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North American
Bluebird Society*

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PRESCOTT BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

Post Office Box 1469 | Sherwood, Oregon 97140 | www.prescottbluebird.com

Newsletter ~ Fall 2011

The President's Nest Box

by Dave Flaming

At PBRP's Annual Meeting held on September 17th, the following volunteers were elected to serve as the Board of Directors: Jeannette Adlong, Bob Burbank, Lyn Burniston, Jack Carter, Dave Flaming, Lauri Kunzman, and Nelda Skidmore. Nancy Fraser continues on the board as Past President along with Pat Johnston and Brenda McGowan as Founding Members. Our Master Bander Dr. Don Powers serves on the board as an ex-officio member.

Following the annual meeting the newly elected board met and elected Dave Flaming as President, Lyn Burniston as Assistant to the President, Lauri Kunzman as Treasurer, and Jack Carter along with Nelda Skidmore as Co-Secretary.

Retiring from the board this year is Zenobia Lapeyre. I wish to thank Zenobia for her years of service on the board. Zenobia will continue to monitor and band in the Sherwood area as well as provide us with her wonderful photographs for the newsletter.

Nancy Fraser retired as board President this year but will continue to serve on the board in the capacity of Past President. Nancy has guided our project for the past 4 years, working countless hours behind the scenes ensuring everything ran smoothly. She will continue to monitor and band in the Ladd Hill area. Thanks Nancy!

Early reports indicate that our 2011 season suffered due to our long cold and wet spring. Despite a high level of nestling and adult mortalities, we are thankful to our hardworking banders, monitors, and homeowners who did everything in their power to lessen the impact of the weather.

Because of the efforts of our wonderful group of volunteers, more bluebirds survived. We look forward to greater success in the 2012 bluebird season!

As members of PBRP, we know that Bluebirds need our help. We help them firsthand by becoming Bluebird Monitors. Without monitors, PBRP can not succeed. If you are not already a monitor and would like to become one, contact us at email@prescottbluebird.com. If you have a friend who might be interested in becoming a monitor, let them know they are needed and have them contact us.

As many of you know, PBRP is an all-volunteer organization that doesn't levy membership dues. We rely entirely on the generosity of our members, welcoming each and every donation, no matter the amount. Thank you for your support!

- Dave

Jack Stennet, Sustaining Nestbox Builder, Retires His Workshop

by Nancy Fraser, Board of Directors

In 1992, Jack contacted Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project after reading about the project and our need for assistance in building nestboxes. Since that time, he has built over 2300 boxes using his own woodworking equipment and donated materials. For many years, he devoted more than 4 hours every day to this building, and gifted us with this wonderful resource. Jack is no longer able to provide this service, and he has left us with an ample supply of these well-built and carefully designed boxes, which allows us to replace aging nestboxes and place new ones in suitable habitat. Jack, our volunteers, landowners, board and especially the bluebirds thank you for your unlimited energy and dedication.

Our Backyard Bluebird Story

by Bill DeLacey, Landowner (including photos)

We moved into our new home in 1999. Shortly after our new fence was completed, I noticed a small blue bird on the fence. I checked the internet and quickly identified it as a Western Bluebird. After a little research, I left for the nearby Backyard Bird Store. One bluebird house and a small supply of mealworms later I returned home. That afternoon we attached the bird house to our fence and placed a small container of mealworms out on the patio table. Hoping to entice the bluebird to visit or stay with us, I selected the box location by looking out the kitchen window and finding a very visible location on the fence.



PHOTO 1 - What just happened? Where are the kids? Who put advertising on my house?

Nesting Box courtesy of Ed Hepp

We were lucky enough to have a bluebird couple think that it was a fine bird house in an OK location. We were one of the first houses in the neighborhood and had many empty grassy lots around our house- not a bad location for bluebirds.

I read about mealworm feeding, both pro and con, and decided it was worth it to me to help out my birds. We would buy worms and the bluebirds would provide backyard entertainment for my family-a good deal for both.

I soon added two additional bird boxes, each about 100 ft away from the original. For several years, bluebirds, Violet Green Swallows, and our two dogs coexisted in our backyard. The swallows were the first to move. As new houses were built in the surrounding lots, the empty grassy lots disappeared. The swallows decided the new house next door had good building spots and moved into their eaves.

Our bluebird families stuck with us. I think bluebirds remember our yard and return from year to year. We are now surrounded on all sides by homes. The bluebirds still come back.

2011 was a very strange year. Bluebirds appeared in early spring as had become their custom. We were excited, I put out some worms and the year started. The bluebird box remained empty as the days passed. The bluebirds kept returning for worm snacks. I decided to keep up the feedings as it was a very late spring and it was going to be a hard nesting season. I had seen some nesting material in the old swallow box, but it appeared to be a chickadee nest. When Tom, our bluebird monitor, came around he checked the swallow box and noted bluebird eggs in the chickadee nest. I had not been paying attention to the chickadee nest other than to note they were there. Some “other” species are welcome to share our boxes, others “not so much”.

The female bluebird had decided to use the chickadee nest “As Is”. Not one stick of grass was added to this small, soft, mossy nest. Four eggs hatched, Lauri banded them and the chicks fledged from that nest on May 30th. Spring was cool and wet late into this year. I kept worm feedings longer than normal to help the family thrive. After the chicks fledged, I removed the chickadee nest and thought nothing more about it.

Two weeks later, I noticed Mom had started a second nest, eggs started to appear and clutch #2 started. Four eggs hatched and Lauri banded those nestlings. After banding, the chicks had been allowed to settle back in the box, when a small beak appeared at the opening. Lauri had been concerned that the box was too small for the growing chicks to exercise enough to gain strength to fledge. As soon as that beak appeared, the decision was made to change the box to a new larger improved version. A mad ten minute period ensued. The chicks were placed back into Lauri’s banding hat. I rushed about rounding up tools to



PHOTO 2 Full nestbox, 3 layered nest, discovered after Clutch #2 had fledged

remove the old and install the new box. The bluebird parents flew around worrying about their little family. I got the box mounted, crookedly, as the mounting holes did not fit my post. We transferred the nest from the old box into the new box and moved the chicks into this nest. Dad soon landed on the new box and tried to figure what in the Sam Hill was going on. Mom finally responded to the upset chicks' sounds and went in the new box. We then left the family to settle down in their new home. (*see photo #1*)

The parents started to tend these clutch #2 chicks again. However, in a few days I noticed they were carrying more nesting material into the box???. The chicks were nearing their fledge date, so it was too late to check out the status in the box by opening it. A couple of days after the fledge date of July 18th, I checked the box. **WOW!** (*see photo #2*) The parents had evaluated the box changes and during the last week or so that the banded chicks were in the box, decided that major renovations were required. I guess the bluebird parents agreed with Lauri about the lack of exercise, and by the time the chicks fledged the parents had built up the nest so the chicks could just walk out the door!

Photo #2 shows the augmented nest, with 3 layers. The bottom third is the old nest we moved from the old box into the new box. The middle and top thirds are new material added after the chicks were banded. A few days later I noticed a new egg on top of the pile (clutch #3). After discussions with Lauri and Tom, we decided that we needed another round of bluebird house renovations. Tom and I decided to remove the bottom 2/3 of the nesting material.

Photo #3 shows the nest as modified by two caring but semi-ignorant bluebird supporters. The long suffering bluebird parents accepted our remodeling, continued to add eggs to the nest, and the female began incubating six eggs in clutch #3.

Four of the six eggs hatched and fledged on the first of September. We banded and fledged 12 Bluebird chicks in 2011. We have been very lucky.

The parents were both pretty well worn out by the time clutch #3 fledged. Dad's feathers were very ragged and Mom was QUITE short tempered. Normally Mom just watched when I moved around her nest, but by the time clutch #3 was ready to fledge, she would fly down and pop her beak to warn me away. I guess she had had enough disturbances for the year!

We have been fortunate enough to have watched nearly 50 chicks be banded and fledged since 1999. All chicks that hatched in our boxes have been banded and have fledged. Only one chick in all those years failed to survive leaving our backyard. All the others flew away healthy. We have had several double clutches over the years, but this was the first year for a triple clutch.

Thanks to our friends,

Lauri Kunzman, our Bander
Tom Aufenthie, our Monitor



PHOTO 3 - Note the poop marks going up the wall from the clutch #2 chicks as the parents raised the nest level and filled the box with additional nesting material

Newsletter Editor Changes

After more than 6 years of editing and formatting the PBRP Newsletter, volunteer Abby Jaworski will no longer be able to edit the newsletter. Our project has seen a steady increase in the clarity and quality of our publication during her editorship, while at the same time responding to the need to use our supporters' donations in the most responsible manner to disseminate information. The Board of Directors recognizes her dedication and effort on the project's behalf, and thanks her for all of her contributions as editor.

Jody Burnim is our new editor, effective with this issue. Welcome, Jody, and thank you for volunteering to undertake the production of the newsletter.

BLUEBIRDS NEED YOU!

Dear Landowners and Nature Lovers:

We know you love our Western Bluebird (WEBL) and have wonderful information and experience with them nesting on or near your property or you might be a nature lover interested in learning more about these charming native songbirds.

We would love to recruit you to learn even more about these beautiful birds by inviting you to join us at our Spring Monitor Workshop. This will be held February 25, 2012 at the Champoeg State Heritage Area - aka Champoeg Park. Meeting starts at 9:00 AM with verbal and visual information to further your knowledge. Additionally we will present information on how to increase your involvement with Western Bluebirds by becoming a monitor. We would LOVE to have you step up to consider becoming a monitor. We will teach you and support you to this end. Our WEBLs truly need you to keep their population stable and hopefully increasing.



Lyn Burniston and Nelda Skidmore will be coordinating the Spring Workshop and will be on hand along with our experienced monitors and banders to answer any questions you might have.

*Please make your reservations by emailing email@prescottbluebird.com.
Please also include your phone number*

A New Monitor's Perspective The Circle of Life

by Jeannette Adlong, Monitor

It was spring two years ago, and I was feeling like life had lost some luster. My children were away at college; a family member had been diagnosed with a serious disease; my once secure job no longer felt so safe. As a long-time bird lover, I leapt at the chance to become a bluebird monitor. I immediately gravitated toward my bander and the friendly people I met at the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project. That first time I went on my route, it seemed as if the bluebirds had just been waiting for me. Yes, bluebird monitoring would be perfect, I thought.

What I didn't know was that summer could be so cold and wet it would hurt the nesting bluebirds. Week after week I would monitor the boxes but the bluebirds weren't nesting. Finally a few birds built nests, but then it seemed they were never going to lay eggs. My first and much anticipated clutch of chicks hatched just as the weather took a turn for the worse. It was miserably cold and the

rain was relentless. I was horrified to discover the chicks had all died in the nest when they were just a few days old. Worse, the female bluebird was found dead nearby. As I watched the male bluebird trying to locate his mate, it was the low point of the season for me. I cleaned out the box and didn't want to talk about how sad I was that my first "babies" had died.

But that male bluebird carried on with life. Within two weeks he had found a new mate and they laid a new clutch of eggs in that same box. These chicks grew and thrived and all eventually fledged. Just when I was wondering if I could stand the pain of watching the bluebirds lose their battle with nature, that vibrant bluebird taught me a lesson about persistence and renewal.

I experienced the gamut of emotions over the course of the season as the bluebirds nested, grew, and continued the circle of life. Monitoring bluebirds can be confusing and sad in death, yet joyful and exhilarating when the birds succeed. Yes, being part of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project has

added much to my life. I found a group of people who get as excited about wild birds as I do. I get to enjoy the landowners' glorious gardens and friendly dogs. And the bluebirds continue to amaze me with their beauty, intelligence, persistence, and savvy.

Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation Potluck

by Nancy Fraser, Board of Directors

The Annual Meeting of Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project was held on September 17 at Champoeg State Heritage Park Historic Pavilion. Nancy Fraser, President, welcomed attendees, gave a brief history of the Pavilion, and thanked all the volunteers, landowners, and particularly board members who have served for two years. A slate of nominees for the incoming board was presented and approved unanimously.

Treasurer, Lauri Kunzman provided a financial report, including an overview and spreadsheet showing the group's budget, main expenses, and donations. (Cont. on pg. 5)

Meeting and Volunteer Potluck Cont.

After the Annual Meeting was closed, Mary Coolidge, Assistant Director of Conservation, Audubon Society of Portland, reviewed the Lights Out Portland and BirdSafe Portland programs. She explained why birds strike windows, the types of injuries that occur (and the fatalities recorded), the key points of what window styles and materials are most strike prone, and some approaches that can be used to reduce window strike mortality. With its Bird Safe Portland study, Audubon Portland is surveying a number of urban buildings and structures to learn the frequency of window strikes in order to work together with city planners, architects, and building owners to create changes that are tolerable and can reduce window strike mortality.

Attendees and board members enjoyed a potluck lunch to express Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project's appreciation to our volunteers for their hard work in the field, on their records and reports, and their continued support to sustaining the Western Bluebird throughout our region. See you all February 25, 2012, at the Spring Kickoff and New Monitors' Meeting at Champoege Park Visitors' Center.

Bluebird Nestbox Honors Teacher

by Kit Whittaker, Monitor (including photo)

When the students of Mrs. Hanlon's second grade class at Boones Ferry Primary in Wilsonville thought about an end-of-school thank you for their teacher, it could have been a lot of things. But what might the perfect gift be?

Mrs. Hanlon taught the class about Greek myths and together they learned the stories of Greek heroes and heroines. Then they dressed in togas for a meal of rolled grapeleaves, spanakopita and tzatziki. They could write a Greek tragedy for her!

She taught the class about the stars, and to name the constellations in Oregon's night sky. They constructed a "puffy planetarium" big enough for a dozen students to crawl inside to view Orion, Sirius, Cassiopeia and the dippers. If they could name a star after their teacher, they surely would.

The perfect gift idea for Mrs. Hanlon eluded the class... until spring arrived and the birds returned.



Second graders George Krecklow & Kullen Whittaker help maintain the bluebird nestbox placed in honor of their teacher, Mrs. Hanlon.

Mrs. Hanlon is a life-long birder. Her classroom sits right at the edge of Graham Oaks, a 200-acre natural area. Hawks and vultures soar over the oak savannah and rolling grasslands. Red-winged Blackbirds and Mallards enjoy the wetland area where willows, cattail and red twig dogwood abound. The feeders outside the window welcome Chickadees, Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, Grosbeaks, Goldfinches, Hummingbirds and others. When spring finally arrived, a unit on birds was a natural.

The classroom's "life list" of birds observed through the seasons was long. Each student studied the list, chose a bird, and over the last few weeks of the school year researched their bird's behaviors and habitat. Their research created a presentation for classmates and parents. The classroom was transformed into an aviary, complete with dozens of paper-mache birds - hovering overhead, sitting on living bushes and branches, or sitting on nests with life-like eggs.

It was then that the class realized exactly what Mrs. Hanlon would like most: something to do with birds. The class had feeders, they had a natural area, and they had visited a Prescott nestbox nearby. How about a bluebird nestbox within view of Mrs. Hanlon's classroom?

And so it was that the class collected money, purchased, and installed a Prescott Bluebird nestbox: a nestbox to honor Mrs. Hanlon, to say thanks for sharing her passion for birds (and life) with them, and to provide even more good bird-watching right outside her classroom window.

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PBRP, PO Box 1469, Sherwood, OR 97140.

2012 Important Upcoming Dates!

TBA	Banders' Meeting 2012
February 25	Spring Kickoff & Monitors' Workshop
March 31	Tentative deadline to submit articles for Spring Newsletter
April-Early Sept	Western Bluebird Monitoring Season
June 16	Bluebird Day at Champoeg State Heritage Area
September 15	End of season monitor/bander reports due
September 15	Fall Wrap Up Meeting
October 4-6	34th North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Annual Conference, Newport Beach, California

Thank you to:

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