



The Maryland Bluebird Society's

BLUEBIRD CHATTER

Winter/Spring 2012

President's Perch

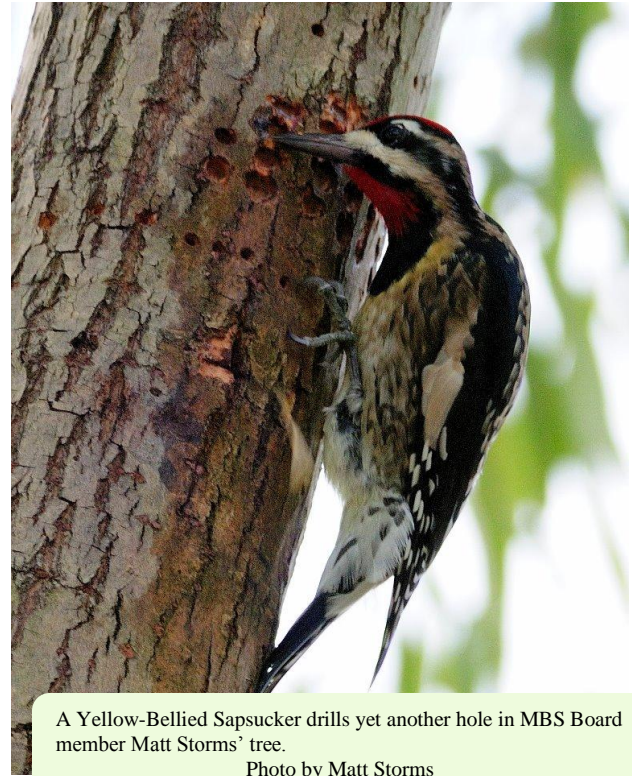
Last spring I assumed the role as president of MBS and brought with me a list of items I wanted to see our society accomplish. The most important item, in my opinion, was the updating of our web site to display current information so that it could be more useful to bluebirders in and around Maryland. After months of conversation and collaboration, we are pleased to announce that our Maryland Bluebird Society web site, www.mdbluebirdsociety.org has had a facelift, is now updated and , while some areas are still “under construction”, we are very pleased with the progress!

Serving as Web Master for MBS, founding Board member and past president, Fawzi Emad has devoted much time and effort over the last few weeks and we think you'll like the changes you see. There's only one thing missing, really, and that is input from our members. Please take a few minutes and visit us (don't forget to refresh your browser so you can see the changes), then drop us an e-mail with your thoughts. Send us some of your bluebird photos for our Gallery. Let us know of upcoming birding events in your area so we can list them in our calendar. Follow the link and visit us on Facebook but, most importantly, let us hear from you. It is our goal to make this site as useful to you as we possibly can.

Kathy Kremnitzer, President

In this edition of *Bluebird Chatter*, read about:

- The NorthBay environmental and character education program in North East, MD
- An in-depth trail report from Mark and Jean Raabe for the Antietam National Battlefield Bluebird Trail
- Nesting reports from bluebirders throughout Maryland



A Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker drills yet another hole in MBS Board member Matt Storms' tree.
Photo by Matt Storms

Upcoming Events

“Beautiful Bluebirds”, Black Hill Regional Park, Boyds, Saturday, March 3rd, 11:30 a.m., by Ed Escalante and Donna Marino.

http://www.montgomeryparks.org/viewer.shtm#http://www.montgomeryparks.org/activities/documents/spring_guide_2012ed2.pdf, page 108.

Bluebird Presentation at Accokeek Foundation, Saturday, March 17th (time TBA) by Jay Jones.
<http://accokeekfoundation.org/>

Nature Fest at Catoctin Creek Park in Frederick County, Saturday, April 21, 2012, 10 am - 2 pm
<http://www.frederickcountymd.gov/index.aspx?nid=2927>

Bluebirds Forever Festival, Sunday, May 20, 2012, 1 pm - 4 pm at Black Hill Regional Park in Boyds, MD
http://www.montgomeryparks.org/viewer.shtm#http://www.montgomeryparks.org/activities/documents/spring_guide_2012ed2.pdf, pages 113-114.

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 or what to do about it. Perhaps house sparrows are plaguing your neighborhood and you need some advice. Well, a MBS County Coordinator is always willing to listen and share whatever knowledge and experience they can with you.

Anne Arundel and
Queen Anne's Counties
Dave Gillum
410 266-8775
dagmapper@verizon.net

Baltimore County
Matt Storms
H 410 686-2089
C 410 952-4019
bigmattblue@gmail.com

Calvert County
Robin Wedewer
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H 410 414 5718
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Carroll County and
Howard County
Felicia Lovelett
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C 301 801-1969
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Charles County and
Prince George's County
Jacalyn Thomas
301 203-5553
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Frederick County and
Washington County
Kathy Kremnitzer
H 301 662-7818
C 301 676-9371
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Harford County
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H 410 569-2205
C 443 617-5556
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Montgomery County
Ed Escalante
301 972-3241
escalante@his.com

Worcester County
Janice Ward
H 410 632-0671
C 443 614-8318
Jward43.jw@gmail.com
Note: Janice prefers email contact which she receives on her phone.

If you do not see your county in the above listing it is because we do not have a volunteer from your county. Please contact us if you would like to serve as County Coordinator from your area.

NorthBay: Challenge, Educate, Empower

By Kristen Sprinkle

NorthBay is a five day residential environmental and character education program located on the Chesapeake Bay in North East, Maryland. NorthBay was created in 2005 by philanthropist John Erickson, whose desire was to create an opportunity for Baltimore City students to see that the key to success in life is education. Today, NorthBay serves over 9000 students from districts annually. NorthBay was designed to empower and inspire kids to make better choices. The program's mission is to challenge students to realize that their attitudes and actions have a lasting impact on their future, on the environment and on their community.

Students spend their days at NorthBay immersed in nature. Curriculum is based on the Investigating and Evaluating Environmental Issues and Actions model by Hungerford and Volk. Each day has a character theme (niche, invasive species, filter, action) and a science skill (research question, study design, data evaluation, action). Each class is its own environmental issue investigation highlighting the daily themes while focusing on subjects such as fish, bivalves, deer, vultures, trees, pollinators, wetlands, food101, and bluebirds. The afternoons at Northbay are filled with many adventure elements, where students can challenge themselves and face their fears in a fun, positive way. These elements include things like zip lines, giant swings, and a rope course.

NorthBay Live is the highlight of each evening. This is an energetic and entertaining show where the character aspects of the curriculum are highlighted. There are two original production videos that build on each other throughout the week. Facilitated by the NorthBay Live hosts, students get to take a look at the characters' lives and relate those stories to their own lives. They have an opportunity to think about where they want to head with their life and are encouraged to make good choices to get there. The entire program of NorthBay culminates in empowering students to take action and know that they have the power to make a difference.

Students generally begin their study with an engagement activity or related game. This interactive approach gets the students engaged and allows the educators to creatively tie in the lesson. The game for NorthBay's bluebird lesson deals with change in population over time. The students are bluebirds and must move to different markers on the ground which represent snags. Throughout rounds of the game, markers are removed and added to demonstrate habitat modification. Other students can be introduced as starlings and sparrows to show the invasive species. This game allows students to think about challenges facing bluebird populations and sets them up to study the population here at NorthBay. The students are given information on approaching and monitoring the nestboxes. With ID guide in hand, they visit the trail's 20 nestboxes, collecting data which includes: species, adult on nest, nest material, # eggs, egg color, hatchlings, fledglings, and predation. Afterwards, students report their findings and present a conclusion to answer their research question.

To learn more about NorthBay, visit www.northbayadventure.com .

Antietam National Battlefield 2011 Bluebird Trail Nesting Report

We are pleased to present the 2011 Eastern Bluebird nesting box report for Antietam National Battlefield. It was the third best year recorded on the Battlefield with 471 fledglings. This compares with the two previous highs of 534 and 538, in 2010 and 2009, respectively, bringing the total to **8,245** fledglings since this recovery effort began in 1979, thirty-three years ago. In addition, there were seventy-seven tree swallow fledglings on the trail this season.

Following is a comparison of nesting data over the past six years:

| | <u>2011</u> | <u>2010</u> | <u>2009</u> | <u>2008</u> | <u>2007</u> | <u>2006</u> |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| *Unsuccessful nesting attempts | 28 | 20 | 20 | 52 | 31 | 59 |
| *Rate of successful nest | 80% | 86% | 87% | 69% | 78% | 57% |
| *Total bluebird eggs laid | 592 | 635 | 658 | 679 | 608 | 566 |
| *Bluebirds successfully fledged | 471 | 534 | 538 | 453 | 454 | 317 |
| *Rate of success (fledgling) to egg laid ... | 80% | 84% | 82% | 67% | 74% | 56% |
| **Successful nests (at least one fledgling).... | 111 | 121 | 130 | 117 | 113 | 79 |
| Ave. fledglings per successful nest | 4.2 | 4.4 | 4.1 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 4.0 |

In 2011, there were fewer nesting attempts and fewer bluebird eggs laid than in any year over the past five years. This suggests fewer nesting pairs. In spite of this lower activity, 2011 was third best in number of fledglings. It appears that the positive results are attributable to the higher rate of successful nesting (80%) and the higher rate of fledgling to egg laid (80%) than some of the earlier years.

House sparrow vandalism returned as a major problem, increasing from 7 instances in 2010, to 14 instances in 2011. Other problems encountered included raccoon (1), blow fly (1), black snake (1), house wren (1), box failure (1), human activity (1), infertile eggs (4), and unknown (4). The raccoon vandalism occurred in a PVC box without a Noel guard. We were able to limit loss due to blow flies to one box by changing nest materials in a half dozen boxes when infestation was discovered before the young were beyond the point of recovery. Most nest vandalism occurred during the incubation period. Once the egg hatched, there was a 95% chance for successful fledging.

We again thank Judy and John Lilga for their careful and expert monitoring help when we were away. Their assistance during August was especially appreciated when they followed and recorded considerable third brood activity.

We continue to be grateful to the Division of Natural Resources Management and Protection for their encouragement and support in this conservation effort. We are always mindful of the high privilege we have in carrying on this work on these beautiful and sacred grounds, something even more special in the forthcoming 150th Anniversary Year.

Sincerely,
Mark and Jean Raabe

Nesting News from Around the State

John and Judith Lilga of Washington County fledged 50 Eastern Bluebirds from their 14 nestboxes. John and Judith also assist in monitoring the Antietam National Battlefield bluebird trail in Sharpsburg.

The Evans family of Frederick fledged 16 Eastern Bluebirds and 14 Carolina Wrens from their nestboxes.

Janice Ward, Worcester County Coordinator, reports that 41 Eastern Bluebirds fledged from the 9 nestboxes at the Cedartown Trail. The Nassawango Creek Trail fledged 127 Eastern Bluebirds and 56 Tree Swallows from its 36 nestboxes.

MBS Treasurer, Diane Seward, fledged 25 Eastern Bluebirds and 12 Carolina Chickadees from her Montgomery County nestboxes.

Dave Gillum, Coordinator for Anne Arundel and Queen Anne's Counties, reports the following numbers: Smithsonian Environmental Research Center- 50 Nestbox Trail fledged 143 Eastern Bluebirds, 16 Chickadees, 7 House Wrens, and 13 Tree Swallows. Kinder Farm-65 Nestbox Trail fledged 61 Eastern Bluebirds, 25 Chickadees and 16 House Wrens.

Mark and Jean Raabe report fledging 471 Eastern Bluebirds and 77 Tree Swallows from the bluebird trail at Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg. This beautiful trail has been in operation since 1979 and has fledged 8,245 Eastern Bluebirds to date!

MBS Board member Ed Escalante reports fledging 93 Eastern Bluebirds and 62 Tree Swallows from the 32 nestboxes he monitors at Little Bennett Regional Park in Montgomery County. This was the second highest count for this trail since 2008 when the trail fledged 102 bluebirds.

Maryland Bluebird Society Officers and Board of Directors

| Officers: | Active Directors: |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Pres.: Kathy Kremnitzer | Fawzi Emad |
| V. Pres.: Stan Fisher | Ed Escalante |
| Sec.: Bonnie Bell | John Corgan |
| Treas.: Diane Seward | Michael L. Smith |
| | Denise Farmer |
| | Matt Storms |
| | Anne Sturm |
| | Jay R. Jones |

www.mdbluebirdsociety.org

Tricia Smucker, trail manager for Heritage Farm Park and Fountain Rock Park in Frederick County reports fledging 59 Eastern Bluebirds and 50 Tree Swallows from Heritage Farm Park along with 20 Eastern Bluebirds and 2 House Wrens from Fountain Rock Park.

Baltimore County Coordinator and MBS Board member Matt Storms fledged 42 Eastern Bluebirds, 7 Tree Swallows and 2 Carolina Chickadees from his Baltimore County trails.

Lou Soule reports that he fledged 42 Eastern Bluebirds and 44 Tree Swallows from his 18 nestboxes in Montgomery County.

MBS Secretary Bonnie Bell reports fledging 28 Eastern Bluebirds, 20 Tree Swallows, 9 Carolina Wrens and 6 Chickadees from the 11 nestboxes she monitors in Montgomery County.

Kathy Kremnitzer, Coordinator for Frederick and Washington Counties, fledged 88 Eastern Bluebirds and 88 Tree Swallows from the 32 nestboxes she monitors. She reports losing a female bluebird at her home to a hawk attack when 5 young were just 4 days old. The male worked hard to outsmart a pair of harassing Mockingbirds and made use of offered mealworms to successfully fledge his babies. The young fledged on day 16, the day before the 4th of July!

Chuck Wilson and Lutie Semmes report to us from Buckingham's Choice in Frederick County that their 30 nestbox trail boasted a successful 2011 nesting season. The first egg appeared on the trail on April 6th and the same nestbox played host to two subsequent nestings, though the 3rd brood perished after only a day in the extreme heat of late July. Chuck and Lutie attribute the early end of the bluebird breeding season on their trail to the extreme heat and dry conditions late summer and also possibly to the nesting of tree swallows. Their trail fledged 69 Eastern Bluebirds and 64 Tree Swallows in 2011.

MBS Vice President, Stan Fisher, reports the following totals from his trails:

Model Airplane Park - 7 nestboxes , 19 Eastern Bluebirds, 24 Tree Swallows

Bluebird Hill - 10 nestboxes 16 Eastern Bluebirds, 3 Great Crested Fly Catchers

Stella's Dream - 66 nestboxes 81 Eastern Bluebirds

Dear Members,

If you have recently received an e-mail reminder that your membership has expired, won't you take a few minutes to complete the application form below and renew your membership? You may also renew by visiting the Membership page of our web site, located at www.mdbluebirdsociety.org . Thank you for contributing to our conservation efforts.

THE MARYLAND BLUEBIRD SOCIETY, INC.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Mail to: Maryland Bluebird Society
10809 Rock Run Drive
Potomac, MD 20854

Instructions: Print and complete this application. Mail to the above address. Please remember to enclose your check payable to the Maryland Bluebird Society. Memberships and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

New Application Renewal Application Note: Membership is effective for the calendar year (s) in which the dues are paid, except that dues paid in the fourth calendar quarter are effective for the following year as well as the year in which they are paid.

Please check the appropriate membership category:

Individual One year - \$10.00 Three years - \$25.00

Household One year - \$15.00 Three years - \$40.00

Student – age 23 or under One year - \$7.00 Three years - \$20.00

Corporate/non-profit One year - \$30.00 Three years - \$85.00

Corporate sponsor (non-voting) One year - \$100.00

Make a tax deductible donation, amount \$ _____

Please print:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Telephone No.: home cell work _____