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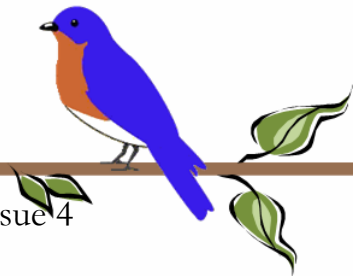
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# TEXAS Blues



Texas Bluebird Society Newsletter October 2013 • Volume 12. Issue 4

## Other Cavity Nesters: **Ash-Throated Flycatcher**

By Susan Meineke

Male and female Ash-throated Flycatchers look alike. About the size of a Mockingbird, they are grayish brown on their back and head and have a bush crest. The throat and breast are pale gray; the belly and undertail coverts are pale yellow. The tail is dusky brown above but rufous and brown on the underside. They are quite abundant throughout most of the western United States and Mexico. The breeding range extends as far east as central Texas.

Ash-throated Flycatchers are generalists when it comes to breeding habitat. They breed in chaparral, mesquite thickets, oak scrub dry plains spotted with trees or cacti, deserts and open deciduous and riparian woodlands. They are as indiscriminate about nest sites as they are about breeding habitat. Nests can be found 3- to 20-feet off the ground in natural tree cavities, hollow stumps, cacti, abandoned woodpecker holes, and in the dry floral stems of yucca or agave plants. Although nesting for many cavity-nesting birds is limited by the supply of natural cavities, this species has adapted to not-so-natural cavities such as metal fence posts, drain pipes and human-created cavities. *The use of artificial structures may have offset the loss of natural nest sites by development, and may be responsible for an increase in numbers.*

The female usually lays 4-5 creamy white to pinkish eggs, heavily marked with fine or heavy streaks or blotches in browns, purples, and grays, which she incubates for 15 days. The young fledge 13-17 days after hatching. The parents may raise two broods a year in Texas. They have a distinctive voice and two calls which differentiate them from other flycatchers—one call is a soft purreer; the other is a soft ka-brick.

Ash-throated Flycatchers migrate north through Texas from early March to early May with most arriving in late March. The breeding season extends from early April to late July. Migration occurs from mid-July to early December.

This species is primarily an insectivore that flies from a perch to catch prey from the ground or from foliage in the undergrowth, less often from branches and trunks, hardly ever in midair. Unlike many other tyrant flycatchers, it often moves on to another perch rather than returning to the same one. It also takes some fruit, especially in winter if insects are unavailable. Rarely, it takes small mammals and reptiles, which it kills by banging them against hard objects. The flight of the Ash-throated Flycatcher is an easygoing, slightly bobbing pattern.



## Native Plants Of Texas For Bluebirds

Photos and article by **Dorothy Brown Thetford**

“Wildflowers-of-Texas”

Native Plant Society of Texas - Trinity Forks Chapter

Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter

Texas Bluebird Society

Denton, TX

If you were fortunate enough to attend the Texas Bluebird Society meeting in August, you should have walked away with valuable information that will enable you to become better bluebird “parents.” We continue to strive to outfox the predators, but, did you listen to the suggestions for providing the right kinds of plants to your landscape, i.e., the plants that will produce an all-you-can-eat buffet for your “children?” I hope your answer is yes. However, if you napped a bit during any of the programs, here's a more detailed recap of one of the native plants suggested.

So, what does the word “native” have to do with the recommended plants? What is native, you ask? The answer may vary a bit, but a simple definition is that native plants are the plants that were here in the United States before the Europeans arrived with plant samples from their home. (Their plants can be identified as “introduced.” even though the nursery trade has certainly monopolised that category during the last fifty years.) Native plants have miraculously survived here for years and years, have naturally adapted to vary from soil to soil, climate to climate, elevation to elevation, temperature to temperature, moisture to drought. When we mention a plant as being native to “this area,” we mean that it should grow naturally without intervention by mankind. It has settled into the environment of its own accord and will survive regardless of most outside elements.

So, why is this information of any value to us? Allowing native plants to grow in their natural environment and/or planting “known” natives in their proper environmental elements have several benefits. Firstly, the plants will need less of your attention, no pesticides, and most importantly, less water from our drying aquifers. Win Win Win! Secondly, when we learn to identify, preserve, protect, and plant native plants, we become stewards of the earth, not only for our own benefits but for the survival of the animal kingdom. Remember, native wildlife is well aware of the native plants on which they've survived for hundreds of years. Think before you destroy for your own gratification.

I'm sure you're aware of the habitat needs to protect our wildlife, i.e., water, shelter, corridors for travel, and food, so here's where we can step in. If our bluebirds require certain foods to sustain their small bodies, and if parenting bluebirds need certain foods to feed their even smaller young babies, wouldn't it behoove us to provide as much help as possible?

So, how can we begin? How about growing your own bluebird delicatessen. Plant the native plants that are indigenous to your specific area, and the indigenous birds of your area will respond. Case in point, many native trees, shrubs, vines and flowers were recommended at the symposium as food sources for many of our native birds, and each is worthy of your further research. However, I've chosen a certain native vine for this discussion because of Keith Kridler's (co-founder of TBS) comment about caterpillars/worms being a staple food for bluebirds, plus, this vine has proven very beneficial from my personal experience. Passionflower vine. I always recommend this vine to the DentonISD Teacher-Training-Summer-Workshops for luring butterflies to their school gardens; however, this article is directed toward you to not only attract the butterflies, but with hopes that the butterflies will lay eggs on your foliage, the eggs will hatch into caterpillars, and you'll have food for your bluebirds. (Please do not spray plant with pesticides, even though leaves will be riddled with holes.)



**Gulf Fritillary caterpillar  
(Agraulis vanilla)**

(continued) **Native Plants Of Texas For Bluebirds**



**White Passionflower (*Passiflora affinis*)**

One of my favorite native wildflowers is the White Passionflower (*Passiflora affinis*) because of its uniquely layered design. A brief description of the 3" diameter flower reveals a lower layer of 5 sepals and 5 petals of similar shape and size, of an off-white color with dark purple markings, and a second layer of crinkled filaments. The third, slightly elevated, layer provides a smaller, flat circle of 5 pale yellow stamens/anthers, and the top level displays 3 stigmas. Some religious beliefs associate this flower with the Passion at Easter, or Crucifixion of Jesus, i.e., 3 stigmas representing 3 nails, 5 stamens representing 5 wounds, and the fringed corona of filaments representing the crown of thorns.

The flowers are visited by many pollinators, hummingbirds, and various butterflies. And, it's interesting to know that passionflowers hold their bloom for only 12-15 hours before expiring, depending on temperature. Yes, the short-stemmed flower can be cut and "floated" in a shallow dish of water in order to bring the sweet fragrance into your home. However, watching the multitude of pollinators flitting around the flowers may be more gratifying than vasing one for your own pleasure.

The key factor in this butterfly-luring process is the foliage whereby it is the larval plant on which the female Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) butterfly lays her eggs. Leaves of *P. affinis* vine are alternate, simple, and palmately 3-lobed, even though I've found 5-lobed leaves on some of the longer stems. Equipped with strong tendrils, the vine can cling and sprawl 20-30 feet during one season, but will die back each winter and provide new growth each spring. A colony of these plants can be considered a butterfly hatchery in your own landscape if trained for fence, trellis, or arbor growth. My plants cling to cattle panel fencing sections that are attached to a 6' tall privacy fence between neighbors. The highest level of foliage on fence is like a fly-by diner for bluebirds, but the space between the wooden fence and the cattle panels is a smorgasbord for Cardinals, Mockingbirds, and Wrens when they are frantically searching for caterpillars for their babies. They repeatedly flit behind the wire trellis, grab food, and hurriedly rush back to their nests....before any neighborhood cat can detect.



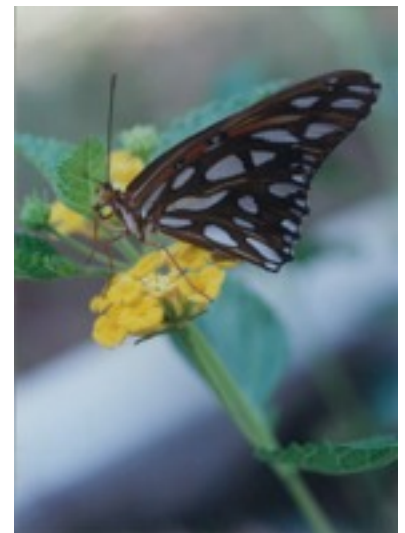
**G. F. butterfly, top side wing markings**

Even though this genus has 430 species, Texas is native to only four: *Passiflora incarnata* (pale lavender color), and *P. lutea* (smaller flower of pale yellow color), *P. tenuiloba* (small green-ish color) and *P. affinis*. Not only do these plants "vine" aggressively, but you must know that they also sucker underground. You can either containerize

the plant, or allow the suckers to surface and grow roots for digging and transplanting, or you can mow them if they surface in unwanted areas. I think you'll quickly learn that your friends and neighbors will welcome your gifted, rooted, suckers once they see the breathtakingly beautiful flowers and the hords of butterflies nectaring.

Get your plants in the ground soon so that the roots can become established over wintertime for a jump-start of a summer-long blooming season next year. If a nursery plant is covered with caterpillars or showing signs of riddled leaves, don't be alarmed; it's proof that the plant is serving its purpose. Plant your plant, watch for the Gulf Fritillary butterflies, and be ready to hang your "eatery" sign out for your bluebirds.

**G. F. butterfly, under side wing markings**





## Bonnie Shares PVC Nestbox Designs

Design, photos, and story by **Bonnie Tull**

Here in Texas, I suspect that heat plays a big factor in the success rate of nesting Bluebirds. With that in mind, I took advantage of a windfall of PVC fence posts to design a nest box that would be both long lasting and somewhat heat resistant. This basic design has been approved by the North American Bluebird Society, but it is always evolving. The latest ones have plastic board panels affixed to sides



and roof by half inch wood spacers and Goop for better insulation and shading. Two way openings allow a choice and ease of monitoring and clean-out. These require somewhat

more engineering, but are worth the effort. I prefer oval entrance holes (2 1/4" x 1 3/8") cut from the ventilation slit at the tops of the front simply because I believe it is easier for the birds to come and go. However, it may also be less predator proof. There is some evidence that Cowbirds can enter that shape and size of hole, as I have found a Cowbird egg among House Sparrow eggs in one of my boxes. For added ventilation, the top sides of the boxes may also be cut out.

Having found a dead male Bluebird who had been pecked by House Sparrows in one of my boxes, I'm now adding "bolt holes" to the back sides of my boxes in hopes that a trapped Bluebird may have an escape exit. So these newer boxes are essentially double entranced.



A feature not included in these plans is the ability to construct a floor support platform using scrap strips of the cut off corner edges of the PVC post. They can be glued with PVC glue to the bottom inside of the box on three sides in order to support a wooden floor that is screwed into the glued supports rather than into the box sides leaving the exterior smooth.

Finally, there is a way to make a Bluebird box using 4-5" PVC pipe with larger PVC pipe diameter for the roof. I've not developed a set of plans for this design yet, though I did make a prototype which is now installed. I've used silver plastic soft sheet insulation on the outside of that box which has yet to be used. However, that type of insulation has been accepted by Bluebirds when used on an interior of a wooden box. I also envision a Bluebird, Great-crested Flycatcher, or Ash-throated Flycatcher nest box using the larger diameter PVC pipe (6-7"), but I've not constructed one yet. The Ash-Throated Flycatchers are squeezing into the square PVC fence post boxes. It is most convenient to install the floor of the round boxes so that it is an eighth or a quarter inch above the bottom of the front opening. This allows the box interior to be swept clean easily, also forms a doorstep for a hinged door, and allows a drip edge which should keep the wood floor drier. (inside view)



***Intrigued? Material list, instructions and design drawings can be found on the next two pages.***

### Time To Prepare For Nesting-Season Is NOW!

- ✓ Clean out old nesting materials.
- ✓ Install a Kingston Predator Baffle on the pole to serve as a predator deterrent.
- ✓ Install heat shields on your nestbox or place in location with afternoon shade
- ✓ Paint your nestbox white, or a light color, to help reduce heat. (use latex paint!)
- ✓ Trim away any plant materials encroaching on the nestbox space
- ✓ Plant native trees, shrubs, and plants as food source. (see list [www.txblues.org](http://www.txblues.org))

**Parts List**

Note: This becomes a "forever box" with the use of stainless steel hardware

1. 20 inch length of 5 inch square PVC fence post
2. 1 x 6 inch deck board untreated for floor
3. 3/8 inch stiff water supply tubing for spacers in hinged roof and front
4. c.1/2 x 1 1/2 inch L screw for clean out back opening
5. (2) 1 1/4 inch #10 machine screws with (2) lock nuts and (4) washers for roof/back hinge
6. 5/8 inch #10 machine screw with (2) nuts for roof latch

7. (3) roof screws for floor

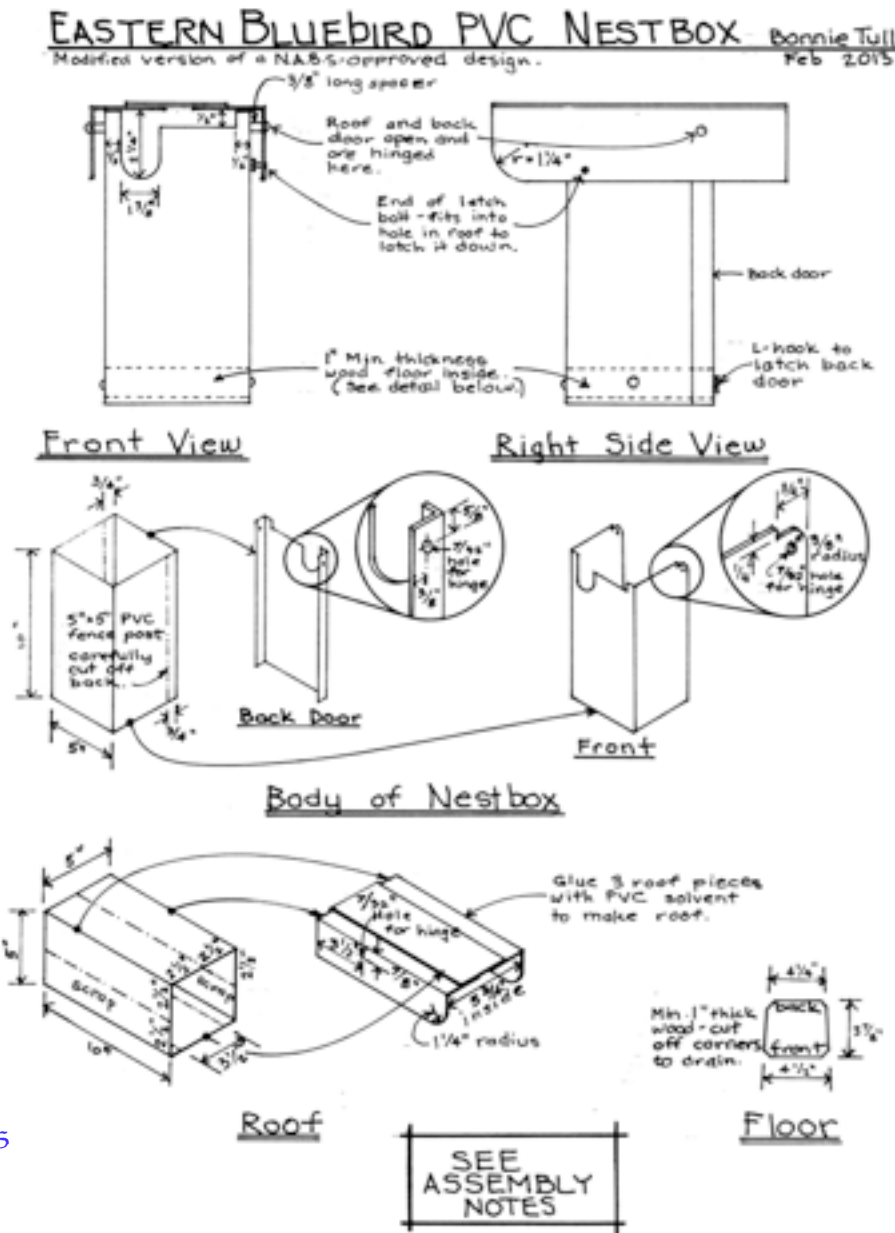
1. Goop for ladder

8. PVC glue for roof connector

9. Thin wood strip for ladder

**Mounting Choices**

1. Pipe flange with glued PVC step down parts to fit 6 x 2 inch PVC pipe over 6ft T-post or:
2. 2 x 6 inch PVC pipe screwed to back of box with 2 inch #10 machine screw with nut – set over 6ft T-post
3. 6ft T-post



NABS has officially sanctioned Bonnie Tull's design as an approved bluebird nestbox design.

## PVC Nestbox Construction Instructions

1. Cut 20 inch length of 5 inch (verify dimensions) PVC square fence post in half. One half will comprise box, and the other will comprise the roof parts. Alternatively, just find two 10 inch sections. These lengths can vary somewhat as long as any critical other dimensions are changed to coordinate.
2. Cut  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch lengthwise off box fence section for back opening side
3. Cut roof section in half lengthwise for roof parts.
4. Cut one of the half sections in half again lengthwise for roof parts.
5. Cut flat section  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide out of the other half section for roof connector. The curved corner sections that remain can be used to make supports for PVC gluing into the bottom of the box for a wooden floor block to be screwed onto without putting screws through the box itself as an alternate floor construction method using more PVC parts.
6. PVC glue the flat section over the two roof sides leaving 1 inch free in center to create wider roof. Again, roof width may be varied as long as the other part dimensions, screw sizes, etc are made to correspond.
7. Notch  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in top back sides  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in.
8. Round off back side corners on  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch radius curve.
9. On front top right face cut  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch notch  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in from front right side to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from opposite side.
10. On front top left face cut oval entrance hole  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inch deep from high side and  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inch wide.
11. Cut floor block  $4\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$  inches and cut corners off for drainage and ventilation.
12. Recess floor block  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch above bottom edges of PVC front section sides and attach with 3 roof screws, one in each of the three sides.
13. On back top left face cut  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch notch  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in from back left side to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in from opposite side.
14. Cut oval hole in top left back face as in #10.
15. Drill #10 holes  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch down from tops of back front sides and midway from back and front edges. Drill through both surfaces at once
16. Set roof on center, mark drill holes to coincide with the ones in the box sections, drill holes through roof side overhangs.
17. Cut (2)  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch tubing spacers.
18. Insert (2)  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch #10 machine screws through roof overhanging sides, tube spacers, back and front sections, and secure with washers and locking nuts on each side of box.
19. Drill #10 or slightly larger holes for  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch #10 machine screw in lower front right edge of roof overhang and front right side of box. Run nut all the way to the head of the  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch long #10 machine screw and insert through hole from inside of box. Add nut on outside and tighten bolt in place. Adjust length of projection so a moderate effort will flex lid out and over bolt and secure lid in place.
20. Cut  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch slot in back bottom edge of box and drill hole for L screw for back latch. Insert L screw.
21. Cut c. 6 x 2 inch thin wooden strip and cut shallow notches across one surface in a ladder effect. Cut oval shape in top to match door.
22. Goop glue wooden ladder to inside front wall and sand or file door edges smooth.
23. Optional: can cut front edges of roof overhangs into curves for better visibility, less weather proofing.
24. Note: File or sand smooth all rough edges that may come in contact with the birds
25. Note: This box is made with two offset openings, one in back and one in front. This is an experimental approach designed to enable a trapped Bluebird to have a bolt hole. I have found dead mature Bluebirds in my boxes on two occasions most probably killed by House Sparrows, and I am trying this idea. It would be difficult to prove or test that it works without close observation. In Texas I believe the heat is such an issue that having the additional ventilation is not a drawback and may be a benefit. The box can easily be modified to a more standard central single opening but leaving the half inch notch in the back for ventilation. Also the back opening on this box can be closed by just gluing a flat piece of PVC or wood over it.
26. Note: It is possible to increase the insulation by gluing spacers and shield material of some kind onto the outside walls and roof of the box as I typically do with wooden boxes. However, this kind of defeats the idea of the forever box made out of PVC – unless one has a truly endless source of PVC.

# Kickoff in Bastrop — It's More Than Saturday, March 1st

**Between Now & Then:** Many volunteer opportunities. We are particularly looking for publicity; Licensed Bartender for Friday evening; and, Audio Visual Specialist to coordinate Dr. Patty Gowaty's presentation via Skype from UCLA and provide coaching on setting up seamless transition presentations. Contact Pauline Tom to volunteer.

**Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>,** 7:00 p.m. Social Dinner at Hampton Inn (preceded by Social Hour at 6:00). After dinner speakers, Paul & Georgan Kyle, world-renowned authorities on Chimney Swifts.

**Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup>,** after event closes at 3:00 p.m. Visit Bastrop. Many of the galleries, antique shops, boutiques, and specialty shops stay open until 5:00 or later.

**Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>,** Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary Trip (\$25. LIMITED to 12. Registration opens November 1<sup>st</sup>.) Arrive at 9:30 a.m. Join Stewards Georgan and Paul Kyle for a tour of Travis Audubon's Chaetura Canyon Sanctuary in northwest Travis County (about one hour from Bastrop). This unique property has been the epicenter for the study of Chimney Swifts in North America for more than 25 years. Participants will be guided through the small canyon to see the native flora, fauna and 17 Chimney Swift towers. Hike is moderate to strenuous with many steps. Lunch will be served on the deck of the stewards' residence overlooking the canyon.

*Easiest way to register? Online of course!*  
**2014 Kickoff registration opens November 1<sup>st</sup>**

**register.texasbluebirdsociety.org**



**2014 Season Kickoff**  
 (with Silent Auction FUNdraiser)



**Saturday, March 1, 2014**

Bastrop Convention Center, 1408 Chestnut Street, Bastrop, TX 78602

**9:00 AM–3:00 PM**

**Doors open at 8:30 for Registration and Silent Auction**

**Featured Speakers**

**Dr. Janis Dickinson,** Director of Citizen Science, Lab of Ornithology (NestWatch)

**Dr. Patricia A. Gowaty,** (via Skype) UCLA, world's foremost bluebird researcher

**Other Presentations:** Bluebird Basics, House Sparrow Control, Native Plants, & more

**Registration Costs and Deadlines**

Early Bird Advance Registration: \$15.00. Box Lunch and 10 Door prize tickets.  
 Deadline: February 1st

Standard Advance Registration: \$15.00. Box Lunch and 2 Door prize tickets.  
 Deadline: February 15th

At-the-door Registration: \$6.00. No meal and no door prize tickets.

**Friday Evening Social with Presentation on Chimney Swifts by Paul and Georgan Kyle**

\$15 at Hampton Inn. Buffet at 7 PM. Happy Hour at 6 PM Happy Hour BYOB (donations for Margaritas). Deadline: February 15

**Lodging: Hampton Inn** \$99.00 (single or double). Ask for the Texas Bluebird Society group rate. (512) 321-2898

Deadline: Jan. 28

On-line registration available at <http://RSVPbook.com/2014Kickoff>

**FREE Nestbox to members who pledge to "NestWatch" at least two nestboxes**  
 (submit observations to Cornell Lab of Ornithology through [www.NestWatch.org](http://www.NestWatch.org))

**To Donate a Silent Auction Item:\***

Benni Konvicka  
 1315 North Dale Ave  
 Stephenville, TX 76401-1604  
[auktion@texasbluebirdsociety.org](mailto:auktion@texasbluebirdsociety.org)  
 (254) 968-6663

Donations received after February 15th will miss the publication deadline.

\*TBS is recognized by the IRS as a 501c3 "charitable" organization. Donations are tax deductible, as allowed by law.

**For More Information:**

[pauline@texasbluebirdsociety.org](mailto:pauline@texasbluebirdsociety.org)  
 512 268-5678

Bastrop Convention Center  
 1408 Chestnut Street

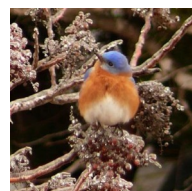


photo by Bill Lindeman

**ADVANCE Registration (includes Box Lunch)**

On-line registration available at [register.texasbluebirdsociety.org](http://register.texasbluebirdsociety.org)

**Registrant #1**

Name	Name for Name Tag
Street Address	City
State	Zip
Contact Phone	E-mail

**Registrant #2 (same street address)**

Name	Name for Name Tag
Contact Phone	E-mail

# Registrants (Please circle)	Description	Cost	New \$15 Membership at this event includes <b>FREE</b> nestbox!
1	2	Member	\$15.00
1	2	Non Member	\$15.00
1	2	Friday Night Dinner	\$15.00

Do you plan to join at the meeting?  Y  N

*(This is not a firm commitment for membership. Please do not send membership dues now.)*

To register more attendees, please include an additional sheet with your mailing.

**For Planning Purposes Only**

1. TBS Members and New Members: TBS will give you a FREE nestbox at this event if you pledge to "NestWatch" at least 2 nestboxes (submit observations to Cornell Lab of Ornithology through [www.nestbox.org](http://www.nestbox.org)).

Do you plan to participate?  Yes  No  N/A

2. \$15 Nestboxes available for purchase (based upon availability). How many do you plan to purchase? \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail Registration Form with Payment made payable to "Texas Bluebird Society" to:**

Texas Bluebird Society Season Kickoff  
 P O Box 40868  
 Austin, TX 78704



**EARLY BIRD** Registration—Deadline Feb 1, 2014  
**STANDARD** Registration—Deadline Feb 15, 2014  
**AT-THE-DOOR** Registration available (no lunch or door prize chances)

Register now with your SmartPhone  
 TxBlues Online





## 2013 Blue Feather Award Winner

# Benni Konvicka

Again for this symposium, the attendee evaluations commented on how well the event was run. Those of us involved know that Benni is one of the main reasons for this. Like the duck floating peacefully across the water, Benni is the one that's paddling like mad to make it look easy. The Blue Feather Award is designed to recognize those volunteers that give extraordinary service to Texas Bluebird Society. Recipients are nominated by the President and past Blue Feather Award winners. Of the nominees, the committee agreed that Benni truly deserved the award.

Benni and her husband, Jimmie, are among the charter members who are still active in Texas Bluebird Society. Starting with the 2010 Summer Symposium in Henderson, Benni took on responsibilities for organizing and coordinating the silent auctions. For the 2011 Summer Symposium, Benni and Jimmie were the local event coordinators as well as running the auction.

Since these first two, Benni has run the auctions for the 2012 Season Kickoff, 2012 Summer Symposium, 2013 Season Kickoff and 2013 Summer Symposium. These six auctions have brought in nearly \$14,000 for lumber to build our nestboxes!

Some of the auction tasks that Benni does are:

- Plans the layout of the tables for regular silent auction and the extended auction
- Plans the layout of tables for auction close out, collation of auction items by winner name, and Self-Checkout
- Organizes the volunteers that work before, during and after the auction
- Buys items with the donations received
- Finds and donates many items that Benni & Jimmie personally donate to the auction
- Tracks, gathers & stores auction items from the many donors
- Hunts for, buys and stores the table covers for the auction tables
- Watches the clock to end the auctions
- Direct volunteers on the close out processes for both the regular and extended auctions
- "Rules" the auction spreadsheet which is the prime source of data for auction bidsheets, thank you letters, donor list for booklet and newsletter, and winner invoices.

Benni is a key member of multiple TBS teams including WebTeam and EventPlans team. As an example, what Benni does for TBS, she and Jimmie took a two day, 525 mile trip to pick up auction items and to scout out the Mount Pleasant Civic Center.

Benni gives willingly of her time for these and more activities below. Oh, by the way, Benni is a full time English Professor at Tarleton State University. Benni is our "Eagle Eye" for proofreading and correcting newsletters as part of the Newsletter Team, keeping our grammar and spelling correct. And, of course, Benni contributes articles to the newsletter. Using her Microsoft Word, Excel and Publisher skills, Benni contributes to many of our publications in addition to the newsletters. She has taken on sole responsibility for creation of the hard copy registration forms. Trust me, it's not an easy job squeezing all the needed information onto the forms!

Benni has been a valued member of the TBS Board since November 2012, but prior to that, she was a regular "visitor" to our board meetings since early 2011 to give us updates on upcoming events. **THANKS and CONGRATULATIONS!**



...for extraordinary service to the TBS organization and work to spread

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

## TBS Honors Outstanding Achievement

### Bluebirder of the Year

in recognition of initiatives and accomplishments in supporting the mission of the Texas Bluebird Society

### Mike Hagan

Mike shows the heartbeat and soul of Texas Bluebird Society — living out major elements of our mission statement To spread “Bluebirds (and other native cavity-nesting birds) Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time” - through education; and, the installation of “NestWatch’d” nestboxes in appropriate habitat; and, sustaining and increasing their natural food supply (insects and berries of native plants) - while enjoying the process and the bluebirds. Pres. Pauline presents award to Mike.

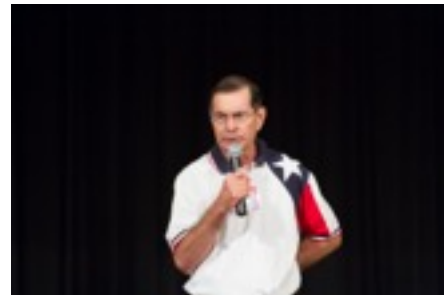


### Lifetime Achievement Bluebird Conservationist

in recognition of a lifetime of commitment and dedication to the promotion and protection of bluebirds

### Don Hutchings

Don is the first recipient of TBS’ new honor, the TBS Lifetime Achievement Bluebird Conservationist award. Don has captured the very essence of the award in his own words...



I have enjoyed bluebirds since 1986 when I built my first nest boxes. As a woodworking hobby I built 3 boxes and placed them along the I-30 service road near Winfield. A week later I was amazed to find four pale blue eggs nestled in a neat grass cup. Needless to say I have been hooked on bluebirds ever since. I have monitored up to 75 boxes but as more local people have put up boxes I have been able to downsize to a more manageable 50 boxes.

*Bluebird conservation has been a very enjoyable and rewarding way of life for me.*

Don Hutchings

Texas Bluebird Society proudly honors the work you have accomplished and join our bluebird friends in heartfelt appreciation. THANKS!



*Installing nestbox trails, monitoring nesting activity, and predator control is all in a day’s work for Mike Hagan.*



**6+Hours** Volunteer work is rewarded with a TBS metal name badge for all future events. This year’s recipients are: **Harold Latham, Ellie Mosley, Kevin Nelson, and Kelly Russell.**

**Keith Kridler** and **Glenda Brogotti** were presented with True Blue Friend plaque for their role as host and hostess for the 2013 Summer Symposium.



## Symposium - Fun Informative and Successful



By Pat Nail

If you think you can learn a lot about Bluebirds by surfing the net or reading books, just wait till you go to a TBS Symposium!

First of all, don't miss the Social Hour and dinner on Friday night. We are new "Bluebirders," and the other members sitting with us at our table provided a wealth of information and encouragement...even one man who has yet to host a "Bluebird family." Plus, the barbecue dinner was yummy!

The various presenters\* on Saturday shared helpful tips for successful "bluebirding"...as well as presenting slide shows to teach us about other cavity-nesting birds like Tree Swallows, the native plants that provide food (berries and "bugs") for our beloved Bluebirds, NestWatch and other research sites like eBird, active and passive means of House Sparrow control, and lots more. A local Boy Scout shared his experience of setting up a Nestbox Trail.

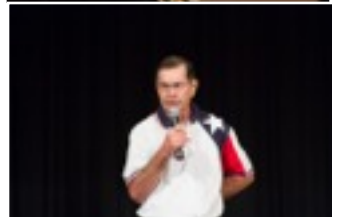
What do you know about these things? An intensive weekend symposium shortens your learning curve to become a successful Bluebird landlord. It gives you something to share with new Bluebirders to help all of us provide the best environment for our beautiful feathered friends so that they can survive and multiply each year. And...when you come to a TBS symposium, you have a chance to pick up some great items at the auctions! (Ask me what WE took home from the auctions!)

All in all, the presenters provided all of us...both new and experienced Bluebirders alike...with a wealth of information and ideas that we could take home and put into practice now. Those who have been bluebirding for a long time also became wonderful "resources" for those of us who are just getting started.

And, lastly, Keith Kridler was kind enough to take a group of us to the state park on Saturday afternoon to check out his bluebird trail. Then on Sunday morning he invited us to his home for an extended walk around his property to see the bluebird trail in his "forest." What a treat!

A big THANK YOU to all who made this 2013 TBS Symposium a success...and a real learning experience. The professionalism and organization was outstanding! See you at the TBS 2014 Season Kickoff on Saturday, March 1, in Bastrop. Save the date!

\*Presenters:(right) Keith Kridler, Debbie Bradshaw Park, Belinda McCoy McLaughlin, David Brotherton, David Pruitt, Don Hutchings and Linda Crum. Emcee – Paul Nelson.



## ***HUNDREDS*** of Manhours = One Terrific Symposium!



### How many hours of preparation does it take to create a terrific event? A lot!

Daily conversations, discussions, brainstorming, and final decisions on EVERYTHING with the events committee of 4 and various volunteers make it impossible to calculate the number of administrative manhours it takes to make each event as perfect as possible. A massive number of hours are spent in preparation long before the physical setup occurs the day before the event. Location, layout, signage,

program, speakers, program content, registration, name badges, door prizes, door prize tickets, tables, tablecloths, electric plug count, spacing, flow, lunch, technical coordination and equipment, internet access. What do we need to bring? Meg Scamman and Pauline Tom spent weeks Identifying items needed, locating and gathering these items, and organizing everything in labeled bins with inventory sheets. Coordinating the logistics between volunteers and storage area to transport nestboxes, display materials, canopies, and sign frames. Not to mention the incredible amount of work Benni Konvicka and Judy Hetherington spent creating the Silent Auction with technical assistance from Rex Reeves.

Special thanks to **Brian Kaminski** and **John Park** for all of the great photos on pages 7 thru 10 documenting our event!



***TBS Volunteers Are Awesome!***

(SEE FULL LIST ON PAGE 10)







Member: **Kenneth Munoz**



Member: **Ellie Mosley**



**Zach and Ethan Zeiner,**  
grandsons of Pauline and Ron Tom

**Kudos and thanks to the members who volunteer preparation and setup time including one extra day of travel. A special thank you to our new young members & grandkids who helped!**

## Volunteers

Laurie Blake  
Glenda Brogoitti  
Barbara Caldwell  
Katy Couvillion  
Sharon Cowan  
Linda Crum  
Don Hutchings  
Joyce Hutchings  
Brian Kaminski  
Benni Konvicka  
Jimmie Konvicka  
Keith Kridler  
Sandy Kridler  
Harold Latham  
Kathy Latham  
Don Lawrence  
Margaret Lawson  
Deb Luten  
Patti Marshall  
Ellie Mosley  
Kenny Munoz  
Lisa Munoz  
Helen Munro  
Kevin Nelson  
Paul Nelson  
Barb Ohlman  
Debbie Park  
John Park  
Rex Reves  
Kelly Russell  
Meg Scamman  
Selena Schindler  
Pauline Tom  
Ron Tom  
Goldie Vaughn  
Pam Wells  
Royce Wells  
Ethan Zeiner  
Zach Zeiner



## Silent Auction FUNdraiser

**\$ 3,571.00**

These funds are used to buy the materials and supplies needed to build nestboxes.

**A Huge THANK YOU To  
All Of Our Contributors!**

### **BUSINESSES:** (bold donates often)

**Ann Hoffpaur Fine Art Aspects, Inc** ●Black Mountain Garden ●**Cynthia Reid Fine Art** ●**Droll Yankees Inc.** ●Green Maker Nursery ●**Greer Farm Cabins** ●**Grubco Incorporated** ●Jabebo.com ●**Jim Neely Photography** ●**Just for the Birds Old Town Spring** ●Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society ●**McCoys Building Supply** ●Mount Pleasant Chamber of Commerce ●**The Nature's Way Mealworms** ●North American Bluebird Society ●**OwlShack.com** ●**Republic National Distributing Co.** ●**SparrowTraps.net** ●**The Birds Paradise** ●The Glass Menagerie ●Van Ert Enterprises

### **INDIVIDUALS:**

Annette Sigler ●Barb Ohlman ●Bill and Susie Johnson ●Don Lawrence ●Brian Hetherington ●Carol Clark ●Caryn & Don Brewer ●Deb Luten ●Don Hutchings ●Jean Jeff ●Dorothy Szepesi ●Doug Tallamy ●Germaine Reconnu ●Greg Grant ●Harry Evans ●Helen Munro ●Jennifer & Johnny Fleming ●Jimmie & Benni Konvicka ●Judy Hetherington●Katy Couvillion ●Keith and Selena Schindler ●Keith Kridler ●Linda Crum ●Lysle Mockler ●Mark Klym ●Marsha Moon ●Meg Scamman ●Pat Chamberlain ●Patti Marshall ●Rene Funk ●Ron & Pauline Tom ●Walter and Beverly Davis

**A SPECIAL THANKS TO THOSE WHO DONATE OFTEN, AND THOSE WHO BUY OFTEN!**



Bennie starts the Silent Auction and Bennie stops the bidding action at the close of the day.

The Silent Auction, TBS' major fundraiser, is held twice a year, at the Kick-off Meeting and the Summer Symposium.

**Whether you contribute, buy, or both,  
it is APPRECIATED!**

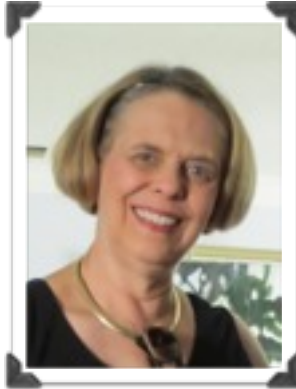
## Election Time! 2014 Board Of Directors

### Nominations:

**Harold Latham**



**Pat Nail**



**Kelly Russell**



### Election Instructions:

Watch for email with link to ballot and annual questionnaire on or near November 1<sup>st</sup> .

- ▶ There is no "competition." Each nominee on the ballot, if elected, will serve.
- ▶ We will email a ballot to each email address in our records on or near November 1st. Simply click on the link provided to access the ballot.
- ▶ If you want to provide /change your email address (or confirm that we have it correctly), provide your email address to [records@txblues.org](mailto:records@txblues.org) on or before October 20<sup>th</sup> .

▶ If you do not receive the email with link to ballot by November 4<sup>th</sup> , please notify [awards@txblues.org](mailto:awards@txblues.org)

▶ If you do not have an email address, you may mail a ballot to TBS, PO Box, 40868, Austin TX 78704.

▶ The ballot allows for write-in candidates. Secure permission from the nominee before submitting the name.

**Current Board members** continuing their terms are:

**Pauline Tom\***(President)  
**Judy Hetherington\***(Secretary)  
**Benni Konvicka**(Fundraising Auctions)  
**Don Lawrence** (New Members)  
**Rex Reves** (Technical Designer)

\*after a 2-year term, a Board Member may be elected to additional 1-year terms, after approval by the Board of Directors.

**A big thank you for their hard work and dedication as TBS Board Members-**

**Caryn Brewer**

**Katy Couvillion**

**Linda Crum**

They have completed their current term and have opted to rotate off the Board.

## Your Financial Support Is APPRECIATED!

Sandy Brent  
Linda Crum  
Beverly Davis  
Rick Davis

Event Donations  
Margie Godar  
Cindy A Griffin  
Elizabeth Hall

Don Lawrence  
Karen McKenzie  
Susan Moran  
Mary Murdoch

Robert Power  
Cynthia Reid  
Charles Robbins  
Meg Scamman

Pat Scott  
David Skinner  
James J Wadowsky  
Ricky Walker

## Welcome New Members!

**Steven Clark •Ricky Davis •JoAnn Duman •Allen Engerer •Velrun Funk •John & Karen Gatherer •Margie Godar •Julie Hart •John Henley •Shirley Jarred •Andrea Josefchuk •Christie Kennedy •Gwyn Kersey-Weatherford •Judy Lano •Victoria James Lewis •Sue Liles •Patti Lovejoy •Joshua Marcoux •Kathy McCall•Betty McNeel•Barbara McNeill •Kathy Nance •Juli Nelson •Jean Pruitt •Jule Puckett •Michele Scaife •Audrey A. Simpson •David Skinner •Carol Smith •William & Nancy Stephens •Terry Sterilel •Carol J. Tobes •Mary Vazquez •Cheryl Vining •James J. Wadowsky •Judy Warren**

*We print names of all new members who give us permission on the TBS Membership application.*

JB, Brownwood •PC, Montgomery •PC, Daingerfield •EE, Montgomery •ME, Athens •TG, Cleveland •JG, Newton •AK, Tyler •JK, Houston •KM, Dallas •MM, Conroe •DM, Athens •AM, Trinidad •JM, New Boston •MM, Conroe •SP, Alba •JS,

## Board of Directors

President  
Executive Committee  
**Pauline Tom**  
Mountain City

Vice President  
Exec Committee serves as VP

Treasurer/AP  
**Katy Couvillion**  
The Woodlands

Assistant Treasurer/AP  
Executive Committee  
**Linda Crum**  
The Woodlands

Secretary  
Executive Committee  
**Judy Hetherington**  
Bronte

Membership/AR  
**Caryn Brewer**  
Conroe

New Members  
**Don Lawrence**  
Whitesboro

Fundraising Auctions  
**Benni Konvicka**  
Stephenville

Technical Designer  
**Rex Reeves**  
Waxahachie

Contact Us:

[tbs@txblues.org](mailto:tbs@txblues.org)

PO Box 40868

Austin, TX 78704

512.268.5678 (Pauline)

281.744.1228 (Linda)



## Definite Answer On Cowbird Egg Removal

Texas Bluebird Society received word from Mark Klym that the Texas Parks & Wildlife legal team "both law enforcement and lawyers - feel that the federal depredating order, which can be found at 50 CFR §21.43, makes a permit of any kind unnecessary for these birds. They do both caution though that, non-lethal means of control must be attempted before the lethal means can legally be used."

Jason Martin, NestWatch Coordinator, secured new language for NestWatch. See Brown Headed Cowbird then under sub heading "A Compound Problem" on nestwatch.org.

A former TPWD employee gave word to Texas Bluebird Society years ago that Texans could remove cowbird eggs and nestlings from bluebird nestboxes. NestWatch gave instructions that cowbird eggs and nestlings could not be removed. So, Texas Bluebird Society requested clarification and NestWatch adjusted their language.

Due to the size of the entrance hole, it is difficult for female cowbirds to enter a bluebird nestbox. But, it does happen.



*(Left) Cowbird eggs are easy to spot when viewed among the bluebird's pale blue eggs.*



*(Center) When a cowbird egg hatches it is easily identified by size, as it is almost always, larger than the other hatchlings. If in doubt, check its mouth! The open mouth with the rosy red lining is a dead giveaway!*



*Much harder to identify nestled among another species whose eggs are similarly speckled!*

### Need Nestboxes?

Go to [www.txblues.org](http://www.txblues.org)  
click Nestbox Distributor tab  
to find the nearest location

### All cavity-nesting birds are protected by federal law.

Do not disturb birds or nest.  
Monitor and report to NestWatch.

The Texas Bluebird Society  
newsletter, *TX Blues*,  
is published four times a year:  
March ■ May ■ July ■ October  
Debbie Bradshaw, Editor

Send street or email address  
changes to Caryn Brewer at:  
[records@texasbluebirdsociety.org](mailto:records@texasbluebirdsociety.org)

## Holiday Reminder

*The holiday season is around the corner. Here are a few bluebird gift suggestions –*

- ✓ Gift membership to TBS
- ✓ TBS Nestbox
- ✓ Habitat Sign
- ✓ Van Eryt Trap
- ✓ Heat Shield
- ✓ TBS Clothing
- ✓ Mealworms
- ✓ Give a native tree, plant, or shrub

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