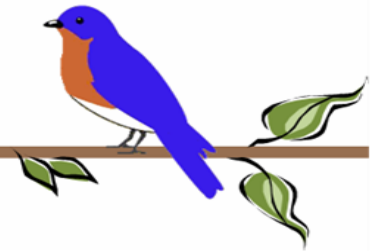


# TEXAS Blues



Texas Bluebird Society Newsletter · Volume 10. Issue 4

WINTER 2011

## Winter Is Coming

- Time to clean out nestboxes.
- Install new nestboxes in appropriate location.
- Winterize nestbox by adding materials to block vents for a snug place to roost.
- Follow suggestions from latest heat study-see story on right.

## Inside this issue:

Volunteers	2
Donors	2
New Members	2
Data Does Help	3
Tenth Symposium	4
Musings From The Master	6
Election Time	7

## New Heat Study Results Provide Cool Solutions

TBS is thrilled to report the Texas nestbox received high marks in recent testing. In fact, based on the studies by Neil Yeager, a bird enthusiast and South Carolina resident, the TBS Board has unanimously approved to increase the vent size to  $\frac{5}{8}$ " on all future nestboxes.

The increased vent size allows the nestbox to remain cooler yet still allows for the capture of House Sparrows. Of even greater importance, Mr. Yeager's research shows the importance of either painting weathered nestboxes a light color or using heat shields as this results in a significant decrease in the internal temperature of older, weathered boxes, by as much as 9 degrees.

TBS shipped two nestboxes as requested. A later email from the requestor, Neil Yeager, revealed Neil wanted the nestboxes for a heat study he was planning to conduct.

"My hope is that my testing will save the lives of many birds in the future" stated Neil.

Always a bird lover, Neil was discouraged when his birdhouses in California were ignored. When he moved to South Carolina in 2000 he was promptly rewarded with a successful brood of bluebirds the first year.

"Later at some point I (Neil) read an arti-

cle on how you can lower your electric bills by painting your roof white. There is a special roof paint they make that will withstand the weather and the lighter color reflects the sun's rays and makes your home much cooler in the summer. So this made me think, what is happening to the temperatures in my dark wood nest box?"

Neil designed his color and heat tests to determine the effects of different colors and box configurations on interior nest box temperatures. Neil compared our nestbox structure and design to other nestbox designs.

### Test Factors and Conclusions:

The three factors tested in these experiments are *color* of box, *ventilation* and *Heat Shields*. All three are significant but color of box is the most important.

► The light tan Texas Box was up to **4.5° F cooler** than the regular unpainted Texas box.

► Results indicate there is virtually no difference between the light tan and white colors as far as heat. ► The  $\frac{5}{8}$ " vents with paint were up to .9°F cooler than the  $\frac{1}{2}$ " vents, difference would be greater in darker boxes. ► The Texas white box with  $\frac{5}{8}$ " vents and white shields

was up to 2.2°F cooler than the same box without shields.

"I (Neil) am happy to do more tests to verify these observations with an emphasis on weathered nestboxes."



(continued on p.3)

**Board of Directors****President**

Pauline Tom  
Mountain City

**Vice President**

Executive Committee  
serves as VP

**Treasurer/AP**

Katy Couvillion  
The Woodlands

**Assistant Treasurer/AP**

Linda Crum  
The Woodlands

**Secretary**

True Blue Friends MGR  
Judy Hetherington  
Bronte

**Membership/AR**

Caryn Brewer  
Conroe

**Nestbox Inventory MGR**

Meg Scamman  
Conroe

**Speakers Bureau/  
Inventory Control**

David Smith  
Battus@aol.com  
San Antonio

**Board Nominations**

Nancy Glover  
Wills Point

**Silent Auctions**

Jimmie Konvicka  
Stephenville

**Contact Us**

TBS  
PO Box 40868  
Austin, TX 78704

Pauline Tom  
512.268.5678  
ptom5678@gmail.com

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

**Volunteers Are Appreciated!**

Debbie Botkins-Parker  
Bonnah Boyd  
Caryn Brewer  
Mark Byrd  
Julie Conner  
Katy Couvillion  
Linda Crum  
Harry Evans

Kathy J. Gosdin  
Alicia Harry  
Sara Henry  
Brian Hetherington  
Judy Hetherington  
Deborah Hoag  
Jeff Hoag  
Luke Hoag  
Benni Konvicka  
Jimmie Konvicka  
Barb Lancaster  
Bob Lancaster  
Greg Marsh  
Paul Nelson  
Patti Marshall  
Barb Olhman  
Simonetta Rodriguez

A special thanks to Jimmie and Benni Konvicka,  
this year's Summer Symposium coordinators.



Booth staffers Linda Crum, Caryn Brewer, Carol Sloan, and Katy Couvillion at Landscape Solutions event in The Woodlands.



Karen Saunders  
Meg Scamman  
Keith Schindler  
Selena Schindler  
Jimmy Shiply  
Carol Sloan  
Mike Tandy  
Nelda Tandy  
Pauline Tom  
Ron Tom

**TBS Thanks Donors For Their Financial Support**

Lyndon & Raymonda Almand ■ Ray & Sally Blackhall ■ Mark Byrd ■ Linda & Fred Crum ■ Judith & TomD' Amico ■ Jay & Nancy Dickson ■ Harry Evans ■ Event Donation ■ Don Halbardier ■ Keith & Carolyn Hale ■ Dr John and Judy Hutka ■ Bill & Susie Johnson ■ Carolyn L Kohls ■ Kay Lowery ■ Beverly Menard ■ Susan Moran ■ Manjula Phelps ■ Cal & Hobby Porcher ■ Nancy Prikryl ■ Carol Sloan ■ Mike Stoecker ■ Nelda & Michael Tandy ■ Terry Windham

**Welcome New Members**

• Lyndon & Ranmonda Almand • Floyd Anderson • Edward L. Ash • Ken & Jane Austin • Hank Bachmann • Betul & Oray Balasaygun • Michelee Bartolo-Howell • Cynthia Barton • Kimberly Bass • Florence Beard • Sheron Bingham • Ken & Margaret Borg • Debbie Botkin-Parker • Robert Brenner • Martha Brogdon • Sue Brothers • Joani Broussard • A.W. (Bill) Burnett • Marcy Burton • Gay Carl • Patsy Carroll • Patsy Chambless • Marsha Chappell • Lynn Cherniske • Kim Cole • Karen Colwick • Allan Colwick • Diane Comer • Cindy Compton • Linda Conover • Andy & Jane Couch • Tom & Judith D'Amico • Alex DePalma • Kelly Dietrich • Bill A. & Karen Edwards • James Edwards' Family • Mary Ann Everett • Marlena Taylor, Dir; Family Peace Project • Shannon Francis • Cheryl Goodger • Susie Green • Paul & Charlie Grindstaff • Ben & Cheryl Groner • Terrie Hahn • Don Halbardier • Lori Harve • Sharon K. Hayes • W.A. & Peggy Hickman • Skip Hill • Selita Hoya • Alanna James • Druenetta R. Jarvis • Bill & Susie Johnson • Carolyn L. Kohls • Curtis Kouba • Bob & Barb Lancaster • Joe & Heather Leising • Linda Mahaffey • Della Marley • Greg Marsh • Raul & Brenda Martinez • Karen Mazzei • Barbara McIver • Peggy McKeithen • Carrie McLaughlin • James R. McMains • Anne McMillan • Bob Mennell • John & Joanne Millican • Ann Mitchell • Vern Mynatt • Keith Nalley • Lindie Nanninga • Micki & Alden Nellis • Beth Nicol • Katie Nikolgiev • Noma Obgeifun • Charles & Linda Peterson • Janice Poinsett • Michael Quinn • N. Reed • Duane Reeves • Marjorie Roark-Lofgreen • Mimi Sadler • Karen Saunders • Steven Savage • Charmaine Scalise • Fran Scott • Lyn Shah • Frances Shofner • Carol Sloan • Dave Smith • Carmen Sora • Valerie Taber • Michael & Nelda Tandy • Tara Vineyard & Winery LLC • Billy Teels • John & Alaina Tenseth • Allen Forshage, Dir. Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center • Marvin Guidry The Bird Crib • The Farm • Chi Ting • David R. Walker • Kim Warner • Cindy Weems • Mike Wiggins • Joy Williams • Sara & Billy Williams • Terry Windham • Neil Yeager • Linda D. Young • JB, Rusk • SB, Spring • RB, Lufkin • JB, Brady • SC, The Woodlands • JC, Glen Rose • RH, Athens • MH, The Woodlands • AK, Nacogdoches • BK, Grandview • AK, Arlington • BM, Ace • CM, Pollak • SM, Livingston • SP, Lufkin • HP, Ft.Worth • SP, Joshua • SQ, Texarkana • CR, Spring • DS, Nacogdoches • BS, Nacogdoches • DS, The Woodlands • MS, Conroe • RT, Coldspring • VT, Madison • SV, Lohn • SW, Athens • MW, The Woodlands • EW, Hewitt • SW, Scroggins • LY, Goodrich

We print names of all new members who give to us permission on Membership Form.

## YES! Your NestWatch Data Is Valuable

### NestWatch data in action



From Cornell NestWatch News

The nesting data that you collect really do matter. Jason Courter, a PhD candidate in the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources at Clemson University, is using NestWatch data in his research. He is comparing the timing of critical stages of nesting attempts with weather variables and the availability of food resources for birds, such as insects. Jason has hypothesized that some birds respond to climate changes by shifting the timing of their reproduction and that this may cause their hungry nestlings to miss peak periods of insect emergence. This pattern may lead to birds being less effective at contributing to the control of insect pests in farm fields. Jason hopes to use the results of his research to provide farmers with decision tools and management

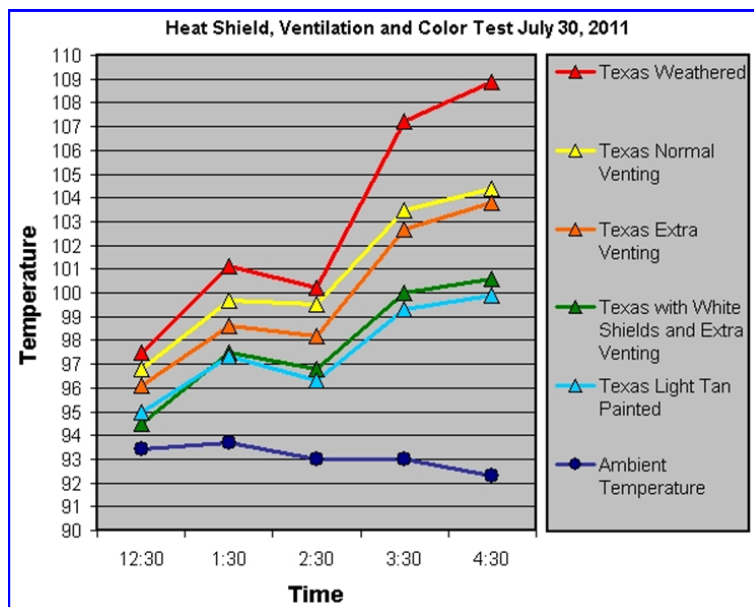
recommendations to enhance avian diversity on their farms. ***Thank you for your participation in Nest-Watch to help science and the birds!***

(... continued from page 1)

### New Heat Study Results Provide Cool Solutions

Neil provided the Texas Nestbox test results from the test conducted July 30, 2011. See for yourself how the different variations contribute to cooler interior temperatures.

Data	12:30	1:30	2:30	3:30	4:30
Texas Weathered	97.5	101.1	100.2	107.2	108.9
Texas Normal Venting	96.8	99.7	99.5	103.5	104.4
Texas Extra Venting	96.1	98.6	98.2	102.7	103.8
Texas with White Shields and Extra Venting	94.5	97.5	96.8	100	100.6
Texas Light Tan Painted	95	97.3	96.3	99.3	99.9
Ambient Temperature	93.4	93.7	93	93	92.3



**Recommendations:** Use a light colored paint and/or heat shields to protect your nest boxes. Also make sure your boxes have adequate top cross ventilation. **The best cooling is obtained using a combination of light color, good ventilation and light colored heat shields.**

*Note that the ultimate goal is to get as close to ambient temperature as possible. Ambient is the air temperature in heavy shade outdoors like under my porch. Your Texas design is the best I've seen so far and painted a light color is only 2°F-3°F above ambient as is. A weathered box varies as much as 16° above the ambient temperature!* (See graph) Nestboxes in afternoon shade do not need extra heat protection.

An unpainted box may look more rustic but my tests show that a painted box is up to 4.5°F cooler than a new unpainted. In areas that experience extreme heat this extra 4.5°F could mean the difference between life and death for chicks in the box.) Plus the paint protects the box from expansion/contraction due to moisture absorption and also splitting/cracking. TBS urges painting and heat shields on nestboxes not in afternoon shade.



## 10th Summer Symposium A Super Success!

*TBS is celebrating their 10th anniversary! Agendas and participation in the annual meeting have evolved over the years, culminating in a day long event filled with fun, great presentations, social networking, awards, and the Silent Auction, the major fundraising activity supporting Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time. Rebekah Hayden shares an inside look at our tenth Summer Symposium.*

The Texas Bluebird Society 2011 Summer Symposium, held Saturday, August 20, in the Somerville County Expo Center in Glen Rose, was our best one yet. With 120 attendees, 39 new members, and \$3,256 raised by the popular Silent Auction, who could disagree?



President and co-founder Pauline Tom cuts the 10th anniversary cake.

We kicked off the Symposium with a first-ever barbecue the night before. It was catered by Ranch House BBQ, and 32 attendees, volunteers, and speakers gathered in the Holiday Inn Express in Glen Rose to share a great dinner, frozen margaritas, and bluebirding stories.

Early Saturday morning, as we volunteers were finishing setup, the first attendees were lining up and registering for the day's events. They snacked on coffee, homemade muffins, and other goodies

until the doors opened at 8:30 a.m. Attendees were a great mix of longtime bluebird enthusiasts, conser-



Last minute silent Auction instructions to volunteers

vationists, and locals who read about the event in the newspaper and just decided to see what it was all about. They drove anywhere from three to 300 miles to attend.

The first speaker of the morning, Texas Master Gardener, Texas Master Naturalist, and TBS Chief Nestbox Constructor Brian Hetherington, demonstrated techniques on installing bluebird nestboxes on EMT conduit, including some troubleshooting tips. He also showed how anyone could easily and inexpensively build baffles to discourage snakes, raccoons, and other predators from preying on nestbox residents.



Ron Tom assists as Brian Hetherington demos using a predator baffle to protect bluebird nests.

Brian's wife, Texas Master Naturalist Judy Hetherington, impressed gardeners next with her suggestions for beautiful native trees, shrubs, and plants for every habitat to attract bluebirds. Her slideshow was an excellent resource for those of us who are always wondering what to plant next.

Joe Simmons and Rebekah Haydin, relatively new to the bluebirding scene, were up next with a quick demo on how to use Nestwatch.org, the Cornell University's database where all bird-watchers can enter data on the nests they monitor. This demo proved that bird enthusiasts need not be experienced or technological gurus to contribute to important data.

Pauline Tom, a founding member of Texas Bluebird Society and mastermind behind this year's Symposium, then presented "Dealing with Predators and Problems." With the assistance of her husband, Ron, she covered some recent research on the best ways to keep nestboxes cool, protecting nestboxes from competitors and predators, and other tips.

Boy Scout Luke Hoag spoke next about "Kids & Conservation." At age 18, Luke has been watching bluebirds for five years and speaks to groups all over Texas about getting involved with conservation efforts. Luke's engaging manner and funny stories, not to mention his impressive expertise, made him a very popular addition to this year's agenda.

The morning break was very busy. Everyone was given an opportunity to bid on the silent auction items, deposit door prize tickets, and purchase mem-



Luke Hoag was this year's recipient of TBS' new award, "Bluebirder of the Year," for his significant conservation efforts and bluebird presentations to the community.

berships and equipment. Best of all, a narrated video of a nestbox camera was played over the projector. The video showed a time-lapse of a bluebird pair building their nest and raising their chicks, up to the last nestling's first flight.

Keith Kridler, naturalist, columnist, advisor, co-founder of Texas Bluebird Society, and co-author of *The Bluebird Monitor's Guide*, spoke from break to lunch. He began with some basics about how to approach a nestbox with caution for the residents and the monitor, talked about how he started caring for bluebirds as a boy, and continued by relating some of his contributions over the years to teaching groups of all ages how to build nestboxes.

We then broke for lunch. Keith Kridler amazed a small crowd by proving that he could assemble a nestbox in under 60 seconds armed with nothing but a staple gun. As we feasted on fajitas and visited with neighbors, there was a fun, informal awards and recognitions ceremony for:

- Bluebirder of the Year: Luke Hoag, for his bluebird conservation efforts.
- 2011 Blue Feather: Ron Tom, for exemplary service to Texas Bluebird Society.



Previous winner, Linda Crum, presents the prestigious "Blue Feather" award to Ron Tom. In acknowledgement of 13 dedication and virtually non-stop service for TBS!

- Lifetime Memberships commemorating the 8,000th "Texas Nestbox," each one a product of their hands: Brian & Judy Hetherington and Bob Houck
- Coordinator Appreciation: Benni & Jimmie Konvicka

●10th Anniversary Appreciation to members who came in as Charter Members for initial and continuing support: Keith & Sandy Kridler, Benni & Jimmie Konvicka, and Ron & Pauline Tom (the other 24 Charter Members did not attend the Symposium but have been invited to receive their certificate at the Season Kickoff)

After lunch, Keith Kridler began the second half of his keynote presentation. His slideshow consisted primarily of wonderful photographs of different birds and other cavity nesters like flying squirrels, and the photos were augmented by Keith's many stories of the excitement a nest monitor may experience.

After our afternoon break, local high school student Katelyn Uehlein and Luminant representative Bruce Turner gave a presentation on the Healthy Habitat Project in the area, sponsored by Luminant, parent company of the Comanche Peak Power Plant. They described their efforts to reestablish habitats where diminished populations of the Eastern Bluebird, Bobwhite Quail, and Scaled Quail can thrive.

The final speaker of the day was Texas Bluebird Society Assistant Treasurer and Texas Master Naturalist Linda Crum. In her presentation "Controlling House Sparrows," she described the harm that this invasive species causes to bluebirds and other cavity nesters. She illustrated humane, effective methods to control and repel house sparrows. Her lively stories delighted us all while we learned about this important aspect of helping bluebirds.

Benni Konvicka closes the Silent Auction. TBS raised a record \$3,308 for nestbox lumber. Thanks to everyone for their generous support!



Mark Byrd had time to enter the highest bid on the flying squirrel box right before the auction closed.



**So what's next for Texas Bluebird Society? Our Season Kickoff event will be February 4, 2012, in Nacogdoches, Texas. We hope to see you there!**

## Musings From The Master... *Bluebirds Love Pokeweed*

Out on the bluebird trail this past April I was watching a family of bluebirds feeding on poke weed fruit. I REALLY like this plant as it is one of the few perennials that can sprout from a seed in early spring and then mature in one season to bloom and produce large, soft, fruit-juicy food for birds and wildlife. These plants bloom from mid-summer until frost in the south and then rapidly produce ripe fruit on hundreds of clusters that resemble grapes.

The best part about these is that they stagger their fruit production so that these plants will constantly have a vast amount of the fruit ripe on any given day BUT these are continuing to bloom at the same time on new growth that will produce more ripe fruit in just a couple of weeks after the tiny flowers drop off. Interesting that the black purple fruit is ripe when you see the green stalks on these plants turn a bold red color. You have these dark green leaves, bright red stalks accented with all the clusters of fruit.

The bluebirds were feeding on "wild" poke weed

Photo by David Kinnear



plants out in a weedy hay pasture. These plants were only about 40 inches tall with a few dozen clusters of fruit. Due to a month long drought there was little growth in these particular plants, but they did survive multiple weeks of 100°F temperatures to provide food when many plants simply died or went dormant shedding this years food, seed or mast crops.

These fruits are mostly water BUT the bluebirds were feeding within a hundred feet of a freshly filled stock pond after a heavy 3 inch rainfall. We are told NOT to add red food dye to hummingbird feeders for fear of harming the hummers kidneys. BUT ANY birds that eat these poke weed berries will have the seeds and this intense color pass through the gut of these birds. Then the birds will

deposit bright purple bird droppings filled with seeds as each berry they eat will contain upwards of a dozen seeds, de-

pending on just how well the insect pollinators were at moving pollen from one flower to the pistil of another. Interesting that European Honey Bees do not work on this species of plant at all even though there are LOTS of tiny flowers everyday!

The plant itself is being consumed by some species of caterpillars that devour the older leaves. These plants have a large potato type root that can be dug up in the fall after a killing frost and moved to another location. Wild hogs avoid eating these roots so there maybe a mild poison in the roots and these plants are also avoided by gophers. Deer, squirrels and chipmunks avoid eating the leaves. These creatures can eat many plants that are toxic to humans.

A GOOD place to plant

poke weed is where you have burned tree limbs and you often see these plants take over a spot where old stumps and logs have been piled up and partially burned leaving behind a spot in a field that tractors and mowing machines cannot reach. It is OFTEN not WHAT we can plant to attract wildlife, but SIMPLY leaving what plants are already common on your property that the birds are already feeding on! Out in the fields, these plants might only grow to 4 feet tall, but in my side yard they are almost eight feet tall and getting close to 10 feet wide. This shows that extra water and good mulch and extra fertilizer can GREATLY improve fruit production and the size of these plants.



**Keith Kridler**, everyone's resident expert, our favorite speaker, and cofounder of TBS, participates in several List-Serve groups focusing on bluebirds and their behavior. Keith has given us permission to publish his contributions to these groups. This is an edited excerpt from the Bluebird Monitors Yahoo Group.







Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time

**"Texas Blues"**  
This newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society is published four times a year.

Send street or email address changes to Caryn Brewer at: records@texasbluebirdsociety.org or send to our P.O. Box.

Photo by L. Hoag



**Need Nestboxes?**

Purchase in quantities of 4 from our website

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

(Sales tab)

**ALL NATIVE CAVITY-NESTERS are protected by federal law. Do not disturb the birds or the nest.**

**Monitor the nest and report to NestWatch.**

**10 Years and 8,000 nestboxes!**  
The hard work and dedication of my TBS friends have made my life easier!

Texas Bluebird Society  
PO Box 40868  
Austin TX 78704



**Memberships & Nestboxes**  
make great gifts!

*Registration Form Will Be Mailed To Members. Will also be available online.*



Presented by Texas Bluebird Society

**2012 Season Kickoff in Nacogdoches**  
(with Silent Auction FUNdraiser)



Sponsored by SFA Gardens

**Saturday, February 4th, 2012**  
Stephen F. Austin University  
Baker Patillo Student Center  
Nacogdoches, TX 75962

**9:00 AM - 2:30 PM**

**Doors open at 8:30 for Registration and Silent Auction**

**Featured Speakers:**

**Greg Grant**

I Can't Stop Loving You: A Lifetime Affair with the Blues

Berry Me with Bluebirds: Landscaping for the Songbird of Happiness

**Cliff Shaokelford**

Knock on Wood: The Woodpeckers of East Texas



Bluebird at natural cavity

**Other Presentations:**

Other presentations will prepare bluebirders, new and experienced, for nesting season

**REGISTRATION COSTS and DEADLINES**

Early Bird Advance Registration: \$15.00, Lunch buffet and 10 Door prize tickets! Deadline January 4, 2012

Advanced Registration: \$15.00, Lunch Buffet and one door prize ticket. Deadline January 21, 2012

At-the-Door Registration: \$ 6.00, No meal and no door prize ticket

Friday Social at Auntie Pastas: \$10.50, 7 p.m. Pasta Buffet. (6p.m. Happy Hour Cash Bar) Deadline, January 21, 2012