



TEXAS BLUES

The Newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society

Volume 2 issue 2

April May 2003

In This Issue:

On the back page of this issue is the first poem published in "Texas Blues". We'd love to print more!

Will you write a bluebird poem for "Texas Blues"?

What else might you contribute?

- Do you have pictures we could use (they will be returned)?
- Do your kids or grandchildren have drawings we could publish?
- Write a story or just send us the facts and we will be happy to help you write it.
- Send a tidbit - every one of us has a few.
- Do you just have a question? Send it to us and we'll try to get an answer.
- We'd love to have some bird jokes. Do you have one?

Submit electronically to mark.klym@tpwd.state.tx.us or mail to our address (found on the back page).

Look for mention of our website on each page of this newsletter. The website is packed with resources. It even has a complete collection of "Texas Blue" issues!

FOLLOW-UP ON HEATSHIELD

Hi, I just read the Texas Blues (February March 2003) issue in reference to the heat shield. Can we buy these shields and if so, where? Also, the article said they fit on any nestbox, I just want to re-verify this as I have Peterson houses. Laurie Harris

The HeatShield is not sold anywhere. It is nothing more than than plywood with spacers. That would work on a Peterson box or any other box as well. I am a research scientist type and am not interested in profiting from the sale of HeatShields. The key here is to create dead space between the inner and outer walls of the nestbox. Holds true for any nestbox. I delivered my paper at the Texas Bluebird Society (TBS) annual meeting last fall. One bluebirder from Lewisville was so impacted that he converted his entire trail over to HeatShield boxes within 30 days after the meeting. Anyone in the south should provide the best possible nesting habitat for native cavity nesters. It can be done with either very thick walled boxes or boxes with HeatShields. If you think about it, a nesting cavity in a snag used by birds would have thick walls, not 3/4 inch flat walls... When I realized that for the past 18 years I had been providing inadequate nesting boxes, I felt terrible. Now we know. Good luck with your trail.

David Shiels

see *HeatShield diagram* at www.texasbluebirdsociety.org

Texas Bluebirds Society Website Upgrade

Thanks to a very valuable donation of web design and web hosting, the Texas Bluebird Society webpage has undergone a considerable upgrade. Lee Sampson of **Sampsonweb.com** has donated his time and energy to make the webpage more professional and more user friendly – as well as donating the host location for the site. If you have not visited www.texasbluebirdsociety.org recently, it certainly deserves a return visit. Visit often. The website is our primary means of communication with bluebirders across Texas.

One of the new features on the site is an online searchable Question & Answer feature. Questions are forwarded directly to an Answer Team. The six on the team have a cumulative 84 years of experience with cavity nesting birds.

If you find errors on the site, please notify us through the "Contact Us" link on the site. Also contact us if you have a suggestion for the site.

Visit us at the Wills Point Bluebird Festival

Saturday, April 26th

**Texas Bluebird Society
will staff the Bluebird Info
Room in the Chamber of
Commerce building and
have a sales booth on the
sidewalk outside the
building with nestboxes.**

**We need help at the TBS
booth. Will you help?
Contact Pauline Tom,
tbs@austin.rr.com
512 268-5678**

Is TBS Still Active?

That was the question a web surfer asked during the time our website was inactive. In response, one of our board members outlined his activities for the first couple of weeks in February. Keith Kridler's 19 days involved presentations to more than 200 individuals, some of these presentations requiring him to give up a full day of work. These activities resulted in new nestboxes in many regions of north east Texas, and many new school students, birders and others becoming excited about bluebirds across Texas. It also resulted in many new members for TBS.

Board member activities include chairing committees, developing outreach materials, reviewing our bylaws, establishing procedures for the board, seeking grants, coordinating volunteer nestbox builders and "TBS Bluebird Ambassadors", answering questions about bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds through answers@texasbluebirdsociety.org and the online question & answer feature on [\[www.texasbluebirdsociety.org\]](http://www.texasbluebirdsociety.org), creating an electronic slide presentation, rewriting "Bluebirds in Texas", planning a mid-year symposium and the November 14 – 15 Convention, developing and printing nestbox labels, creating research studies and more. In addition there is administrative work to do which often takes more time than the committee or directive work.

Just because we went through a period of time with no events posted on the website calendar, don't conclude that we were not active.

There are numerous opportunities for member involvement in this organization – with everything from preparing newsletter mailings to coordinating a network of volunteers across Texas. And, we're looking for more board members. Please step up to the plate.

TBS in Print

When you see bluebirds or Texas Bluebird Society in print, please mail a copy to us.

January 26, 2003 **Liberty Vindicator** "It's a Bluebird Day: Charles busy posting houses to give birds new habitat" by Glenda Kersh. Liberty County People feature article. This story about (new TBS board member) Charles Post emphasized his passion for bluebirds. It provided education about bluebirds and Texas Bluebird Society. It generated several phone calls.

February 15, 2003 **Corpus Christi Caller Times**, "Calling all bluebirds ... Nest-building birders come to the rescue of feathered friends" by Cassandra Hinosa. Feature story with color photos featured Lee Hutchins of Sinton and his grandson, Jordan. They built 25 nestboxes (to specifications) for Texas with his grandson, Jordan, for Texas Bluebird Society

February 20, 2003 **San Patricio County News** "Building a bluebird society". by Johnnie Sue Littleton A front page story. This was another article about the nestboxes built by Lee Hutchins, TBS "Bluebird Ambassador". Lee monitors nestboxes occupied by bluebirds in the Taft, Sinton and Woodsboro area.

March 13, 2003 **Hays County Free Press** "Get your nestboxes while they last". The story (with photo shown in next column) told how new TBS member Brian Hetherington of Taylor and his friend Bob Houck (who has since joined) constructed 100 nestboxes for TBS' use in Central Texas. It described the TBS-approved nestboxes and told how they directly support our mission, "Bluebirds Across Texas...one nestbox at a time".

TBS' Bluebird Ambassador program provides a local contact person for bluebirders and the media. Interested? Contact Pauline Tom.

Please promote bluebirds and Texas Bluebird Society through your local newspaper. Refer reporter to Mark Klym, for information on bluebirds and Texas Bluebird Society.

Texas selected to host North American Bluebird Society Convention in 2006!!

In keeping with the theme of what TBS is doing, we are pleased to announce that Texas will host the 2006 NABS convention! This is quite an honor for our novice organization, though by that time we will have had 4 years experience with state conventions behind us. This will be a major event, and your assistance in planning, promoting, and supporting this event will be critical to our success.

If you are interested in learning more about what to expect, you might consider attending one or both of the conventions to be held before our event – July 7 to 11, 2004 in Ithaca, NY or May 19 to 22, 2005 in Asheville, NC.

The auction and raffles during the convention featuring bluebird items will be a major fundraiser for our organization. Watch for possible donations ... particularly high dollar artwork (such as a painting, drawing, sculpture) and handmade items such as quilts.

For ideas about how you might contribute to planning and preparation, contact Doug Rohde, 972 317-5500 or d_rohde@atthi.com

Bluebirds Across Texas...one nestbox at a time

TBS Speaker's Bureau
 accepting volunteers and
 speaking engagements
 contact Doug Rohde
 972 317-5500
 d.rohde@attbi.net

Did you know ...

"Should a nest always be removed when bluebirds fledge?" **Almost always!** Remove nest after looking to see if a new nest has been started. If a new nest has been started, wait until the next clutch fledges to remove the nests. Removing used nests prevents a "nest build up" which places eggs & nestlings close to the hole.

Weekly Worksheet added to website at member's request

I just received the Feb.-March Texas Blues in the mail. Interesting and informative articles as usual. I do have one big favor to ask. I really like the weekly field worksheet that is included in it. Would you please (for those of us that do not have computer scanners) post it on the TBS website so those of us who like to do our record keeping on our PCs can download it and use it for record keeping on our computers? I checked the website and it currently is not posted. Many thanks John Cys

Dear John, Done! Thanks for the idea. Editor

How to Install a Baffled Nestbox

With the coming of spring comes the urge to nest. Developing nests are like a dinner bell for predators, and that causes concern for bluebirders. Careful mounting of your nestbox, coupled with simple baffles, can reduce this concern and increase the probability of successful fledging of young.

Effective mounting of a baffled nestbox requires:

- Galvanized stove pipe 8 inch diameter 24 to 36 inches long
- 9 inch circle of hardware cloth
- 1 inch galvanized pipe (or EMT conduit) 7 feet long for mounting
- 4 foot length of rebar to anchor the pipe or conduit
- 2 hanger iron strips 9 inches long
- 2 #8-32 X 1 inch screws and nuts

Tools required will include a heavy sledgehammer, screwdrivers and wrenches, a pair of cutting shears and black electrical tape.

Use the cutting shears or tin snips to shape the hardware cloth into a circle that will slide tightly into the stovepipe. Fit it carefully onto the pipe and cut a small opening into the center, just large enough to allow the pipe to fit through. Cut four tabs in the top of the stovepipe so that the stove pipe rests snugly on the hardware cloth.

Bolt the hanger straps to the bar and bend the free ends outward so that the hardware cloth will rest on the straps. Wrap the tape around the pipe just below the straps to hold them in place. The baffle should be mounted about 6 inches below the bottom of the nestbox. A waxy substance smeared on the pole below the baffle will provide additional protection for your nestbox tenants.

To erect the box, drive the rebar about 2 feet into the ground. Slide the pipe with the baffle over the rebar. Mount your nestbox to the top of the pipe.

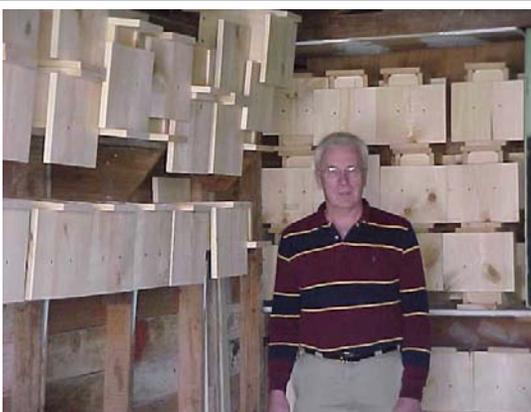
The baffled box installation will deter mammals and snakes.



Gordon Holt, Dealer's Electrical Supply San Marcos, received a TBS Certificate of Appreciation on January 28th for donations of EMT Conduit that TBS uses for mounting nestboxes. Gordon joined our organization that day and now monitors a donated nestbox through TBS' network of volunteers.



2/27/2003 Mt. Pleasant Wolf Pack #34



Brian Hetherington & 100 TBS Nestboxes

President's Corner

HOPE!!!! Hope is the beautiful message that bluebirds bring and sing. It seems God designed the bluebird in a way that it imparts hope. Over and over stories are told of how a heart is filled with hope at the sight of a bluebird.

At the 2001 North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Convention in Columbus, Andy Troyer told of his day of depression when he was faced with the enormous task of rebuilding his barn that had burned to the ground. As he pulled aside for time alone before organizing his Amish friends who were arriving to help, the first bluebird of spring arrived. His heart was filled with hope. It's unspeakable.

I read a post on Bluebird-L years ago from a man who waited almost 20 years for a bluebird to nest on his lawn. (I wish I'd kept a copy.) There WAS hope!!!

I have another chapter in my own story of bluebird hope this season. As others have experienced, words are hard to come by as I try to express what has happened. After starting less than four years ago to build a population of bluebirds in this area where few have ever seen a bluebird, I came back from the NABS Convention to find five precious blue eggs in the nestbox on my front lawn.

Inspired by the May 1999 "Parade" story about the Transcontinental Bluebird Trail and the encouragement of a friend who read the story (he knew I was always saying, "If we could just start out a ways, from where the bluebirds are, we could bring them in ..."), we started a trail from five miles out where I had seen one bluebird one time.

March 2, 2000 a male bluebird sat atop one of those nestboxes. Oh, what a sight! That awesome blue close to my city! Slowly over the past 3 years (one nestbox at a time), with a clutch here and a clutch there, the bluebirds multiplied.

Now, they're nesting on MY front lawn in Mountain City - the first bluebirds to nest here in recent history. (Mountain City is a residential city in South Central Texas, between Austin and San Marcos.)

The pair claimed the box on January 1st. Until it was time to nest they defended the empty box. They spent a month building the nest. The first egg was laid on the day I left for Kearney, NE to attend the North American Society board meeting that preceded the convention. I returned to find the hope of those five blue eggs.

Recently when I delivered a box about 8 miles away, a bluebird flew in and sat overhead on a power line ... delivering hope.

The bluebird population in my area is expanding. There's HOPE. Never give up.

Peace, Joy & HOPE!
Pauline Tom ptom@austin.rr.com

Permission is granted for this publication to be reprinted and distributed along with TBS Membership Form.

Wings of Blue

*Dedicated to Keith and Sandy Kridler,
and their own fledgling Shawn*

On a gloomy day I hear a call,
and a bluebird flies into view,
So soon I feel my spirits lift,
borne upward on wings of blue.

Now he claims a sturdy nestbox,
that one whose plans I drew,
And before long entices a pretty young bird
with a flash of those wings of blue.

As days pass, I find a treasure indeed,
five little eggs so new.
In a few short weeks they will carry life's dreams
aloft on wings of blue.

Year after year I watch that pair;
each season my hopes renew,
As again I see life hopes and dreams
carried skyward on wings of blue.

Old Mr. Bluebird, I saw that young male
take the nestbox away from you,
And now he will catch a pretty bird's eye,
with a wave of those wings so blue.

So soon you'll soar through heaven's gates
please take my prayers with you!
And when at last I enter there,
I'll be watching for wings of blue.

With five little eggs in the nestbox again,
the cycle begins anew,
As life's hopes and wishes are carried with mine,
ever upward on wings of blue.

Kate Arnold
2/8/03

Saturday, August 9
2003 TBS Mid-Year Event
Gulf Coast Bluebird Symposium
Keith Kridler, featured speaker
a joint venture with
Golden Triangle Audubon Society
Garden Center in Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Watch for the registration form. It will soon be on
www.texasbluebirdsociety.org and it will be included
in next "Texas Blues"

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annual memberships are \$10.00/individual or \$15 / household