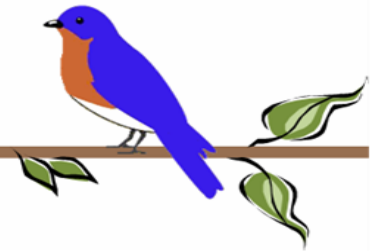


TEXAS Blues



Texas Bluebird Society Newsletter · Volume 11. Issue 1

MARCH 2012

In Spite Of Drought Bluebirds Are Flourishing Everywhere: Hornsby Bend Report

Report and photos by Barbara Vinson

I was contacted by Pauline Tom on March 13, 2008 about monitoring the nestboxes at Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory, near Austin. I had joined the Texas Bluebird Society after meeting Pauline at the TBS booth at Budafest one December. Although I had a thriving Purple Martin colony, I had been unsuccessful in my attempts to attract bluebirds to my property out on the Blackland Prairie east of Buda. I thought Pauline's offer to monitor bluebird nestboxes would be a good way to educate myself about bluebirds as well as provide a needed service. I entered the nesting activity data into www.NestWatch.org.

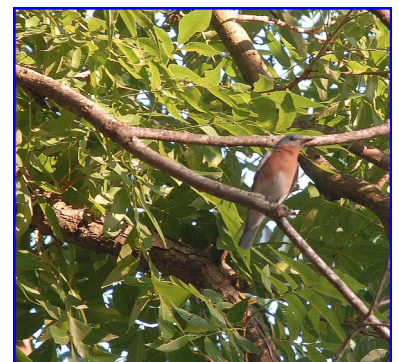


One of a dozen nestboxes.

Over the years of not being monitored, I discovered the old bluebird boxes had fallen into disuse, decayed, been removed or fallen down. I was actually starting over establishing new bluebird trails. Initially, I installed twelve TBS bluebird nestboxes on rebar and EMT poles in three different areas of Hornsby Bend. GPS coordinates and photographs were taken at each site. This and other data on the nestbox locations were entered in NestWatch. Nestbox data was collected on average every 4 or 5 days for each nestbox. Throughout the nesting season, the nesting information collected was entered into the NestWatch site. Once a nestbox had a clutch of eggs, a predator guard was installed on the pole to protect the nestbox contents. So far, these have successfully prevented predation on all nests.

Four nestboxes were set up in short grass under the mature pecan trees in the area immediately around the Center for Environmental Research (CER) building with entrances facing south and southeast to catch prevailing breezes. Four nestboxes were set up at along the margins of the four pond/marsh areas just above the Colorado River. These nestboxes were set up within four to twelve feet of open water or marsh habitats. Entrance orientation again was south and southeast. Four nestboxes were set up along Platt Lane, which is just north and northwest of the main Hornsby Bend CER location. These Platt Lane nestboxes were set up in locations that I had read were ideally situated for bluebirds: open grasslands and along habitat margins such as house yards. Entrance orientation was variable and dependent upon allowing for clear flight path into the nestbox.

After a late start in May 2008 of the first year, there were four bluebird nest attempts and five bluebirds fledged out of 18 eggs. All of these nest attempts were in nestboxes at the CER location and extended from May to August 10th for the last fledging. In 2009, the numbers remained about the same with three bluebird nest attempts and five bluebirds fledged from sixteen eggs. In 2009 there was another cavity nester, a Carolina Wren, with five successful fledglings from a TBS nestbox located in the pond areas.



Great year for bluebirds at Hornsby Bend.

For the 2010 nesting season, NestWatch data documented there was a tripling of use of nestboxes by Hornsby Bend bluebirds. The totals for the 2010 season were twelve bluebird nest attempts with 58 eggs laid and 29 fledglings. Bluebirds started egg laying March 19 and the last nestlings fledged on August 7. In April 2010, I moved several nestboxes that had shown little or no nesting activity in the previous two years. Most notably, I moved the pond/marsh nestbox number four to a location just outside the entrance gate to the pond area. A bluebird pair started nest building in this new location in May, successfully raising 4 fledglings. By July with this pairs' second nest attempt, the Texas heat had set in and heat shields were added to the nestbox because it was in full sun. This second

Continued on page 7

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www.txblues.org

VOLUNTEERS ARE APPRECIATED!

Our president wanted to extend a very extra special **THANK YOU** to the volunteers who made the 2012 Kick-off such a huge success! The amount of hard physical labor needed to display over 400+ nestboxes was exhausting! (Especially when the Grand Ballroom elevator was off-limits for loading/unloading for the day!) Pauline wanted to shout "**THANK YOU**" from the rooftops, but she was too tired after the meeting.

Debra Bashaw
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Linda Crum
Charlene Fischer
Rebekah Haydin
Brian Hetherington
Judy Hetherington
Benni Konvicka
Jimmie Konvicka
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•Jane Austin, Registrar
•Carol Woodson, SFA Conferences Coordinator
•Illuminatedesigns.com, Char Diehm, graphic artist
▶ See volunteer builders on pg. 3

Thank You Donors For Your Financial \$upport

Carolyn Almand•Avant Gardeners•Richard S Barnett•A Best•Henry & Teddy Boehm•Sandy Brent•Kimber Briggs•Robert Burke•Linda & Larry Calvert•Veda Capps•Dana and Patricia Clark•Katy Couvillion •Beverly Davis•Vanessa Davis•Kathy Denison•Teri Dickinson•Tom & Vicki Drummond•Sandra Dworaczyk•Brant D & Annette Edwards•Nancy Etheridge•Daniel Fanelli•Ellen Filtness•Cathy Gero•Cathy Gero•Bill & Ginny Griffith•Mary Alice Harper•Joey & Karen Hodges•Bruce & Vickie Houff•JustGive.org•David & Ora Keetley•David King•Keith Kridler•R.L. Langley•Don Lawrence•Jamie Light•Susan Lipka•Cynthia & Mike Mathews•Mickie McGregor•Roy McKinnis•Billie Murrell•Susan Nenny•Nancy Nichols•Curtis Oeser•Barbara Paul•Leacy Piper•Bowery L Prater•Larry Rankin•Frederick & Amy Rapczyk•Madison & Linda Reed•Joe & Ruth Reeves•Larry B Reynolds•Mayme Richie-Gillespie•Elyce Rodewald•Caroline Roe•Mary Sue Rose•Carol Sloan•Kimberly Smith•Ed & Kay Sones•Ron & Pauline Tom•Bill & Sharon Vick•Larry & Diana Walker •**Dr. Tom Wheeler paid SFA event parking fee for all Kick-off attendees!**

Welcome New Members!

• John & Maureen Anselmi• Merrilyn & Sterlin Barton• Geneva Baxter• Chuck & Ann Bernauer• Kenneth & Sherry Bitz• Eva Bivens• Claire Boutte• Connie Brannan• Brian W. Bray• J.D. & Karen Brewer• Kelly Brown• Dave Bucklin• Suzanne Calenda• Holly Carp• Carole Ann Chance• Rita Clark• Leslie Covarrubias• Susan Crowson• Joe Cucuzza• Kelly Dacre• Vicki Damon• Elaine Davenport• Vanessa Davis• Shawn Davis• David DeFrank• Ivy Doak• Bonnie Dolson• Eileen Dotson• Linda Ellender• Bob & Lina Mae Eschberger• Daniel Fanelli• Sandy Farrar• James & Virginia Foley• Heinz Gaylord• Mary "Ray" Goehring• Michele Graves• Kathy Greer• David Gregory• Mary Beth Hagood• Anton P. Hajek III• Cole & Benita Harper• Lois Heckart• Harriet Helmle• Lisa & Gary Holmes• Bryan Hummel• Francine M. Jenness• Jo Anne Keeter• David & Ora Keetley• LeLynn Koch• Eric & Deborah Kolber• Elaine Lambricht• Jessica Leslie• Troy Lewis• Carma Lewis• Sue & Ed Lilley• Steven Lindsey• Stephen Livingston• Kevin & Nadine Londrigan• James Lutke• Dini & Bill Machat• Jessica Manley• Patricia Marshall• Teresa Maslonka• Mickie McGregor• Dean Mendenhall• Mark & Ann Marie Mihm• Kathy Moore• Susan Morgan• Mike Murphree• Jennie Murray• Billie Murrell• Ann Nutt• Larry Odum• Curtis Oeser• Noma Ogbeifun• Tom Olsen• Margie Osborne• Matt Osher• Shirley Owens• Helen Mar Parkin• Debbie Parsley• Maureen Perez• Sandra Pettigrew• Anne Pfluger• Leacy Piper• Claude & Ernestine Ray• Larry B. Reynolds• Lynne Richards• Mayme Richie-Gillespie• Camilla Ritchey• Debra Roberts• Caroline Roe• Mary Sue Rose• Steve & Charlene Ryan• Jason A. Seale• Perry Sheets• Donna Shope• Annette Sigler• Aleta Spivey• Cheryle Sprecher• Phyllis Stallings• Gene Stapp• Jean Stephens• Donnie Stephenson• Debbie Stewart• Mariane Sultenfuss• Patty Swanholm• Marvin Thompson & Sammy Salisbury• Nancy Thoss• Jessica Turnbull• Sharon Vick• Nancy Webber• Sandy West• Marcy Baron & Whitnah Garrick• Jetta Wilder• Ellen Wojdyla• George Workman• Peggy Wyatt• Kathy Wynns• Parker Yarbrough• Peggy York• Lynn & Bob Zinnel *We print names of all new members who give to us permission on Membership Form, otherwise initials and city used.* PA, Atlanta PA, Flower Mound• KA, Onalaska LA, Onalaska TB, Nacogdoches MB, Nacogdoches VB, Copper Canyon CB, Aledo JB, Brenham PB, Center DC, Livingston IC, Nacogdoches FC, Center MC, Henderson BC, Crockett NC, Lufkin WD, Campbell JD, Washington CD, Shreveport TD, Carmine HF, Burton EF, Austin CF, Fischer WF, Lewisville EF, Brenham CG, Houston EG, Timpson RG, Keller JH, Center EH, Houston MH, Austin AH, Center SH, Palestine JH, Magnolia HJ, Lake Dallas MJ, Carmine SJ, Rockwall DK, Arp JK, Enchanted Oaks SK, Van RL, Magnolia JL, Center JM, Brenham CM, Centerville PM, Denton HM, Double Oak NM, Argyle IM, Copperas Cove JM, San Antonio JM, Brenham MO, Timpson BP, Austin BP, Haworth DR, Georgetown CR, Carmine JR, Grapeland MR, Tyler LS, Athens JS, Clarksville KS, Elgin NS, Tyler NS, Zavalla MT, Athens VT, Mason CT, Nacogdoches LW, Nacogdoches PW, Magnolia EW, Austin DW, Idabel JW, Center MA, Tyler PA, Flint MB, Flint BC, Bullard EC, La Vernia AH, Flint PH, Flint HG, Athens JI, Palestine CM, Whitehouse CQ, Flint JT, Flint LT, LaRue

President Pauline Tom Gives The State Of The TBS Organization Address

From my viewpoint, our members made the most positive new impact in 2011 by **NestWatch'ing** (an ever increasing number of renewals marked, "Yes, Nest-Watch'd the most recent season"); and, members began **painting weathered nestboxes a light color** and/ or adding "**HeatShields**" when a TBS "heat study" was published and promoted. (We will continue the study in 2012.)

In February, TBS assigned **Membership #3399**. The count goes higher almost daily. (As I write, Ron phoned from Austin saying the post office box was stuffed with about 25 memberships and renewals, which arrived since last week.)

1006 (an all-time high) hold current membership. Many add a donation (\$5-\$100) when they renew.

Usually, **over \$20,000** sits in our bank accounts, which will allow the organization to continue should we come to a point in time where we

must pay for some of the professional services now provided by volunteers.

For instance, **our professional web services provider resigned in February**, after eight years of volunteer service.

This year, we budgeted for greater expenditures related to our website.

TBS is well-managed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors, which meets about every five weeks for two hours by teleconference and by the Executive Committee members, who usually work together daily by email.

By far, our largest expense category is "**Nestbox Construction**," with **\$12,775** budgeted.

TBS gives a free nestbox to each new member who joins in person, and we send a voucher (redeemable in person at a TBS event) to those who join online or by mail. And,

we sell nestboxes at wholesale price.

Still, Brian & Judy Hetherington, along with Bob Houck, rip lumber for each nestbox, which limits bookkeeping, maintains

quality, and, makes possible a branded logo. A team in Montgomery County now assembles

hundreds of nestboxes each year.

We expend education dollars to present our semi-annual events (Season Kickoff and Summer Symposium) **at a rockbottom cost to registrants.** Registration fees cover little more (if any) than the actual cost of lunch and snacks.

We continue paying for the printing of the **Texas Parks & Wildlife booklet, "Bluebirds in Texas."**

We print "new member materials" (formatted as 4x6 photos) on an as-needed basis for ten cents each

through Walgreens.com. We store no quantities of printed materials.

TBS holds no inventory that is not directly related to nestboxes. Our imprinted and embroidered apparel and "Bluebird Habitat" signs (available through "Sales" section on our website) are printed one-by-one by outside vendors. (We receive no income on these.)

We spread "Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time." Often we hear from one who sees their first bluebird or their first blue eggs in their own nestbox because of our work. And, then, the next year, they share with neighbors. We're making a difference not only in bluebird conservation, but also in the lives of humans whose lives they impact.

Our most critical need: young leaders willing to commit extensive time to an organization that is not their top priority in life.

Thank you for being a part!

Pauline



Pauline, a very active pres!



Yeah team!

Volunteers (L to R): Roger Clark, Carol Danko, Mike Carrington, Jan Carrington, Judy Hetherington, Marianne Marugg, Clark Beasley, Linda Taubert, Brian Hetherington, Bob Houck, Jimmie Konvicka. Photo by Benni Konvicka.



Bob Houck, Benni and Jimmie Konvicka know the "drill" and quickly begin assembling nestboxes for distribution across TX.



Benni and Jimmie Konvicka, Bob Houck, Clark Beasley, and Mike Carrington inspect assembled boxes before they are ready to be distributed.

Nestboxes Assembled...hundreds at a time!

In November many Big Country Master Naturalists met Brian and Judy Hetherington, who brought all of the supplies to the Expo Center, for us willing worker bees to begin to put together another 200+ bluebird nestboxes for the Texas Bluebird Society. Many thanks to Robert Pritz, who made arrangements for us to use the Big Country Hall. Under the careful guidance of Judy and Brian, newly graduated in-terns; Clark Beasley, Jan Carrington (and her husband, Mike), Mary Haney, Marianne Marugg, and Linda Taubert got right into the swing of building the nestboxes. Thank you to the special guests of Brian and Judy, who were there to help. Bob Houck, who has helped to make over 9,000 nestboxes, and Jimmie and Benni Knovicka from Stephenville, Roger Clark and Carol Danko also helped with the assembly. Everyone arrived ready with their leather gloves, drills and chargers, Phillips head bits, and a willingness to get to work.

Report by Carol Danko, photos center and to the right by Judy Hetherington.

Western Bluebirds have bluish throats and reddish tones on their breasts and shoulders. Their bellies and undertails are gray, which wear down during the year to a blue-gray. In Texas, Western Bluebirds nest in the Davis Mountains and Guadalupe Mountains.

Texas is the winter home to all three species of bluebirds; Eastern, Western, and Mountain.

Subscribers to TXBIRDS Listserve are sharing sightings around the state.

The Mountain Bluebird lacks the reddish breast of its Eastern and Western cousins, presenting an almost pure blue appearance with a white belly. The female is less colorful, showing blue only on her wings and tail.

Western Bluebird Seen in Utopia, Davis Mtn, Schleicher Co, etc.

Mitch Heindel (Utopia)
 Ten calling Western Bluebirds heading east a couple miles west of Utopia on Wednesday December 14th. Flight call is much shorter duration, much lower pitched, very guttural compared to Eastern. Obviously very different when you hear it. At least two were adult males.

By Sean Paul Kelly
 Our first day (12/28) in the

Davis Mountains was a great one. Included in our list is 5 Western Bluebirds.
Brady Surber (Vernon)
 I Birded Fisher county Friday Nov 27th. One Western Bluebird-mixed in with 3 Eastern bluebirds at the Hamlin Country Club

Stephen Gross
 At the end of November, Dave Dolan and I took a six-day swing through many of

the productive birding spots of west Texas. We saw a total of 124 species. The day was marked by several sightings of Mountain Bluebirds (RR 2129 in Schleicher County),



Photo by Hugh P. Smith. The Bluebird Monitor's Guide.

All Three Bluebird Species in South Llano River State Park

By Randy J. Helton
 In the past week (11/12) I have had all 3 bluebird species (Eastern, Western and Mountain) at the South Llano River State Park.

I had a flock of 10 Western



Western

Bluebirds across the road from the park office near where the gravel trail takes off into the Day-Use area. The Mountain Bluebirds are mostly fly-overs and I have had them 3-4 times before.



Mountain

Western and Mountain Bluebird photos by Jeffrey Rich (Bluebird Monitor's Guide.)



Eastern

Eastern Bluebird photo by Bill Horn.

Mountain Bluebird in Santa Anna NWR, Ft. Hood, and Austin

By Edge Wade & Della Rhoades from Columbia, Missouri

Received the following from a birding friend: Mountain Bluebird was at Cattail Lakes at Santa Ana NWR today (xx/xx). The bluebird was "fly catching" insects from perches on 3-foot high stalks in the dry lake bed. In the immediate vicinity was a Gray Hawk atop a tree near the road watching the lake bed.

By Mikael Behrens Austin (Williamson Co.)

I participated in the Austin Christmas Bird Count today, on the Hornsby Bend team. I was excited to find a single male Mountain Bluebird among a flock of at least 40 Eastern Bluebirds. They were all on the Platt property just north of the northwest field, under the power lines. Here are some photos I took

while on the CBC, including a few of the bluebird. All photos are geo-tagged, so click on the map for location details. View Mikael's photos at <http://www.tinyurl.com/behrensMOBL>



Leucistic Bluebird Residing in Mineola



Late September 2011, Mineola TX on Wood County Rd 2205; David Hanson photographed two leucistic bluebirds. He wrote, "They look similar but one appears to have a little blue in its tail. The red is much lighter than normal and almost looks pink."

Leucism is a condition characterized by reduced pigmentation in animals and humans. Unlike albinism, it is caused by a reduction in all types of skin pigment, not just melanin.

Eastern Bluebirds Spotted in All The Usual Places



Photo by Vanessa Voisinnet

Bluebird Habitat

This property provides nestboxes in somewhat open space with short grass, high perches, and insects. All native birds are welcome.

"Bluebirds Across Texas... one nestbox at a time"

www.texasbluebirdsociety.org

ARE YOU READY?



Photo by John Park

NestWatch is now open year round. Make your observations and report nesting activity at your convenience.

Your information is vital to ongoing research.

More on Texan's contributions in next issue.

Getting Ready for Nesting Season



Travis Audubon Society Class is getting ready for nesting season. On January 28th the registrants watch as Pauline Tom demonstrates how to "NestWatch" a nestbox, in a pecan grove at

Hornsby Bend Bird Observatory. She used a retractable mechanic's mirror to show how a viewer can count eggs and nestlings without disturbing the nest. This nestbox, under the high canopy of pecans, has produced bluebirds for several years.

Ron and Pauline Tom delivered to Tommy and Deborah Higgins 13 nestboxes to replace those burned in the Labor Day weekend fires in Bastrop. Texas Bluebird Society offers replacement

nestboxes and installation hardware for all members in Bastrop County. The Higgins are happy to report

"our trees may not come back, but the bluebirds are still here."



The male Eastern Bluebird is dark blue on the head, back wings and tail. He is reddish brown from the chin down over the breast and further back along the flanks. His belly is white

Musings From The Master...



Keith Kridler, everyone's resident expert, our favorite speaker, and cofounder 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 the Bluebird Monitors Yahoo Group.

Keith is also a frequent contributor to the TXBirds listserve, a great place to find bird sightings and comments from our fellow Texans.

<http://lists.texbirds.org/texbirds.html>

Time To Smooth Entrance Holes

Over time, wood nestboxes shrink and expand with rain followed by sunshine. A wood board can shrink in width as much as 1/4" for every 12" width. After a year or two, an entrance hole can become sharp and jagged due to weathering! The hole can shrink upwards of 1/16" or even more, FAR smaller than when it was originally drilled.

During the first nest checks in spring, it is a good idea to carry a cordless drill with you and re-drill ALL of the entrance holes with a Forstner Style drill bit. This will shave off all of the sharp points within the entrance hole.

When I build nesting boxes, I use a 1/4" quarter round bit in a table router to "round over" BOTH sides of the entrance holes. This removes any of the splinters left over from the original drilling of the entrance hole; removing that razor sharp edge.

I use a 1 9/16" diameter Forstner bit as this will keep out the European Starling and it gives the Eastern Bluebirds a little more room than they really require to enter and exit the entrance hole. You can use a 1 9/16" diameter round hole saw or even choose the 1 1/2" drill bits.

This "re-drilling" is MORE important for folks who use 1 1/2" thick lumber for nestbox fronts. IF you have a nesting box with the extra thickness, wood block added to the front of the nesting boxes, then be SURE to drill through these once a year also. These double guards can shift and move over the course of a winter with freezing and thawing. This can create a "pinch point" right in the middle of the entrance hole.

I caught a LOT of grief from a gentleman one day because I was being so picky and that birds were "tough"

and would get accustomed to the entrance. He had used a "flat spade or paddle" drill bit and had HORRIBLY rough and splintery entrance holes on his nesting boxes. I had him drop a small pebble down into his boot and remarked that IF he was "tough," he would be able to leave that small pebble in his boot for month and just get "accustomed" to it!

Why do humans use slick sanded, round handles on all of our work tools? Why do we round over the sharp corners on our furniture and handrails?

Caulk over ANY cracks in the nestbox entrance holes as 1/8" wide cracks can catch the leg of either adult or baby birds. I "prefer" to make nestbox fronts out of thicker plywood and or replace the entire front if the box splits through the entrance hole.

Hope this helps you make your nestboxes safer.



Our Favorite Tradition!

Keith will be joining us August 11th at the Gainesville Civic Center for the 2012 Summer Symposium. Watch for registration, agenda, and other Symposium details in future issues of Texas Blues newsletters



Keith Identified Contents Of Nest For TBS Charter Member Ed Melson

"Those look like Black Cherry seeds (pits) in the nest along with the May Beetles. Bluebirds will carry this fruit to their young when they are older. The young and the adults will swallow the fruit whole, grind off the meat of the fruit in their gizzard and then regurgitate the pits as they are too large to pass through their entire digestive tract. I would expect you have one of these cherry trees within about 200 yards of your nestbox. Bluebirds are also feeding on blackberries and dewberries when this photo was taken." *Photo by Ed Melson,*

Fort Worth Bluebird Project Expands In 2011!

By Jim Marshall

Despite the extremely hot, dry summer, Project Bluebird in Fort Worth, which began with only **one** successful nestbox in 2007, continued to grow during the 2011 nesting season.

Highlights for boxes along the Trinity Trail corridor for 2011:

- Total #of nestboxes: **32**
- Boxes with at least one clutch leaving the nest (fledging): **14**
- Successful nests (many boxes have multiple broods): **25**
- First egg laid: 2/23/11
- First chick to fledge: 4/2/11

- Last chick to fledge: 7/31/11

- Total eggs laid: **145**

- Number of fledglings: **105**

- Volunteer monitors checking on boxes and recording observations: **12**

Observations logged into Cornell University's NestWatch research website: **474**

In addition to the nestboxes along the Trinity River, there are now other successful installations in nearby areas including:

- 2 boxes in individual yards with Sue Anderson reporting a successful box.
- Valley Golf Course as an Ea-

gle Scout project by Ben Phillips and other Troop 720 Scouts. 7 boxes had activity.

- 14 boxes installed at Colonial Country Club golf course. Elaine Petrus checked these boxes during the 2011 season and reported 8 of the 14 had successful nests. Several had multiple clutches and one contained 2 batches of white eggs.

- 7 boxes in the Botanic Garden monitored by Earline and Bob Baker with hopes that bluebirds will one day expand their territory to the Garden.

This means there are a total of at least **70** nestboxes inside the city limits of Fort Worth with **30** of them hav-

ing a successful nest in 2011. These nestboxes have helped the growth of an urban bluebird population, which is rather uncommon, but wonderful for the environment and the enjoyment of people who delight in seeing this beautiful bird.

A big thank you to volunteer monitors Cindy Compton, Tommy Simmons, Herb Biddle and Assistant Kacey, Earline and Bob Baker, Archie Crow, Dr. Mike and Jody Morris, Charles Dreyfus, Avery Kelly, Elaine Petrus, and NestWatch chronicler Roberta Marshall.

Find a video of the Fort Worth Bluebird Project at: www.tinyurl.com/FW-bluebird

Hornsby Bend Report continued from page 1

nest attempt realized 3 more bluebird fledglings in early August.

Although bluebirds had been reported and I had seen them in the Platt Lane area, for a third year of monitoring there were no bluebird nesting attempts in the Platt Lane nestboxes. Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Wrens did successfully use three of these nestboxes. TBS nestboxes were used by Tufted Titmouse and Black-crested Titmouse that laid 16 eggs and fledged a total of 14 nestlings. While Carolina Wrens successfully raised 8 fledglings.



Black Crested Titmouse tried to fledge too soon.

In spite of an exceptionally hot and dry year, 2011 was very successful for the bluebirds at Hornsby Bend with again 12 nest attempts and 57 eggs laid, but this year 50 nestlings fledged. The first bluebird egg was laid on March 13 and the last egg was June 25. Five bluebird pairs had two or more successful nesting attempts.

The nestboxes at CER continued to be the most popular with bluebirds with all four CER nestboxes being utilized at least once during the nesting season. For the first time, there was a nestbox utilized by a bluebird pair along the South pond with two successful fledglings of five nestlings each. The bluebird pair who set up nesting in the box located at the pond entrance gate started egg laying on March 13 and raised 14 fledglings in three nest attempts with the last nestling fledging on July 16.

Other cavity nesters have benefited from nestboxes with a new species for 2011, Carolina Chickadees, successfully raising six fledglings. Carolina Wrens raised seven fledglings and Black-crested Titmouse raised six fledglings in the Hornsby Bend TBS nestboxes.

It is rewarding to see the fledgling success rate for bluebirds increase so dramatically especially in the last two years. It has been a surprise for me to realize how late in the season bluebirds here in Central Texas will successfully raise fledglings when they have favorable conditions. I have also enjoyed identifying and watching other species of cavity nesters who utilize the nestboxes.

For 2012, I will be applying heat shields to several of the nestboxes situated in full sun, installing a nestbox in the CER pecan grove area, and at the request of TreeFolks, one on Platt Lane.

Thanks Kevin Anderson, Coordinator, Center for Environmental Research at Hornsby Bend for your support.



Bluebird babies taking a nap.



"Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time"
"Texas Blues"

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.



A Hot Dry BUSY Summer!
Photos by Clifford Maesaka (Salado)

ALL NATIVE CAVITY-NESTERS are protected by federal law. Do not disturb the birds or the nest.

Monitor the nest and report to NestWatch.

192 Register For The 2012 Season Kick-off—Our Biggest Event

Kick-off Highlights

- ▶ Held on February 4th in the ballrooms at Stephen F Austin University in Nacogdoches.
- ▶ *Largest attendance ever!*
- ▶ *50 new members joined, 13 renewed.*
- ▶ *37 members accepted a free nestbox in exchange for guarantee to NestWatch.*
- ▶ *Auction raised \$2,600 for nestbox materials.*
- ▶ *Everyone enjoyed it. High evaluations.*
- ▶ *Volunteers did a great job at this event!*

By Barb Ohlman.

If you missed the annual TBS Season Kickoff on February 4th, you missed a pleasant setting in the heart of East Texas. Stephen F. Austin State University campus sits in the middle of "piney woods" in the center of Nacogdoches. The morning air was filled with a woody bouquet as the attendees entered the Student Center just in time to hear the "Welcome Announcements" and a brief but informative presentation on "Problems and Predators" made by President, Pauline Tom.

The first featured speaker, Greg Grant, shared his experience with bluebirds from growing up on his grandparents farm in Arcadia TX to the present day where he now has over 100 bluebird nestboxes. Talk about "a lifetime love affair with bluebirds". Greg's strong attraction to the outdoors comes naturally. He is a seventh generation Texan who received his master's degree in horticulture from Texas A&M. His knowledge of berry producing plants and landscaping for bluebirds was the second topic in his presentation.

Lunch, which was more like fine dining, was served in the Twilight Ballroom. It included the juiciest chicken breast this side of the Mississippi and cheese cake for dessert. Silent Auction item tables were also located in the Twilight Room making it easy for attendees to bid one last time for their favorite article before bidding ended after lunch.

After returning to the Grand Ballroom, we were further entertained with presentations on Nestbox Installation by Brian Hetherington and Sparrow Control by Linda Crum. Linda's delightful and humorous Sparrow Control presentation have become a trademark appearance of the Texas Bluebird Society's Bi-annual Meetings.

The last featured speaker, Cliff Shackelford, had no problem following Linda. Employed by TPWD for 15 years as the non-game Ornithologist for Texas, Cliff knows birds. He shared his knowledge of 'woodpeckers' in an audience-friendly manner with a fun-filled quiz at the end of his presentation. In addition to being entertained by Mr. Shackelford, he left us with a 'word for the day'. . . **rhaphothecca**.

All this enjoyment for the registration fee of \$15. And if this wasn't enough, the Silent Auction added more excitement to the day.

Thanks Donors! Silent Auction Raises \$2,600+

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Next Event:
2012 Summer Symposium
on August 11th
at Gainesville Expo Center