



Jersey Blues

The Newsletter of The New Jersey Bluebird Society, an Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society
~ Volume 6, Issue 2 - Fall, 2022

BUBBA'S FINAL SWAN SONG - by Allen Jackson, NJBBS President



This will be my last “opening” remarks in Jersey Blues as President of the NJBBS. I am stepping down when my term ends on December 31, 2022. It has been a pleasure helping build the NJBBS into a recognized organization at both the State and National level.

Since our inception in 2011 and our formal request to become affiliated with NABS, we have come a long ways and accomplished much. As a charter member, I started out as VP and took over as President when Frank Budney stepped down after a few years. Our membership has grown significantly (from 32 to ~200); we have identified many County Coordinators (the heart and soul of our organization) who work locally to provide proper management and educate the public how important management is. We have added many bluebird boxes (1,500?) which provided nesting opportunities for our bluebirds.

Lori Jo Jamieson developed our newsletter, *Jersey Blues*, and Gary Pilling remodeled our website - both major factors to the success of our organization. Our members are so important for promoting our program.

Much of our success has been in southern NJ where agricultural habitat is abundant; however, most any habitat can be suitable, if accompanied by proper management. Our box program (through Dave Moyer's wood shop class in Middle Township Middle School) grew into his classes making boxes the entire school year. I can't say enough for Ed McCay (McCay Wood Products) in Nesco who provided lumber to make all those boxes. All these things blended together to make a successful and progressive bluebird program.

We have benefited greatly from additional financial support from groups like the *Atlantic Audubon Society* and *Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries*. This certainly moved our organization forward. Having the *Audubon Wildlife Society* designate 1/10th of their treasury to NJBBS when they dissolved boosted our ability to provide funds to build more boxes.

Establishing a banding program had a major influence on our success. I like to say I blackmailed (positively) our members into monitoring their bluebirds. Bluebirds thrive on active management, so if our landlords wanted their young bluebirds banded, they need to conduct weekly nest checks so they could notify the banders when appropriate to band their chicks. It worked like a charm and I hope we can continue with this approach.

We banded over 3200 bluebirds in 2021 and fledged over 7100. Pretty darn good in my opinion. In the future, weather (climate change) and food supply (insect production) will probably be limiting factors, so how we manage may be key to having bluebirds around for future generations to enjoy. Let me say we do our part to manage as best we can and I had always set high standards on proper management. I do see some affiliates that take management far less seriously and I hope that does not have a negative affect on their bluebird populations.

Covid had a negative impact on our organization. We have not been able to hold annual meetings, and in some cases, Board of Director meetings; however, I tried to keep things in perspective and communicate as best I knew how. Some wanted Zoom meetings, but I was not technically able to achieve that goal and no one stepped forward to take that lead. We will not be having our annual meeting this year but do have a scheduled Board meeting for November 26th. I will turn over the reins to the Board at that time and suggest ways they can keep our organization going as a new President begins serving.

I am not walking away from the NJBBS, just relinquishing my Presidential duties and a work load that I now struggle with. Do not let that scare you away from keeping our program going. Simply step by me and do the best you can achieve.

Keep the NJBBS going and do your best to benefit our bluebirds.

~ Allen



“Last Chick to Fledge” Photo by Walter Kneis, Morris County, NJ

Here's A Big Wing Wave
Welcome to our new
NJBBS Members!



(Photo by Harry Schmeider)

Atlantic County

Linda Doughy

Burlington County

Robert Hofstrom

Cumberland County

Countryside Garden Club
Carol Deuber

Gloucester County

Holly Freeman
Dorothy Hogan
Braydon Leary
Barbara Sykora

Middlesex County

Joanne Pannone

Ocean County

Lucia Street

Salem County

Margaret Watson

Click the Bluebird
to Visit NJBBS
on FACEBOOK!



"New Jersey
Bluebird Society"

LIKE US - SHARE US!

Interested in hosting bluebirds
on your property? Contact the
NJBBS County Coordinator closest
to your location.

Atlantic - Jim Watson

609-204-3358

wombat3287@gmail.com

Burlington - Nels Anderson

609-268-1817

nels.anderson@comcast.net

Camden - Chuck Kanupke

856-7810

chuckkanupke@verizon.net

Cape May - Rae Griffiths

413-695-8291

raegriffiths105@gmail.com

Cumberland - Allen Jackson

609-805-4073

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Gloucester - Bernadine Visalli

856-986-4502

buttonwood61@yahoo.com

Middlesex - Susan Meaney

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Monmouth - Jean Montgomerie*

646-808-5158

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(New County Coordinator)

Ocean - Laura Stone

732-300-4604

Lauras36@yahoo.com

Somerset - April Tarantino

732-735-3511

Salem Co-coordinators

Bernadine Visalli

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buttonwood61@yahoo.com

Allen Jackson

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Warren - McKenna Kels

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NOTICE: NJBBS Board of Directors Meeting Saturday, November 26, 2022

10 a.m. at the Ocean County Library, 2 Jackson Drive,
Jackson Township, NJ 08527. An agenda will be provided at a
later date along with more information. The meeting will start
at 10 a.m. and last about two hours.

NJBBS OFFICERS

President: Allen Jackson (until December 31, 2022) - **Vice
President, North:** *vacant* **Vice President, Central:** Laura
Stone **Vice President, South:** Allen Jackson **Treasurer:** Louise
Cockey - **Secretary:** Jenyfra Nelson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All Officers above, plus **Past President,** Frank Budney.
At Large: Harry Bratty, Shelly Cucugliello, Dave Gilcrest,
Jonathan Hart, Lori Jo Jamieson, Gary Pilling, Jim Priest,
Bernadine Visalli, Jim Watson

Jersey Blues

The Newsletter of the New Jersey Bluebird Society - Fall 2022 Issue

Editor: Lori Jo Jamieson - bluebirdljj@gmail.com

Webmaster: Gary Pilling - gpilling32@gmail.com

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Peg Urban of Gloucester County took this pic of some very early hatching chicks on her property.

Attention NJBBS Members! It's time to submit your fledging numbers for the season. The deadline for submissions is **OCTOBER 30TH**. If you didn't receive your form via email, please email Gary Pilling at gpilling32@gmail.com, or go here: http://njbluebirdsociety.org/form_summary.html for a form and directions for submitting your numbers.

Important: If your fledglings were banded, you do NOT need to report your numbers. They have already been counted. Our season results will be made available as soon as they are compiled. Thank you for all you do to protect, preserve and promote our bluebirds and other cavity-nesting birds.

DID YOU KNOW? NJBBS is a NABS Affiliate! The NABS 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.

Why is it important to support both organizations? In the past, there has been some confusion regarding memberships in New Jersey Bluebird Society (NJBBS) and North American Bluebird Society (NABS). Hopefully, this will clarify.

NJBBS represents the State perspective. NJBBS is one of 61 chapters affiliated with NABS. We have approximately ~ 200 members in our organization. The NJBBS is the "boots on the ground" that benefit bluebirds directly by working with people and organizations to promote bluebirds in our State. We build the boxes, conduct on sites, monitor many of the boxes and help to educate the public about bluebirds, including coordination with landlords that host bluebird boxes on their property.



NABS represents the National perspective. The NABS works hand in hand with the Affiliate organizations to support efforts by providing educational material, conducting research to benefit bluebirds (Eastern, Mountain and Western Bluebirds) in North American and helping coordinate national conferences. Our Canadian Affiliates coordinate closely with the US Affiliates to make NABS what it is today. NABS has a membership of ~ 1600 (and growing) people. NJ as a State, ranks second only to the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania in the number of members in NABS.



NJBBS has representation (Allen Jackson) on NABS' Board of Directors. He, along with Lori Jo Jamieson, participate on various NABS committees - Lori Jo and Allen on the Journal Advisory Committee and Allen on the Education, Development and Nestbox Committees. Allen also participates in monthly conference calls with NABS' BOD in an effort to better the organization and keep NABS informed about NJBBS' activities.

Membership in both NJBBS and NABS is important.

Both are important organizations, both deserve your support. The cost of membership in both organizations is nominal - as little as \$30 to \$35 total per year. That is a bargain for what you receive: NABS publishes a professional periodical, *Bluebird*, every 3 months. NJBBS publishes a computer-generated newsletter, *Jersey Blues* in the spring and fall of each year.

NJBBS' membership offers a \$15 one-year and a \$40 three-year membership. NABS offers a number of membership options including single memberships for \$25 per year. For first time subscribers only, NABS offers a special \$15 one year, one-time introductory membership for Affiliate members only, **and NJBBS is an Affiliate.**

[Click here for both Membership Forms.](#)

Can You Identify This Animal? HINT: It sure isn't a bluebird!

Allen Jackson's neighbor, Ray, took this pic this past spring, in the woods along the pastures. "This pic may permanently change your perception as to the term "groundhog". I have seen one run up a tree a short distance as I approached to avoid me, but....this thing was near treetop!!!" Seems even groundhogs appreciate a great view. . .



Our Mission Statement: To educate, conserve and promote Bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds in New Jersey.



Our Goals and Methods: The NJBS's 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.

To accomplish these goals our objectives will be to: •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; •provide public education about bluebirds to interested people in the State.

ATLANTIC COUNTY Coordinator, Jim Watson

The Petrongolo Evergreen Plantation on Rt 559 in Hammonton now has four additional nest boxes for the 2023 season, thanks to Allen Jackson. There was already a pair of boxes which produces bluebirds, so this will only add to the existing population. Karen Petrongolo will monitor the boxes.

County Coordinator **Jim Watson** reports banding 3019 bluebirds, and Diane Kady is monitoring the John Layton Trail.

BURLINGTON COUNTY Coordinator, Harry Bratty

	YEAR	EABL	CH	TS
2022 Pinelands Bluebird Trail ~ Submitted by Nels Anderson	1999	57	40	24
Bluebirds Fledged 286 Tree Swallows 16 Carolina Chickadees 17 Titmouse 10	2000	132	38	25
	2001	149	41	27
This was a good year for Bluebirds in the Pines. The first Bluebird egg observed was March 29 and the first to fledge was early May. There are always some disappointments with predation and other failures but empty nest boxes requires moving some around which we will do in late winter. Bluebirds often roost in nest boxes as well as other species and piles of scat are often found in boxes when spring cleaning.	2002	150	38	29
	2003	91	62	27
	2004	95	104	28
	2005	66	95	36
	2006	152	72	45
The crew consisted of 7 active participants (monitored nest boxes in several or many locations) as well as those who monitored only their own nest box or boxes which is also important. The Family Affair consisted of Girl Scout Cate Andrews , Grandparents and Mom, so three generations of support help is impressive for The Girl Scout Trail.	2007	159	47	29
	2008	206	53	35
	2009	195	75	20
	2010	219	44	33
County Coordinator, Harry Bratty , a retired science teacher, took care of boxes in Tabernacle and started a new trail at "The Farm" with Pinelands Preservation Alliance in Vincentown. Clement Green handled boxes in Indian Mills and Wharton. In the pines things grow rapidly so what would have been a good location may not be so in a few years.	2011	207	59	41
	2012	212	28	39
	2013	206	79	20
	2014	124	42	32
A road widening in Wharton changed a "so- so" area into a very productive Bluebird factory. Boxes on homeowners property usually remain productive with things being constant as yards are maintained and things remain the same year after year. Thanks to all those who helped in any way making this at all possible and I wish the Class of 2022 well going through the winter.	2015*	76	43	24
	2016	148	66	15
	2017	186	69	31
	2018	198	43	19
At the right is a history of bluebirds, chickadees and tree swallows fledged since 1999. *A possible West Nile Virus may have been responsible for 2015's low count.	2019	256	33	10
	2020	224	13	16
	2021	276	34	17

CAMDEN COUNTY

Coordinator, Chuck Kanupke

Jim Priest Starts Off the Season With Two Events, a Video, and a Banding



On 4/23 My wife, Priscilla, and I worked the **Earth Day Event at Scotland Run Park**. It was a little cold that day and not too many folks showed up. I did get the names of two folks who were interested in getting a box in their yards, so it was still a productive day, and I put a box at both places in Gloucester County. I feel very strongly that they will produce bluebirds, but time will tell.



The second event was at **James W. Lilley Elementary School** in Gloucester Township, Camden County. I was invited by a teacher there, Heather Hollywood, to give a talk to the 4th & 5th graders who are in **Earth Club**, an after school program for kids interested in nature. I had previously put up two boxes on school property in February. My first time talking with kids, but it went very well. They seemed to be very interested and asked quite a few good questions. I will be banding chick in about 2 or 3 weeks (we hope) and the children will be a part of it. This should be a good experience for them and a chance to maybe make some new bird lovers.



On Tuesday 5/3/22

I banded my first chicks of the year, at Holly Freedman's home in Franklinville. We put up a new box in February. At the moment we have about 14 boxes with eggs so the season was off to a good start.

Please take the time to watch [Project Bluebird](#). Just click on the link. It is a movie made by the 4th & 5th grade Earth Club at James W. Lilley Elementary School in Gloucester Township, Camden County and was put together by their teacher, Heather Hollywood. Hear what they learned, and share in their enthusiasm! ~ Jim

ABOVE: Here's a Reminder as to why we should install Proper Predator Guards! Photo submitted by Laura Hegyi, Camden County, NJ.

Pass On Your Passion! The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is proud to offer *Get to Know Bluebirds: A Guide for Young Nature Lovers*. Written by Myrna Pearman, retired biologist and nature writer/photographer, with the able assistance of Bet Zimmerman Smith and other members of the NABS Education Committee, the book is aimed at a younger audience. Its pages are graced with beautiful photographs by bluebirders from across North America, and is designed to make learning about bluebirds a fun and appealing adventure. With this book, NABS hopes to kindle a fire and a love for bluebirds in young people across this continent.

Get to Know Bluebirds: A Guide for Young Nature Lovers is [available at this link](#) as a FREE downloadable (27 MB) PDF file. NABS encourages you to download the book and share it as widely as possible! Their plan is to get the book printed as soon as the necessary funds can be raised and include it as part of their excellent resource offerings.



CAPE MAY COUNTY

Coordinator, Rae Griffiths

2022 End of Season Summary for Cape May County Submitted by Rae Griffiths, Cape May County Coordinator

Bluebirds Fledged – 411 (341 in 2021)

Banded – 346 (311 in 2021)

Unbanded – 73 (37 in 2021)

TOTAL KNOWN SURVIVED - 409

Cape May County – banded: 338 | unbanded: 73

Atlantic County – banded: 8 | unbanded: 0

Died after banding & before fledging – 8

Reported dead after banding and fledging - 2

New sites added: 15 | New boxes placed: ~28

Boxes/sites producing three successful broods: 9

Boxes/sites producing two successful broods: 29

Boxes/sites producing one successful brood: 22



Peter Manzelmann explains a proper nestbox setup to visitors at Belleplain State Park.

chick. Over the three seasons I have served as CMC Coordinator, my observations have stimulated many questions for me about how our bluebirds ultimately choose what boxes to nest in and how that might change over the season based on weather conditions. I am slowly designing a little study to

learn more about how nest box temperature influences nest box selection. Stay tuned!

SUCCESSFUL SITES BY THE NUMBERS:

The new trail of 13 boxes spread out along the **Middle Township Bike Path**, set up by **Steve Robinson** and diligently monitored by **Bevin O'Grady**, was a big success. Four of the boxes along the trail produced two broods each for a total of 34 chicks fledged. Other boxes along the trail housed tree swallow and chickadee nests throughout the season.

Steve also put up boxes at the **Dennis Township Recreation Center**, a horse farm on Gracetown Road, and at a couple of sites adjacent to Jalma Farm in South Seaville. Through all



Bluebird hen on nest



Chickadee nest

of Steve's efforts this season, 83 bluebird chicks fledged successfully! (continued on page 7)



My mom, Georgene Lockwood and I at Big Timber Lake Campground.

COMMENTS: 2022 saw a major expansion of bluebird monitoring in Cape May County. We welcomed Bevin O'Grady, Steve Robinson, Cindy and Bill Gerber, Joan Gerber, JoAnn and Mike Wolicki, Brian and Candy Van Artsdalen, Paula Smith, Cheryl and Richard Jorgensen, and John Morrissey, as new monitors, with several others expressing interest for the 2023 season. Over 25 new boxes were placed in the county and one box was removed.

The first chicks of the season were banded on April 28th at the Dennis Township Middle School, the same day as 2021! The last chicks were banded on August 28th at Belleplain State Forest at the Vine St. Pavilion. Several visitors to the park came out to help and learn about bluebirds!

A CHALLENGING START TO THE SEASON: The 2022 bluebird season got off to a rough start with the prolonged period of cold, rainy weather we experienced over Mother's Day weekend in early May. We lost broods in all stages of development, from eggs to some that were banded and almost ready to fledge. Despite this, we had the most successful year so far in Cape May County, due mostly to the expanded monitoring efforts this season. The drought and heat in the later part of the season also seemed to have some impact on nest success with a couple of full nests only hatching one

CAPE MAY COUNTY

Coordinator, Rae Griffiths

(Cape May County Season Summary, continued from page 7)

Shellbay Family Camping Resort remained another successful site again this year and still holds the record for the most southerly nesting of bluebirds I am currently aware of. Six of the eight boxes at this site saw some bluebird nesting activity and together produced 31 fledglings.



All three sites within **Belleplain State Forest** saw successful nesting activity. There were two broods each at the Nature Center, the Field Office and the Vine St. Pavilion and 24 bluebirds fledged! Jason Hearon's homestead not far from Belleplain State Forest fledged 20 bluebirds from three of the seven boxes on the property.

At **Amanda's Field** in Petersburg, four boxes produced 17 fledglings despite some issues at one box with predation and human disturbance (the second nest attempt at this box was



Linda Williams helps to band chicks at her house in Cape May Court House.

lost to careless lawn mowing and the box was ultimately removed). Fortunately, one of the other three boxes had three successful broods throughout the season.

The Dennis Township Primary School, Big Timber Lake Campground and Linda Williams all had boxes that yielded three successful broods this season as well. Boxes

at Amanda's Field, The Sunset Flower Farm and Carol Van Artsdalen's house all successfully fledged clutches of six eggs, often called a "six pack," and a box at Alex Hamilton's house in Steelmantown produced the first nest of seven eggs I've ever encountered, (see photo) though only 3 of them hatched and fledged. Alex's two boxes still produced 16 fledglings between them!



A "seven pack"!

Third Season's A Charm! *By Rae Griffiths, CMC Coordinator*. My time as a New Jersey resident is relatively short when compared with most bluebird monitors, and certainly county coordinators, with NJBBS. I relocated to Upper Township from western Massachusetts in August of 2019, and quickly noticed bluebirds visiting my yard amongst the other birds I was attracting to my bird feeders. In my attempts to get to know my new community, I started attending lunchtime lectures at The Wetlands Institute where my husband worked. It was during a lecture by then Cape May County Coordinator, Gail Fisher, that I learned about NJBBS, box monitoring and more. After her talk, Gail and I agreed to have her come to my home in Ocean View and assess my yard for its potential as good nesting habitat for bluebirds. Little did I know how that visit in February 2020 would change my life!

By the first nesting activity in 2020, I was not only a new bluebird monitor, but was apprenticing with Gail to take over as CMC Coordinator when she moved to Virginia later that summer. That first 2020 season, Gail and I placed one box in my backyard and though my yard is a little more wooded than bluebirds would probably prefer, my neighbor's old bluebird boxes were actively explored so I was hopeful. I convinced my neighbor to remove her old boxes, which were falling apart and in danger of predator interference with hopes this would drive interested bluebirds to my box. Alas, while I observed males competing for the box and a pair exploring the box, they did not nest in my yard in 2020, perhaps deterred by the presence of house wrens, which did eventually make a successful nest. That fall, I chose to move the box to the front yard where it was more open, got a little more sun and was further away from the bird feeders and human activity.

In 2021, I started seeing bluebird activity on and around the box in early March. They remained active at my suet feeders and around the box on and off for the month, but by early April, it seemed that chickadees had taken up residence and would be there to stay. Curiously, by mid-April, I stopped seeing the chickadees and observed house wrens removing moss from the box, essentially dismantling the chickadee nest that had been started. I figured the wrens would take over, but by late April all activity had ceased and I emptied the box out hoping to encourage the bluebirds back. By May 23, 2021, there was a partial bluebird nest in my box, created by a VERY dull female and her mate. I watched the pair bring nesting material to the box and by May 27th, we had two eggs. I was ecstatic! On June 2nd, I found four eggs and estimated hatch date at around 6/11-6/12. On June 12th, the chicks hatched and for a couple of days, I watched regular flights to and from the box by both parents. On the morning of June 15th, I observed the male sitting on the top of the box singing loudly. This behavior seemed odd, and the female was nowhere to be seen. I resisted the urge to check the box that morning as not to disturb the pair, but by late that afternoon, the male was also absent and I opened the box to find a dead chick. I was heartbroken. I cleaned out the box and waited. The male had plenty of time left to find another mate, but I didn't see another bluebird in the yard for the remainder of the season. *(continued on page 8)*

CAPE MAY COUNTY Coordinator, Rae Griffiths

(continued from page 7) This behavior continued daily until I left for my vacation to Costa Rica. When I returned on March 21st, all bluebird activity at the box had stopped, but resumed again in early April. Unfortunately, like in 2020 and 2021, the bluebirds came to the yard to feed on suet, but flew out of the yard quickly and stopped showing interest in my box. After removing a partial house wren nest from my box at least twice, I finally let the house wrens complete their nest in the bluebird box. Just when I thought I wouldn't see a bluebird again for the season, to my surprise, a pair showed up looking to occupy the box the wrens were now solidly established in. The wrens fended them off, but I decided then and there to set up a second box to try and accommodate the bluebirds. Of course, they disappeared, but at least I was ready if they returned.

The house wrens fledged in late June and I cleaned out the box so that my front yard now had two empty bluebird boxes waiting for bluebirds. Within a few days, however, house wrens started building a nest in the NEW box. I felt destined to be a house wren hotel! Suddenly, on July 15th, I spotted a bluebird bringing nesting material to the original box in the front yard. Both male and female continued this behavior and by July 20th, there was a nearly complete nest in the box! With the house wrens occupied with the new box, the bluebirds successfully laid four eggs and reared the hatchlings to fledge. All four chicks were banded on August 18th, and by August 28th, all four had fledged!

I am happy to report the house wrens were successful as well. Three seasons and a second box did the trick.

Patience pays off!



4 eggs 7/30



day old chicks 8/9



5 days old 8/12



Banded on 8/18

Bluebird Rae Visits Belleplaine State Park ~ by Mary-Ann Manzelmann, Belleplaine Nature Center

After scheduling many bluebird bandings in the past, our Nature Center here at Belleplaine State Park is taking banding to a new level. Recently we had 2 large scout troops camping over the weekend at Belleplaine, and with Bluebird Rae's help, we were able to have about 70 scouts watch bluebird chicks being banded. They learned about bluebirds and "the pinch of bird banding", as well as the importance of record keeping.



Our program went on most of Saturday. Over the weekend, we had scouts "banded" with Bluebird Rae's top banding number running around our park, hiking and canoeing - with their "bands" on. One of our scouts even banded our Nature Center stuffed Smokey! I loved it. Like the boys, Smokey was included on the banding log. A highlight was our weekly Poop Scoop, where the scouts all loved the fact that the mom bluebird eats her babies' poop. We are excited to share all this with our youth. We are grateful for Bluebird Rae and her



tireless visits and attention whenever we can schedule small and large groups. I am also grateful to Allen Jackson, ready to support us with equipment and extra nests.



CUMBERLAND COUNTY Coordinator, Allen Jackson

A HOLLY FARM SUCCESS STORY (2020-2022) - The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW) acquired the Holly Farm property after a 30 year struggle to protect it from development by many environmental organizations. The property is East of Millville and the connected lands owned by The Nature Conservancy along the Manumuskin River, and the NJDFW adjacent to the Manantico Ponds Wildlife Management Area. Both rivers are part of the National Wildlife and Scenic River System.



Photo by NJ Conservation Foundation, used with permission.

I was fortunate to get permission to erect some bluebird boxes, and the progression towards a productive bluebird trail began in 2020. Originally I put up 2 boxes which produced 2 broods each for 4 broods that year. I added 2 more boxes for 2021. Those 4 boxes produced 9 broods (2 broods in each box with one box producing 3 broods). Some conservation work by NJDFW opened up more habitat, allowing me to add 3 more boxes for 2022. Six of those boxes produced 2 broods each with the 7th box producing 1

brood of bluebirds after a pair of tree swallows claimed the box early in the season. Interestingly, 2 of the boxes produced white eggs which is always a bonus for the monitor. That is a total of 26 broods in 3 years. Every single box was productive with bluebirds during that 3 year period. 100% occupancy every year. Talk about a successful trail!

For the time being, I am not planning on adding more boxes for the 2023 season as I am waiting for the NJDFW to further complete their conservation plan for the property. ~ by Allen Jackson

Mary Ella Morie Community Park in Mauricetown NJ: A Special Bluebird/Purple Martin Trail



Town resident Dorothy Hundt watches Allen Jackson as he bands a chick.

In early 2021, Allen Jackson - well known in both the National and New Jersey Bluebird Societies - and Peter Manzelmann - local resident and member of the Commercial Township Environmental Commission - worked to remove the existing, damaged and neglected bluebird boxes at the Mary Ella Morie Community Park. These old boxes were replaced with new boxes supplied from Allen, which were made by high school students in Cape May County. In addition, other supplies/parts were contributed by the neighboring US Silica. Six bluebird boxes were erected throughout the park with predator guards. During the summer and fall of 2021 those boxes produced 19 bluebird fledglings, which were all banded by Peter, Allen, April Soeoy (from US Silica), and some friends/family. Two boxes produced all the bluebirds with the other four boxes occupied by either tree swallows, house wrens or chickadees. Throughout the summer the trail was monitored to prevent starlings and sparrows from nesting in the provided boxes and to check on the bluebird nestlings.

Allen and Peter also removed the two elevated purple martin "hotels" that were in disrepair and replaced them with two 24 purple martin gourd racks. These racks belonged to the Township's Environmental Commission and were relocated from the Mauricetown Riverside Park and the Port Norris Elem. School. The old martin boxes were occupied by European Starlings and House Sparrows which are non-native species causing population decreases for both bluebirds and martins. US Silica also purchased two predator guards that were placed on the newly replaced martin gourd racks.

The 2022 season was also a great success. A couple more bluebird boxes and a third (12 gourd) martin rack were placed around Mauricetown. The total of 37 bluebirds fledged during this "hottest on record" summer. In addition, the new martin racks were also a success. The martins swirled in the sky as the bluebirds fluttered here and there. Together the park was also energized with action by visiting hawks, waterfowl, songbirds, dragonflies, butterflies, and the occasional cottontail rabbit. *(continued on page 10)*



Peter Manzelmann with purple martin rack

CUMBERLAND COUNTY Coordinator, Allen Jackson

(continued from page 9) The Mauricetown community is grateful for the support from US Silica with our upgrading of the Mary Ella Morie Community Park Bluebird/Purple Martin Trail. What makes this project so special is the community partnership.



US Silica employee April Sooev with Peter Manzelmann

In addition to the support from neighboring sand plant US Silica, the Commercial Township Environmental Commission and the Citizens United Maurice River are also key supporters of this project.

Since both bluebirds and martins are primarily insect eaters, we are grateful for these groups not over-mowing the park (more insects for the birds and less to bite us humans) and monitoring the trash bins (attracts predators to the boxes).

The Mary Ella Morie Community Park is the perfect place for the purple martins and bluebirds to help balance the ecosystem on the west side of this very special, quiet, historic and quaint riverside community of Mauricetown. *A side note- Mary Ella Morie, who donated the land for the community park, is 102 and still going strong!* ~ Peter Manzelmann

GLOUCESTER COUNTY Coordinator, Bernie Visalli

2022 Gloucester County Update ~ by Bernie Visalli, County Coordinator



I was asked to present at the Gloucester County Library during their spring speaker series. It was a great turnout, and the crowd was very energetic. It resulted in a few site visits and a new banding opportunity with meeting David and Karen Stafford, who live around the corner from me in South Harrison Twp. They have been hosting bluebirds and are experienced monitors.

Gloucester County – 2022 was a very successful year with new monitors and record-breaking numbers at several sites. It was also the year of the house sparrow, unfortunately. Gloucester county sites saw an increase in house sparrow numbers and harassment of nesting boxes. Most sites that had an issue took the appropriate measures and the problems were eliminated to allow bluebirds to nest. Great job by all the monitors!

One site (monitor would like to remain anonymous) went from fledging an average high 40's to a big jump of fledging 72 this year! The trail is 10 years old and has gradually expanded to 12 boxes. Those numbers are confirmed by banding and no losses after hatching.

New monitor spotlight: Braydon L -Swedesboro - Braydon and his father reached out to me early in the spring for a site visit and we were able to find a suitable site using his own BB Box, we added a predator guard to his set up. While we were discussing monitoring expectations, he mentioned he also participated in NestWatch and is involved with the Delaware Valley Ornithology Club. This year he reported to NestWatch: 6 Bluebirds and 6 House Wrens.

During the spring nesting season, house sparrows became an issue and Braydon embraced HS control. He did a great job of providing a safe nesting box and was an exceptional monitor. His site also had a pair of Tree Swallows try to take over the nesting box and we were successful in providing alternative housing using a Purple Martin gourd on a shepherd's hook.

Braydon has also expressed interest in learning about larger sites and plans are in the works for the 2023 season to do ride-alongs when monitoring and banding. His goal is to become a volunteer for NJ Bluebird Society when he gets his driver's license. Braydon is currently in 10th grade at Kingsway Regional and his other hobbies include karate at the OKKA Swedesboro dojo where he is a second-degree black belt. He is also a member of his school's environmental club and photography club. The future looks bright when we can engage younger people to get involved in nature and becoming BB monitors!

(Continued on page 11)



GLOUCESTER COUNTY Coordinator, Bernie Visalli

(Gloucester County Report, continued from page 10)



Tranquility Trail /Woolwich Twp- An unfortunate turn of events happened at Tranquility Trail this past season. There was a change to the designated open native space by turning it into a Frisbee Golf Course. During a walk around of the site in early spring for box repairs, Ann Silvers, who is the trail monitor, and I were witness to the construction of the course. Large swaths of trees were taken down to make way for the “tees”. Since we were not involved or notified of the massive changes, it was distressing to see the habitat disturbed in such a big way. We relocated three boxes due to proximity of the tees or baskets and we had hoped the change of habitat would be minimal.

The trail went thru some problems in the past few years, but since Ann took over monitoring the trail in 2021, we hit an all-time high of 50 fledged last year. This year the number was down to 25. That is a **HUGE** drop in numbers, and we can confirm the impact of the activity of the Frisbee golf course, change of habitat and the disregard of people to respect the boxes; most notably, people “resting” or “sitting” near boxes. When challenged by me or Ann, hearing comments like “oh we noticed birds hanging around” was bit disconcerting. I created and posted signs throughout the course making people aware of nesting taking place and asking them to please not interfere. In one case during a tournament, Ann witnessed people using a box for target practice! Also noted: water bottles put in a Noel guard on a box that had a nest with feeding young, and money stuffed in a different box with eggs.

It is my opinion the loss of habitat and despite moving the boxes around to make sure they were not in line or around the course of play, has disrupted the nesting activities. Currently we are waiting for an update from the Township on alternative open spaces for possible box relocation.

Finally, a big THANK YOU to all the monitors in Gloucester County for doing a great job in keeping in contact with me for planning out the banding dates and providing nesting boxes for the bluebirds! The numbers don't lie! Banding record for me personally this year and that is due to the diligence of the monitors. So, a heartfelt thank you. ~ *Bernnie*

HUNTERDON COUNTY Coordinator - VACANT



Male feeds his mate while she's sitting on their eggs. Photo by Mary Pagana

Mary's Bluebird Story - My name is Mary Pagana and I moved back to NJ two years ago, after growing up here. I had moved to NY State where my love of bluebirds took off. I bought an old box on a pole at a yard sale and decided to stick it in the garden. The blue birds came.....they came for 15 years, faithfully every year. When I decided to move to NJ, right away I bought a box and again, the bluebirds came. This year they again are nesting. I'm so excited that I wanted to share my story.

Growing up in Passaic County NJ, I developed a love of nature, animals and especially birds. I would see so many different colors and hear so many different songs. One bird I never saw was the bluebird. I would see them in movies like *Snow White* and hear about them in songs like Judy Garland's *Somewhere Over The Rainbow*. But I never saw one. In my 30's I moved to New York State, where nature was again at an abundance. The bluebird is the New York State bird, so maybe I could get a glimpse of one.

After several years living there, I created a flower garden full of the few flowers deer didn't find tasty. As decoration, I put in the garden an old bluebird box that I bought at a yard sale for \$2.00. Everyone, including an ornithologist friend of mine, told me the bluebirds will not nest there as it was not located in an ideal spot.

“Well, that's ok,” I thought, “maybe someone will nest there”. And wouldn't you know it, like a movie script, the bluebirds came that next spring. And they continued to nest in that box, sometimes twice a season for over the next 15 years, never missing a season.

Recently, I moved back to New Jersey in Hunterdon County and the first thing I did was put up a bluebird box. Like magic, the bluebirds came last spring, nested and had five little ones take flight. This spring, they are back again. The box in New York is still being maintained by the new owner. The bluebird is a symbol of hope, love, and renewal. It symbolizes the essence of life and beauty. I am so happy to be part of the bluebird family. ~ *Mary Pagana*

MONMOUTH COUNTY New County Coordinator, Jean Montgomerie

Meet Jean Montgomerie, NJBBS's New Monmouth County Coordinator

Bluebirds? It all happened because of the pandemic. I retired from my State of NJ Pinelands Commission job in July 2020 as an Environmental Specialist and became a Substitute Teacher at the Freehold Regional High School District, where my sons went to high school and where I live. They really needed Substitute Teachers in 2020 and I have a Master's Degree in Biology/Ecology.

I was assigned to Freehold Township High School for the academic year, and due to the pandemic, I worked every day. There, I met Mr. Ducey's Animal and Botanical Magnet Program students. The Freshman class really had me feeling sorry for them. Here they were in a wonderful program with no ability to use group shared facilities like the greenhouse and the fish and chicken enclosures! or do Field Trips! At about this time, I was researching summer seasonal jobs with the State. I met Jane



Dr. Stone in September '21 at an unmonitored Allaire State Park Nestbox

Mattson, of the Forest Resource Educational Center in Jackson. She explained that they had a Bluebird Trail Program which could use volunteers. So, I thought: I can help get the students outside! They and I will learn to be nestbox monitors! Yes, Mr. Ducey asked if anyone was interested, and three girls signed up!

So who was the Bluebird expert? Not me! Jane introduced us to **Dr. Laura Stone**, who has been monitoring the nestboxes at FREC since 2004 when the FREC opened. We were off! As I got to know Laura, I realized I better not screw this up.

She has dedicated her life to bluebirds here in Central New Jersey.

We had a great Spring of 2021, masks and all, and the girls got volunteer credit. I came up with the idea to construct a Bluebird Nestbox Trail in Freehold Township park land adjacent to the High School so that the girls could do monitoring after



Spring 2021 at a FREC nestbox trail; Dr. Laura Stone teaching a student about predator guards.

school without needing their parents to drive them anywhere.

Well, the 2022 nesting season arrived and I guess the traditional school programs came back and no additional students signed up. But, I got to build the nestbox trail at Michael Tighe Park this past summer. I didn't finish it until late July, but two of the high school girls monitored this "Patriot Bluebird Trail." A Boy Scout at the high school initially offered to make it his Eagle Scout Project, but it proved too daunting with costs and building nestboxes which were NABS Certified, AND getting permission from the Township. So, I did the monitoring at FREC myself and with another Jackson High School student who Laura signed up and trained.

So that's the story. I met local Cornell Nestbox Monitors through Laura Stone and through Facebook groups like Central Jersey Birders and Bluebirds Anonymous. There is much more to learn!

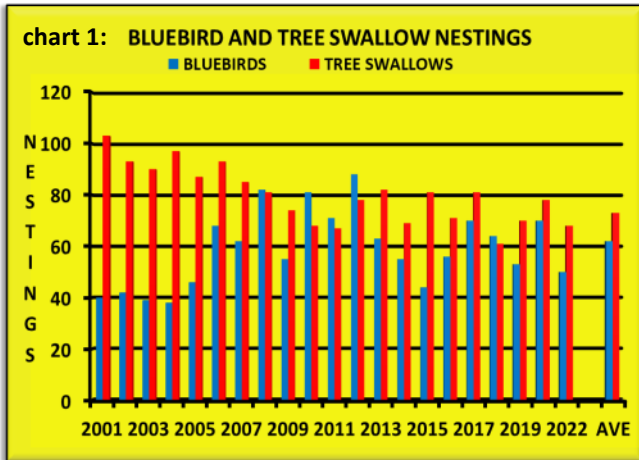
~ Jean Montgomerie



MORRIS COUNTY Submitted by Leo Hollein & Tom Gula

2022 BLUEBIRD NEST BOX REPORT: The Weather Favored Tree Swallows

As in the years prior to 2020, bluebird nest boxes were monitored on a weekly basis in 2022. Monitoring restrictions due to the Corona virus were lifted, starting with the 2021 season. Weekly monitoring provides accurate data on the number of nesting attempts, as well as the number of eggs, hatchlings and fledglings.



The Refuge staff continued in 2022 to improve wildlife habitat. More fields were mowed. The controlled burning of fields was increased. If continued in subsequent years, more fields will be grassy and less brushy. This should improve the habitat for bluebirds in future seasons.

The bluebird nest box trail had **135 nest boxes** that were monitored in 2022. There were **143 nestings** (nest with eggs) in these boxes. Twenty nest box pairs had both tree swallow and bluebird nestings during the season. Twenty-seven individual boxes were not used for nesting during the season. Many boxes hosted multiple nestings. Every nest box pair had a nesting.

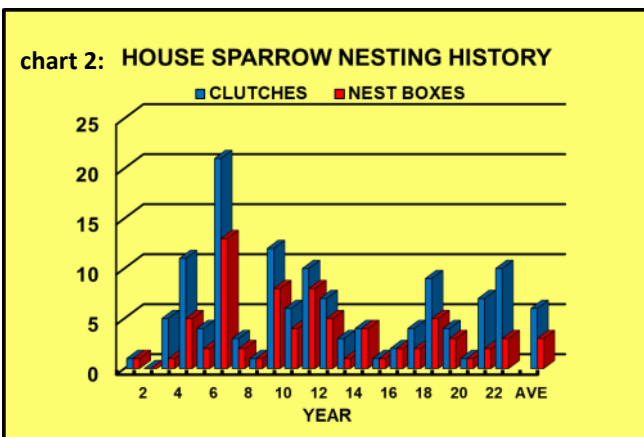
FLEDGLINGS FROM NEST BOXES DECLINE IN 2022 Below is the summary of nestings and fledglings for the 2022 season versus the averages for 2011 – 2021. Year 2020 is not included in the averages due to incomplete monitoring data.

SPECIES	NESTINGS		FLEDGLINGS	
	2022	10 YR AVG	2022	10 YR AVG
Bluebirds	50	62	146	191
Tree Swallows	68	73	253	252
House Wrens	5	11	24	43
House Sparrows	10	6	0	0
TOTAL	143	155	423	486

BLUEBIRDS HAVE BELOW NORMAL NESTING SEASON - Bluebirds fledged the least young since 2015. This is illustrated in **Chart 1** that presents the history of Refuge bluebird and tree swallow nestings from 2001 to 2022. The total number of young fledglings from the nest boxes in 2022 was 423. This is below the 10-year average of 486 and was primarily due to the decline in nesting bluebirds and subsequently fledglings. Bluebirds nested in 53% of the box pairs. Ten bluebird pairs fledged young from two clutches in 2022. One pair laid 3 clutches. One of the three clutches fledged.

A comparison of seasons shows that bluebirds nested in 8 nest box pairs in 2021. In contrast only two box pairs in 2022 were used by bluebirds in the same area. A few fields along Pleasant Plans Road were burned in April. This was the likely reason bluebirds did not nest in the box pairs there this season. Bluebirds begin nesting and laying eggs in April. Burning and mowing fields should create grassy fields and improved bluebird habitat over time. Burning fields before the end of March should make them acceptable to bluebirds in April. The grassy areas around the Visitor Center and off Woodland Road are the prime bluebird nesting territories in the Refuge.

HOUSE SPARROWS LAY EGGS IN THREE NEST BOXES - **Chart 2** presents the history of house sparrow nestings in the Refuge since 2001. House sparrows attempted 10 nestings in 3 nest boxes in 2022. These results are close to their long-term averages of 6 nestings in 3 boxes. The three nest boxes used by sparrows were all in the proximity of buildings along New Vernon Road. House sparrows usually nest near houses or barns where they can feed at bird feeders or from domestic animal feed.



All ten nestings were disrupted as is Refuge practice for this non-native species. The nests and eggs were removed after about a week of brooding and before they hatched. This procedure causes most sparrows to delay re-nesting. However, one sparrow pair this season laid 17 eggs in 5 clutches in the same nest box. They finally stopped re-nesting in late July.

One of the box pairs that hosted house sparrows will be relocated. The other pairs will remain in place because both bluebirds and house sparrows used these box pairs of boxes during the past season. Bluebirds fledged clutches from both boxes.

MORRIS COUNTY

 Submitted by Leo Hollein & Tom Gula


FIVE VOLUNTEERS MONITOR NEST BOXES IN 2022 - The current objective of the 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 trail provides volunteer opportunities for those who wish to work with wildlife. Since the Friends became responsible for maintaining and monitoring 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. Their data (nest, species, eggs, hatchlings, fledglings, and observations) from the visits is entered into a spreadsheet and E-mailed to the coordinator. A weekly report summarizing the key results is distributed to the nest box monitors and other interested individuals.



Male Bluebird w/Katydid

Many thanks to Jim Mulvey, Nancy Felicito, Tom Gula and Christine Pirog who monitored nest boxes and reported their findings during the 2022 nesting season. Two of the five nest box monitors had cardiac pacemakers surgically installed during the season. They were able to complete the monitoring of their boxes with help from the other volunteers. A special thanks to Tom Gula who helped with maintaining the bluebird boxes as well as recording the GPS locations of box locations and developing the above map. - Leo Hollein & Tom Gula

SECOND SUNDAY BLUEBIRD PRESENTATION RESUMED As part of the Friends Second Sunday program a presentation was made in May covering the various aspects of bluebird and tree swallow life cycles observed in the Refuge. This Second Sunday bluebird presentation is usually given on a two-year cycle. However, the 2021 presentation was cancelled due to COVID. A presentation was also made in March to over one hundred attendees at the annual meeting of Pennsylvania Bluebird Society in Bethlehem, PA. The presentation was made at the request of Allan Jackson, who is a retired Fish & wildlife employee and currently president of the New Jersey Bluebird Society.

MORRIS COUNTY

Coordinator, Vacant

Bluebird Boxes at the Picatinny Arsenal "We did well this season despite some inexperienced monitors. We plan to increase the number of boxes for next season." - Jim Grundy. The Picatinny Arsenal is an American military research and manufacturing facility located on 6,400 acres of land in Jefferson and Rockaway Township in Morris County, New Jersey, encompassing Picatinny Lake and Lake Denmark. **Season Report** - submitted by Jim Grundy, 30 September 2022.

	Nests or Broods	Birds Fledged	Nestlings Remaining	Eggs Remaining
Bluebirds	30	95	12	10
Tree Swallows	10	27	0	5
House Wrens	4	12	4	0
House Sparrows	0	0	0	0
Chickadees	0	0	0	0
Tufted Titmouse	0	0	0	0
Totals	44	134	16	15

ROOSTING: How do birds that don't migrate stay warm in the winter? Birds have enough feathers to keep them warm in the winter IF they have enough food and IF they remain dry and out of severe winds. To stay warm, they fluff up their feathers, draw their head in or tuck it under a wing, and shiver. They may scrunch down by bending their legs, or tuck one foot up under their feathers to further reduce heat loss. They may also huddle together with other birds. During the night, the body temperature of birds like bluebirds and chickadees may drop 10-15 degrees, and their metabolism slows down to conserve energy. (This is called nocturnal hypothermia.)

Bluebirds spend about 50% of their lives roosting. (*Pitts, T.David*) A roost is a place or support where birds settle down to rest or sleep. A communal roost is a bunch of birds roosting together. Some birds roost on branches of trees like pines, cedars or oak, or in shrubs/vines. Others roost in cavities. A roost box is like a nestbox, only it is designed specifically for roosting. Steve Gunn has designed a simple roosting box to be made from a single 1 x 6 board, 5 feet long. Plans can be found here: <http://www.birdwatching-bliss.com/support-files/winter-bird-house-plans.pdf>

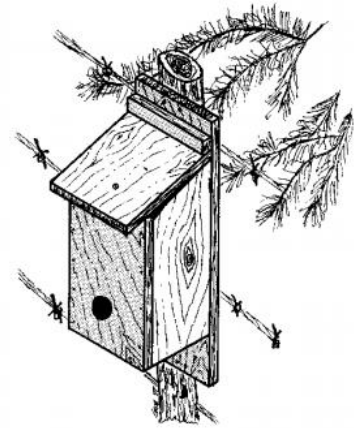
There are not a lot of reports of large flocks of bluebirds using roost boxes, but bluebirds often roost in a regular nestbox, especially in northern states. They may also roost in a box in the daytime during particularly inclement weather (e.g., high winds.) Evidence that a box is being used for roosting includes downy feathers (which sometimes fall out when birds are preening and fluffing), fecal material, and seeds/food residue. Birds often enter a cavity to roost just before sunset. They may enter or leave several times before settling in for the night. They leave right after sunrise.

Advantages of a Box for Roosting: A box or cavity not only provides protection from the elements - it also helps keep them safe from hungry predators. Thus it may be best to just leave boxes up all winter so they can be used for roosting if desired. Also, that way you won't have to go out in January or February to put them back up before nesting starts. Weather-proofing standard nestboxes helps, as the birds sit on the floors. To some extent, deeper nestboxes will keep the drafts from chilling birds on the floor of the nestbox.

Options to prepare a box for winter roosting: a nestbox will do. It doesn't need a hole in the bottom of pegs - if it's really cold, and multiple birds roost together, they will stay warmer on the floor of the box. Seal up the ventilation holes (don't forget the floor). Duct tape on the OUTSIDE can do the trick nicely (if it sticks to the waterproofing). You can use rolled caulking (e.g. "Mortite") but again only on the outside of the box!

Add an inch or so of SMALL wood chips (avoid sawdust and commercially sold cedar bedding, and do not put in large wood chips that might get stuck in the hole and trap a bird inside) or a layer of soft grass, or some moss. Or you can line the floor with silver foil (which insulates and seals), bringing it up to the front of the nestbox under the entrance hole, and then add some dry grass. You can also put a 1/2" styrofoam, cut to fit, on the bottom of the nestbox.

Location and Predator Protection: Mount roost boxes on poles with predator guards to keep the contents from being eaten, and to prevent mice from wintering in the box. Face the entrance away from prevailing winds - south is probably best for greatest warmth. (*Used with encouragement by <http://www.sialis.org>*)



OCEAN COUNTY

Coordinator, Laura Stone

Love of Eastern Blue Birds Inspires Local Girl Scout

My name is Lucia Street. I am twelve years old and a Cadette in Girl Scouts of the Jersey Shore Troop 50427 from Bayville, NJ. This fall, I will be attending Central Regional Middle School. I have been working to help monitor Eastern Bluebirds for three years for the Ocean County Parks and Recreation Department at Cloverdale Farm County Park in Barnegat, New Jersey.



Luci shows a completed birdhouses to the class during her presentation.

My love for Eastern Bluebirds started when I asked to help monitor the Eastern Bluebird trail at Cloverdale Farm County Park as part of my Girl Scout Bronze Award in 2020. I was trained by the Cloverdale Farm County Park staff on how to monitor bluebird boxes and soon I was monitoring thirteen Eastern Bluebird nest boxes with my father at Cloverdale Farm County Park. I was able to share my experience with friends and family by bringing them along to monitor the nest boxes with me. I continued to monitor these nest boxes the following

summer of 2021 as a volunteer. That helped me earn my Cadette volunteer bar for Girl Scouts.

When it came time to decide on my Girl Scout Silver Award project, I knew I wanted to continue my work with Eastern Bluebirds. This time as part of my Girl Scout Silver Award, I wanted to help teach people why the Eastern Bluebird is an important bird species. I wanted to bring awareness of how the Eastern Bluebird is losing its habitat due to deforestation. Development is affecting their population. I hope to get people involved to help restore their population. I hosted three different programs through the Ocean County Park and Recreation Department at Cloverdale Farm County Park in which I spoke about Eastern Bluebirds, their habitats, and the impact of deforestation on their population.

I had the members of the public create over 30 Eastern Bluebird boxes with generous donations of cedar lumber donated by Ed McKay of Nesco, NJ and hardware donated by the Berkeley VFW Post 9503. In two of the programs, 16 mem-



Luci drilling openings in the birdhouses.



Luci with girls from her Troop who helped her build birdhouses after one of Luci's bluebird education programs.

bers of the public and their families who attended created their own bluebird nest boxes made from pre-cut cedar lumber kits I assembled in advance. They took them home to hang in their backyards. The public was also taught about nest box placement and about nest competitors and predators.

I offered another class for Girl Scouts and their family in which the girls helped assemble 18 more Eastern Bluebird nest boxes with the pre-cut cedar lumber nest box kits.



Luci working with volunteers to sort and cut the wood to make bluebird building kits for her upcoming classes.

These boxes were used to create a new Eastern Bluebird nest box trail at Cedar Bridge Tavern County Park located in Barnegat, NJ. With the help of some of Cloverdale Farm County Park volunteers, we installed seven nest boxes. After we monitor the new trail's success, more nest boxes may be added. A few of the remaining boxes were created and be replacement boxes for the trails at both Cloverdale Farm and Cedar Bridge Tavern in the future.

(continued on page 17)



Luci & Ed McKay with the cedar planks. Mr. McKay donated to help make her bluebird trail project at Cedar Bridge Tavern County Park (located in Barnegat, NJ) possible.

OCEAN COUNTY Coordinator, Laura Stone

(Luci, continued from page 16) - I have been very fortunate to have so many people, businesses and organizations support me in this project. These volunteers, family members and friends also lend their hands to see that my Girl Scout Silver Award is successful.

In the future, I am hoping to be able to continue to work with Eastern Bluebirds for my Girl Scout Gold Award during my high school years. My goal is to see that my projects help grow the population of the Eastern Bluebirds within Ocean County and educate the public on the importance of Eastern Bluebirds in New Jersey.

Thank you for sharing my story with members of the New Jersey Bluebird Society. I hope to inspire others to reach out to their community for support, as there are other Girl Scouts, like me, always willing to learn, grow and help out our community, especially the bluebirds! ~ *Luci Street*



Luci with a crew of volunteers after installing the new bluebird nesting trail at Cedar Bridge Tavern County Park in Barnegat.

PHOTO GALLERY- FROM HERE AND THERE



Rare Beauty - In April, Teresa Rhodes photographed this leucistic female Eastern Bluebird in Gloucester, VA. The bird's mate has normal coloring and markings. The pair was building a nest in a nestbox at the time the photo was taken.



CEO Bluebird - This photo was taken shortly after Allen Jackson installed a bluebird box nearby, on the grounds of the KMO building in Millville. Photo credit: Bob Johnson



This beautiful photo of a bluebird hen was captured by Lexi as she was monitoring her nest boxes. She is a high school student at Salem County Votech, and she and her family live in Salem. Allen Jackson began banding their bluebirds last year.



Were you there . . .at just the right moment? If you've captured great images of Bluebirds with your digital camera or phone, send them to me, attached to an email in jpeg form, to BluebirdLJJ@gmail.com. Please include who took the photos, where and when they were taken, and a description of each photo. You may see them in an upcoming issue of *Jersey Blues*.



SALEM COUNTY

Co-Coordinator, Bernadine Visalli & Allen Jackson

2022 Salem County Update ~ submitted by Bernnie Visalli, County Coordinator

2022 found many sites in Salem County outdoing the numbers the sites produced from previous years. House sparrows were an issue at sites that never had them before. Since most of the monitors and sites I personally monitor are in very rural areas, the managing of the house sparrows was especially challenging. I logged 2187 miles on my truck this year for bluebird activities, mostly dealing with house sparrows!

Many sites will be increasing their trails for 2023 due to the success this year. Warren Mabey's trail in Alloway is one we will be adding new boxes since all his boxes had 2 nesting each so the population has increased enough to support expanding.

2022 was the year of the farmer! We have 2 new farms that are hosting bluebird trails:



Watts Organic Farm in Elmer: A fresh produce and livestock farm that uses organic, sustainable, and regenerative practices to educate the public and promote a healthy community and planet. David Watts feels that providing bluebirds nesting opportunities is a win for both the birds and the organic farm. They had activity on all three boxes and had a great first year even with a later start into the nesting season! Looking forward to more success in the future. You can find more information about Watts Organic Farm on [Facebook](#) or at watts-organic-farm.square.site/

A.T. Buzby Farm in Pilesgrove: (Referred by David Watts) In late spring, we set up a site visit with Eric Buzby and house sparrow issues were identified. We took several approaches to get them under control, but they prevented us from putting nesting boxes near the nursery and farm buildings. We placed 5 boxes and had enough success to be hopeful for next year with some resetting of the boxes due to farming practices and lessons learned from this year. Lots

of space to choose from for sure. A.T. Buzby Farm is a family farm in rural Salem County, New Jersey. They grow a variety of fresh produce for local markets.

Partnering with farmers can be challenging, but can also be extremely rewarding. It takes a lot of patience and willingness to be open to compromise, so that you can work around the farming practices to get a productive bluebird trail started. I find it very rewarding, and I know the bluebirds are drawn to certain crops since that's where the grub is.

Good monitoring is a recipe for success. All the monitors who are investing a little bit of time to keep issues to a minimum and are willing to act when needed are making trails more attractive to the bluebirds.

Finally, a **big thank you** to all the monitors who are willing to be open to mentoring, allowing me to be part of their bluebird journey and helping all birds with providing habitat.



www.buzbyfarm.com/



Parvin GPS Coordinates:
39.511968, -75.134925

News from Parvin State Park - On October 13th, Allen Jackson added 4 more boxes at Parvin State Park, Salem County, making a trail of 10 boxes. Besides the 10 boxes on Parvin property, there are 8 more boxes on adjacent lands, making for a productive area of Salem County.

Located less than five miles from Vineland and 40 miles south of Philadelphia, Parvin State Park is a hidden gem. Parvin is home to history as well as plants and animals. Built in the 1930s, by the Civilian Conservation Corp, Parvin contains campsites, cabins and a beach on Parvin Lake. There are 15 miles of trails for walking, jogging or biking and two lakes for canoeing and kayaking.

The park not only has pine forests typical to the area but also a swamp hardwood forest. Spring bursts out in bright colors and rich fragrances with blossoming dogwood, laurel, holly, magnolia, wild azalea and over 200 kinds of flowering plants. Thundergust Lake, Parvin Lake and Muddy Run are popular for fishing and boating. (reference: <https://nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/parvinstatepark>)

WARREN COUNTY

Coordinator, McKenna Kels



Tanya at farewell luncheon



Tess, Tanya and Lori Jo at luncheon. McKenna was unable to attend.

Team Bluebird Updates

The Team is proud (and a little sad) to announce that **Tanya Sulikowski**, Environmental Director at Merrill Creek Reservoir, has accepted the position of Director of Education at **The New Jersey School of Conservation** in Sandyston, Sussex County, NJ. Learn more about their work [here](#).

Tanya had been working at the school previously, but operations ceased during the Covid Pandemic. Ahead now is the huge task of getting the school up and running, making repairs to buildings, planning programs and reconnecting with educators and their students.

Without a doubt, the bluebird trail at MCR would not exist without Tanya's encouragement and support. We wish her the best as she "goes back home" to continue on the path she began.

~ Lori Jo, McKenna and Tess



An unproductive nest box was relocated to a new "micro-meadow" where native plants have replaced a non-native hedgerow. It was the home to tree swallows this season.



Team Effort: The Merrill Creek Stewardship Team has been removing invasives and planting natives, meaning more food for birds, butterflies and moths. L to R, Robby, Maggie, and Linda.

2022 Merrill Creek Reservoir Season Totals:

Compiled by McKenna Kels, Warren County Coordinator

63 Bluebirds - 45 Tree Swallows - 28 House Wrens

This season we had a few boxes completely knocked over by bears, and at quite a few boxes, house wrens were competing with both bluebirds and tree swallows. Eggs mysteriously disappeared from some boxes as well, despite predator guards. A few boxes need to be relocated or taken down completely before next season.

More Warren County News - Like in many other areas of New Jersey, cool rainy weather slowed the nesting pace here in Warren County. Eggs disappeared from boxes, tree swallows built over bluebird nests, an only 4 chicks fledged from my property, compared to 13 last season. House wrens took over the upper box early on in the season.



Bear predation occurred at **NJ Audubon Wattles Preserve** for the second time. (small photo) Records show that the chicks most likely fledged prior to the attack. I chose not to replace this setup for the season.

On a more positive note, I installed two new boxes near the border of Hunterdon and Warren Counties. 4 chicks fledged from the box at **Grace Kocher's** home. (photo far left). This box was put up late in the season, but the habitat holds promise for more fledglings next year. Grace and I will be presenting "The Joy of Bluebirds" to her Womens Club in March 2023.

Thanks to support from **Ryan Jiorle**, Community Engagement Coordinator at the Musconetcong Watershed Association's [River Resource Center](#) in Asbury, NJ, I was able to replace an old nestbox there, which was falling apart. Before removing it, I peeked inside to see three bluebird eggs and one chick. Sadly, upon returning, the brood was gone. I suspect a snake, with the close proximity to the river. The new setup (with predator guard) should be productive next season. ~ submitted by Lori Jo Jamieson