



Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Newsletter – Fall 2007

An affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society



From the President's Nest Box -by Nancy Fraser

Greetings to all of you wonderful volunteers, property owners, donors, and friends of the Western Bluebird and Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project. I am pleased and honored to have been elected by the Board of Directors in September to guide this organization in supporting the continued growth and recovery of the bluebird population in and around the North Willamette Valley. I encourage each of you to get involved (or stay involved) with bluebirds!

I joined PBRP as a volunteer monitor in the 2004 nesting season. My first bluebird route was on Elwert Road, southwest of Sherwood. Later I was trained as a bander, and assigned to band on the east side of Highway 99W, south of Sherwood.

I have served on the PBRP Board of Directors since 2005, most of that time as the Board's liaison to our Newsletter Editor. This year, I attended my first national convention of the North American Bluebird Society. It was a wonderful experience.

As a PBRP volunteer, I was fortunate to attend meetings and the occasional seasonal events on the then unopened to the public Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge in Sherwood. When the refuge opened, I volunteered to be a Trail Rover. This gave me a chance to see over-wintering bluebirds on the Refuge.

Prior to retiring in 2000, I was a manager in the Department of Pathology at OHSU. I have volunteered at the Audubon Society of Portland Wildlife Rehabilitation Center since 1975. Currently, I work every Monday morning at the Care Center, and I am one of a number of volunteer handlers for the non-releasable Education Birds.

In the years since I have been a bluebird volunteer, I have seen changes in habitat and climate that will continue to impact bluebird nesting success and numbers. I look forward to working together with all of you, gathering information about nesting and foraging patterns, and sharing this data to help understand and encourage a sustained increase in Western Bluebirds, as well as provide insight into environmental changes and conservation for all flora and fauna.

I will seek your help and input. Following in Dave Flaming's highly effective footsteps will not be easy, but I know our organization will stay strong and our tasks interesting and rewarding when we work together.

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

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Retirements of Monitors and Banders – Calling for Additional Volunteers!

The Board has heard from a few monitors and banders who will be unable to continue with their volunteer activities with PBRP beginning with the 2008 nesting season. Once again, we will be recruiting interested new volunteers at our Spring Meeting. In addition, we would ask that all of our Property Owners, Volunteers, and newsletter readers consider whether you know someone, or you ARE someone, who would like to volunteer to monitor a bluebird nestbox route. We are particularly in need of volunteers in the McMinnville, Newberg, and Sherwood areas.

When recruiting new volunteer monitors, we need to maximize our flexibility in adjusting coverage to meet future changes to our volunteer ranks. For this reason, we are specifically seeking monitors who will monitor an entire nestbox route, rather than boxes on their own property. Similarly, the expectation for new banders is that they will band two or more entire routes, rather than a small number of boxes.

Thank you to all of our retirees for their dedication and service to bluebirds, wildlife, and PBRP. Every one of us makes a difference with our efforts. We celebrate the difference you have made.





From the Past President

-by Dave Flaming

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project closed its 2007 season with the Fall Wrap-up meeting held on September 29th at Champoeg State Heritage Area. This is an annual meeting where each of our monitors has the opportunity to share their stories and ideas from the 2007 Bluebird season.

A highlight of the meeting was hearing from Lauri Kunzman and Nancy Fraser on their trip to the North American Bluebird Society's annual convention held this past September in Athens, Georgia. We are pleased that they were able to represent PRBP at the convention.

At the meeting, the general membership elected the following members to serve on PBRP's Board of Directors for the next two years: Bob Burbank, Lyn Burniston, Jack Carter, Nancy Fraser, Carol Hallett, Jim Kreutzbender, Lauri Kunzman, and Becky Snyder. Ex-officio members of the board are Don Powers (Master Bander), Brenda McGowan and Pat Johnston (Founding Members) and Dave Flaming (Past President).

I am sorry to announce the retirements of banders Gaila Couch, Mike Terramin and Pat Johnston. Gaila banded in the Sherwood area and Mike in the McMinnville area. Pat is a founding member of PBRP and continues to serve on our Board of Directors. We will certainly miss their contribution to our banding program.

This September I retired as president of PBRP but will continue as Database Manager. I want to thank all the members of PBRP for the support and guidance they have provided over the past 3 years. I wish

to give a special thank you to Nancy Fraser and Lauri Kunzman. Their continued support made my job easy and fun.

At its first meeting in September the Board of Directors elected Nancy Fraser as President. Congratulations, Nancy! Lauri Kunzman will continue as Treasurer, and Jim Kreutzbender continues as Secretary. We have a great leadership team in the new board and I am confident PBRP will continue to be a strong organization in the years to come.

Important Upcoming Dates

November 16, 2007

Next PBRP Board Meeting

January, 2008

Tualatin River Nat'l Wildlife Refuge
(TRNWR) Nature Center Opens

February 9, 2008

Spring New Monitor Information Workshop
& Returning Monitor Meeting

February, 2008

Native Plants for Wintering Bluebirds Plant-
In at TRNWR

March 6-9, 2008

North American Bluebird Society Annual
Convention
Kearney, Nebraska

March 29, 2008

TRNWR Nature Center Formal Dedication

TBA

Banders' Meeting with Master Bander
Donald Powers, PhD

TBA

Champoeg State Heritage Area Bluebird
Day



An Invitation from Bluebirds Across Nebraska and The North American Bluebird Society

Who: Bluebirders, Conservationists, and Nature Lovers in General!

What: Great Plains Sandhill Crane & Bluebird Festival, Combined with NABS Annual Meeting

Where: Kearney, Nebraska

When: March 6-9, 2008

Why: Bluebirds Across Nebraska (BAN) members and guests gather every spring for our Statewide Bluebird Conference as we await the return of bluebirds to our boxes and trails. This spring we are "extending" our conference into a "festival" to share in one of Nature's greatest spectacles – the annual spring migration of the Sandhill Cranes. The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is pleased to announce that it will hold its annual meeting during this festival.

Each March and April, Nebraska features the world's largest concentration of Sandhill Cranes when more than 500,000 cranes converge in the Platte River Valley as they make their journey north. Fossil records indicate cranes have gathered in Nebraska for more than nine million years. Event highlights include birding field trips to view Sandhill Cranes, Prairie Chicken Leks, and migrating waterfowl; tours of the Rainwater Basin and a Prairie Dog village; birding workshops; and a cultural journey through local attractions in and near Kearney. The

festival program on Saturday includes speakers on a variety of nature-related topics including both bluebirds and cranes and much more! Julie Zickefoose, Bill Thompson, III, Al Batt, Kevin Berner, Keith Radel, Keanna Leonard and Ron Cisar make up the informative and talented slate of speakers.

For more details about the festival and to reserve your place at this event, visit Bluebirds Across Nebraska at <http://www.bbne.org/> or write for information to: Bluebirds Across Nebraska, P. O. Box 61757, Lincoln, NE 68506. Hurry... Space fills up quickly!



Inquiry for Readers with Wintering Bluebirds

Do you have bluebirds that spend the winter on your property? If you do, you have information that PBRP would love to gather. We have been the recipients of a generous grant from the Weyerhaeuser Foundation to study native plants which support winter foraging for bluebirds. What do you see the bluebirds eating during the winter in your neighborhood? We would also be interested in the number of bluebirds you see, whether they are using nestboxes for roosting/weather protection, and a brief description of your property environment—elevation, lawn vs. field or pasture, amount and type of forestation, etc. Send information via e mail to our website, email@prescottbluebird.com, or U.S. Mail at PO Box 1469, Sherwood, OR 97140. Thank you!!



Male Western Bluebird, by Karen Russell

One Pair Raises Twenty-Two

-By Nancy Fraser

In the Fall, 2005, newsletter, Corinne Stefanick reported banding three clutches at the Wyller home near Sherwood. In the spring of 2005, a first-year female was captured at this location, and over that nesting season she produced three clutches and a total of 17 fledglings.

In 2006, and unreported in our newsletter, this same female produced 15 eggs, and in during the extremely difficult 2006 nesting season, had 3 clutches and fledged 13 youngsters.

In 2007, the female was back. The male bluebird was not captured this year; he was too busy, as you will see. The Wyllers found the first clutch of 6 eggs on March 28. Before the chicks from this clutch fledged, the female was already nest building in an adjacent nestbox. Four birds fledged on May 1. On May 6, there were 6 cold eggs in the adjacent box, and on May 8, there were 8 eggs. All 8 hatched, and 8 chicks were banded on June 1. On June 9, the female was back at the original box, building a new nest. The male was busy with the 8 nestlings, and all 8 fledged on June 13. On June 19, the female was sitting on 7 eggs in

the other box. Six hatched and were banded. All 6 fledged on June 23.

The Wyllers returned from a vacation and saw the female entering one of the nestboxes. They investigated and found 4 chicks and one unhatched egg. An emergency call went out for a bander, and the 4 were banded. They fledged on September 7.

This remarkable female bluebird produced a total of 26 eggs and 22 fledglings in 2007. It was a struggle to recapture her to verify her band number, and impossible to capture the male. They were both so very, very occupied with all of those fledglings, eggs, and grasses for the nests! On one remarkable morning, I sat with my trap and captured 2 juncos, 3 yellow rumped warblers, and one bluebird fledgling. The adults had the time to be curious, but were quite uninterested in entering the trap.

Thank you to the Wyllers for being such dedicated and responsive hosts and monitors for this tireless pair of Western Bluebirds!



Male Western Bluebird, by Zenobia Lapeyre



Western Bluebird pair, by Tom Cattrall

Fall Wrap Up Meeting Summary

-Photos & Text by Zenobia Lapeyre

The Fall Wrap Up and Annual Meeting was held September 29, 2007, at Champoeg State Heritage Area. This event is held every year, and is the seasonal wrap-up meeting for bluebird monitors, banders, and property owners where nesting boxes are located.

Board Members were nominated, and elections were held. Then, Jack Carter reviewed the concept and progression to date of the Weyerhaeuser Corporation Grant. This grant was awarded for the purposes of experimental planting and monitoring of native plant species to support winter food sources for Western Bluebirds. The next planting will take place at Tualatin

River National Wildlife Refuge this February, with planned similar plantings next year at Champoeg State Heritage Area. For more detailed information, see the related story on page 18 of this newsletter.



Photo of Dave Flaming, Past President, and Nancy Fraser, President of PBRP

The only thing that even comes close to the joy of watching bluebirds is the pleasure of talking about bluebirds with like-minded people. There was a lot of energy and enthusiasm as stories were shared. One such story was told by a volunteer who was startled while visiting their mailbox one cold, wintry morning by a group of bluebirds flying out of the nearby nestbox where they had roosted over night. One bander related the remarkable story of a bluebird pair that raised four clutches during this nesting season. More detail about this can be found on page 5 of this newsletter.

We enjoyed a visit by two of the education birds from Audubon Portland's Wildlife Care Center, along with their handlers. We learned that the Care Center handles thousands of sick, injured and abandoned animals each year, with the goal of repairing, rehabbing and releasing them back into the wild. In many cases, though, that is not possible. Sometimes a bird's health can be restored, but it still cannot function on its own in the wild, due to

missing limbs, for instance. These birds can often be used as education birds, making hundreds of appearances in the public schools as well as at various festivals and meetings such as ours. The one thing that must never happen with these rescued birds and animals is to turn them into pets. They are wild and must remain wild.



Jack Sparrowhawk, the American Kestrel

Jack Sparrowhawk is an American Kestrel, not a hawk. You can see in this photo how small he is (much the same as a jay). This is, in fact, the smallest falcon that we have in the Northwest. He looked so innocent as he sat through the presentation that it was hard for me to dredge up my generic anger at the species which can sometimes be responsible for bluebirds which become MIAs. It was important to learn the vital role of predatory birds like the kestrel in the environmental landscape. In fact, this particular raptor eats primarily small rodents and insects, supplementing its diet with songbirds on occasion.

A real charmer was Hazel, the Northern Spotted Owl. This species has a specialized habitat niche, and is threatened partially because of loss of old growth forest habitat

through development and logging, and new competition from the Barred Owl, a similar species that has expanded from east of the Rockies, and utilizes similar habitat. The Spotted Owl is an indicator species that shows the health (or lack of health) of our native old growth forests.

In talking about owls, the handler, PBRP's own Nancy Fraser, told us that owls' huge eyes give them acute vision for prey sighting. The trade off is almost no room in the skull for muscles to move the eyes. They compensate by turning their heads – nearly 270 degrees – to view objects directly with their binocular vision. I fancied that Hazel was following Nancy's every word. Hazel made eye contact with us in the audience, turning her head from position to position, not just staring blankly. When Nancy referred to her notes on the table, Hazel looked down at the papers too.



Nancy Fraser with Hazel, the Spotted Owl

Finally, one of the main items the agenda was for each of us monitors to turn in our reports of how many Western Bluebirds were successfully fledged on our routes. I don't know how my route compared to the others, and there are jillions of factors to consider, but I'm convinced that we can do even better on Aebischer Road next year!



Photo Caption Contest!



Photo by Rebecca Dandois of bluebird nestling

You may remember this photo- it appeared in our Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 newsletters, and we asked for creative and fun captions to describe this adorable bluebird nestling taking a peek at the outside world. We had said the PBRP Board would vote on the submissions, and that the top captions would appear in this newsletter. And the winners are...

4. "Ok, Ok, I heard! I'm just coming!" – submitted by Rachel Cornforth
3. "So... Where's the mealworms?" – submitted by Linda Gratteri
2. "This IS my smile!" – submitted by Lesley Kempzell
1. "Peek-A-Blue!" – submitted by Gayle Filsinger-Thomson

Thank you to everyone who participated!



Photo of Clematis 'Bluebird', taken by Lauri Kunzman

One Tough Bluebird

-by Ellie Shipley

My husband and I have lived in the Scholls area on two acres for about 20 years. My husband has built a variety of nest boxes throughout the years and we usually have a pair or two of bluebirds. Of course, the swallows and the bluebirds always seem to want the same box! This year, we had one tough male bluebird. One morning, while in the vicinity of the nest box, I heard the male bluebird squawking up a storm, jumping from tree to tree trying to get my attention. I said to myself, "Okay, I'll check your nest box." Inside, I saw a bird lying there. At first, I thought it was the female bluebird, but it turned out to be a dead swallow. I guess he needed help to get rid of the evidence! Hopefully, the four bluebirds that fledged will be as tough as their father.



Male Western Bluebird, by Zenobia Lapeyre



Close of Bluebird Nesting Season

-by Nancy Fraser

Fall has brought a delightful nip to the morning air, crisp (and not so crisp, rained-on) leaves, and a few of those impossibly blue, blue sky days. Have you finished up your last duties for the season on your bluebird monitoring route or on your property?

In our area, bluebirds frequently are looking for a safe, relatively dry haven in which to shelter from winter weather. Natural and nestbox cavities fill that need. For this reason, PBRP encourages all who monitor or own bluebird nestboxes to clean out the remains of nests. Capture the used nest into a plastic bag to be disposed of away from the nesting area. This is not only common courtesy for boxes placed in close proximity to homes and traveled roads, but also avoids alerting potential predators to the presence of nesting or roosting locations.

Fall, before the weather changes into something less than pleasant, is the best time for maintenance on nestboxes, for removing nestboxes which have deteriorated, or for placing new nestboxes and moving existing boxes (if no bluebirds have used them in 3 years) to more favorable locations. You may place nestboxes on right of way (power poles) without seeking permission; do not obscure power company ID shields. Remember when you take down or move nestboxes, you must notify your bander so that the data base can be corrected.

The identification number of a box is determined by its geographic location, rather than the box itself. If you replace a damaged box, you are responsible for labeling the new box with the same number

as the removed box. If you remove a box entirely, notify Dave Flaming, Data Base Manager, with the box number and location.

If you move a box from one property to another, it frequently will need a new number. When you move a box or put up a new box, contact your bander or Dave to get a new number. You will need to give a description of the location. You are responsible for then labeling the box with its new number.

Some basic principles of site location for Western Bluebird Nestboxes:

- Place boxes at least **100** yards apart. You may put up a “paired” box within 5-25 feet of a box, but then leave **100** yards between that pair and another single box or pair.

- Consider climbing predators, and locate boxes so that you can place predator guards or baffles to protect the eggs and young.

- Site the box so that some shade is provided during the heat of the day, or consider constructing some kind of shade or reflective device when sustained hot weather occurs later in the summer.

- Face the nest hole opening away from the prevailing direction of wind and rain.

- Locate the box with the nest hole facing away from roadways, and if possible face it toward a tree or shrub, or structure toward which the fledglings can fly and perch.

- Do not locate boxes in or near heavy brush or woods. This will attract other cavity nesting species.

- Do not locate boxes in areas where you see House Sparrows and Starlings. They will compete aggressively for nestboxes.

A Tribute to Hubert Prescott

-by Pat Johnston, Founding Member

By his own account, Hubert Prescott was born in February, 1899, on a farm on the Nehalem River near Jewell, Oregon. When Hubert was 5 years old, his father bought an orchard near Ashland, to which the family moved. There he attended grade school and the first 2 years of high school, when World War I intervened. He spent several months stateside in the Army, and when the armistice was signed in 1918, he was discharged. Then came a “protracted and finally successful effort to work my way through the University of Oregon with a bachelor’s degree in Zoology and Chemistry. My college career was interrupted by a nearly 7 year interlude during which I traveled to many parts of the world as a sailor on freighters, passenger liners, and one large private yacht. This experience became amalgamated as a major ingredient in my total education experience, but it delayed college graduation by many years. In fact, graduation came in the middle of the Great Depression when remunerative employment was hard to come by. After working in logging camps and various other jobs, I finally put in a 2 year stint teaching high school students for \$100 a month in a rural area east of Astoria. It was there that Fate overtook me in the form of my soon-to-be wife, Justin.”

“Shortly after that, insect pests in agricultural crops created a demand for entomologists. Although I wasn’t yet a bona fide entomologist, insects had been a sort of sub-hobby of mine since my youth. Justine, who was teaching school at Vernonia, took the long chance of diverting considerable of her hard-won teaching salary toward sending me to OSU to take courses in Entomology. After a few months of intensive classroom application, I was

offered a position as entomologist by the Entomology Research Service under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and that became my career until I retired at the end of 1965.”

“Birds were my major avocation since about the age of ten, and when I retired I reverted to my hobby with renewed vigor. Birds have kept me fired up ever since.” Hubert’s affinity with birds was uncanny. There are pictures of him with Evening Grosbeaks sitting on his head, and others of him with Pine Siskins on his lap and his legs. He kept nesting records of every bird that he found nesting. He mounted nestboxes on pilings on the Columbia River for purple martins. This was an adventure in itself because it had to be done during the spring freshet, when the river was high, so that the boxes would always remain above water. To do this, Hubert and a friend would take Hubert’s old canoe, pile it high with nestboxes and a ladder, and paddle out into the Columbia. They would approach the piling from upstream, grab it and balance the canoe against it. Hubert would hold tightly to the piling while his friend would lean the ladder against it, climb up, nail the nestbox to the piling, climb down, and remove the ladder. Then they would paddle to the next piling. Hubert was in his early 70’s at this time.

He had always loved bluebirds as a child, and while they had been very common in the 1940’s, by the time he had retired in 1965, they had almost completely disappeared from the North Willamette Valley. Hubert set out to search for them. He drove the highways and byways on the lookout, and after 6 years of searching, in 1971, he finally discovered a pair nesting in an old nestbox on Chehalem Mountain. In talking to the landowner, he found that there were about a dozen pairs nesting in the area, all in

nestboxes that people had on their property. He spent many hours researching and watching these bluebirds. Then, he went home and began building nestboxes, experimenting with box size and nesthole size. In the meantime, he was corresponding with Dr. Lawrence Zeleny, who was instrumental in working to restore the Eastern Bluebird, and who was the founder of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS). Before NABS was established, Hubert was submitting articles to the *Purple Martin News*. “A Rare Look at the Important Subject of Nest Sanitation”, appeared along with some of his excellent photos in the June 25, 1975 issue.

Hubert was a tall, slender gentleman, even into his seventies. He was never known to lose his temper, and when conversing with someone with whom he did not agree, he would not argue; he would say gently, “That has not been my experience.” His manner was affable and gentle, and he was genuine in his interest in helping restore the Western Bluebird to its former habitat. He would approach each farmhouse (the area was all rural farmland in the 1970’s) and explain his mission. He was rarely refused. He would mount nestboxes on trees, fenceposts, or sides of barns, always in suitable habitat. Befriending the landowners, he would monitor the boxes, keep impeccable records, and photograph whichever kind of bird was using the box, presenting a copy to the landowner. He had a 35 mm camera and a tripod. When he needed extra height on the tripod, he would find 3 sticks and strap them to the tripod legs to get the height he needed. Then he would find another stick or branch and insert it into the ground so that the top was even with the nesthole, and the parent bird had a landing spot. He got many excellent shots of birds feeding their young from this perch.

By 1975, he had built over 200 nestboxes, and erected them on Chehalem Mountain, and also on Parrett, Cooper, and Bull Mountains, and in the West Hills of Portland. He also installed nestboxes in the Molalla and Colton areas, and in the West Linn-Stafford areas. It was impossible for him to monitor this many boxes without help, so he enlisted the help of the Portland Audubon Society. Many young men who would later become influential leaders in Portland Audubon were early monitors of the bluebird project. Even so, there were areas that went without monitors for years. The amount of territory that he covered was astounding. In the 1980’s, when I thought I was setting up boxes in new territories, the landowners would tell me that an elderly gentleman had been there some years earlier and put up boxes. Even into the 1990’s it wasn’t unusual to come across a nestbox that Hubert had erected years earlier.

It was in 1974 that Earl Gillis retired as principal of Newberg High School, and before long joined Hubert Prescott in his endeavor to restore the Western Bluebird. Together they covered many miles by both automobile and trudging across fields, mounting nestboxes. When Hubert could no longer drive, Earl became his informal “chauffeur” until Hubert was no longer able to accompany him.

This man, Hubert Prescott, was a wonderful human being, truly devoted to his self-appointed mission to restore the Western Bluebird to its former habitat. We do well to name our project in his honor. It was he who first realized that this beautiful little bird was disappearing from our landscape, and more importantly, it was he who DID SOMETHING ABOUT IT. It is our hope and our goal to carry on his mission, and make a lasting difference in restoring this truly precious bird.

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Western Bluebirds Banded and Recaptured

	Banded Nestlings	Banded Adults	Total Banded	Live Recoveries	Dead Recoveries	Total Recoveries
1988	106	2	108	0	0	0
1989	27	3	30	0	0	0
1990	94	15	109	0	3	3
1991	117	11	128	1	3	4
1992	243	40	283	20	2	22
1993	242	23	265	29	4	33
1994	363	30	393	47	4	51
1995	493	26	519	32	5	37
1996	611	44	655	57	1	58
1997	939	53	992	83	7	90
1998	1,198	94	1,292	146	14	160
1999	1,295	104	1,399	238	37	275
2000	1,627	107	1,734	360	27	387
2001	1,952	97	2,049	379	51	430
2002	1,356	94	1,450	293	76	369
2003	1,837	127	1,964	378	28	406
2004	2,108	117	2,225	490	22	512
2005	2,048	143	2,191	414	42	456
2006	2,134	145	2,279	448	182	630
2007	1,949	112	2,061	333	83	416

Support Recovery of the Western Bluebird!

Fall is the time for reflection on the past year as the seasons change. This is true also for the Western Bluebird nesting season that has just come to a close. With some notable exceptions, the number of successful bluebird nestlings was lower this season than in those past. This would seem to support continuing to place nestboxes and monitoring bluebird breeding cycles. Banding will help us to track birds, and also potentially to share data with an increasing network of ornithologists who have a vital interest in bluebirds as an indicator species for climate and other environmental changes. Collectively, in the North American continent, we have a wealth of data about the three bluebird species. We can learn so much by sharing our data and continuing to observe, band, recapture, and record the movements of bluebird activity in the northern Willamette Valley.

We ask that all of you interested in the conservation of this species and of nature and wildlife in general consider making a donation to Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project. You will find a donation form and an envelope with this newsletter. We thank you for your support and love of bluebirds. **-Volunteers of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project**



Western Bluebird pair, by Karen Russell

Bluebirding 2007

Every year gets more interesting!

-by Karen Russell

Early in the season, I was monitoring 2 back-to-back nestboxes on T-Posts. I had been hopeful the Bluebirds would take one box and the swallows the other. No such luck! Both Violet Green Swallows and Tree Swallows were flying tight circles around me and dive-bombing my head. Suddenly, I heard a whoosh as I felt something brush my shoulder. I immediately looked up, and in midair saw a Sharp Shinned Hawk grab a swallow in its talons right in front of me! The hawk took off with the swallow, while the swallow's mate tried to fly with them as it screeched in panic.

Good thing I had a witness for this! My husband was in the car. We both looked at each other and simultaneously said, "Did you see that?!" It was a great topic of conversation for us.

Later in the season, I had a pair of bluebirds lay "Albino Eggs". I thought a swallow may have taken over the box, as last year I had both swallows and bluebirds sharing the same box until I separated them. That was not the case this year. There was never a

swallow seen near the box throughout the entire nesting-fledging process.

I discovered it's rare, but bluebirds do lay albino eggs. In such a case, either none of them will hatch, or they will hatch as normal bluebird nestlings. All five eggs did hatch, and all five normal bluebird nestlings fledged with no problems!



Typical Western Bluebird eggs, by Zenobia Lapeyre

Toward the end of the season, I had my first encounter with a Gopher Snake (4 ½ feet long). It was near a nestbox I was monitoring when I stepped forward and unknowingly planted my foot about 3 inches from its body. It has been a long time since I have moved so fast!

I want to thank all of the property owners I work with. They are such great people and so willing to help me in my birding endeavors. It is because of them that I am able to fledge the bluebirds that I do! Thank you all!



Western Bluebird pair, by Zenobia Lapeyre



NABS Convention

North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Convention

-by Nancy Fraser

The largest gathering of bluebird scientists in the world happened during the NABS convention at the University of Georgia September 21-23, 2007. Board members Lauri Kunzman and Nancy Fraser were privileged and delighted attendees at this conference. In addition to the enlightening and fascinating scientific studies that were presented, spending time in the company of other bluebird-oriented volunteers with years and years of experience and anecdotes to share was a very special treat. Both of us would strongly encourage anyone with an interest to consider attending the 2008 meeting in Kearney, Nebraska, in March.



Board Members Nancy Fraser and Lauri Kunzman at NABS convention

The scientific papers ranged from (my paraphrase of the titles) “More Than You REALLY Want To Know About Fire Ants”, “Mountain Bluebird Breeding in the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming (fledging in the snow at 8200 feet)” to “Monitoring a Population of Bluebirds at Los Alamos for a Ten Year Period (through devastating fires, drought, tree thinning projects, beetle-related 90% pine loss, and West Nile Virus)”. And there was just about everything in between. Here are just some facts or scientifically studied theories that I heard. The collaborative and friendly disagreements among scientists and volunteer citizen scientists (like us) were remarkable to observe. These really make one think.

-Bluebird hatchlings are cold blooded for the first 5-7 days after hatching.

-Female bluebirds showed no preference for more brightly-colored males based on color alone, but brighter males did occupy better nesting/foraging territories earlier than less brightly colored males. And the females sought out these premium locations.

-Perceived color in bluebirds is UV light reflective in the feathers rather than true color.

-Bluebirds showed a significant increase in effort and stress in order to breed successfully with increased ambient temperature combined with decreased precipitation.

-Fledglings are dependent on adults for minimally 5-7 days after fledging.

-Divorce rate in one study population (Central California foothills-WEBL) is 7%.

-In this same study area, bluebird groups are composed of parent birds, sons, and immigrant females.

-Comparison of humans and birds regarding tendency of young to move away from natal territory: In humans, males move farther than females. In birds, females move farther than males.

-Presentations were made showing how interdependent or adaptable species were regarding changes in temperature vs. changes in light/darkness to trigger breeding cycles. As global temperatures rise, species that depend on insect prey that have a temperature-dependent cycle may be less adaptable than those that depend on prey that base life cycle on light/dark seasonal changes.

One very inspiring and moving presentation given as a Power Point slide presentation with musical accompaniment was built around Eastern bluebird recovery and monitoring, conservation, natural areas, education of youngsters, other native animal and plant species, and the folk tune “’Tis a Gift To Be Simple”.



Male Western Bluebird, by Zenobia Lapeyre



Western Bluebird pair, by Mark Landis



Grant E. Clere continues to be fascinated with bluebirds. While not quite ready for a route yet (he's still about 14 years away from a driver's license), he has already accompanied his dad out on the Parrett Mountain route a few times. In addition, Grant conducted extensive research into Mountain Bluebird populations at Sunriver whilst on a family vacation there in August. Seated comfortably in his bike trailer, he called out bluebird sightings to his Mom, Dad and Uncle Jason. The little guy seems to be a natural with animals of all kinds, big and small.



Western Bluebird pair feeding fledglings, by Zenobia Lapeyre

Finally I've Got Bluebirds

-by Bill M.

It has taken 5 years and finally we have bluebirds nesting on our property. A number of years ago, while spending the afternoon in the woods West of Carleton, I saw a small flock of bluebirds. I was surprised to see bluebirds in Western Oregon, so I searched the internet for any information regarding bluebird sightings out here. During my search, I came across the PBRP website where I found very useful information on the Western Bluebird. After reading the facts and data, I soon realized this bird is not just found in clear cut logging areas but right here in the Willamette Valley.

The first bluebird nestbox I purchased was very generic in design and did not cater to the Western Bluebird. After installing it, a pair of bluebirds began inspecting it. They stuck around for approximately a month but would not commit to nesting. I moved the nest box to different locations on my property during the second, third, and fourth years, but the outcome was the same. After long winters of anticipating the bluebird arrival in spring, I was very disappointed.

Last winter I studied every article, fact and nesting habit of the Western Bluebird on the PBRP Website. I trashed the nest boxes previously built, and constructed new ones to the exact nest box specifications located on the website. In addition to installing these new boxes, I added a mealworm feeding station.

It was a foggy, gray morning in early February when I saw a pair of bluebirds. This pair of bluebirds made another appearance in late February and began to inspect the nestboxes put up in winter. I added mealworms to my feeding station but had no takers. I saw this pair a few more times in March but they wouldn't commit to nesting in the boxes provided.

Around the middle of April, I saw this pair feeding on my property. They ignored the nest boxes and just called back and forth to one another as they fed. I became curious as to where they were nesting and watched as they flew away. I confirmed that they had taken up residency in a "generic" bluebird box exactly like the one I had purchased 5 years ago! Not only did they take up residency in a common bluebird house that can be found at any lawn and garden store, they did so approximately 1/8 of a mile from the boxes I designed and built specifically for bluebirds. Talk about a low blow! Now I really wondered what I was doing wrong.

It was early June, and I was focused on keeping my vegetable garden green and weed free. While pulling weeds that seem to return every year, I heard a male bluebird chirping as he perched on top of a small fir. I looked up and was surprised to see him so close to where I was working. He moved about the property feeding and chirping as he hunted for insects. I had kept some meal worms on hand should this situation ever occur, and I placed a handful of them on the station. It didn't take long for this male to hone in on the worms from atop the fir trees. I was totally amazed that this bluebird was now feeding from the station that had been empty for so long.

All thoughts I had of hoping to attract a pair of bluebirds on my property came back. I continued to feed this male and occasionally

the female for the next couple of weeks. I confirmed this pair was nesting around the corner in the "generic" box.

The PBRP had a bluebird event at Champeog Park in June. My family and I went to the event and that's when I met Lauri Kunzman and Dave Flaming. I explained my situation and described the struggles of trying to attract bluebirds to my property. I asked Lauri if there was any chance of getting the bluebirds to raise their second clutch in one of my nest boxes as opposed to their current nest box. She indicated that it was possible, but unlikely.

I continued to feed this male every evening and soon noticed he was no longer flying back to feed his clutch this supplemental treat. He was now flying with his mate to and from the feeding station and trees. The first clutch had fledged and the group was now feeding everywhere, including my feeding station.

It wasn't more than 2 weeks later when it happened...The male and female were hanging around the nest box I had put up for them during the winter. The female bluebird quickly started construction on a new nest. After just a few days, it was completed. I was pretty excited that she chose this nest box and patiently waited for her to start laying eggs.

Dave Flaming came over to band the new nestlings and allowed our kids to view the process. We were able to trap and band the adult male as well as a first clutch juvenile from this pair. Approximately, one and a half weeks later they fledged!!

If you are trying to attract bluebirds into your yard, I suggest patience, as well as reading the PBRP website for information!



Spring New Monitor Information Session and Returning Monitor Get Together

The date for this meeting is February 9, 2008, at Champoeg State Heritage Area Visitors' Center. We are looking for an overall coordinator for the morning New Monitor event from 9-noon. There are a number of volunteers needed for logistics, publicity and clerical support, audiovisual assistance, and writing/preparing a comprehensive Power Point presentation to be given by one individual, rather than the multiple volunteer speakers we have used in the past. It will be interesting and challenging to create this presentation, which will standardize the material presented and avoid duplication. We will continue to present a visual summary of the monitoring topic by using a skit format with a new monitor and their bander "on the route" to illustrate points and bring some light-heartedness to the meeting.

The afternoon session (1-3) is for returning monitors to hear a summary of the previous nesting season, any new information for the upcoming year, meet with their banders, and share ideas and stories. The Board plans to present information regarding the Audubon Portland Wildlife Care Center, and guidelines about using this busy licensed wildlife rehabilitation center for injured or orphaned bluebirds.

Please come and join one or both of these sessions. Having some veteran monitors present at the meeting is informative for interested new monitor volunteers!

Native Plant Project Update

The native plant work day scheduled in coordination with the Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge group has been rescheduled from November 10 to an as-yet undetermined date in February 2008. The Refuge is moving into its new office and visitor center building, but because of delays in completing the move, our contact at the Refuge has asked that we shift our planting work day to a Saturday in February.

Please keep this project on your list of fun ways to spend a Saturday morning in February! If this is the first you've heard about the project, we are planting native berry/seed bearing plants in two areas where bluebirds winter. While a great deal is uncertain about the specifics of western bluebird diets during the winter when insects are scarce, their food source is believed to partially shift to seeds and/or berries that are available. The objective of our native plant project is to increase the availability of berry and seed bearing plants in bluebird's winter habitats. We're hopeful this will contribute to greater bluebird winter survival rates, as well as reestablish populations of native plants that many other types of wildlife depend on for habitat and food.

At the Fall wrap-up meeting, many Prescott volunteers expressed an interest in helping out with this project. Stay tuned for the date on the rescheduled planting work day. If you have any questions, contact Jack Carter at 971-344-1431, or by email at oswego62@comcast.net.

The native plant project is being funded largely by a grant from the Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation, which focuses its support on education and environmental projects.



Special Discounted Membership Offer from NABS

The North American Bluebird Society is pleased to announce that we now offer to you a **\$15.00 “A+” membership (individual or household)** as a benefit of Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project’s Affiliate Membership in NABS.

As a member of NABS you will receive “Bluebird,” the quarterly journal of NABS. Please fill out the application below, and send with payment to: **North American Bluebird Society, P O Box 43, Miamiville OH 45147**

1 Year 2 Years 3 Years 4 Years

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\$400 goes to the Zeleny Endowment Fund.

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We do not share or sell NABS’ membership list.

\$10.00 of each annual membership is designated for subscription to “Bluebird,” the quarterly journal. The remaining portion of payment is a contribution.

Payment must be in U.S. funds.

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