

TEXAS Blues



Texas Bluebird Society Newsletter • March 2022 • Volume 21.Issue1

Reflections And Hope

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Federal law protects all native nesting birds!



Do not disturb birds or collect eggs

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Debbie Bradshaw Park,
Editor

Send stories/photos to
editor@txblues.org



*Western Bluebird in Davis Mountains
Photographer: Randall Patterson*

As you probably know, the bluebird has been seen as a symbol of hope over the years. The song of the bluebird is often the first sign of spring, letting the farmers know planting time is near.

2021 was a year of trials like we have never before encountered, and hope we will not to see again.

Many of us and our families have been affected health-wise by Covid-19. We are still dealing with the inconveniences and sacrifices caused by this pandemic. Our hope is we are seeing the return to normality as this disease seems to be easing off somewhat.

Another event we all endured was the winter storm called **Uri**. This was a storm that settled over Texas with days of sub-freezing (near zero degrees in many

areas) weather. Many homes were literally rendered un-inhabitable due to water damage. One of these was a certified TBS nestbox builder Tim Manning who lives in Montgomery. He has just moved back in after a year of rebuilding.

Uri caused the death of thousands of bluebirds (aprox. 35%) and other native cavity nesting song birds. Here is that word again HOPE. We are hoping and expecting a strong recovery of our bluebirds this year!

As an organization, 2021 was a year of transition leadership as our long time Co-founder and Immediate Past President, Pauline Tom, passed the reins to me. I am now serving as Interim President.

I have been tremendously assisted through this year's journey by board members, officers, and too many volunteers to list here!

TBS has weathered the storms of 2021 with the addition of 287 new members, 318 membership renewals, 14 lifetime memberships, several generous donations, and, we were able to host a booth at several festivals.

I want to wish each of you good health, loving families and friends, and many wonderful and exciting bluebird experiences in 2022.

Lonnie Castleman, President

Valley Ranch Green Club Team Adds TBS Nestboxes

by Radhika Lekkala



Spring Is Here!

We installed 4 bluebird houses (purchased from Texas Bluebird Society) in January, with the predator guards in place as well. We have been monitoring the birdhouses weekly. The poles were turning around and just as we were wondering how to stop the poles from turning around, we saw 2 bluebirds - a male and a female going in and out of the birdhouse. So we decided to leave the poles alone and just enjoy and celebrate the arrival of the bluebirds.

Location --> Lakeview Park across from the Ranchview High School. Photographer: Arjun Jenigiri

Hello there - Good Morning!

I am writing to you from Valley Ranch/Irving. The Valley Ranch Green Club in conjunction with our HOA installed 4 bluebird nestboxes this past January. I wanted to take a few minutes to share the fine news that we see a bluebird couple starting to make a nest in one of the nestboxes. We are mighty thrilled. :)

I am attaching a picture (left) that my 8 year old son, Arjun, took yesterday afternoon. He is an aspiring ornithologist and a budding wildlife photographer. Nancy Payne is a member of TBS and the Valley Ranch Green Club and she has allowed him to be a part of the process - right from the installation of the birdhouses to monitoring and sharing updates and he is also on the hook to clean up the nestboxes after the end of each brood, and at the end of the nesting season. :)



Nancy Payne and Arjun Jenigiri install nestbox at Valley Ranch.



*Will they choose this nestbox?
Photographer: Arjun Jenigiri.*

Hi, my name is Arjun, I am 8 years old. I love birds and I want to learn more about them.

One of our neighbors, Ms. Nancy wanted to install some bluebird houses. Ms. Nancy asked me if I would like to help her. I really wanted to do it. Ms. Nancy sent us a video on how to install bluebird houses. Mr. DC, Ms. Nancy, my dad, my mom, and I met. Mr. DC screwed the blue birdhouses to the pole and made and attached the predator guards to the pole. Ms. Nancy and I carried the bluebird house poles, my dad hammered the pole into the ground and me and Ms. Nancy held the pole. We installed 4 bluebird houses. It was so cool! I really hoped bluebirds would come to our houses. My mom suggested that every time we come here I should check on the bluebird houses and log about them on my google doc. I shared my doc with my principal, Mr. Vijay and Ms. Nancy. One of my observations was that the houses kept on turning around, every time I went there I turned them to the east.

One day I was turning the 3rd birdhouse, then I saw a bird on the 4th birdhouse, so I silently walked away. I was 75% sure it was a bluebird because I could not see it's color, from a distance I saw it fly. It landed on the 1st birdhouse. I thought I saw some blue so I looked closer and then I realized that it was a bluebird. I was so excited!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I told Ms. Nancy and she was so excited, we were all excited. The next day I saw a female. I also saw a male going inside the birdhouse. I was sure they would make a nest!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Update from Radhika...

Last Sunday, we fixed the problem with the poles turning around. Since then the poles have not moved - So good news there. :) However the bluebird pair was missing in action after that for 5 days and they finally seem to have come back yesterday. They were near the nest this morning as well. We were worried if the birds were disturbed by us fixing the birdhouses or if it was just the weather. We see the birds go in and out of the nests but don't think they started making the nest just yet,



Mom Radhika, Arjun, DC Frederick, and Dad Sharat



Nancy Payne does the heavy lifting while Arjun leads the way.



Dad Sharat and Nancy Payne keep a close

Arjun Has Extra Duties

In addition to his nestbox chores assigned by Nancy and his Mom, Radhika, Arjun has completed the NestWatch tutorials, certification quiz, and registered the 4 nestboxes. He will monitor and enter the nesting data.

Arjun is sharing his bluebird, and other nature photos, on his instagram account. [instagram.com/arjunjenigiri.photography](https://www.instagram.com/arjunjenigiri.photography).



Bluebirds have definitely claimed this nestbox. Photographer: Arjun Jenigiri 3/4/22.



Kids Like Birds & Nature Too!

Here are a few links to educational (and fun) birding sites for your kids and grandkids.

Fledgling magazine: aba.org select Young Birders

Ranger Rick: rangerrick.org



Download North American Bluebird Society's newest book for kids, *Get To Know Bluebirds*: nabluebirdsociety.org click on book cover.

TBS Board Honors Hard Work With A Bench To Relax

At the end of 2020, Pauline Tom and Linda Crum ended a long commitment to Texas Bluebird Society

After 20 years, Pauline retired as president of the Board. She was a co-founder of the organization, which formed in 2001. Thousands of volunteer hours were a gift from her heart to the bluebirds of Texas and to Texas Bluebird Society. She has had countless speaking engagements, managed the annual Bluebird Symposium for many years, and attended festival upon festival, promoting “Bluebirds across Texas... one nestbox at a time.”

Thank you for your vision and determination. You always gave your best for TBS!



President Lonnie Castleman presented plaque and bench to co-founder Pauline Tom and her husband Ron, who worked tirelessly along side



President Lonnie Castleman and Linda

Linda Crum also retired from the Board, after serving fourteen years. She served most of those years as treasurer but at a time was also membership secretary and nestbox shipper. Linda is both a Master Naturalist and Master Gardener and writes an article in each *Texas Blues* newsletter, helping teach others about native plants that support cavity-nesting birds, butterflies, and other insects advantageous to our environment. Linda is also a popular presenter to many naturalist and gardening groups, and other events ***Thank you Linda!***



TBS hopes Pauline Tom and husband Ron, (left) and Linda Crum (right) enjoy many relaxing hours on their new "thank you" benches.

Their dedication to create execute and support the mission of TBS is APPRECIATED!



Both women continue to support Texas Bluebird Society in vital ways, just a little bit more behind the scenes. The Executive Committee of the Board voted to honor these two amazing individuals with a bench for their yards. We felt they deserved a nice place to sit and relax with a cup of coffee or tea and enjoy the birds and flowers around them. President Lonnie Castleman, delivered the benches, along with a certification of appreciation, to Pauline and to Linda at their homes.

Love My Bluebirds!

Photos and article by Elaine White



Being a bit of a hermit with introvertish tendencies, this episode of social distancing has only occasionally been inconvenient. Mostly it has given me the guilt-free freedom to explore and meander through local parks and nature preserves with unabashed joy, carrying with me the spirit of an adventurer, observing and documenting newly discovered aspects of nature in all its glory. With camera (my instrument of mass distraction, according to my granddaughter) and binoculars in hand, I slowly and quietly traipse through tall grasses, winding forest paths, and lush forest edges adjoining the open prairie. My ears are attuned to the unseen sounds; my eyes pay attention to things in my peripheral. This experience is better than any book or classroom, for it touches the emotional, spiritual, and psychological makeup of my spirit. It teaches me to appreciate all the seasons for the things that occupy and highlight each one. The flights and songs of the wide variety of birds

waiting to be identified as their migration journey bring them through this tiny dot on the map.

My most recent delight has been in seeing so many bluebirds. Warbling their delightful chatter as they congregate in the trees before darting down for a quick meal. I've read that their eyesight is so good that they can see an insect a hundred feet away.

I don't recall ever seeing them growing up, but that could be the unobserving nature of my younger self. I do remember a play I participated in, in the second grade called *The Bluebird of Happiness*, and I'm sure that is one of the reasons I consider them bearers of joy.

Can one ever have too many photos of this engaging and colorfully attired bird? Maybe, but then again, maybe not! I find I cannot restrain myself from clicking away when I see it, and so I happily share this bundle of gladness with you.

*Elaine White is a
Master Naturalist in
the North TX
Chapter.*

*Elaine also hosts a
garden blog*

laneytexasgarden.blogspot.com



Coralberry – *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*

By Linda Crum Master Gardener and Master Naturalist

Coralberry is a small native shrub growing to usually a height of two to four feet. Its natural habitat is shade to part shade in the Eastern third of Texas as well as many other states. This deciduous shrub's older branches have bark that looks shredded. The berries appear in clusters along the stem and ripen in October, remaining on the bush throughout the winter, unless eaten by birds and small mammals. It is moderately deer-resistant. That just means that deer will choose to eat coralberry after they have eaten everything else. New leaves emerge in February with berries still on the shrub.



Tiny white flowers today means yummy



Bluebirds, along with many other birds, depend on berries for a food source during the winter. Photographer: R.W. Smith.

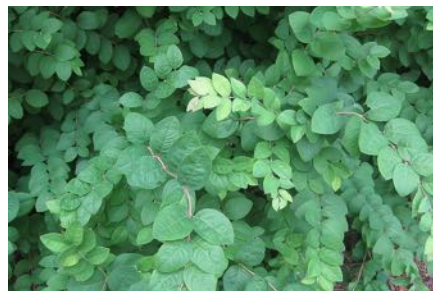
*A few links that may be helpful for you:
[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)
[National Wildlife Federation](#)
[Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#)*

Small, insignificant white blooms follow in the spring, April-June. Coralberry blooms on new wood so no worries about cutting back before new growth starts.

To maintain low growth, cut coralberry back about one-half its height in January about every five years. It can also be cut back to the ground if bushier growth is desired. Coralberry colonizes by stolons or by rooting at nodes where they touch the ground. To propagate, take firm wood cuttings of current season's growth. Propagation by seed is difficult.

Landscaping For The Birds

You can help attract and sustain a variety of birds by planting native species that contribute to their food source. Plants that attract insects? Absolutely! Plants that produce berries? Absolutely! Check with your local plant nurseries to determine the best plants of your backyard.



Noted for its show berries, Coralberry is a bushy deciduous shrub with gracefully arching stems clothed with dark green ovate leaves. The dense foliage remains attractive from spring to frost. Photos from gardenia.net

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936-439-7114 (Lonnie Castleman)

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Welcome New Members

Volunteers Are Appreciated!

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Lonnie Castleman | Jerald Mowery | Pauline Tom |
| Letitia Castleman | Mary Lou Mowery | Ron Tom |
| Linda Crum | Dee Myers | Vanessa Vosinett |
| Jon Hranicky | John Park | Stephen Watkins |
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| Robert Johnston | Nelda Reid | |
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Thank You for your donation!

| | | |
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Nesting Season Is Here!



Photographer: Sam Toscano



(left above) 3/ 6 /22 First nest of the season in my backyard in Orange.

(above) 3/8/22 First egg in the nestbox.

(left) 3/10/22 Today we have four!

Photographer: Jennifer Hudson Fleming.



Mom is collecting more material. Dad is checking out Mom's nest building. Photographer: Larry Melamed. Want to see more of Larry's nature/wildlife photos? Visit larrymelamed.com.

Record all nesting observations to nestwatch.org

Providing critical data needed by researchers worldwide!

TBS Needs Your Help!

Currently, our organization needs a treasurer to join our executive board.

TREASURER -

Manages the finances including paying bills.

This volunteer position would require only a couple of hours per month, in addition to attending the virtual monthly meeting.

If interested in joining a volunteer community dedicated to helping the Texas bluebirds, email **Lonnie Castlemann** president@txblues.org



NestWatch is a nationwide nest-monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. Participating in NestWatch is easy and anyone can do it.

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

The more you buy, the more \$ we receive, the more nestboxes we build!