

*Summer 2017 Edition*



*Photo by: Chuck Lajeunesse*

Tennessee Bluebird Society

Honor Roll

(Life Time Members)

- Margaret Beasley
- Stan & Linda Colburn
- Mary Cushman
- Chuck & Terry James
- Rosalind & George Kurita
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- Donald Turner
- Dr. Heather Wilkins

**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**

*Late at night when  
the wind is still I'll  
come flying through  
your door, And  
you'll know what*



*love is for. I am a  
bluebird, I'm a bluebird*

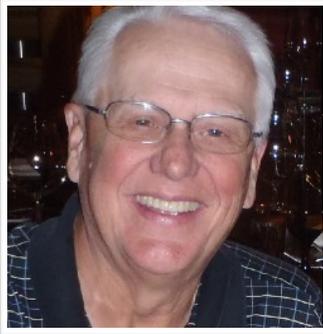
*Paul McCartney*

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**PRESIDENTS LETTER CHUCK JAMES**


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It's hard to believe it's already the end of



June. It seems like we were just starting to talk about having a good nesting season this year. Many of our friends indicated they are having second broods.

We've seen some crazy things this spring: Bluebird and Chickadee also a Tree Swallow and Bluebird laying eggs simultaneously in the same nest. In my many years of bluebirding I haven't witnessed such an event. It's not like we don't have enough nest boxes.

Rosemary Chamberlain reported that all 32 of her and Mark's nest boxes at Montgomery Bell State Park in Mid-Tennessee had active bluebird nests. What a success story.

At Norris Dam, Karen and Ed Smith are reporting success with their experiment with back-to-back nest boxes with a bluebird in one nest box and a Tree Swallow in the nest box on the other side of the pole.

We certainly hope all of our bluebird landlords across Tennessee are seeing great success this year and we are keeping our fingers crossed that the summer will stay cool so we see some third clutches this season.

In this issue of the Tennessee Bluebird Newsletter we have several very interesting stories. The first is a story of the Monarch Butterfly, by Tiffany Beachy Citizen Science Coordinator at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. To be completely transparent I'm proud to be a Board Member of GSMIT. They do an amazing job

of teaching our next generation the importance of protecting our environment and nature, using the Great Smoky Mountains National Park as their laboratory.

Our second feature is a collage of beautiful photo's from Chuck Lajeunesse. We are proud to have him in our Shelby County Chapter.

The third article is from Don Hazel one of our newer chapters in Cumberland County, talking about their efforts and growth over the past year.

The fourth article discusses how, with a little effort, you can make an impact in your community or another community. In this article we discuss the Indian Mountain State Park project in Jellico, TN.

Duane Rice and Rosalind Kurita talk about their program at Dunbar State Park, in Clarksville, TN building nest boxes with children.

Lastly, I would like to welcome our newest Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society, the East Tennessee Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society, headed up by Jerry Rysticken.

For more information or to join the Tennessee Bluebird Society, visit our website at: [www.tnbluebirdsociety.org](http://www.tnbluebirdsociety.org) and read our past newsletters.

Happy Birding!!!!

*Chuck James*

*President*

*Tennessee Bluebird Society*

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**Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont Monarch Butterfly Project: By Tiffany Beachy**


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Every year millions of little winged creatures prepare for a grand movement south. They grace our gardens, town parks, mountaintops, and open fields; they can be seen hovering on the wind high in a deep blue autumn



Tiffany Beachy

sky; and sometimes they converge on an area in masses that darken the sky and trees. No, I'm not talking about migratory birds – these are the fragile brilliant orange and black jewels of Fall, the monarch butterflies!

Surprisingly, most scientists didn't believe that these creatures truly migrated until 1976, when a monarch tagged by volunteers in Minnesota was found in the mountains of western Mexico by Fred and Norah Urquhart. This famed pair of biologists had been tagging monarchs in Canada since the 1930's and 40's, and had enlisted armies of volunteers around North America to help them in one of the first ever citizen science projects. Finally, all their hard work had paid off!

In the fall, an adult monarch will emerge from its pupa with a mission: fly south, eat nectar, fly some more, eat nectar, and end up in the chilly highlands of Mexico. These individuals could live up to 9 months, whereas

most adult butterflies live only 2-3 months. They rarely eat nectar throughout the winter, so it is essential for them to conserve energy by spending their days clinging to fir trees and each other in huge clumps of butterflies. When spring comes, they begin to fly north again, stopping to reproduce along the way before they die. The spring migration north is then a migration by generations, where the wintering adults' grandchildren and great grandchildren make it back to Tennessee or Minnesota or Canada.

The Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont has been involved with tagging monarchs and inventorying other butterfly species for many years.

This is naturally a very popular program for all ages because volunteers get to frolic around sunny fields in Cade's Cove with butterfly nets.



Participants use field

guides to identify the species they find, which contributes to the Park's All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI).

**Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont Monarch Butterfly Project: By Tiffany Beachy**

We tag these little gems because we don't know or understand everything about their migration and we want to monitor the population. Because of the sheer number of monarchs that spend the winter in small forested reserves in Mexico, finding a tagged individual is like finding a needle in a haystack – but hundreds of tags from around the continent are recovered every year!

One person's contribution to this effort may seem minuscule, but Tremont Institute's tags recently found in Mexico make it resonate closer to home, reminding us of the infinite value of each tag. In January 2015, one of our tags from 2002 was found sitting on the forest floor in Mexico! And in February 2016, another tag was found, this one placed on a monarch by a 6-year-old volunteer. Our friend Chesney was elated to receive an official Monarch Watch certificate



stating that her monarch was found! These are more pieces in the puzzle – and this is why we keep tagging!

This seems to be a better year for the monarchs than recent years; each year brings unpredictable cycles or winter storms that impact wintering monarchs. Monarch numbers are declining due to loss of habitat, so we hope that there will be more 'good' years to bolster their population. We tagged 268 monarchs in the fall of 2016 with the help of over 300 volunteers! We are very thankful for everyone who took the time to come out and go butterflying with us.

**Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont Monarch Butterfly Project: By Tiffany Beachy**

In 2015, we increased our capacity tenfold by training top notch volunteers to represent Tremont Institute as public monarch tagging facilitators. This self-dubbed team of **Monarch Monsters** spends many hours in the fields of Cades Cove each year, teaching fellow volunteers about monarchs, their plight, and the story of their migration and facilitating joyful frolics for people of all ages. *This is true citizen science in action!*

Remember! This is a project that you can do at home! Just visit Monarch Watch's website at: [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org) to order nets, tags, data sheets, and everything you'll need to get started in your own backyard.

Tiffany Beachy is the Citizen Science Coordinator at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont.

**Learn More About Tremont**  
Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont is located within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It is recognized worldwide as a leader in experiential environmental and nature studies. To learn more about Tremont and their programs for both children and adults go to their website at [www.GSMIT.ORG](http://www.GSMIT.ORG).



## We Love our Bluebirds

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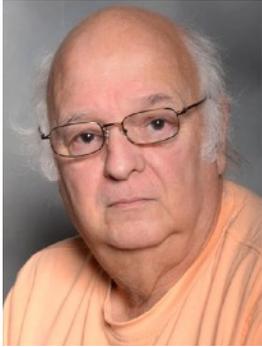
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PHOTO'S BY CHUCK LAJEUNESSE



**W**e are very pleased to have professional photographer Chuck Lajeunesse as a Member of the Shelby County Chapter of the Tennessee

Bluebird Society. Chuck has been a professional photographer since 1984 and owns Collierville Photography. Chuck moved to the Memphis in 1987 from New York, after working in NYC for 10 years.

Chuck has been very active on the Tennessee Bluebird Society Facebook page sharing many of his wonderful bluebird photo's. Below we have put together a collage of his work.

The photo's to the right show two male bluebirds fighting for a territory.



PHOTO'S BY CHUCK LAJEUNESSE

To catch beautiful photo like the one on the left takes a great deal of patience and a excellent understanding of photography.



It's really interesting to see the different personalities of the various bluebirds. I think the bluebird on the right is telling us I'm "Zorro."



We thank Chuck Lajeunesse for his interest in bluebirds and his talent as a photographer.

Chuck Lajeunesse  
Collierville Photography  
<http://www.colliervillephoto.com>  
901-497-8252

**ENJOYING NATURE : BANNERYEAR FOR BABY BIRDS: BY DON HAZEL**



Don Hazel

So far, it has been a banner year for baby birds at the three golf courses where our local bluebird club monitors 65 nest boxes. Earlier this year a group of 25 individuals formed the Cumberland County Bluebird Club and joined the Tennessee

Bluebird Society. Our goal is to help protect the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity nesting birds in Tennessee. We had been checking the boxes at the Bear Trace golf course at Cumberland Mountain State Park for the past three years, and this year we also started monitoring nesting boxes at the Heatherhurst Brae and the Crag courses.

For a few of us, it started about three years ago when the course superintendent at the Bear Trace asked our local

bird club to help monitor their bluebird boxes. So eight of us (four teams of two) agreed to take turns checking the bluebird boxes once a week. Bluebird boxes that are monitored weekly have a higher success rate than unmonitored boxes. When we check the boxes, we are able to remove unwanted visitors like wasps, ants, mice, etc. and we check to make sure the box doesn't need repairs. If predators like black rat snakes or raccoons cause a problem, we can install predator guards to protect the birds.



Photo by: Cindy Rife

Can't bluebirds and tree swallows survive on their own without humans building nest boxes and monitoring them?

They could, and they used to. But years ago some well meaning people released non-native, invasive English sparrows and starlings in the United States. These birds are also cavity nesters, like many of our native birds, but they are more aggressive and they often take over every available nesting cavity. Bluebird populations suffered the most with no place to nest. Once humans began building nest boxes, bluebirds thrived again.



Photo by: Don Hazel

## ENJOYING NATURE : BANNER YEAR FOR BABY BIRDS: BY DON HAZEL

The first year that we monitored the boxes at Bear Trace golf course, 90 bluebirds and 59 tree swallows fledged (grew up and flew away). That was a pretty successful year. The second year disaster struck — the ice storm in early 2015. The bluebirds at Bear Trace were devastated by that storm. Everything edible, including insects and wild fruit, was covered in ice for several days. There was nothing for a insect-eating bluebird to eat, and many died. The tree swallows weren't affected because they were vacationing in Mexico at the time. When the swallows returned in the spring, there was no competition for the bluebird boxes. In 2015 only 20 bluebird babies fledged at Bear Trace. In 2016 the number increased to 40 bluebirds. This year there are already 38 bluebird babies, and bluebirds will nest at least two times or sometimes even three times per year here. The tree swallow numbers are also ahead of last year.



Tree Swallow Photo's By: Don Hazel



This spring we added 10 additional nest boxes at Bear Trace to relieve the competition between the bluebirds and the tree swallows, and it has helped. Also, we added eight new teams of monitors to cover the 30 additional boxes at the Heatherhurst golf courses. Those boxes are full of activity just like at Bear Trace.

If you have a bluebird or other type of bird nest box at home, you should monitor your boxes also. Opening the box and looking in won't cause any problems with

the birds, and it helps you spot and remove problems. Also, always remove the old nest as soon as any babies fledge. Most birds usually build a new nest for every new batch of eggs. They won't use the old nest; they will just build on top of it. So, if you throw the old nest in the garbage, the birds can't reuse any of the old dirty nesting material for their new nest.

Helping bluebirds thrive has been a national success story, and around here 2017 looks like a bluebird year.

Reprint from the Crossville Chronicle May 24, 2017. Comments, questions or suggestions for future nature articles are welcome at [don.hazel@gmail.com](mailto:don.hazel@gmail.com)

INDIAN MOUNTAIN STATE PARK - JELICO, TN : CHUCK JAMES

The Tennessee Bluebird Society was approached by Park Ranger Jeff Nicholson at Indian Mountain State Park about establishing a nest box trail in the park. He had heard of our work at Seven Islands State Birding Park from Park Manager Justine Cucchiara. He thought it would be a great project for their community.

Indian Mountain State Park is a reclaimed strip coal mine in the Cumberland Mountains on the Tennessee / Kentucky border. Once a very thriving area now, like many rural areas, has fallen on hard times with abject poverty and little for the children of the area to enjoy. The park is a great asset to the area.

When TBS Board Kathy Dooley, Jerry Rysticken and myself met with Park Ranger Jeff Nicholson along with a couple of Friends of Indian Mountain State Park we knew this was a project we wanted to participate in with the community.

During our conversations we suggested that we put up 20 nest boxes made of cedar along with poles and baffles. It became apparent that supplies weren't really available and funding



Kathy Dooley & Jerry Rysticken

the project may be an issue. We said don't worry we will find a way to make this happen. Our goal was to involve the community for both construction and monitoring of the nest boxes.

In trying to figure out how we could have some nest box kits made for the children to assemble we called on a friend of ours in Nashville, Tn Aaron Dunn of Vintage-Millworks. We had worked together on a project several years ago at a home show in Nashville assembling nest boxes with children.

When we presented the situation to Aaron, he did not hesitate and said how many nest box kits to you

need. We said about 20 kits. This was last summer when it was so hot in Tennessee. Aaron said we might have to wait until it gets cooler but we'll get you the nest box kits.

**INDIAN MOUNTAIN STATE PARK - JELICO, TN : CHUCK JAMES**

On January 3, 2017 We drove to Nashville to meet with Aaron Dunn. We loaded up the back of the car with the 20 nest box kits he had prepared. Pictured to the right is Aaron Dunn. Vintage-Millworks is Aaron's family business and is known throughout North America. To learn more about this excellent company go to [www.vintage-millworks.com](http://www.vintage-millworks.com).



Mr. Douglas' advanced Wood Shop does more than just make nest boxes. The class also performs work around the community building ramps, decks wherever they can help those in need. In the meantime the children are learning a skill that will help them secure work after school.

This spring we delivered the nest box kits to



the Jellico High School, Mr. Gary Douglas' Wood Shop class. Where Stan Colburn TBS Board Member left along with Gary Douglas and a student start tackling the job of assembling a nest box. Once they figured out how to assemble the box the other students got involved building the boxes. Within a week we had an email from Mr. Douglas that all the nest boxes were assembled and mounted in the park along with predator guards.



A nest box project wouldn't be complete without a monitoring team. In the photo above Chuck Cruickshank TBS Vice President teaches Ms. Barbara Carters' Advanced Biology Class about bluebirds their struggles over time and how to properly care for and monitor the nest boxes. These High School Juniors will monitor the nest boxes this summer. We believe they will get volunteer hours credit toward a Tennessee Scholarship for two years tuition at college.

**INDIAN MOUNTAIN STATE PARK - JELICO, TN : CHUCK JAMES**



We are please to report, so far this summer almost every nest box is housing a new families of Tree Swallows. We are hopeful as the summer progresses we will be attracting more bluebirds.

The picture below is of Park Ranger Jeff Nicholson left along with Tennessee Bluebird Society Vice President Chuck Cruikshank. In case you are wondering there are predator guards on all the

nest boxes poles.

Many from the community walk this 1/2 trail daily for exercise and are enjoying the amenity at the park.



This was truly a community project and we are happy to be part of their success.

For more information on Indian Mountain State Park go to their website at [www.tnstateparks.com](http://www.tnstateparks.com).

## DUNBAR CAVE STATE PARK: BY DUANE RICE

The Central Region of the Tennessee Bluebird Society was in attendance June 17th & 18th at the 3rd Annual Tuckesse Outdoor Expo. It was held in the beautiful new Wilma Rudolph Event Center in Clarksville, Tennessee.

The booth was manned by members of the Tennessee Bluebird Society Board, Rosalind Kurita and Duane Rice, with assistance building nest boxes on Sunday by Gary Newman. Saturday's attendance was light. However a few new friends were made, who showed interest in our mission.

Duane gave a power point presentation on the plight of Bluebirds also touched upon the need for homes for all secondary cavity nesting birds. Sunday afternoon Duane and Gary helped a small, but enthusiastic group of kids and their Dads build nest boxes. In all, ten were made and given away, to what we hope turns out to be, caring landlords to the bluebirds.



Mark your calendar: Duane will be giving a presentation about bluebirds and a tour of the bluebird trail at the **Hummingbird Festival, August 19th, at Dunbar Cave State Park.**

To find out more information on Dunbar Cave State Park go TN State Park website at [www.tnstateparks.org](http://www.tnstateparks.org)

## 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](mailto:tnsialia@gmail.com)

## Tennessee Bluebird Society Board of Directors

### Eastern Region:

Stan Colburn - Loudon

Chuck Cruickshank - Loudon

Kathy Dooley - Loudon

Chuck James - Loudon

Jerry Rysticken - Farragut

### Central Region:

Rosemary Chamberlain - Dickson

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](mailto:tnsialia@gmail.com)

Website: [www.tnbluebirdsociety.org](http://www.tnbluebirdsociety.org)

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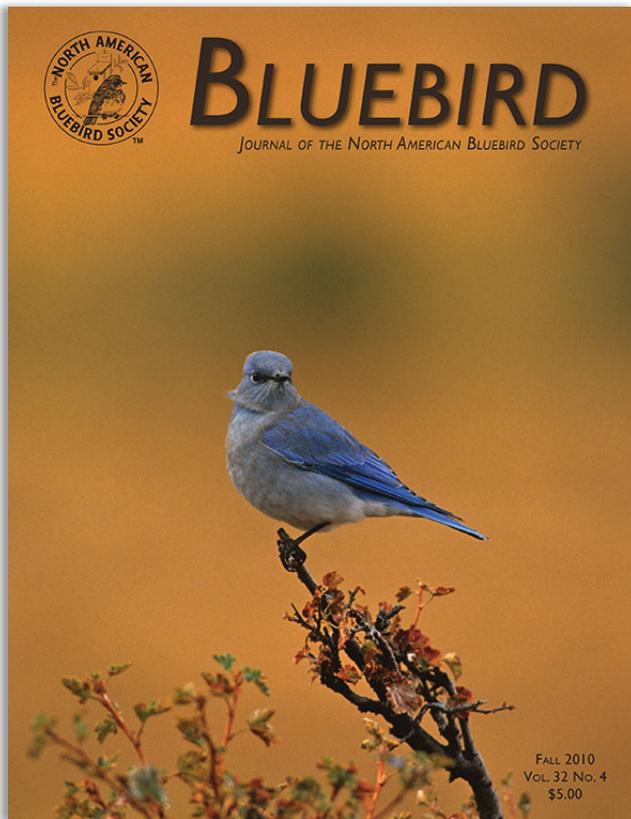
**TENNESSEE BLUEBIRD SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**

Did you know 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 4 TBS newsletters you will receive four issues of Bluebird from the North American Bluebird Society.

Don't miss this great savings.



**Websites**  
Tennessee Bluebird Society  
[www.tnbluebirdsociety.org](http://www.tnbluebirdsociety.org)  
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