

# The Bird Box Bird Box

Spring 2023 Newsletter of the  
Virginia Bluebird Society [www.virginiabluebirds.org](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org)



## The Bird Box

### The President's Box

By Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, VBS President



It took twenty-six years, but in November we were finally able to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Virginia Bluebird Society. And in case you missed it, believe me when I say it was a fabulous time! From the keynote address by Julie Zickefoose – who lived up to her reputation as a truly warm and wonderful person as well as an engaging and entertaining speaker to the many people who presented at Saturday's breakout sessions...we learned a lot, we finally put faces to names with a host of wonderful Bluebirders, and we had fun! So many people to thank! Where to start? The entire VBS Board of Directors, you folks rock! Courtney Sokolowski for publicity, Mark Murphy for behind-the-scenes work setting up online registration and the acknowledgment letters, Mary Lohman and Charlene Talcott for staffing the registration table, Vickie Fuquay for assisting Julie with book sales, Judy Hall and Sandy Jeter for managing the sale of nest box equipment and the Noel guards built by Tony Daniel, and Anne and Carl Little for putting together an amazing display board tracking the twenty-five-year history of VBS. And not least, Doug Rogers who captured the weekend's events with his many wonderful photographs.

To our presenters: Kathy Kremnitzer and Bet Zimmerman Smith from North American Bluebird Society; VBS' own Anne Little and Doug Rogers; DWR's Jessica Ruthenberg, and NABS' director Allen Jackson who graciously stepped up at the last possible minute to cover for Maureen Eiger who was unable to make it, and to local birder, Phil Silas who led the Saturday morning bird walk at Neabsco Creek, a round of applause and a great big Bluebird thank you!

On a somber note we mourn the passing of two influential VBS members Earl Morris, who, to quote Anne Little "was a nice guy" and my dear friend Vickie Allen Fuquay who died suddenly on February 21, 2023.

### In Memoriam

#### George Earl Morris, Jr, 1937 - 2022

By Anne Little, VBS founding member

Earl passed away peacefully on the morning of December 31, 2022. He was 85 years old. Earl was born in Pennsauken, New Jersey. In 1954, Earl enlisted in the Navy as a dental technician. After completing his time as a dental corpsman, Earl became the coordinator for the manned flight awareness program working through IBM with the NASA program. He would retire from IBM after almost 30 years working with the space program, from the later Gemini missions, through the



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Apollo program, and into the Space Shuttle era.

Earl was recognized in 1993 with "Earl Morris Day" in Westchester County, New York, in honor of his work to support the homeless population in the county.

Upon his retirement from IBM and after moving to Roanoke, Virginia, Earl was making and installing bluebird nest boxes on golf courses in the Hampton Roads area and was encouraged to join VBS in 2002. Earl became a Board member in 2005 and served on the VBS Board for 12 years. Earl was named "Bluebirder of the Year" in 2006 for his work in the Hampton Roads area.

Earl's work with golf courses helped Virginia Bluebird Society with their outreach across Virginia. Earl was able to work with the golf course professionals and teach VBS how to approach them in order to get nest boxes accepted. Earl's work with golf courses helped VBS with their outreach across Virginia. Because of Earl's efforts, we have many bluebird trails on many golf courses, and they are some of our best performing boxes. Earl was always cheerful and full of fun. He will be missed.

## Vickie Allen Fuquay, 1954 - 2023

By Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, VBS President

The story goes that sometime back in the 80s, Vickie was driving one day when her car hit an unknown bird, a blue bird. She had never seen one before and took this as a sign to learn all she could about bluebirds. And learn she did! And Vickie's passion never wavered.

Vickie joined VBS in 2007, promptly volunteering to be the County Coordinator and bringing along 27 other bluebird enthusiasts from Pittsylvania County.

In the Fall 2008 issue of *The Bird Box*, Vickie wrote, *'I finally got reports from all my monitors. Our five cemeteries have 27 boxes with 230 bluebirds, up from 106 last year! Can you believe the increase in the cemeteries in just one year? On the walking trail, we had 70 boxes with 250 bluebirds, four chickadees and 95 Tree Swallows fledged. We have 14 boxes at three schools and six more going up this coming week. So far 1,855 baby blues have been reported as fledged for our city and county! We now have just over 150 boxes on public land since March 2007! That does not count the 15 in my garage waiting to go!'*

From those prophetic beginnings in 2007, Vickie went on to develop the "Adopt-a-Box" bluebird nest box program along the Riverwalk Trail in Danville and increased the number of monitored boxes in Pittsylvania County to more than 675. Under Vickie's leadership Pittsylvania County has the most productive VBS trails in the state, fledging over 40,000 bluebirds since 2007.

No surprise then that Vickie was recognized as 2008 County Coordinator of the Year. In 2009 Vickie was elected a director of VBS. In 2011 she was elected vice president, and in 2013 was honored as the Barbara Chambers Memorial County Coordinator of the Year. Vickie continued to serve as Vice President, Education until her passing on February 21.

But Vickie was much more than the positions she held. As administrator of the VBS Nest Box Camera Grant, Vickie was instrumental in placing nest box trails on more than 75 schools throughout Virginia. Imagine the great number of students who may have been as uninformed about bluebirds as Vickie was in the 1980s, but through her efforts learned to love bluebirds as much as she did. She generously gave of her time and efforts to recruit and train volunteers to monitor trails, to speak to community and civic organizations about bluebirds, to pick up the phone or send an email in response to an inquiry from a bluebird landlord. It has been said that if you have a bluebird in your backyard, chances are Vickie Fuquay had something to do with it.

Vickie was all that and so very much more. Her energy, enthusiasm and knowledge were limitless. She was a good friend, a confidante, an advisor. Her kindness, compassion and generosity were without equal. It's no surprise that Vickie could get hummingbirds to feed from her hand and bluebirds to come to her call. Vickie will be forever missed by all who knew her. Our deepest sympathies go to her husband Daniel, her daughters Melissa and Lauren, and her treasured granddaughter, Emma Kate.



Vickie Allen Fuquay



Vickie Fuquay and Christine Boran at Raywood Landscape Center, Danville VA

## VBS Conference and Reminiscing

By Cathy Hindman, Secretary and Past President

I enjoyed our conference very much because I like to talk with people I haven't met across the state who share my love of our Eastern Bluebird. I never go away from a conference without new knowledge. I really liked Julie's presentation Friday night and was sad to hear that some people attended Saturday only and missed her talk. Julie was funny and educational. I now follow her on Instagram.

I have been involved in VBS for over 20 years. First I monitored a trail with my daughters for a science project when I was homeschooling. Then I was asked to be the County Coordinator and get an active list of trails and who was monitoring them. Then I was asked to serve on the board and eventually became Secretary. After many years, I led as President for 4 years. Valerie retired from her career so I got her to take my place! My time as President was administrative and I received a lot of email. The President gets asked to do many things. I do have two favorites I will share.

A lady from the Smithsonian Institution contacted VBS to ask if we could donate a nest box for a special philanthropic initiative exhibit starting at the National Museum of American History. See the story here:

<https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/bluebirds-and-philanthropy>

I had a nest box that wasn't being used and it had this cool lichen on it. So, I packed it up and mailed it in. Amanda Moniz, the curator, contacted me when the box was on display. I was able to go and meet her and see my box. It was the first exhibit in a long line of continuing ones for philanthropy.

My second fun thing was when Valerie and I were interviewed by Ed Simmons for the Virginia Wildlife magazine, Issue Jan/Feb 2020. We got seven pages on bluebirds! Ed contacted me in the summer of 2019 and we met with him in August at Valerie's Potomac Shores trail. By the time it came out in print, Valerie was the President.

## State Awards Presented at the VBS Conference

By Charlene Talcott, VBS State Coordinator

### VBS County Coordinators of the Year

John and Pam Narney of Colonial Beach were awarded the Barbara Chambers Memorial Award at the VBS conference in November. The award is given to County Coordinators who go the extra mile to organize, inspire and further bluebird conservation in their counties. The Narneys lead, train, and encourage bluebird monitors in Richmond and Westmoreland Counties.

John manages three trails : Westmoreland State Park, Menokin, and Stratford Hall. Menokin was formerly managed by the Boy Scouts but the trail had fallen into disrepair. When the Narneys acquired it, they refurbished the trail and replaced boxes. John then took on the monitoring by himself for five years, then recruited and trained volunteer monitors.

The managers at Stratford Hall wanted to refurbish a trail that consisted of fifty boxes. They called on Pam and John for help, and they quickly agreed. Little did they realize at the time how long the process would be. All the boxes had to be rehabbed and moved to new locations established with the help of volunteers they recruited and trained.

The Narneys are also members of the Virginia Master Naturalists Northern Neck Chapter, and are pivotal volunteers at the Virginia Osprey Festival in Colonial Beach.

### VBS Volunteers of the Year

Glenn and Alice Shelton of Chatham were recognized as Volunteers of the Year at the conference in November. This award is given to an individual or individuals who help promote and enhance Virginia Bluebird Society.

The Sheltons were recognized for their invaluable help with the bluebird trails in Pittsylvania County and their dedication to promoting bluebirds wherever they go. Their outreach is extensive including membership in the Virginia Bluebird Society, Audubon Society, Virginia Society of Ornithology, and as board members of the Southside Bird Club.

When trails were installed in area cemeteries, Glenn asked if VBS was interested in expansion to Chatham. To date they care for 24 boxes on



*VBS President Valerie Kenyon Gaffney presents VBS Coordinators of the year award to John and Pam Narney*



*Valerie Kenyon Gaffney presents Volunteers of the Year award to Alice and Glenn Shelton.*

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public land and 11 boxes on private land. This summer, during construction at a local cemetery, they safely relocated boxes so the breeding season could continue uninterrupted.

### VBS Heritage Award

Margaret Wester of Boyce was recognized with Virginia Bluebird Society Heritage Award at the VBS conference.



Valerie Kenyon Gaffney presents the VBS Heritage award to Margaret Wester

Margaret was recognized as a special person who lives and breathes bluebirds and has spent many years promoting bluebirds and the love of bluebirds.

As trail lead for the 96 boxes at Sky Meadows State Park, Margaret is recognized for the wealth of information about bluebirds and other cavity nesters that she shares with her “veteran volunteer” monitors via a preseason refresher quiz each year. In addition, Margaret leads “new recruit” training classes in early March, and is a generous resource for information needed by other trail leaders in both Fauquier and Culpepper counties.

Her knowledge of bluebirds and other cavity nesters has been called encyclopedic and her responses to questions praised as always well thought out and consequently very helpful.

### VBS Bluebirder of the Year

Paul Slebodnick of Clifton was named “Bluebirder of the Year” at the VBS conference in November. This award is given to the individual who promotes bluebirds through outreach to schools and community groups, promoting good bluebird management techniques, and helping others to love and care for the bluebird.

Paul was recognized for his dedication to bluebird trails in Burke Lake Park, Twin Lakes Golf Course, and Liberty Middle School. He builds the boxes at his own expense, maintains the grounds, and participates in weekly monitoring in the spring and summer. He has dedicated countless hours to bluebirds, purple martins, and several species of local birds.

Paul lives with his wife Alexis in the Clifton area. Their property is an oasis for birds, containing several bluebird boxes, water features, pollinator gardens, and feeding stations.



Paul Slebodnick received the Bluebirder of the Year award.

### Passing the Bluebird Torch

By Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, VBS President

On behalf of the VBS Board of Directors, the VBS membership and myself, I want to thank Christine Boran for sixteen years of truly dedicated service to Virginia Bluebird Society. Chris joined VBS in 2007. That spring she launched her first trail with just 14 nest boxes which eventually grew to the fifty boxes she now monitors in and around Patrick County. Two years later Chris volunteered to serve as county coordinator for both Patrick and Floyd counties. It wasn't long before Christine's commitment to bluebird conservation earned her the prestigious Barbara Chambers Memorial County Coordinator of the Year award in 2009.

In January 2013 she assumed the position of State Coordinator, a role she held for four years. Chris' next role was as a director of Virginia Bluebird Society, where she served six years, from 2017 through 2022. Throughout this time, Chris has maintained a Facebook page and a blog, *Woolwine House Bluebird Trail*, sharing her experiences as a bluebird landlord and her extensive knowledge as an advisor to other BB landlords. Behind the scenes, Chris was also responding to questions posed on the VBS Facebook page, often writing 'The Bluebird Advisor' column for the newsletter and as a director of the North American Bluebird Society responding to questions posed to the NABS' hotline.



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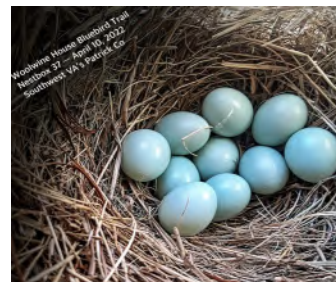
Sadly, Chris has decided to step down from the VBS board. Her knowledge and her wise counsel, which proved so valuable over the years, will be missed. It is no stretch to say her contribution to the wellbeing of the Eastern Bluebird and the success of the Virginia Bluebird Society has been truly immeasurable. We thank her for all she gave to VBS over the years and for the friendship we will continue to share. Chris, we wish you well!

## Sister Wives

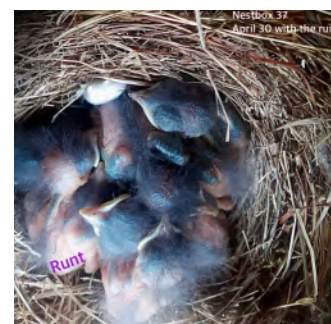
By Chris Boran

Alleged “sister wives” event from the Woolwine House Bluebird Trail, Year 2022, Patrick County:

Two females laid a total of ten eggs in the same Carl Little nest box #37 on the 50-box trail. Two monitors, Jessica Phillips and myself, checked it three to four times a week to get numerous records of the nest activity and took periodic photos. It was determined by our observations that two females occupied the box in laying eggs. We saw two females fly from the nest box on April 17, but we could not get confirmed data that both females actually incubated together side-by-side or even toggled taking turns in those incubation duties. It appeared later, however, one female let the other stay on the nest. Hatching started on April 24th. Seven nestlings developed with one noticeable runt in the bunch. We do not know for sure how many bluebirds fed the growing nestlings and which adults were removing the fecal sacs. Jessica and I opened the nest box on the 12th day and again for the last time on the 13th day—it was observed both days that three adults aggressively



divebombed us! We think we saw the fourth adult staying in the trees. I always think divebombing is a very good sign of alert, guarding parent birds. I smile when they do it because I know all is well. We made it quick and snapped a photo of the slightly underdeveloped—but healthy—seven nestlings on Day 12. The runt caught up to the others. All seven fledged. We found no deceased hatchlings or unhatched eggs on the fledged nest.



## VBS Nest Cams for Education

By Vickie Fuquay, VBS Vice President, Education, and Coordinator for Nest Cams

As we eagerly await spring, now is the time to apply for a nest cam for your school, state park visitor center, library or museum. We have been installing camera boxes throughout the state since 2011. Many schools throughout the years have been privy to the lifecycle of our Eastern Bluebird. It is one thing to learn about their development from a book but to watch it firsthand both delights and amazes the children with images they will never forget.



Nest cam image  
Photo by Vickie Fuquay

We have expanded our program to state parks, libraries, and museums, wherever there is opportunity to educate the public about our mission of saving and protecting native cavity dwellers. I have received four applications for the grant and am awaiting the go-ahead to install the boxes. I just spoke to a representative at a library in the Richmond area who would like to install a nest cam as well. Both cameras and nest box setup are waiting your application!

If your location has suitable habitat for bluebirds and you are willing to monitor the box weekly throughout the nesting season check out our website. [www.virginiabluebirds.org](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org) and fill out an application. I am happy to talk with you if you have questions and assist you in any way possible. Contact information is listed on the grant application form. [Virginia Bluebird Society](http://VirginiaBluebirdSociety.org) - About VBS - Grant Programs - Educational Nestcam Grants.

If your school has a box that needs repair or is having camera issues please let us know. Now is the time to check boxes and make repairs. Bluebirds in Southern Virginia are actively checking out boxes and choosing where they plan to nest.

## New Bluebird Boxes at Paul Edmunds Memorial Park in South Boston, Virginia

By Eleanor Knowlson, South Boston

I just recently became a member of VBS after hearing about it through the Southside Bird Club. When I learned that Julie Zickefoose was to be the keynote speaker at the state conference last November, I just had to

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**New Bluebird Boxes at Paul Edmunds Memorial Park, continued from page 5**

attend as I have been a longtime fan. The conference exceeded my expectations, and I returned home ready to spring into action.

I had previously noticed, when walking at my favorite local park, that the bluebird boxes there were in very poor condition. Edmunds Park is located just outside the town limits of South Boston, Virginia, in Halifax County. The site was once a dairy farm and has gorgeous expanses of open, mowed fields; perfect bluebird habitat. Vickie Fuquay, my VBS County Coordinator, suggested applying for a grant to replace the boxes. She gave me the contact information for Steve Meadows, who put up the houses in 2009. I counted seven, but Steve remembered that originally there were ten, so I proceeded to fill out and submit the simple online application for ten boxes. I was very pleasantly surprised when Doug Rogers, VBS Vice President, Trails, contacted me in a few days' time to let me know that I had received the grant. Doug graciously drove down from Charlottesville to meet me in Lynchburg, and we transferred the ten Carl Little boxes, poles, Kingston baffles, Noel guards and assorted hardware from his Prius to my Outback.



*Original nest box at Edmunds Park  
Photo by Eleanor Knowlson*

Thankfully, Steve had let me know earlier that he would be glad to help me install the boxes at the park, and I was extremely grateful as I had never put one up by myself and didn't want to make a shoddy job of it. On January 22, Steve, my son Spencer, and myself met at Edmunds Park and put up all ten boxes. Steve was an excellent teacher, and I can say that I now feel comfortable setting up nest boxes. They look fantastic, and are ready and waiting for our feathered friends to take up residence in the near future.

I recently became a Virginia Master Naturalist, and am going to dedicate the majority of my service hours to nest box monitoring. I have already talked to my chapter about bluebird monitoring, and hope to establish more trails in the area. I would encourage anyone interested in applying for a grant to do so without hesitation. VBS members have been so helpful and encouraging. I am looking forward to starting this new adventure. Happy bluebirding, everyone!



*Eleanor Knowlson tightens the latch on one of the new VBS boxes at Edmunds Park in South Boston, Virginia  
Photo by Steve Meadows*



*Spencer Knowlson tightens a bolt on a new box setup at Edmunds Park.  
Photo by Eleanor Knowlson*



*Steve Meadows puts finishing on new nest box at Edmunds Park.  
Photo by Eleanor Knowlson*

**VBS Trail Activity 1996 to 2021**

By Anne Little, VBS Past President

The table on the right shows how far VBS has come in supporting Eastern bluebirds and other cavity nesters.

We started with five boxes at Pohick Park with Julie Kutruff and Barb and Charlie Chambers. If you add the data from 2022, we would have almost 500k bluebirds fledged from our boxes, sort of a milestone.



To the left is a photo of Carl Little, designer of the Carl Little Bluebird Nestbox, and Clark Walter, who builds hundreds of nest boxes for VBS every year. These two are unsung heroes in our organization.

YEAR	TRAILS	BOXES	EABL	TRES	CHICK	HOWR	OTHER	TOTAL
1996	2	32	83	32	13	18		146
1997	5	92	230	66	8	89		393
1998	18	273	824	236	43	276		1379
1999	57	1135	3181	852	212	536		4781
2009		4113	13269	3829	838	1552	308	19796
2011		4352	14423	4582	1238	1182	214	21639
2013		4802	17807	6296	1168	1429	328	27028
2014		4838	15450	5517	913	1375	197	23452
2016		5195	13699	6061	1367	1400	195	22722
2017		4766	16272	5604	1189	1290	276	24631
2019	443	5293	18011	6557	790	1639	213	27210
2021	443	4979	19559	4956	527	1368	218	26628

## County Coordinators

By Charlene Talcott, State Coordinator

### Spotlight on Kaycee Lichliter, County Coordinator for Clarke, Frederick, and Shenandoah Counties

Kaycee has been working with birds since 1999, with college course work in natural resource management concentrating in wildlife studies. She was instrumental in starting and/or growing several successful bluebird trails for Audubon, Blandy Experimental Farm, and other organizations.

She also works with other birding programs, such as passerine bird banding and raptor banding, Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS), National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts, and “landlording” for Purple Martins.

Kaycee’s vacations have involved bird watching in Alaska, Costa Rica, Canada, Jamaica, the Rockies, and all along the East Coast.

From Kaycee: “Wherever I go, birds grace the landscape. Every morning as I wake up, I think, what can I do today for conservation, birds, and how can I get others involved in protecting our environment. And, I want my grandkids to know ‘Gram was a bird brain, and she cared about our future.’ ”



*Kaycee Lichliter, County Coordinator, Clarke, Frederick, and Shenandoah counties  
Photo by Kaycee Lichliter*

### County Coordinator Changes

Several County Coordinators have retired or moved. All gave exceptional service to VBS and we give them unending gratitude for their service. If you live in or near any of the vacant counties and want to help, please let me know! [vabluebirdscordinator@gmail.com](mailto:vabluebirdscordinator@gmail.com)

And welcome to new coordinators and those that added new counties to their workload. We appreciate you!

### Departing County Coordinators:

Dale and Linda Kerns, Carrol and Grayson Counties

Carmen Bishop, Fairfax County

Christine Boran, Franklin County

Jill Meyer, Greene County

Carolyn Phillips, Hanover County

Sara Bell, Highland County

### New County Coordinators:

Dick Hendrix, Bedford and Franklin Counties

Lisa Catabiano, Buckingham County

Terry Atkinson, Hanover County

Rick Wailes, Loudoun County

Paula Boundy, Mathews County

## We’ve Given VBS the Data, Now what?

By Tony Daniel, VBS Director & Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, VBS President

We often receive questions about what we do with the nest box trail data we collect. Unfortunately, the North American Bluebird Society no longer asks affiliates to share data with them, and as it now exists, Cornell’s Nest Watch is neither especially user friendly nor is it configured to accept aggregated year end data. So, to answer to the question, ‘What does VBS do with its data?’ We collect and store data for purposes of trending bluebird populations and nesting box success of Eastern bluebirds, and other secondary cavity nesters in Virginia. This data is available upon request by agencies and entities as an environmental indicator and to ensure long term success of bluebirds and other secondary cavity nesters.

## New and Returning Members Joining Us Since November 2022

By Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, VBS President

Welcome to the following new and returning VBS members:

Melissa Bischooping	Dick Hendrix	Patricia Quinn
Judith Booker	Molly Higgins	Timothy Resch
Stephanie Bozarth	Monica A Hoffman	Lynnhaven School
Doug Brobst	Becky Holt	Carol VanDeventer
Angie Callaghan	Allen Jackson	Vince Ventimiglia
Michael Carlson	Christine Lashley	Cindy Vough
Roy Drake	Diane Lewis	Melinda Webb
Jane Dvonch	Rodney Lewis	Darlene Williams
Maureen Eiger	Kitty Monroe	Joe Wilson
Jennifer Ernst	Donna Murphy	Trudy Witt
Marie Fiorentino	Sue Puleo	Donna Zadnik
Larry Ham	Linda Quinn	Julie Zickefoose

## Highlights from the 2022 Twenty-five+1 Conference in November 2022



Julie Zickefoose, our keynote speaker on Friday night.



Dana Glen chats with Julie Zickefoose and Vickie Fuquay.



Mike Bishop accepts Bluebird of the Year on behalf of Paul Slebodnick



Valerie Kenyon Gaffney introduces Bet Zimmer Smith, [www.sialis.com](http://www.sialis.com), to group including Cathy Hindman, Judy Hall, Sandy Jeter, Carol Thompson, and Mary Lohman



Silent Auction items on display.



Valerie presents prize to Ines Nedelcovic, winner of Bluebird Bingo.



Clockwise from top right: Joanne Bricker, and Nancy Vehrs, President, Virginia Native Plant Society check out the native plant materials while Donna Murphy chats with Jessica Ruthenberg. Participants applaud Texas Bluebird Society co-founders Ron and Pauline Tom. Virginia Bluebird Society history on display. Jessica Ruthenberg, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources shares materials for interested conference attendees.



More photos on page 12

## Virginia Bluebird Society Nest Box Activity 2022

By Ann Dunn, Data Manager

The highly productive performance by our cavity nesters of 2021 was a hard act to follow, but the 2022 year group has done a satisfactory job. This year 26,777 new cavity nesters emerged, the largest number since pre- COVID years. The 2022 group came from 477 reporting trail sites with a total of 5188 nest boxes monitored by our dedicated VBS monitors. Species distribution was as follows: 70% bluebirds, 21% tree swallows, 7% House wrens, 2% Carolina chickadees along with several Tufted titmouse, Carolina wrens, brown headed nuthatches; no exotics appeared this year. The distinct differences in species distribution among the various Virginia Society of Ornithology regions are shown below (Figure 1).

2022 Species Distribution By Region*						
Species (Percent of Birds Fledging)						
Region	EABL	TRES	HOWR	CACH	Other	# of Boxes**
North	55	31	12	2	1	2134
East	99	<1	0	0		166
Southeast	88	4	4	4		413
Central	78	18	2	2		757
SouthCentral	87	9	2	2	<1	963
West	57	34	5	1		606
Southwest	67	26	0	6		82

\* Designates of the Virginia Society of Ornithology  
 \*\* Number of boxes monitored

Figure 1

Bluebirds represented 80 percent or more of fledglings in East, Southeast, and South-Central regions, while the remaining four regions held a range of 78 to 55 percent. Tree Swallows as always placed second in frequency, highest in regions where bluebirds were lowest so together the two species accounting for 90% of the breeding population in each region.

The 2022 season opened as usual with reports of “first egg “ arrivals in March. The overall average “first egg” date reported statewide for bluebirds was March 29 (matching the date for 2021). The average last fledge for bluebirds was August 17, giving a breeding duration of 142 days. Tree swallows began their season several weeks later and had a statewide “first egg” average date of April 19 and ended with an average last fledge date of July 15, giving a duration of 86 days (Figure 2).

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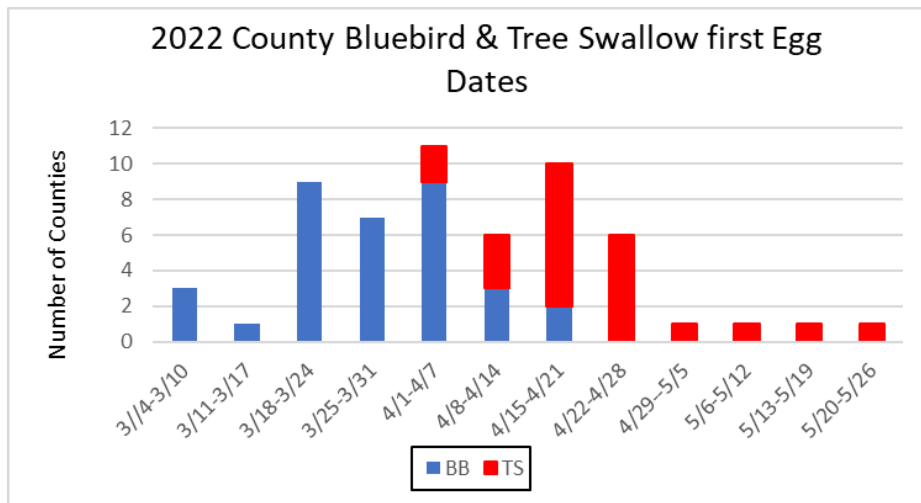


Figure 2

How successful were these nestlings compared to the highly productive year of 2021 and a prior 12-year average? The overall average of **Nest Box Productivity** (fledglings/box) in 2022 was 5.2, below that of 2021 (5.5), but above the 12-year average (5.0). **Nest Box usage**, (nesting attempts/box) was on average 1.5 in 2022 and 2021, making both higher than the 12-year average (1.4). **Nesting survival** (percent of eggs developed into fledglings) was only 77 % in 2022, significantly lower than both 2021 (81%) and the 12-year average (79%). Bluebirds appeared to have been most affected as their nesting survival dropped by 5 percentage points between 2021 (83%) and 2022 (78%). At the same time tree swallows dropped only a single percentage point from 76% in 2021, to 75% in 2022 .

As is usually the case, a weather event can help explain disruption to the nesting process. The dates for first hatchings of bluebirds and tree sparrows are mapped in Figure 3.

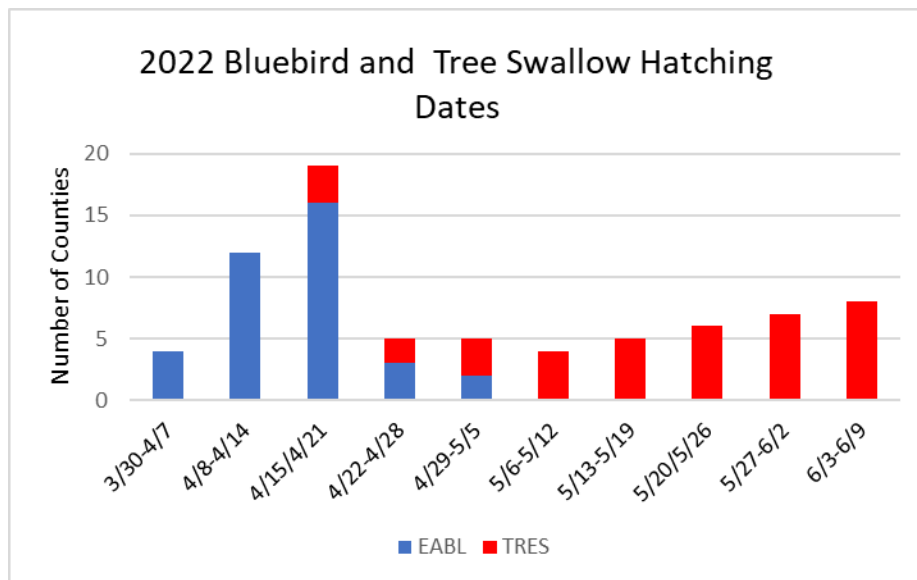


Figure 3

Most of the bluebird first hatching dates occurred during the three-week period 4/8 through 4/28. During that same time three separate cold snaps occurred, each presumably taking its toll on the bluebird hatchlings. In contrast, most of the tree swallows did not hatch until mid -May, and thereby were less subjected to the lethal effects of cold. This plays a reversal of the situation in 2021 where tree swallows, as later season breeders, appear to have been more negatively affected by the heat of summer than bluebirds.

The annual table summary of nest box activity is on the following page.

Many thanks are due our trail monitors who obtain and record all the numbers and to our State Coordinator, Charlene Talcott, who makes sure all the data is collected and passed along to me.

Best wishes to all for another busy and productive breeding season 2023; it is just around the corner.



Virginia Bluebird Society Nest Box Activity 2022

County	Trail Leader/County Coordinator	Number of Trails	Number of Boxes	Bluebirds				Chickadees				Tree Swallows				House Wrens				Other				All			
				Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	BB Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged	Nest Attempts	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged
Albemarle	Dunn, A.	34	352	454	1757	1567	1450	5	23	17	14	86	409	336	318	14	29	28	20	553	2218	1948	1802	5.1			
Arlington Co	Davis-Holland, A.	6	26	2	8	6	4	3	11	5	0	8	46	33	29	9	85	52	61	22	150	96	94	3.6			
Bedford	Hendriks, D.	2	24	46	196	151	151	4	5	4	4	5	24	16	16					52	225	177	171	7.1			
Buchanan	Mayhorn, R.	3	61	53	225	202	195	4	23	19	16	13	61	53	52					70	309	274	263	4.3			
Chesterfield	Keller, P.	3	68	73	319	286	274	1	5	0	8	34	28	23						2	10	6	3	C/T			
Clarke Co	Lichter, K.	1	132	100	393	323	275					111	543	398	367	6	31	17	17	218	968	738	659	5.0			
Culpepper	Dennee, B.	6	52	56	237	210	199	5	16	15	10	35	148	109	97	9	12	7	7	105	413	341	313	6.0			
Fairfax Co	Krob H. Kuruff, J. Bishop, C.	53	685	488	1986	1763	1713	31	146	111	106	276	1356	1164	1084	84	441	380	342	897	4016	3492	3308	4.8			
Fauquier	Wester, M.	1	100	78	302	207	197					59	279	217	209	9	51	47	42	148	640	471	448	4.5			
Floyd	Boran, C.	2	11	12	29	21	21					5	24	17	17	3	8	8	8	20	61	46	46	4.2			
Fluvanna	Dunn, A.	2	50	75	306	234	218	1	5	4	4	30	142	115	99	2	8	8		108	461	361	329	6.6			
*Frederick	Booker, J.	1	6	4	19	15	10													4	19	15	10	1.7			
Franklin	Boran, C.	2	33	36	159	134	121					5	26	22	22					36	159	134	121	3.7			
Goochland	Wallace, E.	1	9	17	74	61	61					2	9	9	9					22	100	83	68	9.2			
Grayson	Kems, D.&L.	2	14	19	80	59	59					2	9	9	9					21	89	68	68	4.9			
Greene	Meyer, J.	3	55	78	338	320	270	0	0	0	0	14	67	58	53					92	405	378	323	5.9			
Halifax	Fuquay, V.	3	31	34	137	124	124	3	18	14	14	10	50	41	41	3	15	15	15	45	194	178	176	5.7			
Henrico	Davis, C.	4	60	59	225	209	203	10	40	40	26	2	10	10	8	18	52	44	41	98	339	315	290	4.8			
Henry Co	Haley, D.	6	160	384	1596	1569	1523	1	5	5	5	3	14	14	14	3	14	14	14	388	1615	1588	1542	9.6			
Highland	Bell, S&N	2	21	17	364	51	45	0	0	0	0	11	51	43	27	4	21	14	0	32	436	108	72	3.4			
Isle of Wight	Langdon, L.	6	107	183	808	635	615	3	14	14	14	10	50	41	41	3	15	15	15	200	891	706	686	6.4			
King George	Settle, A.	3	34	57	217	183	179					1	4	4	4					58	221	187	183	5.4			
Lancaster	Bundy, P.	1	23	36	160	135	130	1	5	0	0									37	165	135	130	5.7			
Loudoun	Wailles, R.	58	686	484	1845	1576	1479	17	70	42	42	310	1273	1104	968	228	737	609	591	1054	3983	3359	3108	4.5			
Madison	Temples, P.	2	22	34	142	117	111					7	30	29	29					41	172	146	140	6.4			
Mathews	Haze, H.	1	4	4	15	15	15													4	13	12	12	6.8			
Montgomery	Weber, S.	8	108	72	314	271	246					64	265	204	175	18	75	60	60	155	660	539	485	4.5			
Nelson	Cattabiano, L.	9	114	111	473	414	379	1	6	6	6	37	174	135	118	1	6	3	3	150	659	558	506	4.4			
Northumberland	Mullins, J.	3	33	57	249	231	231	1	4	4	4									58	253	235	235	7.1			
Orange	Browning, C.	6	42	52	208	157	156	1	5	5	5	5	23	16	14	2	13	13	7	62	258	199	188	4.5			
Patrick	Boran, C.	3	64	115	499	420	386					5	27	24	24	5	27	21	21	125	553	465	431	6.7			
Pittsylvania	Fuquay, V.	150	675	869	3817	3478	3365	27	122	104	103	130	654	577	525	17	90	85	85	1047	4899	4252	4086	6.1			
Powhatan	McCullough, K.	3	29	36	142	128	120	5	28	27	27	8	35	32	28					49	205	187	175	6.0			
Prince William	Gaffney, V.	18	282	293	1193	936	886	10	48	33	33	92	434	343	312	23	118	106	97	420	1806	1422	1328	4.7			
Rappahannock	Patterson, B.	12	166	115	1478	412	389	10	49	47	33	22	94	72	72	6	2	0	0	155	1632	540	503	3.0			
Richmond Co	Narney, P.	1	17	8	33	31	31					2	8	4	4					10	41	35	35	2.1			
Richmond City	Davis, C.	1	18	21	99	87	86					2	10	4	4					23	109	91	90	5.0			
Rockbridge Co	Bernstein, B.	5	45	38	161	130	125	3	13	5	5	15	76	56	39	11	64	54	54	67	314	245	223	5.0			
Rockingham Co	Fisher, G.	5	34	29	119	77	70	5	19	17	13	2	9	9	5	6	30	23	21	42	177	126	109	3.2			
Roanoke	Whiteside/Logan/Repass	3	62	102	433	395	373	1	5	4	0	7	34	31	31	3	18	18	18	113	490	448	422	6.8			
Shenandoah	Lichter, K.	2	11	32	126	96	87					1	1	0	0					33	127	97	87	7.9			
Spotsylvania	Risseuw, D.	2	46	66	257	214	212	1	4	0	0	3	15	12	12	5	24	24	24	75	300	250	248	5.4			
Stafford/Fredburg City	Little, A.	20	193	164	702	578	543	5	22	16	12	78	399	333	318	15	100	89	88	267	1230	1019	961	5.0			
Surry	Carlson, J.&M.	3	41	66	279	260	255	3	8	5	5	104	507	403	348	17	89	61	60	69	287	265	260	6.3			
Warren	Morrison, C.	4	204	192	814	579	512	3	18	9	8	3	9	9	5					316	1428	1052	928	4.5			
Westmoreland	Narney, J.	3	59	81	346	313	312					3	9	9	5					84	355	322	317	5.4			
YorkCo/Newport News, Poquoson, Norfolk	Brown, R.	8	119	149	549	464	397	9	51	44	38									167	641	542	468	3.7			
		477	5188	5551	24228	19850	18803	171	788	625	551	1584	7389	6103	5536	532	2211	1838	1741	7906	34866	28585	26777	5.2			

## Thank You

From John Narney, Executive Editor

Many thanks to all who contributed to this edition of "The Bird Box". This is your newsletter. The editorial staff merely combines and organizes your input. The Box provides a forum for members to exchange ideas and experiences. This is especially important as a source for new Blurbirders. Although the Box only asks for your articles three time a year; you needn't wait for our call. Send the editors your articles as they happen. We are here at [birdboxeditor@gmail.com](mailto:birdboxeditor@gmail.com) all year.

## 27th Annual Purple Martin Field Day

Date: Saturday, June 24, 2023

Time: Presentations begin at 11:00 a.m. ET. Events end by 3:00 p.m.

Location: A private farm in Louisa County, VA (central VA, about 60 miles NW of Richmond)

How do you attract Purple Martins? At this event Lance Wood and several other presenters will teach you how to GET martins, attract MORE martins (if you already have some), and manage them properly. See a spectacular martin colony that has grown to more than 70 pairs! Buy gourd seeds and learn to modify them to create Purple Martin homes. Come and join the fun!

No registration. Event is FREE, but donations are appreciated to help cover expenses.

Bring lawn chairs, shoes for wet grass, binoculars, notepad, bag lunch/drink, and camera. Please do not bring pets.

### DIRECTIONS, PHOTOS, & MORE

INFORMATION: [www.purplemartinfieldday.org](http://www.purplemartinfieldday.org)

Questions? Call Kathy Laine at (434) 222-1831 and leave your name and phone number.

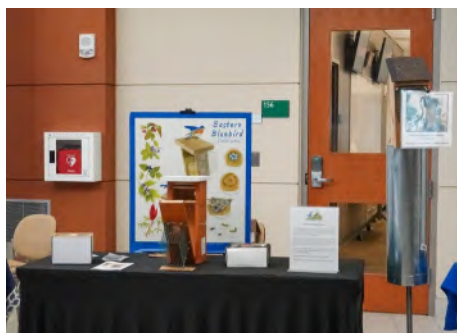


Participants view Purple Martin supercolony  
Photo by Kathy Laine

## Conference Highlights, continued from page 8

Top row, left to right: Presenting Bluebirds 101, Anne Little shows materials available for VBS monitors. *Bluebirds 101*. Doug Rogers presents *Photographing Birds*.

Bottom row, left to right: Bluebird box and guards recommended by VBS, and educational nest cams. Bet Zimmerman Smith and Kathy Kremnitzer present *Cobalt Conundrums, Puzzles and Problems on the Bluebird Trail*. Valerie Kenyon Gaffney 'makes a point.'







Newsletter of the

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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*.

Email your materials to John Narney.

# The Bluebird Advisor



## Why do we monitor bluebird nestboxes?

*(Reprinted from The Bluebird Box, Spring 2013)*

By Doug Rogers, Vice President, Trails (Editor at the time of the original article)

Answer: My best guess is that the answer will vary according to who you ask. Here are some possibilities:

- We love being out in nature and doing something to protect it.
- We love to see love and courtship, babies being born (make that, hatched) and the cycle of life going on.
- We love seeing the wonderful colors of male bluebirds.
- We love counting all of our “grandbirds.”
- We feel a kinship with an organization that brought a species back from the brink of extinction.
- We feel like we have made the world a better place - at least for the bluebirds.

If those reasons aren't enough, someone has to maintain the nest boxes to ensure that the birds don't have unwanted visitors. Wasps and spiders can kill the hatchlings and infest the parent birds. Rodents can move in and soil the nest boxes. When this happens, the bluebirds will not use them.

And don't you just love being a part of the lives of so many bluebirds?



*Bluebird pair  
Photo by Doug Rogers*

## Mark Your Calendars

- April 1** Begin monitoring bluebird nest boxes.  
**April 15** Remove ventilation plugs from nest boxes.  
**May 30** Deadline for submitting articles, photos, ideas, and artwork for Summer newsletter  
**June 24** Annual Purple Martin Field Day, Louisa County; see page 12 for information.  
**November 11** VBS Annual Meeting, Charlottesville, time and location TBA

Check out our *Facebook* page <https://www.facebook.com/Virginia-Bluebird-Society-133048243442687/> for photos and videos throughout the year, and follow us on *Twitter* at [https://twitter.com/VA\\_Bluebirds](https://twitter.com/VA_Bluebirds).

**How To Join:** Join online at [Virginia Bluebird Society \(neoncrm.com\)](http://neoncrm.com) or you can still use snail mail; send your name, address, phone number and email address along with a check, to:

Virginia Bluebird Society  
726 William Street  
Fredericksburg VA 22401

1 Year Individual or Family	\$25
3 Years Individual or Family	\$70
1 Year Sustaining	\$60
1 Year Endowment	\$25
Sponsor a nesting box	\$50

Membership forms are available on the VBS web site: <http://www.virginiabluebirds.org>

## Send An Article to *The Bird Box*

*We welcome articles and photos from our active VBS members. We want to share our success stories from your home and your trails. Send your original articles, photos, or artwork, or suggest a topic for a future newsletter. Submit materials to John Narney, Executive Editor, at [birdboxeditor@gmail.com](mailto:birdboxeditor@gmail.com) by May 30 to be considered for the Summer newsletter.*

*Please include:*

- ♦ *your contact information,*
- ♦ *your location, and*
- ♦ *original photos.*

*Please send photos separately, in jpeg format if at all possible, with identification of people and birds in photos, and name of photographer.*



The Virginia Bluebird Society is an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society. Supporting [NABS](#) provides support for Bluebirds everywhere.