

TN Bluebird Newsletter

A Quarterly Publication for Members of the TN Bluebird Society



Bluebird Fledglings - Photo Courtesy of Becky Boyd



Chuck Cruickshank

Hello to all our members across the Volunteer state. Well, it has been an interesting year. A warm February was followed by a cold and wet March which certainly had an effect on the timing of our secondary cavity-nesting birds. Then the above normal heat and drought in August and September seemed to cut a lot of our third brood activity short. It will be interesting as we compile data for 2019 to see how we did numerically.

As the year comes to a close, I'd like to highlight a few things:

Let me say a big "thank you" to all our volunteers around the state who have been busy building, installing, monitoring and cleaning nest boxes. With our continued loss of natural habitat, your efforts are crucial in helping maintain our bird populations.

Thank you to your Board of Directors members who have made multiple presentations and held workshops to engage the next generation of bird-lovers here in Tennessee. Every journey begins with the first step, and as we attempt to expand our footprint, all of these activities contribute to the greater cause.

I'd also like to give you an update regarding new activity within the TBS family. I think many of you know that nearly half our members reside in eastern Tennessee. A new "Valley" Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society has been established to fill a void left by the Tellico Village Bird Club, but more importantly, include areas to the north and east of Knoxville, and south and west towards Chattanooga. The vision and mission have been expanded to include native plants and pollinator-friendly gardens which complement our birding activity. Chuck James, a founding Board member and past President of the Tennessee Bluebird Society, is taking a leadership role in this endeavor. Stay tuned for more details!

Lastly, I'd like take this opportunity to invite you to our 6th annual meeting. It will be held at the University of Tennessee Arboretum auditorium at 9 a.m. on November 16th. You'll see the details later in this newsletter - we have three excellent speakers lined up and a walking tour at the Arboretum after lunch. The only cost is \$5 for the lunch. Please contact Chuck James for reservations at 119 Talah Way, Loudon, TN, as seating is limited.

Thank you for all you do to support the efforts of the Tennessee Bluebird Society!



2019 Monitoring Season Is Over

Impressive results from Cumberland County on Page 3



2019 Annual Meeting Details

Registration and Speaker Details on Pages 6 & 7



Meet TBS Board Members & Get Updates From Around The State

Page 5

Wild Bird Populations Decline Since the 1970's

Recently, I read an article authored by Seth Borenstein and Christina Larson AP Science Writers regarding the decline in wild bird populations since the 1970's and I found their findings very interesting, so I will be referring to that article along with additional information I've found on-line.

In the AP article, they state there are 3 billion fewer wild birds today in North America than there were in the 1970's. So how do you quantify such a statement? An article by Kenneth Rosenberg, a Cornell University conservation scientist and his colleagues projected wild bird population using weather radar and 13 different bird surveys going back to the 1970's. In the 1970's, they projected the North American wild bird population to be about 10.1 billion birds the most recent projection is 7.2 billion birds a decline of 29% nearly 3 billion birds over 529 species this represents about 75% of the species in North America, the other 25% are rare species and difficult to quantify.

So, what's killing the wild birds? The number #1 reason is loss of habitat. What does that mean? Certainly, suburban sprawl, that's the simply answer. Where I live in Loudon, TN, the rules and regulations regarding the removal of trees for new homes is disturbing, builders are clearing lots at a staggering rate. There are ways each of us can be better stewards of our yard and gardens. Did you know 96% of land birds feed insects and spiders to their chicks? If you have a dead tree on your lot, don't take it down unless it's endangering people or property, it's a wonderful source for insects. Clearing the under story in a wooded area takes away food sources for birds. Most landscaping plants available in nurseries are exotic species from other countries. Many are prized for qualities that make them poor food sources for wildlife. They generally also require more chemicals and water to thrive, increasing maintenance time, costs and environmental hazards. Some can even become invasive. "Birds and native plants are made for each other thanks to millions of years of evolution," says Dr. John Rowden, Audubon's director of community conservation. "As plants grow and bloom earlier because of warming temperatures, there is a growing mismatch between bloom times and the arrival of birds that depend on them. Habitat provided by native plants can help climate threatened birds adapt and survive." By growing native plants, you can help protect birds while turning your home

into a private wildlife paradise. Keep common birds common with these native plants this Spring.

What are other causes for the decline of the wild bird population in North America? The yearly numbers of wild bird deaths due to house cats is about 2.4 billion a year according to numerous studies. I'm not against house cats, but please keep them in the house. Collision with building glass 600 million, communication towers 6.6 million, electrical lines 25.5 million, land-based wind turbines 234,012, electrocution 5.6 million, poison 72 million. (Source: U.S Fish and Wildlife Service)

What birds have suffered the most? Going back to the AP Article the common house sparrow was at the top of the list (good news for bluebirders). Why a decline in House Sparrows? In a separate article from Phys.org they site they're suffering from stress living in cities, poor diet (fast food parking lots), air quality. Other birds in decline are the meadowlark down by about 75%, the bobwhite quail is down about 80%, grassland birds in general are 50% less than they were in the 1970's.

There is good news, the bluebird population is increasing due to the hard work of the North American Bluebird Society the individual NABS Affiliates such as the Tennessee Bluebird Society and, of course, all the of you that put up nestboxes and are good landlords.

In conclusion, we can all due our part on a micro-level in our yards by providing a safe nestbox and monitoring that nestbox along with providing native plants that will help our wild birds and bluebirds survive our somewhat difficult winters. One other thought, please put out fresh water in your bird baths daily all year.

Author: Chuck James is the Co-Founder of the Tennessee Bluebird Society, currently serves on its board as past President. He also served three years on the North American Bluebird Society Board and is active in the Valley Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society.



CUMBERLAND COUNTY FALL FESTIVALS FEATURE TN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

Over 15 TBS members manned booths at both the UT AgCenter Plateau Discovery Gardens Fall Festival in late August and the Hits the Trails Festival in early October. At each event, many visitors stopped by the TBS booth to learn more about bluebirds from TBS members and to receive information from the NABS. The festivals yielded many new memberships at both the state and national levels and quite a few orders for nest boxes to be installed Spring 2020.



2019 Bluebird Report

Cumberland County Bluebird Club of the Tennessee Bluebird Society

The Cumberland County Bluebird Club had a very successful season this year. The numbers of bluebirds fledged improved over last year from 427 to 859, and tree swallows fledged increased from 125 to 328. The number of trail locations went from 8 to 13 and the number of nest boxes regularly monitored increased from 153 to 252. 40 of those were at new City of Crossville Park locations or at the Roane State Community College campus. We also added 20 boxes at Stonehenge golf course 32 at the UT Plateau AgResearch Center. We were very proud to have Cumberland County, Fairfield Glade, and Pleasant Hill follow the lead of the City of Crossville and name the bluebird their "Official Bird". We have 75 monitors that take turns checking each of the 252 boxes every week.



A sight we all love to see - bluebird eggs!
Photo Dona Hazel

Bear Trace golf course – 35 boxes

The number of bluebirds that fledged this year increased 45% over last year, and the number of tree swallows increased over 50%. Course superintendent Tim Brock installed Kingston predator guards on all the boxes and hardly any birds were lost to predators at this golf course. An excellent year at Bear Trace. Bear Trace averaged 7 birds fledged per box, for the 35 boxes, which was the highest of all of the 13 trails that we monitor.

Heatherhurst Crag course – 14 boxes

Only half as many BB fledged as last year- 28 vs. 55 last year. Several boxes had lost eggs or babies due to house wrens, and flying squirrels. We will install Noel guards next year, and possibly move a couple of boxes away from squirrels.

Heatherhurst Brae golf course – 16 boxes

Both bluebirds and tree swallows fledged were up slightly from last year. 63 BBs and 10 TS this year. There were quite a few birds and eggs lost to predators on this course. Flying squirrels were the biggest issue, plus some snake problems. We will install Noel guards next year, and possibly move a couple of boxes away from flying squirrel trees.

Druid Hills golf course – 16 boxes

We added 6 additional boxes this year and the number of fledged bluebirds improved from 47 to 80. Also 13 Carolina chickadees fledged on this course, the most of any of the locations that we monitor.

Dorchester golf course – 28 boxes

This golf course is surrounded by woods and predators were a big problem last year – both snakes and raccoons. This year was a big success story. We placed Noel guards on most of the boxes after the first eggs were laid. Last year only 51 BBs fledged out of 183 eggs, due mostly to predators. This year 117 bluebirds fledged and 23 tree swallows fledged vs. only 6 tree swallows last year. The Noel guards not only stopped the raccoons, but they seemed to stop the rat snakes also. We plan to install many more Noels guards at other bluebird trails next year, due to the success we had at this course.

Fairfield Glade Waste Water Treatment Plant – 21 boxes

The number of bluebirds fledged increased over 40% to 104 this year, compared to 74 last year. It seems on a new trail that it takes the birds a year to really fill out the boxes. Predator problems are still low here, but we will be installing Noel guards anyway next year since this location is surrounded by woods and fields.

Pleasant Hill – 13 boxes

These boxes are located in separate resident's yards. One team leader collects the reports weekly from each individual. Bluebirds fledged totaled 40 this year vs. 51 last year. These boxes were pretty successful last year but this year they had predator problems especially house wrens. We will work with each resident to resolve this year's problems to hopefully be more successful next year.

Crossville athletic parks – 16 boxes

We saw a big improvement at this softball complex and soccer field. Bluebirds fledged increased from 11 to 42, and tree swallows fledged increased from 14 last year to 29 this year. A big change was that we managed dummy house wren nests better this year, plus, the boxes were installed late last year and on a new trail it seems to take a year to reach potential.

Stonehenge golf course – 20 boxes

This Fairfield Glade golf course had nest boxes for a few years, but they were never monitored. This year we added several boxes and our Cumberland County Bluebird Club took over the monitoring weekly. 96 bluebirds and a few tree swallows and Carolina chickadees fledged this year. There were just a few predator problems and we will install Noel guards for next year.

Meadow Lake Park – 14 boxes

These boxes were all brand new this year. Most are located along the long road leading into the park, flanked by open fields. The boxes weren't installed until March and they got off to a slow start but finished strongly. A total of 48 bluebirds and 28 tree swallows fledged at this park.

Cumberland County Fairgrounds and Obed River Park – 15 boxes

This was another new trail this year that was very successful. 53 bluebirds and 28 tree swallows fledged. We also fledged 21 house wrens and we will try to better manage the dummy wren nests next year.

Roane State Community College – 12 boxes

This campus is primarily a wide-open mowed lawn. It started very slowly in April and picked up as the summer went on. 15 bluebirds fledged as well as 32 tree swallows this first year.



Carolina Chickadee Eggs
Photo Don Hazel

2019 Cumberland County Bluebird Report (cont.)



During the 2019 season, white bluebird eggs were found in 3 bluebird nests in Cumberland County
Photo Don Hazel

University of Tennessee's Plateau AgResearch and Education Center – 32 boxes

These 32 bluebird boxes have been in place for a number of years but they weren't being regularly monitored. Our Bluebird Club trained the new monitors and checked weekly this year. 8 of the boxes located in the "Discovery Gardens" area, were completely dominated by house sparrows. We removed HS nests, eggs, and even young, weekly, and didn't allow HOSP to fledge, but no native birds fledged in those 8 boxes either. For next year we plan to plug those boxes and leave them as decorative boxes only. 20 of the other 24 boxes were located every 100 feet along the lane leading into the center. 58 bluebirds and 13 tree swallows fledged from these boxes, but there were predator problems here due to snakes, and house sparrows. For next year we plan to space those boxes every 100 yards and install predator guards, both Kingston and Noel guards, as well as sparrow spookers, and double-holed boxes to see if we can successfully fledge native birds in this farm-like location. We propose to reduce from 32 boxes to approximately 15 next year. Our results will be a valuable test to see if we can protect bluebirds and tree

Monitoring Meeting Yields New TBS Memberships

Cumberland County monitors met on Thursday September, 26 for their season-end wrap-up meeting. At the meeting, 15 members signed up to help construct 50 new bluebird nest boxes for additional locations in 2020, as well as building additional boxes to sell to pay for materials for boxes. Also, at the meeting, 13 new members joined and were welcomed to the Tennessee Bluebird Society.

For only \$150, you could become a Lifetime Member in the Tennessee Bluebird Society!

For the application, go to:
www.tnbluebirdsociety.org

Tennessee Bluebird Society

Honor Roll

(Life Time Members)

Margaret Beasley
 Sue Bradley
 Stan & Linda Colburn
 Shoshanna Cooper
 Chuck & Cecelia Cruickshank
 Mary Cushman
 Kathy Dooley
 Raymond Dunavant
 Roger Givens
 Chuck & Terry James
 Rosalind & George Kurita
 John Langley
 Mort Massey
 Bob & Judy Peak
 Farrell & Jane Roe
 Jerry & Dianna Rysticken
 Donald Turner
 Joanne Watson
 Dr. Heather Wilkins

Meet Your TBS Board Members



Chuck Cruickshank is a consultant to the dairy industry. He is a seasoned agri-business professional with over 40 years of experience working with dairy farmers, and has first-hand, on-farm knowledge of milk production, milk marketing and processing, and the issues that dairy farmers face. Most recently, as Director of Customer-Facing Trends at Land O' Lakes, he was responsible for consumer confidence issues at the farm level, including animal care and sustainability. Prior to that activity, Chuck worked as the Senior Vice-President of Industry Relations at the Midwest Dairy Association, and as Executive V.P. of Industry Relations at Dairy Management, Inc., both farmer-funded promotional companies who have expertise in issues surrounding consumer confidence.

Chuck and his wife, Cecelia "retired" to Tellico Village in 2015. Both have been involved with gardening and nature clubs in former communities in New York, Pennsylvania and Minnesota. Their children and grandchildren live in the Minneapolis, MN area. They have been involved with the Tellico Village Bluebird nesting box project on Toqua golf course, and with the Tellico Village Bird Club



Don Hazel and his wife, Nancy, have lived in Fairfield Glade for 14 years. They have 2 children and 5 grandchildren. The grandchildren range in age from 22 to 15, which Don says makes him old and young at the same time. Don has a degree from West Virginia Wesleyan College in Psychology and Biology. He has lived in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Texas and now in Tennessee. He claims he was either working for large corporations or trying to outrun the law. A nature article written by Don has been featured in the Fairfield Glade Sun newspaper for over 10 years and is now also included in the Crossville Chronicle. Currently Don serves as the vice-president for both the Tennessee Bluebird Society and the Friends of the Trails and is the President of the Fairfield Glade Fly Fishing Club. Don is definitely considered the resident expert on wildlife in East TN and is a frequent speaker at various club and association meetings throughout the area.



BLUEBIRDS FEATURED AT THE HARRIMAN GARDENERS CLUB

On Saturday, September 14, 2019 Chuck Cruickshank and Chuck James gave a presentation on bluebirds to the Harriman, TN Master Gardeners Club. About 25 people attended the presentation and were very attentive and asked many very good questions. There was interest in creating a nestbox trail in a local park and Chuck and Chuck were invited back in January to give a monitoring the nestbox presentation.

Garden Clubs in Memphis and Germantown, TN were treated to several presentations about bluebirds this quarter and many new nestboxes were added in back yards. A new trail of 9 boxes will be put in a Germantown Park bringing the count to 134 boxes on Shelby County trails and a total box count in the county of approximately 150. It's possible that Shelby County could fledge 500 bluebirds in 2020!

Visit these websites for important information and membership applications:

Tennessee Bluebird Society
www.tnbluebirdsociety.org

North American Bluebird Society
www.nabluebirdsociety.org

Tennessee Bluebird Society 6th Annual Meeting

9:00AM -- Meet and greet reception,
Event Center

Refreshments available

9:30a.m. -- Welcome, Chuck Cruickshank
President, Tennessee Bluebird Society

9:45a.m. – 6th Annual Membership Meeting

- Roll call
- Last Meeting minutes
- Treasurer's report
- Committee reports
- Trail Results
- Recognition and Awards
- Nomination report
- Election of 2020 Officers
- President's Update

10:15 a.m.—Randy Hedgepath - State of Tennessee Naturalist
"Winter Birds"

11:15a.m. -- Lunch

11:45a.m.—Rosemary Chamberlain - Certified Naturalist
"Discovering and Helping The Miraculous Monarch Butterfly"

12:45 p.m. - Don Hazel - Crossville Nature Columnist
"Solutions for Nestbox Predators"

1:45p.m. –Michelle Campanis
"A Guided Walking Tour in UT Arboretum, Sights & Sounds"

Sharing Love For Bluebirds and other Birds

Please join us for a day of discovery and friendship as we share our bluebird experiences and our love for nature. Through discussion with your peers you will walk away from this meeting with new information that will help you become better nestbox landlord.

Mail your check for \$5 to: **Chuck James**
119 Talah Way
London, TN 37774

What: Tennessee Bluebird Society 5th Annual Meeting

When: Saturday, November 16, 2019

Where: UT Arboretum
902 South Illinois Ave.
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

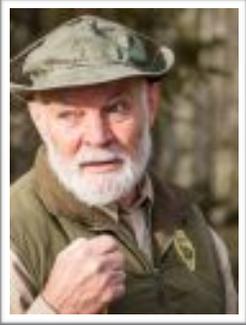
Time: 9am - 3pm

Other: \$5 Admission - Includes lunch.

Tennessee Bluebird Society 6th Annual Meeting

Speakers Profile

Title: ***“Winter Birds”***



Randy

Naturalist at South Cumberland State Park on the Cumberland Plateau and at Radnor Lake Natural Area in Nashville until 2007 when he was given the opportunity to be the statewide naturalist for the state park system.

Randy is a native of West Tennessee where the family farm was just 15 miles from the Tennessee River. After graduating from UT Martin and working seasonally for several years for the National Park Service and Tennessee State Parks, he has spent the last 35 years with state parks. Randy worked as a Ranger/

Title: ***“Discovering and Helping the Miraculous Monarch Butterfly”***



Rosemary

Watch, Journey North, Monarch Joint Venture and National Wildlife Federation for the last four years. She has 4 Monarch Waystation gardens on her property, report sightings of monarchs, and have reared, tagged and released monarchs for the last 4 years. She has given monarch presentations for several garden clubs and also the Tennessee Naturalist Program.

Worked as a RN for 35 years. Retired 5 years ago.
-Certified Tennessee Naturalist for 5 years
-Tennessee Bluebird Society Board Member for 5 years. Established a 30 box bluebird trail at Montgomery Bell State Park 5 years ago. Also have 13 bluebird boxes on her property.
-Have partnered with Monarch

Title: ***“Solutions for Nestbox Predators “***



Don

vice-president of both the Tennessee Bluebird Society and the Friends of the Trails organizations, and president of the Fairfield Glade Fly Fishing Club.

Don and his wife Nancy are retired and have lived in Fairfield Glade for 13 years. Previously he lived in five other states while working for large corporations. He has always had an interest in nature. He writes a twice monthly nature column for the Glade Sun and Crossville Chronicle Newspapers. Don is a

Title: ***“A Guided Walking Tour in UT Arboretum, Sights and Sounds”***



Michelle

where she spent time at the Royal Botanic Gardens. She returned to East Tennessee and in 2017 became the education coordinator for the UT Arboretum.

Michelle graduated from the University Of Tennessee Institute Of Agriculture with a degree in Plant Sciences. She then moved to Boston to work for The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University. She received a one year fellowship from The Garden Club of American to study in England

Sharing Love For Bluebirds and other Birds

Please join us for a day of discovery and friendship as we share our bluebird experiences and our love for nature. Through discussion with your peers you will walk away from this meeting with new information that will help you become better nestbox landlord.

Mail your check for \$5 to: **Chuck James**
119 Talah Way
London, TN 37774

What: Tennessee Bluebird Society 6th Annual Meeting

When: Saturday, November 16, 2019

Where: UT Arboretum
902 South Illinois Ave.
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

Time: 9am - 3pm

Other: \$5 Admission - Includes lunch.

Please Support Our Corporate Sponsors



Wild Bird Supplies Since 1985
Bluebird Boxes
Wild Bird Feeds & Feeders
Hummingbird Feeders And More.

6029 Hwy 100.
Nashville TN, 37205

615-356-7640

**Shop Wild Birds Unlimited for
all your Bluebird needs!**



Wild Birds Unlimited®
Nature Shop
BIRD FOOD • FEEDERS • GARDEN ACCENTS • UNIQUE GIFTS

7240 Kingston Pike Ste. 164, Knoxville, TN 37919
(865) 337-5990 www.knoxville.wbu.com

Tennessee Bluebird Society Board of Directors

Eastern Region:

Michelle Campanis - Oak Ridge
Chuck Cruickshank - Loudon
Kathy Dooley - Loudon
Peggie Flierl - Crossville
Don Hazel - Crossville
Chuck James - Loudon
John Martin - Crossville

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

Scientific Advisor: Dawn Wilkins,
PhD, UT Martin

Email: tnsialia@gmail.com

Website: www.tnbluebirdsociety.org

Facebook: [Tennessee Bluebird Society](https://www.facebook.com/TennesseeBluebirdSociety)

Websites

Tennessee Bluebird Society
www.tnbluebirdsociety.org
North American Bluebird Society
www.nabluebirdsociety.org