

TEXAS Blues



Texas Bluebird Society Newsletter ▪ Volume 9, Issue 3

2010 TBS Summer Symposium

Saturday, August 14th

New Civic Center at Lake Forrest Park
1005 Hwy 64 W, Henderson, TX 75652

This year's Summer Symposium is in full preparation mode! Andrea Brown, coordinator, is busy finalizing plans and checking details for the big day. Following are important dates, reminders, and "good to know" tips, for ensuring you have a great symposium experience!

Send completed registration form with \$10 per registrant by **JULY 31st**.
Registration form is available on www.texasbluebirdsociety.org; a registration form is also available on page 7 of the last newsletter. (\$10 includes event & hot lunch)

9:00 AM—2:30PM

Doors open at 8:30AM for registration and early bids on Silent Auction items

**Advance
Registration**

NABS-approved nestbox with a camera port and 70# base donated to the TBS Silent Auction on August 14th.

See page 4 for nestbox details. (Builder Don is not included.)



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GUEST SPEAKER: GREG GRANT

Stephen F. Austin Gardens' horticulturist, Greg Grant, will present his latest lecture and workshop; *The Hole Truth—East Texas Woodpeckers* and those Who Come Knocking.

Greg will share a fun look at the relationship between woodpeckers and the many secondary cavity dwellers (including Eastern Bluebirds) that depend on them. East Texas is home to 8 species of woodpeckers all of which indicate a healthy forest and ecosystem. The Eastern Bluebird, the "songbird of happiness" is one of the most popular birds in America and one of Greg's favorites as well. He owns over 100 bluebird houses as part of his rural bluebird trail. Come find out how to identify our native woodpeckers and how beneficial they can be to your landscape.

Greg Grant is co-author of *Home Landscaping Texas* and *The Southern Heirloom Garden* and writes the popular column "In Greg's Garden" for *Texas Gardener* magazine. He is a lifetime member of the Texas Bluebird Society, the Native Plant Society of Texas, and the Big Thicket Society.



NEED LODGING?

Baymont Inn & Suites
410 Hwy 79 S. Henderson, TX
Phone: 903.657.7900.

Special rate for 2 queen/1 king, & free breakfast with code: *Bluebird Symposium*, or ask for *Summer Suite* rate.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Willing to help set up? Staff the registration table? Stuff attendee packets? Bring Refreshments? Anything to help get the Symposium ready for a full fun day?

Contact Info for
Symposium Coordinator:

ANDREA BROWN
TBS Summer Symposium
3689 State Hwy 43 E.
Henderson, TX 75652
Phone: 903.658.0026
andie3564@gmail.com



FREE NESTBOX TO MEMBERS

who pledge to "NestWatch" at least two nestboxes and submit observations to Cornell Ornithology Labs at www.registryournestbox.org

KEITH KRIDLER, CO-FOUNDER,

bluebird expert, favorite speaker, an all around great guy, and a mainstay of our symposium speakers, will be presenting *How, What & Why. Eastern Bluebirds*

Always a fountain of information, you do not want to miss Keith's presentation!

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ SILENT AUCTION \$\$\$\$\$\$

Our favorite FUNdraiser! A great way to support TBS; donate an item, buy an item, or do both. Anyway you choose, you are helping TBS raise funds to buy lumber for the nestboxes we distribute in Texas.

Still Need Donations

We are still in need of donations to help make this the best Silent Auction yet! Items need not be bird related. We are a 501 Charity, donation may be tax deductible. Send items to Silent Auction Coordinator:

KERRY FILLIPS
2302 Oxford Street
Bryan, TX 77802
K-Fillip@TTMAIL.TAMU.EDU

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Contact Us

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Austin, TX 78704

Pauline Tom
512.268.5678 (Home)

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830.966.2320

Visit our website
www.txblues.org

THANKS, Volunteers Are Appreciated!



Nacogdoches Blueberry Festival
Melba Siebe of Woodville helped staff the booth. Photo by Ron Tom.



Milam County Nature Festival®
Penny Friedman is ready for the crowds at this first time event. Photo by Linda Crum.



Milam County Nature Festival®
Cynthia Reid takes a quick Margarita Potato break! Photo by Linda Crum.

Great attendance and the hard work of a few good hands garnered 39 new members for TBS.

- ▶ **Andrea Brown** ▶ **Linda Crum** ▶ **Debbie Dalton** ▶ **Penny Friedman** ▶ **Cynthia Reid**
▶ **Melba Siebe** ▶ **Pauline Tom** ▶ **Ron Tom**

Don't Miss The Annual Bluebird Summer Symposium August 14th

You can read about it in the next newsletter, but it is a lot more fun to experience it for yourself! The Silent Auction already has a custom built nestbox from Don Lawrence, mounted photograph from John English, a three-nite stay in Branson from Texas Bank, just to name a few—so save some support \$ to spend at the auction. We always need volunteers for the big day (Contact Andrea). Send in registration soon and do not miss a minute of great speakers, great networking, door prizes, and Silent Auction FUNdraiser. (registration form on www.txblues.org)

TBS Thanks The Following Donors For Their Financial Support:

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| Vicki Barron | Sandy Brent | Durlene Butler | Dennis George |
| Jamie Hough | Karen Kay | David McGlathery | Lou Ann Norma |
| Barb Ohlman | Joan Outlaw | Polly Reed | Bob Reynolds |
| Jody Reynolds | Clint Scott | Ginny Reynolds | Sue Thomas |
| John Thornhill | Tom Wheeler | | |

Bird Watcher's Digest (from subscription offer)
Anonymous donations from Wills Point Bluebird Festival

Welcome New Members

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Holly Anderson | Dwayne Cornelius | Stephanie Kelly | Lou Ann Norman | Deborah Stephens |
| Wynell Baker | John Craven | Debbie Lance | Janice Pelzel | BS, Kennard |
| HB, Terrell | Barry Crowder | Jim Latham | MP, Canton | Tom & Tara Still |
| KB, Nacogdoches | DC, Flint | KL, Houston | CP, Scurry | Terry Strand |
| MB, The Woodlands | Don Day | Kathleen Lester | CP, Scurry | Robert Thompson |
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| Betty Brink | LG, Lufkin | RM, Wills Point | CR, The Woodlands | Anne Wheeler |
| CB, Lufkin | Jennifer Hall | Ernest & Cathy McCoulskey | JR, The Woodlands | TW, Canton |
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| Mark Carpenter | SH, Montgomery | Glyna Miller | BS, Scurry | AW, Wills Point |
| FC, Austin | JH, The Woodlands | S.W. Mills | BS, Centralia | Laura Wood |
| JC, DeSota | Marlin Hughes | DM, Frisco | Brandi & Coy Sewell | Ed Wood |
| LC, Azle | Carol Hughes | Lucy Mitchell | Phyllis Shuffield | Dan Wood, Jr |
| Bea Clack | EJ, Hide-A-Way | DM, Canton | John Skokan | |
| Macy Cluck | MJ, Sweetwater | BM, Katy | Susan & Hudson Smith | |
| C, Ford's Corner | KK, Georgetown | Pamela K. Neeley | WS, Shenandoah | |

If you did not check "Publish Name" on the membership application, initials and city are used.

From The President's Desk ... Where Did We Come From And How Did We Get Here?

Surprise dive bombed me recently when I realized some active TBS members do not know our roots - where we came from and why we exist. Everyone knows what we do ("Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time") and how we do it. But, "the rest of the story" has not been told for years.

Let me tell you, please, what happened before you came along ...

"Texas specific" publications did not exist when I started with bluebirds in 2000. The info I gleaned through extensive reading was not "incorrect" somewhere in the USA, but much did not apply in Texas (i.e., House Wrens; Tree Swallows; blowflies; hypothermia; spacing at 300-yards; NABS-sized nestboxes; migration south, two to three nestings.)

Keith Kridler and David Shiels, located through cyberspace, taught me what works best for Texas differs from general info about bluebirding, including what's published by the

North American Bluebird Society (NABS).

I cried out, "**WHY** doesn't NABS have an affiliate in Texas to help Texans??!!" NABS informed me, "In 20 years, no one has ventured to start an affiliate for all of Texas." No one has plans.

The void consumed me. With electronic communication, the time for a bluebird organization was right. In order to lend a helping hand to Texans, I got the ball rolling. Keith and David, bluebird experts with decades of experience in Texas, agreed to help make it a reality.

Help getting started came from outside Texas in the form of answered emailed questions from presidents of NABS affiliate organizations from coast to coast. At the NABS Convention in Ohio in June, I saw faces and heard voices of close comrades. And, after hundreds of emails just between the two of us, Keith Kridler (a charter NABS member) and I sat together for

the first time, piecing together plans.

In the next few months, Keith rounded up a few other Texans with experience to comprise the Charter Board. We pooled passion and knowledge

Texas Bluebird Society incorporated in September 2001. At the Board Meeting the following month, under oak trees in my backyard in Mountain City, a whirlwind brainstorm produced the slogan we all know so well: Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time.

In that motto we stay centered, with roots that anchor us ...TEXAS (with a "nestbox-T") Bluebird Society.

Peace, Hope & Joy—



Pauline Tom, President

Your Membership Dollars At Work!

Texas Bluebird Society funded the next printing of the Texas Parks & Wildlife booklet, "Bluebirds in Texas." When we learned that the booklet was not available due to budget cuts, we stepped in to help. Dr. Tom Wheeler, Life Member, helped with a generous designated donation.



My First Bluebird

February 19, 2010, Linda Ridings of Tomball wrote, "**I saw my first Bluebird! Have lived here since the early 70's....I was so excited I almost didn't get to my camera fast enough.**" On February 25th, Linda joined TBS when she attended a presentation by Linda Crum at Arbor Gate Nursery in Tomball.

Photo by Linda Ridings



Photo by Larry Gavaty

Tree Swallow Carrying A Fecal Sac away from a natural cavity at Brazos Bend State Park near Houston. This photo provides documentation for Texas ornithological history of the southernmost nesting of Tree Swallows to date. (They first nested there last year.) Should a pair of Tree Swallows nest in your bluebird nestbox, please notify Texas Bluebird Society and

Hats Off To Texas!

- A total of 859 nesting attempts have been reported from 38 states across the country. The top three states reporting nest attempts so far are Texas, Ohio, and North Carolina.
- The number of fledglings reported this season has increased to 2,374. The majority of these young birds are Eastern Bluebirds from Texas, Tennessee, and Ohio. Statistics obtained from Cornell Labs' NestWatch program.



Bob F. asks:

I am building a heat shield for our nestbox from the diagram on the TBS website. What is the plastic tubing? Is it small pvc pipe? What would I ask for at home depot? I understand the tubing is hollow and attached to the box with screws. Thanks for any specific information.

Pauline replies:

Originally, David Shiels, the member who conducted research on the effects of heat on a nestbox developed (per TBS standards) the HeatShield, David suggested the plastic tubing used for an ice-maker. However, he discovered it breaks down too fast in the elements. UV is a killer!

David now gets the PVC spacers at Home depot in the plumbing section and the coated deck screws in the fastener section near the nails. This combination lasts for years. Now he use 1/8" HDPE sheets for the shields. Any good durable plastic will work, even Lexan but that stuff is expensive, he orders online from K-Mac. (KS-1906A HDPE-.125x24x48-HDPE-Natural)

Betsy H. asks:

I moved here from Ohio. My family monitors a bluebird trail in Northeast Ohio, plus several boxes at their home. Once the eggs hatched, we had to be on the lookout for blowfly larvae that would attach themselves to the

babies' legs and kill them. If we discovered the larvae, we would change the nest using clean grass. Are blowflies an issue in Texas, or is that a concern only for northern states? I have my first nest of 5 eggs, which should hatch in about 12 days. Just wondered if this is something that I should be on the lookout for once they hatch.

Pauline replies:

Blowflies are not a concern in Texas. In 10 years, I've heard of one person with blowflies, and that was in a nest with dead nestlings. Such is the primary reason we have TEXAS Bluebird Society. Our issues here are different and those who read materials written "up north" spend time and energy on non-issues. We're constantly learning what works best in Texas.

Jerrí J. asks:

We want bluebirds so badly, and have done everything possible to get them to nest in our boxes. We moved to a house a few miles away from my brother who has several dozen boxes that are used every year. He has offered to bring a box of eggs with the mother on the nest to hang on our property. Would she raise them by herself? Would she desert the eggs?

Linda replies:

I know what it is like to wait what seems like forever to get bluebirds in your yard. But please, do not move a box from your brother's home to yours. The clutch would likely be lost

and the adult birds very upset. It is also against federal law to do this. Bluebirds are a protected species – as are all native birds. We cannot tamper with or relocate an active nest.

Birds can be very picky about where they nest. Is your property open or wooded? Bluebirds like a somewhat open area with trees nearby. I waited 3 years after putting up a box before getting bluebirds. Wait awhile longer and see if you get bluebirds in your new location. In the meantime, enjoy your brother's bluebirds. (Linda Crum)

Don L answers his own question:

Don answers his own question for this one! I had three nest boxes last year and all three failed. The reason for the failure was because of excessive heat build-up inside the boxes. I have relocated the boxes so that they are closer to the trees, more especially on the East and North sides of the trees. This gets the boxes into the shade much earlier than last year and subsequently, keeps the nest box much cooler. Don L



Don decided to build his own nestboxes. He has already provided 6 to the Frank Buck Zoo.

From page 1:

Don shares his construction design with us and has generously donated one of his nestboxes for our Silent Auction.

Design questions? Contact Don.
Don Lawrence
725 CR - 132
Whitesboro, Texas 76273

"I use an all cedar construction, with a double concrete roof. (Hardy-Board) The lower roof has a camera viewing port the same size as my camera optics. When the upper roof is closed, it keeps the birds dry. It is ant resistant, snake resistant, squirrel resistant, and has been wind tested here in Cooke County to 68 MPH."

Betty S. asks:

We had bluebirds nest twice in an old box right on the eave of our back porch last year. Over the winter we invested in a real bluebird house. They came back this spring & laid 5 eggs in their new house—all of which hatched. Close to fledging we had a disaster!

I noticed both bluebirds agitatedly hovering in front of the box. Most of the day I could hear chirping, so I thought Mom was just trying to coax them out of the box. The next day I saw Mom hover around the box but no chirping. I went out and got a step ladder to peak in the box. I was a little surprised I wasn't dive bombed. I climbed up, opened the front of the box maybe an inch—there was a big honking snake staring at me!

Later my husband and I opened the box. The snake was huge! We pulled him out, and of course, all but one of the babies were gone. Based on his stomach, at least two of them were still inside him. The last baby died too. I think the weight of the snake crushed him, he made no effort to move. The snake was just over 3 feet long (after decapitation). Huge and heavy, I'm reasonably sure it was a rat snake. Anyway, to my question. We cleaned out the box and

washed it down. Do you think bluebirds will ever come back to nest again after the snake experience?

Pauline replies:

How heartbreaking to lose bluebirds! I cannot say whether or not the bluebirds will return. Can you move the box to another location? Putting up a predator guard/baffle will help deter snakes, but they sometimes go right over them. Mounting the nestbox on a pole with predator guard and then greasing the pole will help even more. You can make a baffle with stovepipe and hardware cloth.

Building plans for nestboxes, heat shields, and Kingston predator baffles are available on the TBS website www.txblues.org.

Margit W. asks:

Is the BWD offer to help support TBS valid? Will the magazine help me? I specifically need to know—if a nest appears to have been abandoned, do I remove it, or leave it for the next guy?

Pauline replies:

Purchase a *new* one year subscription (6 issues) of BWD for only \$19.99, mention **Texas Bluebird Society, and we receives \$10**. It's that simple! But even better, you'll receive a fascinating and entertaining bird magazine written by bird watchers for bird watchers. Call 1.800.879.2473. www.birdwatcherdigest.com to order.

The offer is still valid. But, "Bird Watchers' Digest" is general interest articles related to wild birds, rather than a source of education on box maintenance.

Regarding a nest that *appears* to be abandoned ... it's always good to err on the safe side. If you're talking

about a nest with a nest cup, you might wait a month or so before removing it. The next guy will build his own nest.

If the next guy starts building atop the original nest before you remove it and the nest gets "close" to the hole, you may remove a bit from the *bottom* of the stack (from the original nest) to lower the nest from the entrance hole.

Also, TBS is an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS). TBS encourages dual memberships. NABS offers to TBS members a special annual rate of \$15. To join NABS, send your name, address, and payment (mark it "A-Plus Membership") to: North American Bluebird Society, P.O. Box 43, Miami, OH 45147.

Valeri asks:

Two years ago I put up a bluebird house and a family has made it its home. I put in 4 more houses. I was wondering when was a good time to clean out last years nest. I did it in early spring this year, but I think I accidentally threw out the new nest. The blue birds built another, because I noticed they still moved in.

Linda replies:

I clean out the nest as soon as the babies leave the nest. They do not return. This makes the nestbox available for a subsequent nesting. Bluebirds can have 2 to 4 broods per year in Texas. Be sure to throw the old nest away so as not to attract predators like snakes to the nestbox.

If you have a dilemma with bluebirds (or other cavity nesting birds), check for an answer in the **Resource** section of www.texasbluebirdsociety.org. If you do not find an answer, send an inquiry to tbs@txblues.org. A TBS board member should answer within a few days. If you have an immediate concern, consider signing up with the new YahooGroup for Bluebird Monitors.

Website: www.sialis.org/bmg.htm has a FAQ and link to group. This same site is another good resource for general bluebird information.

Musings From The Master ... **Remodeling For Chickadees**

Keith Kridler, everyone's resident expert, our favorite speaker, and co-founder of TBS, participates in several List-Serve groups focusing on bluebirds and their behavior. Keith has given us permission to publish his contributions to these groups. This is an edited excerpt from Bluebird-L.

"That chickadee appeared to move 200 feet away and built a nest in the brain cavity of a cow skull I had wired up to our far back fence."

I have installed probably more than 100 "cavities" now on our 20 acres. "Bluebird" nestboxes of all types and sizes, but most have entrance holes of $1\frac{9}{16}$ inches, some slot entrance holes, some Gilwoods.

Last year to try to increase the Carolina Chickadees I made four new boxes just for them with 3"x3" square bottoms about 7" or 8" deep, bottom of entrance hole to top of floor. I drilled a $1\frac{3}{8}$ " entrance hole to exclude the Eastern Bluebirds or at least to limit their access to these boxes.

Locally I find MOST of our chickadees nesting down in open topped 2" steel fence posts or chain link poles. To duplicate this in a wood nestbox just for "fun" in three of these smaller chickadee boxes I put in empty Campbell's soup cans** to reduce the floor space even more to make these boxes less appealing to our Tufted Titmice. Well last year Chickadees built in ALL three of the soup cans in these boxes.

They were successful in fledging from two of them and a bumble bee queen took over one nest in the moss stage and created a hive over summer. That chickadee appeared to move 200 feet away and built a nest in the brain cavity of a cow skull I had wired up to our far back fence. This chickadee entered the

skull through the spinal cord hole. There is a NEW nest in the skull this week with chickadees coming and going.

I removed all but one of the soup cans this spring and Chickadees are ONLY building in the single box that still had a soup can in it. These cans are $2\frac{5}{8}$ " diameter by 4" deep. The nest cups have all been down inside the cans and there are 7 eggs in the one can this week.

Chickadees do not compete along my normal bluebird trails in normal nestboxes designed to allow bluebirds free access. Even though we have hundreds of nestboxes scattered out across hundreds of square miles of East Texas we will fledge more Carolina Chickadees most years from my 20 acres.

We as bluebirders probably need to reassess how we put up nestboxes and what types of nestboxes to see if we can benefit some of the other species of cavity nesters.

I have used normal sized bluebird nestboxes with reduced entrance holes for the past 40 plus years but when I saw most of these boxes go for 10 to 15 years without a chickadee using any of them we drilled them on out to bluebird size.

** The next day, Keith wrote... "better choices (than soup cans) for reducing the inside floor area of a nestbox to make it less appealing to bluebird-sized cavity nesters include a simple plastic flower pot or a heavy cardboard roll."

True Blue Friends Recognition Plaque

Here's a great way to remember a loved one or to acknowledge the contributions of someone you respect.

True Blue Friend allows you to dedicate a new or existing monitored nestbox to a "True Blue Friend" with a customized plaque bearing your personal message along with the name of the person, pet or entity you wish to honor. This is a unique way to honor a special person, memorialize a loved one, celebrate an anniversary, marriage, graduation or birth, etc. while supporting the Texas Bluebird Society.



Photo by LeAnn Sharp

The weather-resistant "True Blue Friend" plaque is suitable for any outdoor memorial. The plaque is available with the Texas Bluebird Society logo (as pictured) or without the logo (the small website addresses will appear at the bottom of the plaque.)

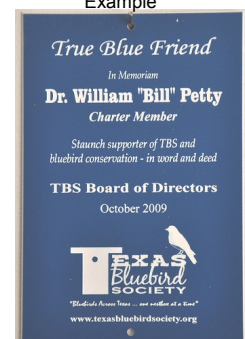
"To order, please complete this form and send it via email to tbf@txblues.org or mail the form to: True Blue Friend, 750 Old Highway Road, Bronte, TX 76933. We will send you an invoice from our convenient PayPal system. Plaques are \$26.95 each plus tax (includes mailing). Allow 5 weeks for delivery.

Board member Judy Hetherington is managing the True Blue Friends program. We hope to have this item for sale on our website soon so it can be managed electronically. In the meantime, please EMAIL or snail mail your requests to Judy. The following information must be provided to accurately process your order.

True Blue Friend Order Form Information

- Your Name and mailing address.
- Your email address. (to acknowledge receipt of order and notification when plaque is sent)
- If billing address is different from the mailing address, please enter billing address.
- Name and personal message to go on the plaque. (a total of 8 lines of 35 characters each; not to exceed 280 characters.
- Do you want the TBS logo on the plaque?
- Name and address where Plaque will be sent.
- Should a note be included with the plaque?
If yes, what salutation should be used? E.g., "Dear Mr. Jones", "Dear Mom", "To the family of George Smith".
- Do you want a picture of the plaque sent to you?

Example



True TBS Friends!

No special marker or plaque—but you couldn't find a "truer" friend of TBS than our lifetime members! By selecting the *Life-time Member* option they are clearly demonstrating a lifelong commitment to the conservation and enjoyment of bluebirds. It is our honor to recognize these members:

Edra Bogucki	Doug and Karen Rohde
Greg Grant	Ronny Rolf
Diane & Eric Hale	William & Linda Stevens
Highland Shores Garden Club	Byron Stone
Maxey Kirkley	Ron and Pauline Tom
Keith, Sandy and Shawn Kridler	Jack Vick
Leonard MayDonna Parker	Dr. Thomas M. Wheeler
Kathy & Billy Pinkerton	Marsha Winfield

Mark's Our Man

A special thanks to Mark Carlson, our new photo librarian. Mark has generously volunteered his time to keep our photo gallery up to date with your latest photos. Mark's dedication and attention to detail will keep our Photo Gallery a unique resource for all of us to enjoy.

Send your photos to:
photos@texasbluebirdsociety.org
(Or) **fotos@txblues.org**

Include photographer's name, names of people in photo, location, date, title or caption, any details if needed. This information helps the librarian process the photo quickly and ensures the right keywords are added for photo gallery searches.



This newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society is published four times a year.

Send street or email address changes to Caryn Brewer at: records@texasbluebirdsociety.org or send to our P.O. Box.

Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time

August 14th
2010 Summer Symposium
Reserve your space today



Texas Bluebird Society
PO Box 40868
Austin TX 78704

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #444
Buda, TX 78610

Return Service Requested



Noted photographer
JOHN ENGLISH

is donating this photo (mounted) to the Silent Auction on Aug. 14th.

Have YOU
NestWatch'd
your nestbox
this week?



NestWatch
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

A pair of Eastern Bluebirds, at Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory in Austin, take advantage of the unique building materials near their nest.

This successful nestbox is in a pecan orchard - in "somewhat open space" under tall trees with canopies way above the nestbox.

Notice the *pecan catkins* interwoven with the native grasses and fine twigs.

As usual, this pair of bluebirds has constructed a well built nest for their future family.

In a joint project with Travis Audubon Society, nestboxes at Hornsby Bend are "NestWatch'd", with observations reported to www.NestWatch.org



Photo by Pauline Tom

WE WANT TO KNOW!

The fall newsletter will be all about our members. Share your pictures, stories, experiences and new "things" you have tried this year to baffle the predators. Please send your entries to editor@texasblues.org

Submission deadline: August 31, 2010