

TEXAS

The Newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society

Blues



Volume 5, Issue 3

September 2006

Oct 28 TBS Get-Together near Austin will feature authors



**Annual Get-Together
Celebrate 5 Years!
Saturday, Oct 28th
McKinney Roughs Nature Park**

\$5.00 for Members (includes dinner) with advance registration. *Registration form and schedule inserted or visit texasbluebirds.com*

Join fellow members (and, general public is invited) mid-afternoon on "time change Saturday." The line-up of presentations includes authors Jan Wrede and Paul & Georgean Kyle along with Charles Post, with his presentation on bluebirds.

Brian Hetherington and Bob Houck, will lead an optional "Build Your on Nestcam Workshop" from 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. "Birthday Celebration" price, \$55.00 for nestbox kit and video camera! **Deadline for nestcam, September 29th.**

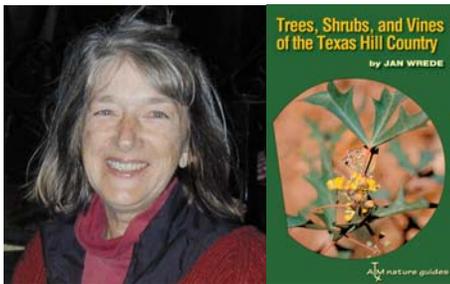
Following a lasagna dinner (preceded by a toast to celebrate NABS 2006,) TBS will recognize "current charter members" (can you figure that one out?) and life members, 5-Star Recruiters (5 or more recruits), and others with special contributions. Names of honorees appear on reverse side of registration form.

The Kyle's after-dinner presentation on Chimney Swifts will finish around 8:00 / 8:30. Those who want to will stay and share bluebird slides (35 mm or electronic.) We offer overnight **lodging** in a bunkhouse at the nature park for **just \$15.00.**

In fact, we *need* 20 to stay overnight in the bunkhouse to qualify for our discounted meeting room rates. Gals downstairs. Guys upstairs. Bring bedding or sleeping bag and towel & washcloth. **Deadline for lodging, September 29th.**

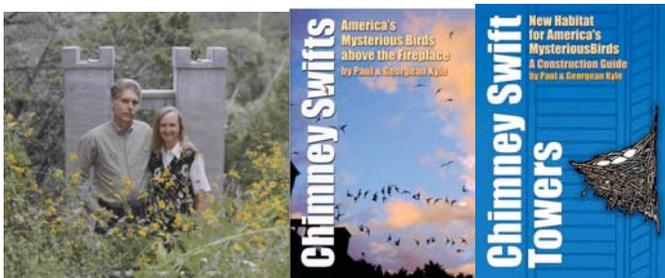
On Sunday morning, there's a field trip to Chaetura Canyon, led by the Kyles. See their Chimney Swift towers and enjoy the Balcones Camyonlands. Fairly strenuous hike. Limited to 12. **\$10.00 fee.**

Another option on Sunday morning is hiking/birding at McKinney Roughs.



"Planting for Bluebirds"

JAN WREDE is director of education at the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne, where she runs an outdoor classroom, directs field research projects, and conducts education programs for Hill Country landowners and families with children. Wrede also writes a nature column for the *Boerne Star* and *Hill Country View*. Following her presentation she will autograph her book "Trees, Shrubs & Vines of the Texas Hill Country."



"Chimney Swifts: Why we should care"

PAUL & GEORGEAN KYLE

Sleek, unique and secretive, Chimney Swifts build their nests, raise their families and sleep just feet from where we watch TV, eat meals and play with our own children, yet most people have never actually seen one – to know what it is. Listen the Kyles as they explore the secretive home life of these aerial acrobats, their fight to cling to survival and what is being done to conserve their declining numbers. Following their presentation, they will autograph their books on Chimney Swifts and Chimney Swift towers. On Sunday morning, they'll lead a field trip to see their towers at Chateura Canyon.

Renewed Nestboxes Continue Mr. Ross' Legacy

A couple of months ago, a close friend phoned to ask if I could help her mother's elderly neighbor with a few bluebird nestboxes that were in poor condition after many years of use. I said sure and told her that I would need to wait until the breeding season tapered off so as not to disturb any nesting birds.

Well, this past weekend, a friend and I headed out to East Texas to make short work of the old boxes. In fact, I had taken along a dozen new Peterson boxes that I had built to just trade them out so that she wouldn't have to worry with the old boxes anymore. As we drove the 100+ miles on those old FM roads, it seemed like a world away from my very urban home back in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. I couldn't help but enjoy the smell of fresh cut hay and sight of cattle and horses resting under the old Elm motts.

After passing through a dozen small towns and past numerous old cotton fields, we finally pulled up in front of a nicely-maintained old farm house that was probably built at the turn of the last century. My friend and I did a quick survey of the area and both commented on the absolutely perfect bluebird habitat in almost every direction.

As I walked up to the door, Mrs. Ross met me and, in quintessential East Texas fashion, she invited us both in for a cold glass of tea. We obliged and as we set down at the kitchen table to enjoy our tea, this very sweet, 80+ year-old lady began to share her "bluebird story."

She told us about how her late husband had first built and installed the nestboxes back in the early 1980s and that for over 15 years he worked "his" boxes and looked after the resulting bluebirds with an absolute passion. In fact, after he retired, that is all he wanted to do. She claimed that they never went on vacation while the bluebirds were breeding because he claimed they might "need him!" After a while, she pulled out several old spiral tablets that held literally hundreds, if not thousands, of journal entries regarding the boxes and their reproductive success. I can't even begin to tell you how amazed we were as she told about all the hard work he had given for the bluebirds in that part of the county.

After several hours of visiting about bluebirds and several more glasses of some of the best iced tea this side of the Red River, I told Mrs. Ross that we should really get to work before it got much later and that if she would just show us where the nestboxes are located ... we would get her fixed up in no time

She led us out the back door and around a little barn to "the trail." She was slow, but steady ... and you could see a very well beaten, looped path along the fence row. At every 70 feet or so, there was a traditional salt-box style nestbox mounted on a post. I quickly counted and there were exactly eleven boxes in

total. I was very relieved when I realize that I already had enough new Peterson boxes to replace all of them for her ... and that we wouldn't have to make a special trip back to Dallas to get a few more to take care of the problem.

As I assured her that we would get this all taken care for her in a couple of hours, she went back to the porch to sit in the shade. My friend and I decided that the best strategy was to remove the old boxes first and carry all of them back up to the porch. Once all were removed, we could then install the mounting hardware on the new boxes in the shade of the porch ... after all, even with a recent cold front, it was still almost 100 degrees in the hot Texas sun!

After picking up a few tools, we both took off in a different direction around the loop. As I approached the first box, I noticed that these boxes had definitely seen better days! Most were absolutely covered in small patches made from pieces of metal coffee cans, plastic butter bowls, small scraps of tin, etc. I quickly thought to myself that I was so glad that I had totally new boxes to replace all of them.

After removing two boxes each, we carried them back up to the porch. I noticed that as we made our second trip back to the porch ... Ms. Ross had picked up one of the old boxes and had placed it in her lap. She appeared to be studying it very intently. My friend commented to her on how bad they had deteriorated and added that that is probably why she hadn't had many of the boxes used by bluebirds in the past few years. She quietly, but proudly told us that she had made and installed the patches herself over the years.

Once we had brought all of the old boxes to the porch, I explained to Mrs. Ross that I had built and brought brand new boxes for her and that the new ones should last for many years. My friend and I went to the truck and began carrying the new boxes to the porch. After the first trip, we very quickly noticed that Mrs. Ross was even more intensely focused on the old nestboxes and didn't even seem to notice all of the new cedar boxes that we were about to install.

We installed the hardware and then headed down the path to begin mounting the new boxes ... after installing the first two; I couldn't help but keep thinking about Mrs. Ross and what her late husband's dilapidated old nestboxes must mean to her. Almost simultaneously, my friend and I looked out across the field toward each other and I hollered for him to come over. We discussed the situation and both agreed that we couldn't possibly replace those old nestboxes with new boxes that meant absolutely nothing to her or this place! To her, those old nest boxes were a definite link to her late husband and they represented something that gave her real meaning and purpose.

Quickly, we removed the four new boxes we had just installed and carried them back up to the porch. Mrs. Ross had already gone back into the house and I could see her sitting at the table looking at one of the spiral notebooks she had just shared with us a few hours earlier.

Without hesitation ... while I began taking measurements, my friend began inventorying any salvageable pieces in the old nestboxes. We both knew that this challenge wasn't going to be as easily resolved as we had originally intended.

Once the assessment was complete, I told Mrs. Ross that it was getting dark and that we would have to come back the next day to finish the job. We loaded up all the new nest boxes and quietly loaded most of the old ones as well. She thanked us for trying to help her and we left much quieter than we originally came. The ride back to Dallas was very long and even more quiet and subdued.

Halfway back to the Metroplex, we stopped at a large home improvement center to pick up some supplies. Once arriving home, I quickly fired up the table saw and began cutting out salt-box style nestbox kits ... while my friend began further assessing the old nest boxes we had just brought home.

By the next morning, we were headed back out to East Texas and we were happy with the outcome of the project that we were sure was quickly about to unfold. We pulled up and immediately began unloading the 11 new "multi-colored," salt-box style nestboxes that we had worked on until 1:30 a.m. that morning to finish. Mrs. Ross came out to meet us and if you could have seen her face when she realized that we had made sure that at least one piece of each of her late husband's boxes were now incorporated into each of the new boxes! I showed her each new box and, without uttering a single word, I could tell it meant so much to her to see him still in each one of those old boxes.

In just over two hours, we had installed all of the nestboxes and were on our way home. The ride back to Dallas was made much easier after our extraordinary weekend and Mrs. Ross' enthusiastic promise to have us back for a piece of homemade lemon pie!

David Gwin
Carrollton, Texas

David Gwin assisted with the TBS Booth at the Wills Point Bluebird Festival last April. He plans to help with our TBS booth at the Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo in Austin, October

Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time

Texas Parks & Wildlife EXPO

America's largest free, family-oriented festival of the outdoors

October 7-8, 2006
9 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily

Texas Parks and Wildlife

Headquarters 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744



TBS is located in the EXPO 2007 *Design With Nature* section.

Under our Texas flag canopy, we will offer our "One Nestbox" membership/nestbox exchanges, demonstrate a recommended method for mounting nestboxes, and display nests and eggs.

To volunteer, contact Ann Thames. 979 278 3053 or semahta@yahoo.com. Obtain parking instructions for volunteers from her.

Dates for your 2007 Calendar:

April 14 Wills Point Bluebird Festival

August Bluebird Symposium, Wichita Falls

Across Texas drought!

B. Hendrickson, July 17th, This year I have had 6 nests in 5 boxes at the ranch. Many of the eggs did not hatch. I wondered if the drought might have had something to do with that. But, I have had at least 8 fledges.

David Gwin (Carrollton), August 1st, Our drought has made it tough for all of our birds and my breeding season, which usually runs well into September, has already started winding down ... fast!

Lori Lomas (Trinity River Wildlife Refuge) September 6th The percentage of fledged bluebirds from total eggs laid had steadily climbed from 86% to 91% from 2002 to 2004, but fell from 84% in 2005 to 71% in 2006. In east Texas, annual precipitation averages 61 inches per year. Conversely, only 46.84 inches of rain fell in 2005 and only 39 inches have fallen since January to July of this year

Ricky Walker (Bandera) September 10th
Dismal bluebird year.

President's Corner

True Blue gratitude to Dan Hanan who recently resigned as TBS Treasurer. His service included updating membership records and NABS 2006 Treasurer. He gave countless hours in administrative tasks ... which trickles down to make a difference for "Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time.

Special thanks to Linda Crum who stepped up as Treasurer through an appointment approved by the Board of Directors.

"Help Wanted"

- CPA to review our books
- CPA or consultant to prepare IRS Form 990 (after Form 990 is filed, we can apply for funding through EarthShare.)
- Newsletter editor

Also, we need members to step up as nominees for the Board of Directors. Please contact me if you're willing.

Days are cooler. Great time to install nestboxes!

Yours, Pauline

Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time

Bid by Proxy!

To place a proxy bid for a donated auction item listed below, contact Jennifer Fleming, 409.886.3975. Tell her the highest amount you're willing to pay (by check or credit card).

An assigned "proxy bidder" will place your bid(s) at the Get-Together at McKinney Roughs.

If your bid is higher than the highest "in person" bid, you will be the winner.

JetBlue Airways

*Letters for a pair of roundtrip tickets from Austin to any non-stop destination
(Value \$1,596)*

Rio Frio Lodging Certificate

*2-night stay for 4 in 1800's style Hideaway Cabin in Utopia
(Value, \$250)*

**Night Owl Video Camera from BirdHouse SpyCam with infrared Night Vision, microphone, and 100' of cable.
(Value \$85)**

Check our website the week before the Oct 28 Get-Together & Auction, to see if more items have been added to the proxy bidding list.

2006 Summer Bluebird Symposium Pine Creek Lodge, Nacogdoches Coordinated by Norm Shoemaker Keith Kridler, featured speaker



Contributors (auction items) included:
BirdHouseSpycam.com, Keith Kridler, Maxey Kirksey, Ron & Pauline Tom, Carson House Inn

Texas Bluebird Society
P O Box 40868
Austin TX 78704

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage Paid
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Buda TX 78610

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TEXAS BLUES

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**TBS Annual Get-Together
Celebrate Five Years!
Saturday, October 28th, 2006
McKinney Roughs Nature Park
13.2 miles east of Austin-Bergstrom Airport on Hwy 71
Entrance is 8.4 miles west of Bastrop**



- 8:00 a.m. McKinney Roughs Nature Park opens
- 1:00 p.m. Convention Registration Opens
- 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. (optional) Build Your Own Nestbox with Camera (\$55.00 fee for nestbox kit and video camera)
- 3:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. (includes dinner)
Ever-popular Silent Auction ▪ Jan Wrede, *Planting for Bluebirds* ▪ Charles Post's Bluebird Presentation
▪ Social Time & Lasagna Dinner ▪ Awards ▪ Paul & Georgan Kyle, *Chimney Swifts*
Following the program, "Show & Tell" ... each person is invited to share 10 favorite bluebird images (as a digital slide show or 35 mm; we'll furnish the projectors)
- 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (optional) Sunday field to Chaetura Canyon, led by Paul & Georgan Kyle (\$10 fee; limited to 12)
- Nature Park is available on Sunday at no additional fee to those who stay overnight

Advance Registration Fees (deadline 10.20.06)	# of People	Cost Each	Totals
Member & New Member* Registration (with meal) (\$5.00)	_____ @	\$5.00	_____

* *New Members, Bring \$15.00 (cash, check or money order) for Household Membership and complete form when you arrive. Receive FREE nestbox.*

General Public Registration (with meal) (\$15.00)	_____ @	\$15.00	_____
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At the Door Registration: \$20.00 ea.

Options

Build Your Own Nestcam 1:30 – 2:30 (\$55.00)	_____ @	\$55.00	_____
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Deadline September 28th. This "birthday special" includes nestbox kit, nestcam and 100 feet of cable (connects nestbox to your television or computer monitor.) Bring screwdriver. Led by Bob Hauck & Brian Hetherington.

Saturday Lodging in Nature Park Bunkhouse (\$15.00)	_____ @	\$15.00	_____
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Deadline September 28th. Bring sleeping bag or twin sheets for bunk bed and towels. Separate lodging for males & females. *We MUST have 20 staying overnight to obtain discounted meeting room rental rates.*

Sunday Morning Chaetura Canyon Field Trip (\$10.00)	_____ @	\$10.00	_____
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At 9:00 a.m. Carpool to Balcones Canyonlands. Chimney Swift Tower Tour led by Paul & Georgan Kyle. See Chimney Swift Towers (without Chimney Swifts) and experience Balcones Canyonlands. Optional one-mile (fairly strenuous) hike. Maximum: 12

Total Enclosed: _____

Name(s): _____

Name(s) for nametags, if different: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ & Email: _____

**Make check payable to Texas Bluebird Society & mail along with registration form to
Linda Crum, Registrar 9 Crescent Falls Court The Woodlands TX 77381 (home, 281.292.4193)
www.texasbluebirds.com**



**TBS Annual Get-Together
Celebrate Five Years!
Saturday, October 28th, 2006
McKinney Roughs Nature Park**



Please join us!

Pay Recognition to Special Members

Please help us correct our records. We want to give recognition to all who fall within these categories

CHARTER MEMBERS WITH CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

Kathryn Booth § John Cys § Jennifer Fleming § James Garriott § Dean / Patty Gary § Norman Griffin § Dan Hanan § Patti Hickman § Highland Shores Garden Club § Selette Hulsey Pearce § Lee and Roberta Hutchins § Alan Jackson § Larry and Betty Jernigan § Maxey and Judy Kirkley § Mark and Nancy Klym § Jimmy & Benni Konvicka § Ed Melson § Hazel Middlebrooks § Lysle Mockler § Dick & Chris Park § Dr. William and Athena Petty § Jeri Porter § Charles & Jackie Post § Jimmy Powell § Doug and Karen Rohde § Carol Schoch § Georgina Schwartz § Danny Seale § LeAnn & Anthony Sharp § R. David & Carol Shiels Family § Norman Shoemaker § Marjorie Swies § Oneta Tally § Cheryl Anderson The Birdhouse § Ron and Pauline Tom § Joyce Valdez § Jim & Earlene Vynalek § Ricky Walker § Tim and Lynne Warfield § Tom and Charline Wheeler § Dr. Thomas M. Wheeler

5-Star Recruiters (5 or more "recruits," either one-on-one or through hosting a festival booth)

Cheryl Anderson • Maggie & Billy Broyles • Jennifer & Johnny Fleming • Lee Hutchins • Don Hutchins • Sharon & Bob Kersten • Keith Kridler • Lysle Mockler • Dick & Chris Park • Bill & Athena Petty • Charles & Jackie Post • Doug & Karen Rohde • LeAnn & Anthony Sharp • Ann & Robert Thames • Pauline & Ron Tom • Barbara Veldhuizen • Philip Walker • Melanie Welch

"Start with Five" Nestbox Trails

Wellborn Bluebird Trail, College Station ... Lady Bird Johnson City Park, Fredericksburg ... The Preserve at Forest Glen Springs ... Groesbeck City Park

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Highland Shores Garden Club • Maxey & Judy Kirkley • Donna Parker • Doug & Karen Rohde • Ronny Rolf • Byron Stone • Ron & Pauline Tom • Jack Vick • Dr. Thomas M. Wheeler • Marsha Winfield

Additional "High Five" Awards will be announced at the get-together!

Place bids at our Annual Fundraising Auction!

- Two travel letters good for roundtrip travel on **JetBlue Airways** from Austin to any non-stop city. Letters may be redeemed for travel pending space availability at the time of booking, seats are limited. Travel in new, state-of-the-art Airbus 320 or EMBRARER 190 aircrafts with roomy leather seats and up to 36 channels of free DIRECTV* programming at each seat and first-run movies from Fox InFlight for just a few dollars. (Value: \$1,596)**
- **Two night stay for Four in the 1800's style Hideaway Cabin** on a 250-acre ranch near Utopia. Given by Hill Country Lodging, Lora B. Garrison, and LeAnn & Anthony Sharp. (Value: \$250)
- **Night Owl Video Camera** from **BirdHouse SpyCam** with infrared Night Vision, microphone, and 100' of cable. Easily mounts in any nestbox, bat house or low light area. B&W image. Have a have a ringside seat to watch the fascinating world of nesting birds. Simply plug in the cable to your tv and watch the hidden world of birds few have seen before. (Value: \$85)

*** Proxy bidding available for those who cannot attend. VISA and MasterCard accepted for auction items. We seek donated auction items (tax deductible for donor, as allowed by law.) To make proxy bid or donate item(s), contact Jennifer Fleming,*