

# Prescott Bluebird Recovery Project

AN AFFILIATE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY - Portland, Oregon

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www.pacifier.com/~bluebird

## The latest results:

Birds Fledged by Species  
1997, 1998 and 1999

Species	1997	1998	1999
Western Bluebird	972	1045	1159
Violet-green Swallow	700	991	1026
Tree Swallow	452	570	657
House Wren	92	72	73
B-C Chickadee	47	76	39
WB Nuthatch	12	18	0
C-B Chickadee	0	10	8
Bewick's Wren	5	7	0
Red-breasted Nuthatch	0	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2280</b>	<b>2893</b>	<b>2962</b>

## Bluebirds Banded and Recovered

1988 to 1999

Year	# Banded	#Recovered*
1988	108	0
1989	30	0
1990	109	2
1991	128	0
1992	268	22
1993	283	33
1994	393	51
1995	519	37
1996	655	58
1997	992	89
1998	1292	161
<b>1999</b>	<b>1403</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6180</b>	<b>743</b>

\*These numbers include previously banded hatch year and adult bluebirds recaptured alive or found dead.

## Second Champoeg Bluebird Festival coming May 20

Mark your calendar now for May 20, 2000. This is the date of the second annual Champoeg Bluebird Festival at Champoeg State Heritage Area in St. Paul, Oregon.

We expect to double attendance at this year's festival. Those folks who attended last year may well return with their friends. An additional draw will be the noon dedication of Champoeg's bluebird trail as the 5<sup>th</sup> member of the Transcontinental Bluebird Trail that will stretch across the United States and Canada. The North American Bluebird Society is responsible for the development of the trail, along with the corporate sponsor, Wild Birds Unlimited.

Sponsors from around the country have already adopted most of Champoeg's 50 nest boxes. However, there are nest boxes in other parts of the country that can be adopted for \$35.00 per year. Adopt-a-Box sponsorship provides:

- An Adopt-a-Box certificate
  - A \$2 coupon for participating Wild Birds Unlimited stores
  - A web page on the sponsor and the nest box adopted
- A one-year membership in the NABS

In 1999, twelve pair of bluebirds called Champoeg home. This is an amazing increase over the 7 pairs that nested in 1998 and the 2 pair that nested in 1997. Each bluebird has colored leg bands that allow them to be uniquely identified without being trapped. This will make it possible to compile a complete life history of each bluebird in the park.

The festival runs from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Activities will take place throughout the park and will include: presentations of the bluebird video and slide show, field trips to see nesting bluebirds, workshops to construct your own nestbox, and a Junior Ranger program on birds for the youngsters. We will have a PBRP information table and an area where bluebirds memorabilia can be purchased. Refreshments will be available.

We will need about 30 volunteers for the festival. Those interested should contact Shelly Walker at 590-4927.

To get to Champoeg, travel Highway 219 six miles south of Newberg to Champoeg Road and follow the signs. The park also can be reached by following Butteville Road six miles west of the Charbonneau exit off I-5. A \$3.00 parking pass is required and can be purchased at the machines in front of the Visitors' Center. **a**

## Revised mealworm policy for the 2000 nesting season

Starting this year, we are making changes in our mealworm program. 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 want to encourage monitors to leave worms whenever they visit an active bluebird nest to facilitate trapping the adults during the banding process. However, we don't believe it is necessary to provide mealworms after the first clutch except in special circumstances, such as the loss of a parent bird, or unexpected cold, wet weather.

This is our new policy on mealworms:

First, the Project will purchase and distribute mealworms to monitors through their banders. Monitors will not be required to pay for the mealworms. When monitors furnish mealworms to landowners; however, they are encouraged to ask for a \$5 contribution to cover our costs. Any money collected should be sent to Brenda McGowan, PO Box 1469, Sherwood, OR 97140.

Second, the Project will not distribute any mealworms after the majority of birds complete their first clutch except in special situations. It is not the Project's policy to continue feeding mealworms during the remainder of the season; however, individual landowners and monitors can make their own decisions. Mealworms can be obtained directly from Sunshine Mealworms by calling 1-800-322-1100.

### *CNBN solicits monitoring info*

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a program called the Cornell Nest Box Network (CNBN) in which participants submit their nest box observations at the end of the season. Researchers analyze the data so that we can all better understand and protect bluebirds and other cavity-nesting species.

Last year 4 of our monitors participated in CNBN and found it to be a worthwhile project. We are hoping that a few more of you might like to give it a try this year. If you are interested, please call Shelly Walker at 590-4927 or Pat Johnston at 246-1337.

## Coyotes are for the birds

*National Wildlife Federation (Dec-Jan issue)*

Might coyotes be good for birds?

That was the question posed by two ecologists who reasoned that the presence of coyotes in a habitat might mean fewer smaller predators such as gray foxes, raccoons, opossums, and outdoor domestic cats. And that's just what Kevin Crooks of the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Michael Soule of The Wildlife Project in Colorado found when they studied habitat around San Diego. Wherever coyotes roamed, numbers of their smaller predators fell — because either the animals moved away or they ended up as coyote snacks.

Some of the striking statistics from the study, which was published in the journal *Nature*, concerned cats: Every 100 homes bordering the study's habitat fragments of about 50 acres supported an average of 35 outdoor cats. Every year each of those cats brings home an average of 15 birds, 17 lizards and 24 rodents. That means the 100 homes account for 525 known bird deaths from cats every year — and that only includes the birds the felines actually bring home.

## Wanted: plastic juice bottles

Dan Brown is hoping to collect at least 100 gallon-size and 2-liter size plastic juice bottles (without handles) to use as predator guards on nestboxes. All you have to do is call him at 554-1283 and he will pick them up!

*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.*

## State-hopping bluebird recovered in Tigard

One of our banders captured an adult female bluebird on Beef Bend Road in Tigard on August 3, 1999 that was originally banded as a nestling at Fort Lewis, Washington on July 16, 1998. This is the first time we've ever recovered a bird from such a distance. Fort Lewis is about 120 miles from the Portland area.

## Grassland bird conservation in the Willamette Valley

by Susan Kedzie-Webb

In 1996 and 1997, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife-Wildlife Diversity Program and Avifauna Northwest conducted a study to evaluate the population status of five important grassland bird species in the Willamette Valley. Results of this study indicated that the western meadowlark, grasshopper sparrow, vesper sparrow, horned lark, and common nighthawk are in decline presumably due to habitat loss and fragmentation. Of these species, the bright and colorful western meadowlark is of particular concern as it is Oregon's State Bird and it requires large tracts of land to sustain breeding populations (10-20 acres/breeding pair or one hundred acres to support long-term populations).

Since much of the grassland habitat in the Valley is privately owned, ODFW has developed the Willamette Valley Grassland Bird Conservation Project to prevent the further decline of these species by enhancing habitat on private land. A primary objective of this project involves providing agricultural landowners with management strategies they can implement on a voluntary basis.

However, enhancing habitat can be simple and inexpensive because these species do not require native plant communities to be successful. Rather, they can and do utilize sites composed of non-native grasses and forbs provided these areas have adequate structural diversity. Large open fields with several grass species of varying heights and densities, a diversity of wildflowers, some bare ground, and singing perches (shrubs or fence posts) create ideal habitat. Fallow fields and lightly- to moderately-grazed pastures are often good examples of existing habitat. However, dense stands of non-native, invasive grasses (e.g. tall fescue) that form monocultures are generally less productive.

### Here's how landowners with non-agricultural land can enhance grassland bird habitat:

- Create grassland habitat by planting medium height bunch grasses (2-3 ft). Small acres (2-5 acres) provide habitat for vesper sparrows and horned larks. Large acres (10 or more) provide habitat for meadowlarks and grasshopper sparrows.
- Evaluate the existing vegetation and landscape. To maximize your efforts, "connect" habitats by establishing cover adjacent to fallow fields, natural meadows, and pastures.
- Recognize the value of other habitats. Riparian areas, white oak woodlands and savannas compliment grassland bird habitat and should be maintained.
- To increase overall diversity, consider planting native grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs which are adapted to local conditions.
- Reduce herbicide applications by spot spraying or mowing noxious weeds before or after the breeding season (April 15<sup>th</sup> - July 15<sup>th</sup>).
- Grasslands are characterized by low shrub and tree cover; however, a few singing perches are necessary for males to establish breeding territories. Perches might include: native shrubs (<10% cover/5 acres), fence posts, telephone poles and wires, and brush and rock piles that extend above grasses.
- Provide small patches of bare ground (several meters square) for dusting and bathing. Also required by vesper sparrow and horned lark for breeding habitat.
- Mow, graze, or burn in rotation to increase grass vigor and reduce weeds.
- Encourage your neighbors to get involved through "across the fence" conservation.
- Limit activity in grasslands during the breeding season and control cats and dogs, feral or domestic.

*Editor's note: Grassland habitat restoration also directly benefits western bluebirds!*

[www.pacifier.com/~bluebird](http://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](mailto:bluebird@pacifier.com)*

## Nesting report changes

This fall nest box monitors will be asked to submit two nesting report forms—one for bluebirds and one for all other species using their nest boxes.

The nesting report form for bluebirds is **blue** and closely resembles last year's form. For each clutch, monitors will need to report estimated hatch date, number of eggs laid, number of young hatched, and number of young fledged. If a nest fails, we want to know your best guess about what happened.

The nesting report for all other species is **yellow**. Monitors will not need to report on each individual clutch. Instead, we want to know how many nesting attempts were made by each species and how many young fledged. This will allow us to report the necessary information to the North American Bluebird Society with a greatly reduced data entry effort.

Every monitor should have in your packet both the blue and the yellow nesting reports. If you don't have them, let your bander know. The completed reports must be sent to Marilynne Keyser by October 1st.

## Prescott banders top charts

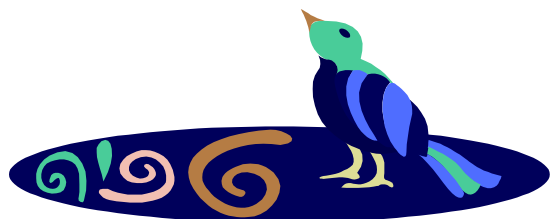
In its 1998 Annual Report, the Western Bird Banding Association reported on all species of birds banded in the states and provinces west of the Great Plains. Reports were received from 246 banding groups. The 1292 Western Bluebirds banded by Prescott banders topped the charts. The California Bluebird Recovery Program rated second with 1179 Western Bluebirds banded.

Thanks to Pat, Brenda, Marilynne, Shelly and Fred for a job well done!

## Birdhouse Online

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Nestbox Network invites you to participate in birdhouse ONline. This new website for bluebird enthusiasts gives landowners the opportunity to share observations about their nest boxes online during the breeding season.

Put your nest box on the map for science and conservation! [Http://birds.cornell.edu](http://birds.cornell.edu) and click on Birdhouse Online. Its free!



## THANKS EVERYBODY!

PBRP would like to thank the following people and businesses for contributing much-needed building materials for nestbox-building. These activities, which are spearheaded by volunteer Dan Brown require an incredible amount of time and effort. We are grateful to everyone here who has helped the bluebirds in 1999 and so far in 2000.

**Tualatin Valley Builders Supply and Marine Lumber for donations of wood**

**Jack Sennett, Dennis Streed, John Wooden and Jeff Wiese for building nest boxes**

**Dave Flaming, Dave Elliott and Jeff Wiese for helping transport 300 nest boxes**

**Mike Darcy of KXL-Radio for his sponsorship of our booth at the Yard, Garden & Patio Show, and Sam Pointer and Dan Brown for helping with the nest box building workshop at the show**

**Ken Dykstra for designing and donating 50 connectors for fastening nest boxes to grape stakes**

**Backyard Bird Shops for their contribution of 100 booklets, *Enjoying Bluebirds More***

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

**Salem Audubon Society  
Patrick & Karen Haynes  
Betsy & Jim Holzgraf  
Marshall Page and Fran Fulwiler  
Karen Goulding  
Pat & Ray Martinelli  
Joe Yesenofski  
Soroptimist International of Vancouver  
Don & Sue McNeil  
Ron Garst  
Philip Nord**

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

## Taste Test

Have you ever felt sick after eating a favorite food and then never wanted to eat that food again?

To find out if birds react the same way after suffering from traces of pesticides in their prey, Lowell K. Nicolaus and Hansoo Lee of Northern Illinois University injected mealworms with tiny doses of the insecticide parathion – less than would kill them. Parathion is an organophosphate, one of the most widely used classes of insecticide around the world. The biologists then let wild redwing blackbirds eat the tainted worms for just one day.

Apparently it was a memorable experience, for although the amount of parathion was too small to induce blatant illness in the birds, they rejected perfectly good mealworms for the entire breeding season after that. Explains Nicolaus: "They felt sick and then blamed the illness on what? On the taste of the prey."

The finding suggests that birds and their nestlings may lose important food sources when they reject whole species after one illness. And farmers may lose the advantages of natural pest control when birds stop eating certain insects.

"The long-term effects of conditioned taste aversion could have widespread implications," says Nicolaus.

—National Wildlife Federation, Dec-Jan 1999

## Websites of interest

"Cornell Bluebird-L LISTSERV Reference Guide" at

<http://www.crosswinds.net/~bluebirdguide/>

This site is a great place to get started in that it will link you to sites from Bluebird organizations to where to order sparrow traps.

"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)

For more information contact

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

## Correction

The column in Vol IX No.2, Fall 1999, PBRP, "Parasitism in our bluebirds," referred to a thorny-headed worm infesting some of our western bluebirds. This acanthocephala is not related to the tapeworm (as indicated in the story). The pillbug is the intermediate host of the thorny-headed worm, an intestinal parasite. Some of the parasitized dead bluebirds that were necropsied at Oregon State University Veterinary Laboratory in 1999 were diagnosed with enteritis, a bacterial disease. It is important to take dead specimens to a lab as quickly as possible to isolate the cause of death.

— Elsie Eltzroth, coordinator, Audubon  
Society of Corvallis Bluebird Trail

*Editor's note: If you come upon a newly dead bird, place it in a plastic Ziploc bag in your refrigerator and contact your bander.*

## Bluebird walks offered

We are offering a number of bluebird walks agains this year. Here is your chance to see nesting bluebirds up close. Meet at the visitor's center at Champoeg State Heritage Area. There is a \$3.00 parking charge, so carpooling is encouraged. Walks will finish by noon. Please call the sponsoring organization to make reservations. Space is limited!

- May 20 - (Saturday) Bluebird Festival at Champoeg State Heritage Area. Bluebird walks will be offered from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- May 28 - (Sunday) Audubon Society of Portland. Meet at 9 a.m. Call Pat Johnston, 246-1337.
- June 3 - (Saturday) Wild Birds Unlimited. Meet at 9 a.m. Call the store at 292-3190.
- June 10 - (Saturday) The Wild Bird Nest. Meet at 8 a.m. Call the store at 655-8001.
- June 17 - (Saturday) Backyard Bird Shops. Meet at 9 a.m. Call the Beaverton store at 626-0949.



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