

The Bird Box

Spring 2017 Newsletter of the
Virginia Bluebird Society www.virginiabluebirds.org



In Memory of Priscilla Kingston

By Anne Little

Priscilla Kingston passed away November 25, 2016. Priscilla was a long-time member of VBS and was first involved with bluebirds when she lived in northern Virginia. Together with her husband Ron, she established many bluebird trails in Northern Virginia including Huntley Meadows and Sky Meadows State Park. When they moved to Albemarle County they began establishing trails throughout the area and promoting bluebirds. Priscilla and Ron monitored 7 trails in the Charlottesville area.

Priscilla was always willing to help with any project. You could always count on Priscilla and Ron doing a stint at the state fair every year, plus helping with nest box building workshops and education events.

Priscilla and Ron were co-chairs of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Speaker's Bureau for many years and attended the NABS annual conferences almost every year.

Priscilla received the VBS Heritage Award in 2015 along with her husband Ron for their many years of supporting bluebird conservation. They were awarded

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the Heritage Award with these words, "The Heritage Award recognizes those who have been long time bluebirders. This award is for those who live and breathe bluebirds, and have spent many years promoting bluebirds and the love of bluebirds. Ron and Priscilla Kingston are such people."

Contributions in honor of Priscilla are being accepted by the Monticello Bird Club in Charlottesville VA. To donate you may send a check to Monticello Bird Club, P.O. Box 4362 Charlottesville, VA 22905 or go to www.monticellobirdclub.org, click on "Membership and Donations" and scroll to the bottom of that site. Priscilla's tab for donations is there.

Virginia Bluebird Society Nest Box Activity 2016

By Ann Dunn, Data Manager

Data for the 2016 bluebird breeding season are in. Details of the results may be found on the attached Table 1. This year we had 5110 nest boxes on 422 trails located in 45 counties and cities throughout Virginia. As always, we thank our many volunteers who worked tirelessly to monitor and maintain our nest boxes throughout the six month breeding season.

As usual, Bluebirds ranked first in species fledging statewide, and tree swallows second, while Carolina chickadees and house wrens tied for third (Table 2, below). A small group of "Other" consisted primarily of tufted titmice.

Table 2 Species Distribution of Fledglings by Region*

Species (Percent of Total Birds Fledging)

<u>Region</u>	<u>EABL</u>	<u>TRES</u>	<u>CACH</u>	<u>HOWR</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u># of Boxes**</u>
Statewide	63	25	6	6	1	5110
North	44	38	6	11	1	1693
East	75	14	11	1	1	153
Southeast	80	3	12	3	7	495
Central	70	21	6	4	1	836
South Central	80	12	4	3	1	924
West	41	46	5	7	0	926
Southwest	53	45	1	1	0	83

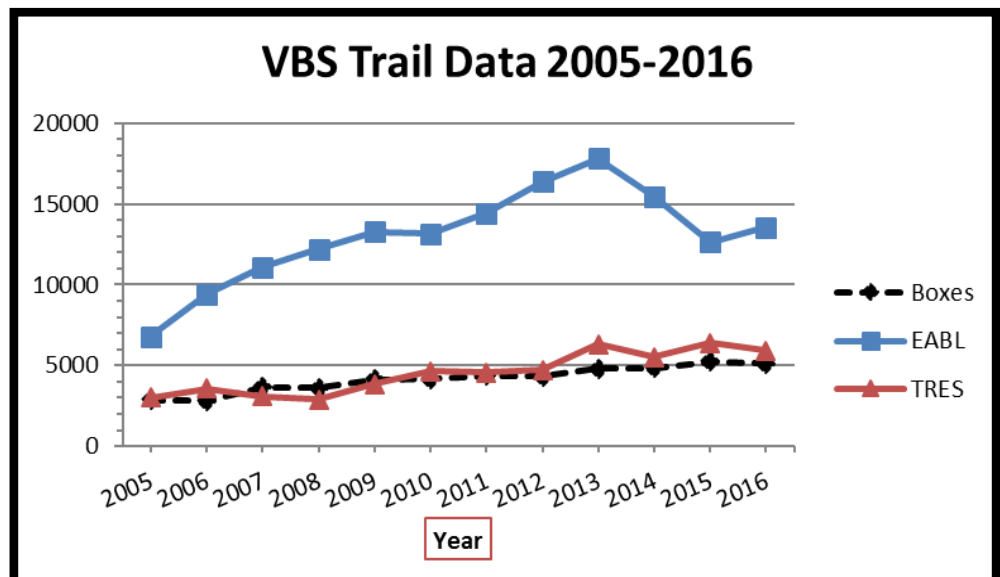
*Designates of the Virginia Society of Ornithology

** Number of boxes monitored in each region

Table 2 shows distinct regional differences in nest box use by species. Bluebirds fledged from more than two thirds of boxes in the four Eastern and Central regions, but only one half or less from the North, West and Southwest regions where tree swallow fledging numbers approached or exceeded those of bluebirds. East and Southeast regions were notable in having a relatively high number of chickadee fledglings.

Figure 1 (right) follows the fledging history of bluebirds and tree swallows over the past twelve years.

The total number of bluebirds fledging showed a moderate increase this year after a two year decline, while that of tree swallows fell very slightly.



Continued, page 3

Nest Box Activity 2016, continued

Figure 2 (below) compares several parameters of nesting activity for bluebirds (2A) and tree swallows (2B) for the years 2015 and 2016.

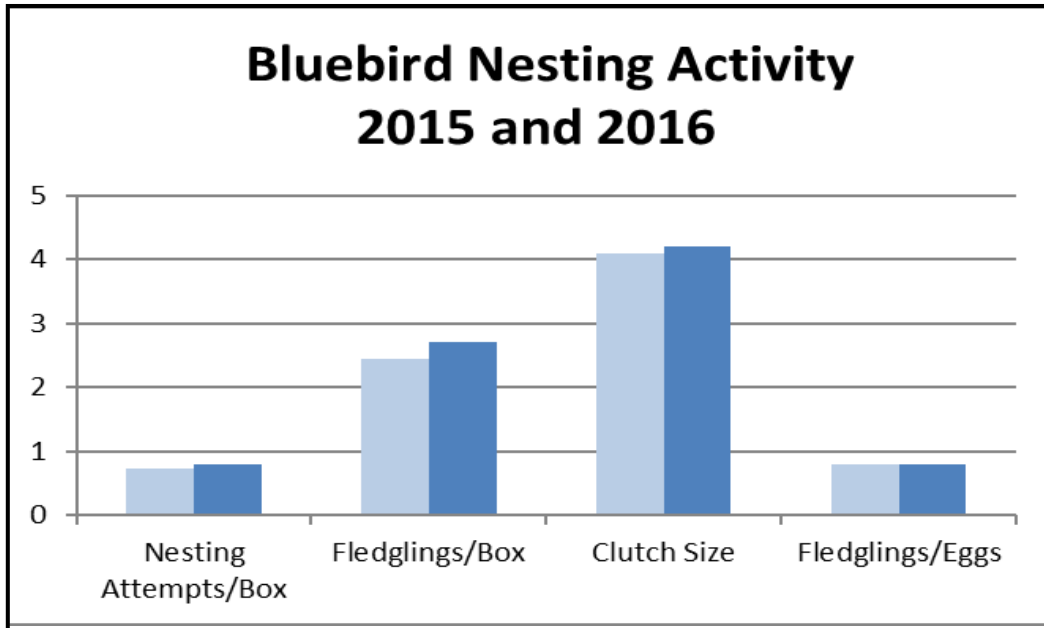


Fig. 2A. Bluebird nesting attempts and fledging productivity, (Fledglings/box) showed increases of respectively 11 and 9 percent in 2016. Clutch size and nesting survival (Fledglings/Eggs) remained essentially the same from last year.

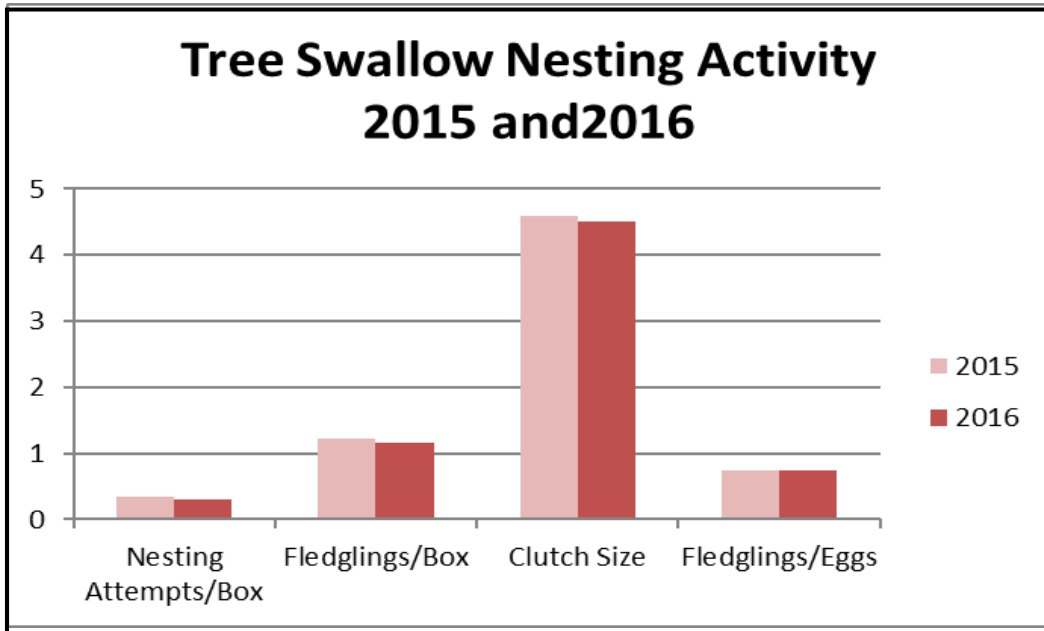


Fig. 2B. The same nesting parameters for tree swallows did not change significantly.

Overall the results for the 2016 nesting season are encouraging. The two year decline in activity leveled off with bluebird productivity showing a modest increase from 2015. Weather patterns may have muted a more substantial gain. A number of reports statewide indicated losses to first clutches during a severe cold spell in April as well as a decline in activity during an uncommonly hot August. As always we look forward to the coming breeding season with high hopes for a continued increase in productivity by bluebirds and all of our native cavity nesters.

Table 1 Virginia Bluebird Society Nest Box Activity 2016

County	Trail Leader/County Coordinator	Number of Trails	Number of Boxes	Nesting Attempts	Bluebirds			Chickadees			Tree Swallows			House Wrens			Other			All			Birds fledged per box				
					Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Egg	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged								
Albemarle	Dunn, A.	43	494	522	2194	1821	1659	33	152	120	108	143	665	586	522	17	64	55	54	1	5	5	716	3080	2587	2348	4.8
Arlington	Davis-Holland, A	3	12	7	32	31	31	5	23	14	5	3	12	12	5	8	43	19	19				16	78	45	29	2.4
Bedford	Boran, C.	1	14	118	485	434	429	21	92	63	62	124	534	447	419	13	54	50	50				9	44	37	31	2.2
Botetourt	Evans, T.	5	213	32	145	128	124	1	6	6	6	22	111	107	100								276	1165	994	960	4.5
Buchanan	Mayhorn, R.	2	44	53	240	226	210	14	69	59	55	4	19	18	17								55	262	241	230	5.2
Chesterfield	Hesler, J. & I.	3	74	85	375	318	253	1	6	6	6	126	633	487	440	12	47	35	34				71	328	303	282	3.8
Clarke	Lichter, K.	1	132	85	375	318	253	1	6	6	6	126	633	487	440	12	47	35	34				224	1061	846	733	5.6
Culpeper	Kitts, S.	4	34	413	86	74	65	1	5	0	0	38	188	161	141								58	283	239	210	6.2
Fairfax	Johnson, S.	58	721	1703	1358	1271	1271	78	346	271	211	318	1479	1212	1125	111	493	400	375	8	39	26	928	4060	3267	3002	4.2
Fauquier	Dennee, B.	5	153	74	311	251	229	7	35	27	18	39	203	184	170	6	32	15	10				126	581	477	427	2.8
Floyd	Boran, C.	3	14	13	57	36	36					12	66	56	51	1	5	5	5				26	128	97	92	6.6
Fluvanna	Dunn, A.	2	35	38	161	128	128	6	33	31	31	5	25	24	24								49	219	183	183	5.2
Franklin	Boran, C.	2	19	26	118	109	88	1	5	5	5					1	5	5	5				28	128	119	98	5.2
Giles	Opengari, B.	1	6	8	15	12	10					3	15	12	12								11	30	24	22	3.7
Gloucester	Walker, W.	4	31	9	50	50	50	3	19	19	19												15	81	81	81	2.6
Grayson	Kerns, D. & L.	3	25	26	104	74	61	6	34	34	32	12	60	52	37	4	18	18	18				38	164	126	98	3.9
Greene	Wilczek, P. & F.	4	79	89	392	361	352	6	34	34	32	12	58	56	50								111	502	469	452	5.7
Halifax	Fuquay, V.	5	49	37	164	148	144	5	29	27	25	15	72	67	64								57	265	242	233	4.8
Hanover	Dorgan/Phillips	1	7	6	27	23	23																6	27	23	23	3.3
Henrico	Woodson, C.	4	61	58	208	180	171	21	90	64	28	2	12	10	5	12	33	32	31	2	10	7	95	353	293	241	4.0
Henry	Haley, D.	5	214	360	1510	1359	1299	6	10	9	9	5	22	12	12	8	21	20	20	3	14	10	382	1577	1410	1350	6.3
Highland Co	Bell, S.	3	32	23	106	74	64					15	73	56	52	5	28	27	25				43	207	157	141	4.4
Isle of Wright Co	Langdon, L.	3	51	65	300	280	256	2	9	9	9	3	14	10	10	1	6	6	6	22	99	85	70	323	299	275	5.4
James City	Lockwood/Jillman	2	173	105	464	386	355	16	88	70	61	1	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	5	4	144	657	547	495	2.9
Lancaster	Bowdy, P	9	26	16	69	62	55	5	9	4	4	1	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	5	4	24	89	76	69	2.7
Loudoun	Ethen, K.	50	561	276	1204	1024	966	42	179	138	124	297	1239	1033	988	100	413	372	368				715	3035	2567	2446	4.4
Lynchburg City	Lloyd, K.	1	8	7	33	26	26					2	10	6	0								9	43	32	26	3.3
Madison	Squire, D.	3	39	28	129	113	111	3	18	17	11	7	33	31	29								45	211	190	175	4.5
Montgomery	Opengari, B.	1	10	9	18	14	11					7	184	156	148								16	51	45	40	4.0
Nelson	Colgate A	7	92	96	414	366	336	6	26	21	17	39	184	156	148								141	624	543	501	5.4
Northumberland	D&L Adams	4	34	46	186	172	166	4	14	10	4												50	200	182	170	5.0
Orange	Browning.	4	36	43	182	138	129	3	12	3	3	7	34	26	21	5	25	16	12				58	253	183	165	4.6
Patrick	Boran, C.	4	64	100	448	376	345	2	9	9	7	5	27	26	26	1	6	6	6				108	490	417	384	6.0
Pittsylvania	Fuquay, V.	124	578	682	2943	2613	2519	38	205	193	190	132	674	609	575	28	139	125	125	5	24	19	885	3985	3563	3478	5.9
Powhatan	Witt, T.	2	25	9	35	33	33	6	26	22	21	4	15	13	13								19	76	68	67	2.7
Pulaski Co	Hansen, C.	14	443	229	697	479	337	43	110	88	71	234	831	533	405	131	210	129	67				637	1838	1229	880	2.0
Prince William	Hindman, C.	8	116	108	447	373	347	11	45	38	37	40	182	153	144	7	35	18	18				166	710	582	546	4.7
Rappahannock	Patterson, B.	6	57	38	148	113	83	13	61	47	36	4	11	10	7								59	242	181	131	2.3
Richmond City	Woodson, C.	4	34	35	122	112	100	2	8	8	8	3	16	16	16	3	6	6	6				43	152	142	130	3.8
Rockingham	Harrison, D.	1	7	6	23	19	19					4	21	18	18	6	11	10	10				16	55	47	47	6.7
Shenandoah	Harrison, D.	1	6	8	38	30	30					2	11	11	10								10	49	41	40	6.7
Spotsylvania	Hamb, J.	2	46	32	124	99	94	8	41	14	14	10	40	38	38	13	65	59	59				63	270	210	205	4.5
Warren	Morrison, C.	2	77	73	303	200	185	6	36	33	33	48	257	187	116	9	49	36	36				136	645	456	370	4.8
Westmoreland	Narney, J.	2	62	28	124	113	111	6	33	27	27	11	57	54	54								45	214	194	192	3.1
York	Lockwood/Jillman	6	102	74	318	280	256	15	75	56	42	0	0	0	0	4	6	4	4	14	73	53	107	472	393	350	3.4
Totals		422	5110	4128	17252	14616	13567	442	1970	1568	1339	1768	7973	6564	5932	507	1817	1471	1366	61	295	224	6906	29307	24443	22398	4.4

Exciting News for Pulaski Bird Watchers and Nature Lovers

By Vickie Houk

Town crew members began installing bluebird houses along Dora Trail. Dora Trail, connecting Downtown with the New River State Park, has been designated a "Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail" (VBWT) by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Pulaski County is one of 28 recognized Bluebird trails in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This designation is an important one for the community since there are many travelers who enjoy such designated trails, and now Dora Trail will receive greater visibility on agency websites and in future publications that promote the State Trail initiative.

The Friends of Peak Creek (FOPC) in Pulaski has established a bluebird trail of 10 nest boxes on the New River Trail along the creek. The trail begins at the Train Station in downtown Pulaski.

Bill Opengari, FOPC member and Master Naturalist, is heading up our Bluebird Trail Monitoring Program. A workshop for volunteers is planned for the near future. Bluebird trail monitors check their boxes frequently over the summer, keeping records about which species uses the box, how many eggs they lay, how many young hatch and how many young fledge.

A special shout out goes to the group from the **Go Pulaski** County program that built the houses last fall and to the Town of Pulaski for its help in installation.



Bill Opengari, Friends of Peak Creek

from left, Mark Hurt, Bill Pedigo, Town of Pulaski, Bill Opengari, Friends of Peak Creek, and Robin Kirby, Town of Pulaski

Photos by Linda Hall

23rd Annual Purple Martin Field Day

Saturday, June 24, 2017, 11:00 am, Louisa County, Virginia

For information, visit www.purplemartinfieldday.org

Enjoy watching hundreds of these beautiful birds soaring and feeding their young, and learn how to establish, maintain, and increase a healthy Purple Martin colony. This event is free, but donations are appreciated. Check the web site for more information.



Photos by Kathy Laine

Passing the Bluebird Torch

By Christine Boran

My four years serving VBS as **State Coordinator** have come to a close at the end of 2016. I have to say THANK YOU to all the County Coordinators for all they have taught me through the experiences they shared with me on the trails. This assisted me to be a better bluebirder by learning what worked well and some things that didn't work for improved trail management. It has been a joy, a challenge - frankly, an honor! - to attempt to follow the late Barbara Chambers, one of the founding members of VBS, in this important role. Going forward, I will continue my other volunteer time for VBS as County Coordinator for Floyd, Patrick, & Franklin Counties, service on the VBS Board of Directors, sharing experiences about monitoring bluebirds online to the 43 nest box



Christine Boran after installation of the new bluebird trail at Fairy Stone State Park

Woolwine House Bluebird Trails' website and Facebook page, and conducting public programs about "all-things bluebirds" as time permits. My favorite experiences in bluebirding have been working with the State Park staffs, Virginia Master Naturalist chapters, and VBS member volunteers in planning new trails and refurbishing existing ones at Fairy Stone State Park, Booker T. Washington National Monument, Smith Mountain Lake State Park, and the late 'Jimmy Doyle' Martinsville Bluebird Trail. I relish taking the tours, sharing recommendations, writing up the VBS grant requests, ordering and picking up the equipment, installing the boxes, training the trail monitors, anticipating the new nesting season—and then seeing those first nesting results!

Please join me in welcoming **Karla Etten** as VBS State Coordinator commencing in 2017. It is a pleasure to "pass the bluebird torch" to someone who will shine in this role using her skills and talents to assist the County Coordinators in their nonstop hard work leading the volunteers in the field monitoring and reporting those valuable nesting cycles to VBS. Karla has been serving VBS already in a big way in Loudoun County as a County Coordinator. She is excited to lead and learn. She is terrific at communications, leadership, and motivating others. She conducts education to others for bluebird and wildlife conservation efforts. She has enthusiasm with the young and older alike, and is active taking care of trails and

mentoring the trail leaders and monitors, much of it through the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and the Brambleton community. Karla recently updated me that Loudoun County presently has about 100+ bluebird monitors and nesting data from over 560 nest boxes and growing for this year's nesting season! I asked her for a favorite bluebird experience to share. Karla told me, "I think my favorite time on the trails is meeting up with seasoned monitors and training new volunteers. I so enjoy meeting people and I learn so much from each encounter. I especially loved taking a tour of the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship State Park with Joe Coleman. Joe is a true renaissance man with an extraordinary wealth of information about ornithology and the environment."



Karla Etten and Joe Coleman at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship State Park

Newsletter of the
Virginia Bluebird Society
www.virginiabluebirds.org

Our email address is:
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If you have a new email address, or have
Recently changed it, please let us know.

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We welcome your written items and artwork
(photos and drawings) for *The Bird Box*!

The Bluebird Advisor

By Anne Little



Dear Bluebird Advisor,

I only want Bluebirds in my boxes. How do I discourage Chickadees?

A Bluebird fan

Dear Bluebird fan,

We all love to have Bluebirds in our boxes, but please remember that Chickadees are also native birds and need our help with nesting sites. Carolina Chickadees have declined 2 percent annually over the last 40 years. The species is classified as a Bird of Conservation Concern. The Chickadee begins nesting earlier than Bluebirds, in early or mid-March, and then the Bluebird may come along and try to evict the Chickadee a few weeks later. The Bluebird may destroy the eggs of the Chickadee and on occasion evict the young.

We can help by

1. erecting additional nest boxes for the Bluebirds once we see that the Chickadee has moved in to our nest box.
2. putting a 1 inch adaptor over the 1.5 inch hole to protect the Chickadee chicks and eggs.

The Chickadee prefers more brushy area, so if you position one nest box in open grassland and one nest box in a shrubby area, you should satisfy both species. Once they both have their own nest box, they will peacefully coexist because they do not perceive each other as competitors since they have different food sources.

One other thing that I do for my Chickadees every year is to go to my local dog groomer and get a bag of clean dog hair. I throw this hair in the corners of my yard for the Chickadees to use in their nesting materials. It is always fun to check the nests and see the little chicks sitting in a nest of black and white or brown dog hair. You can also ask your local hair salon for clean human hair.

The Chickadee gives us so much pleasure throughout the year at our feeders, it is only right that we help them with their young.

The Bluebird Advisor



Photo from
Pixabay

Send your questions to vbs@virginiabluebirds.org

Mark Your Calendars

March	Check, repair, and clean out nest boxes
April	Begin monitoring all nest boxes
May 30	Deadline for submitting articles, photos, and artwork for summer newsletter
June 24	23rd Annual Purple Martin Field Day, Louisa County (see page 5)
November	Biennial Fall Conference (look for more information in the Fall Bird Box)

How To Join

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

Virginia Bluebird Society
726 William Street
Fredericksburg VA 22401

Membership forms are available on the VBS web site:

<http://www.virginiabluebirds.org>

Send An Article to The Bird Box

Send original articles, photos, or artwork or suggest a topic for a future newsletter. Submit materials to Judy Hall, Editor, at carjuwa@hotmail.com by January 30 to be considered for the winter newsletter, or May 30 for the summer newsletter.



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