

Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre

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Newsletter Fall 2016

How Do Birds Beat the Heat?

By Harry Nehls, Audubon Society of Portland Warbler, July/August 2016 (used with permission)

Summers in Oregon are warm and very dry, interspersed with periods of very high temperatures. Over recent years, summer-like temperatures have been occurring earlier in the spring, sometimes reaching temperatures of 90 degrees or more. Humans cool off with air conditioning in their home, office, or car, but otherwise just bear it. What do birds do to survive hot summers?

During the winter months, birds prepare their bodies to combat the cold and retain their body heat. In summer they must expend heat and keep their body temperature at a safe level.

Physically, birds can combat overheating. They do not sweat, but pant to expel heat from the body. A bird's respiratory system differs somewhat from a human's and allows panting to be more successful.

To cool down, birds press their feathers close to the body, compressing the air pockets that hold body heat. Exposing what bare skin they have to the outside air and bringing their blood vessels closer to the surface of the body also releases body heat. Increasing blood flow to the legs is especially successful in releasing a large amount of body heat.

Birds adjust their daily habits to avoid overheating. Most birds begin their day about an hour before daylight and are very active singing, defending territory, and foraging. Several hours after dawn, activity slows and birds seek out cool, shady shelter. Activities continue throughout the day, but rather sluggishly. During the hotter parts of the day birds rest or sleep.

Vultures and other soaring birds do not begin their day until the sun has heated the ground and formed the updrafts that allow them to soar aloft. It is often cooler at higher elevations, so these birds will fly higher than usual to take advantage of the cooler air.

During the hotter parts of the day, birds find cool, dark shelter and do not expend any more energy than necessary. Most activities occur in early morning and a bit prior to sunset. Some birds are even found foraging in the dark of night.

Humans in the northern hemisphere have yet to embrace these hotter summer temperatures and continue to suffer their effects. People in hotter parts of the world have adjusted and find little discomfort in the summer heat. They tend to avoid the hot midday sun, completely cover bare skin, and slow down during the hotter parts of the day. Their bodies soon adjust to the hotter temperatures.



Photo Credit Laurie Neish

From The President's Nestbox

By Dana Robinson

The 2016 Western Bluebird season has come to a close and we have great news to report. Our bluebird numbers are significantly up this year. While we monitored fewer nest boxes (we removed some that have been unproductive for several years), we banded an increased number of nestlings and more importantly, banded or recovered more adult Western Bluebirds than in the previous five years. See page 3 of this issue to review the statistics report.

The Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project closes each season with a Fall Wrap-Up Meeting. This is an opportunity for monitors and banders to share experiences of the season, problem-solve and share ideas. We had a great discussion! Lyn Burniston gave a summary of our high school scholarship award process and introduced two reward recipients. PBRP also has a new technical committee that will oversee some new scientific processes to be implemented in 2017. Bob Burbank brought a sample new nest box we will be trying that has a two-layer roof he designed to help mitigate extreme temperatures. In 2017 we will utilize temperature gauges in several nest boxes to determine how much temperature impacts nesting success.

Monitors and homeowners will now be getting ready for winter by cleaning out nest boxes and making any needed repairs. Remember bluebirds and other songbirds use the nest boxes in winter for roosting during cold weather. As the days get shorter and the temperatures become cooler, the impending fall brings us all a sense of renewal. We watch a variety of birds that come through our area and stop at our feeders during fall migration. This annual event reminds me of the rhythm of nature and how she succeeds in seasonal changes despite human influences all around us. While the Western Bluebird doesn't migrate in the conventional sense, they do seek out sheltered areas with more temperate mini-climates in lower elevations and locations that provide food when insects become scarce during the cold. Our great homeowners are always asking what else they can do to help the bluebirds. Within the next few weeks we will post information on our website <http://prescottbluebird.com/> on recommended winter-bearing berry plants that you can plant on your property to provide a much needed food source when insects are scarce.

Congratulations to Greg LaHaie! Greg is the winner of our recent photo contest: What Is Blue and Always Makes Us Smile? Greg's photo will make you smile. You can see it (and share it!) on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/prescottbluebird/>. Give us a "Like"!

It is so exciting to learn of a successful year – we had several

clutches where determined single parent birds persisted in raising their young even after the loss of their mate to predators. This determination and dedication is also demonstrated by our monitors, banders and dedicated property owners. Let's look forward to 2017 and commit to making it an even greater year for bluebirds.

Charlie Stalzer Embarks on New Service Project

By Nancy Fraser

For over 10 years, Charlie has happily and courageously managed PBRP's Information Technology needs on our website and at our regular spring and fall meetings. He has been a key part of our success over the years. And he has brought many of us to an increased knowledge of crafting presentations, electronic information organizing, sharing, and storage. He has assisted those of us not quite so ready to embark on our own projects by implementing our ideas in the framework of computer and digitized technology. At the same time, he has served similarly with other non-profits in our communities (Riverkeepers, Tigard Senior Center) and Tigard Public Schools, among others.

Charlie will be retiring from his important support role with PBRP in order to take on a large new project, working with teenagers in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) field. They will put his skills to good use, and will be very fortunate to have him.

Congratulations, Charlie, on your new endeavors. PBRP thanks you for the patient support you have provided to our volunteers and the Board on behalf of the Western Bluebird.



Photo Credit Greg LaHaie

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Banding

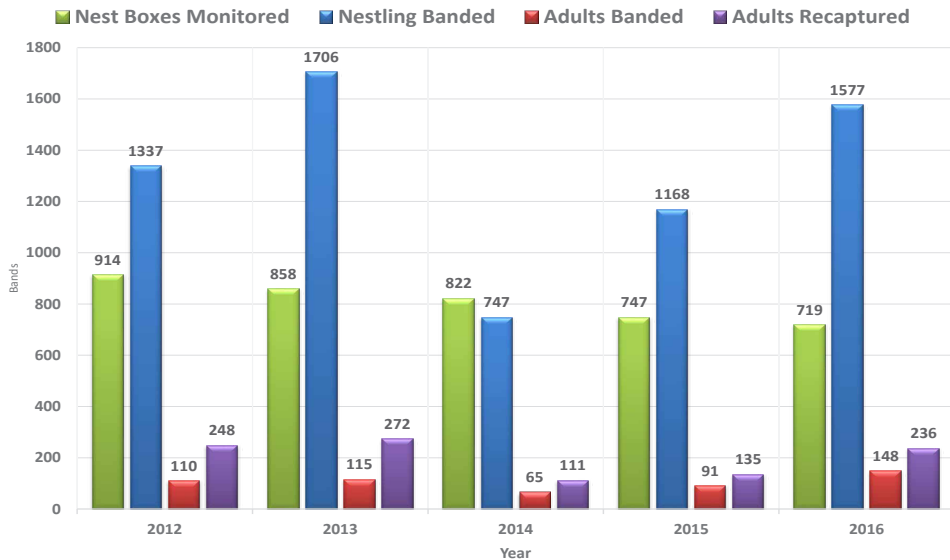


Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre



Photo Credit Nancy Fraser

Seeking New Volunteers for the 2017 Season

By Nancy Fraser

The Spring Workshop for New and Returning Monitors will be held at Champoeg State Heritage Area Visitors' Center on Saturday, February 25, 2017, from 9:30 until noon. Each season, with the retirement of monitors, there are routes to be filled. We are especially looking for potential volunteers in the areas where bluebirds nest, to minimize travel time for our volunteers getting to their assigned routes. Would you like to help Western Bluebirds sustain their numbers and have a great nature experience? Come to the workshop and find out what it's all about and how you can contribute. Register by mailing us at: email@prescottbluebird.com

Please include your name, address, and telephone contact number. We look forward to seeing you in February!

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Celebrates & Thanks Our Volunteers

Betty & John Ballentine	Bob Burbank	Lyn Burniston	Jim & Barby Conroy
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Lynn Erdman	Dave Flaming	Nancy Fraser	Lisa Fratianni
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Mary Hayden	Colleen Hill	Barbara Holland	Thomas Houseman
Colleen & Mike Keyes	Michelle Koepp	Carol Krueger	Lauri Kunzman
Greg LaHaie	Susan Lamb	Caroline Mann	Barbara & Don Manghelli
Gwen Martin	Susan Mates	Stan & Krista McKay	Scott Morrison
Jess & Joanie McNiel	Ginger & Bob Meehan	Cheryl Neal	Elaine Newland
Tualatin River NWR (Friends of the Refuge)	Rob O'Gorman	Donald Powers	Margaret Peterson & Jeff Fahey
Joy Redington	Betsey Rixford	Dana Robinson	Russ Rosner
Dan Sherman	Ellie Shipley	Ron & Nelda Skidmore	Charlie Stalzer
Chelsey & Doug Smelser	Patty & Rick Sorensen	Helga Stephenson	Denise Szott
Mike Turley	Onalee Wasserburger	Kit Whittaker	David and Michal Wert

Annual Meeting and Fall Wrap Up

By Nancy Fraser

The Annual Meeting & Fall Wrap Up was held on September 10, at Champoege State Heritage Area. Kirk Naylor, retired Senior Field Biologist for PacificCorp, was the guest speaker. PBRP President Dana Robinson led the meeting, introducing the Board and thanking volunteer Monitors and Banders for their contributions and dedication to the project. She also thanked Charlie Stalzer for his years of support to our project and the Western Bluebird. Charlie will be leaving the IT Committee Chair position in order to pursue other non-profit support work (see separate article).



Interpretive Panel - Photo Credit Greg LaHaie

Lauri Kunzman gave the financial overview. Two of the four recent high school graduates awarded scholarships were introduced (see separate article). The Interpretive Display sign to be placed outside the Visitors' Center at Champoege was available for viewing (photo) and will be installed within the next two weeks. This was a cooperative project between Oregon State Parks and PBRP, with Nelda Skidmore taking the lead role for PBRP. Thank you Nelda for a job well done. The sign is very informative and eye-catching.

Kirk Naylor, Speaker at the Fall Wrap Up September 10th

By Greg LaHaie

The annual meeting of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project featured Kirk Naylor as guest speaker. Mr. Naylor is a retired Senior Field Biologist who spent over 30 years managing forest lands to benefit all types of wildlife for PacificCorp. His slide show showed many examples of land management strategies over the years. Most federal and private efforts favor the heavy regrowth of timber, at the expense of creating an environment healthy for other plants, animals and birds. The types of plant growth and the amount of open space and light under the forest canopy are lower than desired. His efforts thru PP&L focused on lower density of trees and more suitable snags and necessary cavities for secondary cavity nesting birds, and more suitable vegetation for wildlife gleaning and browsing. He emphasized that work done by PBRP in providing and maintaining boxes as an alternative to natural cavities for bluebirds will remain critical for at least the next 20 years, or longer if land management guidelines do not change.

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project Scholarships

By Lyn Burniston

PBRP is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2016 college scholarships. The scholarships are available to students graduating from high school in Washington, Yamhill and Clackamas Counties who plan to attend an Oregon college to major in environmental sciences, wildlife biology or related field. PBRP is providing these scholarships to promote stewardship of the environment for the next generation.

This year due to the outstanding applicants, four scholarships have been awarded. Skye Walker from West Linn High School will be attending Oregon State University with career goals of environmental policy, environmental, and animal law. Mia Palmer from West Linn will be attending Oregon State University (Honors College) as an ecological/environmental engineer. Esmeralda Sanchez-Sanchez from Canby High will be attending Portland State University to become a zoologist or wildlife biologist. Christiana Niebel from Sherwood High will be attending Oregon State University for zoology and wildlife biology. We wish them the best!



Lyn with Mia and Skye - Photo Credit Lyn Burniston

Planting for Bluebirds and Other Wildlife

By Scott W. Gillihan, *NABS Bluebird Journal*, Fall 2015
Vol. 37 No. 4, Used with permission

Fall may be the best time to plant trees and shrubs. The cool, moist weather stimulates root growth, giving plants a head start next spring to survive the heat and dryness of summer. When choosing plants to beautify your landscape, why not pick native species that can provide food for bluebirds and other wildlife, especially during the critical cold months?

In warm months, when insects are active, bluebirds dine primarily on bugs. But in cold months, when insects are dormant or otherwise unavailable, bluebirds shift to small fruits/berries. In order to survive cold temperatures, bluebirds must have access to fruits. A comprehensive list of suitable berry-producing plants for all of North America is beyond the scope of this publication. Good information is available from local nurseries, county extension offices, books, and back issues of *Sialia*/Bluebird (available online at www.nabluebirdsociety.org).

Sialia carried an excellent series of articles on plant selections to benefit bluebirds and other wildlife, written by Karen Blackburn. In the final installment (*Sialia*, Summer 1991, pp. 99-103), Karen noted:

"It is important, particularly in areas that receive snowfall, to make available an abundance of plants that possess fruits that persist through the winter months. Among the best plants for this purpose are sumacs, bayberries, viburnums, and American holly."



Photo Credit Cody Polansky (*Sialis website*)



Some of the specific plants recommended, valuable because the fruits can persist through winter into spring, and because they are preferred by bluebirds, include:

- American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)
- Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)
- Northern Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)
- Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

Other plants with fruits that can last until spring, although they may not be as favored by bluebirds:

- Red Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*)
- American Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*)
- Deciduous Holly (*Ilex decidua*)
- Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)
- Common Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
- Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*)
- Pasture Rose (*Rosa carolina*)
- Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*)
- Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*)

Plants with fruits that may persist from fall deep into winter:

- Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
- Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)
- American Mountain-Ash (*Sorbus americana*)

Editor's note — Reprinted without edits, the plant lists above contain some species that are not hardy in our climate. The best plants with fruit carried into the winter are those native to your area, because they will provide best berry production. Here are names of some local nurseries who advertise a selection of native plants:

Alder View Natives, Wilsonville; BeaverLake Nursery, Beavercreek (mail/ internet orders); Bosky Dell Natives, West Linn; Echo Valley Natives, OR City; Emerald Seed & Supply, Portland; Livingscape Nursery, Portland; Northwest Native Plants, Inc., OR City; Oregon Native Plant Nursery, Woodburn; Portland Nursery, Portland; Valley Growers Nursery, Hubbard, Cistus Nursery, Sauvie Island

Bluebirds Migrate to Find Better Weather and Resources

By Sandy Seibert Excerpted From: North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Journal: Bluebird., Fall, 2015

We often think of migration as a seasonal movement of birds during spring and fall to avoid harsh weather. That is only partially true.

“Migration evolved as a way for birds to exploit resources that are seasonably abundant and avoid times when or places where resources are scarce or weather is very harsh,” Dr. Paul Berlinger wrote in *How Birds Migrate*.

Many birds are able to tolerate cold temperatures but if they cannot find food, they must migrate. Berlinger goes on, “By far the most common type of migration, partial migration, is characterized by seasonal movements away from a breeding range by some, but not all, members of a species.”

Mountain Bluebirds are the most migratory of the three bluebird species. They form family units in late summer, merging with others to form large flocks. At this time, they may also mingle with Western Bluebirds. In September and early October, they depart for their wintering grounds. Northern birds start migrating sooner than southern birds. They travel as far as south Texas and central Mexico. The extent of their migration seems to be related to availability of fruit and severity of winter weather.



Photo Credit Zenobia Lapeyre

In milder areas, Mountain Bluebirds will just move to lower elevations within their breeding range. As it gets colder in the mountains, they follow the insects and berries down mountain slopes and then back up the slopes in the spring.

During migration and winter, Mountain Bluebirds are found in grasslands, deserts, brushy areas, plains and lowlands. They are able to survive lower temperatures than Western bluebirds, thus they are found in colder regions.

Western Bluebirds share some migration traits with Mountain Bluebirds. In areas where their ranges overlap, they will flock together. They will also remain in their breeding range in milder areas of the West. Those that do migrate move into open scrubby forests in the foothills and canyons of the southwest.

During the winter, some of their favorite foods are the berries of junipers and mistletoe. The availability of these plants determines the birds' movement throughout the colder weather; they can become very nomadic in their search for food. Western Bluebirds consume so many berries that they are considered an important dispersal agent for these two plant species.

All 3 bluebird species share some similar migration behaviors. They all migrate during the day. Many join up with resident flocks of bluebirds to find food, water and roost sites. Fall migration seems to be determined by the shortening of daylight rather than weather. Food is still plentiful and weather conditions are still pleasant when they begin to depart. Weather can influence migration, however. Birds may linger for longer periods at foraging sites when the weather is mild. When weather turns inclement, it may cause them to move south at a faster pace.

Weather, especially the temperature, has a big influence on spring migration. As the temperature warms, insects become active, and bluebirds begin their journey northward, back to their breeding territory.

[For brevity, I have left out the discussion of more complex (and more heavily observed) migration patterns of the Eastern Bluebird, retaining that of Mountain Bluebirds, that are observed together with Western Bluebirds regularly in some parts of the northwest US and southwest Canada] —Editor

PHOTO CONTEST: 2016 and for Upcoming 2017 Nesting Season

By Joy Reddington

Congratulations Greg LaHaie, the winner of our "What is Blue and Always Makes Us Smile?" Spring 2016 photo contest.

Greg's photo "New Family" entry won a \$50 Backyard Bird Shop Gift Card and will be featured in our future PBRP publications.

The criteria we took into careful consideration when choosing this entry were:

- Technical quality
- Originality
- Artistic Merit
- Natural Habitat

Thank you to everyone who participated and who helped make our contest a success! Stay tuned for our next photo contest announcement in the Spring 2017 newsletter or like us on Facebook for contest details and other upcoming events. Find us at: <https://www.facebook.com/prescottbluebird/>

"New Family" - Photo Credit Greg LaHaie



Mother's Day Celebration

By Nancy Fraser

On May 8, Mothers' Day, Gwen Martin, monitor for Rex Hill Vineyard in Newberg, met me and two visitors from NE Portland in Sherwood. The visitors were there to observe and learn about Western Bluebirds and Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project. Vicky and Keith were winning bidders in the annual on line Call of the Wild silent auction of unique birding and nature experiences organized by the Audubon Society of Portland Wildlife Care Animal Rehabilitation Center, to support its operating costs. The four of us agreed it was a fine way to celebrate this special day, with a bluebird pair and their brood of five hungry, fourteen-day-old nestlings.

It was an enjoyable experience for all of us, the first brood and banding of the season for Gwen and I, and giving Vicky and Keith the chance to see the remarkable development of eggs to unfeathered hatchlings to partially finished nestlings. By visiting a variety of nestboxes, we had an opportunity to talk together about the time investment and energy investment of bluebird pairs to successfully fledge young.

These chicks were hatched on April 24, and were 14 days old by estimated dates. Their actual physical development suggested they were a bit behind in maturation, often the case in first spring broods, when weather is unpredictable and insect resources for feeding the nestlings can be uncertain.

Banding was accomplished quickly in order that the chicks not be exposed for long to the coolish temperatures on this overcast and breezy morning. The female bluebird watched the proceedings from a post on the end of a grape row near the nestbox.

The first 5 bands on my chain of 100 were quickly used for the nestlings. The 6th was used to band the female bluebird, who did not have a band. The male bluebird did already have a band. The PBRP data base showed that (like his mate today) he was first banded in May, 2014, as the male of a nesting pair at a nestbox site 4-5 miles due east of the Rex Hill location.

We left the site after watching the two adults busily bringing wild caught insects and using the mealworms we offered as well, flying to the nestbox opening, dipping their heads inside, and placing the food into the nestlings' gaping mouths. The sun was beginning to peek through, and the uniformity of the overcast sky was being broken up by puffy, white clouds. A beautiful day to be out in the country!

The nestlings, due to fledge in about 7 days, fledged successfully on May 16. The same pair of adults successfully fledged a second brood of six in July at this site.

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