

# The Bird Box

Spring 2016 Newsletter of the  
Virginia Bluebird Society [www.viriniabluebirds.org](http://www.viriniabluebirds.org)



## Biennial 2015 Fall Conference



Current and Past Presidents of VBS: From left to right, Cathy Hindman, Anne Little, Carmen Bishop, and Julie Kutruff with Bruno the bluebird “mascot”.

### The Bird Box

#### Inside this Issue

Item	Page
Fall Conference	1
Memorials	2
VBS Awards	3/4
Nest Box Reports	5/6
Statewide Report	7
How to Join	8

In November 2015, the VBS Fall conference took place in Charlottesville with 85 attendees. There was a photo presentation from Bob Schamerhorn of [www.iphotobirds.com](http://www.iphotobirds.com) about attracting birds with water. We learned we are citizen scientists from Dr. Caren Cooper of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and how our note taking and data collection is valued. We enjoyed more beautiful photos from Bill Young and listened to 99 reasons to be fascinated by birds. There were displays and books and door prizes and food! We enjoyed the comradery of bluebirders from all over the state and beyond. We elected new board members and presented awards. It was a productive and enjoyable day for all. Those who attended look forward to the next in 2017.

Newsletter of the  
**Virginia Bluebird Society**  
[www.virginiabluebirds.org](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org)

Our email address is:  
[vbs@virginiabluebirds.org](mailto:vbs@virginiabluebirds.org)  
If you have a new e-mail address, or  
have recently changed it, please let us  
know.

**Cathy Hindman**, President  
(h) 703-590-0715  
e-mail: [samhindman@verizon.net](mailto:samhindman@verizon.net)

**Vickie Fuquay**, Vice President  
(h) 434-822-0930  
e-mail: [vickiefuquay@comcast.net](mailto:vickiefuquay@comcast.net)

**Lexi Meadows**, Vice President  
(h) 434-251-4407  
e-mail: [meadows9@fairpoint.net](mailto:meadows9@fairpoint.net)

**Mary Lohman**, Treasurer  
(h) 703-280-1081  
e-mail: [lmlohman@yahoo.com](mailto:lmlohman@yahoo.com)

**Anne Little**, Secretary  
(h) 540-207-4298  
e-mail: [thegate@cox.net](mailto:thegate@cox.net)

#### Directors

**Ann Dunn** (h) 434-296-3496  
e-mail: [add7k@cms.mail.virginia.edu](mailto:add7k@cms.mail.virginia.edu)

**Paul Davis**, (h) 434-361-0141  
e-mail: [davis0138@aol.com](mailto:davis0138@aol.com)

**Earl Morris**, (h) 540-776-1640  
e-mail: [emorris@entelos.net](mailto:emorris@entelos.net)

**Doug Rogers**, (h) 434-973-7634  
e-mail: [doug5996@gmail.com](mailto:doug5996@gmail.com)

#### Past President

**Carmen Bishop**, (h) 703-764-9628  
e-mail: [cjbish@aol.com](mailto:cjbish@aol.com)

#### State Coordinator

**Christine Boran**, (h) 276-930-9963  
e-mail: [woolwinehouse@gmail.com](mailto:woolwinehouse@gmail.com)

#### Data Manager

**Ann Dunn**, (h) 434-296-3496  
e-mail: [add7@cms.mail.virginia.edu](mailto:add7@cms.mail.virginia.edu)

#### Bird Box Editor

#### Vacancy! Help needed!

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

## Bird Box Soul

Come inside, rest.  
The hammer's still,  
a life's work done.  
Blue feathers carry  
your last breath  
and bring you back  
to whatever we were  
before.  
The last bird box  
hangs empty,  
a life fledged  
on a legacy of wings.

Reprinted with the  
permission of the author

Candy Castellanos



Charlie Chambers, Co-founder of VBS  
1928 - 2013

## VBS Memoriam

Nest Boxes in memory of the following members were given at the fall  
conference.

### Tom Clifton, Salem Va

In 1999 Tom became interested in bluebirds and he set up his wood shop to  
produce nest boxes and make them available to anyone who wanted a box.  
Known as the "Bluebird Man", by 2008 Tom was maintaining 750 nest boxes on  
bluebird trails in six counties. During this period in Roanoke County, 76-percent  
of the 363 nest boxes on 18 county trails were donated by Tom.  
By 2014 Tom estimated that he had produced well over 1,200 nest boxes which  
fledged thousands of bluebirds. Earl Morris accepted a memorial nest box in  
memory of Tom. The box will be installed at Garst Mill Park which was one of  
Tom's favorite bluebird trails

### Jimmy Doyle, Henry County - A Pioneer in Bluebird Conservation

Jimmy Doyle was an advocate for the local bluebird population for the past 36  
years and served as acting County Coordinator for Henry County for most of  
those years.  
Jimmy maintained 45 boxes on a 7 mile bluebird trail that extended from  
Mulberry Road to Chatmoss Country Club. His efforts over the past years have  
made a significant impact in the bluebird population across Martinsville and  
Henry County. He erected and monitored nest boxes all around the area and his  
efforts were focused on teaching other people how to take care of the bluebirds.  
A memorial nest box was accepted by Carole Doyle in memory of her husband.

# VBS Awards Ceremony November 2015

By Anne Little

Our volunteers are the life-blood of VBS. Our members' work is done away from the limelight, in the quiet company of nature. We realize that extra effort deserves recognition and that is why we have awards to applaud their hard work.

**Jan Lockwood & Lois Ulman: Barbara Chambers Memorial County Coordinator of the Year** - This award is given in memory of Barbara Chambers and the energy and inspiration she brought to bluebird conservation. This award is given to a county coordinator who goes the extra mile to organize, inspire and further bluebird conservation in their county.

Lois and Jan are a great team. They are responsible for three areas: James City (7 trails with 148 boxes), Williamsburg City (1 trail with 20 boxes), and York County (5 trails with 88 boxes). They exhibit the drive and enthusiasm to lead others in a positive, fun way. Jan and Lois have done this for many years.

Christine Boran nominated them for this award with these words, "They are hardworking, communicate well with their monitors and are willing to try new ideas to make their trails better. They are willing to try anything to help the bluebirds!"



**Ron & Priscilla Kingston: VBS "Heritage Award"**-This award is not given every year by our organization. It recognizes an individual who has been a long time bluebirder. This is a special person who lives and breathes bluebirds, and has spent many years promoting bluebirds and the love of bluebirds.



Ron and Priscilla became involved with bluebirds when they heard Dr. Zeleny give a presentation in 1978. While they lived in northern Virginia they established a number of bluebird trails including Huntley Meadows and Sky Meadows State Park. When Ron retired they moved to Albemarle County and began establishing trails throughout the area and promoting bluebirds. Ron and Priscilla were active with NABS since the early days of NABS.

Ron was chair of the speaker's bureau for many years and they were both in attendance at the annual NABS convention every year. They have volunteered for many, many years on all kinds of projects for VBS. You could count on them doing a stint at the state fair every year, nest box building workshops, and educational events. They have been a huge supporter of other cavity nesting birds as well – kestrels, owls, prothonotary warblers and purple martins. Ron and Priscilla have partnered with Lance Wood to hold the annual purple martin workshop in Albemarle County every year that attracts hundreds of people to learn about cavity nesting birds.

Ron developed the Kingston Stovepipe guard that has saved thousands of bluebirds from predation. Bluebirders all over the country use his design to protect their nest boxes.

**Clark Walter: Volunteer of the Year** – This award is given to an individual who helps promote and enhance VBS. By giving of their time and energy, this individual helps VBS and the bluebird to grow and flourish in VA.

Clark is extremely generous with his time and knowledge. Each fall he builds hundreds of bluebird houses, including the pole and baffle, and sells them to anyone who wants them, for the cost of his materials. He receives no remuneration whatsoever for his time - except for the joy and pleasure of encouraging bluebird populations and bluebird monitoring. Clark also will assist with installation of boxes that he builds and also gives educational programs.

Clark first became involved with bluebirds in 2012. Clark built all of his own boxes for his trail.

Soon, by word of mouth, he was on his way to building nest boxes for others. That first year he built 91 boxes. He expanded his call for orders to include all local Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) members and others. As of February 2015, Clark had built 692 bluebird nest boxes. During Clark's designated building months, his shop becomes a crowded, but well-organized, blur of activity. Over several weeks, Clark is a one-man, bluebird nest box assembly line. He also drives to Ohio where he gets a discount on the metal to construct baffles – a discount that is passed on to those who buy his boxes. Clark has also prepared an informational power point presentation which he will e-mail on request to any one with questions about set-up and nesting in general.



**Linda Drage: Bluebirder of the Year** – This award is given to the individual who promotes bluebirds through outreach to schools and community groups, promoting good bluebird management techniques, and helping others to love and care for the bluebird. Nominated by Dottie Haley, Henry County Coordinator, she writes, “Linda is a monitor in Henry County and is fairly new to monitoring. In 2014, she took over the Martinsville trail that had been built and monitored by Jimmy Doyle over the last 25 years. When Jimmy's health began to fail, Linda stepped up.

As the 2014 season progressed, the Martinsville boxes began to present an unusually high mortality rate. Linda was finding dead chicks as well as adult bluebirds on her weekly rounds and she quickly sprang into action. She called on the expertise of Christine Boran, State Coordinator for the VBS. Christine surveyed the trail with Linda and made numerous suggestions for upgrading the older boxes along the trail.

In order to secure funding for the upgrades, Linda drafted a letter for each homeowner who had a box on the Martinsville trail. Most of the boxes on the trail were old and did not have the guarding now recommended by VBS. Linda's letter writing campaign was a huge success. She collected a total of \$480.00 and was able to purchase 16 complete new boxes from Clark Walter and replace some of the older boxes on the Martinsville trail.

Linda is very enthusiastic about all of her volunteer undertakings, and gives 150% to her bluebirds.

# VBS Nest Box Activity 2015

By Ann Dunn, Data Manager

Our monitoring reports are in. Details of the results may be found in the attached table. This year we had 5312 nest boxes on 412 trails located in 45 counties and cities scattered throughout Virginia. We thank our very dedicated volunteers who monitored and maintained our trails throughout the breeding season.

The species distribution show some shifts this year (Figure 1). Bluebirds continue to be the primary species on our nesting trails throughout the state, but their relative dominance has fallen since 2013. This year they represented 57 percent of fledging birds, the lowest since 2005, while tree swallows accounted for a new high of 29 percent. In the East and Southeast regions (designates of the Virginia Society of Ornithology), Carolina chickadees have traditionally replaced tree swallows as the secondary species. In these regions tree swallow numbers remained low (< 5 percent) in 2015 while chickadees contributed a new high of 16 percent of fledging birds.

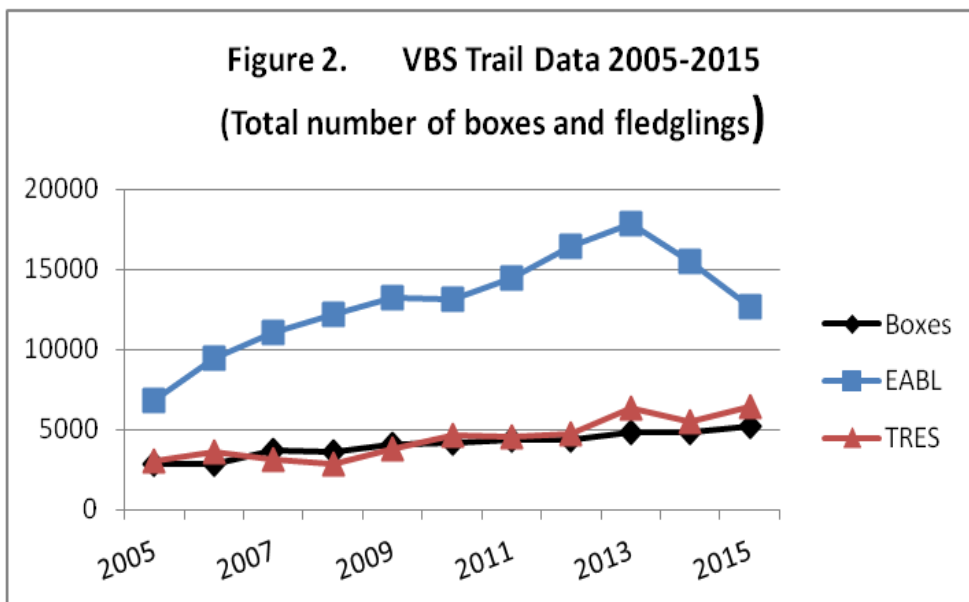
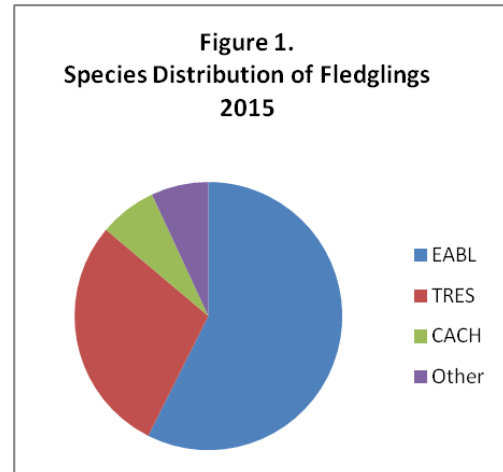
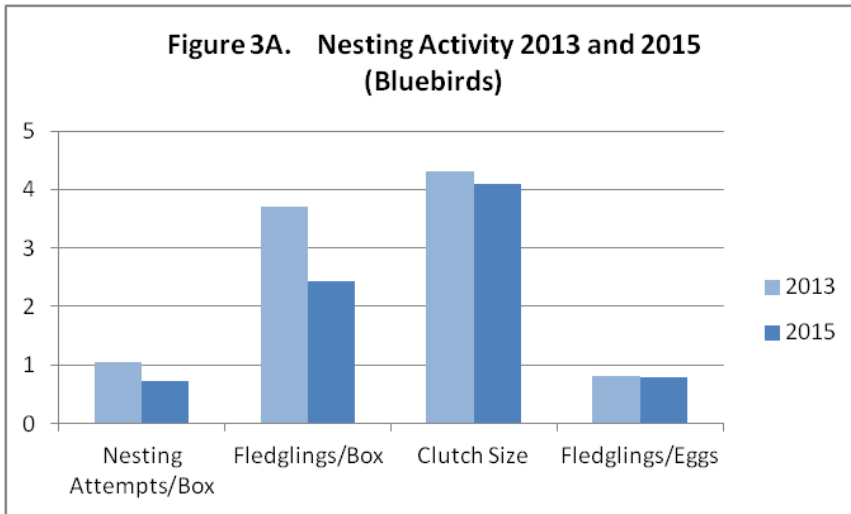
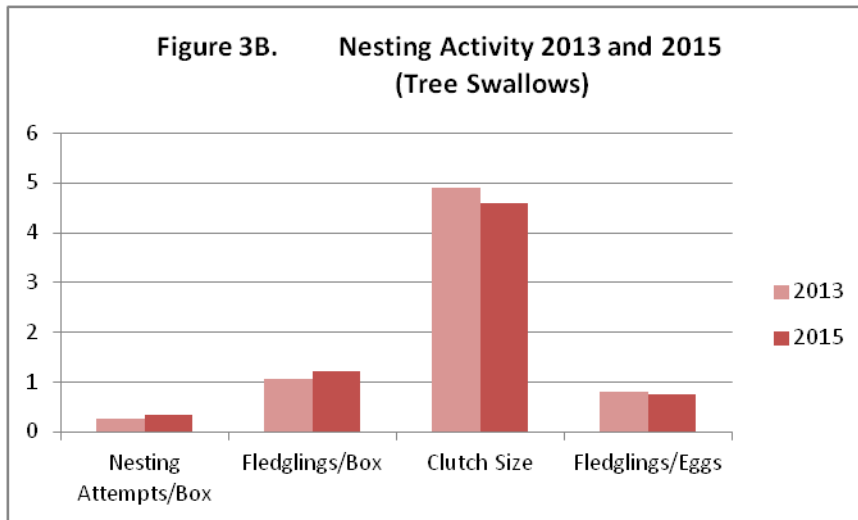


Figure 2 follows the fledging history of bluebirds and tree swallows over the past eleven years. The decline in fledging numbers by bluebirds, first seen in 2014, continued this past year and represents a 29 percent drop from the peak year of 2013. Tree swallow fledging numbers showed little change during this period.

Figure 3 compares several additional parameters of nesting activity for bluebirds (3A) and tree swallows(3B) in 2013 and 2015.



Bluebird nesting attempts during this period fell by 30 percent and fledging productivity (Fledglings/Box) by 35 percent while clutch size (Eggs/Nesting Attempts) declined slightly and nest survival (Fledglings/Eggs) remained steady. Bluebird losses were greatest within the East, Southeast and North regions of the state where both nesting attempts and fledging productivity were down by 45 percent from 2013 levels.



During the same period tree swallow nesting attempts and fledging productivity increased by respectively 23 and 14 percent, but clutch size and nest survival fell by respectively 6 and 8 percent. In the East and Southeast regions where chickadees were second to bluebirds in nest box use, both their nesting attempts and fledging productivity increased by 45 percent, while clutch size and nest survival remained stable (results not shown).

By all indices bluebirds nesting activity in 2015 has continued to decline since 2013. Presumably weather patterns over the last three years have been a significant factor. The winter and spring of 2013 were unusually mild while the past two winters have been severe, followed by late/cool springs. Our resident breeding bluebirds, probably already in population decline after 2014, faced another condensed and cold breeding season which brought increased competition for nesting sites from secondary nesters and a reduced supply of needed protein-rich food for breeding vitality. Improvement in nesting productivity over the next couple of breeding seasons may be critical to keeping our Virginia bluebirds common. Let's continue the good work, keeping those nestboxes intact and protected, the trails well maintained and monitored, all the while keeping careful and complete records of what we find. Numbers are essential to understanding what is happening to our beloved bluebirds and their fellow native cavity nesters.

County	Trail Leader/County Coordinator	Number of Trails	Bluebirds				Chickadees				Tree Swallows				House Wrens				Other				All				
			Number of Boxes	Nesting Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged
Albemarle	Dunn, A.	41	491	497	2182	1794	1654	114	149	689	605	464	16	58	53	53	2	12	12	12	699	3115	2610	2297			
Arlington	Davis-Holland, A.	2	12	6	26	18	18	3	3	13	13	3	3	13	31	30	9	9	9	9	48	44	44	43			
Augusta	King, J.	1	9	6	26	18	18	3	3	13	13	3	3	13	31	30	9	9	9	9	48	44	44	43			
Botetourt	Evans, T.	10	285	103	444	364	346	37	37	200	165	152	158	757	684	630	14	78	62	60	312	1479	1275	1188			
Buchanan	Mayhorn, R.	3	66	33	138	121	116	3	3	11	10	5	30	158	152	133	66	307	283	254	66	307	283	254			
Chesterfield	Hesler, J. & I.	3	75	35	166	143	138	9	51	51	44	8	39	28	18	1	6	6	0	53	262	228	200				
Clarke	Lichter, K.	1	132	81	334	283	262	1	6	6	6	107	536	438	441	19	84	69	66	208	960	796	775				
Culpeper	Kitts, S.	3	15	5	23	16	16	1	6	2	0	11	61	49	42	2	11	11	11	17	90	67	58				
Dinwiddie	Zulauf, N.	1	10	3	15	14	14	1	2	2	11	11	2	11	11	11	2	11	11	5	26	25	25				
Fairfax	Bishop, C.	56	756	362	1486	1221	1202	66	294	195	207	342	1628	1385	1278	54	248	212	215	836	3699	3049	2932				
Fauquier	Dennee, B.	4	133	69	300	271	263	44	44	245	227	211	2	11	6	6	115	556	504	480	115	556	504	480			
Floyd	Boran, C.	3	13	10	40	36	27	7	7	32	30	28	2	13	12	12	19	85	78	67	19	85	78	67			
Fluvanna	Burkett, P.	1	4	5	22	22	22	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	28	28	28	28			
Fredericksburg																											
C/Stafford Co	Little, A.	9	69	32	141	114	110	11	32	145	122	119	3	16	14	13	78	379	305	296	78	379	305	296			
Giles	Opengari, B.	1	11	14	48	32	18	10	10	30	26	23	10	30	26	23	24	78	58	41	24	78	58	41			
Gloucester	Walker, W.	4	33	12	58	58	58	8	41	41	41	41	8	41	38	38	4	23	12	12	20	99	99	99			
Grayson	Kerns, D.&L.	3	26	29	120	109	106	8	8	41	38	38	8	41	38	38	4	23	12	12	41	184	159	156			
Greene	Wilczek, P.&F.	3	54	93	220	185	155	4	24	24	24	24	19	100	80	76	1	5	0	0	117	349	289	255			
Halifax	Fuquay, V.	3	21	19	94	82	78	1	6	4	4	2	11	10	9	1	5	5	5	23	116	101	96				
Henrico	Woodson, C.	5	66	47	204	157	156	25	65	58	54	2	9	8	8	10	35	25	25	84	313	248	243				
Henry	Haley, D.	8	227	349	1469	1302	1253	4	16	15	13	4	17	17	17	17	5	24	24	23	364	1537	1369	1317			
Isle of Wight	Langdon, L.	3	50	62	234	189	175	6	30	13	7	4	20	12	12	12	12	12	12	72	284	214	194				
James City	Lockwood/Ulliman	8	156	51	210	163	149	12	59	56	49	12	59	56	49	12	59	56	49	18	89	74	74				
Lancaster	Bounty, P.	3	82	96	401	378	358	6	33	27	27	2	8	6	6	0	0	0	0	81	358	293	272				
Loudoun	Ethen, K.	35	448	180	732	627	664	29	96	66	76	258	1113	981	1038	68	238	207	219	631	2179	1881	1997				
Lynchburg City	Lloyd, K.	1	11	5	22	19	14	1	5	5	5	2	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	37	24	19				
Madison	Squire, D.	3	27	19	93	88	88	2	13	11	10	10	10	48	41	35	1	5	4	32	159	144	137				
Montgomery	Pfeiffer, S.	3	31	28	125	111	100	1	6	0	0	21	92	87	85	1	4	4	4	51	227	202	189				
Nelson	Colgate, A.	9	153	159	467	418	369	3	21	20	20	56	270	198	114	14	33	27	20	232	791	663	523				
Northumberland	Adams, D.&L.	4	33	29	108	95	95	10	56	52	51	10	56	52	51	10	56	52	51	41	174	152	151				
Orange	McMillie, P.	5	54	23	91	79	59	4	22	22	22	19	80	58	44	4	4	4	5	5	22	22	22	22			
Patrick	Boran, C.	4	58	78	351	316	303	3	16	15	15	9	41	35	29	5	22	22	22	90	408	366	347				
Pittsylvania	Fuquay, V.	110	557	574	2505	2201	2111	36	176	153	149	100	453	377	338	38	187	163	157	762	3379	2936	2796				
Powhatan	Witt, T.	1	10	8	19	15	15	5	27	26	26	2	10	10	10	1	6	6	6	45	206	184	171				
Pulaski	Hansen, C.	7	253	117	414	328	280	24	71	64	47	177	735	501	402	72	79	55	35	390	1299	948	764				
Prince William	Swanson/Hindman	9	148	75	311	270	246	8	38	25	25	75	219	204	178	13	76	59	58	178	667	562	507				
Rappahannock	Patterson, B.	6	55	40	141	121	97	16	64	36	27	3	17	15	13	4	26	26	26	69	267	213	178				
Richmond City	Woodson, C.	6	61	35	152	140	130	7	38	28	25	2	10	10	10	1	6	6	6	45	206	184	171				
Roanoke	Morris, E.	14	281	262	1171	1017	959	25	120	97	85	113	579	486	435	29	136	107	98	440	2066	1746	1610				
Rockingham	Harrison, D.	1	7	8	34	29	28	3	15	9	9	1	7	0	0	2	9	9	9	14	65	47	46				
Shenandoah	Harrison, D.	1	4	6	27	27	27	3	17	17	10	3	17	17	10	3	17	17	10	9	44	44	37				
Spotsylvania	Hamb, J.	2	46	21	84	64	59	11	65	31	24	10	47	43	42	15	88	63	63	57	284	201	188				
Warren	Morrison/Leonard	2	76	61	270	191	173	6	32	25	25	34	193	166	134	5	23	17	17	106	518	399	349				
Westmoreland	Narney, P.	3	86	13	52	50	46	6	42	37	23	8	34	28	25	13	37	27	26	83	369	304	294				
York	Lockwood/Ulliman	7	117	54	242	203	201	12	66	56	53	13	37	27	26	4	24	18	14	27	128	115	94				
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>412</b>	<b>5312</b>	<b>3808</b>	<b>15786</b>	<b>13481</b>	<b>12758</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>2101</b>	<b>1665</b>	<b>1537</b>	<b>1846</b>	<b>8524</b>	<b>7193</b>	<b>6514</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>1582</b>	<b>1300</b>	<b>1257</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>6696</b>	<b>28385</b>	<b>23937</b>	<b>22343</b>

## Calendar Noteworthy:

March – Check boxes for any necessary repairs and clean out from winter roosting

April – Start monitoring all nest boxes

May – Deadline for newsletter submissions May 16

June 25<sup>th</sup> is the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Purple Martin Field Day in Louisa County

[www.purplemartinfieldday.org](http://www.purplemartinfieldday.org)

## How To Join

Send your name, address, phone number and/or email address along with a check for \$10 for an individual with e-mailed Newsletter (\$15 for print Newsletter) or \$15 for a family with e-mailed Newsletter (\$20 for a print Newsletter) to:

Virginia Bluebird Society  
726 William Street  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

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



Virginia Bluebird Society  
726 William Street  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401