Fi signal (with an accessible distance range of up to 15 meters). Although the camera uses wireless connectivity, it still requires an external power source to run, and a waterproof 10 meter DC extension power cord is supplied. The camera features include invisible night vision LEDs, HD color 1080p video, audio, and an adjustable 2.8mm wide-angle lens to get optimal focus. A memory card slot supports up to 128 GB to capture and record high quality videos and 24/7 recording of nesting birds.



What I like most about my camera is how it enables me to watch nest box activities from my phone or tablet, an awesome and helpful advantage. I can be away from home and see a real-time live preview at any hour of the day inside the nest box without having to physically check the box, reducing contact and disturbance of the attending pair. A motion-activated setting sends notifications to my phone whenever there is movement or change inside the nest box.



The camera then records these activities which I can download to my phone.

A camera also allows us to keep an eye on the box to notice any problems that may occur during nesting that we can help or prevent, such as predators or parasites. We can

be aware of the aggressive competitors such as the house sparrow. I have had a good number of house sparrow pairs on my property trying to nest in my boxes over the last few years. It became a problem for my resident bluebirds and tree swallows. Two nesting seasons ago, I had a devastating encounter with a male house sparrow. It decapitated an adult male tree swallow who had been checking out and trying to claim a nest box. Apparently, this stronger and more aggressive sparrow also wanted to nest in that box. He killed the helpless swallow who was unable to escape the box once trapped inside. This infuriated me, and from that day on I was more determined than ever to prevent this from happening again. *(continued on page 11)*

(Nest box Camera, continued from page 10)

With my nest camera alerts, house sparrow traps, handmade sparrow spookers, and devoted monitoring, I am now much more prepared to take action when needed, and have eliminated a significant number of house sparrows on my property during the nesting seasons. The camera allows me to notice their arrival, allows me to remove any pairs that are checking out my boxes before they have time to attack native nesting species. I have not had any house sparrow pairs succeed in starting a nest, and I will continue to monitor their occurrence in my area. If you have a problem with house sparrows in your nest boxes, a nest box camera may give you an advantage, too.

This pandemic has given me more time to be present outdoors and appreciate all the environment has to offer. I am able to spend a lot more time observing and recording nesting details and findings of our precious bluebirds. With my camera and live recordings of the entire nesting period, I can record precise activities like nest completion, egg laying schedule, total hours spent incubating the eggs, exact egg hatching times, and feeding totals per day. Last season, it really was an amazing experience to witness the incredible growth each day and watch the tiny, gaping nestlings develop into colorfully feathered and lively bluebird fledglings. Listening and watching each fledgling take the leap out of the box one by one, the frantic chirps getting further and further away as they flew across the yard, was one of my favorite parts. It makes me happy to see bluebirds successfully nesting in my own backyard, and I love that I can be a part of helping and monitoring this species.

This will be the fourth season that I have had nesting pairs successfully produce multiple broods in my nest boxes. Over the past three years, 36 bluebirds have fledged. It excites and motivates me to help increase these numbers in the years to come. To this day, every single time I see a bluebird or hear their chattering singing in my own backyard or alongside a road, it still amazes me that I become just as captivated and delighted as the very first time I saw one. The rewarding happiness and growing understanding that bluebirds bring to us, is exactly why we need to continue to monitor, protect, and promote the necessary practices to maintain healthy bluebird populations. - *McKenna Kels*



Not only do I learn so much about the nesting pair and their behaviors, from courtship display to feedings and parental duties, it also allows me to capture wonderfully intimate photos and videos of the growing nestlings and adult bluebirds. I can easily share my photos and videos with family and friends on social media. They enjoy seeing the daily nesting activities of my backyard birds. This has been a great way to capture peoples' interest and help share the rewards of being actively involved with nature and our wildlife. It could ultimately help spread awareness of our nesting bluebirds, and encourage others to become more aware of them and perhaps install a nest box in their own backyard.

I would love to share my photos and videos of my nesting bluebirds from my nest cameras with you all, and hope they bring as much happiness to you as they bring me.

[Here is a link](#) to some of my favorite nest box captures and recordings. It's very hard to choose just "some" of my favorites, as I have so many that I love. Green-Backyard also makes an IP Bird Feeder HD Camera that is weather-proof and supports Wi-Fi connection. This camera is great for setting up at bird feeders or bird baths to capture some awesome photos and videos of birds and other wildlife behaving and socializing in their natural environment.

[Here is a link](#) to some of my favorite photos and videos captured on my feeder cameras. Enjoy! - *McKenna*

Sources mentioned in this article

<https://green-backyard.com/collections/bird-box-camera> or [/bird-feeder-camera](https://green-backyard.com/collections/bird-feeder-camera)

If you are reading a printed copy of "Jersey Blues"

Link to my favorite nest box photos & videos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/1Brk7qhrU8RViG4s7>
 Link to my favorite nest box photos & videos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/EcuzQuMkLP23eQvC9>

Diseases at Bird Feeders- Published February 15, 2021 by Dr. Roger Lederer

The British naturalist James Fisher wrote that the first person recorded as feeding wild birds was the 6th-century monk Saint Serf of Fife who tamed a pigeon by feeding it, but the first indication of bird feeding in United States came from Henry David Thoreau who fed birds on Walden Pond in 1845. The first commercial bird feeder was a hummingbird feeder designed by Laurence J. Webster of Boston for his wife, who had read a 1928 National Geographic story about feeding hummers from small glass bottles. Since those times a profusion of bird feeders have been developed.

Bird feeding is enjoyable, a benefit both to people and the birds, but there can be a downside. A recent disease outbreak is killing finches across the western United States. Dead birds have been found in recent weeks in the Carson Valley and Truckee, California, the fatalities seeming to be related to an outbreak of salmonellosis, caused by salmonella bacteria. A common cause of mortality in feeder birds, the symptoms are not always obvious. Sick birds may appear thin, fluffed up, and depressed and may have pasted vents and swollen eyelids. They are often lethargic and easy to approach.



The problem appears to be especially bad along coastal Northern California, Oregon and Washington. Most of the affected birds are Pine Siskins, but Lesser Goldfinch and other finches may be affected. The bacteria are spread through droppings, especially where bird seed piles up beneath feeders or in tray feeders where the birds stand among the seeds.

The four diseases that most frequently affect birds that use feeders are: salmonella, caused by a bacterium, trichomoniasis, caused by one-celled protozoa, aspergillosis, a fungus, and avian pox, a virus. All of these diseases are transmitted from one bird to another at feeding stations, especially when overcrowding occurs. Birds are also susceptible to mites and lice which feed on the skin, the feathers, or suck blood. Birds infected with House Finch eye disease (also called Mycoplasma conjunctivitis) have red, swollen, runny, or crusty eyes.

In addition to salmonella, some bird diseases are transmissible to humans, such as West Nile Virus (via mosquitoes), histoplasmosis, and campylobacteriosis, but they are typically not serious. But, to stay safe, wear rubber gloves when handling a dead or diseased bird or cleaning bird feeders.

To avoid diseases from spreading, keep your feeders clean. Clean them with a 9 to 1 solution of water to bleach at least once a week and let them dry thoroughly. Some people alternate feeders while one is being cleaned. Clean ground of any food accumulating under feeders. If you see sick or dead birds, consider removing the feeder for a couple of weeks. Don't worry, the birds will find alternate sources of food.

Diseases at bird feeders are spread primarily by crowding. The more birds sharing the space, the more disease is likely to be spread. Some people say to avoid disease transmission, put up more feeders to spread the birds out, but I suggest taking all feeders down for a week and cleaning them. ~ Dr. Roger Lederer

MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Coordinator, Susan Meaney

Good News from Susan- My mentor, Laura Stone, met with Ann from the Plainsboro Preserve and walked the blue bird trail there, which has not been maintained for quite a while. Laura advised Ann about proper blue bird nest necessities. Ann is now canvassing the volunteers there to assist in the realignment, reconstruction and monitoring of the new trail. Stay tuned for results in Fall "Jersey Blues!"

OCEAN COUNTY

Coordinator, Laura Stone

A Note from Allen Jackson on the Southern Ocean Birding Group - Here is an email I received December 31, 2020. I beam with the results of Ocean County's Christmas Bird Count. Results like this certainly help other organizations take notice of what we are doing. It may also lead to financial help.

"Allen, just have to say, "Happy New Year" and hope it is true. I am forwarding the Tuckerton Christmas Bird Count done by the Southern Ocean County Bird Group as it has one item of note that may gladden your heart. In the analysis done by Greg Perlich, he notes in the common bird section that Bluebirds were at an all-time high of 60 versus 24."

Read the results for yourself at <https://southernoceanbirdinggroup.org/projects/2020-cbc/>

WARREN COUNTY

Welcome New County Coordinator, McKenna Kels



McKenna Kels at Merrill Creek Reservoir, Warren County. She is a valuable member of "Team Bluebird," a group of four women busy upgrading and reinstalling the site's 30-box bluebird trail. Photo at right includes Tess Harrison, Merrill Creek's intern. Photos by Lori Jo Jamieson

Meet McKenna Kels, Our New Warren County Coordinator:

"Hi! I am from Harmony Township of Warren County and have lived here my whole life. Growing up on the Delaware River has definitely influenced my love for being outdoors, exploring, and being drawn to all different types of wildlife.

This experience led me to pursue my passion for helping wildlife when I went on to study Marine Biology and Environmental Science at Monmouth University where I earned my Bachelor's Degree. I have worked at a wildlife refuge and at a wildlife rehabilitation hospital, where I was able to help care for injured and orphaned wildlife and enable them to return to their natural habitats. These experiences have amplified my passion and enjoyment for helping our wildlife, which is exactly the kind of work that I will continue doing."

Be sure to read McKenna's nest camera article on pages 9 & 10. She has had numerous nest boxes on her property and this is her fourth season of hosting bluebirds. Her nest and feeder cameras have captured many intimate "birds eye view" photos of birds and other wildlife. Links are included in her article.

New Bluebird Trail at NJ Audubon Wattles Stewardship Center - by Lori Jo Jamieson

Recently, when **Lori Jo Jamieson** and her husband Peter were out exploring this beautiful NJ Audubon preserve near Port Murray, she noticed that nest boxes there had been neglected, and that many of them were mounted on wooden 4x4s. She contacted **Lindsay Gafford**, Stewardship Department Specialist at NJ Audubon and got permission to remove the numerous old boxes, offering to install 5 brand new setups made to NABS specs. With too many projects and not enough staff, no one at Wattles was available anymore to monitor and maintain their trail, but bluebirds still had a presence at the site. Things looked hopeful.

After meeting with Lindsay and **John Parke**, Stewardship Project Director for NJ Audubon's North Region, five new locations were chosen. Lori Jo has installed two boxes so far, with the remainder to be put up after seasonal mowing at the preserve. She will be monitoring the new trail until a volunteer can be found. **Interested? Email bluebirdlij@gmail.com.**

The Wattles Stewardship Center is a 51-acre wildlife sanctuary and is also the location of New Jersey Audubon's northern Stewardship Program staff. Acquisition of the property was made possible by Mr. Gurdon Wattles, who donated the house and barn, and through NJ Green Acres funding. The property is flanked by a state wildlife management area to the southeast and preserved farmland to the northwest. A trail from the Wattles Center parking lot leads visitors to the Musconetcong River and will soon connect to Point Mountain Road and Hunterdon County's Point Mountain Park.



All photos by Lori Jo Jamieson

WARREN COUNTY Welcome New County Coordinator, McKenna Kels

“Team Bluebird” Updates 30-Box Trail at Merrill Creek Reservoir - How beautiful is Merrill Creek Reservoir? It was the deciding factor in buying our old place about ten minutes from there. When my husband retired, we moved from Atlantic County to Harmony Township. I had already contacted the Reserve and asked who monitored their bluebird trail, offering to clean out and winterize their nest boxes, which I did. This got my foot in the door, but all of the boxes needed predator guard. Some were on wooden posts, and many needed replacing or repairs.

I met with the new **Environmental Specialist, Tanya Sulikowski**, and **Intern, Tess Harrison**, who were both enthusiastic about updating the trail. I also invited **McKenna Kels** to help out. (*New Warren County Coordinator - read more about her on page 13*) and “Team Bluebird” was formed. Incredibly, Tanya found monitoring records dating back to 1997. Tess formatted the past five years of nest history into a reference document. With Allen Jackson’s advice, shopping was done, new setups were built, and various repairs were started. Installation began in early March. We had deep snow and cold winds to deal with, but nothing could stop “Team Bluebird!” We have a few more nest boxes to install in new and better locations. Monitoring will be divided among the four team members.

Last week, the team replaced an existing pair of boxes mounted on two joined fence posts with a new setup. (*See before and after pics, next page.*) We hope to continue this pair’s success with hosting bluebirds and tree swallows at very close proximity Watch for our data submitted in the fall. No more “zero” bluebird counts for Warren County!



Tess, McKenna and Lori Jo with the Reservoir behind them.



“The Mule” off-road vehicle provided the team with transportation through the woods to remote nest boxes.

Photos in this article were taken by Tess Harrison, Lori Jo Jamieson, McKenna Kels, Karen Korpics and Tanya Sulikowski.

WARREN COUNTY Welcome New County Coordinator, McKenna Kels



*Tess Harrison,
Environmental Intern*

Tess Harrison, MCR Intern, grew up and resides in Holland Township, NJ. She currently attends Oregon State University, pursuing a degree in Fish and Wildlife with a minor in Sustainability. Tess started an internship at Merrill Creek Reservoir this past January. She began by reviewing and analyzing data that was collected from the nesting boxes located on the Merrill Creek property. This project prompted Tess's interest in birds, specifically in the stunning bluebird. She has now completed, with the help of her extraordinary Team Bluebird, modifying and improving the nesting boxes to support the bluebird population and other cavity nesting species.

Tanya Sulikowski, Environmental Specialist at MCR, trained as a field ecologist. Her favorites are the often-less-loved bats and rattlesnakes. She's taught middle and high school science and used her hands-on knowledge of ecology to bring science lessons to life for her students. Her experiences in the forest and the classroom demonstrated what a powerful teacher nature can be.

Tanya earned her B.S in Conservation and Applied Ecology from Rutgers University and M.S. in Ecology and Evolution from Montclair State University. She was selected as a 2017 Grosvenor Teaching Fellow by National Geographic and awarded the "Women in Wildlife" Award for Education by the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ.

Tanya is an avid native plant and organic vegetable gardener and loves to hike, paddle, and explore the planet's wildest places with friends and her husband Bruce.



Before and After Paired Boxes



Today was our final day of installing boxes.



Merrill Creek Reservoir is a 650-acre reservoir surrounded by an additional 2,300 acres of woods and fields. Its basic purpose is to provide stored water that can be released to the Delaware River to make up for the evaporative water usage at certain electric generating units in times of low flow in the river. In addition to that basic purpose, Merrill Creek Reservoir provides a tranquil setting of water and land that allows people to interact with the natural environment.

The "Scott's Mountain" Hawk Watch located at Merrill Creek, with its easy access and impressive number of hawks counted each Fall, is a must visit during the hawk migration season. Volunteers gather at the Merrill Creek Reservoir's Inlet/Outlet Tower parking lot during migration season to count hawks as they pass overhead. The raptors will migrate from late summer through the end of November with peak numbers expected from mid September through mid October. The record number of broad-winged hawks counted at Merrill Creek in one day was a staggering 18,000. The data that is gathered each year is compiled and submitted to the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA). This organization is committed to the conservation of raptors through scientific research.

For driving directions & GPS, use 34 Merrill Creek Road, Harmony, NJ 08865 | (908) 454-1213. Learn more at their website: www.merrillcreek.com or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/merrillcreekreservoir.

Are you crazy about bluebirds, too? Join us - You've found your Tribe!



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. If you are reading this newsletter and still aren't a member, here's why you should be: **Membership Has Its Rewards!**

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. We also provide:

- ~ **A community of people, all ages, all areas of New Jersey, all interested in bluebirds**
- ~ **Education about bluebirds and assistance with nestbox trails**
- ~ **Expertise and guidance to trail monitors and backyard bluebird enthusiasts.**
- ~ **Data forms to help document the bluebird activities in your boxes.**

We encourage members to submit the number of bluebirds fledged from their boxes at the end of each season. This precious data is used to monitor population trends in New Jersey.

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



North American Bluebird Society

There are lots of advantages to being a member of both **NJBBS** and **NABS**. Joining NABS entitles you to receive "Bluebird", their colorful quarterly publication. This is a quality periodical of interest to anyone who appreciates bluebirds and other secondary cavity nesters. The North American Bluebird Society organization supports and helps unify the work of state chapters across America. For a small membership fee, 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!**