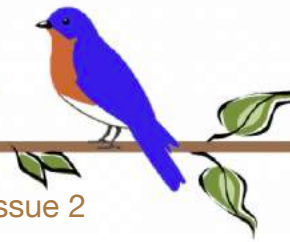


# TEXAS Blues



Texas Bluebird Society Newsletter • May 2023 • Volume 22.Issue 2

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Federal law protects all native nesting birds!



The Texas Bluebird Society newsletter is published:  
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Editor

Send stories/photos to  
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## Who Laid These Eggs?

Many cavity-nesting birds enjoy a TBS nestbox. Of course, our favorite is the pale blue, sometimes white, bluebird eggs. Can you identify which cavity nester is using your nestbox this nesting season?



### Ash-throated Flycatcher

Broods: 1-2, Clutch Size: 2-7  
Creamy white with reddish brown streaks and elongated blotches.



### Bewick's Wren

Broods: 2 Clutch Size: 5-7  
White, irregularly dotted, with spots of browns, purples, and gray.



### Brown-headed Nuthatch

Broods: 1 Clutch Size: 3-7  
Cream colored with reddish brown dots and blotches.



### Carolina Chickadee

Broods: 1-2 Clutch Size: 3-10  
White with fine dots to small blotches of reddish brown.



### Tufted Titmouse

Broods: 2 Clutch Size: 3-9  
White to creamy white, spotted with chestnut-red, brown, purple,

Keep all of our cavity nesters safe. Use appropriate predator guards, monitor nesting activity, and report your observations to NestWatch.

# Volunteers Keep TBS Strong!

TBS is totally dependent on members volunteering to perform a wide variety of tasks to support, sustain, and promote the organization. Some administrative tasks need technical skills such as Excel. Others require an aptitude for hands-on skills such as building nestboxes, people-oriented educational tasks include giving presentations or hosting a TBS booth at a local event. Or, write an article and share photos in the newsletter.

Share your skills, talents, and friendship. Contact Lonnie Castleman at [president@txblues.org](mailto:president@txblues.org) today!



*TBS booth is ready to go. (Left to right) Jennifer Fleming, Johnny Fleming and Lonnie Castleman host the first TBS booth at the South Texas Fair - Champions for Nature Exhibit.*

Jennifer and Johnny Fleming joined Lonnie Castleman to host the TBS booth at Champions for Nature Exhibit at the South Texas State Fair held April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Beaumont. The Sabine-Neches Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist organized the event in conjunction with the fair. Master Naturalist and TBS member Randy Beehn was instrumental in securing a booth for TBS. 2023 is the first year TBS has participated in this special event, recruiting 17 new members.



*Judy Ray shows off the final display before the gates open and attendees flock to the TBS booth,*

Judy and Ken Ray with Deborah and Dan Rayfield hosted the TBS booth at the Ellis County Master Gardener's 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Lawn & Garden Expo held March 25<sup>th</sup> in the Waxahachie Civic Center. Always a popular event, the TBS team inspired a record 40 household memberships. Lysle Mockler hosted the first TBS booth at this event in the early 2000's. Rex Reves carried on the tradition for many years. Did you join TBS at this event? TBS is happy to report 334 members have lived in Ellis County!

## Speakers Available For Local Events

Another fun volunteer activity—give a bluebird presentation to a local organization, club or community group. Thanks to Randy Beehn, Lonnie Castleman, Linda Crum, Roberta Marshall, LeAnn Sharp, Peggy Tolboom, and Pauline Tom, who have already renrolled new members during their individual presentations at various organizations. TBS events and presentations have recruited 77 out of the 100 new memberships to date this year.

Volunteer to join the TBS Speaker roster, or request a speaker for your event. Contact Ron Tom, our Speaker Engagement Coordinator, at [rontom2006@gmail.com](mailto:rontom2006@gmail.com).



*"Thank you so much to Pauline Tom for the incredibly informative talk teaching us how to bring bluebirds to our own backyards. We truly appreciate everyone who came out for the event." Wild Birds Unlimited, Austin.*



TBS created a [Bluebird Basics](#) PowerPoint for members to use as is, or customize, for your presentations.

Download from [txblues.org/resources/presentation](http://txblues.org/resources/presentation).

# Cheryl Anderson, a TBS Pioneer

*By Pauline Tom, Immediate Past President*

From her perch at The Birdhouse (wild bird supply store) in Azle, Cheryl Anderson joined Texas Bluebird Society in late 2001 when she received our mailing that went to North American Bluebird Society (NABS) members in Texas shortly after TBS' inception.

Charter Membership #31 was already introducing her customers and those who attended bluebird seminars at The BirdHouse to bluebirds. Once introduced to Texas Bluebird Society, she began introducing them to TBS, recruiting them as members.

Cheryl joined the TBS Board of Directors during our first year. She served on the TBS Board until she and her husband, Jim C (J C) Collier moved to Florida.

For most of 2002, she worked with Pauline Tom and Lysle Mockler on the creation of our logo. She and J C donated funds for legal protection of the logo, slogan, and more with U S Patents and Trademarks. (See full story in TX Blues 2004 issue 5.)



*The new TBS logo was adopted by the Board of Directors in late September. The work began almost a year earlier when a committee (Cheryl Anderson, Lysle Mockler, and Pauline Tom) began work on the project. The goal was to have a new logo to which TBS has full rights that captures the essence of the organization's slogan, "Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time."*

Cheryl put together the 2004 TBS Summer Symposium held at Fort Worth Nature Center.

When Texas Bluebird Society made plans for our auction associated with "NABS2006", the continent-wide conference TBS planned and presented in San Antonio, Cheryl offered The BirdHouse address for the receipt of donations and she was active in soliciting donations. But, before NABS 2006 in April,

she and J C were well on their way to resettling in Cape Coral Florida. They were in Florida for weeks at a time, so she missed participating in the NABS conference. By December 2006, their move to Florida was official.



*Cheryl Anderson (front) and her team of worker bees and speakers; (Left ) LeAnn Sharp with (back row) Lysle Mockler, featured speaker, Keith Kridler, Pauline Tom, and Dan Hanan. (2004 symposium)*

Even when their lot in Cape Coral Florida was vacant, they erected a bluebird nestbox. For her Florida personalized license plate, she selected BLUEB.

Her first bluebird eggs, in a nestbox at a nearby park, came in April 2009. By that time, Cheryl was concentrating time on a species that needed help in her local community, the Burrowing Owl. The owl, which nests on her street, is state designated by Florida as a species of concern.

By 2010, Cheryl was also raising Monarch butterflies and working on the establishment of Purple Martin colonies. She became curator of the Tom Allen butterfly house in Cape Coral and well-known for her work with Purple Martins.

Cheryl was anchored in place, exactly where she was needed, when Hurricane Ian hit in September 2022. Purple Martins and their landlords needed help. Her rescue story is reprinted beginning on page 4.

Cheryl Anderson's work with bluebirds in Texas continues through those whose lives she touched while here and those who they touched and on and on.

And, she has established a new conservation legacy in Cape Coral FL.

***Cheryl Anderson, you make TBS proud!***

## When Hurricane Ian Came to Visit

by Cheryl Anderson

Cape Coral, FL

**I never thought it would happen here. I never thought it would happen to us. I knew we lived in hurricane territory on the Gulf Coast, but the storms always went someplace else. Even when Hurricane Irma in 2017 scraped us, I thought “it won’t happen here”.**

Sept 28th, 2022

We had been watching this storm develop for two weeks. It was going to hit Tampa to our north. We had our solid aluminum shutters up. We brought in all the outside furniture, and everything that was loose around the house. We had discussed removing the 20 gourds and two houses we had tied to our dock pilings. But we thought “not us”.

After a sleepless night on the 27th, we woke up to “it’s coming here. Be ready for an 18-20 ft. storm surge”. OMG! We live on a salt water tidal lake just inland from Pine Island Sound and the Gulf of Mexico in Cape Coral, Florida. It was definite. After much crying, I convinced my husband to move to a friend’s house five miles north of our house, off the water. The last thing I did before kissing my sweet house goodbye was to remove all the gourds on the martin poles. We still had them up because we do not clean and take them down until the weather cools off. This is due to insect occupation in the warm weather. I was crying and stuffing the gourds into an empty trash can and pulled them in the garage.

9 a.m. The wind is picking up and we grab our two sweet little dogs

and our 94-year-old neighbor and head down the road away from the water.

My sturdy 2013 Prius was snugged up to my friend’s garage since there was no room in the garage. We then spent the next ten hours huddled in my friend’s house listening to an emergency radio. The power went off at 1:30 p.m. The radio was battery operated so we kept listening.

The hospital was flooding, and the power was off. The hospital closed. When does that happen? We had a small gap in the rear window to look outside.

The rain was falling, and the wind was blowing, and you could hear stuff coming down outside. The roof started to rattle. Around 1 p.m. the wind slowed, and we thought we saw some blue sky through our hole. Ah! Maybe it’s over! NO! The radio said that calm was the eye, now here comes the backside! OMG, I think that was even worse. Our shutters blew open and we discussed where we would go if the window broke out, but luckily that didn’t happen.

The winds finally slowed around 9 p.m. It was dark-I

mean dark! No lights anywhere. Power out everywhere. We decided to try to sleep and go back to our house in the morning light. My husband and I and our two sweet little dogs, who were great through the whole thing, got in the Prius and headed to our house to see what was left. It took a long time to go that five miles. Trees were down and roads were closed. Power lines were down across the



*Jim Collier assembling the new wench rig. Note the raised and curled dock in the background.*

roads. There were two huge royal palm trees down on our street, but we were able to steer around them in my brave little car.

We were lucky. Our house was not flooded. Our roof and solar panels held. The winds were clocked nearby at 140 mph. The water came up right to the edge of our patio door, but the steel shutters screwed down with “L” brackets stopped the water just at the edge. Our pool was trashed, and there were three docks, ours and two others, in our back yard. The boats were just hanging on, twisted in the boat lifts and one crashed into my sister’s back yard teetering on a ladder. The 60 ft. Norfolk Pine tree in the backyard was still standing! It could have crushed our house and anything in its path if it had fallen. The water came up in front of our house and filled the garage. The water must have been at least 3 ft. high on the street in front of our house. Our butterfly garden was swept away. Our power was restored eleven days after the storm, and we felt quite lucky to get it. Running tap water with a boil water notice took about six days. Every place had damage, some severe, some total destruction to the slab or ground.

But the empty Purple Martin poles were still attached to the pilings which were holding up the docks that washed into the backyard! The old Trio houses (the castle is 40 years old) were still there. Bent up and missing some parts, but still attached to the bare pilings which were pulled a bit sideways. There are no walkways to get to them, but we have a solution!

Remember the boat that crashed through my sister’s dock across the street and landed in her

backyard? Well, that boat is a small work barge. We had two cranes lift it off her yard and it has been repaired enough so we can get to (and recover some of) the martin housing in our city that crashed into the water.

We are slowly removing gourds and houses from the salt water. The land-based gourd racks came down with the high winds when the ground stakes bent. We are currently removing the old bent ground stakes and installing new ground stakes to support the gourd racks at the Sirenica Vista park and the Oasis Middle School. A good Samaritan was able to retrieve the 36 gourds from our Sirenica Vista colony. Thank you! We fished some of the gourds out of the pond in front of the school and one was occupied by a small peacock bass that had found shelter in the sunken gourd!

With the help of PMCA we have been able to order the needed parts; ground stakes, gourds, brackets, etc. We are trying to get all the known colonies (public and private) in Cape Coral back up in time for the martins’ return. Cape Coral is one of the first places the martins return to. Last year the first birds were seen on January 8th. PMCA has also helped us by sharing our Facebook Go Fund me page on their Facebook page. If you would like to contribute, go to



*Before and after cleaning the gourds. Note the barnacles.*

the Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife Facebook page and look for the photo of the teacher with the gourds at Oasis School.

Lots of work to be done yet. So many people are suffering after losing everything. Every day brings another sad story of loss and damage. The debris pickup is finally making some headway. We are no longer facing huge debris piles on every street, just some. I know the return of the martins will cheer all of us up. When people are homeless it is difficult to worry about houses for birds, but all our dedicated landlords care and want the birds to be welcome when they return. Thank you to all who have donated to our fund for repairs and thank you to PMCA for caring and helping us to secure the replacement parts.



*Gerry Geyer power washing a pole that had been submerged for two months.*



*Shelly Oram, Charlotte Taft, Jim Collier putting the new rack together.*

# *Amelanchier arborea*, common serviceberry

By Linda Crum, Master Gardener/Master Naturalist

Common serviceberry is a small deciduous tree/large shrub, usually 15-25 feet, native to northeast Texas and eastern North America. It is a member of the rose family and thrives along stream banks in moist, well-drained, acid soil.



The fragrant, white flowers occur in drooping racemes March to April before the leaves appear. Young leaves are covered with soft, wooly hairs that disappear as the leaf matures.

The leaves turn wine-red in fall. The bark has a smooth gray appearance streaked with reddish, longitudinal fissures. As the bark matures, it becomes scaly. Root suckers will result in a shrubby growth habit if not removed.



The tree produces small, reddish-purple berries that are beloved by birds. The edible berries resemble blueberries and can be used in jams, jellies and pies.

Serviceberry has no serious problems. Occasional disease problems are rust, leaf spot, fire blight and powdery mildew. Occasional insect pests include

sawfly, leaf miner, borers and scale. Planted where it gets sun/part shade and good air circulation should minimize any problems.

Propagation is achieved by softwood cuttings when the stem tissue is firming. Sow untreated seeds in fall or cold-stratified seeds in spring.

## Wildlife Love Serviceberry

Serviceberry is one of the earliest blooming shrubs in spring, usually blooming in early April. This makes it an essential early-season food source for pollinators such as bees and butterflies. In fact, pollination ecologists include the serviceberry as a special value to bees due to the large number of native bees it attracts. Skunks, foxes and chipmunks eat the berries, and deer and elk eat the foliage.



The common serviceberry fruit is loved by over 35 species of birds. Cedar waxwings, robins, chickadees, juncos,

bluebirds, goldfinches, orioles, tanagers, catbirds, thrushes, mocking birds are among many birds that enjoy the fruit. (Great attractor during migration) Not only do birds enjoy the berries, the showy white flowers bloom from April to May which in return attracts insects that birds also rely on for food. Serviceberry fruit is probably the best summer fruit for birds.



Nectar from the serviceberry blossoms attract a variety of butterflies and insects. Serviceberry is a food source for the larvae of tiger butterflies and viceroys. Gypsy moth larvae also feed on downy serviceberry. It is a host plant for the Red-Spotted Purple and Viceroy butterflies.

## Humans Use Serviceberry Too

- Native Americans ate the fruits fresh or dried them for pemmican and cakes.
- An extract of the bark was used as an anti-diarrheal medication.
- The hard, fine-grained wood is used for tool handles.
- The fruits are occasionally used to make serviceberry pies, jams, preserves and wine.



## Welcome New Members

### Board of Directors

#### Lonnie Castleman

President  
Nestbox Const. Coord.  
New Caney

#### Peggy Tolboom

Co-Treasurer  
Dublin

#### Nelda Reid

Co-Treasurer  
Klondike

#### Charles Hubbard

Secretary  
Midlothian

#### Carrie Brown

Fundraising Consultant  
Angelina

#### Ann Fox

Tyler

#### Roberta Marshall

Event Listings  
Fort Worth

#### Ron Tom

Speaking Engagement  
Coordinator  
Mountain City

#### Steve Watkins

Aubrey

#### Thomas Wheeler

Bellaire

Contact Us:

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

936-439-7114 (Lonnie Castleman)

Tammy Kemnitz Allen  
Susan Alvarado  
Alleasha Austin  
Paul Bertrand  
Jan Blackwood  
JoAnn Brewer  
Kathy Coker  
Rebecca Copeland  
Robert/Margie Debault  
Michelle DeVerter  
Tammy Diller  
Dennis Durkee  
Bob/Cindy Eimatinger  
Kerry Franks  
Cheryl Frederick  
Eleanor Griffan  
Marilyn/Rick Guidry  
Jim Haberman  
Cindy Haneline  
Richard Hart  
Carmalla Haywood  
Brent/Renae Hazard  
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Robert Holmes

Lori Horne  
Clara Hubacek  
Merissa Hudgins  
JoAnne Johnson  
Frankie LaGrone  
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Lideana Layboy  
Nicole Litterio  
Rhonda Mabry  
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Jim May  
Mary Mitchell  
Beverly Moore  
Indira/Lee Morrow  
Vicki Newby  
Amy Nichlos  
Jeri Norris  
Walter Patschke  
David Perdue  
Richard Peters  
Janene Potter  
J. Allan Ramos  
R. Richard  
Crissy Richter

Heather Rider  
Mitch Rizzello  
Irene Rowe  
Neil/Michelle Saum  
Joe Savoie  
Donna Sue Sealey  
Linda Selman  
Garnet Sheffield  
Sandra Skrei  
Hal Smith  
Rachel Stambaugh  
Lamar Stampley  
Diane Thompson  
John Thornhill  
Linda Turner  
Judy Warner  
Patsy Warren  
Monica Wilhelm  
Paul Williams

## Volunteers Are Appreciated!

Randy Beehn  
Lonnie Castleman  
Linda Crum  
Jennifer/Johnny Fleming  
Donna/Chris Honkomp  
Linda James  
Bill/Susie Johnson  
Robert Johnston  
Archie Manning  
Roberta Marshall

Jerald Mowery  
Dee Myers  
John Park  
Shannon Ramsey  
Ken/Judy Ray  
Deborah/Dan Rayfield  
LeAnn Sharp  
Peggy Tolboom  
Vanessa Voisinet

## Thank You for your donation!

Sandy Behrman  
Katherine Bennett  
Norma Bruns  
Michelle DeVerter  
Laurie Fondren  
Anne Goodman  
JoAnn Gruben  
Ed/Sheila Heierman

Robert/Jeanne Langley  
Martha Leonard  
Jane Tillman  
Mark Lyon  
Tom/Rebecca Motley  
Dinah Murdoch  
Catherine Peake  
Jeri Porter

Ashley Robinette  
Margaret Scamman  
Lorraine Scheider  
Moire Schilke  
Delaina Sims  
Lynn Stallones  
David/Edwina Thomas  
Bill/Sharon Vick

## **NO HOUSE SPARROWS!** **Learn To Recognize Both Adults and Eggs**



**Male House Sparrow**

Male House Sparrows are brightly colored birds with gray heads, white cheeks, a black bib, and rufous neck.

Females are a plain buffy-brown overall with dingy gray-brown underparts.

Their backs are noticeably striped with buff, black, and brown.



**Female House Sparrow**



### **House Sparrow**

Broods: 1-4 Clutch Size: 1-8  
Light white to greenish white or bluish white, usually spotted with gray or brown.

**The House Sparrow is a non-native species that is harmful to songbirds.**

Do NOT allow House Sparrows to nest!

Take action immediately. It is legal to humanely dispatch them under Federal Law.

Links to a detailed explanation of why it is so critical to control House Sparrows, including information on both passive and aggressive methods of House Sparrow control.

[North American Bluebird Society](#)

[Cornell Labs NestWatch](#)

[Sialis Organization](#)

[Texas Bluebird Society](#)

The oldest recorded House Sparrow was a female, at least 15 years, 9 months old when she was found in Texas in 2004, the same state where she had been banded.

## **Check Out Those Feet**



All birds' feet are not created equal! Bluebirds, like most perching birds, have three toes that point towards the front and one that acts like a thumb in the back. The foot is made up of strong tendons and bones. Their feet don't have very many nerves, blood vessels or muscles. This allows Bluebirds to land on cold metal perches or walk on ice when temperatures drop. Some other birds have three or even just two toes. The next time you look at a bird, be sure to check out their feet! Courtesy of Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania.

