

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

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Letter from the President

Fred Robinson

It is an honor to follow Pat Johnston, Earl Gillis, and Hubert Prescott as the leader of this ongoing effort to help restore the Western Bluebird population. I doubt that Hubert or Earl ever dreamed that their efforts as founders of the organization would lead to such wonderful success. I know Pat finds it very satisfying to see the success over the last decade and a half.

I see my new role on the leadership team as taking some of the workload from Pat and continuing to work with her, Brenda, and Marilynne in providing coordination and encouragement for the volunteers, landowners, and friends who are the heart and soul of this organization. We will continue to focus on providing information to the landowners and the public on enhancing habitat and providing and monitoring nest boxes where we think bluebirds will use them. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with all of the steering committee, monitors, and friends of the project. I'm confident that our combined effort will result in the continued growth and expansion of the Western Bluebird population.

Please feel free to contact me or the steering committee with any thoughts, questions, or comments. Good luck and happy bluebirding!

Look at our New Logo



MARCH 9, 2002
Saturday

Mark Your Calendar
**SPRING
VOLUNTEER
WORKSHOP**

Champoeg Park

9 to 12:30 newcomers
1 to 3:00 old timers
3 to 4:00 steering committee

Hail and Farewell

from Pat Johnston, 1988-2001
(but I won't be going far!)

When I first became a bluebird monitor about 25 years ago, bluebirds were uncommon in the Willamette Valley, and sighting one was a Real Event! Now it is not unusual to see them, and people even report seeing small flocks on occasion. That is very gratifying to me, and I am sure it would please Hubert Prescott and Earl Gillis, both of whom spent many years working towards this end.

Going from a low of three monitors to the present high of 85 monitors is encouraging, and is indicative of the change in the perception of the public regarding things environmental. More organic gardens and farms bode well for bluebirds and all other birds.

Mostly through trial and error we have initiated changes that have helped the bluebird survival rate. Our nest boxes are made of thicker-diameter wood so that they offer better protection to the nesting birds. The roofs are now much larger, giving better protection against the elements: keeping the rain out, and providing shelter from the hot summer sun.

Following the disastrously cold wet spring in 1989 when over 90% of the first clutch of nestlings died, we experimented with feeding mealworms to help the nestlings survive when there were no insects available. Now we encourage the feeding of mealworms during these cold wet spells.

Observing different individual characteristics among the bluebirds, we initiated a banding program in 1988 so that we could follow the nesting activities of individual birds. Our objectives were tracking mate fidelity, nest box fidelity, bird movement, and bird longevity. Now all of our data is entered into our database, and we are able to follow each bluebird as it is recaptured. (*See page 7 for statistics*)

So it is with satisfaction and great pride that I turn over the presidency to Fred Robinson. He is very capable, a dedicated bluebirder and an excellent bander. I have every confidence that he will carry on the work of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Program with great élan. The organization has many enthusiastic volunteers, and I thank you all for your many hours of work on behalf of our bluebirds. I know you will be of great assistance to Fred.

I intend to continue banding on a much reduced scale, and I will remain in the Bluebird Cheering Section. So it is Hail and Farewell to you all!



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email@prescottbluebird.com or call 503-245-8449*

North American Bluebird Society Annual Convention

from Dan Brown

I attended my first North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Annual Convention June 21-24, 2001, in Columbus, Ohio. Being an Ohio native son, I could not resist accepting the offer to attend when asked.

If you have not attended a NABS convention, I recommend that you do, as it is a wonderful chance to meet other friendly bluebird enthusiasts. The organizations in the East are much larger than ours: Ohio has 800 members and New York, 900. Peterson boxes are very popular in the Midwest and slot boxes are preferred in British Columbia. Organizations in the East make extensive use of the PVC raccoon and Noel predator guards. Dealing with house sparrows is a major concern everywhere. The Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project is certainly at the forefront of banding and collecting nest box data.

The convention tends to follow a format of workshops for affiliate organizations offered early the first day and later, an affiliate meeting where organizations from around the country share ideas. The second day is devoted to area field trips that cost \$30.

My choice for a field trip was the Dawes Arboretum, a lovely 1,100 acre area which includes a Japanese garden. The arboretum had about one hundred bluebird nest boxes and it was here I saw my first Eastern Bluebird that was nesting in a Peterson nest box. We ate a catered lunch at the elegant Longaberger Golf Club that is Audubon approved.

The third day was more speakers and workshops including "The Meaning of Bluebirding Management in the Context of the Environmental Movement." About 250 people attended the third day and there were vendors selling nest boxes, as well as bluebird art, books, cards, etc.

The 2002 NABS convention will be in Penticton, British Columbia, June 13-16. Registration forms are available from me at (503) 554-1283, at dlbrown@teleport.com, or at the NABS website at www.nabluebirdsociety.org. The 2003 convention will be in Kearney, Nebraska, March 20-23.

HELP CONSERVE THE WESTERN BLUEBIRD

The Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project is a nonprofit 501C(3) organization operated entirely by volunteers. Because dues are not required, your tax-deductible contribution is essential to our continued success. Expenses include the cost of printing and mailing newsletters and educational materials, training volunteer, and purchasing lumber and other materials for building and mounting nest boxes. Mealworms are sold at cost to property owners.

Please send your contributions to PO Box 1469, Sherwood, OR, 97140.
Our tax identification number is 93-1021520

THANKS EVERYONE!

PBRP is grateful to the following individuals, organizations, and businesses for donating \$50 or more:

Leonard and Gloria Attrell
Elizabeth Rillver (in memory of her mother Ruth McCan Merrill)
Heidi McLean
Jim Hillman
Chehalem Garden Club
Elouise Binns (in honor of Fama and Bill Partlow's 50th wedding anniversary)
Alice Deming
Roger and Joan Smith
Gordon Nielszen
All the anonymous donors who put money in the jars at the Backyard Bird Shops

**We especially thank Mail Boxes, Etc. owner Marc Kline and staff,
who tirelessly print our newsletter at his Sherwood store.**

**Special thanks to the following for donations of material for nest boxes,
price breaks, or services rendered:**

Frank Abdenhalder
Bill Ballou
Len Grubowski
Lumbermen's of Newberg
Philips Pump Company of Sherwood
Portland General Electric
River City Cedar
Charlie Stalzer
Jack Stennett
Irene and Alan Tessman
Leonard Walker



While cleaning out the nest boxes on her route early this past spring, Sharon Trujillo-Jackson was surprised to find a \$5.00 bill, which someone had tucked into the entry hole of one of the boxes at the Pioneer Cemetery.

Thank you to the anonymous donor.

The oldest Western Bluebird so far recorded has been reported by Brenda McGowan, who recovered a beautiful male on July 1, 2001 that had been previously banded June 1, 1995 about half a mile away. Surprisingly, Brenda's bluebird had not been recaptured since the original banding in 1995—a mystery bird!



The Science Side of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

from Amber Keyser

Each spring, PBRP volunteers jump into high gear putting up nest boxes, monitoring nests, and banding bluebirds. The result is good for bluebirds and good for science. In the last seven years, PBRP volunteers have gathered important scientific data on 8,644 individual bluebirds. Until now, these data have not been put to use, but last year, PBRP received a grant for \$2,029.00 from the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Project to fund the scientific analysis of our bluebird data.

There are three major questions we intend to answer through our analyses. First, is our population of bluebirds growing, stable, or in decline? The primary goal of PBRP is to increase the population of bluebirds in the North Willamette Valley. We want to assess how our conservation efforts are helping. To do this, we need to estimate survival and fecundity in our population. We intend to calculate separate nestling survival estimates for those clutches that were fed extra mealworms. This will allow us to determine if supplemental feeding is an important conservation strategy.

Second, what are the dispersal patterns in Western Bluebirds? For most breeding adults, we know the box in which the bird was hatched, and we know the box in which that bird first bred as an adult. From this information, we can calculate the dispersal distance for each bird, and we can compare dispersal distances for males and females. Typically, we expect females to disperse farther than males.

Third, is there a genetic component to clutch size and hatching rate? Our database includes many instances of mother-daughter pairs, in which a female and at least one of her daughters are found breeding in the same year. We can use these cases to investigate the relative role of genetics versus environment in two important measures of fecundity: clutch size and hatching rate. This information will help us prioritize our conservation efforts.

Marilynne Keyser, Amber Keyser, and Tygh Walker are spearheading this effort. We are excited to make an important contribution to the scientific literature and further our knowledge of Western Bluebird breeding biology.

Steering Committee for Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

*All members of the committee can be reached through the Voice of Prescott at:
503-245-8449*

Pat Johnston, Past President, Bander
Fred Robinson President, Bander
Brenda McGowan, Treasurer, Bander
Corinne Stefanick, Secretary, Bander
Martha Stewart, Newsletter Editor
Lauri Kunzman, PR/Events, Bander
Jim & Barby Conroy, Finance
Dan Brown, Nest Box Developer
Marilynne Keyser, Database/Research
Gayle Mirkin, Speakers/Presenters
Ellen Stevenson & Mark Jager, Bander, Web Master
Shelly & Tygh Walker, Bander, Computer Consultant
Dave Flaming, Voice of Prescott, Bander
Dennis Wiley, Bander
Pam Reid, Bander
Shelly Othus, Bander

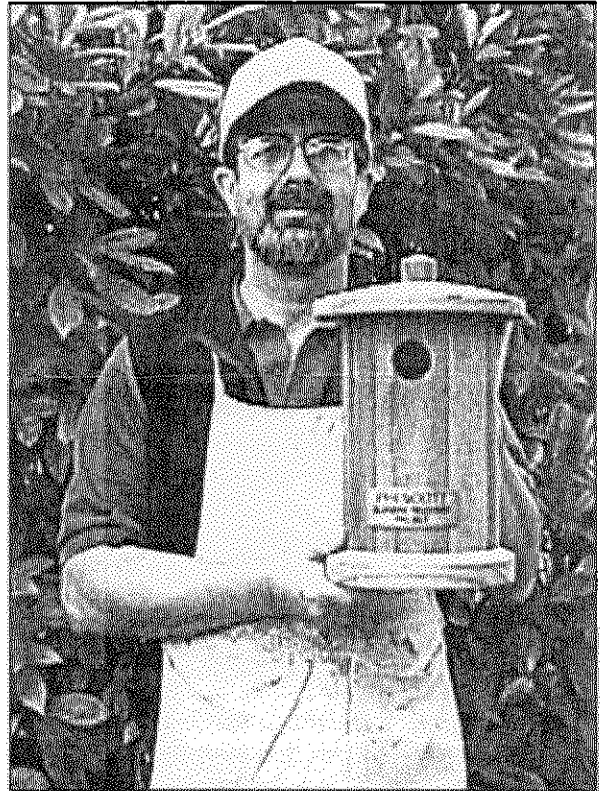
Amazing Volunteer

Prescott is fortunate to have many talented and generous volunteers. Let me introduce you to a special person who is a talented creative woodcraftsman - Charlie Stalzer. Charlie likes to figure out complicated designs, so when he saw an octagonal birdhouse in a woodworking magazine he knew he could make one to fit the Prescott dimensions.

Prescott was receiving requests for "designer" nesting boxes and we had been given recycled redwood from Champog's picnic tables. Charlie saw the value in this wood and started designing what ultimately resulted in a beautiful round redwood nesting box with an octagonal beveled roof. He hand-hones 20 slats and glues them together with an eight-piece roof. He even makes the latch by hand!

The Stalzers now have two of these beautiful nesting boxes in their own yard, which sits on the west side of Bull Mt area, with their first ever clutch of bluebirds this summer! When it was second clutch time, Shelly Walker, the bander for this area, figured the male was probably from a farm house that had been torn down two years ago and replaced with a housing development. This male was very wise and clever and did not submit to having his band checked.

The Stalzers are excellent bluebird landowners and enhance their bluebird environment by placing one house very close to their mini-blueberry patch and by keeping their birdbath fresh and clean. There were five eggs laid, five chicks hatched and five fledglings this year. Today Charlie and his family continue to enjoy watching their bluebird family frolicking in their birdbath.



Thank you Stalzers for sharing your story with us and for making your generous donation to our Prescott family. These boxes can be seen at all Prescott functions.

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

from Marilynne Keyser

Bluebirds Banded and Recaptured from 1995 to 2001 (at artificial nest boxes located in the following counties:
Clackamas, Marion, Multnomah, Washington and Yamhill)

Year	Banded Nestlings	Banded Adults	Total Banded	Recaptured Adults		Total Recovered
				Alive	Dead	
1995	493	26	519	32	5	37
1996	611	44	655	57	1	58
1997	939	53	992	82	7	89
1998	1198	94	1292	147	14	161
1999	1295	108	1403	250	35	285
2000	1629	105	1734	361	28	389
2001	1962	97	2049	382	50	432

FIELD NOTES

Prescott Circuit Rider

from Dave Flaming

When her car broke down, Prescott monitor Carol Munger turned to her horse Cocoa for transportation to monitor her route.

Carol knew she had two nest boxes on her route with nestlings that needed to be checked. Since she lives a half-mile from her route, Carol saddled up Cocoa and rode off to monitor her route. Five hours later and with a few sore spots, Carol was able to relax, knowing that her nestlings were healthy and doing just fine.

Carol monitors McCormick Hill road where she has 16 nest boxes for the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project. McCormick Hill road is a narrow gravel road that begins at the top and winds down the east slope of Chehalem Mountain to the valley floor and ends near the community of Scholls.

Last year Carol and her family moved to Oregon from Illinois where she had monitored Eastern Bluebirds. When she heard about our program, she quickly volunteered.

Carol is no stranger to alternative types of transportation. Two weeks prior to riding her route, she and her three daughters spent 10 days walking and riding in this year's Oregon Trail trek.

Orphans

from Lorene Nissen

I had a pair of Western Bluebirds that laid six eggs, which hatched May 20, 2001. On June 7, I opened the nest box, as I had not seen the adult birds that morning. I found both adult birds dead in the nest box with three dead and two surviving nestlings. I took the two nestlings, which were 18 days old, and put them in a small box, about the size of their nest box. I half-filled it with dry grass to make it seem as much like their real nest box as possible. The first few times I tried to feed them, I had to pry open their beaks with tweezers to give them mealworms. After feeding in this way every two to three hours, on their 11:00pm feeding, they opened their beaks for me. I kept the box covered and dark so they slept most of the time. They made quite a fuss when they were hungry but did not try to climb out of the nest.

By June 10, they were progressing so well and growing so fast that I built a 4' x 4' pen with netting for them and moved them outside during the day. By this time they were sitting on the perches that I built and I was able to feed them through the netting. They were also drinking from the pan of water in the pen. I wondered if they learned to drink from instinct or from watching birds at the nearby bird bath. Every night I caught them and brought them in the house to keep warm in their old nest.

By three weeks I was able to put mealworms in a container on the ground. They did not like it at first, but soon they started eating so much I had to fill their dish pretty often. On June 20, at not quite four weeks old, they began to fly around the pen. I continued to catch them at night, although it was becoming harder to do. About this time, I noticed a male bluebird hanging around the pen, so I began to put out mealworms for him, also. He watched the nestlings and tried to get in the pen. The little ones seemed to know he was one of them.

It was stormy June 26-28, so I had to put plastic over the pen, but soon after, I was able to coax the male bluebird into the pen so that I could get his band number. On June 28 I released them all together into the wild and they flew up into a nearby oak tree. The nestlings were almost five weeks old when they flew off and I have not seen them again. Fred Robinson banded the nestlings and I am hoping for word of them next season.