



Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Newsletter

Spring 2010

An affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

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President's Perspectives

By Nancy Fraser

Welcome to a new nesting season. We are excited and busy reviewing nesting records and starting the multi-year process of removing or relocating nestboxes that have not hosted bluebirds for three seasons or more. The name we have assigned to this project is "Fewer Nestboxes Are Better". We plan to gradually reduce the total number of boxes and thus reduce the rapidly growing population of swallows desperate for



nesting space and competing more fiercely than ever before with the bluebirds. This also will reduce the "busy work" done by our monitors visiting nestboxes that do not host bluebirds. In this way, we will have more volunteer hours to contribute to re-establishing routes left inactive when we have not had enough volunteers.

We are also bringing along new volunteer banders, with four of our monitors starting a year as assistants

to current banders. Within our all-volunteer project, banders 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 inactive routes. We should be prepared to do this when new banders are approved

and ready to band and oversee routes independently over the next few years. A rather small number of banders have willingly and capably managed a large number of routes and monitors for the

past several years, and I hope to give them some help and respite from their heavy workloads.

I hope to see you either in the field or at Bluebird Day at Champoege on June 19. Consider attending the annual North American Bluebird Society convention, which this year is in Ontario, Canada, September 9 through 12, 2010.

Blue skies, and enjoy the coming spring season of renewal! -Nancy

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

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Assistants to Banders in 2010:

Carol Krueger, Barbara Manghelli, Scott Morrison,
Dave Sewell

News from the Past

- Nancy Fraser

While Dave Flaming was out in the wilds of January doing maintenance on a nestbox route in Hillsboro, a landowner greeted him with a precious surprise. She brought out an article from the *Sunday Oregonian*, April 30, 1978. In two full pages, this wonderful article featured Hubert Prescott and his work. For those of us fortunate to have known Mr. Prescott, this is a treasure. For those of us who never knew him, it is priceless. Profound thanks are extended on behalf of our volunteers to Ms. Diana McQuhae, who was thoughtful enough both to keep the article and to donate it to our project for our archival records. We hope to feature portions of the article on our website in the near future.

Fall Wrap Up & Volunteer Appreciation Meeting

Mark your calendars for this meeting, which will again be in the format of Annual Meeting, Program (to be announced), discussion of the just winding up nesting season, and potluck lunch provided by the Board of Directors in appreciation of our fantastic volunteers. The meeting will be Saturday, September 18, 2010, at Champoege State Heritage Park Pavilion. Tentative hours are 10:00 am to 2:30 pm. Come to learn and to celebrate the end of another successful season with fellow volunteers and the board.

New Monitors and Current Monitors Changing Roles

Welcome to new volunteer monitors who joined us this nesting season: Jeannette Adlong, Tom Aufenthie and Jenny Whitmore. Four current volunteer monitors are serving as assistants to banders this year, and will join our bander corps for the 2011 nesting season: Carol Krueger, Barbara Manghelli, Scott Morrison, and Dave Sewell. Carole Hallett is returning as a bander after taking a season off to work on a bird conservation project with American Kestrels.

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Western Bluebird Nesting Summary

	2008	2009
Nesting Attempts	565	552
Failed Attempts	166	159
% Successful	71%	71%
Earliest Hatch Date	4/11	5/1
Latest Hatch Date	8/28	8/21
Total Eggs Laid	2,897	2,827
Avg Eggs/Clutch	5.1%	5.1%
Total Hatchlings	2,118	2,125
% Eggs Hatched	73%	75%
Avg Hatchlings/Clutch	3.7%	3.8%
Total Nestlings Banded	1,770	1,917
% Nestlings Banded	84%	90%
Total Nestlings Fledged	1,618	1,729
% Nestlings Fledged	76%	81%

Check our web site for additional statistics: www.prescottbluebird.com

Dear New Monitor...

-Zenobia Lapeyre

Dear New Monitor,

I haven't met you yet, but I already know some things about you. You have volunteered to be a part of the PBRP, you want to make a difference, and you will be taking over my old bluebird route. I want to make that as easy for you as possible, so I'm sending you some notes. I really want you to succeed.

This first box on the route is a Right of Way box, or ROW. This one, like many of the other ROW boxes, is right beside the roadway. You will need to be careful where you park, so you don't create a hazard for other traffic and so that you don't get your car stuck. I always use this wide spot and walk back a little bit to the nest box.

There are two nest boxes on this next property and one of them is pretty hard to find if you don't know where to look. You can park at the end of the driveway and walk around the edge of the yard to the back of the house. You will always want to be considerate of the yards and gardens where people have invited us to monitor the bluebirds. Watch out for little plants and don't cut through the garden.

When you go to the next property, you will need to go all the way to the end of the drive, turn around, and then park to the side of the drive in case a car needs to get past you while you are checking on the bluebird box. I know the box is right at the highway end of the drive and you could just park, check, and back out. But this is a very busy highway and it can be very dangerous to back out into traffic where they don't expect a car. Protect yourself at all times.

This is one of my favorite places to stop and I will miss these next people on the route. They are really anxious to have bluebirds nesting on their property as they did a few years ago. You will need to remind them not to feed crows and critters so near the nest box and they might have better luck attracting the bluebirds.

Some of the boxes are getting a little old and cranky

but the bluebirds seem to prefer the aged ones. But if you see something that needs to be fixed, be sure to let your bander know about it. Your bander will be your mentor for this year and a few years after you are flying solo.

Three properties on this route have livestock involved. It is critical that you respect PBRP's status as a guest on the property. Make certain that you latch all gates and doorways each time you pass through, going in and coming out. Walk slowly so you don't spook the animals. Some of them are curious and might want to approach you. Don't be afraid; just keep doing your business and move on.

I guess you can already hear a potential problem at the next box. That barking dog is in a kennel and won't get in your way. There are some places where dogs come out to greet you, though. If a dog or cat shows too much interest in the nest box, you will need to let your bander know about it. Perhaps the two of you can talk with the property owner and explain the dangers to the nestlings and fledglings.

You will learn to love the lady at this next house. She will greet you when you arrive; as you walk back to your car she will ask if there is any activity in the nest boxes on her property. When there are eggs you will want to show them to her. And when it is time for your bander to band the chicks, you will want to alert the property owner so she can watch the process.

That reminds me of another critical part of your job as a bluebird monitor. It is extremely important that you report every week to your bander. You are the bander's eyes; let him or her know what you are seeing. Are the bluebirds showing interest in a nest box? Is there a problem? Are there bluebird eggs in the nest? How many? Remember that the bander's schedule is based totally on the bluebird's cycle. Your weekly reports provide the raw data required by the bander in order to calculate the correct age of the chicks. You must feed this information to your bander every week to make the schedule work.

This is a lovely part of the country and you will see something different each week. Keep your eyes and ears and heart open. Welcome to the team!

What's the Scoop on Mealworms?



Our project volunteers use mealworms (*Tenebrio molitor*) to supplement food resources for bluebirds in the early part of the nesting season (first clutch). This is because the weather becomes uncertain, cold and rainy, there are chicks in the nest and natural insect food resources are low. We taper off feedings as the warmer weather of summer and a more plentiful supply of insects arrive.

This season, as we did last year, we will purchase mealworms from Bassett Cricket Ranch, Visalia, California. They have a superior quality product with excellent customer service, including shipping arrangements. Our long-term local supplier has had production difficulties for the past few

years regarding the LARGE size mealworms that are most suitable for the feeding of our bluebird population. These difficulties are just beginning to be resolved, with the quantity and viability of our size selection still uncertain for the upcoming season.

PBRP MONITORS: contact your bander if you need mealworms

PBRP BANDERS: contact one of the four PBRP volunteers authorized to order from Bassett Cricket Ranch:

Lauri Kunzman, Lyn Burniston, Dave Flaming, Nancy Fraser

LANDOWNERS: Contact either Bassett Cricket Ranch or Sunshine Mealworms

We recommend the LARGE mealworms (Snookums Large at Bassett), not giant or super.

Bassett Cricket Ranch: Toll Free telephone: 1 800 634 2445 (order Monday – Wednesday)

Website/email: www.bccricket.com info@bccricket.com

Sunshine Mealworms: Toll Free telephone: 1 800 322 1100

Website/email: www.sunshinemealworms.com sales@sunshinemealworms.com

A note from the editor...

As announced in our Spring 2009 issue, PBRP has made our newsletters available both online at www.prescottbluebird.com as well as via email. If you would like to sign up to receive the newsletter by email, either for this issue or for all future issues, please email the editor at: pbrpeditor@yahoo.com. Signing up for one of a variety of free email accounts that are available to you on the Internet, and then signing up to receive our newsletter via email, is a great way of helping us make every dollar count. It is PBRP's policy to not share your email address or other personal information with anyone.

Thank you for your continued support!

-Abby Jaworski, Newsletter Editor

Nest Box Cleaning

-Lauri Kunzman

Don't we all enjoy a clean house? Our Western Bluebird is no different... though, truth be told, they never complain. As a project monitor and keen landowner, we clean out our nesting boxes three times a year: in early March, just prior to the new nesting season (April - August), after the first clutch, and again after the nesting season is over.



Female Western Bluebird carrying nesting material; Photo by Zenobia Lapeyre

The tools used in any cleaning include a scraper (either a plastic car window scraper or a metal scraper), gloves, goggles for eye protection, a mask to prevent the user from inhaling any dry guano and a bottle of 10% bleach solution.

Nelda Skidmore, along with her husband, Ron, monitor the bluebird nesting boxes at Champoege State Heritage Park. They have diligently cleaned, repaired or replaced the 28 nesting boxes at Champoege Park.

We clean out our boxes for two major reasons. First is basic sanitation. Bluebirds always build a new nest for each clutch. Eventually, nest material would totally fill up the box. By cleaning out the used nesting material between clutches, we help

keep the height of the nest well below the 1 ½ inch hole opening, making it more difficult for any predator to reach the eggs or chicks that are inside this box.



Nelda Skidmore, Monitor, cleaning out a nestbox; Photo by Scott Morrison, Monitor

When disposing of any used nesting, we place this material in either a plastic bag or paper bag and carry it away from the nest box itself and off the landowner's property. We NEVER just dump this old nesting material close to the nesting box and pole. Personally, I add it to my compost when I return home. The reason for this diligence is to prevent predators from discovering this nesting spot.



Lauri Kunzman, Nelda Skidmore, Ron Skidmore and Scott Morrison (aka The Parkies) at Champoege State Park; Photo by Ron Kunzman

2009 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, Robert & Bonnnie Acker, Backyard Bird Shop, Rita Bang, David Beltz, Jerry & Valerie Black, Martin & Katie Boehme, Patricia Boryer, Caroline & Stephen Brandt (in memory of Ben Lapeyre), Luis & Mary Brillas, Alan & Jane Brockway, Robert Burbank, Peter & Susan Carr, Dot & Russ Carson (in memory of Wm Enyeart), Paula & Dwight Cash, John & Sandra Crosland, Jack & Dorothy Davis, Rod & Doris Diman, Archibald & Adah Doty, John & Patricia Eaton, David & Mary Beth Elliott, Dave & Edie Flaming, Nancy Fraser, Fran Fulwiler, Leonard & Anne Grubowski, Juliann Hart, Nancy Harvey (in memory of Martin Harvey), Ed & Fran Hepp, Avon & Frederick Holmes, Jim & Pat Horrock, Martin Jaqua, Marilyn Jones, Narveson Joyce, Roger & Janet Kadel, Jim & Lesley Kempself, Kevin & Sue King, Daniel & Patricia Knox, Ron & Lauri Kunzman (in memory of Ben Lapeyre), Ray & Evelyn Leinger, Barbara Linden, Bonnie Lowe, Arlan Madsen, Barbara & Don Manghelli, Sarah Marcus, Mary Ann McCammon, Cheryl Mcaffrey, Frances McCole, Brenda McGowan, Andrew & Lynda McNab, Howard & Mona Mozeico, George Nelson, Nims Family Trust, Norene Nissen, Mary Nyquist-Koons, Noreen O'Connor, Marshall Page, Leslie Patton, Marna & Robert Porath, Elizabeth Rillver, Carol Santeson, Grace Schaad, John & Jeannine Schmeltzer, Conley Scott, Tom & Nancy Seidl, Barry & Wendy Shapiro, Loren & Ellie Shipley, Jerald & Loris Shroyer, Janice Stevens, Kenneth & Julee Streeter, Cathy Stuchlik, Josephine Towers, Frederick & Madalyn Utz, Linda Volz, Jean Wallace, Rosemary Westphal, Jan & Glen Whittlesey, Alf & Ardyth Wyller, Susan & Masatoshi Yamanaka, Edward & Patricia Zakocs



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You will notice that all of our newsletter publications now contain an envelope for donations and volunteering in our project. The envelope is pre-printed, so the coupon in the body of the newsletter is no longer necessary. Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project appreciates Joan Pinkert, Print Production, for donation of her time to assist us in creating the envelope. Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project is supported entirely by donations of our friends and friends of bluebirds. Due to our non-profit 501 (C) (3) status, your donations are tax deductible. We sincerely thank all of you who contribute to our recovery project and volunteer in support of the Western Bluebird.

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