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PRESCOTT BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

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Newsletter Spring 2018

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Newly Elected Board Takes the Helm, Loaded with New Members and Ideas

By Nancy Fraser

At our 2017 Fall Wrap-up and Annual Meeting, the biennial election of the board was held. The new board, ten strong, is made up of 50% returning members and 50% new members, all of whom are volunteer field monitors or banders with at least two years experience (although the

range runs up to 15 years experience). Quarterly meetings are held, with most members taking on one or more liaison or co-ordinating roles. You can see the new roster of board members at the left on this page. Here's a photograph taken shortly after the adjournment of the January, 2018, meeting showing some of the members and volunteer bander guest Michelle.

The Bluebird is a Thrush Too

Welcome, welcome, little stranger,

Fear no harm, and fear no danger;

We are glad to see you here,

For you sing "Sweet Spring is near."

~Louisa May Alcott, "To The First Robin," 1840



Photo Credit - Zenobia Lapeyre

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Spring Workshop

By Gwen Martin

On a typical late winter day—a little rain, plenty of clouds, and a little sunshine, returning and new volunteers gathered at Champoege State Park for our 2018 Spring Workshop. New volunteers received their initial overview of monitoring a bluebird route, and returning monitors and banders picked up their packets of materials for the coming nesting season.

We had guests from the Clark County Master Gardeners' Program (see separate article).

The project has a higher than usual number of vacancies, due to retirements, moves, and family or health reasons, and the PBRP Board was delighted to welcome so many new volunteers. With new members come fresh ideas and energy, and we're excited for the coming seasons! In addition to monitoring and banding, other volunteer opportunities are available in the following areas: assisting with the newsletter, participating in social media, staffing our table at bird festivals and special events, being a photo contest judge, nestbox repair/building, and board member. If you missed the workshop and want to get involved, let us know! Contact us at our website: www.prescottbluebird.com.



Photo Credit - Zenobia Lapeyre



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President's Message:

By Karrie Duckworth

The 2018 Bluebird season is off to a great start. The Board of Directors did a wonderful job holding the spring workshop at Champoege State Heritage Area Visitors' Center on February 24th. There was a record attendance of new volunteers wanting to sign up.

This year PBRP is focusing on building our monitor volunteer base. Our banders currently serve as mentors, coaches, field trainers, and team leaders for groups of monitors. Without sufficient banders to meet these needs, we are unable to re-open routes that do not have proper monitor coverage. The board of directors decided to launch a new position called 'Monitor Mentor'. Thankfully, many seasoned, returning monitors signed up to be a Monitor Mentor. Monitor Mentors will serve as a point of contact for new volunteer monitors as they begin their new routes.

Another focus is to continue conducting the nest box temperature button project. This is a project collecting data for Don Powers, Ph. D., Professor of Biology and chairperson of the Department of Biology and Chemistry at George Fox University in Newberg. Last but not least is the photo contest. There were 29 photographs submitted last year. We are eager to receive even more photographs this year. So have your camera ready!

The board of directors have been extremely dedicated to preserving PBRP's mission of increasing the Western Bluebirds population. I am thankful for all of their hard work. I am looking forward to the 2018 nesting season, and I wish each of you a summer filled with Western Bluebirds.

Look, What's That On The Ground?

By Nancy Fraser

A new volunteer who attended the February 24 workshop and signed up to be a monitor, curious about her new route, made an independent drive around the general area a few weeks ago. She found many nestboxes, but one in particular was interesting.

One of the first nestboxes she discovered was sitting on the ground next to a power pole. This new monitor, not yet even offered an orientation to her route, carefully checked the nestbox location number on the box, assessed the situation, and contacted our board member who was coordinating route assignments. She thought from observing a nestbox on the ground at the base of a shiny new power pole, that the original power pole where the box had been installed had been removed and replaced. The power company or perhaps a nearby landowner recovered the box and placed it carefully at the base of the new post. When the scheduled day for her first visit to her new route rolled around, we found that the box was no longer on the ground, but secured to the new pole. On observation, the box looked like it had done hard service for too many years, and was ready for retirement. We thank a local resident or the power company for their thoughtfulness in re-installing the box, but fortunately had an extra in the car, and together the brand new volunteer and mentor installed a new box. Pretty good work for just the first route visit. The rest of the day was spent in exploring the route and locating the boxes, cleaning them up, ensuring they were as leak proof as possible for the wet spring weather, and verifying nestbox location numbers with the data base printouts for the route. The ceilings of the boxes were carefully soaped to discourage wasps from nest building and notes were made to bring supplies on a subsequent visit to make some box repairs.

Saving the best till last, it was a lovely, sunny day. We first heard, then saw bluebird pairs (and once a triumvirate) at a number of sites. The bluebirds are out there. When they are ready, LET THE SEASON BEGIN!



Photo Credit - Zenobia Lapeyre

Welcome to Our New Volunteers!

Ruth Armitage
 Sharon/Steve Coan
 Helen Gavrilov
 Sarah Hatfield/Jeff Murray
 Amy Beth Jacobsen
 Ike Leahy
 Margaret Monet
 Tricia Niday/Cathy Kelly
 Judy/Steve Page
 Teresa Schechtel/ Leah Rivendell/ Pete Ramer
 Sigrid Shaffer
 Dee/Don Sitko
 Elaine Zevenbergen

New Construction, View of Fort Rock, Available Immediately

By Nancy Fraser

Years ago, I joined Zenobia on a small group birding tour to Lake County, Oregon. We visited Summer Lake Wildlife Area, Abert Lake, the Fort Rock area, and many byways of Lake County. It was early spring, and there was still the threat of snow and near Fort Rock, snow accumulated on the ground. We were thrilled to see Mountain Bluebirds with the males' brilliant near-turquoise plumage silhouetted against the stark white background on that crisp sunny morning. It would appear from this shot Zenobia took in mid-March this year, that someone has recognized that housing was needed and installed at least one nestbox.



Photo Credit - Zenobia Lapeyre



Photo Credit - Zenobia Lapeyre

this area," said Eric Bjorkman of the Vancouver Audubon Society. "They seem to be making a bit of a comeback. The Willamette Valley is a staple for them. People down there have done a good job preparing a habitat for them".

The Master Gardeners have ordered native plants that have winter berries & will plant them in March to provide food for coming winters, said Johnson. Johnson said people with open lands should keep an eye out for bluebirds, especially if they maintain mowed fields and lawns. Bluebirds are primarily insect eaters. Their nestlings depend on insects for their early growth and development while spending 3-4 weeks after hatching in a natural cavity or a nest box. Bluebirds perch on bushes, fences, power poles, and power lines peering at the surface of the ground for their prey, then fly down to capture it and return to their nesting site to feed the nestlings. They are not able to easily capture their prey in the air over tall grown fields.

Master Gardeners plan to begin monitoring the nestboxes in April, and ask anyone who spots bluebirds to note the location and get in touch with the county extension office at 360-397-6060, Extension 5738, or by e mail to erika.Johnson@clark.wa.gov.

Clark County Master Gardeners Spot Bluebirds, Plan Nestbox and Monitoring Expansion

Reprinted from material appearing in *The Columbian*

Rarely seen Western Bluebirds were seen about 7 years ago near Heritage Farm on Northeast 78th Street, Vancouver, by Erika Johnson, coordinator for Clark County Master Gardeners. They are being spotted again. Erika and several volunteers attended our February 24 Spring Workshop to learn more about the birds, the nestboxes, and monitoring. They plan not only to place a few nestboxes near Heritage Farm, but also to encourage the public to be on the lookout for bluebirds and report the sightings to the Master Gardeners.

Seeing bluebirds in Clark County is unusual because the county doesn't contain much of the type of habitat the birds are known to depend upon. "They used to be a common bird around here years & years ago. They were kind of extirpated from

Annual Bluebird Photo Contest

By Gwen Martin

Get Your Camera Ready and Win a \$50 Gift Card to Backyard Bird Shop!

Spring is here, and the bluebird nesting season has begun. With it comes opportunities for photographing these engaging birds. We hope you will submit your best photos to the 2018 PBRP Photo Contest to share with other bird lovers and for a chance to win a \$50 Gift Card to Backyard Bird Shop.

Photos will be judged on technical quality, originality, and artistic merit capturing the Western Bluebird in its natural habitat. The winning image will be featured in PBRP publications with photo credit.

Official Entry Rules

Images must be of Western Bluebirds only.

Contest is open to amateur photographers 18 years and older submitting up to 5 original photos.

All entrants give permission to PBRP for future use in print and online publication.

Contest opens April 1 and closes July 30, 2018, at 5:00 pm PST.

Electronically submit your photo, name, and phone number to photocontest@prescottbluebird.com.

Tips for Submitting Photos

The best photos are clearly focused, high-resolution images with good lighting. Our printer uses a 600 dpi format, so a high pixel count is ideal.

Submit your original, unedited photo without file manipulation, such as cropping, enlarging, or filters.

Please don't save or submit the file in a compressed file format.

Is the camera battery charged and ready to go? We can't wait to see your photos!

Upcoming Dates to Remember

May 19, 2018 9am - 4 pm	Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Bird Festival
May-August	At end of each month, bander reports to Data Base Coordinator Lisa Fratianni for all completed broods
After the last brood fledges	Monitors' End of Season Bluebird & Other Species Reports due to their banders
After the last brood fledges	Final bander reports & reviewed monitor reports to Lisa Fratianni
Sept. 22, 2018 9:30 am - noon	At Champoege State Heritage Area



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Lee and Carol Zinsli

Bluebird Parents Feeding Nestlings - Which bird gets the food?

(Source: NABS journal *Bluebird*, winter 2005)

The four eggs in the nest box have hatched, naked baby birds seem intent on only one thing — food. Their beaks gape wide each time one of the parent birds arrives at the nest. All four nestlings are begging.

Do the adult birds know which young bird was fed most recently and which should get food now? If so, how is this determined? Food resources, parental energy and time all are limited. What factors go into this important decision? Is it nothing but random chance?



Photo Credit - Zenobia Lapeyre

The question of how often and how much a single bird in a nest of several young gets fed is more complex than you might imagine. In the bird world, all young birds need not be considered equal.

Parent birds can be expected to invest more time and energy in the nestlings most likely to survive to

adulthood and reproduce. The parent bird is motivated to ensure its genes are passed along.

Nestlings offer cues that help parent birds make feeding decisions. The intensity of begging is one cue, position in the nest is another. Young birds nearest the entrance are most likely to be fed. Nestling

size is another cue; the larger nestling can be considered most likely to survive, therefore the best investment for the parent.

A parent bird might also consider the sex of the young bird, if either sons or daughters are more likely to successfully breed as adults. In bird species where females mate with more than one male, the resident male might want to favor his own offspring over those of the intruder.

Young birds might be able to manipulate their parents by changing their begging intensity to gain more feeding attention. There is no guarantee that the bird begging most intently is more likely to survive. A small nestling might beg loudly but have less chance of survival because of its size.

In an ornithologist's study of Tree Swallows, a native secondary cavity nester like bluebirds, these theories were explored. Findings suggested the primary factors in which nestling is fed first are the first bird to beg for food when the parent returns to the nest with a prize. A related factor determining "first fed" is the nestlings closest to the nest entrance. (Young birds were observed to jockey for the best position between feeding visits, or just after feeding had occurred, a fecal sac was produced, and the adult bird left the nest.) These factors are controlled primarily by the nestlings themselves. Feeding did not appear to be influenced by nestling size, sex, or paternity. However, smaller nestlings may not be able to compete with larger brood-mates in begging intensity or jockeying for that best position near the nest entrance.



Photo Credit - Zenobia Lapeyre

2018 Is The Year of The Bird

From material appearing in the *Klamath Bird Observatory newsletter*

The National Geographic Society, in partnership with National Audubon Society, Birdlife International, and The Cornell Lab of Ornithology have proclaimed 2018 as the Year of the Bird.



Secretary Bird, Kenya - Photo Credit - Nancy Fraser

The Year of the Bird marks 100 years of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act—the most powerful and important bird protection law ever passed. The Year of the Bird will celebrate the wonder of our feathered friends and provide an opportunity for people everywhere to recommit themselves to protecting birds. The Year will be 12 months of storytelling, science, and conservation aimed at heightening public awareness of birds and the importance of protecting them.

Everyone can join in and be a part of the #YearoftheBird. National geographic will be highlighting simple actions you can take part in each month to make a difference for birds— visit their website <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/projects/year-of-the-bird/> to read more about this special year. Another resource is the Cornell Lab All About Birds website's "6 Resolutions to Help You #BirdYourWorld In 2018" at <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/6-resolutions-to-help-you-birdyourworld-in-2018/>

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