

*The New Jersey Bluebird Society's*

# Jersey Blues

*Volume 8, Issue 1 - Spring 2024*

## THE PASSION OF BLUEBIRDERS

page 3



Visit NJBBS on Facebook at [New Jersey Bluebird Society!](#)  
Share your photos, trail experiences and advice with us!



**Our Mission Statement:** To educate, conserve and promote bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds in New Jersey. **Our Goals and Methods:** NJBBS'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 methods are:**

- to provide expertise and guidance to trail monitors and backyard bluebird enthusiasts;
- to monitor yearly population trends by surveying the number of young fledged from nest boxes;
- to provide public education about bluebirds to interested people in the state.

**Membership Has Its Rewards!** Become a part of a community of people, of all ages, from all areas of New Jersey, who are all interested in bluebirds, like you are. 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. We hope that your concern for the well-being of our New Jersey native Eastern Bluebirds will motivate you to go [HERE](#) and join!



**NJBBS is a proud State Affiliate of The North American Bluebird Society** and there are advantages to being a member of both groups. The NABS organization supports and helps unify the work of state chapters across America. Only members of NABS receive the quarterly *Bluebird* journal, a publication of interest to anyone who appreciates bluebirds and other secondary cavity nesters. And even those of us who consider ourselves “experienced” bluebirders find the resources on their website, [www.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org) to be a goldmine of information. Included are printable (PDF) fact sheets about getting started, nestbox plans, predator control, monitoring guides and feeding recommendations. Please consider joining

both NJBBS and NABS today. New members can join NABS for an additional \$15 (first year only).

**NJBBS OFFICERS: President - vacant; Vice President, South: Bernadine Visalli; Treasurer: Louise Cockey; Secretary: Jenyfra Nelson**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS: All Officers above, plus Frank Budney, Allen Jackson, Presidents Emeritus At Large: Harry Bratty, Shelly Cucugliello, Dave Gilcrest, Lori Jo Jamieson, Jean Montgomerie, Gary Pilling, Jim Priest, Laura Stone, Jim Watson**

***Jersey Blues* is the Newsletter of the New Jersey Bluebird Society [www.njbluebirdsociety.org/](http://www.njbluebirdsociety.org/)**

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*Cover Photo by NJBBS Member, Bruce Michael - more photos on page 8.*

*Background image by [Simon Berger](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

## YOU KNOW YOU'RE A [Passionate] BLUEBIRDER WHEN...

By Bet Zimmerman Smith , adapted from her newly updated and expanded website, [Sialis.org](http://Sialis.org).

People refer to you as the “Bluebird Lady” or “Bluebird Man.” You can talk for hours about cavity nesters (to the dismay of your partner.) You consider bluebirds the true harbingers of spring - forget about robins! You watch the bluebird box instead of the boob tube. The first egg of the year always brings a smile to your face. You can recognize ‘your’ bluebirds by their looks, song, or behavior. They come when you call.

**YOU HAVE THE BLUEBIRDER ‘TUDE** You tell houseguests, “Yes, that IS a container of squirming mealworms in the refrigerator. Why? Is there something wrong with that?”

You roll your eyes when people refer to Blue Jays as bluebirds. You find the chirp of a House Sparrow worse than fingernails on a chalkboard. You flinch when you hear it at Home Depot or on TV. You complain at those stores selling flimsy ‘craft’ nestboxes that cannot be opened for monitoring or cleaning. You cringe when driving by a tree-mounted birdhouse with a busted roof and squirrel-gnawed entrance hole.



Photo: Ann Silvers



**Would you like to learn more about hosting bluebirds on your property, or monitoring a nestbox trail?**

**Please contact the NJBBS County Coordinator listed below who is nearest to you.**

**Atlantic - Jim Watson**

609-204-3358

wombat3287@gmail.com

**Burlington - Harry Bratty**

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**Camden - Chuck Kanupke**

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**Cape May - Rae Griffiths**

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**Cumberland - Allen Jackson**

*See Allen's note on page 6*

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**Monmouth - Jean Montgomerie**

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**Somerset - April Tarantino**

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### **YOU HAVE SPECIAL BLUEBIRDER STUFF**

The wallpaper on your cellphone/laptop/desktop computer is a bluebird photo. Your ringtone is a bluebird song. Your shelves/clothing/walls/car/mailbox/hat have bluebirds on them. (Extra points for a bluebird tattoo.) You always carry a bluebirding toolbox in your vehicle. You stop at construction sites and ask to paw through their scrap wood piles. Your shed is overflowing with boxes, poles and miscellaneous supplies (which you spent more money on than you care to admit.) Like a mad scientist, you constantly experiment with variations of baffles, heat shields, sparrow spookers, wren guards and other devices, in an effort to give your bluebirds their best chance at survival.

### **YOU HAVE BLUEBIRDER EMOTIONS**

Your happy place is on the bluebird trail. You engage in heated arguments about which style of nestbox is best. You mourn the loss of each egg, baby, or adult. You find you are simultaneously sad and relieved when nesting season ends.

**Be sure to visit Bet's site - [www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org)**



*A little bluebird told me that on June 26th,  
it'll be time to wish Jim Priest a*

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

*Best wishes from your friends at NJBBS!  
We (and the little bluebirds) appreciate all that you do!*



**Time Traveling with Jim** - "I was looking through some old photos from Midway. These photos are of Dr. Fisher, Earl M, and me - banding Albatross and a Masked Booby. Look at the size of those bands!" ~ Jim P

#### **An Update from Jim Priest and Team**



*Photo by Jim Priest*

We have welcomed a couple of new folks, **Jim & Kathy H** from **Williamstown**, and a school. Our group keeps growing, which is good. We manage and monitor 125 boxes throughout four counties. Most are in Camden and Gloucester Counties, and a few are in Burlington and Atlantic Counties.

We added two new boxes at the **Clementon Elementary School** in Camden County this year. Teachers Mr. Erario & Ms. Wilson are running a nature club for the kids. I hope to add a few more boxes to Gloucester County this season as well.

A lot of time and labor was spent getting ready for this season - cleaning out boxes, and repairing any that need it. I'm building new nestboxes, having received enough lumber from Allen for at least 60 of them. A big thanks to Greg Staman for helping me with the prep work required to assemble the boxes.



Chuck Kanupke, Priscilla Priest, Jim Priest.

*On April 6, we offered a NJBBS "Meet and Greet" at Tractor Supply on RT 73 and Jackson Road. We gave out bluebird information and made some good contacts. Thanks to Camden County Coordinator, Chuck Kanupke, for arranging the event!*

**Woodworking Class** - On Saturday, April 13, **Lori Jo Jamieson and her husband, Peter** drove down to Jim's workshop, where Lori Jo was tutored on the fine art of putting together the infamous NJBBS Atlantic White Cedar nestbox - with those cool little brass door hinges. Jim is a patient teacher, and Priscilla has a helper's heart! Now we need a source of white cedar here in Warren County!



## HELP! A PRIVATE COMPANY IS SPRAYING MY NEIGHBOR'S YARD FOR MOSQUITOES! *by Patricia Sutton*

As wildlife garden owners, many of us have a neighbor who fears all bugs, feels one mosquito bite is too many, doesn't realize that ticks are part of our landscape, and tries to solve it all by hiring one of the many private companies that promises to take care of mosquitoes and ticks safely. Such companies even have the jargon down by promoting their approach as "pollinator friendly." I wish that were the case.

I am sharing this information to tell you that we who garden for birds, wildlife and pollinators do have rights as a nearby "non-target" property when a private company sprays a neighbor's yard. Many companies contract with homeowners to treat/spray every 3 weeks, sometimes with "added protection" packages to spray every 2 weeks. That spray can easily drift onto our nurtured wildlife habitats and take a huge toll on pollinators, since insects and drifting spray do not recognize property lines. Any treatment is unwelcome to those of us with these habitats, but an onslaught of treatments every 2 or 3 weeks could be a death sentence for most of the area's insects.

**Effects of Mosquito Sprays Used by Private Companies** - Heather Holm, author of three excellent books about native pollinators and their close association with native plants, <sup>1</sup> shared an article written by Colin Purrington, "Effects of mosquito sprays on humans, pets, and wildlife." It summarizes the active ingredients of the pesticides used by a number of companies offering to spray yards and 'eliminate mosquitoes.' Purrington shares that "pyrethroids, a widely used active ingredient of pesticides, kills monarch caterpillars, even weeks after application due to the presence of insecticide dried onto milkweed leaves. It also kills fireflies, which are most active in a yard in the late evening when mosquito-spraying franchises like to fog." <sup>2</sup>

Purrington's most mentioned group of unnoticed insects that are killed by evening pyrethroid applications are solitary bees, of which there are approximately 4,000 species in the United States. These bees collect pollen and nectar during the day but spend their evenings and nights in holes (e.g., mason bees) or clamped to low vegetation. Everyone has dozens of species of native bees in their yards but few people realize it. Therefore, when pesticide applicators claim their pyrethroid sprays don't harm bees or are bee friendly, that is entirely untrue.

**Mosquito Education** - Regarding mosquito issues in your neighborhood, education is key, and prevention is the first step. Checklists are available online and from your local government that can help property owners resolve mosquito-breeding sites they themselves may have created. Since mosquitoes need to breed in stagnant water, the most effective form of mosquito control is to remove all open containers, unclog gutters and seek out/empty any water collecting in the shallowest of places. Adding agitators or wildlife to water features will stop mosquito larvae from surviving within them. Print out a checklist and share it with any neighbors who have signed on for treatments by one of these private companies.



**Notification List (NO SPRAY List)** - If your municipality is spraying at night by truck, in many cases you can contact and request to have your property not to be sprayed. In 2009 I called my Cape May County Department of Mosquito Control and told them that I did not want my property sprayed (a half-acre wildlife garden & habitat full of native plants, birds, pollinators, and other wildlife). Since then I have been on their "Notification – NO SPRAY LIST" and I am notified when my town of Goshen, NJ, is going to be sprayed.

Speak up and make your voice heard; we all work too hard to create safe refuges for pollinators to let them be eliminated so easily and so completely. Stop any spraying that could drift into your refuge of native plants where so many pollinators are concentrated.

Case in point: I took this photo in Cape May Point - famous worldwide for the fall migration of birds and monarchs - on September 16, 2022, at the peak of their migration. The yard being sprayed by a private company is directly across the street from native plant gardens located at the south end of Lily Lake. The garden includes a large bed of butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) that was covered in monarch caterpillars when I took the photos. (continued on page 14)



If this caterpillar survives the spraying and continues through its life cycle, becoming an adult Monarch, it would be part of the migratory population of Monarchs that journey to Mexico to safely winter

© Patricia Sutton

# Burlington County

Coordinator, Harry Bratty | 856-630-6765 | [hnbratty@gmail.com](mailto:hnbratty@gmail.com)



## Bluebirds: Winter into Spring - by Nels Anderson

Near the end of winter, usually about February, many of us go through our bluebirds trails cleaning and sprucing, fixing and even moving the nest boxes in preparation for the approaching nesting season.

Boxes can contain a wide a variety of contents such as dead birds, mice, bats, bees/wasps, flying squirrels and so forth. Some nest boxes will contain a handful of poop - mostly dried out - as birds will roost in a bird box over and over. Often more than one bird will roost in a box and leave their poop, which is good news. The good news is that they are alive and well making a living here in winter. I appreciate the unspoken message which the poop tells me, they are

doing okay. I recall a report of as many as five bluebirds entering a box at dusk spending the night sharing their heat and making good use of the nest box.

Bluebirds will gather in winter, both male and female and at times dozens may be seen foraging together, but during nesting season the only blue the male will tolerate is his girlfriend. Bluebirds need a lot of room, 100 yards often more, or males might waste a lot of energy battling each other. They need their territory. This kind of reminds me of a true frontiersman, Daniel Boone. "When I see the smoke from a neighbors chimney, it is time to move on."



Some boxes remain unproductive as conditions change, especially in the pine forests as saplings take over. Moving them is a constant process; however, in groomed areas such as home yards the area stays more constant. I have moved a box that had remained empty - perhaps by just 100 feet - and suddenly it is occupied.

Our group monitors over 150 boxes and opening a box can provide a glimpse into nature at 20 inches or so as a brooding female might just sit, looking back. Reminds me sometimes of a NYC waitress, "Wadya want?" So with 150 boxes and 20 visits per year (mid March to mid August) we have 3,000 opportunities for that close look. I have said this many times: after twenty five years I know enough about this stuff to know how little I really know. And the only thanks I will ever need is seeing or hearing bluebirds.

*All photos by Nels Anderson*

# Cumberland County

Coordinator, Allen Jackson | 609-805-4073 | [aljaxn@aol.com](mailto:aljaxn@aol.com)

In February, Allen installed a bluebird box at the Lewis' property in Bridgeton. They became NJBBS members and also received a gift membership to NABS.

Allen also made an on-site Purple Martin consultation along the Tuckahoe River in Woodbine, Cape May County after a request was made. Many of the martin colonies in the area were fledged in gourds, so they may be more accustomed to this form of nesting vessels. He gave the owners 4 gourds that can be hung under their existing units to make it more attractive for the birds to start a new colony.

## SEEKING A CUMBERLAND COUNTY COORDINATOR

Allen Jackson is looking for someone to [take his position] as Cumberland County Coordinator. Personal health issues associated with himself and his wife dictate this. Please contact him at [aljaxn@aol.com](mailto:aljaxn@aol.com) for more information.

# Cape May County

Co-Coordinator, *Rae Griffiths* | 413-695-8291 | [raegriffiths105@gmail.com](mailto:raegriffiths105@gmail.com)  
 New Co-Coordinator, *Christine Albrecht* | 609-231-8062 | [cdaalbrecht@gmail.com](mailto:cdaalbrecht@gmail.com)



All photos by Devin Griffiths

## News from Cape May - by Rae Griffiths

Several folks reported seeing small flocks of bluebirds around their property this winter. I had a flock of six on and off, visiting my bird bath and suet feeders and occasionally sitting on and going in the nest box. It was exciting to see that one of the females was banded!

In February, I gave a presentation on bluebirds to the Cape May Garden Club and helped out at the NJBBS table at Eagle Fest in Mauricetown. It is always rewarding to talk to people about bluebirds!

Several months ago, I accepted a full-time job as Operations Manager at the Cape May Point Science Center. I am very excited about this new opportunity, but needless to say, I will have less time to support all of the wonderful bluebird monitors in the county. This is where the new Cape May County Co-Coordinator, Christine Albrecht comes in!

I am looking forward to my 5th season of coordinating monitoring efforts in CMC! Happy Bluebirding! ~ Rae

**Welcome, Christine!** I am excited to introduce you to the new Co-Coordinator of Cape May County, Christine Albrecht. Christine lives in the heart of Belleplain, is an accomplished bird researcher/enthusiast and someone I know well from her time as a research assistant at The Wetlands Institute. Christine will be supporting monitors in Dennis Township and Woodbine while I continue to support monitors in Upper, Middle and Lower Townships.

Below is Christine's introduction - in her own words. I am thrilled to have her on board!

*Hi Everyone,*

*My name is Christine Albrecht and I will be helping Rae with Eastern Bluebird monitoring! A little bit about me – I am 23 years old, I was born and raised in Cape May County and am currently living in Belleplain. I love all wildlife, but have a special place in my heart for birds. I love to bird watch, hike, kayak, pretty much anything to do with being outside. I'm a Stockton University graduate and I majored in environmental science. I have worked with the Cape May National Wildlife Refuge on multiple wildlife surveys and I've worked at The Wetlands Institute as a coastal bird research assistant.*

*I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and am looking forward to working with you in Cape May County! If you see a red Nissan in your yard with a "I brake for turtles" magnet on the back, just know it's me. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time via my phone number (609) 231-8062 or my email, [cdaalbrecht@gmail.com](mailto:cdaalbrecht@gmail.com). Let's have a great nesting season!*



## Hunterdon County

### Bluebirds at Home in the Front Yard - by Lori Jo Jamieson

New NJBBS and NABS members **Beth and Bruce Michael** have added two new setups to their Whitehouse Station, Hunterdon County property.

I met Beth on a Mindfulness Hike with the Hunterdon Hiking Club. As we chatted at lunch, she described how her husband likes to photograph the bluebirds that visit their backyard. As it turns out, Bruce's work is just amazing, and his "angry bluebird" photo graces the cover of this newsletter. If you are a NABS member, you've seen his photo on the cover of *Winter Bluebird*. Here is a progress report from Beth:



Beth and Bruce - photo by LJ Jamieson

*The bluebirds have been checking out the two new birdhouses you put up in our front yard. Also, we replaced the old bluebird house in the backyard with the Audubon birdhouse that we had on our fence post. We put a white PVC predator guard on that pole. We put a white PVC pipe on the pole of the birdfeeder. Bruce put out his game camera and saw that 3 raccoons came to the feeder, but they couldn't climb up the pole - it worked!*



Photos by Bruce Michael

### Hunterdon County needs a County Coordinator!

Co-Coordinators considered. NJBBS membership for minimum of 1 year is required. For more information about this important volunteer position, please email Lori Jo Jamieson at [bluebirdljj@gmail.com](mailto:bluebirdljj@gmail.com). Thank you.



### Bluebirds of Happiness

Bluebirds, also known as "The Bluebirds of Happiness" are associated with the concepts of joy and harmony.

Having the opportunity to host them in my yard, where I can constantly observe and photograph them, has been a very special privilege.

Personally, they symbolize hope.

With spring weather arriving quickly, their sightings are becoming more frequent.

Like spring, these birds make me think about renewal.

As nature wakes from the dormant cold, the warmth brings renewal of leaves, flowers and colors.

The beautiful color of the bluebird constantly reminds me to have an open heart and a positive outlook.

by Mary Pagana, Hunterdon County. Photo also by Mary Pagana.



# Monmouth County

Coordinator, Jean Montgomerie | 646-808-5158 | [jmontperson@gmail.com](mailto:jmontperson@gmail.com)

## Battle at the Battlefield! By Jean Montgomerie

3/24/2024 - Today I met Nano Mardones and Leslie Roche at Monmouth Battlefield State Park. Leslie found me by visiting the New Jersey Bluebird Society's Facebook Page and looking up Monmouth County. Nano and Leslie have been monitoring and setting up nestboxes at the Battlefield for THIRTY YEARS!

They were eager to get their data uploaded to Cornell's NestWatch website and to add the prior decades of digital and paper data to a site like NestWatch. We no sooner had gotten underway with our visit to GEOLOCATE their 12 nestboxes for Nestwatch when we saw that the State Forest Fire Service had control-burned (RXB) most of the park in the vicinity of the main park building, including where the nestboxes are!



*Leslie at Box 12, which luckily is mounted on a metal pole.  
Nano using his spotting scope. Photos by Jean Montgomerie*

While RXB is great at maintaining the bluebird grassland habitat, it does have its drawbacks- if the nestbox poles and boxes are not removed or doused with water before the fire is set, the boxes catch fire and anything made of PVC melts like butter. Oh no! Nano quickly found a Park Ranger and showed him the damage. The Forest Fire Service had recently undergone personnel changes and the message to remove the boxes or douse them with water was never received! While the Ranger got to work inserting T-posts into Boxes 9, 8 and 6, Box 5 was left unfixed and Box 6 was replanted in the ground under a tree. Soon the Ranger had gone and we were left to ponder what to do so this did not happen again.

We knew that the Park is control-burned yearly in some spots, and in others sporadically like this year.

The answer is . . . use T-posts (or metal pipe) instead of PVC pipes! Maybe *all* the PVC needs to be removed here at Monmouth Battlefield due to the unpredictable control burning regimen. It can happen again! Let the battle begin!



*Above: Boxes 5 and 8 lost their means of support!  
At left: map of nestboxes at Monmouth Battlefield State Park.  
Photos by Jean Montgomerie*

## Nature Wreaks Havoc in New Jersey



### HIGH WATER IN DENVILLE!

Alex Raybould of **Denville, Morris County** captured these photos of a birdhouse that was almost swept away by floodwaters in Denville - but it survived! The Rockaway River rose up by more than 10 feet. The box had been installed as part of a new nestbox trail in Denville. The center photo is of Alex's daughter, Amelia. She came up with the idea for the project and helped to install it. *Photo by Alex Raybould.*



**TIMBER!** A bluebird nestbox setup lost a battle with a tree during recent high winds at JR and Kathy Racer's property in **Alloway, Salem County**. The Wood Duck box needs its broken backboard fixed, but that bluebird nestbox set-up has seen better days! *Photo by Jane Gandy*



Courtesy of Valley Forge Audubon Society



## From Horse Barn to Workshop: in A Week

I had to face the facts: my horse barn was not being utilized. It was becoming a place for my extra clutter. After a bit of soul searching, I was emotionally able to throw out 90% of my old used horse supplies. Meanwhile, I had outgrown my current workshop space, which was filled full of bluebird boxes in need of repairs, and my purple martin supplies.



My new space has served me well so far, and I'm so glad I took the week off from work to get it done. ~ *Bernnie*

Next, I decided to do some big renovations. I cleaned, painted the walls and floor, and put up curtains. The best part was renovating the Hoosier Cabinet!



**Bernadine Visalli - VP South, Gloucester and Salem County Coordinator**  
856-986-4502 | [buttonwood61@yahoo.com](mailto:buttonwood61@yahoo.com)

# Ocean County

**Coordinator, Jean Montgomerie | 646-808-5158 | [jmontperson@gmail.com](mailto:jmontperson@gmail.com)**



**BAND RECOVERY REPORT** - Andrew and Gemma Major banded a fledgling Eastern Bluebird at Country Walk of Lake Ridge in Whiting, NJ on May 17, 2022. The banded bird was recovered and reported on October 25, 2023 near Moore State Park in Paxton, Massachusetts. "As the bluebird flies", that's about 201 miles. Sadly, the report stated that this bluebird was "killed by a barn cat".

Next to habitat loss and fragmentation, cats are considered the most serious threat to songbird populations worldwide. In a few months, one feral cat can kill all the bluebirds you helped fledge in a year. Since some areas only have one or two pairs of nesting bluebirds, the loss of even one bird can have a real impact on local populations.

Free-roaming outdoor cats typically live less than five years, while indoor cats often live to be 17 or older. Outdoor cats are exposed to many hazards, including cars, poisoning, animal attacks, human abuse, traps, contagious diseases of which many are fatal (feline leukemia, feline distemper, infectious peritonitis, Immunodeficiency Virus, upper respiratory infections, rabies, plague, cat scratch disease, toxoplasmosis), and parasites. Vet bills associated with tapeworm, ringworm, roundworm, or hookworm and flea infestations, and abscesses can be substantial. Outdoor cats may also transport ticks into the home, increasing the likelihood that family members will contract tick-borne illnesses like Lyme Disease.

Read more at <https://www.sialis.org/cats/>

## Somerset County

**Coordinator, April Tarantino**  
**732-735-3511**  
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At April Tarantino's home, there's a pair of Eastern Bluebirds that seems as interested in her as she is in them. In the middle photo, the male appears to be looking for a great workout!



Photos by April Tarantino



**Butler Park** is located in the extreme southeastern corner of Washington Township and partially located within Mansfield Township, along the Musconetcong River in Warren County. This residential community was established in 1927, when a Mr. Butler purchased a farm and subdivided it into building lots. The community had its own baseball team, and a fire company was established in 1953.

William Butler also opened an amusement park here - with a penny arcade, carousel, roller-skating rink, swimming, and more. In the 1930s, people could go for paddleboat rides up and down the river. The park closed in 1954, but the 1880's Herschell - Spillman Carousel is preserved and in operation at Carousel Village, Route 413, Wrightstown, Pa.

Grace Kocher remembers visiting the Butler Amusement Park as a child, when her family were still living on the Hunterdon County farm. She recalls getting separated from her mother, but Grace was given good advice and waited for her mother at their car. *Carousel photo courtesy of the [Friends of Lebanon Township Museum](#).*

**Warren County Needs a County Coordinator** Co-Coordinators considered. NJBBS membership for minimum of 1 year is required. For more information about this important volunteer position, please email Lori Jo Jamieson at [bluebirdljj@gmail.com](mailto:bluebirdljj@gmail.com).

# Warren County



**My Bluebird Story** by Grace Kocher - Butler Park, Warren County (as told to Lori Jo Jamieson)

**How long have you lived in this historic community?** I moved to Butler Park in 1964, after we sold our family farm in Hunterdon County. It now has a nursery, is home to Woodlands Wildlife Refuge. There are two houses on the property now. Wish we could have kept it in the family.

**When did bluebirds become a part of your life?** When my daughter was in third grade, I coordinated programs in conjunction with the PTO at Mansfield Township Elementary School here in Warren County. I heard about a retired teacher, Mr. Junius Birchard, who dedicated his time and energy to re-establishing nesting sites for bluebirds, which I believe were endangered at the time. Mr. Birchard was thrilled to share his knowledge of bluebirds and the importance of nesting sites, as well as the specific requirements for the houses. He also emphasized the importance of monitoring the boxes, including removal of rival birds' nests, including English (House) Sparrows and European Starlings. I also became aware at that time there was a big difference between bluebirds and blue jays!



The children were each given the chance to help build a bluebird house to take home. When my daughter and I returned home we showed her house to my husband, and he promptly installed it on a pole near our home. Thus began a lifetime pursuit of building and distributing bluebird houses to friends and neighbors that hopefully resulted in reestablishment of bluebird habitat in our area. I've been a Life Member of NABS for around 25 years now.

A few years later we had a call from Mary Janatotos, who lived in Maryland at the time. Ms. Janatotos asked if we could meet at the Blue Army Shrine in Asbury, NJ. She thought it an ideal spot for bluebirds. We met her there with a few boxes and installed them at the site. I don't think the boxes were monitored regularly and, therefore, no longer exist. *(Editor's note: I'd like to explore the possibility of putting monitored nestboxes on this property again.)*

**What led you to NJBBS?** After I retired, I contacted Allen Jackson, then-President of NJBBS. Since I had more time, it became important to broaden my knowledge of those beautiful birds and share my passion with others. Hopefully, they would be encouraged to learn even more about them.

Allen told me you had recently moved to Warren County and were very passionate about bluebirds, too. I'm grateful for the advice regarding the necessity to put a predator guard on my nestbox, restricting access to snakes, since the Musconetcong River is just down the hill.

You have been a true blessing to me by sharing your knowledge, installing and stopping regularly to check my nestbox. I appreciate your fresh veggies and homemade soup as well!

**Did you see bluebirds here this winter?** Yes, I had bluebirds stay all winter. That was the first time I recall that happening, although it is not unusual. My bluebirds left my yard because of sparrows and starlings and are nesting in my niece's nestboxes a short distance from my house. I used a bluebird meal recipe from NABS Bluebird, but the starlings ate it - none left for my bluebirds! *(Read more about Butler Park on page 12.)*

**More about Julius Birchard** - Here is an article excerpt from *Sialia*, Winter, 1984:



*The John and Norah Lane Award for an outstanding contribution to bluebird conservation by an individual was made to the following persons: Junius Birchard of Hackettstown, NJ, who has been a major force in increasing bluebird awareness in New Jersey. Working through the public schools he has given innumerable illustrated talks and demonstrations to children and adults, has supplied 5,000 precut nesting boxes at cost, and maintains and monitors his own trail.*

*Source: Sialia - The Quarterly Journal Of The North American Bluebird Society, "Presidential Points" by Lillian Lund Files, pg.2.*

*PHOTO: Junius Birchard (left) receives the John and Norah Lane Award from Award Committee Chairwoman Anne Sturm. Photo by Robert P. Solem.*

(continued from page 5 - *Spraying for Mosquitoes!*)

If we (individuals and communities) create pollinator habitats with plantings of native plants, it is our obligation and responsibility to protect them from incidents like this. Otherwise all we have accomplished is to have created ecological traps where we are dooming the very pollinators we are trying to benefit by concentrating them in potentially hazardous sites. Thank you for caring!



*Pat Sutton lives near Cape May, the world-renowned migratory crossroads that is famous for its hawk, owl, songbird, shorebird, dragonfly, and Monarch butterfly migration. She has keenly studied the natural world for over 40 years. Pat and her husband Clay's landmark book, "Birds and Birding at Cape May" (Stackpole Books, 2006), is the in-depth result of their efforts over many years documenting and protecting the migration and the hometown that they so love.*

**References:**

<sup>1</sup> PAT SUTTON – Pat's website is rich with resources for the native gardener and includes lists of the best plants for birds. Add it to your "must-visit" list, and be sure to sign up for her "Gardening Gang"! <http://www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com>. Read the original post here: <http://www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/help-private-company-spraying-neighbors-yard-for-mosquitoes/>

<sup>2</sup> HEATHER HOLM - <https://www.pollinatorsnativeplants.com/>

<sup>3</sup> COLIN PURRINGTON - <https://colinpurrington.com/2018/09/buzz-on-mosquito-sprays/>

**NJ Residents: Here is a CHECKLIST to follow if a Private Company is Spraying the Neighbor's Yard for Mosquitoes**

if your neighbor has hired a private company ('Company') to treat their property for mosquitoes, ticks, etc. and you fear, for good reason, that any spray will drift onto your property and kill the wealth of beneficial pollinators that your garden attracts, concentrates, and benefits:

1. Your rights: You have rights not to be drifted upon as a non-target site when a 'Company' is hired by a neighbor (the actual rule is: 'No person applying a pesticide shall permit drift or other movement of the pesticide to infringe on a non-target site, under circumstances where such infringement should be reasonably foreseeable').
2. Call the DEP Hotline, 1-877-WARN-DEP (1-877-927-6337) and report your concerns about pesticide drift onto your property during applications by a 'Company' hired by a neighbor.
3. Explain to the DEP Hotline (and/or your county's NJ-DEP Pesticide Control Program inspector, see # 4) that you garden for wildlife (including pollinators) and that your property is a safe harbor for them and concentrates them. List what efforts you have made to provide for beneficial insects (native plants, host plants, wildlife pond, pollinator garden, etc.) and list insects you've attracted to your yard.
4. Calls to the DEP Hotline (mentioned in #2) like this are then directed to the NJ-DEP Pesticide Control Program (PCP). You can also call the NJ-DEP PCP directly at (609) 984-6568 and ask to speak with your county's PCP inspector (each county has an inspector). Ask for your inspector's email address so that you can cc them when you write to the 'Company' hired by your neighbor to treat for mosquitoes, ticks, etc.
5. In correspondence to the 'Company' copy in your county's NJ-DEP Pesticide Control Program inspector (this lets the 'Company' know that if their spray 'drifts' onto your property, they will be held accountable, and by whom.
6. Write to the 'Company' stating concerns about their applications in your neighborhood, noting the above points (that you have rights, that your property concentrates beneficial pollinators, etc.), and request that they provide notification one-day in advance of any upcoming treatments, listing date & time, applicator's name & license #, product Brand name & copy of the label showing both active & inactive ingredients. Be sure to cc your county's NJ-DEP Pesticide Control Program inspector.

David Donnelly, a Garden Gang member who successfully thwarted a neighbor's hiring of one such 'Company' shared that the 'Company' does not have to provide this at all to any neighboring sites unless they are asked to do so. That is why it is important to copy in the DEP Inspector for proof that you asked. There is no rule stating a time limit of notification either, but he suggests asking for one day notice so you can make yourself available to watch and video the application if necessary.