



**Virginia
Bluebird
Society**

The Bird Box

October 2005

President's Box

Reflecting on Our Accomplishments

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your President over the last six years. I look forward to continuing my work with VBS as I assume my position on the Board, but for the moment I think it is appropriate to reflect on what we have accomplished together.

We (VBS) began with a few trails in Northern Virginia and have grown to more than 130 trails all over the Commonwealth, with more than 2,300 boxes. We started with a few dozen members and have grown to over 330. Our members have given educational programs to hundreds of people, developed an educational exhibit, handouts, and an informative Web site. We have spent hours talking to people about bluebirds at fairs all over Virginia – not to mention the hours we've spent each season monitoring boxes and collecting data. Together we have touched a lot of people over these six years and have helped fledge thousands of bluebirds. Kudos to each and every one of us for the good work we have begun in building VBS!

I would like to extend a special thanks to **Mary Penn-Soranno** for her work on the Board, her assistance to me as Vice President, and all of her work in the Staunton areas as county coordinator extraordinaire. Her efforts in and around Staunton led to the establishment of many bluebird trails, united bluebirders in the area and brought many new members to VBS. Another board member who has quietly helped to keep this organization running is our treasurer and membership coordinator, **Charlie Chambers**. We owe Charlie a huge debt of gratitude for his hours of service getting us established as a 501(c)(3) organization, building many boxes over the year, working with Boy Scouts, keeping our books, paying the bills, and doing all of the other things he has done to "keep us together" since the organization's inception. As an all volunteer organization, we have been blessed to have people as good as Mary and Charlie on our team.

Finally, I would like to welcome all of our new officers, Board members, and our new President, **Anne Little**. Anne was one of our founding members and throughout the years has worked to grow VBS into the strong organization it is today. She has served as Vice President, as Secretary, and as a Board member, and she brings with her a wealth of excellent experience. Her leadership is likely to move us in some exciting new directions, but she will need all our help to keep VBS growing into the future.

All the Best! – *Julie Kutruff*



Photo: Helen Ellis

See Inside

T Corrected: VBS Statewide Bluebird Box Nesting Data Report for 2004

Calendar

October 1: Welcome new Officers and Board members! Farewell (and job well done!) to our outgoing Officers and Board members. (See page 2.)

October 1: All Trail Data should be finalized and sent to your County Coordinator or to Charlie Chambers. Forms are on the VBS Web site.

October 7-9: Eastern Shore Birding Festival, Kiptopeke / Cape Charles. See www.esvachamber.org for more information.

November 1: Time to winterize your nest boxes. See the VBS Web site for suggestions.

November 15: Northern Shenandoah Valley Audubon Society Bird Festival, Winchester.

January 15: Deadline for articles for the March *Bird Box*.

January 21: Box-building Workshop, Fredericksburg. E-mail for details: vbs@viriniabluebirds.org.

February 9 - 12: VBS at Maymount, Richmond. E-mail to volunteer: vbs@viriniabluebirds.org.

March 25: VBS Board meets at DGIF Building, Broad Street, Richmond. Details coming in the March *Bird Box*.

April 26-30: NABS Convention, San Antonio, Texas. See page 2.

Promoting bluebirds and other cavity nesters

The Bird Box

Issue 7.2

Newsletter of the
Virginia Bluebird Society
www.viriniabluebirds.org

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We welcome your written items and artwork (photos and drawings) for

The Bird Box! Send your materials by e-mail or on diskette to Sarah or Bob.

VBS News

New Leadership for VBS

At the VBS Annual Meeting on September 24 at Beth Elkins's home in Dogue, Virginia, the following members were elected to the leadership:

President Anne Little

Vice President Beth Elkins

Vice President Kaycee Lichliter

Treasurer David Mitchell

Secretary Marci Swanson

Directors Barbara Chambers
Phil Kenny
Julie Kutruff
Nan LaRue
Klytia Salcedo-Roper
Brian Swanson
Jeff Trollinger, C.W.B., DGIF

Their terms began upon election and continue until the Annual Meeting in 2007. We thank all of the retiring Officers and Board members for serving us so well, and the newly elected Officers and Board members for volunteering to do the same.

— *Mary Penn-Soranno, Nominating Committee Chair*

NABS 2006 Goes to San Antonio

At the Annual Conventions of NABS (North American Bluebird Society), bluebirders gather to share information, learn of new developments in bluebirding, enjoy programs and field trips, and make and renew friendships. The Texas Bluebird Society (TBS) invites you to the 29th Annual NABS Convention in San Antonio, April 26-30, 2006.

TBS is giving an "Early Bird Gift Package" to those who register before November 1, 2005. The headquarters hotel is the Airport Hilton, near the San Antonio International Airport. Continental Airlines and the Airport Hilton are offering "NABS group" rates. NABS 2006 will be held during the city's hugely popular Fiesta, so attendees are urged to reserve rooms at the Hilton by November 1 to secure the lowest room rate (\$89 plus 16.75 percent tax). The Hilton will also offer the special NABS rate three days before and after the convention.

The NABS registration cost of \$45.00 (only \$37.00 for NABS members) includes two to five days of general sessions and breakout sessions. The one-day rate is \$25.00.

A convention brochure insert in the Fall edition of *Bluebird*, the quarterly journal of NABS, outlines registration details, describes each day's agenda, and provides a mail-in registration form. You can also find on-line registration and a downloadable registration form at www.NABS2006.com.

"Red, White & Bluebirds", the convention theme, hints at the Texas-style welcome awaiting all for fun, training, education, and sharing. The Wednesday-Sunday itinerary is extensive and ability-friendly. April is the best birdwatching period in Texas. "Your Texas affiliate is working hard to plan a convention with your needs in mind," says TBS president Pauline Tom.

— *Mary Leyendecker*

Our Citizen Scientists

VBS trail monitors this past season have been conducting important research by placing an electronic device no larger than a coat button under the eggs inside nest boxes on several trails. This electronic button records the fluctuating temperatures inside the nest as the female bluebird goes about her business of incubating and then leaving, off and on, to feed herself and stretch her wings. The device is left in the nest box for three days and then removed and taken to a computer, where the information is both downloaded and then reset for the next time.

Those trail monitors were supplementing the work of researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York. The Cornell Lab organized a volunteer network in 1950 to enable its scientists to ask large-scale ecological questions and get better answers from many cooperating members in the field. The Lab's goal is to test hypotheses and conduct experiments like this one all over this country and Canada. The results from this effort with bluebird monitors could provide insights into how environmental factors, such as temperature, affect the number of hatchlings in a brood. The study asks whether birds lay fewer eggs in cooler climates because of the energy costs of incubation. How do you think temperature might affect the number of eggs laid? The July and August heat in the Virginia boxes might just get the incubation started unevenly and cause eggs not to hatch and to be set aside by the adults.

Brian and Marci Swanson, of Gainesville, were citizen scientists for Cornell during the 2004 season on their Heritage Hunt Golf Course Trail, using one data logger. They were the first Virginia trial for Cornell's temperature program. **Kaycee Lichliter** and **Greg Baruffi** from Boyce, who have a trail of 100 boxes on the Virginia State Arboretum at Blandly Farm in the Shenandoah Valley, have taken over that project as they have more boxes! Their efforts were written up in the June 3, 2005, issue of *Science*. If you are interested in finding out more about what these monitors are doing and perhaps joining them next year, you can read the article on-line at www.sciencemag.org. It is a fascinating look into ways to make the data you take count towards some real research.

Kaycee and Greg are also now trained to band birds having taken a MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) bander training class at the Environmental Studies Center at Airlie in Warrenton in August. This week-long class introduced participants to bird banding and the MAPS protocol. Activities included learning to band birds in the morning and lectures in the afternoon. The class was taught by Danielle (Dani) Kaschube, the MAPS Coordinator and a North American Banding Council (NABC) Certified Trainer. Our VBS bluebird bander, David Mitchell, is a MAPS trained bander. (See his article on a nestling-banding project in the July *Bird Box*.) There are several more of these MAPS banders among our VBS membership. – **Barbara Chambers**

Meet Peggy Spiegel

In 1976, Peggy Spiegel joined the Roanoke Valley Bird Club, and one of the first things she agreed to do was monitor bluebird boxes along the Rte. 24 trail. She fell in love with the birds and has been active in some form of birding ever since, including a recent trip to Costa Rica to band hummingbirds with Bill Hilton, Jr.

Peggy first heard about VBS in a conversation with Julie Kutruff and joined soon thereafter. She has given programs about the Eastern Bluebird in Giles County where she lives, at the Roanoke Garden Festival, the Mid-Atlantic Garden Faire, and at many more locations around the state. She is currently Giles County Coordinator and has monitored nest boxes at the Bland Correctional Farm for almost four years. [See page 4]



Kaycee Lichliter and Greg Baruffi beside one of their many nest boxes at Blandly Farm (Photo: Marci Swanson)

Membership Note

As of the first of August, we had 339 memberships, of which about a third were family memberships. We welcome the 39 folks who opened memberships in 2005.

– **Charlie Chambers**

Chambers Retires

Beginning with our March 2006 edition, please welcome **Sarah McDade** as co-editor, with **Bob Sindermann**, of *The Bird Box*. Send all articles, stories, photos, and comments to sarahmcdade@aol.com. **Barbara Chambers** is retiring from that position after seven years of *The Bird Box*, beginning with the Inaugural Issue in July 1999.

Peggy Spiegel staffing the VBS display at a birding festival (Photo: Marci Swanson)



Clarke County Park Bluebird Trail



Tree Swallows try out the perch designed and built by Jim and Lucas Mason
(Photo: Jim Mason)

The Clarke County Park Bluebird Trail was planned, developed, and installed this past April by Lucas J. Mason of Stephenson, Virginia, as his Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project. It was completed in cooperation with Clarke County Parks and VBS. The trail consists of 15 nest boxes. The nest boxes are made of cedar donated by Lowe's of Winchester. Using a grant from VBS, we built snake guards and mounted the nest boxes and snake guards on 10-foot lengths of one-inch EMT conduit pipe. Since bluebirds are ground feeders and like to perch above an open field to look for food, we also designed a perch to be placed at the top of the EMT pipe, above the nest box, which is mounted at eye-level. This provides perches along an open-field trail where there otherwise would be none.

We bought the EMT pipe in 10-foot lengths. We left it at full length so that the top of the EMT is eight feet above the ground when installed. The perches are inexpensive and are quite simple to make. They cost a little more than \$1.00 apiece. The perches are made of one-inch diameter, 36-inch long dowels, which are cut to four-inch lengths. Drill a 3/8-inch hole through the one-inch dowel, two inches from each end. Center a 36-inch x 3/8-inch dowel in the hole and secure it with a 1/2-inch brad. The four-inch dowel is then placed in the hole at the top of the EMT and is secured with a 3/4-inch wood screw. (Drill a pilot hole about one inch down from the top of the EMT.)

When installed, the perch is about three feet above the nest box and eight feet above the ground. The bluebirds and Tree Swallows love and use the perch.

During the trail's first year, we had two pairs of nesting bluebirds, eight pairs of Tree Swallows, and one pair of House Wrens. The bluebird pairs each fledged five birds during the first nesting and then returned to a nest box less than a week after the first brood left. Each pair laid five eggs during the second nesting. One pair fledged five birds; the other pair fledged only two due to some unknown cause.

— Lucas Mason

[Editor's note: You might like to try this unique design, which uses the VBS box and pole mount. Contact Lucas's father, Jim, at jrmason3@aol.com, for further details on his invention for perching birds on trails without other nearby perches.]

Join NABS

Founded in 1978, the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to monitoring bluebird populations and leading the bluebird conservation movement. VBS is an affiliate of NABS.

Individual memberships are \$20, and family memberships are \$30. In addition to the mealworm discount, members receive a subscription to *Bluebird*, a quarterly journal with new scientific findings and a wealth of ideas and tips for bluebird lovers. Nesting boxes, literature, and bluebird art are available for purchase. You also get access to expert advice for bluebird trail problems. And you get opportunities to participate in field research and nestbox design tests.

To join NABS, visit its Web site, www.nabluebirdsociety.org, or send your payment to NABS, P.O. Box 244, Wilmot, OH 44689-0244.

Peggy Spiegel (from page 3)

Peggy has three nest boxes in her yard and delights in feeding the bluebirds meal worms and miracle meal throughout the winter. She says her watering area with the dripper draws them in all year long. She also has a hummingbird garden with five feeders that host a couple dozen hummers by late July. She leaves her feeders out until December for any late migrants or strays.

About six or seven years ago Peggy was asked by Elderhostel to do a hummingbird program at Mountain Lake for their spring event. Peggy realized that Mountain Lake Resort would be a wonderful location for a bird festival. Her knowledge of birds plus her work on the Giles County Tourism Committee made Peggy the perfect choice as Field Trip and Events Coordinator for the first Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Festival.

In February 2004, Peggy joined the festival planners, whose focus was bringing bird watchers to the western part of the state to enjoy Virginia's high elevation species. The hope was that a spring birding festival at Mountain Lake would complement the "other" Virginia birding festival on the Eastern Shore in the fall. With 110 birders and 110 species of birds (including the Eastern Bluebird and 23 species of Warblers) seen and/or heard during just three days, the first Mountain Lake Bird festival, held last May, can be counted as a huge success.

— Marci Swanson

Keep Your Eyes Open

[Editor's note: Campbell Chambliss with the help of three local Ruritan Clubs in his Brunswick County area, and finances from VBS, has put up 30 boxes on three new trails this year.]

When you monitor or clean out a bluebird box, stop and take a reading of that nest! You can learn a lot about what happened during the nesting period by doing so. "Ma and Pa Bluebird" work together. Pa brings the grasses and Ma weaves them into a neat compact nest. They are both very thorough in the nest keeping.

If you look carefully at the used nest you may find one or more dead insects. Usually this alone tells you that the baby birds fledged! The parents come to the nest more frequently as the nestlings grow, and if there are no hungry mouths ready to take the food they will just drop the insects into the empty nest. Also, there may be two or three white fecal sacs (waste droppings) left in the nest by the last fledging birds. During the feeding and rearing period, you may be lucky enough to see the parents leaving the box carrying the white fecal sacs away from the nest box. This is a "Dutch Cleanser" way of keeping the nest clean.

You may find a nest that is clean and appears unused. The parents may have abandoned it for one of many reasons. Maybe the parents chose another box, and built another nest for some reason, or one of a pair was killed, or perhaps the female had flown off with another, more attractive male!

Perhaps the nest may have had eggs or nestlings that disappeared before fledging without leaving any evidence of what happened. The nest materials may not have been disturbed, and you may wonder what happened. This "smells" like the work of a black rat snake, which could have climbed into the nest box and swallowed the eggs or young birds. If the snake is still curled up in the box digesting its meal, you will have positive proof!

If, on the other hand, you find that the nesting materials have been stirred up or partly pulled from the box, this may tell you that a house cat, a squirrel, an opossum, or a raccoon may have gotten into your nest box. The eggs or young may have been raked from the box by these predators, and you might even find some claw marks or hairs left by the intruder around the entrance hole or on the top of the box. This can all be avoided by attaching a Noel guard around the entrance hole and mounting a snake guard on the pole.

If you find a brood of fairly mature bluebird nestlings that are motionless and beginning to smell, then we humans may be the culprits! We may have allowed the adult birds to pluck up insects stunned by the insecticide spray or dust that we carelessly use on our farm crops, garden vegetables, or yard flowers. The stunned insects, fed to the chicks, may have caused their deaths. Please beware of the effects of the insecticides and herbicides that you use on your yards and acreage.

If you find the eggs punctured or, along with the chicks, thrown from the nest, this could be the work of the murderous House Sparrow or even the House Wren. Often you may find a House Sparrow nest incorporating the bluebird's corpse. The House Sparrow is not a native bird, and many of us have methods we use to discourage or eliminate them. The House Wren is a protected native bird, and moving the nest box away from the shrubs is the only good method of discouraging it.

Our bluebirds struggle against many odds trying to raise and fledge a nest of young. Not only are there many predators and enemies out there attacking them but the search for a natural nesting site is becoming more difficult because fewer and fewer trees with natural cavities are available. The North American Bluebird Society's research has determined that 90 percent of our bluebirds are now raised in nest boxes built by dedicated bluebird enthusiasts like you. Please help our bluebirds by putting up and maintaining more nest boxes and monitoring them weekly. VBS is here to help you do that.

– Campbell Chambliss, Rawlings, Virginia



Campbell Chambliss, Palmer Green, and Doug Winn with the Red Oak Ruritan Club put up one of 30 new bluebird boxes.
(Photo: South Hill Enterprise)

Meet Our VBS Photographer

Four years ago, after five years in the Richmond area, John and Helen Ellis returned to Northern Virginia to be near their grandchildren. They chose a house with room for the family to visit and a lot that attracts birds; especially bluebirds. From her back porch in Gainesville, Helen watches, feeds, and photographs her beloved birds, from backyard birds to a recent Yellow-billed Cuckoo. But her special love is "her" bluebirds, of which she has thousands of photographs.

Shortly after moving, Helen opened Backyard Boutique, a wild bird shop, in April of last year. She printed many of her photos to illustrate feeders and nest boxes in use. Customers began to ask as much about the photos as the products in the shop, and Backyard Boutique Original Photography was born. Both Ellises spend a lot of time behind the lens. John, a physician, tends to shoot more flowers and landscapes; Helen captures most of the bird images.

Helen has uploaded a number of her photos to her on-line gallery: www.backyardboutique.com. All are available as prints, including large stretched canvas prints and note cards. Helen's favorite, "Why Be Mad," a portrait of a male bluebird, is also available on mugs and coasters.

Cavity Nesters' Corner

The Prothonotary Warbler

[Editor's note: In the spring 2000 Bird Box, Larry Cartwright wrote an article for our "Corner" about this small, golden, cavity-nesting bird. Because there is new information, and because it has been so long since we have looked at this species, we republish the article here with a few additions.]

The Prothonotary Warbler, sometimes called the "golden swamp warbler," is a unique species; it is the only cavity-nesting warbler found in the eastern half of the United States. The male is a beautiful, glowing, golden yellow. His head and belly are golden yellow, but his under-tail is white. His wings are blue-gray and lack wing bars. His tail is also blue-gray with the large white patches common to warblers. These white patches can often be seen in flight. The female is a duller yellow, but otherwise similar to the male. Their bill is long, heavy, and spike-like. It is black only during breeding season.

The Prothonotary Warbler is a neotropical migrant and winters in mangrove swamps along the Central American and northern South American coasts. In the eastern U.S. they breed in lowland hardwood-forest wetlands throughout the south and as far north as northern New York State and Minnesota! The key to their nesting is suitable habitat of forested swamps or flooded backwaters and woodland pools or oxbow ponds.

Males generally begin arriving on their breeding grounds, in Northern Virginia, during the third week of April, Larry Cartwright tells us, with females showing up about a week later. Dan Petit of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and his wife, Lisa Petit, of the Smithsonian Institution, have worked extensively with Prothonotary Warblers, and they report that breeding pairs prefer to nest in snags over standing water where the surrounding tree canopy provides partial or complete shade. An open under-story appears desirable too, since scrubbiest habitat can create competition with the House Wren. The nest cavity, usually an abandoned Downy Woodpecker hole, is generally located three to six feet above ground, but Jon Dunn in the Peterson Field Guide, *Warblers*, states that some Prothonotary Warbler nests have been found in cavities higher than 25 feet.

These birds are adaptable and will accept man-made boxes. There are plans out there to help you build one. It must be placed in the correct habitat and have a 1-1/4 inch hole. The location will be a challenge for you to place and monitor! **Kevin Parker**, VBS County Coordinator for southern Prince William County, and trail leader for the VBS bluebird trail at Occoquan NWR, has such a Prothonotary trail; he has built his own boxes and placed them in a swamp! You can call him to find out about the extensive work he has done to help this bird on its breeding grounds (phone numbers on the VBS Web site, under County Coordinators). **Larry Brinza**, another VBS member, has had a Prothonotary pair breed in a bluebird box on his trail at the Mason Neck NWR. That box is located on a bluff over a swamp off the Potomac River.

The male Prothonotary Warbler leaves nest offerings of pieces of moss in several cavities before the female arrives. The female then decides which cavities she prefers to lay her eggs in! (Shades of the House Wren's sticks!) Then, according to Paul Baicich, in *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds*, the male builds the moss nest with almost no help from his mate, in about six to 10 days. She will build the cup for the eggs. The average clutch is four to six eggs but clutches as large as eight eggs have been reported.

Larry Cartwright discovered, when he was first putting out boxes for these warblers at Dyke Marsh and Huntley Meadows about nine years ago, that the Prothonotary Warblers in Northern Virginia started nesting by the second week of May. The first set of nest boxes for Prothonotaries in 1996 at Dyke Marsh, along the Potomac River, contained eggs by May 16. These birds have been observed building nests well into June and Larry's latest [See page 7]



Male Prothonotary Warbler
(Photo © Bill Horn)

Vital Facts

Prothonotary Warbler (*Prothonotaria citrea*)

Length: 5-1/4 inches

Nest: Constructed primarily by Male with moss.

Eggs: Color varies from yellowish to white or pale pink; 3-8, usually 4-6.

Incubation: By female; 12-14 days

Fledging: On the 10th or 11th day after hatching!

Broods: Usually one; but can double clutch in southern breeding grounds.

Food: Primarily insects; some fruit.

Habitat: Forested wetlands near open water.

Housing: Cavities, sometimes in man-made boxes with 1-1/4 inch hole.

[From *The Backyard Birdhouse Book* by René and Christyna M. Laubach]

Bluebirds All Day Long

The line, “Nothing but bluebirds all day long,” from Irving Berlin’s song, “Blue Skies,” is a welcome greeting for each new season of bluebird nesting. This past March, a bluebird couple began their season by investigating one of two deck-mounted bluebird boxes behind my residence. Returning from two weeks of travel in early April, I saw pine needles jutting from the birdhouse. A peek inside revealed five eggs!

To encourage the trust of Mom and Dad Bluebird and to reduce their workload, I put out mealworms every evening. The first few days, both birds would watch the distribution from a low branch of a nearby white oak. Then, whenever the worm person appeared, either parent would swoop down to a nearby shepherd’s hook and watch as the worms were ungraciously plopped on, of all things, a Jacuzzi cover. (Last year, neither parent would leave the oak branch until the worm distributor stepped inside the person house. This year, parents would fly closer to watch, but never retrieved worms until the human was about ten feet away – developing trust, perhaps.)

Incubation continued with evening meal worms on the dole. Usually both parents availed themselves of these pleasures. Occasionally, Mr. Dad would carry a mouthful into the birdhouse, presumably caring for his mate.

Once eggs hatched, first week of May, both parents would fly to either the white oak branch or shepherd’s hook, watch the worm human deliver the goods, and swoop down to stuff their beaks as soon as the Samaritan retreated a few steps. By the third week in May, the nest was quiet and parents appeared only at evening mealworm time.

After another round of travel, the worm person checked the bluebird box in early June: a new nest with two eggs! Two days later, another check and there were four eggs. The next day was a human travel day. Both parents were out and about the nest a day later. That evening, the worm person went out to do the “daily deed.” There was half of an eggshell on the deck, and part of the nest, too. A walk in the yard revealed another portion of eggshell about 12 feet from the nest. The next day, a third piece of shell was found under a bush about 15 feet from the deck.

After a wake and too many glasses of wine, a remorseful look was cast to the now empty box. On top was a saucy, prancing House Wren. Are House Wrens wretched, or what?

The wren chose not to inhabit an empty bluebird box about ten feet from the one attacked. The bluebirds did not return to build another nest that June; but now in July an adult returns in the evenings for mealworms. They now have to contend with a catbird; but the bluebirds pick up as many worms as possible and fly elsewhere. Perhaps they are with another brood, all day long.

– V. Kay Fry

The Prothonotary Warbler (from page 6)

documented fledging date was on July 12, when three vocal youngsters were observed being fed by a male shortly after leaving their natural cavity (after only about 10 days) at Huntley Meadows. Like all native cavity nesters, these birds will choose a natural cavity over a nest box. Only when the natural cavities become scarce do they use our boxes. So if you build one, pole-mount it and use the two predator guards, and hope.

The breeding season for Prothonotaries is definitely over by late July. During August the birds are preparing for fall migration, and by mid-September all but a few stragglers are gone. As you dream of the 2006 nesting season this coming winter, consider locating some Prothonotary habitat and then build them a box to nest in. But be sure you have a boat or waders in order to place it properly and monitor it weekly! VBS will take all the data you send us!

– Barbara Chambers



Busy Father Bluebird with hungry fledglings
(Photo: ?)

God’s Wild Creatures

A ‘coon and a frog, and a
‘possum on a log.

A duck and a goose, a bobcat
on the loose.

A deer and an owl, and a fox
on the prowl.

A quail and a dove, a turkey
gobbler in love.

A squirrel and a hare, and a
hawk in the air.

A wasp and a bee, a hornet
nest in a tree.

God’s wild creatures,
everywhere,

A tiny mouse and a great big
bear.

He made some big and He
made some small;

But He made the little
bluebird the prettiest of them
all.

– Frank Newell

Frank Newell is the owner of the Newell Farms’ Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Warrenton, NC. They sell bluebird houses to individuals and non-profit organizations, made from western cedar or cypress (\$12) or heart pine (\$10). His boxes come well recommended! Call 252-257-1754 for more information. No shipping available.

Visit Our Web Site

The VBS Web site offers nest box plans, trail monitoring protocol, trail data forms, news, and links to other useful sites:

www.virginiabluebirds.org.

Join Us!

Become a member of VBS and receive:

- T** All the information you need to start and maintain a successful bluebird trail.
- T** Access to working trails, workshops, and educational programs.
- T** Our newsletter, *The Bird Box*, in July, October, and March.

Annual membership is \$10 Individual, \$15 Family.

Send your check, payable to the Virginia Bluebird Society, to:

**726 William Street
Fredericksburg, VA 22401**

Bluebirds Have Lost a Champion

David Magness, the owner of the Jenna Bird catalog business, died on August 25. His funeral was held on August 29 at the Slateville Presbyterian Church in Delta, Pennsylvania. Dave had fought a winning battle with Leukemia for just over a year and was weak, but cancer free, and home. Then in early August he was diagnosed with a lung disease. He fought that, too, bravely and with all he had. The doctors did all they could, but Dave wasn't able to beat this last insult. Dave leaves his wife Sandy, and his two children, Philip and Jenna.

Dave Magness will definitely be missed by the birding community, his VBS and NABS friends and members, and his customers. Dave served on the NABS board and ran a thriving birding business that many of us patronized. This newsletter ran his catalog in several of our issues. The bluebirds have definitely lost one of their best champions.

If you wish to send something, in Dave Magness's memory, his family would appreciate that donations be made to either the Philip and Jenna Magness Trust Fund, c/o Lisa K. Getz, Esq., Getz Law Office, 26 S. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21024; or to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, 8600 LaSalle Road, Chester Building, Suite 314, Baltimore, MD 21286.



Virginia Bluebird Society
726 William Street
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

**DATED
MATERIAL**

2004 VIRGINIA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY STATEWIDE BLUEBIRD BOX NESTING DATA¹

County	Trail Leader/County Coordinator	Bluebirds			Chickadees			Tree Swallows			House Wrens			Other									
		Number of boxes	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged					
Albemarle	Kingston	410		61	58	1090	4	26	26	56	10	51	40	391			8	1	5	5	44		
Augusta	Penn			727	714	583								130									
Bath	Bratton	15	9	35	32	27					7	45	42	37	4	13	13	13					
Botetourt	Downs	194	92	363	339	375	17	73	57	62	66	349	326	334	12	60	60	60					
Campbell	Devan	10	4	12	12	12					1	1	293	288	2	9	6	6					
Clarke	Lichtler/Baruffi	108	46	205	152	139	1	1	0	0	66	350	293	288	49	269	174	149					
Fairfax	Salcedo-Roper	504	281	1288	1065	1028	58	226	188	186	121	329	278	279	129	430	398	386	11	50	29	29	
Fauquier	Taylor	57	30	107	70	70	3	7	7	7	3	12	4	4	1	6	6	6	14	14	33	24	
Fredrick	Hickerson	30	6	30	28	28	2	5	5	5	11	57	41	41									
Fredricksburg	Little	12	4	15	10	10	1	5	5	5	2	9	8	8	1	4	4	4					
Giles	Spiegel	16	16	63	57	57	1	5	3	3		4	18	16					1	4	4	4	
Goochland	Rapalee	22	21	87	80	68	2	12	12	12	3	12	12	12					1	3			
Henry	Doyle	80	116	490	445	429	1	5	5	5													
Highland	Bratton	120	68	254	223	203					74	328	287	264	8	32	19	19					
James City	Berg	29	40	145	119	96													6	26	24	15	
King George	Elkins	26	7	30	29	28	3	16	16	14													
Loudoun	Hamilton	130	88	385	310	286	1	7	6	6	42	201	173	168	42	159	104	107	62	76			
Montgomery	Opengari	30	25	104	69	87	0	1	5	3	3	0	24	109	92	87							
Nelson	Avery, Colella	11	10	39	39	39	1	4	4	4	2	8	8	8					2	7	7	4	
Newport News	LaRue	40	19	65	58	58	4	19	18	18					5	21	20	20	3	5	5	5	
Northumberland	Newsome	21	15	53	46	46	3	9	8	8													
Prince William	Little	125	107	465	407	405	7	39	29	24	30	144	126	125	9	48	38	29					
Roanoke	Morris	128	156	697	608	578	14	74	68	64	11	61	56	54	7	41	41	41	1	4	4	4	
Rockingham	Scott	59	39	148	127	133	1	7	7	7	21	102	89	92					6	7	4	4	
Spotsylvania	Elkins	34		245	205	200														55	32	25	
Stafford	Nasca	13	9	43	31	28					1	5	4	0									
Warren	Morrison	12	12	51	43	43	1	5	0	0	9	41	23	16	4	16	10	10					
W. Virginia ²	Hickerson	39	13	63	49	49					10	47	33	33									
GRAND TOTALS ³		2,275	1,233	6,270	5,425	6,195	125	546	469	489	493	2,155	1,885	2,409	365	1,195	893	873	108	275	138	158	

Notes: 1. In a few instances, non-reporting or under-reporting of some data makes for apparently inconsistent results, e.g. see total BB eggs vs hatched vs fledged. However, numbers of fledglings were always reported.

2. One member, John Hickerson, travels regularly in West Virginia, and monitors trails in Inwood and Falling Waters Counties.

3. Counting all species, 10124 birds were fledged.

Notes on 2004 Data Summary

We apologize for the missing numbers in the 2004 data summary included in the July *Bird Box*. A complete listing is on the other side of this page. Several people have called my attention to some of the results; and in particular, that the total numbers of birds fledged are generally more than the numbers hatched! This is one of the hazards of combining data sent in by a bunch of people. The problem is simply that some of our data submitters haven't submitted complete data. I chose to present the data the way you see it, rather than, for instance, leaving out the totals that don't make sense. See also footnote #1 of the report.

2004 Data

Many of you may remember that the number of bluebirds fledged in 2003 was down substantially from the previous season. The numbers: in 2002, we fledged 8,626 bluebirds state-wide, while in 2003 we fledged 4,894. Accounting for the difference in the numbers of boxes involved (there were slightly more boxes in 2003 than in 2002), we estimate that we fledged about 45 percent fewer bluebirds in 2003 than in 2002. We concluded that the reason was almost solely the result of fewer nesting attempts by adult bluebirds; that is, there were simply fewer adults trying to nest in 2003.

The good news is that in 2004 our bluebird population seemed to be recovering: In 2004, we fledged 6,156 bluebirds. Compared to the 2002 and earlier data, that gets us almost halfway back from the 2003 low point. So we're especially looking forward to seeing the 2005 results. *Go Data!*

2005 Data

The first batch of 2005 data arrived on August 20 from Tony Berg of Williamsburg. For that good work, that member gets a three-year extension of his VBS membership. *Way to go, Tony!* The second submitter will get a one-year extension!

Now for the rest of you hard-working monitors, since the nesting season is over, it's time to send us your trail data for 2005. Please send your data to your County Coordinator, or to me:

Charlie Chambers
8911 Moreland Lane
Annandale, VA 22003-3915

We'd like to be able to report the statewide summary of 2005 results in the March 2006 *Bird Box*. It all depends on *you*.
– *Charlie Chambers*