

*From the President* YEEHAW!!!! "The" bluebird convention is just around the corner. Would you send this to a local newspaper or radio, please?

North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Convention  
San Antonio April 26 – 30, 2006

"Red, White, & Bluebirds" coming to San Antonio in April!

The NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY (NABS), spearheaded what many conservationists believe is the most successful campaign in conservation history to reverse the decline of a species. In April this year, The Texas Bluebird Society will host the North American Bluebird Society Convention in San Antonio, Texas. The name of the convention is "Red, White & Bluebirds." It will honor and promotes bluebird and other native cavity-nesting species including Ivory-billed Woodpecker and Chimney Swifts. The event will feature Texas Hill Country field trips (birds, bats, natural history, popular tourist attractions), presentations, workshops, and special events with an accent on Mexican free-tailed bats. Speakers include David Luneau, "The King of Natural Cavities: The Ivory-billed Woodpecker; Dr. Gary McCracken, "Bats Attack Insects Over Texas...Billions Perish!!!; June Osborne, "Treasures of the Texas Hill Country"; and, Keith Kridler, "Bluebird Tales of Texas."

website: [www.NABS2006.com](http://www.NABS2006.com)

eventPhone: 512.268.5678

dateTime: April 26 - 30, 2006, during San Antonio's annual Fiesta!

location: San Antonio Airport Hilton (request "NABS" convention rate)

cost: starts at \$37/\$45 for 5-days or \$25 for 1 day, plus cost of optional field trips and special events.

A \$10 late fee applies to registrations received after February 26th. 20 complimentary door prize registry tickets for registrations received by February 14th.

For more information, go online at <http://www.nabs2006.com>

#### Thanks, 2005 Donors

Billy & Ricky Walker  
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Ann Thames  
Ron & Pauline Tom

James W. Collier and his wife Cheryl Anderson donated the funds to establish the trademarks for the Texas Bluebird Society logo and our True Blue Friend nestbox dedication plaque program. Attorney Ann Livingston donated her professional services.

#### Seeking venue for TBS 2006 Convention

Each year we hold our Annual Meeting on the last Saturday in October. Plans for 2006 have been slow in coming together, as we have focused on the NABS 2006.

The Board voted in 2004 to conduct the 2006 meeting to the north and east of Central Texas, "between Waxahachie and Tyler," where we have many members.

Perhaps you know of a corporate or church retreat that might "fill the bill"?

- easy-to-find
- lodging on-site or lodging nearby
- "natural" setting
- catered lunch permitted or lunch for less than \$10
- complimentary (or value-priced) meeting room for up to 70 individuals and several tables of silent auction items

Please contact LeAnn Sharp if you have ideas or suggestions.

### Help Wanted: "Texas Blues" editor

#### TBS Board of Directors

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Each board member can be reached by email through placing their first name before [@texasbluebirdsociety.org](mailto:@texasbluebirdsociety.org)

#### TEXAS BLUES

The newsletter of Texas Bluebird Society is published about 5 times a year

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## Ivory-bill gets top billing at NABS 2006

Hear M. David Luneau at the Saturday morning session of the 2006 North American Bluebird Society Convention, April 29<sup>th</sup>, at the San Antonio Airport Hilton!

David was a member of the team that rediscovered the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker in eastern Arkansas; and, he confirmed the rediscovery in 2004 with the only video ever taken. David, who has degrees in Electrical Engineering from Rice University and Georgia Tech is a professor of Electronics and Computer Engineering Technology and Information Technology at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

His wife Terri will accompany him to NABS 2006. She is the author of *Big Woods Bird: An Ivory-bill Story* (a book for children) which will be available for purchase that morning, and she has agreed to inscribe those books purchased.

Another "write-in" for the convention brochure is a break-out session on Chimney Swift Conservation by Paul & Georgean Kyle on Thursday afternoon. The Kyles will participate in the "Tea with Texas Authors" book signing following the opening session on Thursday; and, they will lead a field trip to Chaetura Canyon on Sunday.

TBS has devoted three years to prepare for this celebration ("Red, White & Bluebirds" !!!!) We will provide a time of education, encouragement and entertainment for bluebird lovers and nature conservationists from across the continent.

Convention registration starts at \$37 (for NABS members\*) or \$45 (if not a NABS member\*) for 2 -5-days or \$25 for 1 day. This includes all general sessions and break-outs. A registrant may add on the cost of field trips and special events. A \$10 late fee applies to registrations received after February 26th.

The Airport Hilton offers convention registrants a rate of \$94.00 until space fills or March 26<sup>th</sup>, whichever comes first. Starting March 27<sup>th</sup>, without a discount, rooms currently start at about \$150.

\* TBS encourages membership in TBS (Texas bluebird conservation) and NABS (the "umbrella" bluebird conservation organization for the continent.) A "mini-NABS membership form" appears on page 2 of the convention brochure or you may join NABS online at [www.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org) or by sending \$30 (family membership) to NABS, 481 Athens Rd, Royston, GA 30662-5128



*Find inside this issue a copy of the preliminary program for NABS 2006 from the convention brochure. We mailed the brochure to TBS members in October, within a sample issue of "Bluebird", the journal of the North American Bluebird Society.*

*This schedule and a registration form can be downloaded on [www.nabs2006.com](http://www.nabs2006.com) If you do not have Internet access, you may request a convention brochure from Ann Thames, \_\_\_\_\_*

*We continue to add featured speakers and activities. See [www.NABS2006.com](http://www.NABS2006.com) for updates.*

## Bluebird Blue - by Ruth Beasley

One winter day on a ride in the country, my mother and I saw a pair of Eastern Bluebirds on a mesquite tree near a pond. We were a long way off but we had binoculars, and the birds were bathed in sunlight so we got a wonderful look. The male was brighter than the female; both had rusty throats, clear white bellies, and heads and wings and backs of cerulean blue.

The birds were in no hurry, and would change position from time to time, giving us excellent views of back, sides, and front. The light on those blue feathers seemed to shimmer -- the sight as a whole felt to us like some great gift. We passed the binoculars back and forth, and marveled at our luck.

Henry David Thoreau once said that the Bluebird carries the sky on its back, and to this, my mother and I would gladly testify. The blue of those birds seemed a distillation of the winter sky behind them.

In point of fact, the connection between the sky and the blue in a Bluebird is more than just poetic -- there is actual science involved! And the pleasure my mother and I felt that day was due, in part, to the fact that those particular Bluebirds were drenched in sunlight.

Without light, the blue in a Bluebird is not blue at all, but turns to grey. A Bluebird in the shadows is most difficult to see, while the red of a Cardinal or the yellow in a Warbler remains bright no matter where it is. This is because there is no such thing as blue pigment. Well, almost none -- a few exotic birds are said to possess blue or green pigment, but in all the ordinary blue birds -- such as Bluebirds, Blue Jays, Blue Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings, to name just a few -- blue pigment is most definitely not present.

So how do our eyes deceive us, then? Well, it seems there are two kinds of feather color: pigmentation and structural color. Pigmented feathers contain molecules that reflect specific wavelengths to produce red, brown, yellow, and black. In other words, red feathers are really, truly red.

Some birds must ingest certain foods to retain their pigment. Pink Flamingos would not be pink for long without a steady diet of pink brine shrimp.

Structural color results from a trick of the light blue, green, and iridescent birds derive their color from the structure of their feathers, where tiny ridges and air sacs reflect and scatter the light and create the

impression of color. The distance between these surface irregularities determine which colors we see.

Blue sky results from a similar refraction of atmospheric light. Just as the void of sky at night is black when the light is gone, so the blue in a Bluebird does fade in the shadows.

Structural color changes with the angle of view. A Bluebird can seem turquoise from one angle, more deeply blue from another. If you had a blue feather, you could wet it, and it would turn brownish grey, but once the surface dries, the refraction works correctly again and the blue seems to reappear.

I didn't know any of this when I tried to photograph feathers, but I do remember having a dickens of a time getting the blue ones to show up blue.

All this talk about color and the illusion of blue calls to mind the bluebird of happiness. Perhaps happiness, like the blue in a Bluebird, is not only elusive but often largely imaginary, yet well worth glimpsing nevertheless.

[Thanks to the folks of [texbirds.org](http://texbirds.org) for explaining Bluebird blue.]

*Ruth Beasley recently joined TBS! She will read essays at the 2006 NABS Convention! Visit her website, [www.learningthebirds.com](http://www.learningthebirds.com)*



**Shortcut to TBS website: [www.texasbluebirds.com](http://www.texasbluebirds.com)**

## ... one nestbox at a time

Most Texas Bluebird Society members install their first nestbox *after* they join the organization! Our booth at festivals offers "One Nestbox" - a membership/nestbox exchange. The bluebird population now extends into locales that previously had no breeding bluebirds because of the work of our organization.

Often (but not always), a bluebird nestbox attracts bluebirds. A suitable place to nest (a cavity) provides the missing element in otherwise appropriate habitat.

Staffing a booth just became easier! TBS compiled a new member packet to accompany each nestbox. So, even a member who has never seen a bluebird can take part in bluebird conservation by offering membership/nestbox exchanges at a festival.

Nestboxes are transported from Central Texas to the spot of a festival booth.

### ***from Corsicana - Bluebirdless in Corsicana willing to work the TBS booth at Wills Point***

Dana, a new member who indicated on the membership form a willingness to "staff booth at a festival" responded to a request to work our Wills Point Booth on April 8th:

*I should tell you I have never even seen a bluebird in the wild...but I am willing to go up to Wills Point and help if I am needed. It is a little over an hour away and my husband said that would be no problem. I also do family research and have some family I want to find there in the cemetery as well.*

*I prefer to know what I am talking about when doing something like this so please send me something to read up on. I have been really getting into this lately and have been taking several pictures of birds...but no bluebirds...Looking forward to hearing from someone...Dana*

Note: If you will work the Wills Point Bluebird Festival booth, please contact Pauline Tom, 512.268.5678 or [pauline@texasbluebirds.com](mailto:pauline@texasbluebirds.com)

## ***Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time***



### **Fall 2005 Festival Booths**

(not pictured) Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo  
Ron & Pauline Tom, Tim & Lynne Warfield

Utopia Arts & Crafts Festival  
LeAnn & Anthony Sharp

Budafest  
Ron & Pauline Tom ... new board member Philip Walker stopped by for awhile on Saturday. Notice TBS' beautiful new banner and the display cases for our egg & nest display. Your membership dollars at work!

