



# Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Newsletter

## Spring 2011

*An affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society*

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### President's Perspectives

*By Nancy Fraser*



This morning it snowed at my house. Now this afternoon the soft, shushing sound of small pellets of frozen precipitation accompanied me as I filled the bird feeders, spread some cracked corn, and replenished the suet feeders. Fortunately, I had left myself a computer search task today - tracking down a picture of bluebirds that I had used before and not carefully filed so that I could access it easily again. So I am forced to go through tens or hundreds of pictures of bluebirds as a task. What a blessing when the weather turns like this. And what a pleasure that our volunteers and landowners provide such wonderful images that evoke the bright and beautiful nesting season of the Western Bluebird. Well, someone has to do difficult assignments like this, so why not me?

We should be gently moving into the beginning of the nesting season by the time you receive this spring newsletter. I know that our volunteer corps will have already visited their nestbox routes to check on the soundness of the boxes, clean out any over-winter roosting evidence, evaluate any changes to the nearby environment that might suggest the box be moved to another location, and in general make these alternative nesting sites ready for bluebirds. They will have begun weekly monitoring of their routes and weekly reports to their banders. Perhaps we will already have some bluebirds selecting nestboxes and even beginning the miraculous process of building their nests.

We will have two new banders this season: Carol Krueger and Scott Morrison. I wish them many happy years of bluebird activity and thank them for their willingness to expand their roles within our organization. I anticipate that our Spring Workshop has encouraged and motivated just the right number of new volunteers to fill the vacancies of monitors who have had to discontinue their roles in our project. Welcome to all, and thank you to our "retiring" monitors.

Welcome (back) to all of our volunteers and landowners who give of their time and support in our Western Bluebird conservation effort. I hope to see you in the field.

*Above photo is of the PBRP Board of Directors. Left to right: Lauri Kunzman, Lyn Burniston, Zenobia Lapeyre, Bob Burbank, Pat Johnston, Nelda Skidmore, Nancy Fraser, Jack Carter, Dave Flaming. Not present: Brenda McGowan.*

## Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

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Master Bander  
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## Important Upcoming Dates

### March – September

Nesting/Monitoring/Banding Season for Western Bluebirds in the Northern Willamette Valley

### May 13-15

Tualatin River Bird Festival at Tualatin National Wildlife Refuge, Sherwood

### June 18

Bluebird Day at Champoege State Heritage Area

### September 17

Fall Wrap Up/Annual Meeting  
 Board Elections  
 Tentative Speaker: John Deshler, "Field Studies, Northern Pygmy Owls"  
 Volunteer Appreciation Potluck

## Thank you!

*PBRP would like to extend our sincerest thanks to all of the volunteers who give so much of their time and energy to ensure that our project is successful. These volunteers help to monitor and band the bluebirds, as well as manage other areas of the Project. A huge thank you to:* Jeannette Adlong, Tom Aufenthie, Gail Bolstad, Caroline & Steve Brandt, Bob Burbank, Lyn Burniston, Jack Carter, Paulette Case, Jim & Barby Conroy, Charlotte Elder, David Elliott, Lynn Erdman, Dave Flaming, Nancy Fraser, Carole Hallett, Diane Harris, Nancy Harvey, Ed Hepp, Bunny Hirtzel, Abby Jaworski, Pat Johnston, Marilyn Jones, Carol Krueger, Lauri Kunzman, Mark & Cheryl Landis, Zenobia Lapeyre, Sandy Lockwood, Barbara Manghelli, Brenda McGowan, Krista & Ron McKillip, Scott Morrison, Carol Munger, Cheryl Neal, Elaine Newland, Donald Powers, Krista Reichard, David Reichle, Fred Robinson, Russ Rosner, Karen Russell, Peter Schmidt, David Sewell, Dan Sherman, Ellie & Loren Shipley, Ron & Nelda Skidmore, Charlie Stalzer, Carolyn Uyemura, Onalee Wasserburger, Debby White, Jenny Whitmore, Kit Whittaker, Jeff Wiese.





## Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Western Bluebird Nesting Summary

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Nesting Attempts	552	502
Failed Attempts	159	150
% Successful	71%	70%
Earliest Hatch Date	May 1	April 28
Latest Hatch Date	August 21	August 28
Total Eggs Laid	2,827	2,430
Average Eggs/Clutch	5.1%	4.8%
Total Hatchlings	2,125	1,743
% Eggs Hatched	75%	72%
Average Hatchlings/Clutch	3.8%	3.5%
Total Nestlings Banded	1,917	1,484
% Nestlings Banded	90%	85%
Total Nestlings Fledged	1,729	1,394
% Nestlings Fledged	81%	80%

Check our website for additional statistics –  
[www.prescottbluebird.com](http://www.prescottbluebird.com)



### Spring Monitors' Workshop – New Look

This year's spring meeting had a new look - our current volunteers and guests interested in learning more about the Western Bluebird and our project met on a Saturday morning in February and enjoyed information, informal conversation, refreshments, and a lively question/answer session. Despite maxxing out the available chairs and space in the Visitors' Center at Champoeg State Heritage Area, both guests and current volunteers enjoyed the diversity of experience and the collaborative team the project presented. Returning volunteers sought out guests to introduce themselves and answer questions, and I suspect a lot of anecdotes about monitoring bluebird nestboxes were shared. I was told over and over how impressive both our obvious love of the bluebirds and dedication to our mission were.

There were five vacancies in our monitor ranks, and five new volunteers/teams kindly volunteered. Welcome to our new monitoring colleagues: Linda Lowell, who will monitor on Chehalem Mountain; Bridget Wyckoff, who will monitor a 2<sup>nd</sup> route on Chehalem Mountain; Colleen Hill, who will monitor in West Linn; and Susan Mapes & Betsey Rixford, who will monitor in Sherwood.

Also I would like to welcome Carol Krueger and Scott Morrison to their new volunteer role as banders. Our monitors are the key field workers in our project, and banders serve as trainers and mentors for the monitors. Our banders have all been monitors, and many continue to monitor while they also take on bander responsibilities. Thank you everyone, and welcome Carol and Scott.

## Those Aren't Bluebirds in My Nestbox!

*By Jack Carter, Monitor*

What do you do when non-bluebirds nest in bluebird nestboxes? Enjoy them! Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project places nestboxes that are sized to appeal to western bluebirds, but many other species can nest in them, too. So until these other species learn how to read the “Prescott Bluebird” label on the side of the box and graciously move along to other lodging, we’ll continue to welcome other native species that use the Project’s nestboxes. Like western bluebirds, other native species are protected by federal law, so we let them complete their nesting once they’ve moved in.

What sorts of birds are we talking about? In the Project’s territory, the most common non-bluebird nesters are Swallows (Violet-Green and Tree), Chickadees (Black-Capped



and Chestnut-Backed), Nuthatches (Red-breasted and White-breasted), and House Wrens. These are all great birds to have in backyard nestboxes.

What to do if you find a nest in your backyard nestbox? First, don’t remove it immediately under the assumption that it’s a nest left over from last year, especially if it looks like it hasn’t been used. Second, try to figure out what species it belongs to. Building a nest takes a lot of trips in and out of the nestbox, so if nest construction is still underway, chances are you’ll see the nest-building bird entering and leaving the nestbox, and be able to tell what sort of bird it is. Some nests are easy to match with a species because of the material or method of construction. For example, chickadees build nests from moss, so a new chickadee nest will be a masterfully built, bright green moss mat, top-lined with fur, down, or other fluffy material chickadees scavenge. Third, if there are eggs in the nest, identifying them is usually pretty straightforward. Finally (and most importantly), once you’ve determined that a bird like a chickadee or nuthatch is using the box, give them their space. While bluebirds tolerate regular nestbox checks, many other native species do not. The last thing anyone wants to do is cause a bird to abandon a nest, its eggs, or chicks.

What about non-native species? The non-native bird most likely to nest in a bluebird nestbox is the House Sparrow. Once you’ve confirmed that a House Sparrow is using a box, because they’re not a protected species, their nests can be removed from the box. If the entrance hole of a nestbox has been enlarged (by squirrels, for example) European Starlings may also establish nests. Starlings, like House Sparrows, are non-native, non-protected species, and their nests can be removed. If you have questions about how to deal with House Sparrows or Starlings, ask your Prescott Bluebird Nestbox Monitor.

Have questions about how to identify nests of different cavity-nesting species? An excellent website is <http://www.sialis.org/>. This website focuses on eastern bluebirds, but includes useful pages for “Other Cavity Nesters” and “Nest and Egg ID” with photos and descriptions of other species.



## New Volunteer Has Bluebirds Visit

*By Linda Lowell, Monitor*

Thank you for such an informed meeting yesterday. I'm looking forward to my involvement in monitoring bluebirds as a Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project volunteer. I became aware of your monitoring efforts through my mother-in-law, Lucille, who used to travel with a friend as she monitored from their retirement home. She had asked me if I'd ever seen them at our place, and I've looked over the years, but have not actually spotted them.

Well, just this morning, as I drew open my blinds, there was a female sitting on the deck railing, not more than 12 feet away. I knew it was a bluebird when I spotted a male flying past. Then I saw a flock of maybe a dozen or so. They accompanied me as I went to the mailbox to get the paper, undulating and graceful in their

frolic. They were so obvious in their intense blue plumage with a touch of orange, I wondered how I could have missed them in the past.

Later that morning, I got a call from Lucille's son, Grant. Lucille had passed away that morning. She was 97. She had led a grand and very fulfilling life, even windsurfing by helicopter when she was in her 70s. I'm sure when I see those charming little birds again, I'll often think of her and imagine her having another great adventure, welcoming to the world of bluebirds.

*Linda lives in Newberg and will monitor on Chehalem Mountain.*

## Newsletter Editor Needed!

Do you have a love for and interest in birds, especially bluebirds? Would you enjoy working with a fantastic team of dedicated volunteers? PBRP is looking for a newsletter editor who has the time and skill needed to not only edit and create a twice-a-year publication for PBRP, but who also has the time and desire to become involved with the Project in other capacities, perhaps as a monitor or as a volunteer in another area of the Project. If this sounds like something you'd enjoy, please send an email to [pbrpeditor@yahoo.com](mailto:pbrpeditor@yahoo.com).



## Bluebird Day at Champoeg State Heritage Area – Saturday, June 18

Champoeg throws a party with varied activities to celebrate the Western Bluebird and its successful comeback, especially at the Park but also in the Willamette Valley. Together with park staff and Friends of Historic Champoeg volunteers, we have volunteers on site to provide visitors with information about our project, bluebirds and other secondary cavity nesters. PBRP has a rich collaboration with Champoeg throughout the season. The dedicated volunteer Monitor/Bander team assigned to the Park has worked for several years to enhance the nestboxes in the park to increase the number of bluebirds fledged.

Volunteer to be one of the faces of PBRP at this event. We have stations for Bluebird Discovery (nestbox observation), videos from the Champoeg projection room with interpretation by our volunteers, an introduction station outside the entrance, and a nestbox building (fee for materials) in the historic barn.

We provide chickadee nestbox kits so that guests from any area can build a box and place it on their property without risk of proliferating House Sparrows (not everyone is fortunate to have bluebirds on their property). Our core of building assistants that return every year to this enjoyable activity pretty much fills the barn, but come to the event or volunteer, and you can walk over to the barn to watch kids delight in working with power tools and old fashioned hammers to make nestboxes.

Send an email to [email@prescottbluebird.com](mailto:email@prescottbluebird.com) to put your name in to volunteer for Bluebird Day exhibits.

### Fall Wrap Up and Annual Meeting

All current volunteers are encouraged to attend the Annual Meeting and Program, and then stay for a potluck lunch prepared and served by the PBRP Board. An announcement will be sent closer to the meeting date giving the exact time. Historically, we have begun the meeting at 9:00 am and said farewells, cleaned up, and left by 1:00. This is always a relaxing and pleasant opportunity to talk informally with other volunteers, enjoy our speaker, vote on a new Board of Directors slate, and spend some time at Champoeg State Heritage Area. There still should be plenty of bluebirds, as well as other birds, and pleasant weather on the walking trails. After the potluck walking is always a good idea!

Our tentative speaker is John Deshler, who will share field study work on Northern Pygmy Owls, their feeding, nesting, territorial, and habitat needs and preferences. We will meet at the Pavilion and a reminder announcement will be sent to all volunteers in August. Save this date on your calendar!

### Mealworms for Your Birds?

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project uses mealworms primarily from two suppliers, Bassett's Cricket Ranch and Sunshine Mealworms.

Bassett's Cricket Ranch is located in Visalia, CA. Telephone number 800.634.2445. Web site: [www.bccricket.com](http://www.bccricket.com).

Sunshine Mealworms is located in Silverton, OR. Telephone number 800.322.1100 for sales and 503.873.8989 for inquiries. Web site: [www.sunshinemealworms.com](http://www.sunshinemealworms.com).

For care of mealworms, please see the company's web site or contact them by phone.



## 2010 Contributors

**Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project owes its success to its donors. Every dollar you give helps us to help our beloved Western Bluebirds. To all of you, without exception, our heartfelt thanks.**

*Frank & Jean Abderhalden, Dr. & Mrs. Robert Acker, Rudy & Lonna Altgelt, Daniel & Ann Marie Amstad, Lila Ashenbrenner, Leonard & Gloria Attrell, Autzen Foundation, Bill & Helen Bach, Rita Bang, Geoffrey Beasley, Jan Becker, David & Merla Beltz, Jerry & Valerie Black, Ben & Sandra Bole, Patricia Boryer, Vern Brecht, Luis & Mary Brillas, Daniel Brown, Stephen & Gloria Brown, Robert Burbank, Sue Burkhardt-Kasch, Elida Canales, William & Gail Carr, Peter & Susan Carr, K. Jackson Carter, Dwight & Paula Cash, Pam & Richard Christ, Carl & Joan Christian, Carol Clark, Rebecca Clark, Gordon & Jeris Clark, Carl Constans, David & Char Corkran, Rachel Cornforth, Eloise Crandall, John & Sandra Crosland, Alice Deming, Rod & Doris Diman, Archibald & Adah Doty, Charlotte Elder, David & Mary Beth Elliott, Michael & Chris Feves, Dave & Edith Flaming, BackYard Bird Stores, Nancy Fraser, Freitag Family Trust, Jeff Fullman, Loren & Pat Gerig, Ethel Gerlach, Peter & Emily Gladhart, Raylene & Erez Gordin, Linda Gratterer, Leonard Grubowski, Geraldine Harrington, Juliann Hart, Ed & Fran Hepp, Jim Hillman, James & Betsy Holzgraf, James & Patricia Horrocks, Gerald Hulsman, W. Griggs Irving, Charles & Irene James, Mallory Jarboe, David & Margaret Jeans, Patricia Johnston (in honor of Dave & Edie Flaming's 50th Wedding Anniversary), Roger & Janet Kadel, Ron & Priscilla Kingston, Maggie Knauss, Ron & Lauri Kunzman, D. E. Layton, Jerry & Mary Lebert, Ray & Evelyn Leniger, Barbara Linden, Pamela Lindholm-Levy, Ann & Lee Littlewood, Elaine & Dave Logan, Bonnie Lowe, Jack Lynch, Jack & Martha Lynch, Peter MacDonald, Patricia Martinelli, Betty McCaffrey, Cheryl McCaffrey, Peter McDonald, Brenda McGowan (in honor of Dave & Edie Flaming's 50th Wedding Anniversary), Brenda McGowan, James & Sondra McIlhagga, Susan & Don McNiel, Jay & Linda McWhirter, Violet Metzler, Bill & Nancy Meyer, David & Myrnelia Meyer, Gale & Linda Miller, Robert, Jr. & Irene Mills, Mona Mozeico, NABS, Cheryl Neal, Georgie Nelson, Jr., Berta Neubauer, Fred & Jill Newton, Craig Nies, Lorene Nissen, Lars & Cynthia Nordstrom, Michelle Othus, DL Patrick, Scott & Lolly Peavy, Nicholas & Teresa Peters, Molly Peters, John Philipp, Constance & Morgan Pope, Pope Family Trust, Marna & Robert Porath, Marilyn Portwood, Richard & Elaine Rife, Elizabeth Rillver, Russ Rosner, Grace Schaad, Lewis & Barbara Schaad, John & Jeannine Schmeltzer, Scott & Wanda Schroeder, Conley Scott, Conley Scott (in memory of Ed Neilman), Thomas & Nancy Seidl, David & Mary Sewell, Barry & Wendy Shapiro, Loren & Ellie Shipley, Charles & Diane Shutts, Ron & Nelda Skidmore (in honor of Dave & Edie Flaming's 50th Wedding Anniversary), David & Barbara Slader, Charles & Marie Smith, Sue Specht, Stephanie Spoerl, Janice Stevens, Pat Stolley, Kenneth & Julee Streeter, J Robert Swanson, Arthur & June Taylor, Alan & Irene Tessman, Conrad Thomason, Paul Thompson, Diane Trainer, Frederick & Madalyn Utz, Carolyn & Mike Uyemura, Marilyn Van Dyk, Anne Voegtlin, Jean Wallace, Hollis & Georgie Watson, Bruce & Madeline Wendland, Beth & Bruce Wendland (gift in the name of Nadine Wendland), Gordon & Rosemary Westphal, Thomas & Kit Whittaker, Jan & Glen Whittlesey, Alf & Ardyth Wyller, Susan & Masatoshi Yamanaka, Joseph Yesenofski, Edward & Patricia Zakocs.*



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