



Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Newsletter - Spring 2005

An affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

PBRP Welcomes New Master Bander

By Fred Robinson

Don Powers, Ph. D., Professor of Biology and chairperson of the Department of Biology and Chemistry at George Fox University in Newberg, has volunteered as our new master bander. Don teaches biology and ornithology at George Fox, is noted nationally for his hummingbird research and brings with him 25 years of experience as master bander. He is a member of the American Ornithologists' Union, has published eight papers and also authored two chapters in "Birds of North America".

PBRP banders recapture and band bluebirds for the primary purpose of studying population migration and longevity. Each bander is authorized by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and is under the supervision of the licensed master bander.

We are most fortunate to have Don volunteer and are also looking forward to learning more about his hummingbird studies. Please welcome Don into our Prescott family. 🦋



They're back!

New Monitors Hit the Bluebird Trail in 2005

We were thrilled to see so many new faces at our annual spring training in February, and twelve dedicated individuals signed up to take on a nest box monitoring route.

Becky Snyder and Kelli Hoffman will be working with bander Lynn Krupa. Chris Childs joined Carol Munger's group. Bander Lauri Kunzman added Diane Harris and Jack Carter to her list, and Dave Flaming, PBRP President and bander, hit the jackpot with seven new volunteers: They are David Reichle, Gordon & Jessica Craft, Barbara Manghelli, Jim Norris and Mary Langtry, and David Elliott. Welcome to PBRP! 🦋

2004 Contributors

The Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project is a non-profit 501C(3), all-volunteer organization dedicated to the recovery, restoration, and enhancement of the western bluebird in the northern Willamette Valley of Oregon.

Please send all tax-deductible donations to: PBRP, P.O. Box 1469, Sherwood, OR 97140. Our tax identification number is 93-1021520.

The PBRP Newsletter is available free by mail each spring and fall. To receive it, call 503.245.8449 and leave your name and address or read it online at www.prescottbluebird.com.

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 Corinne Stefanick, Immediate Past President
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 Marilyn Van Dyk, Secretary
 Pat Johnston, Founding Member
 Brenda McGowan, Founding Member
 Don Powers, Master Bander
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 Lynn Ahern, Education Coordinator
 Jeff Wiese, Nest Box Coordinator
 Jane Dunkin, Newsletter Editor
 Charlie Stalzer, Webmaster

Open Positions:
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Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project owes its success to its donors. Every dollar you give helps us help our beloved Western Bluebirds.

To all of you without exception our heartfelt thank-you.

Lynn Ahern, Gloria Attrell, Autzen Foundation, Rita Bang, Estelle Barbur, Norma Beaty, Kenneth & Janice Becker, David & Merla Beltz, Gary & Cindy Bidiman, John & Esther Bisonius, Mary & Luis Brillas, Debra & Paul Brodie, Stephen & Gloria Brown, William & Marilyn Brown, Bob Burbank, Peter & Susan Carr, Jackson Carter, Sidney Cathey, Richard & Karen Cavender, Nancy Chase, Carl & Joan Christian, Frank & Edith Colley, Edith Cooley, Gaila & Bill Couch, Jennifer Devlin, Roderic & Doris Diman, Janet Dorow, Archibald & Adah Doty, Jr, John & Gayla Edwards, Barnes Ellis, Chris & Michael Feves, Edie & Dave Flaming, Brooke Floren, Stan & Colleen Freidberg, Fran Fulwiler, Thad Furlong, Paul & Patricia Garstka, Suzanne Gillmer, Michael & Margaret Godfrey, Linda Gratteri, Gaylene Grossen, Rex & Elisabeth Hagans, Juliann Hart, Michael & Laurel Heifetz, Lana & Gene Herb, Barbara Hinman, Bernice Hirtzell, David & Maryanne Holman, Betsy & Jim Holzgraf, Anne Jackson, Jackson Family Trust, Martin Jaqua, David & Margaret Jeans, Paul & Kris Jellum, Philip Johnson, Roger & Janet Kadel, James & Peggy Kessinger, Pat & Dan Knox, Joan Kruse, D. E. Layton, Lawrence & Pamela Levy, Barbara Linden, Kelly Lindsey,Carolynn & John Loacker, R & Andrea Lockwood, Mary Loman, Marsden Manson, David Marshall, Diane Mathers, Sondra & James McIlhagga, Heidi & Jack McLean, Jerry & Cathryn McMurray, Marion McTimmonds, Mike & Linda McWhirter, Virgil & Thelma Medley, Myrnela Meyer, Linda & Gale Miller, Richard & Jane Miller, Robert & Irene Mills, Mary Nelsen, George Nelson, Jr., Berta Neubauer, Fred & Jill Newton, Janelle Niemann-Ross, Nims Family Trust, Michelle Othus, Marshall Page, Palisades Garden Club, Dorothy & Donald Patrick, R Scott & Lolly Peavy, Burl & Margarita Peterson, Jack Peterson, Nicholas & Teresa Peterson, Dolores Philipp, Ruth & Roger Phillips, David & Kay Pollack, Pope Family trust, Marilyn & Richard Portwood, John U & Betty Jo Reynolds, Reuben Rich, Richard & Elaine Rife, Elizabeth Rillver, Roger Martin & Assoc, Roos Family, Lynda Ryan-Hill, John & Jeanaine Schmeltzer, Thomas Seidl, Loren & Elmarine Shipley, Jerald & Loris Shroyer, Ross & Audrey Shutts, Charlie & Marie Smith, Roger & Joan Smith, Elmer & Sue Specht, Charles & Cloris Spink, Gary & Patricia Stolley, Peggy Stone, Ruth Strom, Susan & Anders Swanson, John Teskey, Alan & Irene Tessman, Pat & John Trudel, Connie Tyson, Frederick & Madalyn Utz, Volz & Associates, M.K. Vredenburg, Leonard & Donna Walker, Gorden Walvik-Nielsen, Don & Sigrid Weidenweber, Murray Wells, Westover Inns, Janelle Whittlesey, Mark & Joann Wiltrakis, Ardith Wyller, Susan Yamanaka, Joe Yesenofski, Trish & Ed Zakocs. 🍴

From the President's Nest Box

By Dave Flaming

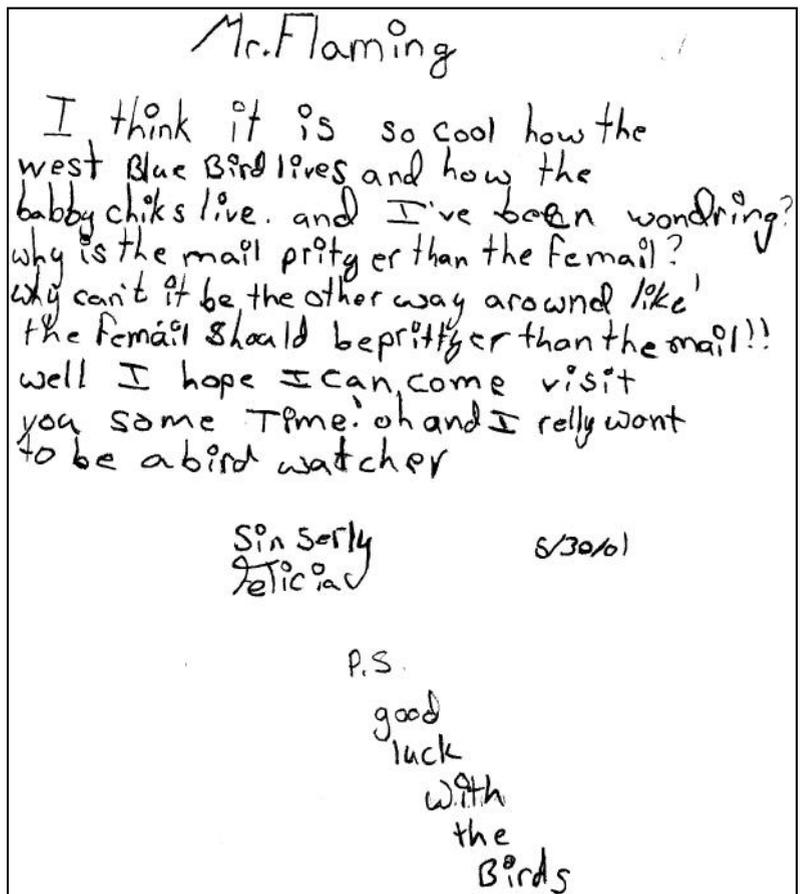
Welcome to Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project's 2005 season! We experienced a very good year in 2004 and are looking forward to another great season.

Our 2005 roster consists of 16 banders, four bander assistants, and 74 monitors for over 1600 nest boxes. We also have the support of 727 homeowners who allow us access to their property in order to monitor Bluebirds. My personal thanks to each and every one of you. I am pleased to announce that Lynn Ahern is our new Education Director. Lynn has been a monitor for Prescott for a number of years and has been very active in our educational program. In addition to giving presentations to the public, Lynn has been leading Bluebird programs at Champoeg State Heritage Area.

We welcome Don Powers as Prescott's master bander. Don has been an active birder for over 30 years. Please read more about Don on page one in this issue.

Lauri Kunzman is Prescott's new Treasurer. Lauri is a bander and monitor in the Wilsonville area. She previously served as our Public Relations Coordinator.

This May the National Association of Bluebird Societies (NABS) will hold its annual convention in Asheville, NC. Prescott is pleased to be represented at this convention by Education Director Lynn Ahern and bander Carole Hallett. I am looking forward to this season, and I wish each of you a summer filled with Western Bluebirds. 🐦



Volunteers in the Spotlight

By Lauri Kunzman

Gail Bolstad has been a monitor with PBRP since 1997, shortly after her retirement. That spring Gail spotted a Western Bluebird on her deck railing and called the Portland Audubon Society. They notified Pat Johnston, one of our founding members, who placed the first nest box on Gail's property. Western bluebirds have returned every year to the three boxes on the Bolstad's five acres.

When asked what draws her back to monitoring each year, Gail explains, "I just love seeing the beautiful blue colors of this sweet bird and enjoy the process of their entire nesting cycle. It feels like family. When the blues return in the spring, I think *my family has returned.*" Gail feels strongly about protecting the environment and participating at a grassroots level, and Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project provides encouragement and an opportunity to contribute.

Gail monitors a route in the Sherwood area between Tooze Road and Baker Road. She has made many new friends with her neighbors, who are now also bluebird homeowners. In 2004 her diligent monitoring helped in the success of 19 clutches in 12 of the 18 boxes she monitors.

"We all need a purpose in our retirement, and helping to protect these beautiful birds is a wonderful purpose in my life."

"Oh, the blues are back!" is a familiar refrain at the Bolstad house, one she shares with her two grandchildren, Taylor (5) and Jacob Cole (3). Last summer during the second clutch, Taylor was anxious to watch the banding process and asked to hold one of the young nestlings. Taylor is especially proud of what her grandmother does and is always eager to watch the blues during their stay at her grandparents' home.

Gail shared her pearls of wisdom for new monitors: "Please know we are always dealing with

nature, and there will be challenges and disappointments. Sometimes we have to make tough decisions, and not all the nests will be successful. But we have to keep trying and remember the good parts, keep learning, and keep watching those beautiful blue birds."

Thank you, Gail, for being a tremendous monitor, a wonderful keeper of our blues, and for passing your love of nature on to your grandchildren. ♣



Gail Bolstad with her granddaughter, Taylor.

Special Thanks

A special thank-you to Don Dykstra for designing, manufacturing and donating over 100 plastic nest box mounts to PBRP.

The poles can be screwed to the back of the nest boxes and then slipped over the top of metal T-stakes for quick and efficient mounting.

Prescott to Host 2005 Champoeg Festival

By Kit Whittaker

Bluebirds, blueberries and a bluegrass band - it's the perfect combination for this year's Champoeg Bluebird Festival. The annual event will take place at Champoeg State Heritage Area on Saturday, June 18 from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM (Father's Day Weekend).

A chance to learn about the Western Bluebird in its nesting habitat is the main attraction of this family-oriented festival. Spotting scopes will be set up for close-up viewing of several bluebird pairs, and guided bird walks around Champoeg park bring visitors close to the birds in their natural habitat.

New for this year is also an officially sanctioned Volkswalk.

For the children there will also be birdhouse building, ranger talks and other fun activities. Blueberry refreshments, a barbecue lunch and a live bluegrass band will keep visitors' energy up, and local artisans will offer unique and hand made bird, garden and wildlife items for sale. Bird-friendly native plants and heirloom vegetables from local growers will also be available. 🍃

Directions to Champoeg State Heritage Area
Off I-5 take the Donald/Aurora exit No. 278.
Follow the signs approximately six miles west to the park. There is a \$3.00 charge per vehicle for parking.

It's Your Festival

And here's how you can help

We need many volunteers to make this year's Bluebird Festival at Champoeg the best yet. So step forward, and don't be shy. It's fun, it's in a beautiful location, it's interesting, *and* it's all about bluebirds. You will want to be there on Saturday, June 18! Here's what we need:

Setup: 4 strong volunteers to set up tables, chairs and signs. 4 more for take down.

Welcome table and information post: 4 - 6 enthusiastic members who love to meet, greet and talk Bluebird Recovery with interested visitors – two locations.

Bluebird presentations: 2 or 3 people to help in the Champoeg museum theater

Nest box building: 3 or 4 volunteers to help kids (and their parents) build a chickadee box to bring home. This is fun!

Junior Ranger Program: Hang out under the Old Oak Tree and help with kids' projects.

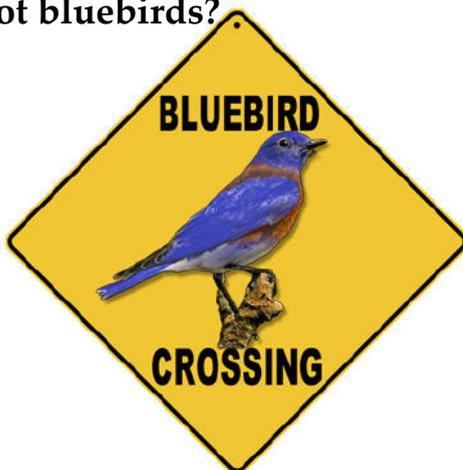
Nest box viewing: 4 or 5 volunteers to talk the bluebird talk, answer questions, aim spotting scopes and describe recovery program work to visitors.

Refreshments: 3 or 4 volunteers to serve blueberry treats and help with BBQ lunch.

Prescott sales table: 2 or 3 people to sell aprons, totes, bluebird crossing signs, books and other bluebird memorabilia.

Native Plant Sale: 2 or 3 knowledgeable people to assist with sale and display. For information contact Kit Whittaker at 503.682.1446 or email her at whittsend@aol.com (or call or email PBRP). 🍃

Got bluebirds?



Crossing signs are available for \$12.00 plus postage. Email or call PBRP and ask for Lauri Kunzman!

PBRP Members Attend Event

Lynn Ahern, Jackie Salkield and Lauri Kunzman participated as special guests at the first annual third-Saturday-in-April *Buds, Blooms and Bluebirds* event at the Champoeg Wine Cel-



lars vineyard. The bluebirds were busy nest building and entertaining the picnickers, two of whom were Mr. and Mrs. Harry Irons. Mr.

Irons was president of Portland Audubon Society in the early seventies when Hubert Prescott approached Audubon to request support for his new recovery project. The three Prescott members enjoyed a delightful chat with Mr. Irons about Hubert Prescott and his pioneering work. 🍷

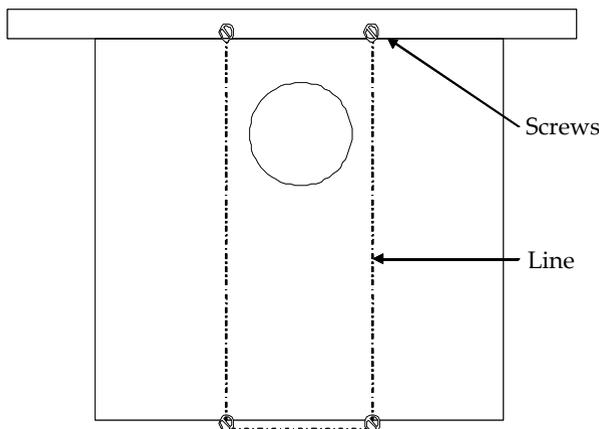
Monofilament Line Deters House Sparrows

By Joan Watroba, Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania

I have been experimenting with the method in the configuration below for the second half of last season and all of this nesting season with excellent results.

Last year I started using it on a 12-box trail that had many House Sparrows interfering with nestings of bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds. However, after I installed the line on those boxes, there were no further attempts by House Sparrows to use the boxes, yet other native cavity-nesters, bluebirds and tree swallows used the boxes with ease and had successful fledgings. This season I added three more nest boxes to the same trail, and I reinstalled the line to all except one nest box. I installed it on several box styles – standard, Peterson, and slot boxes in late Febru-

ary. All of my nest boxes except one remained free of any House Sparrow activity even though there are many House Sparrows in the immediate area. The one that had House Sparrow activity – nest and eggs, was the one without the monofilament lines. After removing the nest and eggs, I installed the line on that box, and there have been no further attempts by House Sparrows to use that nest box or any other on the trail. I am happy to report that this year two more species, titmice and chickadees are successfully nesting there. If you use this method I would be interested in learning how it worked for you. Any questions or feedback can be directed to me by email at sunshinebb@msn.com. Happy Bluebirding!



Instructions: You will need 4 small screws and 6-lb test monofilament fishing line.

Place 2 screws on top and two on the bottom of the box spaced just outside the entrance hole.

Pull the monofilament line taut along the length of the nest box.

Note: For side opening boxes there is no need to move the line when monitoring the nest box. For top or front-opening boxes it is best to tie the line permanently to the upper left screw, bring it down to wind along the bottom screws, then up to the top right screw leaving extra line that can be wound around and secured by the treads of the screw. I always tighten the screws completely on the top of the nest box. 🍷

Bluebird Art: Artist Donates Share the Story all Proceeds to Prescott

By Lynn Ahern

As the new Education Coordinator for Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project, I would like to encourage any of you out there (whether you're a new member or a seasoned bluebirder); if you are interested in becoming involved in education outreach for the project, please get in touch with me. I am willing and able to work with you on the equipment and materials we use, and I am always open to new ideas.

Where do your interests lie? Do you want to present the project in a classroom? Would you like to help out at the Bluebird Festival? Is there a garden group that needs a speaker? Would a bird walk be up your alley? How about manning a table at a wildlife festival? These are just some of the events PBRP is involved in. We welcome anyone who would be interested in sharing the wonderful story of the Western bluebird. We take great satisfaction in knowing that we are playing an active part in the habitat restoration of such a beautiful little song bird.

Please think about it - and then contact me! I would love to hear your ideas.

Lynn Ahern
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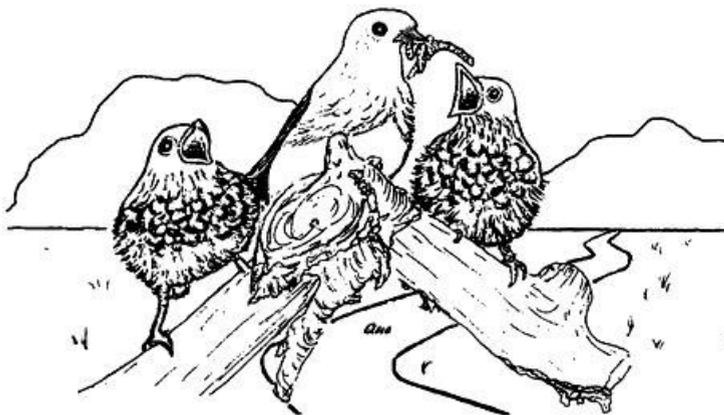
If you should happen to visit the King City Backyard Bird Shop might we recommend you begin your browsing on the back wall of the store? The display of bluebird plaques will take your breath away and, even better, we promise no sticker shock, here! The price is only ten dollars and, as the sign says, all proceeds go to the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project.

Juliann Hart, local sales clerk and display designer, is the creative soul behind these hand-painted gems, and they are only sold in the King City store. Juliann monitored a



Bluebird art by Juliann Hart.

nest box route for PBRP in the Sherwood area for several years before returning to work full time, but she has found another way to support the "blues". If you can't stop to see her artwork at the store, please come meet Juliann and check out her creations at the Champoeg Bluebird Festival in June. 🐦



Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Bluebird Society.

Why are Bluebird Eggs Blue?

By Megan Miller

Like so many strange and wonderful things in nature, the color of bluebird eggs is driven by genetics. Blue genes, you might say. (Or you might not. Perhaps we'd better just continue...)

A young female bluebird hatches with the ability to start producing ova. Interestingly, she only has one ovary - the left one. It is believed that the right ovary, while present, does not develop in order to save weight in flight. As the bird matures, she begins to produce the yolk that will enshroud and nourish the embryo as it ultimately incubates beneath her.

When sexually mature at about one year, the female bluebird may mate with more than one male per breeding season. The ova are fertilized and travel through the oviduct. Albumen (egg white) is added in layers, and chalazae form. Chalazae are specialized "ropes" of albumen whose function is to stabilize the egg within the shell. The shell is created last, also in layers, and during its formation glands add the familiar blue pigment. The pigment, known as biliverdin, is created from bile.

Here's where genetics step in: Not all Eastern Bluebirds are capable of adding the pigment. It is estimated that as much as five percent of Eastern Bluebird eggs emerge white.

Shell color does not indicate whether or not a female chick will herself be a white-egg layer or a blue-egg layer, as white-egg layers do not regu-

larly pass the gene anomaly to their offspring. Nor does shell color predict the birth of a white bluebird (sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it?). White eggs and blue eggs both generally contain healthy blue birds.

Albinism does occur in bluebirds, however. One well-documented case was sighted in Maryland in 1999 (although some reports say that it was not a true albino as it had dark eyes and legs). Albino birds are at special risk in the wild - they are easily seen by predators and tend to have im-



paired hearing and eyesight, and feathers of lesser quality. But to return to the question, why are bluebird eggs blue? Some authorities say that the blue color blends well and helps hide the eggs in the dappled light of a nesting cavity. A seven-year-old authority of my acquaintance says they're blue because there are so few of them. Whatever the reason, blue eggs are another reason we love bluebirds.

*(This article was written for Texas Blues, the newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society. Megan Miller lives in Crawford, Texas.)
(From Bluebird, Summer 2004) ♣*

What you can do to help wildlife:

- ✓ *Never release a domestic animal to the wild.* It's inhumane, biologically destructive and illegal.
- ✓ *Do not feed wild animals.* It is far better to allow wildlife to adjust to the available natural forage.
- ✓ *Place all garbage in appropriate receptacles.*
- ✓ *If you see a young bird or mammal on the ground, do not interfere.* Give it a wide berth and allow its parents to continue to raise it.

Remember that we share the urban landscape with a wide array of wild neighbors. Especially during the spring active nests and vulnerable young animals can be found all over our urban parks. ♣

The Debate on Cleaning Nest Boxes

By Dr. David Bird

Adapted from the California Bluebird Recovery Program, v. 10 no. 3, Summer 2004 as excerpted from *Backyard Bird News*, Winter 2000

Should you or should you not clean out your nest boxes? This is a perennial debate. Perhaps cavity-nesting birds prefer boxes that contain old nesting material? Or maybe leaving it in for next season will lead the birds to reproductive failure.

There are various reasons, however, why birds might prefer either scenario.

First, reuse of an old nest can save time and energy. Second, birds might be able to avoid selecting an unsuccessful nesting site if they choose one that looks like it was used last year. On the other hand, old nests might have been plundered by predators last year, who are just waiting for the new occupants to set up house. Also, if a site has been used, the previous owners might show up, leading to competition and perhaps nest destruction or delayed breeding. The biggest disadvantage, though, might be the presence of nest-swelling ectoparasites just waiting to infest the incubating adults or their nestlings. These in-

clude blood-sucking mites and fleas.

Eastern bluebirds readily use wooden nest boxes, so Wayne Davis, Paul Kalisz and Rick Wells of the University of Kentucky in Lexington set up pairs of nest boxes on 50 power poles, one box empty and another containing a bluebird nest that had fledged young the year before.

Of 41 bluebird pairs using the paired boxes, 38 chose ones with an old nest and only three nested in a clean one. In four other sets of boxes, a pair of house wrens, white-breasted nuthatches, Carolina chickadees and tree swallows respectively, chose boxes that had old nests. A pair of tree swallows used a clean box.

As to why the bluebirds prefer boxes with old nests, Davis and associates offered a couple of explanations. First, bluebirds like deep nests that make it hard for predators to reach in and grab eggs or young. Perhaps the bluebirds like having the old material so that they can rework it and dig a deeper nest cup. Then again the researchers found no difference in the depth from the entrance hold to the top of the old nest. Their second explanation was related to ectoparasites. The larvae of blood-sucking blowflies inhabit bluebird nests and can be harmful to bluebird

young. But the birds have an ally in the parasitic wasps that also inhabit their boxes and kill the blowfly larvae. Although adult blowflies over-winter outside the boxes, the parasitic wasps hang out in the boxes. By removing old nests in spring or fall, you are also throwing out the wasps, which ultimately leads to greater blowfly larvae numbers and hence lowered nestling survival. So the eastern bluebirds might want the parasitic wasps that come with them.

The only effective way to completely eliminate parasites from nest boxes is to clean out the nests and thoroughly clean the box interior with a light bleach water solution just prior to nesting season. Deciding which chemicals are safe for the bird and the environment raises a whole new issue.

I recommend that you do not bother cleaning out your nest boxes each fall or spring except under two circumstances: If the nesting material is badly soiled, then chuck it out. If it feels damp, consider the possibility that your nest box is not rainproof and it should be repaired or replaced. In the case of eastern bluebirds, clean out the box only if the old material has accumulated to the point where the nesting cavity has become too shallow and thus vulnerable to predators. ✍

We also thank our supporting businesses.



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Beaverton Fred Meyer Center 11429 S.W. Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy. (503) 626-0949	Vancouver 8101 N.E. Parkway Drive (360) 253-5771

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2005 Calendar

NABS Convention	May 19 - 22
Champoeg Bluebird Walk	June 5
Champoeg Festival	June 18
Cycle Oregon at Champoeg	September 15
Fall Wrap-up Meeting	September 17
Newsletter Deadline	November 1

Words to Ponder

Contributed by Pat Johnston

Jack Ward Thomas, a member of the famous (or infamous, depending on your point of view) "God Squad" appointed by President Clinton, said that he never understood ecology until he learned these four truisms:

1. *All things are connected.*
2. *Everything goes somewhere.*
3. *There is no free lunch.*
4. *Mother Nature knows best.* 🌿



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