



# The Maryland Bluebird Society's

## BLUEBIRD CHATTER

SPRING 2021

### President's Perch

By: Heather Zindash, MBS President

I grew up on a small farm in Northeast Ohio. I was an avid 4-H'er. My favorite childhood memories involve being outside all day, playing in the creek, catching crayfish, and getting lost in the woods. I did not come home until dark. A Mason jar and a lid with holes would allow me to capture, observe and release all kinds of insects and small animals. I learned the most about nature by experiencing and interacting with it first-hand. Maybe you did too.

When my husband, Chris and I started our family in Maryland we knew that we wanted our children to have as much connection to nature as we could provide. Each Mother's Day, my one request was to play in the garden. Soon we realized that our little plot of land had all the elements required to register it as a Certified Wildlife Habitat. And so, we did.

When the girls grew older, I had more time to pursue my personal passions. In 2013, I merged my Graphic Design education with my life-long love and connection with gardening and nature to create The Soulful Gardener, a business where my mission is to "bring people, plants and nature together for health and well-being." I went on to become a Maryland Master Gardener, Maryland Master Naturalist, Certified Professional Horticulturalist, a Professional Integrated Pest Management Consultant, and an ISA Certified Arborist. I received an AAS in Landscape Technology in 2018.

In 2014, I became a Bluebird Trail Monitor at Button Farm Living History Museum in Germantown, MD while earning volunteer hours as a Maryland Master Naturalist. I had no idea then how fulfilling this work would be. Nor, how quickly my family would want to get involved. Because of our experiences in our own wildlife habitat, we were well-suited to be nest box monitors.

Bonnie Bell (current Maryland Bluebird Society Treasurer) trained me to be trail monitor. She was such a wonderful mentor and an extremely knowledgeable naturalist. Because of this warm and inviting introduction, I joined the Maryland Bluebird Society and the North American Bluebird Society right away. Since then, I have not only maintained the Button Farm Bluebird Trail but also added trails on other properties. There is nothing more rewarding than teaching families how to connect with nature and with each other by adding and monitoring a Bluebird Trail. Not only does this provide a great ecoservice to our native secondary cavity nesting birds, it also bolsters connections with families, friends, neighbors and the world around us. Please join us by becoming an MBS member at <http://mdbluebirdsociety.org/membership/>. (continued on page 2)



I am honored to be the new MBS President. I am following the very talented Kathy Kremnitzer who has served three non-consecutive terms in her tenure with this organization, as well as several other valuable roles. Though I have big shoes to fill, I plan to lead this passionate group in a way that allows the members to apply their skills and passions in ways that help our organization fulfill our mission: to assist in monitoring and increasing the population of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity-nesting birds through education, support and research.

I urge everyone to go outside, unplug and open yourselves to the constant surprises Mother Nature has in store.

See you on the trail,

Heather Zindash, MBS President



### **A Message From Outgoing MBS President, Kathy Kremnitzer**

The time has come for me to step aside and to pass the leadership of the Maryland Bluebird Society to Heather Zindash, your new president. I promise you that with all her qualifications and experience, she is well-equipped to lead. I will let Heather tell you more about her qualifications in her introduction and, instead, I will focus my words on why I feel that she is the perfect person for the job. Heather instills confidence. She does this by asking questions and then genuinely listens to the answers. When she and I first talked of the possibility of her becoming president, she asked what I would like for the future of MBS to look like and I feel that she really heard what I was saying. She has skills and talents, yes, but she also has a vision for how MBS can grow to expand our mission of conservation and education. Heather, along with our new VP, Lisa Fair and our newsletter editor, Dana Grayson, have plans to update many aspects of our communication and technology and the three of them are the driving force behind the planning for our upcoming virtual Bluebirds Forever Festival to be held in May. Just wait until you see what they have planned for this week-long event!!!! I'm excited to see what the next couple of years holds for us and I hope you are too. Hang on, because we're going places!

To Jenny Hendershot and Bonnie Bell, I give my heartfelt thanks for their agreeing to serve another term as secretary and treasurer, respectively. I also thank Jodi Hewitt for her years of service as my right hand. In fact, the entire board of directors of the Maryland Bluebird Society has worked well and together for many, many years and it has been a blessing and an honor for me to have had their support as well as their friendship.



If the past year has taught us anything, it's taught us to appreciate what we have, but it's also shown us to not underestimate what we can accomplish when we work together. Thank you for your support over the years. I wish you all good health and happy bluebirding! ~ Kathy



# Save the Date!

## Bluebirds Forever Virtual Festival

Daily Presentations      Children's Activities  
Advice and Best Practices      Live Q&A  
Prizes and Giveaways

**May 17 -21, 2021**

More information  
coming soon!



Join us for our annual Bluebirds Forever Festival - now from the comfort of your own home!

The Bluebirds Forever Virtual Festival is a week-long event of daily presentations about bluebirds and other native cavity nesters - how to attract them, care for them, keep them safe, plant for them, and enjoy their company!



Maryland Bluebird Society

[Follow us on Facebook](#) and [our website](#) for updates, registration information, and more!

## My Experiences with Bluebirds

By: Ken Foster

As the year comes to a close, I thought I should write about my bluebird experiences. Perhaps this will help other people new to bluebirds or maybe even provide some insights or interesting tidbits to those that have worked with bluebirds for many years.

I will call this my first successful year with bluebirds. I put up a nest box in 2019 and I had seven eggs by April 22. I first saw chicks on May 5. Then, on May 16, there was nesting material on the ground and no chicks in the nest box. I was devastated. I had already reached out to some members of the Maryland Bluebird Society (MBS) to assist with bluebirds hitting into my neighbor's windows and Ed Escalante got back to me with some advice. He also let me know about the MBS Bluebird Festival. I lost the chicks just two days before the Festival so I attended it to see if people could help me understand what might have happened. People were very helpful (they thought it was a raccoon that had gotten the chicks) and from that point forward, Ed took me under his wing (pun intended). Ed provided plans for a pole and baffle set up and I worked on them over the winter.

The bluebird activity in 2020 started heating up in early March. Two pairs were checking out my nest box and nesting material was present by March 11. Four eggs were laid by March 26 and the first two hatched by April 6. Finally, on April 12 I saw a third chick, but I never saw a fourth chick. In the late afternoon on April 24, I saw the first flight from the box for one of the them. Shortly afterwards, I saw a parent get a dried mealworm from my feeder and fly up to the fledgling in a tree. But he didn't give it to him – instead he showed it to him and then flew up higher in the tall oak. Only when the fledgling followed the parent up did the parent feed the mealworm to him. I was so excited to have gotten 'my' brood to fledge after last year's disappointment.



A house wren actually went in the nest box the day after the chicks fledged. Both bluebird parents immediately flew down to the box and the house wren was still inside. The male bluebird stuck his head in the box and heard lots of high pitched noises and saw some feathers fly. The wren finally came out.

I cleaned out the nest box eight days after the fledging and the female began bringing new nest material (pine needles) to the box that same day. But the next day the male was calling out non-stop for a long period of time. After some period of days, a female was around but she acted differently than the other one. With these two events, I concluded the female met her demise. This new female would never go in the nest box and I never saw her feed the two fledglings. I saw the male actually pull some of the pine needles out of the box. I thought the new female wanted her own nest, so I cleaned out the box. But for a period of weeks, she wouldn't go in the nest box. He went in frequently and even pulled out some of his own feathers while in the box and left them there.

She finally started bringing in nesting material, but it was the dried flowers from an oak tree. Other material was brought to the box but only some of it was pine needles and there was no cup shape to the material. The male went in the box frequently. I guessed she was a new mother and didn't have the hang of things yet and he was trying to help out. A serviceable nest was eventually formed and four eggs were laid by June 12. The four fledged on July 14.

I ended up putting up a second box in my yard and another pair used that box to lay five eggs in late May and all five fledged between June 30 and July 1. They had a second brood with the fourth (and last) egg laid on July 16 and three fledging on Aug 15. I got to see all three fledge from the box. *(continued on page 5)*

### My Experiences with Bluebirds *(continued from page 4)*

Between the four broods I followed on my property this year, there were many interesting events I observed:

- I saw chicks pass poop sacs directly to a parent that was perched on the edge of the entrance hole and I saw one chick leave the poop sac in the opening when a parent wasn't there (the parent took it when it arrived).
- The parents didn't feed the dried mealworms from my feeder to the chicks until they were over a week old.
- After the fledging from a nest was complete, I never saw any sign of unhatched eggs, eggshells or bodies of hatched chicks that didn't fledge.



- I saw a male bluebird reach into a box that had a nest being built and poked his head in. He pulled out some of the grass from the nest and it was left hanging out of the entrance hole. A few minutes later the nesting pair came back and she cleaned things up. I wonder if this was the male from my other box trying to dissuade another nesting pair (there is no direct line of sight between my two boxes).
- I saw the mother go in the box with four chicks in the last week before they fledged. I can't believe there was much room in the box and some must have gotten walked on.
- When fledglings could only make it to a low bush or were on the ground after their first flight, the parents were calling frequently. This brought in other birds to the same bush were the fledgling was. I saw this on two occurrences. For the first, a cardinal pair, Carolina pair and titmouse came to the same bush. On the second, it was a cardinal pair, chipping sparrow pair and chickadee that came to the bush.
- I saw the juveniles come to the bird bath (for the first time?). They were trying to drink by poking the water.
- I saw a male bluebird and house sparrow joust in the air. Thankfully, I didn't have a problem with sparrows doing anything in the nest box.

With a total of four broods and 14 confirmed fledglings, I consider it a very successful year. My wife bought me a nest camera for Christmas, so as long as the set up goes smoothly and the birds aren't dissuaded from using the nest box I will be even more invested in the bluebirds this coming year. I would like to thank Ed for all his knowledge and guidance while helping this bluebird newbie.

**Want to share your stories with the  
Maryland Bluebird Society community?**

**Email Newsletter Editor Dana Grayson**

**[Graysons2005@comcast.net](mailto:Graysons2005@comcast.net)**



## 2020 Nesting Season Data

Many members of MBS host individual nestboxes or trails on their personal property, or they monitor trails at nearby farms, parks, golf courses, cemeteries, and other spaces.

These MBS members are citizen scientists—observing the world around us and making a concerted effort to help native cavity nesting birds survive and thrive in the face of many challenges. Careful data collection is an essential part of monitoring a nestbox. Below is data shared with MBS by our members for the 2020 nesting season! We also encourage all monitors to submit their data to Nestwatch (see page 8 for details).

Share your 2021 nesting season data with MBS by emailing Dana Grayson [Graysons2005@comcast.net](mailto:Graysons2005@comcast.net) at the end of the season. Please be sure to include the **name of your trail, number of boxes, and number of each species fledged.**

Trail or Monitor Name	# Boxes	Eastern Bluebird	Tree Swallow	Carolina Chickadee	House Wren	Prothonotary Warbler
Ballenger Creek	10	38	31			
Brunswick City	14	9	19			
Button Farm	12	10	24		11	
Cedartown	16	78	14		4	
Clark	2	9				
Grayson	3	15	5			
Kremnitzer	8	22	20			
Lauffer	3	5				
Linden Farm	10	46	20			
Mayer	2	5				
McCabe	8	22	12	5		
Middletown Park	10	34	17			
Moran	28	103	10		46	
Nanjemoy Creek EE Center	18	30		5		
Nassawango	33	129	21	20		5
Naughty Pine		4			5	
Norris	1	14				
Northwest Branch Golf Course	17	38	4			
Public Landing Waterfront	11	16	19			
Sampson (Calvert Report)	366	1149				
Schindler	1	12				
Stella's Dream 2	17	30	32		9	
Stell's Dream 3	12	23	26			
Stone	3	10				
Sturm	6	20	16			
Tea	2	8			4	
Truitt	1	5				
Westwood	6	9	15			
	<b>620</b>	<b>1,893</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>5</b>

# Nestbox Trail Signs Available for Download

Unfortunately, not all people respect the work we do to help native cavity nesting birds. Worse, others may intentionally do harm to our boxes and trails, and the birds that call them home. At one time or another some of us have dealt with vandalism, destruction, or other interference with our nestboxes.

In an effort to deter such interference, we have recently revised the MBS Bluebird Nesting Box Trail Sign. If you would like to use this sign on your boxes, you can download it from the homepage of our website at [mdbluebirdsociety.org](http://mdbluebirdsociety.org). Once printed, these signs could be inserted into a plastic bag or laminated to help them resist the elements, before being attached to a box. If you would like to modify the sign and need help, please feel free Lisa Fair at [lisafair67@gmail.com](mailto:lisafair67@gmail.com)

<b>Maryland Bluebird Society</b>	<b>BOX #</b>
<b>Nesting Box Trail</b> This box is part of an organized trail maintained and monitored by the Maryland Bluebird Society.	
<b>DO NOT DISTURB</b> <b>Violators subject to</b> <b>finest and imprisonment</b>	
<b>THE MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT</b>	
It is illegal for any person or persons to interfere with the nesting of migratory birds. "Interfere" is defined to include by any means or any manner, an attempt to hunt, pursue, wound, ill, possess or transport any migratory bird, nest, egg or part thereof. To do so is a violation of federal law and is punishable by fine, imprisonment or both.	
	It is the mission of the Maryland Bluebird Society (MBS) to increase the population of Eastern Bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds through conservation, education, and research. Learn more at <a href="http://www.mdbluebirdsociety.org">www.mdbluebirdsociety.org</a>  Maryland Bluebird Society



# MBS COUNTY COORDINATORS

The MBS County Coordinator program offers “boots on the ground” assistance to our members to help with issues such as where and how to set up a nestbox, what to do about house sparrows and other predators, how to figure out if your nesting has been abandoned, and more. Our coordinators are always willing to listen and to share their knowledge and experience with you.

If you do not see your county on this listing, it is because we do not currently have a volunteer in that county. If you are interested in representing your county as a coordinator, please contact us.

Allegany	Vacant		
Anne Arundel	Ann Johnson	<a href="mailto:annj@rocketmail.com">annj@rocketmail.com</a>	(443) 758-5324
Baltimore	Matt Storms	<a href="mailto:bigmattblue@gmail.com">bigmattblue@gmail.com</a>	(410) 686-2089H (410) 952-4019C
Calvert	Lori Sampson	<a href="mailto:anmthe@gmail.com">anmthe@gmail.com</a>	(301) 717-8795
Caroline	Vacant		
Carroll	Felicia Lovelett	<a href="mailto:c5nest@gmail.com">c5nest@gmail.com</a>	(301) 801-1969
Cecil	Maryanne Dolan	<a href="mailto:maryanne.dolan@gmail.com">maryanne.dolan@gmail.com</a>	(443) 350-9197
Charles	Debbie Reece	<a href="mailto:dreece18@aol.com">dreece18@aol.com</a>	(301) 751-4871
Dorchester	George Radcliffe	<a href="mailto:radclifg@gmail.com">radclifg@gmail.com</a>	(410) 228-7670
Frederick	Kathy Kremnitzer	<a href="mailto:griffin459@myactv.net">griffin459@myactv.net</a>	(301) 676-9371
	Dana Grayson	<a href="mailto:graysons2005@comcast.net">graysons2005@comcast.net</a>	(240) 446-4895
Garrett	Vacant		
Harford	Pam Ford	<a href="mailto:jpford@comcast.net">jpford@comcast.net</a>	(410) 569-2205
Howard	Felicia Lovelett	<a href="mailto:c5nest@gmail.com">c5nest@gmail.com</a>	(301) 802-1969
Kent	Karen Unruh	<a href="mailto:karenunruh007@gmail.com">karenunruh007@gmail.com</a>	(410) 404-0155
Montgomery	Ed Escalante	<a href="mailto:escalante@his.com">escalante@his.com</a>	(301) 972-3241
	Don Truitt	<a href="mailto:dht0526@verizon.net">dht0526@verizon.net</a>	(301) 288-4648
Prince George's	Vacant		
Queen Anne's	Vacant		
Somerset	Janice Ward	<a href="mailto:jward43.jw@gmail.com">jward43.jw@gmail.com</a>	(443) 614-8318
St. Mary's	Barbara Whipkey	<a href="mailto:wbuofsmc@gmail.com">wbuofsmc@gmail.com</a>	(301) 863-2473
Talbot	Rhonda Matterson	<a href="mailto:wbueaston@gmail.com">wbueaston@gmail.com</a>	(443) 340-7751
Washington	Jenny Hendershot	<a href="mailto:djbmhenderson@aol.com">djbmhenderson@aol.com</a>	(301) 491-8823
Wicomico	Janice Ward	<a href="mailto:jward43.jw@gmail.com">jward43.jw@gmail.com</a>	(443) 614-8318
Worcester	Janice Ward	<a href="mailto:jward43.jw@gmail.com">jward43.jw@gmail.com</a>	(443) 614-8318

THE MARYLAND BLUEBIRD SOCIETY, INC.  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Mail to: Maryland Bluebird Society  
20809 Bell Bluff Road  
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Instructions: Print and complete this application and 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.

Note: Membership is effective for the calendar year (s) in which the dues are paid, except that new member dues paid in the fourth calendar quarter cover the following year.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please check the appropriate boxes below:

New Application     Renewal Application

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

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

Lifetime:     Individual - \$250.00     Household - \$300.00

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: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No.:  home     cell     work    \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about MBS? \_\_\_\_\_

[Click here to Join/Renew your MBS Membership Online](#)