

TN Bluebird Newsletter

A Quarterly Publication for Members of the TN Bluebird Society



It's that glorious time of year - nests are being built ...



and eggs start to appear!



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Don Hazel, TBS President

President's Corner

It's bluebird time in Tennessee. In late March, bluebird lovers around our state can't wait to begin watching and monitoring our most beautiful bird. But, keeping ourselves and others safe is more important this year than bluebirds.

Getting outside and keeping your distance from others is safer than grocery shopping, getting gas for the car, or other activities where germs can be passed.

If you want to get out and check on bluebirds, there are still precautions to take. Unless you share a household with someone, take separate cars. Even in parks and trails, keep 6-10 feet apart. And, wash your hands early and often.

Love your bluebirds, but be safe first.

Hanging out safely at your house is a good time to think about how you can help bluebirds. Do you know a group that could start a bluebird trail, or even start a new Tennessee Bluebird Society club? Do you know a public park or golf course that would be perfect for bluebirds? Let me know.

With your ideas and feedback, together we can help bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds.

don.hazel@gmail.com

Bluebird Factsheets are now available on the [North American Bluebird Society website](#). The one titled **Getting Started with Bluebirds** is a great way to familiarize yourself and others with the joy of monitoring bluebirds and promoting healthy habitats for them.

Exciting News - Cookeville Added as TBS' Newest Bluebird Club!

The Tennessee Bluebird Society has a new club! A garden group from Cookeville, Tennessee has joined the TBS and formed a new bluebird trail in Cookeville. The club worked with the city of Cookeville to get approval for bluebird nest boxes in two city parks, Dogwood Park and Cane Creek Park. In addition, several members of the club installed bluebird boxes in their yards. There are 16 new places for bluebirds to nest in Cookeville, with more to come. Welcome to our newest club and members!

For more information on TBS's newest bluebird club, here's a great the article in the Upper Cumberland Reporter newspaper!

<https://uppercumberlandreporter.com/2020/04/bluebirds-finding-new-homes-in-dogwood-and-cane-creek-parks/>



A new bluebird nest box overlooks Cookeville's Dogwood park

A Most Unusual Sighting

Dennis Urbaniak of Lookout Mountain Tennessee observed two different female bluebirds going in and out of his bluebird box as the one male watched. When Dennis checked the box he found 9 eggs. Obviously, both females had laid eggs in the nest. A few day later Dennis checked again and both females were sitting side by side on the nest. A very rare and very interesting case!



Meet Your TBS Board Members



Chuck James and his wife Terry have been married 43 years. Chuck attended Northwestern University and retired in 2009 from Transonic Systems where he served as Executive Vice President. Fourteen years ago Chuck and Terry moved from Inverness, IL to Loudon, TN and Chuck fills his retirement time serving on several non-profit Boards. Chuck is a past Board Member of the North American Bluebird Society and is the current President of the Valley Chapter of the TBS. Chuck became interested in bluebirds, about 16 years ago, through his wife's niece and her husband. After attending numerous NABS meetings, Chuck was very impressed with the SC Bluebird Society and in Fall 2013, with fellow bluebirder Farrell Roe, they started the Tennessee Bluebird Society. Chuck served as President for 2 years. Chuck believes getting people interested in conservation through bluebird activities creates a new appreciation of our natural world and a life long learning opportunity. Chuck is the current webmaster for the TBS website.



Kathleen (Kathy) Dooley has always had an interest in birds, but her involvement prior to coming to TN was limited to providing food and water to the regular visitors to her "backyard" in San Francisco, mostly chickadees, scrub jays and mourning doves. After retiring from nursing, she relocated to eastern Tennessee in January 2016 and immediately began getting involved in the Tellico Village community. After attending a presentation on Eastern Bluebirds by Chuck James, Kathy joined both the TBS and the NABS and volunteered to serve on the TBS Board. She learned how to monitor the bluebird nesting boxes by Chuck James on the Toqua Golf Course, then later gained more monitoring experience on the Tanasi Golf Course, where she is now the Lead Monitor. As a new nesting season approaches, Kathy looks forward to introducing and sharing the monitoring experience with new volunteer monitors. She is also excited about becoming more involved with the planned activities/projects in the new Valley Chapter. Kathy currently serves as Treasurer for TBS.



ADRIANNA NELSON RECEIVES HIGH HONOR FROM AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION

TBS' own Adrianna Nelson of Bristol, TN was recently named Young Birder of the Year by the ABA, a national organization focused on increasing knowledge, skills, and enjoyment of birding. Participants vying for the honor work on projects from April to October and submit their portfolios to a panel of judges. Adrianna's submission included a field notebook and a summary of her work in the area of community engagement/conservation. Her project highlighted the work she has done on the bluebird trail, including numerous presentations and a bluebird pamphlet at the park. Understandably, the judges were very impressed with her project! You can read more about the Young Birder award on the [ABA website](#). For TBS, Adrianna monitors 10 nest boxes that fledged 37 bluebirds in 2019. Congratulations, Adrianna! We are so proud of you!

Visit these websites for important information and membership applications:

Tennessee Bluebird Society
www.tnbluebirdsociety.org

North American Bluebird Society
www.nabluebirdsociety.org

THE SECRETS OF TAKING BEAUTIFUL BLUEBIRD PHOTOGRAPHS



Who hasn't watched a bluebird in their backyard and wished they could take pictures like this one to share with friends? Most who see this picture believe it took expensive equipment to capture the image of the bluebird. Some even think the picture was altered with Photoshop. It wasn't. You will be surprised to learn about the basic equipment bluebird photographer Becky Boyd uses to capture such stunning images as the one that is shown here.

According to bluebird photographer and nature lover Becky Boyd “the secrets to capturing captivating images of bluebirds are patience and an awareness of their behavior patterns.” Boyd continues by saying “People think it’s important to purchase expensive cameras. It isn’t. All the equipment in the world won’t get you that incredible shot if you don’t have the patience to sit quietly and wait.”

The native of East Tennessee and 28-year veteran with Travelers Insurance company has always taken snapshots. It was just three years ago she began her transformation from snapshot shooter to bluebird photographer with a cell phone.

Today, she practices what she preaches and typically sits quietly and waits for the bluebirds to present themselves at the right moment. Becky has upgraded a bit to a Nikon P1000 camera that cost around \$700, has an incredible superzoom lens, and even has a special bird setting on it. This is far from the thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars that can be spent on top-end camera equipment used by some photographers.

Regarding what is the most important ingredient a photographer can have, she agrees with the nationally known bluebird photographer David Kinner, who said “The most important ingredient for taking pictures of bluebirds is a few inches behind the aperture.” In other words “the most important piece of camera equipment is located a quarter inch behind the view finder - it’s your eye!”

The energetic but patient amateur photographer also prefers to let the birds come to her, rather than traveling to them. Her blind is a bedroom located on the second floor of her home. There she patiently waits near an open window whose screen has been removed. Below her is her back yard which has ideal bluebird habitat, a nextbox and bird feeders to draw her subjects in.

Becky’s blue bird box faces east away from prevailing winds and away from brush and overhanging tree branches. The bird feeders are located 40 feet away, there is a bird bath, and some tall trees for strategic viewing point. Below her window in plain view is everything needed to capture the domestic life of bluebirds.

Secrets of Bluebird Photographs (cont.)

She doesn't have to travel to have wonderful opportunities to photograph birds. Several dozen bird species visit her yard at different times of the year, along with deer, fox, and the occasional unwelcome coyote. Becky and her husband live in the suburbs of Knoxville, TN along the top of a ridge where a large plot of wooded area provides a habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Becky is slowly working toward making her backyard an attraction and a haven for the birds by adding plants that attract birds, ensuring a source of fresh water and food, and she left a couple of dead trees standing to attract birds that like to hunt for grubs and insects. Her yard might not look a showplace to people, but it's just right for the birds' satisfaction. Because cats that roam are efficient hunters of birds and small mammals Becky's five cats are not allowed to roam outside. They do their bird watching through the window.

This set-up also provides something else that is not generally discussed in books about how to photograph wildlife. That something else is time. It means Becky who works a 40-hour week or more does not have to spend hours of precious time in order to travel to a place to photograph bluebirds and other birds. This means Becky can spend her valuable spare time photographing not traveling - a benefit any working person can appreciate. It also allows her time to monetize her hobby by creating photography products and even jewelry inspired by her photography.

Boyd gets her love of and understanding of the natural history of the creatures found in East Tennessee from her parents who were Oak Ridge, TN scientists and loved the outdoors. "Instead of a trip to Disneyworld for vacation, we explored the wild places of the Appalachian Mountains" says Becky. "We camped in tents, climbed mountains, crawled around in caves, climbed fire towers, and played in the mountain streams. Throughout these adventures, my parents taught me to appreciate, respect and protect nature. Mom always had her camera in hand to capture the scenes we saw and the critters we encountered. She enjoyed amateur photography from the time she was a child and inspired that same passion in me."

Everyone who sees her work benefits from the understanding and the love of the outdoors Becky learned from her parents.

The images she captures from her bedroom window with a relatively inexpensive camera inspire us. They inspire us because they make us realize that the secret ingredient is not the price of the equipment, but patience and the ability of the photographer to understand her subject that allows success in capturing that "aha image". That ability is within our reach.



Rebecca Boyd works for Travelers and in her spare time loves photographing Bluebirds in Knoxville, TN. You can see her work on the Tennessee Bluebird Society Facebook page and her Facebook page Boyds Birds.

Becky sells her bluebird calendars, notecards, pictures and inspired jewelry. For more details visit her Facebook page "Boyd's Birds" and look for her new website later this year at www.RidgeRockArts.com.

Thousands have seen her photos on the following websites:

<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/first-snow-beth-fontenot.html>

<https://m.phys.org/news/2020-02-bluebirds-fend-parasites.html>

http://www.heraldcourier.com/community/unlikely-orange-crowned-warbler-becomes-daily-visitor-this-winter/article_82879224-0d07-11e8-9df2-cf9ff85ccb42.html



From Around The State

100 Newest Bluebird Monitors

In early March, Cumberland County Bluebird Club members John Rife and Don Hazel travelled to Murfreesboro Tennessee to talk about bluebirds to 100 Hobgood Elementary school first graders. They were the best behaved first graders in Tennessee. After learning how to help bluebirds, a bluebird nest box was installed in the Hobgood schoolyard. Just one day later, the kids watched as a bluebird checked out the new box.



Left - John Rife installs a new bluebird nest box at Hobgood Elementary School



Right - Hobgood first graders watch for bluebirds



BLUEBIRD ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS

Kids love to have fun! And fun was had at the UT AgCenter in Crossville last month. TBS members Christine Doster and Mary Nagy talked to middle school kids about bluebirds and developed activities to make learning fun. Suet logs were loaded with nutritious suet for the birds, and pretzel and candy “bluebird nests” for made for eating.



Left - Kathy Dooley, TBS Treasurer and Trail Leader prepares the Tans Golf Course nest-box trail for the 2020 season in Loudon, TN



Right - Positive results from the new bluebird trail in Harriman, TN

From Around The State

Highlights From the Cumberland County Monitor Meeting



TBS Board Member and Monitor Coordinator, Peggie Flierl, shows a new volunteer how to prepare the items needed for effective monitoring.



Cumberland County monitors turn out in record attendance to be trained and receive important updates for the 2020 nesting season.



TBS President, Don Hazel, shares the successful results from the use of the Noel predator guards and explains how and when to install.



Right - In March, Chuck Cruickshank gave a “Basic Bluebirding” presentation at the Tellico Village Library in Loudon County to group of over 30 interested backyard birders. This is the 5th or 6th year the Valley Chapter has given this very popular presentation to the members of the community.



On February 19, Don Hazel presented to 70 attendees on "Attracting, Raising, and Protecting Bluebirds" at the UT Ag Center in Crossville, TN.



Left - On Tuesday, March 3, 2020, after much work with the Harriman Garden Club and the Parks and Recreation Dept. in Harriman, TN, the group is ready to move forward with a nestbox trail in their Riverfront Park. Chuck Cruickshank of the Valley Chapter of the TN Bluebird Society gave a presentation on how to monitor nestboxes and record data. Lynne Blaker from the Harriman Garden Club is taking the lead as trail coordinator. Currently the the TN Bluebird Society and its chapters monitor and report on over 800 next boxes throughout the Tennessee.

From Around The State

On Saturday, February 1, 2020 the Valley Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society enjoyed presentation on honey bees and bumble bees by club Pollinator Specialist Steve Rains. Over 55 people attended Steve's presentation at the Yacht Club in Tellico Village. Steve gave a detail presentations of the struggles of honey bees and native bees in Tennessee and what we can do as individuals to help create a micro environment in our gardens to support our bee population.

The Valley Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society in an effort to interest more people is expanding its areas of interest from bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds to include pollinators and the plants needed to support these very important species.



Left - The Valley Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society committee met on Monday, February 17, 2020 to work on assignments and plans for the 2020 nesting and educational season. Since the Valley Chapter has included pollinators and native plants into their mission, there has been a great deal of interest in the community. VCTBS has also established liaisons with the Tellico Village Audubon International re-certification committee and the new Aesthetics and Environmental Committee in Tellico Village.

Right - On Saturday, February 15, 2020 Wild Birds Unlimited put on their yearly Bluebird presentation with an overflow group of more than 60 people interested in learning more about the Eastern Bluebird. Also in attendance was Chuck Cruickshank Immediate Past President of TBS. This year store owner Liz Cutrone gave the presentation and Chuck James wrapped up the meeting talking about the Valley Chapter of the TBS and the many activities they are participating in throughout the TN Valley. Liz Cutrone then presented Chuck James with a check for \$150 for the Knoxville Wild Birds Unlimited Corporate Membership for 2020. This is the 5th year Wild Birds Unlimited, Knoxville has been a Corporate Sponsor of the Tennessee Bluebird Society.



From Around The State

More nest boxes, more bluebirds

The Cumberland County Bluebird club has been building boxes lately. Nest boxes were needed for three new trails this year. Fifteen boxes were installed in “downtown” Fairfield Glade, fifteen were installed at Cumberland Cove golf club, and sixteen nest boxes were installed in Cookeville for the new Cookeville Master Gardeners bluebird club. In addition, boxes were installed in individual backyards. Ten club members cut, sawed, screwed, pounded, stapled, filed, and sanded, delivered and installed the 80 boxes built since December. If you want to start a trail in public locations, start a club, or have a box building party, let the Tennessee Bluebird Society know. More nest boxes mean more of our beautiful native Eastern bluebirds.



Right - Kathy Wodka is a master bluebird box builder



Left - Sue Ginter knows a thing or two about running a drill press to make bluebird nest boxes.

Valley Chapter of the TN Bluebird Society Invited to Participate in Nestbox Trail Honoring “Peg” Beute, long time Ijams Educator

The Valley Chapter of the Tennessee Bluebird Society was invited by a group of friends of Margaret Marie “Peg” Beute, to help establish a Tennessee Bluebird Society approved nestbox trail in memory of Peg Beute, a long time educator at Ijams Nature Center in Knoxville, TN who passed away in January 2020. The trail location is the new I.C. King Park in Knox County.

The first step was to get together, on a snowy February morning, and survey the location for suitable places to place nestboxes, taking into consideration the needs of the bluebirds - finding food, places for the babies to fledge, safe location and an area where they won't interfere with grounds maintenance.



The next step was to meet with the volunteers and give them background into bluebirding and becoming good nestbox landlords. The discussion then turned to the actual design of the nestbox, pole and baffle system with each member of the group taking on various tasks. Chuck Cruickshank provided the group with a complete materials list along with costs to produce each nestbox.

While Chuck Cruickshank was giving his talk on predator's and the importance of predator guards one of the staff members from Ijams brought back a Rat Snake she had outside exercising.

Left to Right: Mary Glover, Meredith Clebsch, Chuck Cruickshank, Chuck James - Not in photo Kim Pilarski-Hall

With assigned tasks, the group is on their way to establishing a 10 nestbox trail which will be installed on Saturday, March 28, 2020. There will also be signage recognizing Peg Beute and the memorial nestbox trail.

Once the trail has been established the group has agreed to collect nesting data and report that data both to the TN Bluebird Society and to the NestWatch program.

The Valley Chapter of the TN Bluebird Society is dedicated to getting people involved, understanding our natural world beginning with nestboxes and bluebirds. In addition, the group is also interested in getting people to think about our pollinators who we need for 90% of plant species, plus the need for native plants necessary for our ecological system.

If your group is interested in a presentation from the Valley Chapter of the TN Bluebird Society they can contact: Chuck James at chuck3185@gmail.com or call (865) 437-9732.



Tennessee Bluebird Society Board of Directors

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Michelle Campanis - Oak Ridge
 Chuck Cruickshank - Loudon
 Kathy Dooley - Loudon
 Peggie Flierl - Crossville
 Don Hazel - Crossville
 Chuck James - Loudon
 John Martin - Crossville
 Janet McDonald - 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
 Scientific Advisor: Dawn Wilkins, PhD,
 UT Martin

Email: tnsialia@gmail.com

Websites: www.tnbluebirdsociety.org
www.nabluebirdsociety.org

**Facebook: Tennessee Bluebird
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Tennessee Bluebird Society

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

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Best Wishes for a Productive Nesting Season!!



Blessings to you and yours
Love for what you do
Utter happiness
Energy to keep going
Big rewards
Involvement
Respect
Dream big

Here's to a great 2020
Bluebird Season!

Websites

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