



The Maryland Bluebird Society's

BLUEBIRD CHATTER

Volume 4, Issue 2

Summer/Fall 2010



Hatching sure is hard work! A newly hatched bluebird chick takes a well-deserved rest.
Photo by Kathy Kremnitzer

Annual Picnic and Membership Meeting

The Maryland Bluebird Society will host its 4th Annual Membership meeting and picnic on Saturday, September 25th in Shelter F at Black Hill Regional Park in Boyds from 2 – 6 p.m. MBS members, friends and family are all welcome to attend. Hot dogs and drinks will be provided and attendees are asked to bring a dish to share.

Nestboxes, feeders and other equipment will be on display and experts will be on hand to answer questions and offer advice.

Door prizes will include various MBS logo items and a bluebird nestbox set-up including pole and predator baffle.

Please RSVP to Kathy at (301) 662-7818 or e-mail to griffin459@myactv.net.

President's Perch

by Ed Escalante

Become A County Coordinator

A county coordinator is a local contact for bluebird enthusiasts in need of help, and as such, is very important to the success of a bluebird trail. So, what does it take to become a county coordinator for the Maryland Bluebird Society? First, a coordinator must want to help bluebirds. They must be knowledgeable about the needs of these beautiful birds and be willing to search for information they do not readily have. Second, a coordinator must be willing to help others, especially beginners, with questions about their bluebird boxes and trails. These are the most important attributes for a county coordinator.

The state of Maryland has 24 counties and the Maryland Bluebird Society currently has coordinators for only 10 of them, which means that we have 14 vacancies. We have coordinators for Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Montgomery, Prince Georges, Washington and Worcester counties. If you live or work in a county not listed, please consider becoming a county coordinator for the Maryland Bluebird Society. You'll get the satisfaction that comes from helping bluebirds and bluebird enthusiasts in your community. To volunteer, visit our web site at www.mdbluebirdsociety.org and contact any of the officers. The bluebirds need you.

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

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

Monitor's Corner

Question: This year's nesting season went pretty well for my 4 nestboxes, but I did have a problem with a tree swallow nesting and I didn't know where to turn for help. Can you give me some information on who I can contact for advice in case of an emergency?

Answer: MBS has a small group of people, called county coordinators, who are available to assist you. Though not all counties have coordinators at this time, visit our web site at www.mdbluebirdsociety.org and contact the coordinator in the county nearest you. MBS Secretary, Kathy Kremnitzer, serves as primary contact for MBS and would also be happy to help. You can reach her by e-mail via the "Contact Us" tab on our web site.

Also, you can visit www.sialis.org for up-to-date information on bluebirds and other native cavity nesters. There are also some wonderful on-line forums you can participate in. The Garden Web Bluebirding Forum can be found at <http://nature.gardenweb.com/forums/bluebird/> and the Bluebird Nut Café is located at <http://bluebirdnutcafe.yuku.com/>

Both of these forums have many seasoned bluebirding veterans willing to offer advice and suggestions.



Volunteer Wayne Leadbetter works with MBS member and trail monitor Dedra Salitrik to put the finishing touches on a newly-installed nestbox.

New Bluebird Trail in Frederick

On Saturday, April 3rd, a perfect spring morning, a tiny development of twelve homes was completed in Frederick. Stretching out along the wide Tuscarora Creek floodplain path on both sides of the pedestrian bridge in the Worman's Mill community is a trail of 12 brand new bluebird boxes. These boxes were built, donated and installed by the Maryland Bluebird Society and Worman's Mill resident volunteers. The boxes were ready for occupancy just in time for nesting season.

The installation took less than three hours with the expertise of Maryland Bluebird Society Secretary, Kathy Kremnitzer, and her husband, Dan, who sped up the installation process with tools and practical knowledge. MBS President, Ed Escalante, assisted in selecting the best open meadow locations for the boxes.

Denise Farmer and Matt Storms drove all the way from White Marsh to offer their muscle and brain power to the task. Matt's ingenious nestbox and baffle designs are sure to impress the bluebirds as much as they did the team. John and Dedra Salitrik garnered permission for the trail from the community management. Their planned move to Frederick this summer will allow them to continue monitoring this trail near their new home. Finally, resident Wayne Leadbetter, another handyman with the tools and wisdom to assist with installation complications, answered the call for help.

At the end of the installation process, as the group headed back to their cars, a single bluebird perched at the edge of the tree-lined floodplain, already inspecting the first of the new boxes. This turned out to be the first box with a nest.

The Salitriks have monitored the boxes, removing wasp nests from each one and coating the inside walls and ceiling first with candle wax and later with ivory soap. Within two weeks, even with several days of chilly weather and rain, two of the boxes had the beginnings of bluebird nests.

To protect the nesting bluebirds from vandalism, residents were urged through the neighborhood newsletter to continue their walks along the creek. The expectation is that the more folks are seen passing by the boxes, the less likely it will be that vandalism will occur. In addition, each of the boxes has been closed with a special drive screw. This will make them more difficult for passersby to open.

Meet Your Board Members

First in a series of articles to acquaint MBS members with those serving as Officers and Board Members

By: Board Member Anne Sturm

In the early 1970's, like most bluebirders at some time, I wanted to do something that would help the native bird population in my area of Montgomery County. I lived on a horse farm with lots of open pasture so started with purple martins. Success with purple martins led me to bluebird conservation. In the beginning, I can assure you that I did EVERYTHING WRONG. Dark houses put in prime wren habitat led to more wrens. Fortunately, I was a member of the Audubon Naturalist Society and so was Dr. Zeleny. In reading the newsletter, I saw that Dr. Zeleny was leading a bluebird walk on his trail. I went and from then on I had an expert mentor. It embarrasses me to remember all the times that I called Dr. Zeleny. The soon-to-be founder of NABS was my "hot line". As a payback for all that expert help, he ask me to join him, and Mary Janetatos and so many others to get the North American Bluebird Society launched. It was a privilege to serve on the first board of directors. Thanks to friends and neighbors, my bluebird trail took off and I was soon happily monitoring boxes on my own and other people's farms throughout the Barnesville area. In November of 1979, **Parade** magazine ran a cover story about the bluebird. In that article, interested people could write to NABS, send a quarter and we would send them nest box plans. Our little band of bluebirders was totally unprepared for the 80,000 plus responses we received. My family, my neighbors and every child of "opening age" spent hours going through thousands of letters, untaping the quarters. At that time, other NABS members, a group of retired people and some telephone workers doing volunteer work also gathered at Mary Janetatos' home to process the wonderful requests. Some of you may remember the beautiful article in National Geographic on Dr. Zeleny and bluebird conservation in 1978. These two national articles totally launched the North American Bluebird Society.

I went on to be the Recording Secretary of NABS in 1980 and 1981 and then President in 1982 and 1983. In the days before cell phones, personal computers, and inexpensive long distance telephone calls, communication was the big challenge. So I drove an hour to Mary Janetatos' home every Wednesday most of the year. There Mary, Chuck Dupree, and I would meet, plan, do mail and stuff envelopes—what ever else needed to be done. The North American Bluebird Society will always owe a huge debt of gratitude to Mary. She was the executive director of NABS, making everything work beautifully. For years, NABS operated totally from her home. Thus, my job as President was a thousand times easier than our current President, Jonathan Ridgeway's job is today.

My bluebird work led me to be active in the Audubon Hot Line. In those days, we did not have places like Second Chance. You signed up for an afternoon of phone calls, and if there was a locally injured bird, the bird usually came to the volunteer's house. Some of you may remember Janet Coyle on Game Preserve Road near Gaithersburg. She taught most of us on the Hot Line how to care for injured and baby birds. I had a permit to handle small birds in my home and to transfer large birds to a designated place. This work was very rewarding but all-consuming. After a duck in the bath tub and a heron in the shower made it challenging for my three children to bathe, I called it quits.



Photo by David Kinneer

Today, I have a small bluebird trail of about 8 boxes on my property and I still have an active purple martin population. My good friend, Margot de Messieres helps me monitor the boxes that I can not get to easily. Another long time friend, Dr. Chet Anderson, helps me maintain my three martin units. Many friends report to me on the progress of their trails and I give a rare talk to interested people. Upon retiring, I celebrated with a trip to the Bluebird Conference in Nebraska a few years ago. Happily, I became active in NABS again and found the Maryland Bluebird Society on line. Besides monthly board of directors meetings with NABS (telephone conference calls), I am Chair of the Grants and the Awards Committee. Bluebird conservation has led me to be active in many environmental groups including the Sugarloaf Citizens Association. Presently, I am serving as President of this group whose main mission is to preserve the Montgomery County Agriculture Preserve. I enjoy three book clubs and my scattered adult children and five grandchildren. Bluebird conservation has enriched my life in so many ways. Like many of you, I wake up and have tea every morning with that soft unique call. I am grateful for that call and all the other wonders of this sweet earth giving true meaning and purpose to my life.

A Bluebird Lover's Lament By Kathy Kremmitzer

Tell me if this sounds like someone you know. You're on a family outing, maybe going to your child's baseball game or a picnic at the in-laws, when suddenly you see a bluebird nestbox in a passing yard. Not only is the nestbox mounted on a fence, but your practiced eye is pretty sure that the "stuff" hanging out of the entrance hole is from a house sparrow nest. You begin to rant about irresponsible bluebird landlords and how important it is to monitor what is nesting inside a nestbox, how all nestboxes should be pole-mounted and equipped with predator baffles . . . when suddenly you realize that your previously enthusiastic family members are all looking out their respective windows, tuning you out.

When did this isolation, this tuning out, begin? After all, it's hard work being a bluebird lover! All the worries. What effect will the cold, wet spring weather have on that first nesting? Why do the bluebirds choose your neighbor's unsafe nestbox over your lovingly placed, NABS approved box? Will the sparrow spooker keep those pesky house sparrows away from your almost-ready-to-fledge nestlings? How in the world can you place another order for mealworms and then justify to your family that they are on a spaghetti-o diet for the next two weeks? While these are certainly burning questions, we must learn to temper our enthusiasm with the understanding that many people just don't "get it" like we do. For instance, people who put up nestboxes truly mean well, but they just aren't as educated on the subject of bluebird recovery as we are.

In my experience, the only person who can understand what's in the heart of a bluebird lover is another bluebird lover. Oh, others may try to understand. They may smile politely, even ooh and aah as you show them a nesting of newly hatched babies. Their hearts might even be touched, for a moment. And then they move on. They won't be looking out the window about a hundred times a day to be sure no creature is harassing the nestbox where mama blue is incubating a nest of beautiful blue pearls. They won't be cringing as their spouse rides the lawnmower just a bit too close to the nestbox pole. No, they won't be bothered at all that the neighbors are letting their cat wander again. So, the question becomes: How do you find someone with whom

you can commiserate and share your addiction? That is what bluebirding is for most of us. Well, there are several ways to connect with others like us. First, you can check into local birding clubs in your area. A simple Google search should yield a local chapter of an ornithological society, for example. Remember, though, that most birding clubs don't concentrate just on bluebirds but on all species. Next, don't overlook the possibility that your state has a bluebird society. Maryland does, much to the surprise of many. Some state societies even have county coordinators who can put you in touch with bluebird enthusiasts in your specific area. Imagine conversing about pairing nestboxes, blowfly infestations and predator baffles with someone whose eyes don't glaze over at the mere mention of the word "bluebirds"! However, if contacting a birding group or society seems too dramatic a step for you, there are several on-line forums that will allow you to communicate with others who share your passion for bluebirds.

I have been a member of the Bluebirding Forum at GardenWeb/Nature Net for many years and have "met" some wonderful people there. On this forum you will find folks from all walks of life, yet all have one thing in common- they LOVE bluebirds! While some are new to bluebirding, others are old hands and there is much to be gained from their experience.

Another forum with equally wonderful members is the Bluebird Nut Café. This forum is a few years newer but also has many experienced members available to assist and socialize. You will even find that some Café members also belong to the GardenWeb forum and vice-versa. A plus for the Café site is that it boasts an on-line shop which sells a variety of wonderful bluebird-lover products, including mealworm feeders that really stand up to the elements.

The important thing to remember is that there are others out there who are just like you! Take that first step and reach out. Bluebird clubs, societies and on-line forums provide an opportunity for people to share experiences, ask questions and to feel a sense of camaraderie. Imagine a world where there's always someone ready with a kind word, encouragement or advice and absolute understanding of the anxieties that come with loving bluebirds.

