

PRESCOTT BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROJECT

NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2025



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Presidents' Message

by Sarah Hatfield & Gwen Martin

The daffodils have bloomed and the tulips are out in full strength. Birdsong fills the pre-dawn morning which starts earlier and earlier each day. Spring is here and the bluebird nesting season has begun. Monitors have reported numerous bluebird sightings, lots of nest-building, and, as of the second week of April, eggs have been laid in at least one box.

Monitoring bluebird boxes connects us to nature in a very personal way. We get to observe as a pair claims a box and begins to build a nest. We watch as the birds bring grasses to the box and begin to build and shape their nest. We may get to see a male bluebird feed its mate some of the wiggly mealworms we offer. Soon we will see and begin to count eggs. We may open a box and see a female on the nest, incubating her lovely, blue eggs. On the next visit, we might get to witness hatchlings, just a day or so old. The next time, if we are lucky, we will be welcomed by the sounds of nestlings and their hungry, noisy chirping as they await whatever morsels their parents bring them. There will come a visit or two that we don't even open the box but have to rely on our observations of what we see and hear coming from the box, and trust that the bluebird parents are preparing their brood to fledge.

Monitoring does connect us to the full cycle of life. We may open a box and find abandoned eggs or hatchlings that have died. One or both of the parents may disappear, victims of a predator or extreme weather. A location that has always been productive may suddenly show no signs of bluebird activity. Sometimes we can attribute this to construction or development, but sometimes there is no apparent reason for the change.

When the nest is empty, whether from a fully fledged clutch that you may see lingering near the box or due to a less positive reason, it will be time to clean out the box and prepare for the future. This could be a second clutch of bluebirds from the same pair, or a new pair. It could be that a pair of swallows will take over the box, or we may have to reclaim the box from invasive House Sparrows. Or the box may remain empty until the following spring when the cycle begins again.



Photo Credit - Sarah Hatfield



Photo Credit - Sarah Hatfield

Welcome New Volunteers

The Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project would like to welcome the following volunteers who will be joining us in the field beginning with the 2025 season:

Judith Allen

Bryan Bukin

Ed Dietrich

Elizabeth Gemeroy

Maria Fiorella & Robert Weber

Tim Wagner

Thank you, new monitors! If you see them out in the field, please give them a warm welcome!

Get to know your PBRP board members

We recently asked some of our current board members to share their favorite part of monitoring.

■ **Lisa Fratianni** has been a monitor between Wilsonville and Sherwood since 2014. She has served as Treasurer and President, and is currently the Database Manager.

"My favorite part of monitoring is watching the pairs interact with each other."

■ **Sarah Hatfield** began monitoring alongside her husband, Jeff Murray, in 2018, in the Sherwood area, on and around Roy Rogers Road. She is the newsletter coordinator and is currently serving as co-President.

"I love getting outside and seeing not just the bluebirds, but other birds and wildlife. Monitoring forces me to slow down and notice the little things. My favorite thing is when I approach a nestbox and can hear the chirping of the nestlings."

■ **Gwen Martin** started monitoring in 2015. While she doesn't currently have a route, she is a team leader for nine monitors fills in when they are out of town. She is the volunteer-coordinator and is serving as co-president for the second time.

"In addition to gaining in-depth understanding of Bluebirds, I also enjoy learning more about the environmental issues that impact their and other birds' survival as a species. I also love meeting the property owners who generously host our boxes; it's given me opportunities to learn about Oregon agriculture I wouldn't have otherwise had. Over the course of the nesting season, I watched grape vines from bud break to harvest. One day I was in a chestnut orchard in bloom, another day watching an owner harvest green walnuts a local distillery uses to make liqueur. And, of course, I enjoy my fellow & sister bird lovers!"

■ **Donald Sitko** started monitoring with his wife, Dee, in 2019 in the west Wilsonville and east Sherwood area. He joined the board in 2021 and is currently serving a treasurer.

"I love how the birds are not afraid of us, recognize our car, and look for treats (mealworms) on every visit. They are cautious, and we treat them as wildlife, not pets. They pose for my camera on occasion!"

■ **Maggie Stock** has been monitoring for three years in the Sherwood area near Baker Road. She joined the board in Fall 2024.



Hungry nestlings singing for their supper

Photo Credit - Sarah Hatfield

"My most favorite thing is to support the bluebirds in any way I can. I get such joy from watching the bluebirds. They're amazing parents! The feeling is indescribable when all the nestlings have launched successfully from a nest. I can't wait until spring time to start monitoring again. Plus, this project is outdoors - a win, win. Can you tell I'm obsessed?!!"

■ **Sally Visser** has been a volunteer for about 5 years but has had nest boxes on her property for about 12 years. She monitors around Stafford, including Luscher Farm. She has been on the board for three years and is currently serving as Secretary.

"My favorite part of monitoring is walking around Luscher Farm and seeing all the beautiful gardens with the variety of birds enjoying the insects and flowers. One time on our property a baby bluebird was left without any parents, so I took him down to Audubon (at the time) in early July. In September I got a call from Audubon and they were bringing the adolescent bluebird back to the initial nest box to release him in the Fall. I was very impressed with their dedication and their love for the Western Bluebird."

■ **David Wesley** has been a volunteer for 6 years, monitoring in the Laurel and Bald Peak area. He has been on the board since 2023.

"My favorite part of being a monitor is watching the chicks mature and the diligence and dedication of the parents. I also really enjoy talking to the landowners and seeing how much joy and pride they get from watching 'their' birds."

QR Code

"We love bluebirds, and with your help we can continue our conservation work. Will you help? Because we are an all-volunteer organization and do not require memberships or sell items, we depend solely on the generosity of our financial donors. If you are able to contribute financially, we hope you'll consider a donation. You'll find a donation envelope included with this newsletter, or you can contribute via PayPal with this QR code or find a link on our website www.prescottbluebird.com. Thank you for helping us help our Western Bluebirds!"



From the Files of Hubert W. Prescott

Last winter, the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project was contacted by Bird Alliance of Oregon (formerly Portland Audubon). Hubert Prescott's son, John, had donated several boxes of his father's papers relating to bluebirds and some of his other forays into the scientific world. Bird Alliance felt these documents would be more appropriate for PBRP so members of our board have been spending time going through these items. Initial impressions prove that Hubert was a very interesting man who had a lifelong interest in the natural world around him that went well beyond the Western Bluebird.

We plan to share more of what we have learned about Hubert in the future. To start with, we thought that the following would be appropriate as gardeners begin to plant their summer gardens.

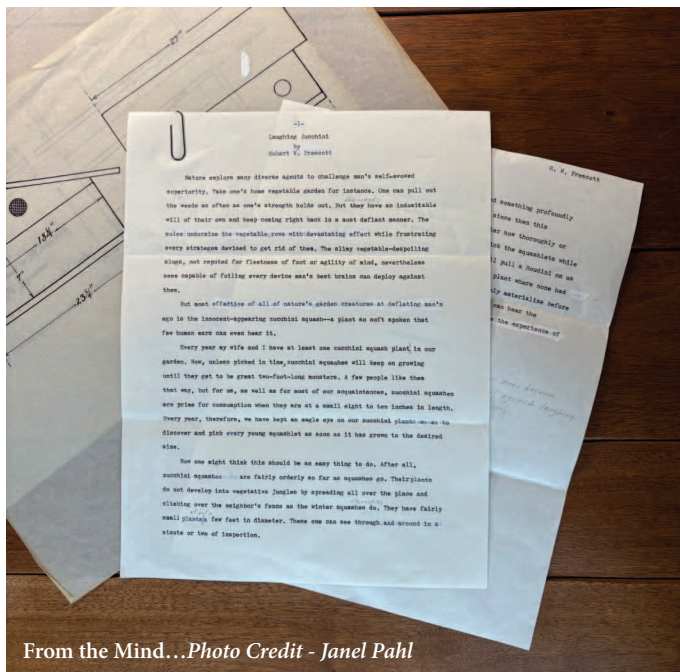
Laughing Zucchini

by Hubert W. Prescott

Nature employs many diverse agents to challenge man's self-avowed superiority. Take one's home vegetable garden for instance. One can pull out the weeds as often as one's strength holds out. But the weeds have an indomitable will of their own and keep coming right back in a most defiant manner. The moles undermine the vegetable rows with devastating effect while frustrating every stratagem devised to get rid of them. The slimy vegetable-despoiling slugs, not reputed for fleetness of foot or agility of mind, nevertheless seem capable of foiling every device man's best brains can deploy against them.

But most effective of all of nature's garden creatures at deflating man's ego is the innocent-appearing zucchini squash — a plant so soft spoken that few human ears can even hear it.

Every year my wife and I have at least one zucchini squash plant in our garden. Now, unless picked in time, zucchini squashes will keep on growing until they get to be great two-foot-long monsters. A few people like them that way, but for us, as well as for most of our acquaintances, zucchini squashes are prime for consumption when they are at a small eight to ten inches in length. Every year, therefore, we have kept an eagle eye on our zucchini plants so as to discover and pick every young squashlet as soon as it has grown to the desired size.



From the Mind...Photo Credit - Janel Pahl



"This plaque was among the Hubert Prescott documents"

Now one might think this should be an easy thing to do. After all, zucchini squashes are fairly orderly so far as squashes go. Their plants do not develop into vegetative jungles by spreading all over the place and climbing over the neighbor's fence as the winter squash varieties do. They have fairly small plants of just a few feet in diameter. These one can see through and around in a minute or two of inspection.

But several years ago my wife and I discovered something profoundly uncanny about zucchini squash. Every squash season since then this experience has recurred to baffle us to no end. No matter how thoroughly or how repeatedly we monitor our zucchini plants to find and pick the squashlets while they are at prime tender size, at least one or two will pull a Houdini on us before the season is over. Down in the recesses of the plant where none had been noted before, a huge lunger of a squash will suddenly materialize before our eyes. Then our ears suddenly become sensitive and we can hear the zucchini squash laughing its heart out. Did you ever have the experience of hearing a zucchini squash laugh at you?

The following was a hand-written postscript:

"Then as we stand in puzzled wonderment our ears become acutely sensitive and we can hear the zucchini squash laughing its heart out. Might tricky jokers those zucchini."

Thank You

The Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project would like to thank the generosity of the following individuals and organizations. Our mission would not be possible without the support of donors like you. Thank you!



Some kind notes that were included with recent donations.

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Vivian Weber
Barbara Whitaker
Carol & Lee Zinsli



"On the corner of Bluebird & ..."
Photo Credit - Sarah Hatfield

Bluebirds Everywhere

Bluebirds have long captured the imagination. Their name and image can be found all around. Here are just a few images of bluebirds in the "wild" as well as an idea for sharing these beautiful birds with your friends and family. We'd love to see your bluebird encounters and use them in upcoming newsletters. Please send them to info@prescottbluebird.com



"Coffee Shop in Whitehall, Montana"
Photo Credit - Gwen Martin



"The Bluebird Cafe in Nashville, Tennessee"
Photo Credit - Jennifer Rutledge



Photo Credit Dee Sitko

The Thoughtful Gift

by Dee Sitko

Spring is here, and some days we need a perk to make our days brighter. With uncertainty in our lives, bluebirds bring us a ray of hope. We can give back to them and our neighboring businesses by purchasing locally and patronizing businesses that share our love of birds.

Our friends, Joel and Tara, have been so generous and thoughtful about gifting over the years. The last couple of gifts are particularly meaningful. One was a simple card with a bluebird painting by local artist, Dean Crowser. It was so beautiful; we framed it, and it reminds us of our beloved friends and our sweet bluebirds. The latest gift was a group of 4 tile coasters with bluebird images created by "Art by Alyssa" - beautiful and functional, which is so appreciated!



So, when stumped for a gift for friends or yourself, consider visiting a local shop, and purchase something beautiful and meaningful. We can improve our quality of life with our purchases.

Outreach in Canby

One of the missions of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project is educating the public. On March 11th, Michelle Harrington had the opportunity to give a presentation to the members of the Canby Gardening Club at the Canby Public Library. There were nearly 50 people in attendance that day, eager to learn about the Western Bluebird. With its rural fields and pasturelands, much of Canby can be an ideal setting for bluebird homes. Quite a few members reported having seen bluebirds on their property and asked questions about the best ways to welcome them. Michelle shared information about setting up and maintaining nest boxes as well as making gardens and property bluebird-friendly. Michelle says, "Since I am a retired teacher, teaching has always been my passion. Teaching the public about the Western Bluebird means that hopefully folks will gain valuable knowledge and this will enhance the birds' ability to thrive."



Photo Credit - Janel Pahl

Bluebirds and Downy Woodpecker sharing a bite - Photo Credit - Janel Pahl



Save the Date

2025 Dates to keep in mind...

★ Get to Know Western Bluebirds

May 9th, 1:30 - 3:00, Juanita Pohl Center, Tualatin

Join us for an overview of the Western Bluebird's lifecycle and nesting habits and learn how RB is supporting these enchanting bluebirds.

★ Volunteer Happy Hours

July 16th, 4-6, Sherwood area - location TBD

July 23rd 4-6, West Linn McMenemy's

Sit, sip, snack, and swap tales! It can be lonely out in the field, and sometimes your non-birding friends and family just don't understand the highs (and lows) you experience with the birds. These social hours have become a great way to share your stories with fellow monitors. Check your email and our Facebook page for more details closer to the dates.

★ End of Season Reports - Late August - Early September

Please get your end of season reports to your team leaders as soon as your last clutch has fledged.

★ Fall Member Meeting

September 27th, 9:30-11:30, Tualatin Heritage Center

The fall meeting is an official end to the monitoring season and also serves as the organization's annual membership meeting which is required of us as a non-profit.



Spring Recruiting Meeting

The Tualatin Heritage Center was abuzz with bluebird enthusiasts on the morning of February 22nd as returning members and prospective volunteers met to discuss the upcoming monitoring season. This year about 45 people came to listen to members of the board talk about the Western Bluebird and the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project's mission of monitoring the nestboxes of this native songbird.

Katie O'Toole served as emcee for the event. She welcomed attendees and introduced the board members. Then Michelle Harrington gave an informative talk about the Western Bluebird. She gave an overview of the life cycle and nesting habits of the birds and talked about the importance of supporting their population. Sarah Hatfield then talked about the PBRP, including how and why it was formed, as well as the man from whom we get our name, Hubert Prescott.

After a brief break, Gwen Martin provided an overview of nestbox monitoring. This included a description of what a monitor does on a weekly and annual basis. She also showed a video of some basic supplies a monitor might want to take with them into the field (this video is available for volunteers on our website). Gwen and Sarah then outlined the next steps for prospective new volunteers.

After the meeting adjourned, there was more time for prospective volunteers to talk with veteran monitors and board members.



Snow Day

On a cold, icy morning this winter, board member, Janel Pahl was lucky to witness several birds foraging in the snow.



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