### In this issue:

President's Message1
New Jefferson County
Coordinator!2
Newsletter Deadlines2
New to the Flock
Donations
Monitoring Best Practice4
Adventures of a Nest Box
Monitor6
Monitor
2019 Nest Box Survey

Above: . Wing-waving male bluebird on apple-blossom tree in early spring. Photo by Linda Schamberger

### President's Message

by Jenny Murtaugh

Happy Spring!

Thanks to everyone who responded to the meeting date poll. The majority of you were available on Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> for the Spring Board Meeting, so we will meet at our usual location at the LaFayette Public Library, 2577 US-11, LaFayette, NY 13084 (Onondaga County), 9:30 AM - 3 PM. <u>Please send your agenda items to me prior to the meeting</u>.

Also, if anyone is interested in taking the lead on planning the Fall Meeting, please let me know. There has been discussion and requests to move the meeting to October, since September is so busy for folks, so that is something to consider. I'll certainly work on it, but realistically I need to admit that I just can't do the big push this year. This may already be obvious, considering I haven't gotten anything out.

See you on June 15<sup>th</sup>!



### NYSBS Welcomes new Jefferson County Coordinator!

My name is Carolyn (Corky) Marlowe and I am the Jefferson County Coordinator of the NYSBS. I live in Glen Park, just outside of Watertown, and have been seriously birding since the early 1980s. I have always been interested in Eastern Bluebirds but never saw very many, so I never had a chance to learn much about them. I am president of the North Country Bird Club, and when Sarah Hodder contacted us a few years ago, the opportunity arose to learn more about these beautiful creatures. After Sarah and Karen shared their information on the Bluebird trails, I was hooked. I began monitoring the trail on US Route 11, North of Antwerp (with help from Jackie Young), asked a friend to help, and she (Ellen Darabaner) agreed to take over that trail. I then took over monitoring another trail on Route 11, from US Route 342 to the city of Watertown. I have been a trail monitor for 3 years and thoroughly enjoy it! I've been stung by wasps a few times and had eggs stolen from one nest (snake?), but that's the worst that has happened.

I am a retired Surgical Nurse and worked in the OR for 45 years in the Watertown hospitals. I now work when needed in an Oral Surgeon's office to keep up my Nursing skills. In addition to my role as President of the North Country Bird Club, I am also President of the Dexter Historical Society and President of the Glen Park Volunteer Fire Department. Along with birding as much as I can, I also garden, read, knit, crochet, and listen to classical music and watch opera. I have a camp in the woods where I spend time in the Summer away from traffic and electricity! It's a very peaceful place. And when I can, I spend time with my family, most of whom are local.

I am looking forward to being the Jefferson County Coordinator—I think I can interest many more birders in helping the Eastern Bluebird maintain and increase its presence in Northern New York. I am thankful for the opportunity to do so.

Corky Marlowe



### Page 2

# Newsletter Deadlines for Submission of Articles for Publication

The deadline for the fall issue of Bluebird News is July 15, 2019. Please submit prior to that date all material you would like considered for publication in Bluebird News to Martha Moran by email at moran.martha@gmail.com.

We are always looking for new and interesting articles, stories, photos and personal observations of bluebirds and other cavity nesters. Please share your interesting experiences with our members.

Your articles make this newsletter special, so please keep sending them! I will also welcome new ideas and feedback - they are crucial to help keep this publication relevant and useful.

Thank you for your help and participation!
Martha Moran
Editor
Email: moran.martha@gmail.com

To the members of the New York State Bluebird Society, I apologize for any errors or omission of photos or articles that you submitted for the Spring 2018 edition of Bluebird News. Please contact me and I will see that it is corrected in the next issue.

Martha Moran, Newsletter Editor

### Note

If you know of a member of NYSBS who has recently passed away, please notify our Membership Secretary, Murial Prianti, by email at mrprianti@aol.com or by note to her at 5157 Orangeport Rd., Brewerton NY 13029, so that we may send a sympathy card to the member's family and also so that we may notify the NYSBS members of the death of one of our own. Thank you.

### New To The Flock

### Murial Prianti, NYSBS Treasurer & Membership Chair

Please join me in welcoming the following new members (listed by county):

Albany: Gary Pollard,

Allegany: Beth Dennis, James Thomson,

Broome: Jeanne Konecny, Chautauqua: Cheryl Noggle, Erie: Colleen Scotch,

*Genesee:* Bonnie Madden,

Madison: Alan & Marlene Bissell, Onondaga: Chris Sorensen, Ontario: Jon Van Houten, Orleans: Daniel Rosentreter, Oswego: Paul & Joanne Tennant,

Saratoga: Deborah Hollowood,
Schoharie: Berenice Dooley,
Schuyler: Joan & David Sutherland,

Ulster: Karen Holden, Kenneth Hollander,

Wayne: Carol Brust, Pam Dibble.

Barbara Treiber renewed as a Life Member.



Photo Courtesy NABS

### **Donations Received**



Our sincere thanks to the following for their generous donations: Rachel Anderson, Elly Blodgett, Ivan Boss, Steven Douglass, Carol Hardenburg, Nancy Haas, Debi Holt, Barbara & Peter Kelly, Carolyn Marlowe, Bobbie Monroe, Regeneron Pharma, Christopher Streit, Jerry Sullivan, and James Wise.

We thank the following for their generous donations in memory of Norman Frey: Raymond & Priscilla Barkman, Althea M. Bond, Richard & Patricia Dorsey, Murial Prianti, Kathryn & David Riha, Mark & Christine Southworth, Glenn & Eileen Van Oort, Joy & William Walsh, Deborah Wines.

### Nest Box Monitoring Best Practice: To Open or Not to Open

By Bill Zitek

"I think the bluebird laid eggs in that box but, I'm afraid to look in. I don't want to frighten them away from the nest. When can I open the nest box in a safe manner?

Well, you should not be afraid to look inside the box <u>IF</u> your timing is right. It is correct to be concerned for the safety of the birds. The answer to your concern is straight forward enough if you pay attention to the following:

- Good observations
- Knowing a bit about the natural history of the Eastern Bluebird
- Keeping track of all you see

Depending on where you live, the Eastern Bluebird may begin nesting in late March to early April. Asking others who have nest boxes in your area will help you expect when this might be.

After pairing, the bluebirds will choose a nest site - in this case, your nest box. The only evidence that they may be starting a nest in your box may be a few pieces of grass on the box floor that the male has placed there (pine needles in some areas). The female has to give her approval of the nest site and then she will build and complete the nest. In a few days after the nest is complete, she will begin laying eggs; this could be as long as a week after the nest is completed. (See Image 1 & 2, Page 5)

Questions: Why is it important to know:

- When the first egg was laid
- When the last egg was laid
- When the clutch is finished

The best way to have these questions answered is to set a schedule of planned visits to the nest box. A once weekly visit is best. For example: if you start your monitoring

on a Tuesday, plan to make every Tuesday your weekly monitoring

You will be opening the nest box several times as you monitor and want be aware of what to

expect, how to interpret what you see and do this without negatively impacting the whole process. Your goal is to assist the bluebirds in raising a successful clutch.

Remember, you want to monitor the activity at the nest box, not be a nuisance to its inhabitants. While you have been deciding on a schedule, the female has laid 1 blue egg which you see on your visit. The date – for demonstration purposes, will be April 5 (4/5).

Important points: the female usually lays her egg early in the morning and should not be disturbed while laying. Wait until at least 10 AM to do your monitoring. She needs safe and undisturbed surroundings. ALWAYS approach the box quietly and slowly and knock on the side to alert any occupant, before you open it.

Since your first visit was on 4/5 (when you saw 1 blue egg), your next visit will be on 4/12 (1 week later). Now you see 6 blue eggs. The clutch is usually finished at 6 eggs. (See Image 3, Page 5)

Question: when was the last egg laid?

Since the first egg was laid on 4/5 (you saw this), and she lays 1 egg a day until done (the clutch is finished), the last egg was laid on 4/10. (4/5,4/6,4/7,4/8,4/9,4/10).

If you see only 4 eggs on 4/12, when was the last one laid? 4/8 (4/5,4/6.4/7.4/8). There will be no more eggs in this clutch since the last one was laid on 4/8. In rare instances the female may skip a day and lay another egg but, when several days have passed, she is done.

INCUBATION: The female usually begins incubating after the LAST egg is laid. Sometimes they do take a day or so off and start a day or two later. We use the next day's date because that is what experience has taught works well.

Again, continuing our example: we'll use 4/10 as the date of the last egg. The Eastern Bluebird incubates the eggs for 12-14 days, so we use 13 days to make our calculation of when the eggs will hatch. We can therefore say that the eggs will hatch on 4/23 (date of last egg (4/10) plus 13 days incubation = 4/23).

According to our scheduled visits however, you will have checked the nest box on 4/19. What should you see on 4/19? 6 eggs. When you visit again on 4/26 what should you see? 6 nestlings. How old will they be? 3 days old (hatched on 4/23).

Now, we want know when the nestlings will FLEDGE (leave the nest). This is a critical date because we <u>should</u> not open the nest box within 5 days of the fledge date as



Image 1, Above: Female Bluebird chooses her nest box

Image 2, Right: Female bringing nest material to the box to build the nest

Image 3, Below: Bluebird eggs in nest



it may cause the very active nestlings to leave the nest too early, before they are capable of surviving outside the nest box.

16-20 days after hatching the nestlings will be ready to fledge. Imagine that! Thirty days from egg to the widewide world! So, you need to calculate when this will happen. We know that they hatched on 4/23. If we use 17 days (a good average fledge time is between 16 and 20 days) in calculating the time from hatching to fledging (hatch date to fledge date): 4/23 plus 17 days gives us a fledge date of 5/10. They should fledge on or close to May tenth.

REMEMBER - we should not open the box after the 12<sup>th</sup> day of nestling period, i.e., 5 days before predicted fledging, when the nestlings are 12 days old, to prevent premature fledging. This is the NO CHECK Date. The nest box should not be opened until fledging is finished.

So, everything having gone along well, we should have 6 bluebirds fledged! And, hopefully, you understand why



we need to pay attention to the important dates and keep records of them.

Now, clean out that nest box so the bluebird pair can start again. And, hopefully this information can help sharpen your monitoring technique.



# Adventures of a Nest Box Monitor...What Could Possibly Go Wrong!

### By Russ Guard (Washington County)

On my trail today, I came to nest box #38, which is paired with #41 (don't ask!) along a small stream. Over the years, the property owner has built a nice wall of field stones right along both banks forming water's edge. A previous entry for this box stated, "5 sml chicks-poor nest." Inspection showed the expected poor nest with numerous maggots. The chicks appeared somewhat lethargic with half-opened eyes. With these clues, I whipped out my plastic pail, removed the 5 chicks and covered the bucket with my hat. The fact that the chicks were much larger than they originally appeared, and more animated by several factors at this point went unnoticed. The box was cleaned out and a nice new nest installed.

Due to vast experience, no attempt was made to return the chicks to the box with the door open. It was closed and chick #1 and 2 were popped in through the entrance hole. As I bent down to retrieve chick #3 from the bucket, two blurs were discerned as # 1 & 2 literally reached escape velocity as they described a graceful arc while falling into the brook. Thinking fast, #3, 4 and 5 were quickly popped back into the box through the entrance hole, which I blocked with my hand kerchief to keep them

from escaping, at least temporarily. With the phrase, "If you can't help them, just don't hurt them!" thundering in my ears, I looked down to see the 2 chicks dog paddling in the water.

Thoughts of removing my socks and jumping in were fortunately passed over in favor of lying down flat and reaching over the wall to reach them. This proved successful, but any feeling of elation waned as the laws of physics suggested way too much body mass was over the wall edge and gravity was about to propel the Bluebirder into the water, on top of the chicks. However, with some rather amazing muscular flailing, birder and chicks returned to an upright if not totally dry position.

A general tingling sensation, at first mistaken for a feeling of elation, was found to be the result of stinging nettles which had made contact with exposed arms and stomach. In any event, #1 and 2 chicks were gently toweled off and returned to the nest with their siblings. With temps in the mid-80s, drying off was assured. Did I mention that both parents were dive bombing the Bluebirder during this whole operation?

### Correction

Spring 2019 Edition: photo credit for "*Bluebird taking a bath in South Texas*" was incorrectly attributed to Rock Termini. The correct photo credit is Steve Taylor (Texas).







# 2019 Nest Box Survey By Deb Wines

Spring is here, on the calendar. The temperatures at night are still too cold for me, and maybe for the birds too. As of now, I have one nest box that belongs to a bluebird pair. I get so nervous when my bluebirds lay eggs in early May. Five beautiful blue eggs have been in the nest for a week. I finally saw the male and female flying around today. I am hoping the weather warms up before they hatch.

Here is the information you'll need to know about the Nest Box Survey. On our beautiful web site, you will find the link to the Nest Box Survey, thanks to Cherie Layton. Thank you to those of you who used the survey to report your 2018 results. User-friendly instructions are provided so there should be no problems. It is programmed to only accept data from June 1st through November 1st. When you have finished filling it out, you will be cued to submit, and it will be transmitted electronically to my mailbox. On the form is one question about purple martins and one about kestrels. I believe Cherie worked through all of the glitches, so take the opportunity to help NYSBS go green!

For those who do not have access to computers, the hard copy is still available and will be included in the next newsletter. However, if you have access to a computer, we would appreciate it if you would try the online form to help our environment by saving paper. All survey results received by November 1, 2019 will be compiled and reported in the winter newsletter. Please remember to wait until after your final nesting before reporting your results.

Last year was another difficult year for our bluebirds: unfavorable weather conditions, increased house sparrow predation, decreased monitoring/reporting. I am hopeful that this year will be better for our blues. Already I am hearing of successful hatchings and it is only May! Keep up the great work, bluebirders. I can't wait to hear from you!

Deb Wines Nest Box Survey Tabulator

# Questions for the Experts – Updated!

The following additional information (A2) was provided by Niles Brown and Eli Martin (Penn Yan) as an update from what was published in the Winter 2018-19 edition of Bluebird News. As a reminder, the original list of questions is compiled by Deb Wines and then sent to our NYSBS Experts, Bill Zitek, Niles Brown and Rich Wells.

Q: What can be done to prevent this woodpecker damage? Around 10 boxes on this trail had the same damage.



**A2**: You can put a piece of screen around the front of the box, with an entrance hole cut out.

A1: If damage occurs while birds are nesting your options are limited. I would try using a sparrow spooker or tack a shiny object to the nest box front. Out of season, remove the nest box until bluebirds return. Out of sight out of mind.

# New York State Bluebird Society Incorporated Annual Awards -- Call for Nominations

The chart below identifies those who have been honored by NYSBS. Each one is an interesting story. For each one of them, dozens of others toil in anonymity to encourage bluebirds.

YOU ARE INVITED to nominate your "bluebird hero" for consideration by the NYSBS Awards Committee for the awards to be presented at the annual Fall meeting. The strength of supporting documentation will determine those to be honored.

Feel free to contact any officer or director with your nomination. If you prefer, send your nomination, with your reasons, by email to Bill Zitek at Wezent402@gmail.com, John Ruska at ruskhill@roadrunner.com, or Rich Wells at vwells10025@aol.com.

1985	Brewerton	Recognition Award	Bucky Hoover Larry Flick, Vince Schneible
1986	Brewerton	Outstanding Service Award	Larry and Gloria Flick John Rogers
1988	Brewerton	Dedication to Bluebirding	Sadie Dorber
1992	Brewerton	Dedication and Generosity to Bluebird Conservation	Herman Bressler
1993	Ithaca	Recognition Award	Rich Wells Florence Germond
1994	Sherburne	Recognition Award	Morton Miller Fran Hanes Vince and Ginny Schneible Paul Wilson
1995	Seneca Falls	Recognition Award	Frank Eddy
1996	Delmar	Recognition Award	John Rogers Genevieve Harrington
1997	Jamestown	Recognition Award	Ray Briggs Vivian Pitzrick
1998	Brewerton	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Kevin Colton
1999	Brewerton	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Joe Sedlacek
2000	Brewerton	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	David Heidenreich
2002	Binghamton Cobleskill	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Bob McCullough Kevin Berner
2003	Fredonia	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Ron Howe David Smith
2004	Sherburne	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Jeanne Ayers Pat Lynch Barb Treiber
2005	Delmar Bath	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Alan Mapes Dave Hofer
2006	Altmar	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award Recognition Award	Carl Zenger Phyllis and David Smith
2007	Fair Haven	Hanes Memorial Conservation Award Bressler Distinguished Service Award	Jim Kunz Paul and Sandra Wilson
2008	Depew	Bressler Distinguished Service Award	Van Travis
2008	Kingston	President's Award	Ray Briggs Kevin Berner Norman Frey
2009	Newcomb	Bressler Distinguished Service Award	Judy Derry

		Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Norman and Phyllis Frey
2010	Sherburne	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Ray Briggs Bill Zitek
2011	Ithaca	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Murial Prianti Henry and Dean Robie
2012	Auburn	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award President's Award	Cherie Layton Jim Engelbrecht Susan Gilnack
2013	Cooperstown	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	John and Beverly Ruska Elaine Crossley
2014	Savannah	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Niles Brown Sarah Hodder and Mark Couchman
2015	Ithaca	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Jonathan and Lynne Ridgeway Deborah Wines
2016	Batavia	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Kimberley Corwin Richard A. Wells
2017	Auburn	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	John Rogers Susan and Jerry Gilnack
2018	Auburn	Bressler Distinguished Service Award Hanes Memorial Conservation Award	Norm & Phyllis Frey Rob Wrobel







### Managing House Sparrows

### Excerpted from the Sialis.org Website Bet Zimmerman, Editor

The tips below include both active and passive means of managing House Sparrow (HOSP) populations. House Sparrows are deadly and difficult, but there are ways to manage them. To see the article online and many links to details/additional resources, go to http://www.sialis.org/hosp.htm.

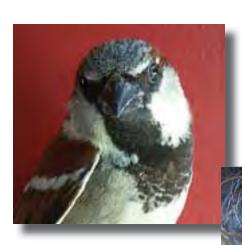
**QUICK TIPS:** Successful bluebird landlords do not tolerate House Sparrows (HOSP), which are non-native nest site competitors. In my opinion, it is better to have no nest box at all than to allow House Sparrows to breed in one. The combination of methods I recommend most highly are:

- Do not feed cracked corn, millet or bread. Switch to black oil sunflower, thistle and safflower instead. Use a Magic Halo at feeders.
- Try Gilbertson PVC nest boxes, as they are least preferred by HOSP. Troyer style boxes may also not be preferred.
- Hang monofilament on nest boxes early in the season (carefully).
- \*For backyard boxes or small trails: if you do nothing else, put a sparrow spooker on top of the box after the first bluebird egg is laid (provides 24/7 protection for eggs, nestlings and adults.) Remove it after fledging so House Sparrows don't get accustomed to it.

• Systematically remove nests and eggs that you are sure are House Sparrow nests every 10-12 days, or addle eggs.

• Trap early and often. Although trapping is not for everyone, it is the most effective long-term solution.

- Consider using a Van Ert trap to trap a HOSP entering or claiming a nest box (monitor hourly)
- If populations are high, use a ground trap like the Deluxe Repeating Sparrow Trap with a live decoy. I ground trap continuously during active nesting season.
- Adult HOSP, nests, eggs and young may be destroyed under U.S. federal law. Humanely euthanize trapped birds. Relocating them only relocates the problem, and in some states a permit is required. If you cannot bring yourself to euthanize (see accounts of HOSP attacks before deciding - warning, graphic photos), at least trim their wings.
- Consider not putting boxes up at all in HOSP territory
   try other areas instead.



Left: Male HOSP

Below: Speckled eggs in trashy

nest

Right: Typical HOSP nest





# 2018-19 Directory - NEW YORK STATE BLUEBIRD SOCIETY INCORPORATED (dated 10/19/18)

OFFICERS						
President (20)	Jenny Murtaugh	154 Lyons Lake Rd.	Nassau	12123		President@nysbs.org
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2019	Rock Termini	PO Box 145	East Otto	14729	716-680-0322	rocktermini@gmail.com
2019	Deb Wines	4429 McCloy Rd.	Cortland	13045	607-756-2681	dwines54@gmail.com
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	Rich Wells	10025 Middle Rd	E Concord	14055	716-592-9596	vwells10025@aol.com
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Cavity Nesting Species	cies	VOLUNTEER NEEDED				
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Nest Box Survey Report	eport	Deborah Wines	(see above)			
Promotional Activities	ties	Murial Prianti	(see above)			
Research & NABS Liaison	Liaison	Kevin Berner	(see above)			
US Rt. 11 Educatio	US Rt. 11 Education Trail - Northern Section	Jim Engelbrecht	(see above)			
US Rt. 11 Educatio	US Rt. 11 Education Trail – Southern Section	Sarah Hodder	(see above)			
US Rt. 20 Research Trail	ı Trail	John Ruska	(see above)			
Grants - Kevin Ber	Grants - Kevin Berner, Jim Engelbrecht (see above for contact info) and Nancy Conradi Pearson, 3258 S. Harbor Rd., Southold NY 12971	for contact info) and Nancy Cor	nradi Pearson, 3258 S. Harb	or Rd., Southe		631-603-7639 SuffolkBA@nysbs.org
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## The New York State Bluebird Society

Please send address changes or corrections to:

Murial Prianti

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Brewerton, New York 13029

Phone: (315) 676-4850

Email: memberships@nysbs.org On the web: www.nysbs.org NON PROFIT ORG. U.S. POSTAGE PAID ALBANY, NY PERMIT NO. 191

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### New York State Bluebird Society Membership Application/Renewal

Membership Class	<u>Annual</u> <u>3 Years</u>	Name
Family	( )\$10 ( ) \$25	Street
Group Life	( )\$10 ( )\$150	City
(	( ) New ( ) Renewal	State Zip
letter via ( ) email (fu	ld like to receive the NYSBS quarterly ıll color) or (	rhite).
•	copy provide full color, it arrives soon are away at summer or winter residence ou!	
		Email
( ) I am also encl	losing an additional \$	which represents a Tax Deductible Gift to NYSBS which will be used in
		ement, and research projects. The NYSBS is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Make checks payable to: NYSBS Mail to: Murial Prianti, Treasurer NYSBS 5157 Orangeport Road Brewerton NY 13029

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Your membership expiration date is included on your mailing label above.

Please renew prior to the expiration date to save time and expense of sending renewal notices.

Email newsletter recipients will find their membership expiration date included in their Newsletter cover letter.

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