

Summer 2018 Edition



Photo by: Chuck James

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Tennessee Bluebird Society

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Interested in becoming a Tennessee Bluebird Society Life Time Member? For more details see the application on the last page of this newsletter.

BLUEBIRD QUOTES

Each person who looks into a nestbox gets a magical window into the life of a bird. This glimpse can give them an appreciation and respect for birds they would



never get otherwise.

- Karen Louise

*Lippy, Bluebird_L,
2002*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER CHUCK CRUICKSHANK**A busy spring nesting season!**

Well, after a late and cold spring season, our Tennessee Bluebirds are off to a good start. The warmer and dry weather of the past couple of weeks has been good for our cavity-nesters. Reports from around the state have been positive, with many pairs already having fledglings that have left the nest. Here at home we believe we have two different families who are bringing first brood babies to the feeders, and they seem almost as agile as mom and dad!

Around the state, our Tennessee Bluebird Society Board members and volunteers are reporting good numbers. They have built, installed, and are monitoring many new nest-boxes in parks, at golf courses, and in other municipal locations. Monitoring activity is in full swing, and we have many photos of boxes, eggs, babies and fledglings that have been added to our TBS Facebook page. I would encourage you to go there and observe all the activity. It always inspires me to see involvement of our members from around Tennessee!

Thanks to all of you who are involved with this effort donating you time and talents to our birds.

Quite often we get questions about proper human activity regarding the nest-boxes during the breeding season. So, I thought it would appropriate to review a few guidelines to our members. It is important for us as good stewards to monitor the boxes regularly.

Guidelines for Bluebird nest-box monitoring:

- Inspect the boxes at least once per week.
- Afternoon hours are best, if possible. Avoid early morning or dusk hours, or during cold or wet conditions, as the female will want to remain on the nest during these times.

- If paper wasps or bees have built in the box, remove them (gloves are recommended), and apply bar soap or wax to the roof or sidewalls to prevent re-establishment.
- If mice have invaded, remove their nests, and apply a 10% bleach solution to the floors and walls.
- If ants are present, apply boric acid powder (most hardware stores have this) on the floor. If a nest is already in place, you can use a spatula to lift the nest, brush out the ants and apply the powder, then replace the nest. If there are hatched babies in the nest, be very careful about moving the nest.
- After the current brood has fledged, remove the current nest from the box, place it in a plastic bag, and deposit it in a garbage can not in proximity to the box. (Don't just throw it on the ground). This makes it a little more difficult for potential predators to find the nest boxes.
- For more tips on nest-box monitoring, go to the North American Bluebird Society website:

<http://www.sialis.org/monitoring.htm>

Finally- don't forget to provide food for the offspring, in addition to mom and dad. Water is also an essential component. There are many nest-boxes, food sources, feeding and watering accessories available at Wild Birds Unlimited in Knoxville, and the Wood Thrush Shop in Nashville. Both of these companies are corporate sponsors of the Tennessee Bluebird Society. We appreciate their support, and hope that you will frequent their locations for your birding needs and additional tips. The folks at both locations are knowledgeable and helpful!

Happy Blue-birding!

Chuck Cruickshank

President Tennessee Bluebird Society

EASTERN BLUEBIRD NOW OFFICIAL BIRD OF CROSSVILLE, TN BY: CHUCK JAMES

When you say Don Hazel is busy that's an understatement. We no sooner receive Don's article on putting a nestbox trail at a sewage treatment plant, we receive an email from the Greg Wood City Manager of Crossville, TN stating the City of Crossville will be discussing making the Eastern Bluebird the Official Bird for the city. Immediately we contacted Don Hazel knowing he would plead our case with passion and expertise.

On May 8, 2017 the Crossville City Council voted unanimously to designate the Eastern Bluebird as its official bird. Don was contacted shortly after the council meeting by the City Manager and told since we made the Eastern Bluebird the official bird of the city we should probably have some bluebird houses. Don met with the Parks and Recreation Director and identified 3 different city areas that would be good locations for nestboxes.

Over the following weekend Don built 20 nestboxes and installed 16 on May



14, 2018. Don will begin training park employees on how to properly monitor and maintain the nestboxes.

When we think of we can't have an impact on nature and helping bluebirds just think what Don Hazel and the Cumberland County Bluebird Club has done in one year.

They have gone from monitoring 30 nestboxes on one golf course to installing and monitoring over 100 nestboxes on 5 different golf courses, a trail at a sewage treatment plant and now 20 nestboxes at the parks in Crossville, TN.

What impact can you have in the state of Tennessee? Perhaps we will never replace the Mockingbird as the state bird, that has a long

and rich history. However, what about our local municipalities, is there an opportunity to make the Eastern Bluebird the City / Village bird. Let's all check to see if we have an opportunity locally to have an impact.

Feel free to contact us for supports.

www.tnbluebirdsociety.org

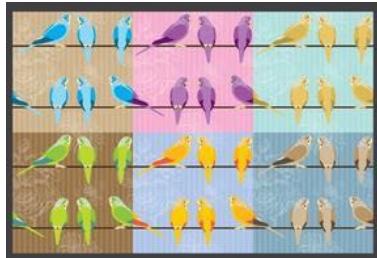
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NESTBOX TRAIL AT A SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT? BY: DON HAZEL

On the Tennessee Bluebird Society Board conference call last month, someone mentioned birds at sewage treatment plants, and it got me thinking.



Don Hazel

The next day I called the sewage plant manager, Bruce Evans, in Fairfield Glade and asked him if I could put up a couple of bluebird boxes

around the property. He gave an enthusiastic "yes".

The property near the treatment ponds was wide open and grassy, with a chain link fence surrounding the property. Years ago, (at least 8) someone had mounted bluebird boxes every 100 yards on the fence. All of the boxes were old, with no way to open them, and had never been monitored. There were 10 boxes in all, and most had mice nests in them. So, in the past, someone had a good idea, but it wasn't well executed. The manager removed all of the boxes for me, and they were all unusable.

The open area where the old boxes had been wasn't the best for new boxes because it had no trees for perching and it would have been difficult to monitor due to a long walk through a low lying wet field. However, the property has a 2.5 mile gravel road around the perimeter, with scattered trees and fields.

The fields are mowed regularly, and the clean water from the final pond of the facility is sprayed over the fields as a last step of treatment. In fact, minnows are raised by the thousands in the last pond for food for the bass in the Fairfield Glade lakes. The road, and the open woods and fields around the property is a beautiful park-like setting and you wouldn't know you were within 100 miles of a sewage treatment plant. It looks like perfect bluebird territory.



The plant manager agreed to buy the materials if I would make new nest boxes. A few days later I met Bruce at the hardware store and we bought the lumber and hardware. He had leftover materials at the plant for 3/4 inch metal posts.

The next long day I made 16 new bluebird nest boxes and contributed 5 more that I built previously, for a total of 21. My friend John and I installed the boxes on Monday afternoon, and the next morning at 7am when I went back to number the boxes, there were already bluebirds flying around 2 of the locations.

So, we have a new bluebird trail with 21 boxes and high hopes. Now with the sewer plant covered, I now have the shooting range in my sights....but just not this year.

*Don Hazel is a Tennessee Bluebird Society Board Member and lives in Crossville, TN
Email: don.hazel@gmail.com*

Around Tennessee

March 9, 2018

Don Hazel presented an hour long program to 15 people at Uplands Village, a retirement community in Pleasant Hill, TN in Cumberland County. The group decided to start a bluebird trail in their community. Some woodworkers attended the meeting and Don gave them plans and a bluebird box. They plan to make about 10 boxes. Don will go back and help them identify good locations, and give them instruction on the forms to complete when monitoring. A number of the individuals plan to join the Cumberland County Bluebird Club and the TBS. Don will provide an update once the boxes are done and installed.

March 12, 2018

Don presented an hour long program to about 40 members of the Fairfield Glade Bird Club. He challenged the club to identify locations and start a bluebird monitoring trail. He offered to help them make boxes and get started. They will see if anyone from the Bird Club gets going. They chanced off one bluebird box and Don sold 5 more which he will install in the next two weeks. Above is a photo from that presentation.



April 11, 2018 UT Arboretum, Oak Ridge

Michelle Campanis, UT Arboretum Education Program Coordinator put on a training session for nestbox trail



coordinators. After training the team they went into the field to monitor and record their nestbox findings.

April 12, 2018 Tellico Lake Rotary Club



Chuck James presented basic bluebirding to the Tellico Lake Rotary Club with the assistance from Stan Colburn, fellow Tennessee Bluebird Society Board Member. The Rotary Club had 20-25 members present for the talk and luncheon.

There were many excellent questions from the attendees. At the end of the presentation the Eastern Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society donated a nestbox for the upcoming Tellico Lake Rotary Charity Dinner and Silent Auction.

Fred Robertson and Ray Dunavant, Shelby County

Shelby County will have over 100 nesting boxes on trails for the 2018 season thanks to Ray Dunavant sponsoring an additional trail at Orgill Park in Millington, TN.

A HOUSE SPARROW ADVENTURE BY: DON HAZEL

It started last year. We noticed a different kind of nest in one of the bluebird nest boxes that we monitor on one of several golf courses. I was used to seeing neat, compact bluebird nests of white pine needles or dried grass, deep nests of moss and plant fibers of Carolina Chickadees, nests of grass and feathers, feathers, feathers, of tree swallows or nests of sticks of house wrens. This nest was different, but I knew what it was. It was the box-filling, messy, fluffy nest of a house sparrow. House sparrows are usually seen at fast food restaurants, grocery stores, and malls, not on one of our golf courses.



Don Hazel

nests of sticks of house wrens. This nest was different, but I knew what it was. It was the box-filling, messy, fluffy nest of a house sparrow. House sparrows are usually seen at fast food restaurants, grocery stores, and malls, not on one of our golf courses.

Since house sparrows are non-native, invasive birds, and because they out compete and even kill native birds, their nests can be legally removed and the birds can even be legally killed. House sparrows are the main reason that bluebird populations plummeted by up to 90% in the first half of the 20th century.

Last year we just removed the house sparrow nest and 5 eggs. It was late in the nesting season and we didn't see another sparrow or nest again.

But in early April this year, they were back, and the adventure was about to begin. On the same day that we saw the house sparrows and their nest in box 9D, one of the regular monitors found a dead Carolina chickadee in box 10. The chickadee was obviously killed by trauma to its head; the typical work of a house sparrow. We removed the sparrow nest from 9D,

but the next week we found 2 dead tree swallows in 2 other boxes, with the same type of injuries.

A few days later, I found the male house sparrow on top of box 9D again. Male house sparrows will claim a nest site and bond with that box. He will then sit on the roof and try to attract a female. He hopes that a female will come and like his house and stay and raise a family. To get rid of the sparrows you must remove and kill the male. I know that many people might have trouble killing a bird, but my response is that you can kill the house sparrow or the house sparrow will kill your bluebirds. If a house sparrow wants a box and catches a bluebird or other bird in the box, he will kill not only the babies, but the female too. You can take your choice, one dead house sparrow or potentially several dead bluebirds.



When I found the male house sparrow this time, I had with me the Van Ert house sparrow trap that I had ordered several days earlier. The trap works by springing a cover over the entrance hole when a bird goes inside and lands on the trigger. I installed the trap inside the box and within 15 minutes a female entered the box, tripped the cover and was caught inside. I placed a clear plastic bag over the box and when I opened it the female immediately flew into the plastic. I humanely euthanized her and reset the trap. A half hour later, the male house sparrow entered the box and sprung the trap. However, this was an old nest box with some wide ventilation slots near the roof. The male immediately squeezed out of the ventilation slot and got away. He won round one.

A HOUSE HOUSE SPARROW ADVENTURE BY: DON HAZEL

A couple of days later I found the male once again on top of box 9D, this time with a new female companion. I stuffed the vent slots with paper towels and reset the trap. Ten minutes later, the male went inside and tripped the trap again. But before I could get to the box, he pulled the paper towels inside and once again escaped through the wide ventilation slots. He won round two.

Third try. I returned a few days later and box 9D was empty with no house sparrow in sight. So, my fellow monitor, John, and I grabbed a golf cart and headed off to check on the other 34 boxes on the course. 150 yards away we rounded a corner

and there on the roof of nest box number 16 was Mr. house sparrow. He flew away as we approached. We had to remove the front of the nest box to install the Van Ert sparrow trap inside because there wasn't room to work a screwdriver in the small space. It only took 5 minutes to install the trap, replace the front of the box, and leave. We headed to another box a couple hundred yards away. After checking that box we had to go past the box with the trap. It had been, I am guessing about 8 minutes since we set the trap. As we drove by I noticed that the door had been sprung. We put plastic over the box, opened it and into the plastic flew the male house sparrow. We caught the culprit in less than 10 minutes.

There are several types of sparrow traps available. I chose the Van Ert Universal Sparrow Trap for Bluebird

Nest Boxes at \$9.50 each (plus \$5 shipping). They are cheaper in quantity, but you only need one because you can't leave it in a box, or you might trap a bluebird or another native bird. Set the trap, move away a hundred yards or so and watch. You can find videos on YouTube on how to do it.



Remember, removing the house sparrow nest is usually not enough, you really need to catch the male to remove the threat. It is not the most fun part of bluebird trail monitoring, but you'll have to choose ...bluebirds or house sparrows, dead or alive.

*Don Hazel is a Tennessee Bluebird Society Board Member and lives in Crossville, TN
Email:*

don.hazel@gmail.com

Because of the irreversibility of mixing formerly isolated species, biological invasions may have even more drastic effects than climate change.

- Mooney & Cleland 2001

INSTALLING A NESTBOX CAM BY: CHUCK JAMES

This is not a how to article, however, it's an article which may make you think about the fun you can have for less than \$100.

At a recent bluebird presentation Cecil Clontz spoke up and said if you ever want to install a nest cam let me know and I will help. It took me about 3 seconds to say yes, I would like a nest cam. Cecil gave me a list of parts I had to order, he said he would put the software together. Not sure how many hours he put into this project but I think it was around 80 hours. We had a bad wifi board along with a couple of other technical issues, however, Cecil wouldn't give up and kept working on the project. The end result was amazing.

The nestbox is located in our backyard and does have a power cord to the computer. The live streaming is over our house wifi network. From my computer we can watch the activities in the nestbox real-time. The camera has a motion detector so it records video when



there is activity in the nestbox. There are also LED lights in the nestbox we can toggle on and off. When you turn on the LED lights the bluebird will look around but it doesn't seem to bother her. We did have two temperature probes, one for under the nest in the nestbox and one outside. When we were having issues getting a good signal we disconnected the sensors. After this clutch fledge we will try and reconnect the temperature sensors. It will be interesting to see how hot it gets in the nestbox.

I realized the female would rotate the eggs once she started brooding what I didn't know was after she laid each egg she regularly came back

to the nest to roll the eggs with her feet.

We are still waiting for the chicks to hatch and looking forward to capturing some good video we hope to share with our fellow blue-birders.

If you enjoy the wonders of the bluebird this is a great way to enhance your experience. Nest Watch www.nestwatch.org has information about nest cams and you can find many camera options on the internet.

Enjoy, and happy birding

Chuck James
chuck3185@gmail.com

We need help in the following areas

* **County coordinators** - Give presentations to local civic groups and organize one community project per year.

* **Data Collection** - Must have strong spreadsheet skills. Collect trail data and collate for research.

* **Woodworkers** - Willing to build nest boxes.

* **TBS Board Members** - We need people interested in taking a leadership role in TBS.

* **Newsletter Publisher** - Must have past experience putting together newsletters.

Email us if your interested in the above opportunities to:

tnsialia@gmail.com

Tennessee Bluebird Society Board of Directors

Eastern Region:

Stan Colburn - Loudon
Chuck Cruickshank - Loudon
Kathy Dooley - Loudon
Don Hazel - Crossville
Chuck James - Loudon
Jerry Rysticken - Farragut

Central Region:

Rosemary Chamberlain - Dickson
Andy Ecton - Lebanon
Beth Ecton - Lebanon
Rosalind Kurita - Clarksville
Duane Rice - Chapmansboro

Western Region:

Fred Robertson - Collierville
Farrell Roe - Jackson
Stacey Roe - Jackson
Joanne Watson - Collierville

Scientific Advisor: Dawn Wilkins,
PhD, UT Martin

Email: tnsialia@gmail.com

Website: www.tnbluebirdsociety.org

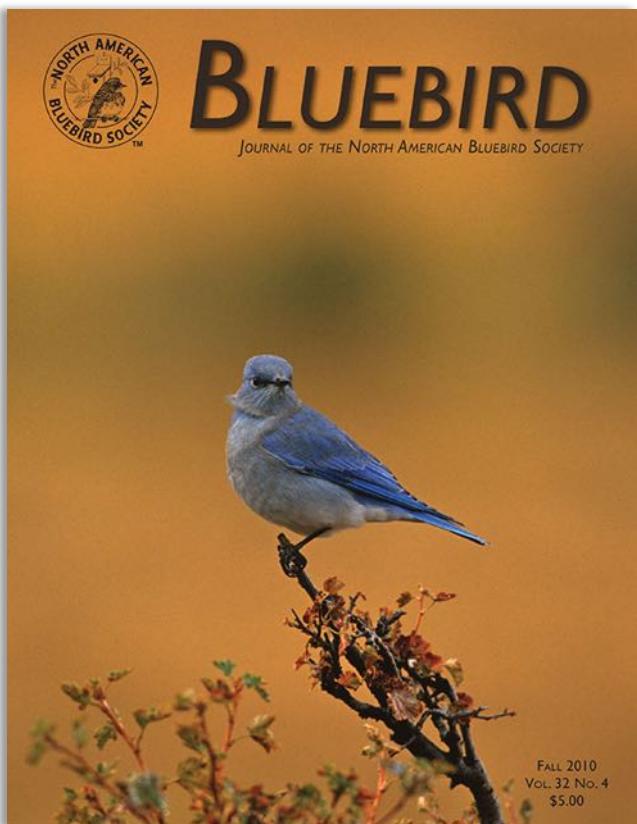
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TENNESSEE BLUEBIRD SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Did you know that when you become a member of the Tennessee Bluebird Society there is an additional benefit? Once you become a TBS member, for an additional \$15 you qualify for your first membership into the North American Bluebird Society at a 50% savings. Only \$15 instead of \$30. Fill out the Tennessee Bluebird Society application on the last page of this newsletter. Indicate that you want a TBS Household Membership for \$15.

Then by the NABS circle (Y) and add \$15 for a total of \$30 and send in your application. We will submit your membership to NABS.

In addition to receiving our four TBS newsletters you will receive four issues of Bluebird from the North American Bluebird Society.



Websites
 Tennessee Bluebird Society
www.tnbluebirdsociety.org
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Household	\$15	\$35	\$150
NABS	\$15 (First Time Member with a TBS Membership) \$30 Value		
Corporate	\$150		

Add only \$15 to a household membership and become a member of the North American Bluebird Society a \$30 value. For first time NABS Members. You will receive four issues of The Bluebird Journal of the North American Bluebird Society.

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Membership Type: _____ Amount: _____
NABS \$15(Y/N) _____
Total: _____

I have interest in helping the following areas: Newsletter_____,
Membership_____, Education_____,
Website Management_____, Data Collection_____,
Becoming a Board Member of Tennessee Bluebird Society_____

Send your application and check to:

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Loudon, TN 37774

Website: www.TNBluebirdsociety.org / Email: TNSalia@Gmail.com

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