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PRESCOTT BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

Post Office Box 1469 | Sherwood, Oregon 97140 | www.prescottbluebird.com

Newsletter ~ Spring 2015

Upcoming Events Calendar

May 16, 2015

TRNWR Songbird Fest

June 13, 2015

Champoeg Bluebird Day

September 12, 2015

Fall Wrap-up

End of Season Reports due to Dave Flaming

From The President's Nestbox

By Dave Flaming

Welcome to Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project's 2015 season. Once again we opened the season with our Monitoring Training Workshop held on Saturday March 7th. Over 40 volunteers were present. The workshop began with an introduction to the history of our project along with topics on the life and breeding cycle of Western Bluebirds. A question and answer period followed the presentation. A special "Thank You" to Backyard Bird Shops for providing door prizes for this workshop.

I wish to give special recognition to retiring banders Karen Russell and Caroline & Steve Brandt. Karen served many years banding for our Project out of Newberg. Caroline & Steve banded Blues on the north side of Chehalem Mountain. Thank you for all you did for the bluebirds of the Willamette Valley!

I'm looking forward to a great season in 2015!

Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre





Photo Credit ~ Zenobia Lapeyre

2014 Contributors

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

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Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

Western Bluebird Nesting Summary

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Nesting Attempts	502	414	401	442	188
Failed Attempts	150	145	99	106	34
% Successful	70%	65%	65%	76%	82%
Earliest Hatch Date	4/28	5/5	4/20	4/12	4/30
Latest Hatch Date	8/28	8/18	8/23	8/21	8/20
Total Eggs Laid	2,430	2,043	2,055	2,286	946
Avg Eggs/Clutch	4.8	4.9	5.1	5.1	5.0
Total Hatchlings	1,743	1,507	1,576	1,828	789
% Eggs Hatched	72%	74%	77%	80%	83%
Avg Hatchlings/Clutch	3.6	3.6	3.9	4.1	4.2
Total Nestlings Banded	1,484	1,200	1,337	1,706	747
% Nestlings Banded	85%	80%	85%	93%	95%
Total Nestlings Fledged	1,394	1,086	1,258	1,455	675
% Nestlings Fledged	80%	72%	80%	80%	86%

Check our web site for additional statistics: prescottbluebird.com

New Display Banner for our Events - Whodunnit??

When volunteer monitor Denise Szott was unable to return to monitoring her route in Clackamas County this season, she volunteered her graphic design skills for any projects that would benefit PBRP. She has drafted a number of graphic image samples of bluebirds, nests, and nestboxes, and the board enjoyed all of them, making it difficult to pick.

After this review by the board, she extended her work to use the image selected by the board to design an image to be transferred to a free-standing 32 x 80 inch banner to be used at events such as the Bird Festival at Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge and Bluebird Day at Champoege State Heritage Area.

We used the banner at our Spring Workshop at Champoege on March 7, and it definitely caught everyone's eye!

Thank you Denise (seen her with the banner on full display at Champoege) for your ideas and expertise that brought this display to life, and for the other designs you created that can be used for upcoming projects.



New banner with volunteer designer Denise Szott (Photo Credit Dave Flaming)

PBRP Website Updated

By Nancy Fraser

Wow! Please visit the newly designed and updated website at prescottbluebird.com

You will have an opportunity to explore this awesome resource, and be able to refer landowners and members of the community of the information .

The board of directors wishes to thank board member and monitor Nelda Skidmore and webmaster Charlie Stalzer for all of the time and creative effort they expended in making



Nelda Skidmore and Charlie Stalzer
(Photo Credit Dave Flaming)

this happen, and just in time for nesting season's beginning. Our site gets an exponential increase in hits in the spring/summer. This update has corrected out of date information, provided a more readable format, the benefit of fresh eyes looking at the content, and a fresh new display format for pictures on the Home Page.

I think we have in mind to add new pictures or replace some of the moving scroll at the top of the Home Page. Submit your photos for possible use in this way, or in the PBRP newsletter. We love having pictures of our volunteers, landowners, and bluebirds!



Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre



Charlie Stalzer explains E Mysteries (Photo Credit Dave Flaming)

2015 Spring Workshop for New & Returning Volunteers

On Saturday, March 7, the workshop was held at Champoeg State Heritage Park. Dave Flaming, PBRP President, gave the opening remarks. Park Ranger Dan Klug welcomed us and spoke to the long relationship between our two organizations, and also mentioned the slow but steady progress on the informational bluebird signs we will be donating to the park.

Dana Robinson gave the history of the project, it's current role and scope, and highlighted Western Bluebird facts and breeding cycle details, assisted by the excellent slide show presentation that is improved and updated every year . . . and it was darned good to start with! Nelda Skidmore gave a brief demonstration of the key points of monitoring nestboxes. A lively Q & A session followed. Dave requested that those interested in volunteering to monitor bluebirds submit a completed information card. We were pleased to see the degree of interest expressed by many workshop participants. The next step is to review our vacant routes and match and offer the best possible route for their home location to potential new monitors. The number of vacant routes and their locations are not always a match for our interested volunteers and their locations.

Dave excused visitors and he and Charlie gave a demonstration of new tools for reporting bluebird nesting activity, and data base files that allow computerized searching for previous banding and nesting history on adult bluebirds recovered with bands. He suggested sharing the information with landowners and monitors and banders whose routes produced the birds identified by their bands.

Charlie gave an overview of the updated PBRP website, prescottbluebird.com.

Nest Sites Set in Stone

By Scott W. Gillihan, Editor of North American Bluebird Society journal BLUEBIRD Spring, 2014 Ed. BLUEBIRD (used with permission of the author)

At our public library's annual sale I picked up a number of natural history books, including the classic Wild America by Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher. This book chronicles an epic birding trip around North America taken by these two great naturalists in the 1950s. It's fascinating to read about the state of the natural world in those days and compare it to today.

One thing that has probably not changed since then, or at least not very much, is some of the geology they encountered. In Oregon, for instance, they visited Crater Lake National Park. Their route took them along Pinnacles Road, named for the vertical stone spires created as erupting lava flowed up through vertical gas vents during a long-ago volcanic event. As softer lava around the vertical vents eroded away, the pinnacles were left standing.

Some of the pinnacles are partially or completely hollow inside, and some are pockmarked with small openings or cavities. Peterson and Fisher noted that the park's naturalist had found birds nesting in some of these cavities in the early 1950s. Mountain Chickadees, Violet-green Swallows, and Mountain Bluebirds had been observed carrying small food items into these stone dwellings.

I searched online but could not find any more recent references to birds nesting in these pinnacles. Perhaps some ambitious NABS members in the Crater Lake area could visit this spring and search for such nests and provide us an update. Given the enduring nature of stone, one would expect that the cavities are still available and birds would still be using them. (Ed. note: given the late opening of Crater Lake roads in the SUMMER in normal snow years, probably this project won't happen. Oh, wait, perhaps this year might be the ONLY one, given the snow pack depth.)

In addition to finding out if bluebirds persist in nesting here, it would be especially fitting to find House Wrens. After all, their scientific name, Troglodytes, means "cave dweller."

Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre

Save the Date!!



June 13, 2015

CHAMPOEG BLUEBIRD DAY

Held at Champoeg State Heritage Area



How Do Birds Stay Warm in Cold Weather??

By Nancy Fraser

Recently I read a message from a local birder at an on line birdwatchers' forum. He wrote that he had seen seven Western Bluebirds enter a nest box near the fairgrounds in Corvallis, and said he was unaware that bluebirds behaved in this manner. That made me think that bluebirds' coping with cold weather might be a good topic for our newsletter.

Thinking about how bluebirds react to cold weather relates directly to the same big three items that define their preferred habitat: food, water, and shelter. When volunteers in our project monitor bluebirds, these needs are further defined by nesting habitat preferences for more precise food and shelter needs to raise and fledge nestlings.

How do the birds cope? From feathers to fat, birds have multiple strategies to keep warm. Each fall, many bird species begin long and hazardous journeys to their overwintering grounds in warmer climates. There are always species that instead stay put for the winter. They have a better chance of maintaining their territory in this way and avoid the hazards of migration. In exchange, they must endure the cold.

RELOCATE

Although there isn't a significant seasonal migration for bluebirds in the northern Willamette Valley, the birds do make adjustments to lower elevations where weather might not be so harsh and where there is also availability of native berries and perhaps the occasional insect to meet their nutritional needs.

In this way, our Northern Willamette Valley bluebirds "migrate" in order to avoid the cold and scarce food resources in the habitat where they live during the nesting season.

FOOD

Birds often put on extra fat in order to cope with cold. In certain species, more than 10 per cent of body weight can be fat. Birds often spend almost all their daylight hours searching for fatty food sources. There is a significant break even point between the energy expended in this search and the benefit of fat as an insulator and energy source.

SHELTER

Birds may seek shelter in dense bushes/trees, in window wells, courtyards or other sheltered areas of buildings (some may come inside outbuildings), and natural or artificial cavities such as our nestboxes. Creating habitat for native species often includes leaving dead trees standing as "snags" and creating brush piles to offer shelter for wildlife.

GATHER YOUR FRIENDS

Birds that winter in cold climates often gather together in a sheltered spot to share body heat during the especially cold nights. We have evidence of this when in the spring checking and cleaning of our nestboxes, we observe "roost" material (also known as bird droppings) in the boxes. In the cold night of spring, birds might regularly visit nestboxes and take advantage of huddling together. Sadly, often we find the evidence in particularly severe winters to be dead birds in the boxes that didn't survive the cold.



Mountain Bluebird in the Snow (Photo Credit Nancy Fraser)

PUFF YOUR FEATHERS/PULL IN YOUR FEET

Birds can use their feathers as insulation from cold (or heat) by puffing them up for insulation and to reduce the total surface area exposed to the cold. Similarly, birds pull up their feet and tuck their heads to minimize exposure.

SHIVER

Birds have the ability to use their expertise at shivering to fight cold weather. This isn't a simple tremble that mammals use to generate heat. Birds can activate opposing muscle groups, creating muscle contractions to help retain heat, without all of the typical jiggling of human shivers.

CHANGE YOUR TEMPERATURE

Birds maintain a temperature of 104-106° F. Bluebirds have not adapted to this strategy, but some bird species can regulate their circulation to supply critical internal organs and let extremities cool down significantly. Other species can adjust their temperatures to a much lower degree than the 104-106° F, and actually reach a state or torpor. This is not too practical for over-wintering birds because the energy required to return from this state may compromise survival.

Fall Wrap Up and Annual Meeting

Alert: End of Year Final Reports on Bluebird Nesting Activity and Other Specie Nesting Activity are due on this date.

The meeting will be held on the morning of Saturday, September 12, at the Champoeg State Heritage Area Visitors' Center. All volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting.

There will be a short but important business meeting, which will include remarks from President Dave Flaming, a Treasurer's Report, and election of new board members. Every two years, board members are elected, and then meet to elect the officers within the board. A nominating committee has been appointed, and they will have a slate of nominees to be voted on at the September 12 meeting.

There will be ample opportunity to talk with other monitors and banders, and there will be a guest speaker.

Start time and other details will be announced closer to the meeting date.



Photo Credit Laurie Frajola



Be a part of the newsletter!

We need your contributions.

Please submit your photos & ideas to:
pbrpnewsletter@yahoo.com
 for consideration.

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