

Maryland Bluebird Society's Bluebird Chatter

Summer/Fall 2008

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Annual Membership Meeting and Picnic

Our August 9th Picnic was held at Black Hill Regional Park in Boyds, MD. Approximately 21 people attended and a great time was had by all. The weather was perfect—sunny, breezy with temperatures in the upper 70's. Hot dogs were grilled, pineapple upside-down cake was shared as were lots of conversations about our beloved bluebirds. Society members displayed nestboxes of different styles as well as feeders, sparrow traps and various bluebird literature and resource materials. Black Hill Regional Park offers much to its visitors, including a nature center, butterfly garden, hiking trails and the breathtakingly beautiful lake view. We hope more of our members will consider attending next year's annual membership picnic and share in the fun!

News & Notes:

The time has come where many MBS memberships have expired and must be renewed. You may join or **renew your membership to MBS** by visiting our website. Options include using Paypal or you may print the online membership application, complete it and mail it with your check. Visit www.mdbluebirdsociety.org today and bring your membership up to date.



A variety of nestboxes and feeders were on display at the 2nd Annual picnic at Black Hill Regional Park.

Nesting News From Around the State

As bluebird nesting season begins to wind down in our beautiful state of Maryland, several bluebird monitors have submitted their season totals for 2008. MBS President, Ed Escalante, monitors a trail of 33 boxes at Little Bennett Regional Park and reports that, as of 7/29/08, his trail has fledged 94 bluebirds and 36 tree swallows. 30 of his nestboxes are paired and three are single boxes. Ed considers 2008 a successful year and still has a couple of nests with young yet to fledge. MBS Treasurer, Diane Seward, reports the following data from Potomac: Carolina Chickadee: 2 clutches, 7 eggs, 7 nestlings, 6 fledglings; Tufted Titmouse: 3 attempts all invaded by house wrens. (Cont'd on page 2)

President's Perch

First, I would like to thank the Board Members of the Maryland Bluebird Society for having me as President of our group, and I will try my best to not let you down. This has been a good year for MBS, though we lost our original President, Fawzi Emad, to California.

Through the efforts of our energetic secretary, Kathy Kremnitzer, this Spring saw the dedication of a bluebird trail in Middletown Park to the late Betty Nichols. The dedication ceremony was held in April and was well attended by many of Betty's family and friends as well as MBS members and supporters. Parks Superintendent Earl Eyler spoke of the fondness Park workers had for Betty and he also recounted some of the stories workers had shared with him of Betty's antics. The dedication is a testament to Betty's commitment to her bluebirds.

John Corgan, our former President, has set-up a camera in a bluebird box to capture the activity inside. Though we haven't attracted nesting bluebirds, we have had them inspect the inside of the box. Also captured on digital photos are house sparrows, house wrens, chickadees, starlings, and nuthatches. It has been fun to watch.

Early in August we held our Second Annual Picnic at Black Hill Regional Park, and it was a grand success, with special guests Denise Gibbs, Naturalist, and Michael Smith, photographer, in attendance. In the coming months we will strive to maintain our momentum, keeping in mind our primary interest in helping the beautiful bluebirds in our midst. Sincerely,
Ed Escalante, President

An Interesting Situation

Bluebird enthusiast Matt Storms has had an interesting nesting season on his Howard County trail. During the month of June, in one of a set of paired boxes, Matt had a female tree swallow lay 3 eggs. A female house wren laid 5 eggs in the 2nd box. The first egg of each clutch was laid on the same day. It was at this point things started to get interesting! The female tree swallow decided she wanted the house wren's box, so Matt assumed the house wren would simply switch boxes, remove the tree swallow eggs and start her nesting over. Instead, the house wren began incubating the 3 tree swallow eggs! Meanwhile, the tree swallow began laying another clutch of eggs in the box with the house wren eggs. (Matt believes that the box switch occurred before the house wren began incubating her eggs.) So, it looked as though the female tree swallow would incubate her eggs along with the 5 house wren eggs . . . she added feathers to the nest UNDER the house wren eggs and went on to lay 3 more of her own eggs to the nest, for a total of 8 eggs! Matt was beginning to show some concern at this point because it looked as though both females were incubating eggs that belonged to the opposite species. He questioned whether the baby house wrens would survive after fledging, since tree swallows fledge from the nest and are self-sufficient (feeding on the wing) whereas baby house wrens are fed by their parents until they become independent. As it turned out, two of the 3 tree swallow eggs being incubated by the house wren DID hatch and mama and papa house wren were very good parents. In the other box, 3 of the house wren eggs hatched, along with 1 tree swallow egg (2 of the house wren nestlings later died) and Mr. and Mrs. Tree Swallow were busy feeding "their" remaining 2 chicks. Matt had been in contact with a wildlife rehabber and was given the suggestion to wait until the nestlings were a bit older and then attempt to switch babies back to the appropriate parents. The plan was for the newest tree swallow hatchling to go to the rehabber since the other swallow nestlings were much older. This plan changed when the smaller of the original swallow hatchlings died. On the advice of the rehabber, the 1 remaining swallow (still with the House wren) was taken to the rehabber, raised and released. The house wren hatchling was returned to the house wren nest, but had a physical disability and was removed from the nest just before fledging. It went to live with the rehabber. The youngest tree swallow was raised by its parents and fledged without any problems. Whew! Good job, Matt, for going above and beyond the calling of a bluebird landlord!

The Monitor's Corner

Do you have a question about monitoring bluebird nestboxes? A problem with a nesting situation that you'd like some advice on? Maybe you have some good tips to share for putting together a monitoring kit or simply would like to know how to get started with becoming a bluebird landlord. Perhaps you've been a bluebird monitor and have an interesting story to share. If so, this is the place for you! Please submit questions, advice, tips and experiences to one of our MBS Officers via the www.mdbluebirdsociety.org web site. Your communication will be addressed in a future issue and shared with our membership.

Nesting News, cont'd.

Eastern Bluebird: 42 eggs, 29 hatched, 25 fledged. Three adult female bluebirds lost in May due to cold, wet weather. Diane had no 3rd nesting attempts which was unusual for her bluebirds.

Donna Marino, in upper Montgomery County, submits the following data: 64 Eastern bluebirds fledged (with 4 still in the nest), 10 Chickadees fledged, 3 Tree swallows fledged, 12 Tufted titmice fledged and 5 Carolina Wrens fledged. Though 13 eggs were lost to snake predation and 2 babies died due to the cold, wet spring, she reports that this is her best nesting season to date! Board member Jacalyn Thomas has had a disastrous nesting season with the loss of 4 baby bluebirds due to the cold, wet spring. She also lost a male bluebird to a house sparrow attack.

MBS Secretary, Kathy Kremnitzer, submits mixed results this season. While there was success with her trails in Frederick and Washington County, she also had losses due to the cold, wet spring and reports more losses of bluebird and tree swallow young to house sparrow attack than in years past. Kathy's 30 nestboxes fledged 77 bluebirds and 55 tree swallows with 3 tree swallow nestlings killed by house sparrow attack. She reports that 15 bluebird nestlings were killed by house sparrow attack and 17 nestlings were lost during the cold, wet early spring. Approximately 10 bluebird eggs were lost to house wrens. She further submits that there were fewer 3rd nesting attempts this year than in years past and attributes this to the many failed attempts due to weather and house sparrow interference.

MBS would like to publish nesting results from other members as well. You may submit your nesting data to one of the officers listed on our web site and the information will appear in a future issue of Bluebird Chatter.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about bluebirds, visit:
www.nabluebirdsociety.org

www.sialis.org

To learn more about bluebirds and bluebirders in our area, visit the Maryland Bluebird Society at:

www.mdbluebirdsociety.org