

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

AN AFFILIATE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

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Bluebird Nesting Results for 2000 Exceed Expectations

By Marilynne Keyser

After the discouraging problems with the weather and intestinal parasites in 1999, it is wonderful to have a highly successful year in 2000. Here are some of the highlights:

- We banded 1,733 bluebirds, a 24% increase over 1999.
- We had 456 nesting attempts by bluebirds, of which 77% successfully fledged a total of 1,467 bluebirds.
- The average clutch size was five eggs. On average four eggs hatched per clutch and three young fledged.
- Nine pairs nested three times, four of them successfully.
- 27 orphan chicks were fostered into other nests, and all but five fledged.
- There were five clutches of white bluebird eggs.
- Monitor Gail Bolstad had 78 successful bluebird nests on her Sherwood route, the most of any monitor this year.
- Pam Reid, Ellen Stevenson and Dennis Wiley joined us as banders this year, bringing our total number of banders to eight.
- We had 82 volunteers monitoring 1547 nestboxes over 5 counties.▪

Birds Fledged by Species for 1998, 1999 and 2000

Species	1998	1999	2000
Western Bluebird	1045	1159	1467
Violet-green Swallow	991	1026	1614
Tree Swallow	570	657	857
House Wren	72	73	124
Black-capped Chickadee	76	39	151
White-breasted Nuthatch	18	0	25
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	10	8	19
Bewick's Wren	7	0	10
Red-breasted Nuthatch	4	0	0
Total	2893	2962	4267

Getting ready for change...

Election of Officers in Fall 2001

Our organization is looking for dynamic participants to become pillars of the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project.

Pat, Brenda and Marilynne feel it's time to move out of their positions of leadership and allow the talent of other volunteers to bloom. We all want this organization to survive and thrive, so we are planning an election of officers in fall 2001.

Please give some thought to whether you'd like to step up to such duties.

Latest Mealworm Policy

A few clarifications to our mealworm policy:

Although popular with some landowners, the coordination and distribution of mealworms throughout the breeding season is taking up too much of our time. We want to encourage landowners to provide mealworms during the cold, rainy spring weather. We also encourage monitors to leave worms whenever they visit an active bluebird nest to facilitate trapping adults during the banding process.

The Project will purchase and distribute mealworms to monitors through their banders. Monitors will not be required to pay for the mealworms they use for the active nests they visit. However, when monitors furnish mealworms to landowners, monitors are encouraged to ask for a \$5 contribution (**our** cost). Send money collected from landowners to: Brenda McGowan, PO Box 1469, Sherwood, OR 97140.

The Project will not distribute mealworms after the majority of bluebirds complete their first clutches except in special situations. **It is not the Project's policy to continue feeding mealworms during the remainder of the breeding season. However, landowners and monitors can make their own decisions about this.** Mealworms can be obtained directly from Sunshine Mealworms in Silverton, Oregon by calling 1-800-322-1100, or can be purchased from local bird shops.

Bluebirds Banded and Recaptured from 1995 to 2000

	Banded	Banded	Total	Adults Re-	Adults Re-	Total
Year	Nestlings	Adults	Banded	Alive	Dead	Recovered
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	104	1733	361	28	389

RECORD LATE HATCHING

Harry Bestwick in Newberg had three broods of bluebirds this year, the last hatching September 2, producing four nestlings.

This is the latest we've ever seen bluebirds hatch. The brood fledged September 23.

— Brenda McGowan



The Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project is a nonprofit 501C(3) organization operated entirely by volunteers. Expenses include the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter and educational materials, training of volunteers, and purchasing lumber and other materials for building and mounting nest boxes. Mealworms are sold at cost to property owners. Since we require no dues, your tax-deductible contribution is essential to our continued success. Please send your contributions to PO Box 1469, Sherwood, OR 97140. Our tax identification number is 93-1021520.

Piggy Banks Kind to Bluebird Project

2000 was a very good year!

By Jim Conroy, treasurer

This year was a good one for Prescott Bluebird Project's bank account. We spent what we gathered in donations — approximately \$3000 — and at the end of the year we still have a reserve balance of \$6,000. I want to thank all members, volunteers and contributors for the generosity of their time and money.

A special thanks to the 30 cash contributors for their generosity and the "bluebird jars" at the Backyard Bird Shops around town. Also, the second annual Champoeg Bluebird festival in May was a phenomenal fundraising success. In one day we had over 500 visitors and were able to generate \$1,100 in contributions through the "adopt a bluebird route," the sale of boxes, sales of bluebird items and contribution from Wild Birds Unlimited. Special thanks also goes to volunteers who donated their time and effort, especially Marilynne Keyser who championed the event. The staff at Champoeg call her "the bluebird lady."

As to the overall financial condition of Prescott Bluebird Project, the year 2000 meant great achievements while staying within our budget: We have a supply of over 1,000 new nest boxes at a cost of less than \$500 thanks mainly to the efforts of Dan Brown and Jack Stennet; We developed a new brochure as a hand-out at events; Shelly Walker updated the bluebird traveling show; We continue to publish our semi-annual newsletter, update the database on bluebird breeding success and continue the mealworm program **all within our budget --- great work everyone!**

The Prescott Bluebird Project is on solid financial ground and is looking forward to increasing number of fledglings nest year. Thank you for your continuing support.

Confessions of a Novice Monitor

Joy, rage and revenge in the field!

by Colleen Freidberg

I discovered the PBRP while channel surfing one rainy April evening in 1998 and saw the Oregon Field Guide segment that you are all familiar with. My husband and I are birders and it piqued my interest. I learned more at the website and decided to volunteer after spending an afternoon with Marilynne on one of her Champoeg State Park routes. After one sighting of that incomparable blue through my binoculars I was hooked. That was pretty exciting but paled in comparison to the range of emotions I was to experience in the several months.

I felt very well prepared for the route I was given and set out each week a little nervous but very eager to see what had happened since the previous week. The first season was, I know now, relatively trouble free and culminated in a joyous morning high on a hill above Wilsonville Rd. where Marilynne, me, the homeowner and her three very young children banded and held the nestlings while the parents and their earlier fledglings swooped around us and gobbled the mealworms we left for them.

Driving home that day I felt so fortunate to be part of the project, and couldn't help but wonder how many years would pass before those youngsters would remember, and hopefully, appreciate, that day. I felt sadness too for the children who will never see a bluebird but found a little comfort in knowing that what we were doing would change that for a few lucky kids.

The second season wasn't so trouble free. From the first time out I learned first hand of the horrors of a housesparrow attack. I may have been well prepared for the practical aspects of monitoring but even as a retired RN, I was surprised at the depth of my revulsion, rage and even disbelief that something so awful could happen inside that tiny little world of fluff and hope. I imagined myself inside that nest when the invader appeared, and the fury that ensued. Then I hoped I'd find a housesparrow nest so I could wring the necks of those little beasts as Marilynne had described to me on my first day of training. Then, of course, I was appalled at such a thought!

Now I planned revenge!

There were more tragedies and lots of successful nestings. Human parenting has many ups and downs, but there is something different about the relief and joy of opening a box and finding it empty, knowing those little beauties have safely winged their way into the paradise of an Oregon summer. And knowing too that there's a good chance that I'll see them next spring when nesting season begins again. ❖

www.pacifier.com/~bluebird

If you can view this newsletter on our website you can help us save money! If you would like to be removed from our mailing list please call Brenda McGowan, 625-6786 or e-mail: bluebird@pacifier.com

WISH LIST

It's all tax deductible!

Kodak Carousel slide projector — The bulb on our old projector burned out and a replacement lamp costs \$60. The projector is so old that it doesn't even have a "reverse" button. We are hoping someone out there has a Kodak Carousel that we could adopt.

\$\$ — We are always looking for monetary contributions from people who support our efforts to conserve western bluebirds.

Contact Brenda McGowan with your donations.

High Survival Rate for Bluebird Family

By Pat Johnston

While banding on Jim and Barby Conroy's property on Laurelview Road south of Hillsboro this year, I retrapped a pair of nesting bluebirds that I had banded as parents at the same box in 1999. They had two successful broods in 1999; a clutch of five in June, and another clutch of five in July. Two of their young from the June brood (a male and a female) were nest helpers, assisting their parents in feeding young from the second brood.

This year, I recaptured both of those helpers as breeding adults. The female was nesting at Elaine Baker's home on Laurel Road not far from her natal nestbox. The male was found 21 miles away at Bethany Bible Church near Cornelius Pass Road and Germantown Road in northwest Portland. Two of his siblings were nesting within a mile of him.

The most amazing thing was the recapture of still a third male from that second 1999 brood as a helper at the nest of his two brothers. In June he was recaptured assisting his brother with feeding nestlings at the Kessingers after the brother's mate was injured and removed for rehabilitation. In July he was recaptured again about a mile away assisting with feeding nestlings at the nest of his other brother at Bethany Bible Church.

This story is remarkable for a number of reasons. First, it is the first time we have documented such a high first-year survival rate (50%) for offspring from the same pair of bluebirds. Second, it is the first time we have documented a family group made up of siblings from different clutches moving such a long distance as a group. And third, it contradicts the normal expectation that male offspring remain in close proximity to their natal nestbox while female offspring ordinarily range from six to nine miles from their natal nestbox to breed and raise young. ❖

THANKS EVERYBODY!

PBRP would like to thank the following people and businesses for contributing much-needed building materials for nestbox-building. These activities are coordinated by volunteer Dan Brown. We are grateful to these donors who have helped aid western bluebird recovery.

For donations of labor and materials:

*Newberg Lumbermen's
Chavez Lumber
Feathered Friends
Champoeg State Park
Picnic Table Work Crew
Larry Judd & Yamhill-Carlton High Wood Tech
Students
Leonard Walker
Jeff Wiese
Charlie Stalzer
Jack Stennet
Dave Flaming
Dave Elliott
Louis Gay*

PBRP also received donations of \$50 or more from the following supporters:

*Lauri and Ronald Kunzman
Ann Groman
Michael and Chris Feves
Wild Birds Unlimited
Debra Brodie
Joan and Roger Smith
Nancy and Martin Harvey
Richard and Marilyn Portwood
...and all those who put money in the "bluebird jars" at Backyard Bird Shops*

We'd also like to extend a special thanks to Mail Boxes Etc., owner Marc Kline, who tirelessly prints our newsletter for us at his Sherwood store!

In June of 2000, a special dedication was held to formally recognize Champoeg State Heritage Area as a member of the Transcontinental Bluebird Trail. Elsie Elztroth, a NABS board member from Corvallis, OR made the trip to present PBRP with a \$500 check from NABS for the 50 boxes adopted at Champoeg.

The third annual Champoeg Bluebird Festival will be held June 16, 2001. Mark your calendar and consider volunteering at this great outreach event!

Spring Training Session March 3 at Champoeg

The spring training session for the Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project will be held at the Champoeg State Heritage Area Visitors' Center on Saturday, March 3rd. We need volunteers who would like to monitor a trail of bluebird nestboxes once a week from mid-April to mid-August. If you are unsure whether or not you are ready to be trail monitor, come to the meeting and check us out. Babysitting will be provided for both sessions. If you need directions to the park, call or email Marilynne Keyser at 503-694-2738 or mtkeyser@aol.com.

New volunteers should come in the morning from 9:00am to noon. Property owners with nestboxes on their property who would like to know more about bluebirds are also welcome at the morning session. Please call Pat Johnston at 503-246-1337 if you plan on attending the morning session for new monitors so we can have a packet of materials for everyone.

Experienced monitors will meet from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. You can pick up your monitoring forms, nestboxes and other supplies at the meeting. There will be coffee and donuts in the morning and juice and cookies in the afternoon.

Don't forget there is a \$3 charge to park at Champoeg.

NABS Meeting 2001

The North American Bluebird Society's annual meeting will be held June 21-24, 2001 in Columbus, Ohio. If anyone from the PBRP would like to attend, we may be able to help finance the trip. This is a great place to showcase what we are doing for western bluebirds.

The guest speaker at next year's annual meeting will be Julie Zickafoose, wildlife artist and author.

Steering Committee

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Our website address is:

www.pacifier.com/~bluebird

PBRP is a non-profit 501C(3) organization

Bluebirds Beat Out Prison at Former Dammasch State Hospital

By Marilynne Keyser

In the foothills just west of Wilsonville lies a piece of property that has been the center of controversy for several years. An abandoned mental hospital rests in the middle of vast acres of grasslands on a site that Governor Kitzhaber originally selected for the state's next medium-security prison. After a brutal political battle, the prison was sited elsewhere, and the property is now vacant.

The Dammasch property is now home to seven pairs of bluebirds that are carefully watched over by Georgie Nelson, a state employee.

In May 1999, Georgie found a dead breeding female near two old nestboxes that a previous employee had put up on the property. Later in the summer, the male found another female, and the pair produced 6 young. Excited about the possibilities, Georgie and I put up more nestboxes.

This year, seven of nine nestboxes were used by bluebirds and 35 young fledged. Several clutches were lost due to harassment by western scrub-jays attracted to the mealworms placed on the top of the nestboxes. Georgie solved this problem with the help of Dan Brown. Now every nestbox has a mealworm feeder on the top of it. This is a great success story and a wonderful example of what one dedicated volunteer can do!

Reports from Other Areas...

Elsie Eltzroth, the bluebird coordinator for the Audubon Society of Corvallis reports 529 bluebirds successfully fledged from their trails this year - a record for them. Bluebird numbers in the Corvallis area have been steadily climbing since the first trail was established there in 1977. In the first year, those nestboxes produced 11 fledglings. In 1999 the group recovered 36 dead adult bluebirds whose eggs and chicks also were lost. Consequently, the number of breeding bluebirds in 2000 was considerably smaller, but the breeding success turned out to be better than anticipated.

Betty Gooding, who lives near Culver in Central Oregon reports about 60% success rate with her nestboxes. She has mostly mountain bluebirds, but says western bluebirds are becoming more numerous in the area. She is hopeful that someone will volunteer to help her monitor her trails. Does anyone have a summer home over that way who would be willing to help out Betty?

Care deLeeuw and Jane McElroy have a bluebird trail in Fort Lewis, Washington. Their success rate was not great in 2000, but every bit helps the population.

If you know of anyone who monitors bluebirds outside the lower Willamette Valley please let me know. It is always heartening to find out that our fine feathered friends are showing up in new areas.

— Pat Johnston

Help Needed

A flatbed truck and a driver, or a U-Haul trailer is needed to haul 700 nestboxes from Monitor, Oregon south of Oregon City to Chehalem Mountain. This can be done any time between December and March 1. The entire trip would take half a day. If you can help, please call Dan Brown at 503/554-1283.

A Primer on Bluebird Decline

Clip-and-use fact sheet from the North American Bluebird Society

Over the years, land has been cleared for housing and industrial developments, shopping malls, highways, and cropland; many old trees have been cut down for firewood. Wooden fence posts (and natural tree cavities) that provided nesting cavities have now been replaced with metal posts. With modernization, the supply of natural nesting cavities for bluebirds and other native cavity nesters has been greatly reduced.

Compounding the problem of habitat loss has been the introduction into North America of two imported species - the House Sparrow and the European Starling. Both starlings and sparrows are cavity nesters, and both are very aggressive. House Sparrows are small enough to enter any hole that a bluebird can, and are so aggressive that they will chase away the more timid bluebird. Starlings can be excluded from bluebird boxes by using the correct size entrance hole, but will out-compete bluebirds for woodpecker holes and other natural nesting cavities.

During the summer, bluebirds feed mainly on insects. In the winter, bluebirds depend on many kinds of wild berries for their food supply. However, the supply of wild berries has also decreased over the years. The few berries that remain are often stripped quickly by large flocks of starlings.

Even though the bluebird population has greatly decreased, the future can still be promising for them. The most important step we can take to help bring back the bluebird is to provide nesting sites by setting out a bluebird box or starting a bluebird trail. A bluebird trail is a series of bluebird boxes placed along a prescribed route. In areas where nesting boxes have been put up in suitable habitat, bluebird populations are increasing. Bluebirding is a great environmental, hands-on project that people of all ages can enjoy. By following the instructions below, chances are good that you will be able to attract and enjoy bluebirds. ❖

Websites of Interest

Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project:
www.pacifier.com/~bluebird

"Cornell Bluebird-L LISTSERV Reference Guide" at
<http://www.crosswinds.net/~bluebirdguide/>
This site is a great place to get started.

"The Bluebird Box" at
<http://users.aol.com/jimmcl/>
This site features, "Bluebird FAQ" & "The best of Bluebird-L Classified."

"North American Bluebird Society" at
<http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/>
This is the mother of all bluebird web sites, need I say more?

"The California Bluebird Trail" at
<http://www.geocities.com/heartland/1493/page32.html>
This is a home page for a western bluebird recovery project in California. There are not very many sites that are just for the "Western Blues" like us!

"Bluebird Information & Awareness" at
<http://home.afo.net/~bulpitt/bluebird.htm>
This is another good page, well put together and informative with a good "link" section (it has the "PBRP" link on it)

Partners in Flight
www.partnersinflight.org

Bird Conservation to focus on Pacific Northwest

Bird Conservation, the magazine about Partners in Flight and bird conservation throughout the Americas, will be devoting its Fall 2000 issue to the Pacific Northwest.

The entire magazine issue will highlight species, specific projects, and the people who are making a difference in landbird conservation. It will be on the street sometime in December, 2000.

Bird Conservation is published by the American Bird Conservancy.



Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project
PO Box 1469
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Fall 2000 Newsletter

Recaptured Bluebirds Make Record Books

While banding in Sherwood, Marilynne Keyser recaptured a six-year old male bluebird at David and Glenda Wecks on Westfall Road. He was banded as a nestling at a nearby nestbox on Baker Road on July 11, 1994. He was recaptured nesting on Gail Bolstad's property across the street from the Wecks in both 1998 and 1999.

Fred Robinson recaptured a male bluebird that is at least 5 years old at a nestbox on his property on Nelson Road in Newberg. He was banded as an adult at the same nestbox on May 16, 1996, making him at least one-year-old when banded. Since then, Fred has recaptured him nesting in the same location in 1997, 1998 and 2000. Although not recaptured in 1999, his mate from the prior years was recaptured, suggesting that he was the breeding male in that year as well. With this assumption, we can conclude that this male fathered 12 broods over the 5 years, producing 62 offspring.

Albino Eggs in Sherwood

This year marked the first time Glen and Darolen Sorum placed a bluebird box on their property. The first nest ended in disaster with four young pecked to death by a marauding house sparrow. But then, the Sorum's noticed bluebirds were back, along with tree swallows, looking for nesting sites. The first clutch of eggs were white. . .and there were seven! Could this be a nest of tree swallows with a rare seven eggs? The Sorum's were certain that they had spotted a pair of bluebirds atop the box. Brenda McGowan later confirmed they were bluebird eggs. For the Sorum's, and me as a newer monitor, this was a thrill!

The uncommon albino eggs produced commonly "blue" bluebird chicks and the nest was a success with six of the seven fledging. Soon after, there was a second clutch of albino eggs and all six fledged. When Brenda trapped the adults and checked the origin of the female, she found it had been banded two years earlier at a nest within two miles of the Sorum's property. That nest had also produced albino eggs! Is this a matrilineal trait? The Sorum's and I found this all quite fascinating and we look forward to the possibilities next year. We have since learned there was at least one other nest of albino eggs in the area. So be on the lookout next season, you may have an uncommon clutch of albino bluebird eggs in a box nearby!