



## Passing the Gavel

In the spring of 2008, I was elected as President of the Maryland Bluebird Society, a responsibility that I felt honored to take on. We have steadily grown, and made ourselves more visible to the outside world of bluebirders, by making our presence known at the North American Bluebird Society conferences, giving talks to local groups, and generally reaching out to others. We have increased the number of County Coordinators, one of the keys to our success. New members have stepped forward to serve as members of the Board of Directors, another key to our future development. This year we will be celebrating our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Picnic. This gathering has been a delightful success, attracting others to our group and providing a forum for the exchange ideas and experiences. This past May we assisted with the "Bluebirds Forever Festival", held at Black Hill Regional Park, where several of our members played important roles in the program. Most importantly, I now see more bluebirds when I am outdoors! Surely we have had a role in that. I could go on, because I'm very proud of the MBS. These are things that you have accomplished as a group, and these successes are yours.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your President, but I pass the gavel on to a marvelous lady, Kathy Kremnitzer, who is not only very dedicated to bluebirds, but is a talented leader. I'm not going anywhere. I will remain in your ranks providing whatever support is needed, because I enjoy being a part of an enthusiastic group, dedicated to helping bluebirds and other cavity nesters.

Ed Escalante, Past President



## President's Perch

In April of this year I was elected to succeed Ed Escalante as President of the Maryland Bluebird Society. As this is not a task that I take lightly, I will attempt to continue to guide MBS in a positive direction with the assistance of our small but dedicated group of volunteers. It is my hope that we can grow our membership and increase participation from all areas of our beautiful state. I would like to see each one of Maryland's 23 counties represented by a county coordinator. At present, only 10 counties have representation. I would also like to see our web site become a more useful tool for bluebirders to turn to for information, assistance and fellowship.

I would like to thank Ed for his years of service as President and to express my relief that he will remain an active part of our society. I would also like to thank Diane Seward for the hard work and dedication she has given since our inception and, I'm sure, will continue to give in the coming years as Treasurer for MBS. Stan Fisher was elected to serve as Vice President and Bonnie Bell as Secretary. As they are both relatively new members to our board, these are exciting times indeed!

Our Board of Directors is hard at work in many areas and I encourage you all to reach out and join us by becoming involved. We've come a long way since that first meeting in 2004, but there's ground yet to cover! Ed nicknamed me "Spark Plug" years ago and I will try my best to live up to that name.

Kathy Kremnitzer, President

### **Maryland Bluebird Society Officers and Board of Directors**

#### **Officers:**

**President:** Kathy Kremnitzer  
**V. President:** Stan Fisher  
**Secretary:** Bonnie Bell  
**Treasurer:** Diane Seward

[www.mdbluebirdsociety.org](http://www.mdbluebirdsociety.org)

#### **Directors:**

Fawzi Emad  
J. Pamela Ford  
Jeff Ford  
Michael L. Smith  
Jacalyn Thomas  
Denise Farmer  
Matt Storms  
Anne Sturm

# MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBERS

## By: Diane Seward, MBS Treasurer and Founding Member

Diane lives in Potomac (Montgomery County) with her husband, Tim.

On a beautiful morning in mid-November, I looked out my kitchen window just in time to see four or five bluebirds checking out one of our backyard nest boxes. I opened the window to hear the blues chattering away, clearly enjoying a lovely fall day. The sighting brought home to me once again how very fortunate we are to be involved, hands on, in their conservation.

My very first sighting of bluebirds took place about 25 years ago; it was mid-fall, and my husband and I had just raked leaves away from our backyard fence. Suddenly, several blues flew down from the sky, perched on the fence, and began hunting for grubs and insects in the patch of grass that we had just cleared. That spring, we hung our first box on a tree (big mistake), but it did not attract any cavity-nesting pairs (not even house sparrows) for a couple of years. Eventually, we had our first bluebird nesting attempt, which was successful, producing four nestlings, all of which fledged.

In those early years, I relied exclusively on the Donald and Lillian Stokes' Guide To Attracting Bluebirds. It was pretty helpful, with photos of nestling stages, competitors' nests, and a description of predators and how to counteract them. During one of those early years, a snake got into that tree-mounted box and devoured young nestlings. That first lesson was painful.

Fast-forwarding to the mid-1990s, I joined the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Bluebird-L, an excellent real-time discussion group focusing on bluebird (and other cavity-nesting species) nesting behavior and often providing solutions to problems raised by the participants. Through Bluebird-L, I became acquainted with the late, great Betty Nichols, of Middletown, who was my mentor until she died in early 2003. Betty took me to see a nest of 10-day-old bluebird chicks in Antietam. The box was featured as one of the Cornell Lab's nest cams. Betty introduced me to the Huber house sparrow trap and explained quite matter-of-factly how to deal with trapped sparrows.....put succinctly, show no mercy! Betty also gave me my first batch of mealworms, which I put out summer and winter for several years, even growing my own for a year or so. She told me about Bluebird Gourmet, a home-made treat of sunflower hearts, peanut butter and suet or lard, which I now favor.

Through Betty, I met Fawzi Emad, who showed me his well-designed nesting boxes and mealworm feeding stations, and recommended a kinder, gentler way to control house sparrows, which I have adopted. Fawzi was the organizing force behind the creation of MBS, in the fall of 2003. I attended the initial board meeting, together with Ed Escalante, John Corgan, Pam Ford, Paul Kilduff, Jacalyn Thomas, and the late Dave Magness, among others.

Today, I monitor a neighborhood trail of about a dozen nesting boxes. The boxes host Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees, in addition to Eastern Bluebirds. In the 15 or so years that I have kept track of boxes in our neighborhood, we have had one White-Breasted Nuthatch nesting attempt, which was successful, and early on, successful titmouse and chickadee nestings.. Recently, however, House Wrens have doomed those nesting attempts, while wren guards have brought only occasional relief. Bluebirds are less threatened by the house wrens on my trail, and our house sparrow population has been substantially reduced, thanks to advice from Fawzi Emad and Betty Nichols.

Bluebirds never fail to delight and amaze me. I admire their spirit, perseverance and dedication. This past summer, sadly, a clutch of nestlings perished in 105-degree heat when they were 15 days old. Undeterred, the day after the catastrophe was discovered and the box cleaned (nestlings buried), the industrious pair built another nest in the same box and raised another clutch, this time successfully.

My favorite online site for information about bluebirds is [www.sialis.org](http://www.sialis.org), and I recommend the Cornell Lab's Bluebird-L and our own online links to officers and county coordinators for prompt responses to pressing questions, especially during nesting season. I participate in the Cornell Lab's annual Feederwatch and Nestwatch projects, as well as its annual Great Backyard Bird Count and Audubon's Christmas Bird Count.

In addition to my bluebird activities, I serve as a Levelwalker for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Association. As a levelwalker, I submit occasional reports of the flora and fauna sighted on the Canal near the Great Falls Tavern, which is about five miles northwest of I-95, on the Potomac River. My husband and I enjoy walking along the river in winter to catch sight of the Buffleheads, cormorants, Snow Geese and other water fowl that overwinter near Great Falls. I serve on the board of the Friends of the Historic Great Falls Tavern, a nonprofit group dedicated to conserving the Tavern and the Charles F. Mercer, which is a mule-driven 19 century packet boat that takes passengers for short cruises through a lock on the C&O Canal.

# Maryland Bluebird Society's County Coordinators

MBS's County Coordinator Program is an important aspect of what our society is all about, helping bluebirders throughout the state when troubles arise. These volunteers accept phone calls and e-mails and are ready to assist with information and resources on the spur of the moment. Do you need help figuring out how to set up your nestbox? Maybe you have an abandoned nesting and don't know why. Perhaps house sparrows are plaguing your neighborhood and you don't know what to do. Well, an MBS County Coordinator is always willing to listen and share whatever knowledge and experience they can with you.

Thirteen of the twenty-three counties in Maryland do not currently have coordinators. If you live in a county other than those listed below and would be interested in serving as a coordinator, please contact Ed Escalante at [escalante@his.com](mailto:escalante@his.com).

## Baltimore County

Matt Storms  
H 410 686-2089  
C 410 952-4019  
[bigmatblue@gmail.com](mailto:bigmatblue@gmail.com)

## Frederick County, Washington County

Kathy Kremnitzer  
H 301 662-7818  
C 301 676-9371  
[griffin459@myactv.net](mailto:griffin459@myactv.net)

## Calvert County

Robin Wedewer  
C 410 474-7639  
W 410 414-5718  
[robin@datazoneresearch.com](mailto:robin@datazoneresearch.com)

## Harford County

Pam Ford  
H 410 569-2205  
C 443-617-5556  
[jpford@comcast.net](mailto:jpford@comcast.net)

## Carroll County

Felicia Lovelett  
H 410 489-7169  
C 301 801-1969  
[flovelett@verizon.net](mailto:flovelett@verizon.net)

## Montgomery County

Ed Escalante  
301 972-3241  
[escalante@his.com](mailto:escalante@his.com)

## Charles County, Prince George's County

Jacalyn Thomas  
301 203-5553  
[j-rthomas@mindspring.com](mailto:j-rthomas@mindspring.com)

## Worcester County

Janice Ward  
410 632-0671  
C 443 614-8318  
[jward43.jw@gmail.com](mailto:jward43.jw@gmail.com)

## MBS on Facebook!!!

Did you know that you can find us on Facebook? Come visit and let us know how your nesting season is going!

[MBS on Facebook](#)

## Upcoming Events

MBS will host its 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Membership Meeting and Picnic on Saturday, October 1, 2011, at Black Hill Regional Park in Boyds, Maryland. Watch your e-mail for specifics. All are welcome to attend!

# NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

## BLUEBIRDS FOREVER!!!!

On Sunday, May 15, 2011, bluebirds and bluebird lovers were everywhere . . . . at least at the Bluebirds Forever Festival at Black Hill Regional Park in Boyds, MD. Over 400 people attended the 3 hour program, taking part in bluebird crafts, story times, trail hikes, exhibits, demonstrations, games, music and much more.

The Festival was organized by Park Naturalists, Friends and Volunteers of Black Hill Visitor Center and the Maryland Bluebird Society. Volunteer naturalists Ed Escalante and Donna Marino gave an informational talk, Beautiful Bluebirds, for those interested in attracting bluebirds to their yards and learning how to help them survive. Noted wildlife photographer, Michael L. Smith, presented an amazing slide show of his photography over the years. Students from Yellow Springs Elementary School in Frederick County presented their play, The Quest for a Nest, and even performed an encore.



Students from Yellow Springs Elementary in Frederick perform their play, The Quest for a Nest. The play was directed by school counselor (and beloved thespian) Sandra Johansen.  
Photo by Nancy Jones

## BALTIMORE COUNTY



Papa bluebird perches near his nesting site at Pine Grove Middle School in Baltimore County.  
Photo by Matt Storms

In January 2010, MBS's Baltimore County Coordinator, Matt Storms, visited Pine Grove Middle School. He presented a talk about bluebirds to the 30 students of PGMS's Environmental Club. The group worked together, under Matt's direction, to build nine Gilwood nestboxes and six NABS side-opening nestboxes. In late March 2010, five of the nestboxes were set up at the school, equipped complete with predator baffles. Within a week one of the boxes had a bluebird nesting in progress! The first egg was laid on 4/14/10. Though there were a few issues with house sparrows, Matt quickly brought the situation under control and 2010 season totals for this fledgling trail were 15 eastern bluebirds and 5 tree swallows.

As only five of the constructed nestboxes were used on the school's trail, the remaining ten boxes were donated. Some went to Maryland bluebirders, while others went to enthusiasts in Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. One box was even sent to South Carolina, to a woman who had bluebirds nesting in her mailbox! The ten nestboxes were donated to various individuals on behalf of The Maryland Bluebird Society, thanks to Matt.

A sixth nestbox was added to the Pine Grove Middle School's trail this season and was the first box chosen for nesting by bluebirds. As of April 30<sup>th</sup>, the trail had one active tree swallow nest and two active bluebird nests! Matt returned to Pine Grove Middle School on May 11<sup>th</sup> for another presentation and nest check with the Environmental Club. Another nestbox was added to the trail, bringing the total to 7. Unfortunately, the trail suffered some lost nestings and damage as a result of vandalism-one nestbox with an active tree swallow nest was stolen from its location. The box was replaced immediately and currently has bluebirds nesting in it. The displaced tree swallow pair relocated to another box and successfully fledged 3 young.

A third pair of bluebirds began nesting the first week of June and fledged 4 young on July 13<sup>th</sup>. Matt expressed his appreciation to the students and staff at PGMS for their support of bluebird conservation. As of this date, the trail has fledged 12 bluebirds with 10 still waiting to fledge. Matt plans to work with the students at Pine Grove Middle School again next year and hopes to add even more nestboxes to the trail.