

The Bird Box Bird Box

Spring 2024 Newsletter of the
Virginia Bluebird Society www.virginiabluebirds.org



SAVE *the* DATE
VIRGINIA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY'S
BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 1 & 2

Friday Evening 6-10pm | Saturday 8am-4pm

Location: Virginia Crossings,
Glen Allen, VA

Registration opens early Sept.
Contact Valerie Kenyon Gaffney
with questions.
vbs@virginiabluebirds.org

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
MYRNA PEARMAN
Biologist, Author & Nature Photographer





www.virginiabluebirds.org

The Bird Box Bird Box

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Bluebirds, Bears, and Beyond: Celebrating Beauty Everywhere

Join Myrna Pearman on a photographic journey celebrating her love of nature. From the bluebird trail she started as a teenager, through her years as the Biologist at Ellis Bird Farm, to her current travels through the backroads, backwoods and bayous, be uplifted by all things beautiful.

Virginia Bluebird Society Annual Membership Meeting

By John Narney and Cathy Hindman

The 2023 Virginia Bluebird Society annual meeting was held November 4, 2023 at The Center at Belvedere, Charlottesville, VA. The meeting was a hybrid with members attending person in Charlottesville and remotely via Zoom. Those at the meeting were treated to coffee, juice and pastries from Panera Bread.

After the meeting was called to order the treasurer, Mark Murphy, reported that general donations were in line with the budget. \$8,000 was used to purchase nest boxes and materials from Clark Walter. A storage facility was rented in Charlottesville to keep the boxes. New and refurbished grants exceeded the budget. Some certificates of deposit were purchased to create growth in funds on hand. Mark also stated that we had almost 500 members.

The main topics of new business were the approval of bylaw changes and election of officers. The bylaw changes were read and approved by the membership. The changes are available on the VBS web site. The following slate of officers and directors was presented and approved:

President - Valerie Kenyon Gaffney

President-Elect - Barbara Katz

VP of Education - Cathleen McGarvey

VP of Trails – Dana Glenn

Secretary – Carol Kauffman

Treasurer – Mark Murphy

Directors: Jen Kettelkamp, Pam Narney, Doug Rogers, Alison Davis-Holland

Pictures and background information on these electees are available in the Fall 2023 issue of The Bird Box.

President Valerie Kenyon Gaffney discussed the November 2024 Biennial Conference. The conference will be November 1-2, 2024 at Virginia Crossings at Glen Allen, VA. Please share with Valerie who and what you would like to hear at the conference.

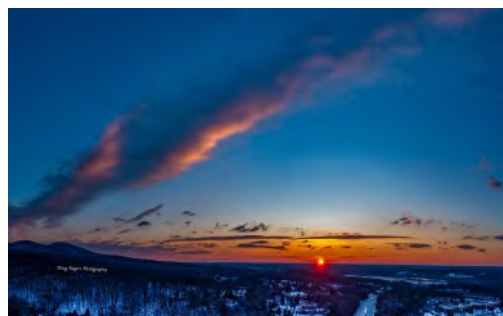
As special recognition for her service as VBS data manager for the state from 2014-2022, Ann Dunn was given a certificate and special attention for her service.

Door prize winners were Beverly Arnold, an Amazon Gift Card, and Mike Carlson, a Doug Rogers framed photograph.

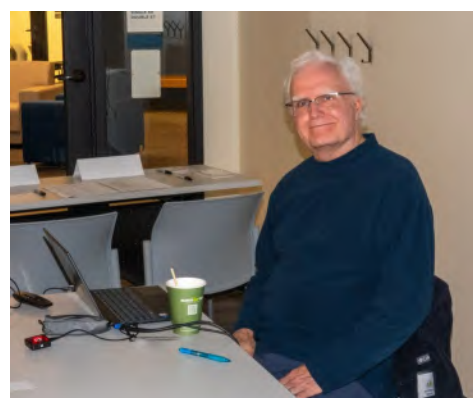
After the meeting was adjourned, Doug Rogers gave a fascinating presentation on the technique of drone photography. Some of his photos were truly unbelievable. Finally, a HUGE thank you to Mark Murphy for arranging for the venue, the coffee and pastries, AND the technical support so the meeting could be hybrid. A first for VBS — enormously successful and inclusive for those who couldn't travel to Charlottesville.

Right: Winter sunrise panorama from Pantops Mountain looking west over Charlottesville, taken with a drone from an altitude of 400 feet.

Photo by Doug Rogers



Above: Valerie Kenyon Gaffney presented Ann Dunn with a Certification of Appreciation for serving as Data Manager from 2014—2022.



Left: President Valerie Kenyon Gaffney and door prize winner Beverly Carlson.

Center: Valerie and door prize winner Mike Carlson, Surrey County County Coordinator.

Mark Murphy.

Photos by Doug Rogers.

Award Nominees Desired

The Virginia Bluebird Society gives awards biannually to outstanding Virginia bluebirders who are nominated by you, VBS members.

These dedicated individuals are out in the field monitoring our trails and recruiting monitors for established and new trails, giving presentations, administering Virginia Bluebird Society activities, and generally promoting the care and growth of bluebirds in Virginia. Without their efforts the outcomes for the bluebird population would be diminished. Pam Narney, Charlene Talcott, Cindy Hindman, and Barbara Katz are the Awards Committee members searching the Commonwealth for worthy bluebirders. Do you know one or more individuals who are especially deserving of recognition? If so, we would like to hear from you.

The VBS presents awards in four categories:

Barbara Chambers Memorial County Coordinator of the Year

We are seeking county coordinators who go beyond basic collection and collation of the data from their county. Some coordinators write articles for publication in local papers and do speaking engagements to raise awareness of the mission of VBS.

Bluebirder of the Year

An individual worthy of this award recognition is a leader in promoting bluebirds in Virginia. The person chosen promotes the profile of the bluebird as an indigenous species challenged by development and a changing environment. These dedicated individuals take advantage of outreach to community groups, schools, and media to promote VBS's dedication and love of bluebirds.

Volunteer of the Year

This award honors an individual who promotes and enhances the Virginia Bluebird Society. Organizations like VBS don't stand still. They need to grow and flourish if they are to remain relevant. We are looking for someone who helps us do just that.

The VBS Vicky Fuquay Memorial Award

This special award is not given every year. The award recognizes an individual dedicated to the care and rescue of the bluebird. This bluebirder has been active over many years promoting a love of all things bluebird.

Selected awardees will be notified prior to our VBS Conference in November, 2024, where the awards will be presented.

For application forms go to <https://www.virginiabluebirds.org/events>.

Applications found on the VBS website must be sent to Pam Narney pnarney@verizon.net by September 1, 2024. In addition to the application, emails supporting a nomination from other VBS members are also welcome.

For questions or more information contact Pam Narney at Pnarney@verizon.net or text or call her at 804-761-1674.



*Right: Valerie Kenyon Gaffney presents 2022 Volunteers of the Year award to Alice and Glenn Shelton, at the 2022 VBS Biannual Conference.
Photo by Doug Rogers*

Rocky Mount Manufacturing Company Turns Campus into Bluebird Trail

By Wade Thompson, Roanoke, Virginia



Blue dots indicate the location of Ronile's bluebird boxes. Photo from Google Maps.

A manufacturing company in Rocky Mount, Virginia has taken the meadows surrounding its factory and created a bluebird trail.

Back in 2021, Ronile, Inc., a space dyer of automotive, carpet and craft yarns, as well as sanitary products for use in the medical and feminine care markets, was looking for creative ways to become more green and environmentally sensitive. Ronile had already installed a biomass boiler to replace fossil fuels being burned for their steam needs. They also had replaced their energy hungry metal halide and fluorescent lights with modern high efficiency LEDs and worked for decades to reduce, reuse, and recycle its solid and liquid waste, but they wanted to do more.

They didn't have to look very hard to come up with the next great idea.

Wade Thompson, Environmental Manager at Ronile, stepped up to the plate and said he was up for the challenge. He had been a bluebird advocate for many years and had fledged many broods from his own back yard in Roanoke.

"I had a strong desire to do things to support the rebound of the Eastern Bluebird in my own neighborhood and had assisted neighbors in installing their own bluebird houses. In addition, I had made a presentation about these native birds to our neighborhood association to inspire others to consider installing their own boxes."

"In January, when the desire to expand our environmental footprint outside of our four walls arose here at Ronile, adding a bluebird trail was my first thought. Our CEO, Phillip Essig, was 'all in' on the idea and wanted us to start immediately so we could get them installed in time for the 2021 spring season."

"Ronile was a pioneer in environmental stewardship in the textile industry, receiving the 1996 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award from the State of Virginia for recycling waste dye. Shrinking our environmental footprint has always been part of our corporate mission, and we have made environmental improvements regularly since our founding in 1984," Essig said.

Thompson said that the knowledge he gained from reading newsletters and articles from the Virginia Bluebird Society website as well as his ten years of success with fledging bluebirds at home, gave him confidence that Ronile could put in a successful trail on their 36-acre property.

Things moved quickly and Ronile had its eight bluebird boxes planned and installed in three weeks. In the three years the trail has been in place, 58 bluebirds and 19 tree swallows have been successfully fledged.

Thompson said that spacing them 100 yards apart, facing them eastward and having effective predator protection were keys to the high success rate.

"Due to our site perimeter being mostly naturalized, we had many predators including raccoons, possums, and snakes and we wanted the eggs and hatchlings protected. As a result, we installed our boxes with predator baffles and Noel guards to ensure that our bluebirds had the best chance possible to survive. We checked the boxes every two weeks during nesting season to ensure that only native species nested in them."

Essig said Ronile is looking forward to many years of continued success with the bluebird boxes and for other new projects to continue to strengthen the company's environmental legacy.



Left: A female bluebird brings in another load of pine needles to fortify her nest. Photo by Wade Thompson.

Right, above: Mother bluebird sits on her nest. Photo by Wade Thompson.

Right: First year hatch. Photo by Mark Johnson.



Embracing Conservation of Bluebirds at an Active Gun Range: a Matter of Coincidence

By Carol Sennott, White Stone, Virginia

You can imagine my surprise as a new member of the Rappahannock Pistol and Rifle Club (RPRC) located in White Stone, to discover bluebird boxes on the property. My husband Tom and I had volunteered for the fall workday at the range. Joe Warren, Range Operation Officer, who oversaw assigning tasks, asked us to examine all of the bluebird boxes for damage and to relocate them along a fence line. The surprises continued as we discovered that each box contained a full nest, one of which still had three telltale blue eggs.

As the workday concluded I asked Joe if anyone monitored these boxes. He was very interested in pursuing the possibility. I knew that bluebird trails exist in many locations in our area which are monitored by a cadre of very dedicated volunteers. Coincidentally my longtime friend Paula Boundy, County Coordinator for Lancaster County, in fact monitors the boxes at Bell Isle State Park. Her findings are reported on a weekly basis throughout the season to Charlene Talcott, State Coordinator, Virginia Bluebird Society. Coincidentally, Charlene and I are in the same water aerobics classes at the YMCA Kilmarnock.

RPRC has recognized the importance of environmental stewardship and is constantly utilizing measures to protect the environment which will aid in coexisting with the bluebirds on the property. The connection between the range and bluebird experts has been established so that this knowledge is providing guidance in strategically placing the nesting boxes for ultimate bluebird usage and ultimate success. Paula is also providing a manual which outlines procedures for the monitoring process and maintaining boxes. This manual also contains photographs of the weekly stages of bluebird development to aid in determining the approximate age of the babies as the trail is monitored on a weekly basis.

While a gun range is traditionally associated with intense activities, efforts to preserve the bluebird population on the property showcase a commitment to ecological harmony. This effort of balancing recreational activity with conservation initiatives should foster an appreciation for birdlife and environmental stewardship among shooting sports enthusiasts who are members of RPRC. This unconventional pairing not only enriches the natural surroundings but also promotes responsible stewardship, demonstrating that wildly diverse interests can thrive together in harmony as a result of happy coincidences.

County Coordinator Spotlight

Dana Glenn is the County Coordinator for Roanoke and Botetourt County. Before joining VBS she was a County Coordinator in North Carolina for 26 years.

Her interest in cavity nesters began when she was eight years old and hosted a Tufted Titmouse in a Tupperware® birdhouse. It wasn't until 1997 that she saw her first Eastern Bluebird (on the Roger Tory Peterson website), and she instantly wanted to learn all that she could about this bird. By 1998, she started a bluebird trail in an empty field across from her house and was monitoring it at least twice a week. Dana says, "I have been in love for over 25 years now."

Dana is a Virginia Master Naturalist. Her specialty area is, of course, the cavity nesters. She is also a member of Daughters of the American Revolution where she serves as the chapter chaplain and a preservation volunteer. She plays golf and pickleball in her spare time. Her ultimate goal is to "try to design the latest and greatest bluebird box," she says with a smile.

*Dana Glenn, Roanoke and Botetourt County Coordinator.
Photo by Marty Dickens.*



Virginia Bluebird Society Nest Box Activity 2023

By Ann Dunn, Data Manager

At the start of 2023 there were concerns about the coming breeding season. Reports were out of early bluebird nest building, some nests having eggs, a few even with hatchlings, these sighted during several hot spikes happening in January and February. What effect might this early activity have on the rest of the season?

We had 2343 trails, located at 45 different sites (county or city) throughout the state. From their 4959 nest boxes flew 25,053 new native cavity nesters. Species distribution was as follows: Bluebirds 68%, Tree Swallows 22%, House Wrens 7%, and Carolina Chickadees 3%. The annual table summary for 2023 is attached.

The breeding season opened for both bluebirds and Tree Swallows in the second week of March, with activity peaking around mid-April. As the Tree Swallows continue their trend toward earlier starts the two species now follow a very similar pattern (Figure 1).

Figure 1

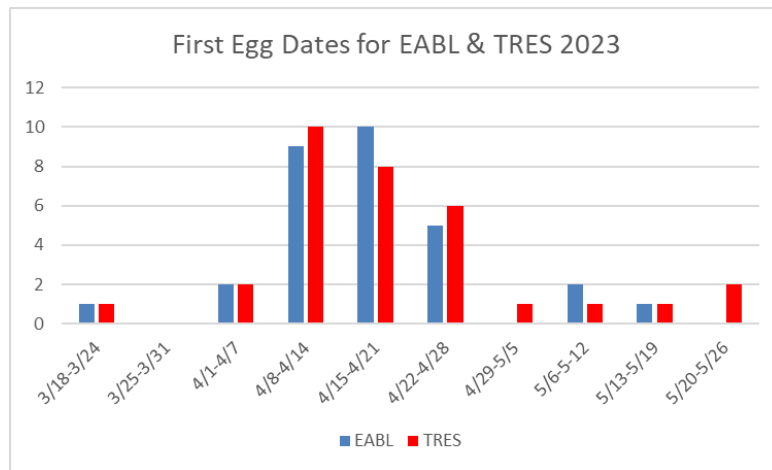
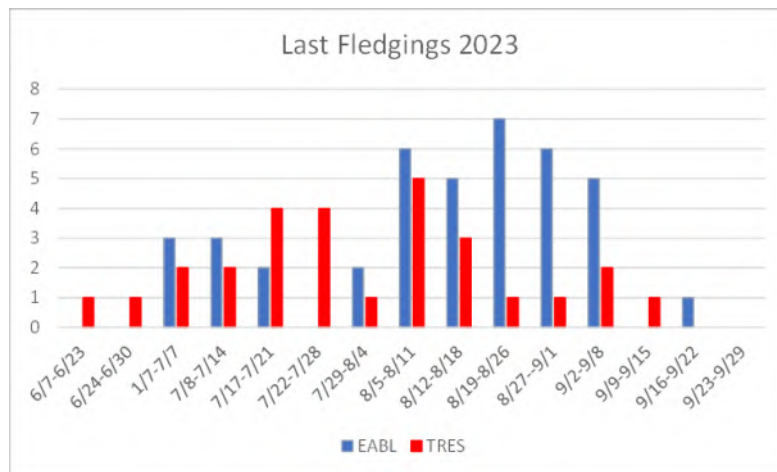


Figure 2



Seasonal dates for “Last Fledgings” for bluebirds and tree swallows are given in Figure 2.

The dates reveal a surprisingly long seasonal duration of 190 days for both species.

What was happening during the breeding period? We looked at three parameters of nesting activity in 2023 and compared them to those from the preceding ten years.

Nesting Attempts/Box- Nest box usage has remained very steady over the time measured. In 2023 EABL measured 1.02 NA/Box and TRES for 0.3, each, matching their 10-year averages.

Nesting Survival (Percent of eggs fledging) measured to include all species was 77% in 2023 compared to 80% over the 10-year average. Data on single species show a slight decrease in survival rate for Tree Swallows at 75% but not for bluebirds at 80%.

Nesting Productivity (Fledging Birds/Box) measured at 5.1 in 2023, matched their 10-year average.

The results suggest that despite a slight drop in nesting survival for Tree Swallows, the birds seem to have had a normal season. This year we had a troubling number of reports describing dead adults in the nestbox, some

Continued on page 6

2023 Nest Box Activity
Continued from page 5

on nests with eggs, a significant negative contribution to nesting survival. Are these caused only by weather events, or could species competition play a part now that the tree swallows season tends to coincide more closely with that of bluebirds? It will be of interest in the future to compile more complete data on these occurrences.

Thank you so much for having me as VBS Data Manager these past ten years. It has been a pleasure. Hats off to all the trail monitors for their watch over our birds and deep thanks to Charlene Talcott for making sure all those trail reports got to those of us who needed them.

Best regards,
Ann Dunn

Nest Boxes For Sale

Do your nest boxes look like this?"



*Original nest box at Edmunds Park
Photo by Eleanor Knowlson.*

You could make them look like this:



*Complete nest box setup.
Photo by Valerie Kenyon Gaffney.*

Wondering where you can acquire a bluebird nest box? Wonder no more. Virginia Bluebird Society has a limited number of boxes, mounting poles and predator guards for sale.

Cost for a complete set up (Carl Little cedar box, 7' mounting pole, snake baffle, cat/raccoon guard and all hardware) for \$135.

Boxes only for \$35.

Cat/raccoon guards for \$10.

Checks payable to Virginia Bluebird Society.

Shipping not available. The equipment is inventoried in Charlottesville and pick up is by appointment only. Email vbs@virginiabluebirds.org for additional information.

Welcome to New Members

By Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, VBS President

Welcome to the following new VBS members, joining Us Since November 2023:

Lorrie & Gordon Aitken	Jeanine Dodge	Leslie L'Heureux
John Altonen	Janet Douberly	Steven Laarson
Tom Ashley	Michael Dow	Russ Lescault
Karen Axell	Diane Ebenal	Stephanie Lescault
Curtis Backus	Jim Ellis	Wayne Lipscomb
Melanie Bell	Susan Farmer	Little House Farm
Bettina Belles	Judy Flynn	Laura Long
Susanne Besecker	Elizabeth Friberg	Kathryn Louis
William Boeh	Melissa Fuquay	Liz Macklin
Hope Booth	Val Galati	Martha Manack
Connie Braig	Twyla Gendron	Laura McDonald
Tim Branham	John Gibbs	Jennifer McFadden
Bridgewater Retirement Community	Thomas Goode	Bre McGloughlin
Franklin Burroughs	Nancy Gordon	Peggy McKee
Pam Camblin	Michael Gordon, Sr.	Nancy Minor
Kareen & Rob Canora	Victoria Gordon	Carrie Misyak
Jocelyn Chan	Lewis Graves	Anne Moore
Gael Chaney	Renee Grebe	Mariah Neary
Renate Chapman	Jane & Bruce Greyson	Virginia Neil
Erin Coady	Kim & Erin Grosner/Johnson	Valerie Neitzey
Marcia Colby	Charles Grymes	Susan Newton
Mark Colgan	Jen Kettelkamp	Lori Oreskovich
Lynda Davis	Susan Kruyne	Carolyn Pflug
Henry Day	Alexandra Kuhns	Jessica Phillips

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Welcome New Members, continued from page 8

Sharon Pressler	Amy Scneider	Della Thacker
Michelle Primack	Amy Settle	Lucy Thompson
Jill Reddick	Mary Ann Settlemyre	Christine Toelke
Camille Reilly	Preston Simms	Susan Walton
Jen Repko	Manoma Sirisena	Bill Whitacre
Reynard Florence Vineyard	Megan Smith	White House Farm Foundation
Bruce Reynolds	Jane Sprague	William White
Dorothy Rilee	Jan Stanfield	Thomas R. Witt, Jr.
Robert Perkins	Thomas & Mary Stephens	Jeff Wright
Luann Roche	Ione Taylor	Karen Wright
Chris Russell	Kim Teitelman	Bob & Marion Azbot
Bill & Sue Russo		

A Big Thank You to Supporters of Virginia Bluebird Society!

The VBS 2023 end of year fundraising campaign provided \$2,547 from 35 donors. The average donation was \$73. Thank you all for supporting our mission to help bluebirds and other cavity nesters thrive in Virginia.



This series of bluebirds enjoying Cathi Morrison's hospitality was taken by a camera trap on a 50° afternoon on January 5, 2024. When asked why her yard was so conducive to bluebirds, Cathi responded: "Well, I live beside two fields and a number of farms, with two golf courses very nearby. I have a bluebird trail of 26 houses, so they are around. I also have a small pond with a little waterfall so they hear that. This birdbath is heated so they like to sit there. Lots of trees around. Good vibes, I guess. I suppose the eleven are a year of nestlings and parents." Way to go, Cathi!



The Virginia Osprey Festival

By Joanie Millward, President, Virginia Osprey Foundation

The Virginia Osprey Foundation, based in Colonial Beach, Virginia, will host the 6th Annual Virginia Osprey Festival in Colonial Beach on April 13, 2024 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Town Hill, Colonial Beach, located on the beautiful Potomac River. The festival celebrates the return of its Osprey from their wintering grounds in South America. The festival will offer educational presentations for young and old alike. Our keynote speaker is Dr. Paul Spitzer, a Conservation Biologist who earned his degree from Cornell University. Among our many exhibitors we are proud to host the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Potomac Riverkeepers, and Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and the Center for Conservation Biology. We will also have food vendors, artisans and a “nestlings’ corner” with fun and educational activities for children. Whether you choose a trolley ride or a golf cart tour, guides will show you the many nests that make up our “Osprey Garden” in Colonial Beach. You will also have an opportunity to be up close and personal with Vega, the Turkey Vulture and other wildlife ambassadors. Treat yourself to a variety of

delicious food and shop at our many talented artisan booths. There is something for everyone.

On Sunday, there will be guided bird walks by the Northern Neck Audubon Society and the Northern Neck Master Naturalists, and Colonial Beach Parks and Recreation will host “Fly Like an Osprey” kite flying on the beach.

Please visit our website for the most up to date news about our festival and other activities we are involved in! <https://www.virginiaospreyfoundation.org>

You can check out our osprey nest cam at <https://www.youtube.com/@virginiaospreyfoundation>

The Virginia Osprey Foundation is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization.

We hope to see you there!

VIRGINIA OSPREY FESTIVAL

Featuring:

- Keynote Speaker, Dr. Paul Spitzer
- Activities for children
- Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
- Ambassador Wildlife
- Virginia Institute of Marine Science
- Golf Cart and Trolley Tours
- And much more!

Hosted by the Virginia Osprey Foundation
VirginiaOspreyFoundation.org

April 13, 2024 • 9 am – 4 pm
Town Hill, Colonial Beach

VIRGINIA OSPREY FOUNDATION

Virginia Osprey Festival in Colonial Beach

VIRGINIA IS FOR OSPREY LOVERS

Purple Martin Field Day

Date: Saturday, June 22, 2024

Time: Door Prize Drawing and Presentations begin at 11:00 a.m. (Please arrive before 11:00 a.m.)

Location: A private farm in Louisa County, VA (central VA, about 60 miles NW of Richmond)

How do you attract Purple Martins? Lance Wood and other speakers will teach you how to GET martins, attract MORE martins (if you already have some), and manage them properly so you will not LOSE them. Which martin housing is the safest - GOURDS or HOUSES? Do martins in Virginia LIKE gourds or houses better? Will martins eat all my MOSQUITOES? Come and find out!!! At this event on the farm of Mrs. Merle Wood and her son, Purple Martin expert Lance Wood, you will learn the habitat martins require, and how to protect birds from snakes, hawks, owls, raccoons, House Sparrows, starlings, wind damage, and lightning. See a spectacular martin colony that has grown to more than 70 pairs! This kind of growth happens only with proper equipment, utilizing the best management techniques, and hard work by Purple Martin caretakers (“landlords.”)

YOU can learn how to do it all!—FREE!

No registration. Event is FREE, but donations are appreciated to help cover expenses.

BRING: Lawn chairs, shoes for wet grass, binoculars, notepad, bag lunch/drink, and camera.

Please do not bring pets—we will share ours with you!

DIRECTIONS, PHOTOS & MORE INFO: www.purplemartinfieldday.org

Questions? Call Kathy at (434) 222-1831 (leave your name and phone number)



*Left: Small Purple Martin colony.
Right: Participants view large
Purple Martin colony
Photos by Kathy Laine*



Tee shirts, Sweatshirts, and more—Order From VBS Web Site

Show your love for bluebirds and support VBS; shop the store at

[Virginia Bluebird Society](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org) | [Official Merchandise](#) | [Bonfire](#)



The President's Box

If for no other reason than I'm putting hundreds of miles on the Subaru, we know Spring is in the air. From Charlottesville to Manassas to Richmond to Vienna, back to Charlottesville back to Manassas, to Westmoreland State Park, to Glen Allen...and the beat goes on. It has been one very busy spring. But truth be told, the best part of being president of VBS is when I get out in public and 'talk the Blues.'

Upcoming events include Prince William Native Plant Society on March 7; Riverine Master Naturalists on March 13; First Baptist Seniors, Woodbridge on March 20; Bull Run Regional Park (Fairfax Co) Bluebell Festival on April 13 -- staffed by super volunteers Helaine Krob and Glenys Mulholland; Science Museum of Virginia on April 13 with yours truly and President Elect Barbara Katz; and Rivanna Master Naturalists on May 23.

If your organization – garden club, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, church seniors, Wild Ones, and the list goes on, and on, wants to know more about our beautiful Blues, and you're within a two-hour drive of northern Virginia, reach out. Have laptop will travel! All I ask is a donation to VBS and a place for good ice cream on the way (shout out to Moo Thru, Remington!)

Well, okay that last one isn't a deal breaker, but I can tell you this position has introduced me to some AMAZING places for ice cream over the past 4+ years. And I'm always willing to sample more.

I also want to put in a plug in for our November conference. The pandemic got us off schedule, but we're now back to a biennial conference and 2024 is the year. We're gathering November 1 and 2 at Virginia Crossings in Glen Allen. Having Myrna Pearman as our keynote is so very exciting. If you're not familiar with her, check out her website. And already we have commitments from Alonso Abugattas of Capital Naturalist fame, and our own Pam & John Narney to present breakout sessions.

Oh, and if there's something you are eager to learn about, let me know. The lineup is not yet complete for breakout sessions, and I welcome your suggestions. You know where to find me: vkg3105@gmail.com.

Finally, this organization is run entirely by volunteers. Yep, all of us. We volunteer. This summer we will be seeking candidates for the board and for the executive committee for 2025 terms. If what we do matters to you, please step up. It may prove to be one of the most gratifying undertakings, and I promise you will make close and caring friends for life.

See you on the trail....mine is Potomac Shores, Dumfries.

- vkg



Some beautiful bluebirds posing for David Kinneer, Fredericksburg, Virginia.



Newsletter of the
Virginia Bluebird Society
www.virginiabluebirds.org
 Our email address is:
ybs@virginiabluebirds.org

If you have a new email address, or have recently changed it, please let us know.

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birdboxeditor@gmail.com

Judy Hall, The Bird Box Editor
birdboxeditor@gmail.com

We welcome your written items and artwork (photos and drawings) for *The Bird Box*.

Email your materials to

birdboxeditor@gmail.com.

The Bluebird Advisor



Getting Boxes Ready for Spring

By Christine Boran, County Coordinator and Manager of the Woolwine House Bluebird Trail, Patrick County

This bluebird female is enjoying this winterized Linda Violett design Two-Hole Mansion (with an installed camera) on January 12, 2024. This is one of five various designs of approved nest boxes at my home property. Two have cameras - all have been winterized. I placed the white pine needles on the floor of this nest box in November, a great time to find an abundant supply of them fallen on the ground. The pine needles are the preferred nest material by the bluebirds on my trail if they can find them close to their nest box, so it is perfect natural bedding for roosting, too. They are placed about two or three inches thick, are sap-free (not sticky!), and are without extra debris; i.e., leaves, small sticks, and any overwintering spider sacs. I used A/C insulation foam to plug one of the double holes, as well as the ventilation slot at the top of the front panel. About mid-March, I will inspect the pine needles by hand. If still clean and without any deposited waste matter or berry pits by the roosting birds, I will leave all winterizing materials in place as is, especially the foam plugs, until late April. However, as I do, I will still watch the fluctuating spring temperatures in case unusual spring hot weather arrives. Rarely, though, in my location in the foothills, have I seen the need to remove the ventilation foam plugs sooner than April 15 to May 1. Here in Southwest Virginia's Blue Ridge Highlands, we can get sudden overnight freezes, enough to damage the peach orchards here and sometimes after the first bluebird eggs have already hatched young.

I highly recommend winterizing nest boxes before December each year. It is easy to do, and it can be lifesaving for the birds using them as shelter on those frigid nights and during snow, ice, and wind storms.



Top right: A female bluebird in a winterized box in January.

Left: A/C insulation foam plugging one hole in a Violett Two-hole Mansion box.

Right: Bluebird box ready for spring.

Mark Your Calendars

- April 1** Begin monitoring bluebird nest boxes.
April 13 Osprey Festival, Colonial Beach, Virginia. See page 10 for information.
April 15 Remove ventilation plugs from nest boxes.
May 30 Deadline for submitting articles, photos, ideas, and artwork for Summer newsletter.
June 22 Annual Purple Martin Field Day, Louisa County; see page 11 for information.
November 1-2 VBS Biennial Conference, Glen Allen, Virginia. See page 1 for details

Check out our *Facebook* page <https://www.facebook.com/Virginia-Bluebird-Society-133048243442687/> for photos and videos throughout the year.

How To Join: Join online at <https://virginiabluebirds.app.neoncrm.com/forms/membership> or you can still use snail mail; send your name, address, phone number and email address along with a check, to:

Virginia Bluebird Society
726 William Street
Fredericksburg VA 22401

1 Year Individual or Family	\$25
3 Years Individual or Family	\$70
1 Year Sustaining	\$60
1 Year Endowment	\$100
Lifetime membership	\$500

Membership forms are available on the VBS web site: <http://www.virginiabluebirds.org>

Send An Article to *The Bird Box*

We welcome articles and photos from our active VBS members. We want to share our success stories from your home and your trails. Send your original articles, photos, or artwork, or suggest a topic for a future newsletter. Submit materials to John Narney, Executive Editor, at birdboxeditor@gmail.com by May 30 to be considered for the Summer newsletter.

Please include:

- ♦ *your contact information,*
- ♦ *your location, and*
- ♦ *original photos.*

Please send photos separately, in jpeg format if at all possible, with identification of people and birds in photos, and name of photographer.



The Virginia Bluebird Society is an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society. Supporting [NABS](#) provides support for Bluebirds everywhere.