

PRESCOTT BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

Post Office Box 1469
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www.prescottbluebird.com

Newsletter - Spring 2016

*An affiliate of the North
American Bluebird Society*



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From The President's Nestbox

By Dana Robinson

Greetings everyone! I'm Dana Robinson, recently elected President of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Board. I've been with the organization since 2012, beginning as a monitor. I then trained as a bander and joined the Prescott Board of Directors in 2014. It has been a very rewarding experience with many joys and of course, some sadness.

I and the Board of Directors are greatly appreciative of the many years Dave Flaming has served as President. He has helped steer the organization to many successes. Dave will continue to manage the project's database, a critically important element of the Project's objectives. Banders use the database to determine the origination and movement of recaptured adult bluebirds and submit new banding numbers for nestlings. Oftentimes we can share this information with the homeowner. Data collected is also reported to the Bird Banding Laboratory at the Department of the Interior. Dave is a stickler for accuracy and we are all glad he is!

Spring is around the corner, bringing our beautiful bluebirds back to nesting sites. Homeowners are already reporting bluebirds on their properties and nest building has begun at some locations. It appears that bluebirds are returning before the swallows this year and that will help them get established. If you are hosting a bluebird box on your property expect to see your monitor coming to check that the box is cleaned out from winter roosting. You may have one of our new monitors introduce themselves. New monitors work in collaboration with a bander to learn their route, Western Bluebird behavior and the value of observation. Homeowners may not think of themselves as a resource but if you are hosting bluebirds you can be our eyes and ears. A new monitor (or experienced bander) can benefit from your observations. Nest building behavior, courting pairs and male bluebirds entering the box to feed the female are examples of information that is helpful to share with your monitor. It is an exciting time of year. We all share great anticipation as we embark on a new Western Bluebird nesting season. Aren't we fortunate to be able to spend a little time with these wonderful birds?

*"A man who
never sees a bluebird
only half lives."*

Edwin Way Teale

Photo Credit Richrd Sorensen, Monitor

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Every dollar you give helps us to help our beloved Western Bluebirds.*

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Swallow competition with bluebird male for nest box with nestlings

Photo Credit Richrd Sorensen, Monitor

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Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

Western Bluebird Nesting Summary

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nesting Attempts	414	401	442	188	264
Failed Attempts	145	99	106	34	36
% Successful	65%	65%	76%	82%	86%
Earliest Hatch Date	5/5	4/20	4/12	4/30	4/17
Latest Hatch Date	8/18	8/23	8/21	8/20	8/17
Total Eggs Laid	2,043	2,055	2,286	946	1,380
Avg Eggs/Clutch	4.9	5.1	5.1	5.0	5.2
Total Hatchlings	1,507	1,576	1,828	789	1,100
% Eggs Hatched	74%	77%	80%	83%	80%
Avg Hatchlings/Clutch	3.6	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.2
Total Nestlings Banded	1,200	1,337	1,706	747	1,168
% Nestlings Banded	80%	85%	93%	95%	106%
Total Nestlings Fledged	1,086	1,258	1,455	675	977
% Nestlings Fledged	72%	80%	80%	86%	89%



Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre

Check our web site for additional statistics: prescottbluebird.com



Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

- mid-March Monitors begin visiting routes and reporting to assigned bander weekly.
- May 21 Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Bird Festival, Sherwood
- April 8 Board Meeting
- July 8 Board Meeting
- Sept. 10 Fall Wrap Up/Annual Meeting at Champoege State Heritage Area Visitors' Center
- Sept. 10 End of Year Reports for WEBL and for Other Specie Nesting due to Data Base Manager Dave Flaming
- October 14 Board Meeting

Save the Date!

September 10, 2016 9:30 - noon
Fall Wrap-up Session at
Champoege State Heritage Area, Visitors' Center

Spring Workshop for New & Returning Volunteers

By Nancy Fraser

The workshop was held at Champoeg State Heritage Park on Saturday, February 27. There was a good turnout and mix of those interested in volunteering and returning volunteers to help answer their questions and in general “talk Bluebird”. Great company, pretty good weather, a great brunch to get us through the morning, and lively and informative talks and presentations were enjoyed by all. When the coffee and tea were consumed, the fruit and sandwiches devoured, eight individuals/couples expressed an interest in volunteering. The following week, a small team met to match volunteers as best we could with nestbox routes with vacancies. Routes will be offered to volunteers based first on best fit geographically and then based on the individuals’ ability to commit to that route. Visits to the routes with the bander/team leader for that location began soon thereafter, as bluebirds were already being seen investigating nestboxes in February.

Returning volunteers received their monitoring materials, and began working in the field by early to mid-March, and reporting observations to their assigned bander weekly.

Thank you everyone for coming out on a Saturday morning. We couldn’t maintain our bluebird routes and record the results of bluebird nesting without all of you!!! We hope anyone disappointed not to be offered a route (we did have more willing volunteers than we had openings) enjoyed learning about bluebirds and our project, and might consider volunteering in future nesting seasons.



What is Blue and Always Makes us Smile?

By Joy Redington

Our beloved Bluebirds! Springtime is upon us and the best opportunity to take some great photos of our Blues. Why not enter your favorite photograph in our 2016 PBRP Photo Contest? Submit your original photo image, name, and phone number to: pbrp.fb@gmail.com for a chance to share with other bird lovers and win great prizes. Please be sure to check out our contest details for your best opportunity to win. We look forward to seeing your images.

Contest details:

- Contest runs from March 30, 2016 – July 15, 2016
- Winning image will be awarded to the photo that best displays: technical quality, originality, and artistic merit capturing a Western Bluebird in it’s natural habitat.

Prizes Awarded:

- One \$50 Gift Card to Backyard Bird Shop
- Winning image will be featured on PBRP publications with photo credit.

Official Entry rules/requirements:

- Western Bluebirds images only
- Open to all amateur photographers 18 years and older
- Images/photos must be your own
- All entries must be submitted with your name and phone number
- Only electronically submitted images in 600 dpi format to: pbrp@gmail.com will be considered
- Up to five entries per person and/or email
- All contest entrants give permission for future photo use for all PRBP publications
- Submission deadline July 15, 2016, 5:00 PM PST



A Report on Winter Kill for Eastern Bluebirds: Winter of 2014-2015

The author found a much higher number of dead Eastern Bluebirds in nestboxes when readying his bluebird trails in March, 2015. Number of fledged bluebirds in 2015 season on his route was 30% of average previous years.

From: North American Bluebird Society (NABS)
Journal: *Bluebird.*, Fall, 2015

PBRP Editor's Note: this article is based on observations by volunteers monitoring Eastern Bluebirds east of the Mississippi. Our project exclusively monitors Western Bluebirds in a different climate zone.

Finding 5 Eastern Bluebird carcasses in two of my nestboxes when readying my trail this March was unusual for my

40-box trail. My historical records showed that in the past 30 years I had found one dead bluebird in three other springs. The NABS Facebook page and our hotline had a number of reports of finding dead bluebirds this spring. I believe this matter is worthy of attention because we know from the past that severe winter weather can decimate bluebird populations and reverse years of production from our trails. Production on my trail this season will be less than 30% of that achieved last year.

NABS members were offered an opportunity to report on the status of winter kills on their trail for the winter of 2014-2015. I've received too few reports as yet to provide sufficient data to attempt any kind of regional analysis, but thought I would summarize the information so far obtained.

Bob and his wife Judy manage 170 nestboxes on several trails spread over the 170,000 acre Land Between the Lakes Recreational area in western Kentucky and Tennessee. Over the last 25 years, they have fledged over 30,000 Eastern Bluebirds! For the last 24 years, they have averaged 1-2 winter-killed bluebirds in their boxes. But last March they found a total of 24 dead bluebirds. They also mentioned that for the year before, the situation was even worse, as they discovered 69 dead bluebirds in their boxes. Bob wrote that the weather in their area last winter was record-setting for their area. The first major snow event dropped 10 inches in mid-February and a further 16 inches in early March. What is more, the February snow cover persisted for 2 weeks and was accompanied by bitterly cold temperatures. The second event in March re-covered the ground just as the first snow was dissipating. Not surprisingly, these monitors believe their annual bluebird production (usually over 1,000 chicks) for this nesting season will be the lowest to date.

Joel is a NABS member living near Bloomington in south-central Indiana, where he manages 30 nestboxes. This spring he found 5 dead male bluebirds in 3 of his nestboxes. Since none had signs of head trauma, he believes they were winter kill. Joel has been managing his trail for 30 years and had never seen winter kill before.

Jerry, near Evansville, manages 90 nestboxes located within a 30 square mile area in extreme SW Indiana. He also reports a significant increase in winter kills this spring. He found 28 dead bluebirds when opening his trail in March. In other years, he notes he has found a total of 4-7 winter-killed bluebirds. Like Joel, he reported severe cold with sub-zero temperatures (wind chills of -20°F) and prolonged periods of snow/ice cover, Jerry has carefully tracked bluebird populations and in the 2014 season he had 90 nesting pairs (up from 5 pairs in 1980). However, this season he has counted only 30 nesting pairs on his trails. Certainly this is a legacy of the previous winter conditions?

Jim has 90 nestboxes in Greenville, Illinois, (east central location). He found 2 boxes, each with a dead male-female pair in March. These were the first winter-killed birds he has seen in 10 years of monitoring this trail.

Jane and Lee manage a bluebird trail near Chesterfield, VA, and have also observed winter kills for the first time this year. In March, they found 2 males in one box and five in another. Their area had also experienced prolonged snow cover and unusually cold periods last winter.

A startling report comes from Allen, a retired wildlife biologist in Millville, NJ. Allen manages about 380 nestboxes on 24 trails spread out over 6 counties in southern New Jersey. This spring he found a total of 59 dead bluebirds (80-90% males). He notes that February and March featured record levels of snow and cold temperatures for the area. He also provided a detailed assessment of both the food supplies and amount of forest cover available for bluebirds overwintering near his trails. Some of the areas were particularly problematic for wintering bluebirds because of sparse forest cover and available food sources like berries. Like others, he is already beginning to see a sharp reduction in the number of nests and fledglings compared to last season.



This past winter (possibly the past 2) probably affected spring breeding populations, and possibly over a significant part of the Eastern Bluebird wintering range. These birds found in nestboxes probably represent only a fraction of the total number of bluebirds lost to winter exposure last year

I expect that the past 2 winters have reversed a significant part of the population gains made over recent decades. One possible aspect that may have prevented these losses from being as profound as those of the late 1970s is that this time the extreme cold and snow cover may not have impacted as large a percentage of the birds' winter range.

PBRP Editor's Note: Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project data (see Page 3) from the 2014 nesting season showed a profound reduction in nesting attempts, eggs laid/hatched, and nestlings fledged, with a modest recovery in 2015. Anecdotal reports within our project area and others elsewhere in Oregon and in Western Canada in 2014 are similar to that reported in this NABS journal report. Contrast this with the 2013 season, which was the most numerically successful in over 20 years. The winter of 2013 was harsh, with long periods of very cold weather & sustained snow cover in much of the Willamette Valley—unusual weather conditions.

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