

Spring 2018 Edition



Painting by: Nick Farrell

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.

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BLUEBIRD QUOTES

Bluebirds are living, breathing gifts from God and if we are to offer housing to them,



we must be prepared to offer the safest situation we can.

- Ninapearl, 2005

PRESIDENT'S LETTER CHUCK CRUICKSHANK

Now's the Time...

As I compose these thoughts during the third week in February, it occurs to me how time and nature move on regardless of calendars and our timetables. A quick check of The Weather Channel says Tennessee will



Chuck Cruickshank

experience temperatures in the 70's for the next week. A look around the yard shows that hyacinths, daffodils and dandelions are already in bloom. Our "peepers" are singing when moisture dictates, and insects have made their return. I also observed tree swallows on a walk with the dog yesterday, so all the signs are there. I know that March can be a fickle weather month, but current conditions can give us a great start!

So what does that mean for us?

Now is the time to check our nest-boxes for needed repairs or replacement prior to our 2018 nesting season. Having the boxes in good repair and stable will instill confidence in our feathered friends as they start to look for nesting sites. Current boxes need to be cleaned out. I've noticed several of our local nest-boxes that have been used as roosting locations when it was so cold in January. Manure deposits from that activity need to be removed, and any entrance holes enlarged by squirrels need to be repaired to the 1 ½ inch diameter to discourage predators.

Now is also the time for you trail-monitoring coordinators to start aligning your observation teams for their weekly visits. Do you have new

members that need some training? We have folks on our membership roster that can help with that process. Contact any TBS Board member for assistance, or go to the Cornell Ornithology Nest Watch site to download the manual.

Here's a link to that location: http://www.birds.cornell.edu/bbimages/nestwatch/pdf_copy/NestWatchManual.pdf

So as we head into spring, I'd like to thank, in advance all the volunteers that will be endeavoring to make 2018 another good year for our feathered friends. Let's keep the great momentum from the past four years going!

Happy Birding!

Chuck Cruickshank

Chuck.cruickshank@gmail.com



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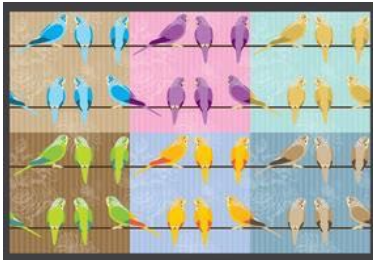
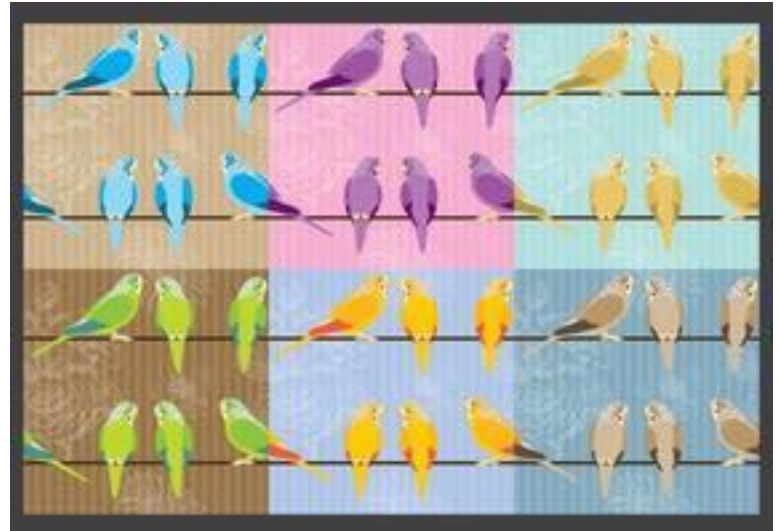


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FIVE LESSONS ABOUT BLUEBIRDS THAT I LEARNED THE HARD WAY BY: DON HAZEL

Don Hazel

Usually the lessons that you learn the hard way stick with you a lot longer than the lessons that you just read about. Here are 5 things about bluebirds that I didn't learn from books.

Twelve years ago when I moved to Tennessee, one of the first things I did in my new yard was to put up a bluebird box. And shortly, there was a new nest and my first Tennessee bluebird egg. The next day there was a 2nd egg right on schedule. But the third day there was none. Just gone. Day four brought another single egg. Day five...gone. I wasn't raising bluebirds, I was feeding a Tennessee rat snake. Lesson 1 - Without a predator guard you may just be feeding the wildlife.

A day later I also installed a predator guard on the bluebird box that I had given to my neighbor. He didn't tell me, but he didn't like the way the predator guard wobbled on the pole, so he wired it solid. Several weeks later a raccoon climbed the predator guard and ate five babies, and maybe the mother, too. Lesson 2 - A Kingston stovepipe predator guard is easy to make and they are made to wobble.



On another installation, I lost a nest to a raccoon. I had a predator guard, but I installed it just above ground level, which just made it easy for a raccoon to stand on top of the convenient platform to reach up to the box. Lesson 3 - Don't mount your predator guards too low, install them just a few inches below the nest box.

The first year that our bluebird club monitored boxes at a golf course, we found seven dead tree swallows in several of the boxes in the early spring. Tree swallows can have trouble getting out of a smooth sided box, especially after the long flight home from winter in Mexico. After installing screen "fledging ladders" on every box, we have not lost another tree swallow. Lesson 4 - A "fledging ladder" made out of screen or etched into the wood will save many tree swallows.

At our golf course trail, several of the boxes were in the rough area of the course. As the summer progressed the vegetation grew thicker and higher around the bluebird box. The boxes in the high vegetation all had higher instances of rat snake predation than the boxes in the open. Lesson 5 - Don't provide cover for predators.

That is just 5 of many lessons that I have

Around Tennessee

On Saturday, February 3, 2018, Chuck Cruickshank, President of the Tennessee Bluebird Society, gave a basic bluebird talk at Wild Birds Unlimited, Knoxville to a sell out crowd of 70 interested bluebirders. This is the fourth year TBS has given a Presentation at Wild Birds Unlimited. Once again Wild Birds Unlimited, Knoxville will be a Corporate Sponsor of the Tennessee Bluebird Society. Thank you Liz and Tony Cutrone. Wild Birds Unlimited is located at 7240 Kingston Pike, Suite 164 , Knoxville, TN



and now involves about 40 people monitoring Bluebird houses.

Fred Robertson and the Shelby County Chapter had a very successful presentation at the Millington Library on January 27, 2018, with 33 in attendance. Lots of questions and lots of enthusiasm in preparation for 2018 nesting season. Millington now has 30 nest boxes with Ray Dunavant monitoring and responsible for getting all of them installed. Thank you Ray.

UT Arboretum in Oak Ridge, TN was the sight on February 22, 2018 when the Tennessee Bluebird Society in corporation with UT Arboretum started the process of establishing a bluebird trail for the parks visitors to enjoy. A group of volunteers will be sharing the monitoring duties.

Don Hazel recently gave a bluebird presentation at the Crossville Rotary Club. He explained the reasons for the Bluebird houses placed in Bear Trace and several Fairfield Glade courses. Initial program began at Bear Trace



Don Hazel telling us how it is with Bluebirds.



L-R Kevin Hoyt UT Arboretum Center Director, Don Williams Trails Volunteer, Stan Colburn TN Bluebird Society Board Member

EXTRAORDINARY WINTER OF BIRDS IN TENNESSEE BY: MORTON MASSEY

While most Tennesseans bundled up to keep warm during the bitter cold of January and February, interesting things were going on in the bird world across the state. The extreme cold caused much freezing of the lakes far to the north of us. The



Mort Massey

They look strikingly similar and can be difficult for even experienced bird watchers to identify unless they are side by side. In most years the state will see less than 10 Mute and Tundra Swans and usually no Trumpeter Swans. But this year was different.

In early January when the first bitter cold spell hit, the swans started showing up. Groups of all three species began being reported all over



Photo by: Ron Shrieves - 5 Adult Mute Swans (Orange Bills), 4 Immature Trumpeter Swans
Melton Lake Park, Near, Clinton, TN, January 2018

result was an invasion of birds into Tennessee that we rarely get to see. The most interesting family of birds to show up were the swans.

There are 3 regularly occurring swan species in North America. These are Trumpeter, Mute and Tundra Swans. They all three are large white birds about 2 times the size of a Canada Goose with very long necks.



Tundra Swan

the state. The rarest, Trumpeter Swans, were first seen in Clinton Tennessee but have since been reported at least 5 more times. There has probably been 10 groups of Mute Swans often with 4 – 12 birds in a group reported. I would

suspect we have had over 100 of these and many have stuck around for weeks feeding in our lakes.

EXTRAORDINARY WINTER OF BIRDS IN TENNESSEE BY: MORTON MASSEY

Tundra Swans have been reported in probably 15 different locations too.

Not only have swans showed up but also many other birds we don't often get to see much. There have been many reports of rare gulls, ducks, scoters and loons. We have also had an invasion of Short-eared Owls. Unfortunately, no one has reported the super rare Snowy Owl.



Snowy Owl

been one of the best winters ever.

From what I have observed, the Eastern Bluebird population has fared pretty well during the cold weather.

We would like to thank Morton Massey for his work with the Tennessee Bluebird Society. In addition to being a Life Member of TBS,



Again, all of this is due to bitter cold up north and the lakes freezing. Birds come south for open water and hunting grounds not covered with lots of snow. To the avid bird watchers, this has

Mort has taken time out of his busy schedule to help TBS with a wonderful presentation at our annual meeting last fall, connecting us with UT Arboretum and his continued work at Seven Islands State Birding Park.

Mort Massey is a member of the Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society and a very well respected life long birder

**BLUEBIRD NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE ARBORETUM!
BY MICHELLE CAMPANIS**

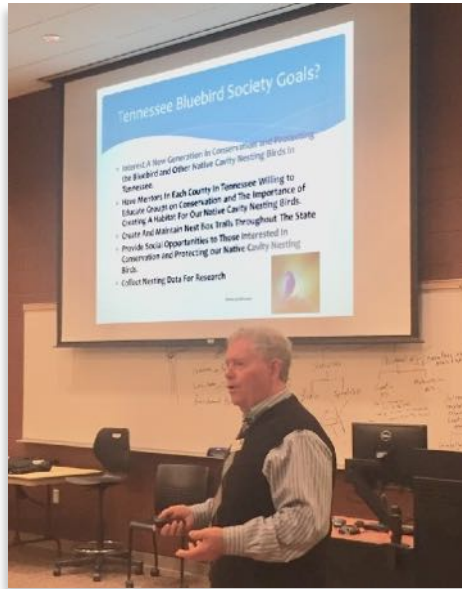
Last fall I met a member of the Tennessee Bluebird Society at a festival and expressed interest in starting a Bluebird trail at the UT Arboretum where I am the coordinator



Michelle Campanis

of education programs. It only took one comment for several members of the Tennessee Bluebird Society to express interest in helping us and since then we have had programs for children, adults and installed a new bluebird trail here!

We started with a planning meeting with Chuck James, Chuck Cruickshank and Stan Colburn. We identified a possible trail site in the arboretum and made a plan for UT Arboretum Society volunteers to be trained to properly monitor the bluebird boxes. We planned two programs for our local community to



stimulate interest and knowledge of bluebirds. The first program, Bluebird Basics, had 60 people attend! Chuck Cruickshank and Stan Colburn shared about bluebirds and stayed to answer questions from the standing room audience. The second program, Bluebird Nest box Monitoring Training was specifically geared to train our monitoring volunteers, who have named themselves “bluebird buddies”, the proper methods for monitoring and we also had several members of the community join us.



Local schools have showed a lot of interest in learning about bluebirds! Chuck and Stan went with me to Willow Elementary where they had a bluebird program for Brownie Troop 21158. Jerry Luckmann and her troop helped build four birdhouses with Stan and Chuck’s guidance that they donated for the new trail at the UT Arboretum. (See Photo’s on Page 9 of Brownie

Troop building bluebird boxes)

BLUEBIRD NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE ARBORETUM! BY MICHELLE CAMPANIS

I provided a program for a kindergarten class at Linden Elementary on February 22nd where the students learned ways to help bluebirds thrive. They have two bluebird boxes on their playground that they will be watching.

February 22nd was an exciting day for us –while I was doing the program at Linden



see who moves in for the first season in our new bluebird houses. We will be making a map to include the new bluebird trail and would love to have you visit us at the UT Arboretum in Oak Ridge.



Michele Campanis is the Arboretum Education Program Coordinator for the UT

Elementary, Chuck James, Colburn, Stan, UT Arboretum Society volunteer, Don Williams, and our director, Kevin Hoyt, installed the first phase of the new bluebird trail at the UT Arboretum. We will be getting our bluebird monitoring teams busy this spring and are excited to



L-R Kevin Hoyt UT Arboretum Center Director, Don Williams Trails Volunteer, Stan Colburn TN Bluebird Society Board Member

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:

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Rosalind Kurita - Clarksville
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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

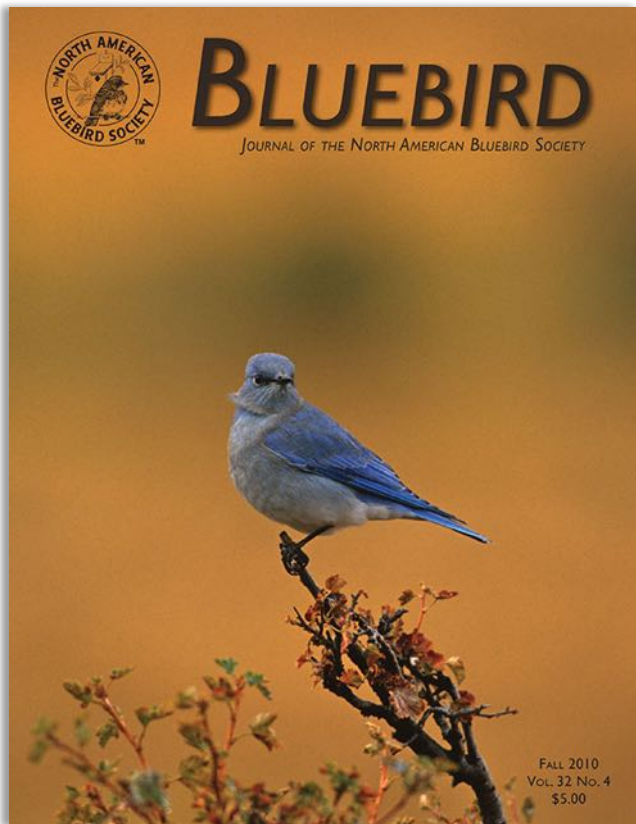
Facebook: Tennessee Bluebird Society

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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