



The Maryland Bluebird Society's

BLUEBIRD CHATTER

SPRING 2022

President's Perch

By: Heather Zindash, MBS President

Happy New Nesting Season! I hope your nesting boxes are in good repair and ready for new tenants this year.

As I reflect on the last nesting season, I realize that this Bluebird Trail monitoring provided a wonderful opportunity for respite during a time when there was a lot of anxiety in the world. It was a time when we were keeping socially distant for our own health and safety, as well as that of our family, friends, and fellow human beings. While we were all experiencing restricted access in many venues, monitoring our bluebird trails meant that at least once a week throughout the nesting season my family and I would go outside together, monitor our trails, and enjoy a picnic lunch in the fresh air while interacting with nature. We looked forward to our weekly monitoring responsibilities, like a family outing.



Chickadee with caterpillar. Photo: Heather Zindash

This is an activity we have always enjoyed however, but this past year it was especially rewarding. One of the biggest highlights last seasons was the design and installation of a new Bluebird Trail on a customer's property where I was already providing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) services to help maintain his crop in an environmentally sensitive way. This customer is a Christmas tree and landscape tree grower. They wanted to increase their ecological services by improving or adding habitat and environmentally sound land management practices. Using IPM means that we manage plant pests in crops using a variety of methods including cultural, mechanical, biological and when necessary, soft, target-specific chemical options. This allows us to target any plant pest that threatens the value of the crop while reducing the risk of damaging the non-target organisms and the environment.

To enhance the eco-services on this property and to encourage natural enemies (i.e., good bugs that eat bad bugs), I designed and installed an insectary garden which would provide nectar and pollen to beneficial insects such as pollinators, predators, and parasitoids. This would increase biodiversity and natural plant pest control. Did you know that only 1% of all insects are considered pests?

We also added a bluebird nesting trail consisting of twelve nesting boxes. Did you know that birds can eat 400-500 million insects per year? Their diet changes based on their life cycle, focusing more on protein while they are raising their broods and on carbohydrates when they are preparing to over-winter or migrate. Birds are great natural insect predators. They are also sensitive eco-indicators. By maintaining our bird populations, especially focusing on our native, cavity nesting birds, we not only increase their populations but also monitor the health of our own environment.

The philosophy of using multiple ecological services to create a more balanced ecosystem and food web is called eco-stacking. Combining these elements allows for a highly functional ecosystem (*continued on page 2*)



Brown lacewing larva feeding on an aphid in the landscape. Photo: Heather Zindash

(continued from page 1) and food web. Everyone's gotta eat!

One of the best ways to protect our naturally occurring insect predators, parasitoids, and pollinators is to avoid the misuse of chemicals in our landscapes. Start with properly identifying the perceived plant pest (causing damage to your plants) before engaging in a control strategy. In Maryland, The Home and Garden Information Center site has a large number of resources for gardeners: <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environment-natural-resources/program-areas/home-and-garden-information-center>. They also have a link where you can 'Ask Extension' questions about your plants or pests: <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/environment-natural-resources/program-areas/home-and-garden-information-center/ask-extension>. Proper identification is critical.

Once you are confident with your identification, try to use the best low-risk control option, which might include physically removing the pest, washing it off with water or choosing a plant variety that is resistant to known diseases.

I encourage readers to do their best to avoid broad-spectrum insecticide, even those derived by natural compounds. The term broad-spectrum means that it is not target specific and is detrimental to non-target organisms such as our natural insect enemies.

It is wise not to engage in mosquito applications, again, even if those chemicals are derived from natural products. They are not target-specific to mosquitoes and can kill the other beneficial insects in our landscapes, including natural mosquito predators: insects, birds, bats, and more. It is best to target reducing mosquito populations by removing habitat including any standing water in gutters, drainage tubes, buckets, kid's toys, rain barrels, birdbaths, etc. Make sure to empty all standing water every three days. This will interrupt the mosquito lifecycle and reduce their population in your area. Remember to also block the bite by using natural or conventional mosquito control products on your skin or clothing, and wear light-weight pants and sleeves.

I wish you a healthy and safe 2022 nesting season. Please follow us on Facebook and send in your pictures throughout the year. Bluebirds are the sign of happiness, and we are happy to be connected to you.

Happy birding,

Heather Zindash

MBS President



Maryland Bluebird Society

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

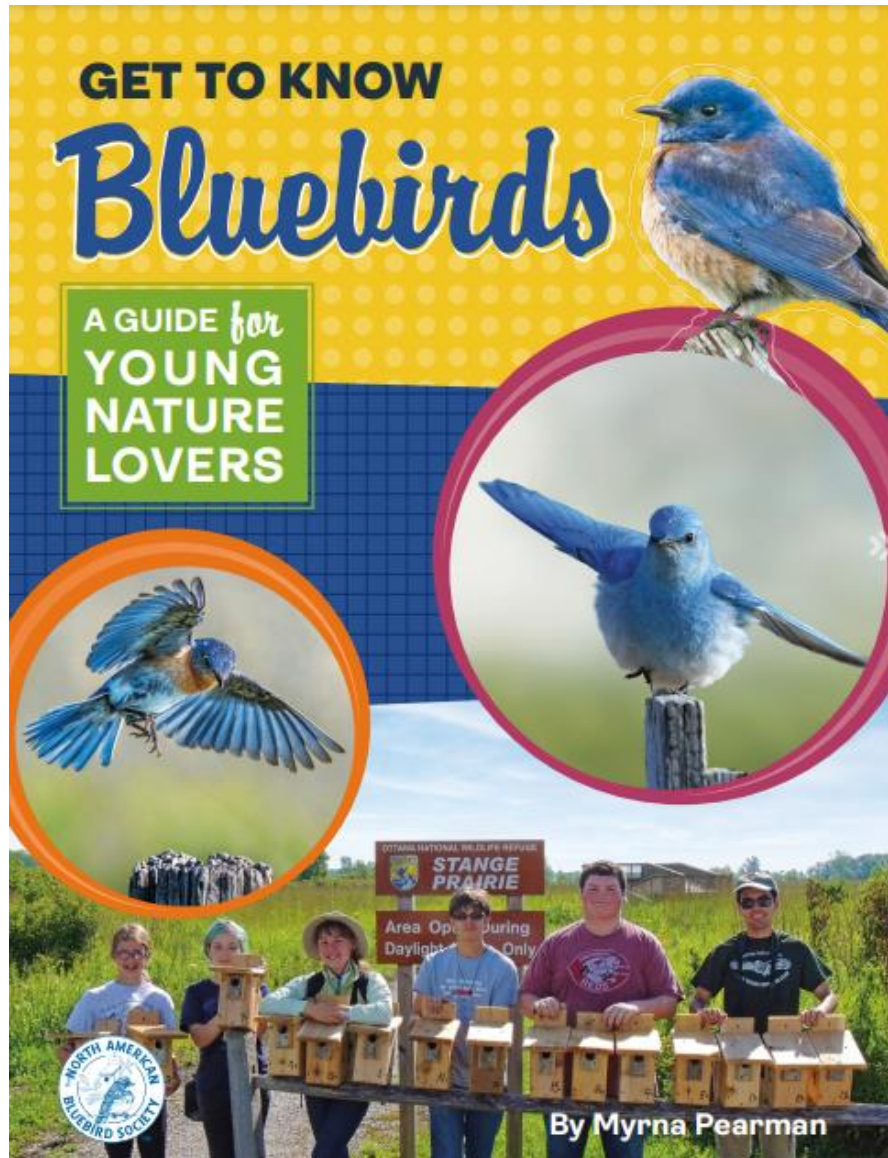
Nestbox Trail Signs Available for Download

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. 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

<p>Maryland Bluebird Society</p> <p>Nesting Box Trail This box is part of an organized trail maintained and monitored by the Maryland Bluebird Society.</p>	<p>BOX #</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>DO NOT DISTURB Violators subject to finest and imprisonment</p> <p>THE MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT</p> <p>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.</p>	
	<p>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.</p> <p>Learn more at www.mdbluebirdsociety.org</p> <p> Maryland Bluebird Society</p>

It's Finally Hatched!



The [North American Bluebird Society \(NABS\)](#)* is proud to announce the publication of Get to Know Bluebirds: A Guide for Young Nature Lovers. The book, which is aimed at a younger audience, has been written by Myrna Pearman, retired biologist and nature writer/photographer, with the able assistance of Bet Zimmerman Smith and other members of the NABS Education Committee. Its pages are graced with beautiful photographs donated by bluebirders from across North America, and it has been designed to make learning about bluebirds a fun and appealing adventure. With this book, NABS hopes to kindle a fire and a love for bluebirds in young people across this continent.

Get to Know Bluebirds: A Guide for Young Nature Lovers is available at [this link](#) as a downloadable (27 MB) PDF file. We encourage you to download the book and share it as widely as possible! Our plan is to get the book printed as soon as the necessary funds can be raised.

We look forward to your feedback. Feel free to contact me at bdaniel@cinci.rr.com

Dr. Bernie Daniel

President, North American Bluebird Society

*Maryland Bluebird Society is a North American Bluebird Society Affiliate



2021 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 2021 nesting season! We also encourage all monitors to submit their data to [Nestwatch](https://www.nestwatch.org).

Share your 2022 nesting season data with MBS by emailing Dana Grayson 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	Purple Martin
Little Bennett Regional Park	32	109	35				
SERC	41	48		5			
Stella's Dream	45	110	52		18		
Stone	3	5	6		5		
Lillard Memorial Park	3	5					
Nassawango Creek	32	149	26	16		3	
Chevy Chase Club	21	18					
Ballenger Creek Park	10	51	25				
Brunswick Rosie Trail	11	23	10				
Othello Regional Park	12	54	28		4		
Antietam (partial)	25	100	24				
Kremnitzer	7	14	14				
Linden Farm	11	30	16				
Sturm	7	25	15		5		
Izaak Walton League Farm		102	63				187
Potomac		55	9				
Button Farm	12	23	20				
Naughty Pine	12	21	28		25		
	284	942	371	21	57	3	187

The Perfect Place for a Nest Box

By: Anne Sturm

What is the best location for a native cavity nest box? When I first started in bluebird conservation in the spring of the first Earth Day, I walked a long way on my farm to mount a nest box in the “perfect” place. It took me about a half hour one way to walk to the first two of my “perfect” place nest boxes. Thanks to an article in the Audubon Naturalist Societies’ newsletter, I signed up to go on a field trip led by Dr. Zeleny, to his trail in Beltsville. I was soon laughing with him about how much precious monitoring time I was spending on my “perfect” locations. Under his guidance I mounted about fifty boxes and monitored them with luck in about four hours.

One of my trails today is on Linden Farm located on Martinsburg Rd. in Dickerson, MD. This land is part of the Dickerson Composting Facility. The original ten box trail is on the “farm” part of the facility with huge swaths of mowed fields and lots of trees. There is a large barn used for meetings, a bank barn that is used only by barn swallows, and a few hives for bees. One might say it is perfect and it is a “gated community.” The trail was first started when Denise Gibbs with the MoCo Parks Department was looking for safer places to put nest boxes after some tragic vandalism in down county parks. We laughed that the Linden Farm Trail was certainly safer behind a locked gate and security guards watching over the complex.



The Linden Farm trail has been very successful, thus the people who work at the “office” behind the “pretty” part of the Dickerson Compost Facility asked if I would put up a box on their side. I happily put up a nest box right at the edge of their parking lot located where the office personnel could enjoy the view without leaving their office tailor. Luckily, the next box got bluebirds right away. In my conversations with staff, it was decided that I would put up some more. Stan Fisher generously put together nest box complexes and he, Beth and I went over to put two more boxes up “at the office” this spring. I went back after a week and found bluebirds in the original box, TS flying around one of the other new boxes and another bluebird nest in the third box.

All three boxes are right next to (one could say in) a huge parking lot filled with about twenty vehicles. The parking lot is across from a big weigh station that huge trucks are driving up to, on, and then out by the small trailer office. The male bluebird’s favorite perch is the light that controls when these massive trucks stop and go. The traffic has to go five miles an hour so the birds are not in danger of being hit by a vehicle. This industrial park is where all the grass, and leaves are hauled from the most populated county in MD and turned into a great compost product, Leaf Gro. This process one would call very industrial as it involves a lot of big trucks all day long, and a lot of staff driving tractors to push and turn huge mountains of composting material. Yet cavity nesting birds are happy to raise their young on part of this complex. *(continued on page 7)*

The Perfect Place for a Nest Box *(continued)*

(continued from page 6) Why? I think it has to do with the acres, and acres of mowed grass surrounded by fence that is part of this complex. As we all know, bluebirds love fences along open fields. Tree Swallows love following mowers as they stir up insects from these huge fields. There is also a long row of very old, yet very alive crabapple trees that attract insects all growing season long and then provides berries for fall and winter survival. The bluebirds and tree swallows seem happy to be in this food rich environment and have some how adapted to the noise and dust. I am happy for the birds but even happier for the office staff that get to enjoy the beauty of the bluebirds and tree swallows during a challenging, noisy work day.

I hope this gets you all thinking about how you might bring the bluebird of happiness into another office complex. Your industrial complex just might be the next “perfect” place.

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

Email Newsletter Editor Dana Grayson

Graysons2005@comcast.net



**Middletown Green Expo
Middletown, Maryland
April 23, 2022**

Know of an event we should attend?

Contact us at www.mdbluebirdsociety.org



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May 23 - 27, 2022

More information
coming soon!

**Registration Opening Soon and Will Be
Shared on Facebook**



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Maryland Bluebird Society

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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	annj@rocketmail.com	(443) 758-5324
Baltimore	Matt Storms	bigmattblue@gmail.com	(410) 686-2089H (410) 952-4019C
Calvert	Lori Sampson	anmthe@gmail.com	(301) 717-8795
Caroline	Vacant		
Carroll	Felicia Lovelett	c5nest@gmail.com	(301) 801-1969
Cecil	Maryanne Dolan	maryanne.dolan@gmail.com	(443) 350-9197
Charles	Debbie Reece	dreece18@aol.com	(301) 751-4871
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Garrett	Vacant		
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Kent	Vacant		
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Queen Anne's	Vacant		
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Talbot	Rhonda Matterson	wbueaston@gmail.com	(443) 340-7751
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Wicomico	Janice Ward	jward43.jw@gmail.com	(443) 614-8318
Worcester	Janice Ward	jward43.jw@gmail.com	(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:

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

Make a tax deductible donation, amount \$ _____

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How did you hear about MBS? _____

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