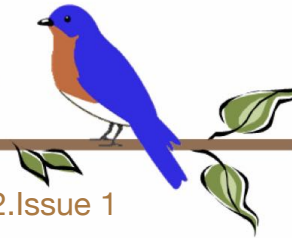


TEXAS Blues



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Federal law protects all native nesting birds!



The Texas Bluebird Society newsletter is published: March - May - July - October

Debbie Bradshaw Park,
Editor

Send stories/photos to
editor@txblues.org



2022 Was A Good Year For TBS

2022 turned out to be another exciting year for Texas Bluebird Society. This year was loaded with festivals, presentations, and activities. All across the state, our tireless volunteers helped to educate bluebird enthusiasts! Their efforts resulted in the addition of 199 new members and a 40% renewal rate including 13 choosing lifetime membership. The revenue from these added members, along with several generous donations, allow us to purchase more lumber (cypress) to build new nestboxes. To date, TBS has been responsible for the installation of over 20,000 nestboxes across Texas and other states.

From top to bottom our wonderful organization depends on volunteers. I urge each of you to become involved with TBS – host a booth, transport nestboxes, give a presentation, write an article for the newsletter, help out with administrative tasks – there are many ways to serve TBS.

You will soon come to realize, as I have, that it is not a job, but truly a labor of LOVE! Contact me at President@texasbluebirdsociety.org

Thanks to all for a very successful 2022. I look forward to a successful 2023!

Lonnie Castleman, President

Lumber Shortage Impacts TBS

Due to supply chain issues (primarily wood availability), we regret that we must temporarily limit purchases to ONE nestbox per customer. Nestboxes must be picked up directly from a distributor during this time. Locate your nearest distributor [here](#).

- Members pay \$30 for a nestbox. Please see Option #1 [here](#) to make an online purchase.
- With a first-time membership (either Individual or business), the member receives one free nestbox. Please purchase your membership [here](#). Online payment is preferred. Please take the email receipt with you to your local distributor to pick up your free nestbox.

Thank you for your understanding and we apologize for this inconvenience.

Lonnie Castleman. President

Project Bluebird Is Thriving In Fort Worth

Jim Marshall's story of providing nesting space for bluebirds in Fort Worth began in 2007 when he saw a bluebird while bicycling on Trinity Trails. It occurred to Jim that he had never seen a bluebird in the city, and he realized the opportunity to help the bluebirds by installing nestboxes. He took the initiative to work through Streams and Valleys (a non-profit) to obtain permission from the Tarrant Regional Water District to install nestboxes along Trinity Trails, starting just a block from a busy urban shopping corridor. Adelaide Leavens, Executive Director of Streams and Valleys, played an instrumental role in helping Jim get this project underway.



First nestbox

That year Jim reported “a pair of Eastern Bluebirds, rare inside the city limits of Fort Worth, raised three batches of babies from that little house along the Trinity River Trail near the Hulen Street Bridge.”

“When I first set up those boxes, I told Streams & Valleys: ‘I want to help out. I’ll put up the boxes, but then I’m done. I’m hands off,’” Marshall said. “Well, all these years later, it’s gone on because if you’re monitoring, and you see the nest being built, the eggs hatching, the chicks, it’s a fun thing. It’s satisfying” Jim explains.

Project Bluebird Adds Volunteers

Jim has certainly been 'hands on' over the years. Those few nestboxes along the Trinity River Trail has evolved into a major all-volunteer team, known as Project Bluebird. This team is focused on maintaining and monitoring the nestboxes, while encouraging bluebird conservation. Jim was on his own the first year when there



Jim Marshall leads the annual Project Bluebird Kickoff Meeting held in Fort Worth on February 16th at the Botanical Research Institute of Texas.

were only five nestboxes. In the following years as more nestboxes were added, Jim began finding volunteers from his family and friends to join Project Bluebird. In



Project Bluebird volunteers gather for annual meeting to plan activities for the upcoming nesting season.

addition to his sister, Roberta Marshall, these volunteers have been monitoring for many years: Betsy Booth, Steve Smith, Cindy Compton, Maryann Coleridge, Mike Morris, Jody Morris and Simianne Hayden. More recently the following have come on board: Paul John Roach, Mary Beth Lampe, Claudia Blalock, Laurie Lucas and Roger Norman.

The initial success of the Trinity River Trail has inspired the Project Bluebird volunteers to expand to other local areas. A favorite habitat for bluebirds; golf courses! Wide open spaces with manicured lawns means lots of insects that are easy to see and quickly capture in the short grass.

Project Bluebird Expands

Over the years the team has established nextbox trails at Pecan Valley Golf Course (maintained/monitored by Bill and Susie Johnson), Rockwood Golf Course (monitored by Cindy Compton), and Tierra Verde golf Course in Arlington (maintained/monitored by Cross Timbers Master Naturalist Donna Piercy and Dick Schoech. In addition, many neighbors whose property backs up to the golf courses have requested nextbox installations so they can enjoy and monitor the bluebirds. Backyard nestboxes can also be found around golf courses at Ridglea, Mira Vista, and Meadowbrook.

Project Bluebird now has primary nestbox trails on the Trinity River Trail, the Fort Worth Botanical Garden, the Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Rockwood Golf Course, and Mount Olivet Cemetary. Including a few areas with just one or two nestboxes, Project Bluebird maintains and monitors between 60 -70 nestboxes each nesting season.

Reporting Nesting Activity To NestWatch

Besides the obvious pleasure of watching bluebirds and promoting conservation awareness, the Project Bluebird volunteer team, serving as Citizen Scientists, provides a

critical data resource for research scientists worldwide. Regardless if it is one or a hundred, monitoring the nestbox during nesting season and reporting all nesting activity - both good and bad - to NestWatch is strongly encouraged. Nestwatch, a nationwide nest-monitoring program developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. Besides collecting online data, NestWatch has now undertaken the enormous task of digitizing the 300,000 handwritten cards submitted to Cornell prior to 2007. Your participation in NestWatch provides an enormous amount of data available to researchers that they would never be able to collect themselves. Visit NestWatch.org to become a certified nestbox monitor, explore tips, and publications using NestWatch data.

Project Bluebird has 14 monitors who check nestboxes weekly and send data to Roberta Marshall, who enters nesting activity into NestWatch. (Roberta also serves on the TBS Board and maintains the Events webpage.)

Nesting Experiences



White eggs discovered

Every nesting season brings new experiences. “I was surprised, recalls Jim, when I opened the nestbox at Oakmont State Park in 2011 and saw white bluebird eggs. It was the first activity for that nestbox and the first time I have seen white instead of blue eggs. I had read about them, but this was my first time seeing white eggs.” Approximately 4-5% of bluebirds lay white eggs due to lack of pigmentation in the female’s oviduct.

This is a photo taken by Jim at Rockwood Golf Course in 2018 when floods caused the West Fork of the Trinity River to go over its banks. The Rockwood Golf Course nestboxes have been monitored for many years by Cindy Compton. When Cindy emailed her weekly report during that time she said, “could not check that box because I did not have a canoe.”



Trinity River overflows

The baffle was washed downstream, but the box and pole were salvaged and have produced several successful clutches through the years since.

Naturally, Project Bluebird volunteers follow TBS guidelines for installing nestboxes in appropriate habitat, adding presator guards, and guidelines for monitoring. Instructions, tips, suggestions and other resources are available on the TBS website.



Painted hole help?

Jim was asked about the painted circles on the side of many of the nestboxes. “Although it is not proven scientifically, we think it seems to help. The reason we paint a circle on the side is to encourage bluebirds flying perpendicular to the real opening to check out the nestbox. The theory is that once they do that, they might discover the real opening and use the nestbox.”

Bluebirder of the Year Award

Two Members of Project Bluebird have been awarded Bluebirder of the Year; the highest award bestowed by TBS to a member in recognition of outstanding initiatives and accomplishments that align with the mission of TX Bluebird Society.



2017 award to Bill and Susie Johnson.

Bill & Susie Johnson now maintain and monitor 32 nestboxes. A few on their own property, those at Pecan Valley Golf Course in Benbrook as part of Project Bluebird, and now Benbrook Lake. Read the full story TX Blues May 2018.



2012 award to Jim Marshall

Jim Marshall has installed or helped others install and his 70+ nestboxes in the Fort Worth area. Each week recruited volunteers report Project Bluebird nesting activity to NestWatch.

All this and more occurred because Jim Marshall started with one nestbox and then began to envision the possibilities. His vision and efforts have increased the population of Eastern Bluebirds in Fort Worth Read the full story in the May 2011 and October 2012 issue of TX Blues).



[Project Bluebird article in local paper!](#)

Bluebird nestboxes are booming in Fort Worth.
By environmental reporter Haley Samsel
2/21/23 in the [Fort Worth Report](#)

Bluebird Behavior At TheNestbox



Nestbox selection

- Birds perching on nestbox
- Male singing on top or near nestbox
- Both birds going in and out, sometimes with nesting material



By David Kinneer



By Lynette Dobbs

Nest Building

- Female entering nestbox frequently, usually for a few days, with nest material
- Female gathering nest material from ground in general area
- Male around but does not normally take nest material into nestbox



By Larry Melamed



By blue_happy Harold



By Larry Melamed



By Larry Melamed



By Bill Griffith

Egg Laying

- Not much activity around nestbox
- Sometimes mating can be observed near nestbox.
- Female will enter nestbox for short time to lay one egg each day - usually in morning
- Male rarely seen near or entering the nestbox



By David Kinneer



By Linda Crum

Incubating

- Female in nestbox quite a lot (how much depends on weather)
- Female sometimes pokes head out
- Female may leave nest to feed or mate may bring her food
- Male is not seen much, but is usually nearby
- Female will spend night in nestbox



By LeAnn Sharp



By HiltonPond.org



By Albert Wiersch



By Debra Booth



By Mike and Jean Drummond



By John Park

Hatching and first few days

- Female in nestbox a lot brooding the very young chicks
- Male seen around and at nestbox
- Both parents go right inside the nestbox to feed tiny chicks with small insects



Older chicks

- Parents visit frequently with larger insects
- Often don't go all the way into the nestbox to feed
- Parents remove little white blobs (fecal sacs) until fledging time approaches

Fledging

- Parents fly to and from nestbox, calling from perches nearby
- Nestlings look out for long periods
- Eventually chicks make great leap and take maiden flight to nearby tree or other object.



By David Kinneer



By David Kinneer

Fledgling phase

- Parents carry food to fledglings that are hidden in trees for about two weeks

"Alarm" behavior check nestbox to determine cause of alarm

- Excitement around nestbox; erratic movements by parent(s)
- Birds going to nestbox but not entering
- Parents nowhere to be seen



By Kim Roulias



By David Kinneer

visit txblues.org

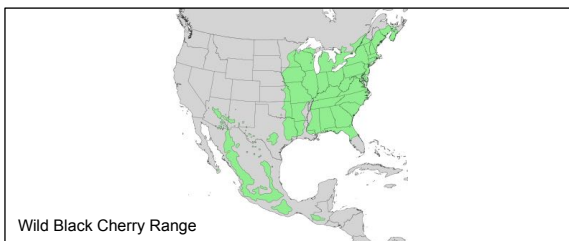
to learn more about bluebirds and other cavity nesters!

Prunus serotina – Wild Black Cherry

By Linda Crum, Master Gardener/Master Naturalist

Wild black cherry, *Prunus serotina*, is a 25-110 ft. deciduous tree. Height depends on variety. White flowers appear as drooping racemes after the leaves appear March-June. The dark red fruit (drupes) changes to black from August through October. Fall foliage is yellow. Wild Black Cherry

Wild black cherry is easy to grow. While the fruit is edible and used in beverages and cooking, the rest of the plant contains amygdalin and is toxic if consumed. Seeds should be removed before using in beverages and cooking. Birds will excrete the seeds.



Two Varieties Native to Texas

There are five geographical varieties. Two varieties occur in Texas. *P. serotina* var. *serotina* (eastern black cherry) occurs as far west as east Texas. *P. serotina* var. *eximia* (Escarpment black cherry) occurs in central Texas.

Wild black cherry prefers well-drained, moist soil. The pH preference depends on variety and region. Eastern black cherry prefers neutral to acidic soil.

Eastern Black Cherry tree grows 80 feet tall with a trunk one to three feet in diameter. Found in East Texas along fertile woods, burned areas, fence rows and disturbed sites.

Escarpment Black Cherry is a distinct and geographical isolated variety of Black Cherry found only in the calcareous soils of central Texas. This variety



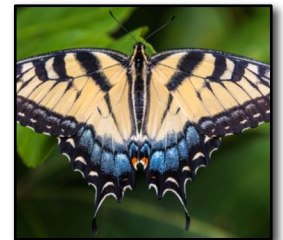
grows up to 50 feet tall. It can be distinguished physiologically from other *P. serotina* varieties by almost or entirely hairless leaves with more coarsely toothed margins, and longer petioles.

Benefits For Wildlife

A broad spectrum of animals eat Black Cherry's fleshy fruit. Many thrushes, woodpeckers, sparrows, bluebirds, tanagers, orioles, and Cedar Waxings are among the dozens of bird species that eat the fruit.



One of the most familiar butterflies across the eastern United States, Eastern Tiger Swallowtails are just one of 456 species of butterflies and moths whose caterpillars eat the leaves of Black Cherry and other *Prunus* species, based on research from Douglas W. Tallamy and the University of Delaware.



In spite of their ability to extend orange horns when threatened, these caterpillars are in turn an important source of food for birds, especially when they are raising their young.

Providing beauty, timber, food and medicine for humans, food for birds, mammals, pollinators and hundreds of other insects, Black Cherry is among our most productive native trees.



Wild Black Cherry Trees are easy to grow.

Visit these websites for expert tips and advice.

[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#), [Texas A&M Native Plant Society of Texas](#)



Welcome New Members

Board of Directors

Lonnie Castleman
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Nestbox Const. Coord.
Trinity

Peggy Tolboom
Vice President
Dublin

Charles Hubbard
Secretary
Midlothian

Nelda Reid
Treasurer
Klondike

Carrie Brown
Fundraising Consultant
Angelina

Twyla Doty
Eastland

Ann Fox
Tyler

Roberta Marshall
Event Listings
Fort Worth

Ron Tom
Mountain City

Steve Watkins
Aubrey

Thomas Wheeler
Bellaire

Contact Us:
tbs@txblues.org
936-439-7114 (Lonnie Castleman)

- Richard Blair
- Tom & Kathy Bone
- Karla Burnett
- Richard Cabrera
- Kevin Chasey
- Varun Cherukuru
- Linda Cobb
- Ed & Jill Dahmenn
- Janet Dawson
- Barbara Dumaine
- Danny Duncan
- Catherine Edwards
- Lynn Eichler
- Richard & Brenda Fahringer
- Laurie Fondren
- Jerry Glasow
- Laura Gott
- Vanessa L. Gray
- Missy Gudal
- Becky & Wayne Harvey
- Ron Hornbeck
- Jeremy Hudman
- Mark Lyon & Jane Tillman
- John & Fatima Kaluska
- Ronald Kelly
- Sherry Kuenstler
- Sue Land
- Gordon & Sandy Lee
- Judy Ann Loya
- Ellwyn Markov
- Alan Martin
- Jack McGarrity
- Brent & Mindy McQueen
- Chris Michel
- Robin Miller
- Steve & Darcy Morrissette
- Tom & Rebecca Motley
- Jamie Peay
- Macee Prause
- Wanda Puckett
- Natali Ray
- Andrea & Terry Renfrow
- Carol Southern
- Robert Steinbach
- Jodi Stringfellow
- Derry Summer
- Jim Swindell
- Dr. Linda Talley
- Velda Tiblets
- Joseph & Cheryl Wallace
- Pam Williams
- Max & Gail Wright
- Diane Wuthrich

Volunteers Are Appreciated!

Randy Beehn
Linda Crum
Jon Hranicky
Linda James

Bill/Susie Johnson
Robert Johnston
Archie Manning
Jerald Mowery

Dee Myers
John Park
Shannon Ramsey
Ken/Judy Ray



SPECIAL THANKS

to **President Lonnie Castleman** and **Treasurer Nelda Reid** for the many activities they perform above and beyond the normal duties expected in their board positions.

Thank You for your donation!

Sherry Briggs
Karla Burnett
Kevin Chasey
Millie Clark
James Douglas
Dolores Coleman
Nancy Sue Copple
Barbara Dumaine
Danny Duncan
Kay Fancher

Kathryn Fagalde
Courtney Ginn
Missy Gudal
Mark Hansen
Linda James
Charlene Johnston
Judy Lano
Jennifer Magill
Ellwyn Markov
Barbara Ohlman

Macee Prause
Cecily Rodgers
Mary Rusek
Judy Santerre
Margaret Kirby Taylor
Jon Watkins
Paul Wick
James L. Wittliff

Nestbox Installation At Porter High School

Porter High School Student Council was able to install five bluebird nestboxes around their campus with the help of TBS President Lonnie Castleman. These nestboxes were the idea of Porter High School's Vice-President, Ashton Carrigan (Lonnie's granddaughter). She states "These boxes will attract wildlife to our campus so our students and staff will be able to watch this incredible process of nesting. The Student Council chapter has an Energy-and-Environment committee that encourages students to better take care of their community and these nestboxes will do just that."



Lonnie Castleman helps Porter High student Council members install nestboxes on school grounds.

Good news, both students and teachers have seen bluebirds investigating the nestboxes. We hope the Porter High family has a successful nesting season!



NestWatch

Where Birds Come to Life

Upcoming TBS Events

**Ellis County Master Gardener's
22nd Annual Lawn & Garden Expo**
Saturday March 25th (9:00 am - 4:00 pm)
Waxahachie Civic Center

The Expo will focus on wildflowers. Special speakers will share tips for creating home wildflower gardens. 100+ booths featuring plant sales, gardening experts, and children's workshops and activities.

TBS Booth Host: Ken and Judy Ray

Visit [TBS - events](#) for further details

Champions For Nature Exhibit

South Texas State Fair
April 1st & 2nd (noon – 6pm)
Ford Arena in Beaumont

Various nature-focused agencies and organizations come together at the South Texas State Fair to educate and encourage everyone to be A Champion for Nature. This event is presented by the Sabine-Neches Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist.

Booth Host: Lonnie Castleman with Jennifer and Johnny Fleming

*This special exhibit is held the last two days of the fair. Visit [South Texas State Fair](#) for complete details of all fair activities and events held March 23 - April 2.

nestwatch.org

Check your nestboxes.

- are old nests removed?
- predator guards in place?
- installed in the proper location?
- NestWatch account activated?

TBS encourages members to report all nesting **activity**.