

The Bird Box Bird Box

Summer 2022 Newsletter of the
Virginia Bluebird Society www.virginiabluebirds.org



Second Annual Bluebird Photo Contest

In March, Virginia Bluebird Society launched the second annual Facebook photo contest. It was a great success, and it is exciting to know that there are so many people who love bluebirds and who are so talented at capturing them in photos: in flight, taking care of fledglings, at feeders, perched, and even in the snow! Twenty-four photos were submitted and bracketed, and voting was then conducted by Facebook followers liking their favorite of two photos. Thanks to everyone who participated and congratulations to the winners.

Sherry Schellenger Parker's first place photo won her a complimentary signed copy of [Julie Zickefoose's](http://www.juliezickefoose.com) book, *Saving Jemima: Life and Love with a Hard-Luck Jay*, compliments of Julie. <http://www.juliezickefoose.com>

Sherry also won second prize, for which she received a gift certificate for 5,000 live mealworms, donated by [The Nature's Way](http://www.thenaturesway.com).

A one-year membership in VBS was awarded to Beverly Murdock, third place winner, and the fourth place photo was submitted by Carole Stone.

We look forward to holding the contest again next year and encourage everyone to start taking photos again so they will be ready for the next competition. Even with the contest over for this year, we still would love to see your photos. Please share to the Virginia Bluebird Society Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/virginiabluebirdsociety/> so everyone can enjoy them.



Above: First Place Winner
Sherry Schellenger Parker, Fairfax County.
Birds in the Cage

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Inside This Issue Item	Page
Second Annual Bluebird Photo Contest	1-2
Save the Date	2
Red-headed Woodpecker Nest in a Bluebird Box	3
Email Scam Alert	3
Southside Virginia's Builder and Helper	4
Ants, Sparrows, and Pesticides	4
Bear Attack	5
Special Thanks	6-7
Joint Nesting in Bluebirds	7
Greene Community Park Trail News	7
What's Happening With Educational Nest Cam Grants	8
Spotlight on County Coordinators	10
Attracting Birds With Native Plants	10-11
Join NABS	10
The Bluebird Advisor	11
Mark Your Calendars	12
How To Join VBS	12
Send An Article to The Bird Box	12

Continued on page 2



Left: Second Place Winner, Sherry Schellenger Parker, Fairfax County, Virginia
Flying Blues



Above: Third Place Winner, Beverly Murdock, Virginia
Kissy Face

Below: Fourth Place Winner, Carol Stone, Virginia
Wing Waving



SAVE *the* DATE

VIRGINIA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY'S

BIENNIAL CONFERENCE



Registration opens early September. Contact Valerie Kenyon Gaffney - with questions. vbs@virginiabluebirds.org

Location: NVCC's Workforce Center Woodbridge, VA

TWENTY FIVE +1 CELEBRATING THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF OUR FOUNDING

NOVEMBER 11 & 12
Friday Evening (6-8pm)
Saturday (9am-3pm)

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: JULIE ZICKEFOOSE



Virginia Bluebird Society
www.virginiabluebirds.org



Bluebird photo by: Randy Streufert, 2014

Red-headed Woodpecker Nests in an Eastern Bluebird Nest Box

An exciting event took place on the Shenandoah Audubon/ Blandy Bluebird Trail at Blandy Experimental Farm in Clarke County, Virginia, during the 2021 nest monitoring season. A pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) was discovered to have enlarged a bluebird nest box entry hole and made a nesting attempt. To read the full report, along with photos, by Trail Manager Ms. Kaycee Lichliter, go to <https://www..org/post/red-headed-woodpeckers-nest-in-bluebird-house>



Above right: Red-headed Woodpecker flying aerial acrobatics outside the nest box

Left: Enlarged entrance hole of a bluebird box

Right: Pink Red-headed Woodpecker eggs in a bluebird nest box

All photos by Kaycee Lichliter



EMAIL SCAM ALERT

From: (Bluebird Society member)

To: your email address

Hello _____,

Virginia Bluebird Society needs you to purchase gift cards for ...

Some members are receiving emails that claim to be from a member of VBS. Usually they ask for money or gift cards. Even though they may have the name of a board member on them, the people that are being “spoofed” have no idea their identity is being used.

If an email looks fishy, check the email address. Is it the one the sender usually uses? Are they asking for donations to causes that VBS does not engage in, such as programs for veterans, or pleas to help sick children? Officers or members of VBS will **NEVER** ask you for gift cards. Do not respond to these emails (even if they ask you to) or forward them. If you are ever in doubt, contact the person that you think sent the email at their regular address or by phone, not by responding to the email. If you don’t know their email address, you can check the list of board members at [Virginia Bluebird Society — About VBS — Officers](#). Please do not forward the email as it could contain a virus.

Thieves learn new technology at a rapid pace, and it’s sometimes difficult to keep up with these pros. Keep your guard up and don’t be a victim.

Southside Virginia's Builder and Helper of Bluebirds

By Vickie Fuquay, VBS Vice President

David Torborg first became involved with our area bluebirds as a Boy Scout leader when one of his scouts completed his Eagle Project by building bluebird houses through our VBS Grant program. David has always loved woodworking and these bluebird houses spiked his interest.

After losing Harry Pruitt, the man who first designed our school camera box, and then finding out our new supplier could no longer construct the boxes, David stepped up to the plate with his carpentry skills to help both Raywood Landscape Center in Danville and Virginia Bluebird Society fulfill their needs.

Since 2015 he has built 290 bluebird boxes complete with baffles and pole systems. In 2020 he began building the nest cam boxes for VBS and has modified some to sell locally to homeowners who want to use the Blink outdoor camera. He has built around 35 camera boxes with 20 of them placed around the state on school grounds and parks.



David also became a bluebird nest box monitor on the Danville Riverwalk Trail in 2015. He has become my right hand man to call when there is a need on the trail for anything from broken poles, to house repairs and even sparrow control help! He has bluebird houses on public land through VBS grants now in Blackstone, Staunton River State Park, and Wayside Park, as well as all the local houses we sell at Raywood Landscape to homeowners. Not only has he made Noel Guards but goes on site to convert the way the boxes open in order to add the guards. Many of our houses have been up since 2006 when our Danville bluebird trail was begun. David is always ready to help with a repair, relocate boxes and count eggs and baby blues.



Above: David Torborg in his workshop
Left: Boxes, baffles, and poles ready for use
Photos by Vickie Fuquay

Ants, Sparrows, and Pesticides – a Horrific Month on the Trail

By Anne Little, Fredericksburg, Virginia

This past month has been a difficult one for our bluebird trail. After a particular heavy rainstorm, we had a massive invasion of ants in many of our nest boxes. We had placed Vaseline on the poles (underneath the snake guards so that the Vaseline did not get on the feathers of the birds) but the ants were able to cross those barriers. I watched with horror as thousands of ants carried their eggs up the poles and into the boxes. I always try to carry a spare clean nest in our bucket for such occasions. I quickly scooped out the infected nest, placed the three living nestlings (about 5 days old) into our bucket on a clean towel and covered the bucket. We then swept out the ants from the box, applied diatomaceous earth (DT) around the base of the pole as well as swept some DT into the cracks of the nest box. We were not going to be able to place the nestlings back into the box, the parents were not around, and I spotted two house sparrows on a nearby branch. They were probably the cause of the two dead nestlings and maybe the absent parents. The only recourse would be to get them to a licensed rehabilitator. The nearest rehabilitator is an hour away, and it was late in the day.

The main thing to do with orphan nestlings is to ensure they stay warm. Nestlings can succumb to cold and die quickly. They need to stay at a temperature of about 95 degrees at that age. I placed them in a small box in a dark area of our workshop at home and placed a microwave heating pad in the box near them but not too close to overheat. It is a difficult balance. I was able to feed them each a few mealworms every 15 minutes until dark (never give nestlings water and only feed them if you cannot get them to a rehabilitator right away and only if they open their beaks). One nestling was not eating and had some ugly peck marks on his head; it did not look good for him. The next morning, I drove them to the rehabilitator and dropped them off. Unfortunately, the injured nestling had already died on the way, but the other two seemed fine. They did well for about five days, and then one of them died, and the other is struggling as I write this article. There are no easy answers to orphan nestlings. Rehabilitators do their best and are trained to deal with all sorts of emergencies, but nature is unpredictable.

We had also found ants in a tree swallow box that day, and the parents refused to go into the box to feed the nestlings. We were able to remove the ants, and the parents proceeded to feed the young once the ants were gone.

We also lost four nestlings to pesticide spray by a local tree company spraying for needle drop near the box. The nestlings probably ingested insects contaminated from the spray. We have since moved the box.

Takeaway from these traumas: 1. Place heavy Vaseline on the pole and renew it frequently. 2. Carry spare nests with you always (sparrow nests make great spare nests). 3. Check boxes after heavy rainstorms. 4. Communicate with groundskeepers about the danger of pesticide sprays to nestlings.

Bear Attack!

By Brion Patterson, Rappahannock County

Wednesday April 27, 2022 was Hatch Day for five bluebird fledglings in our front yard. For the next twelve days we enjoyed watching these hatchlings, until disaster occurred. On the morning of May 9, we discovered that the pole had been pushed over, the roof and front door of the nest box had been ripped off, two nestlings were nowhere to be seen and the other three were mangled bloody corpses on the ground. A bear had attacked during the night!

Bears are the biggest hazard to bluebird houses in rural Rappahannock County. Local bluebird aficionados Barney and Mary O'Meara (32 boxes) and Bruce and Susan Jones (69 boxes) both have extensive bluebird trails on their home properties in Rappahannock. With their extensive experience with raising bluebirds in bear territory, I believe that Barney and Bruce may be the foremost experts on deterring bear attacks on birdhouses, so I asked them for advice. Barney and Bruce have each developed their own unique techniques, and both claim at least some success.

Barney O'Meara's advice is fairly easy to implement. Barney told me, "We have had much less bear damage since we added a different sort of snake guard on top of our lower baffles: it's a 3 foot x3 foot piece of what's commonly called hardware cloth, or rat wire, that has 1/2" openings. Noel guards are usually made of the same wire. Most of our lower baffles are re-purposed five-gallon buckets, inverted and with a 1-7/8" hole in the center of the bottom that slips over our PVC pipes. The bucket bottoms are about 1' in diameter and thus do a decent job of supporting the wire panels. The center of the wire panel also has the same size hole and just slips over the pipe and rests on the bucket.

I think the key might be that the panel keeps the bear approximately an arm's length from the box, especially if the cut edges of the wire are positioned in front of the entry hole. I think they are prickly enough to

discourage a bear that tries to get close to the box and gets poked through its fur. It does make monitoring a bit more difficult, too, as the wire ends poke humans equally well."



Bruce Jones modifies the nest boxes significantly, but the great news is that they have had complete success. As Bruce says, "We are very familiar with the situation, and the worst part is that the bear(s) imprint on the bluebird boxes over time so they will continue to hit them over the summer and even in the fall, with no eggs or birds to devour! Since we have lost so many boxes over the past three to four years, we resorted to elevating the boxes up about 2 1/2 feet, not knowing if the bears would continue to destroy. And they did not! We have elevated approximately 30-35 boxes and no bear damage to date. The key downside: monitoring is fairly difficult. We have a good size golf cart and can stand on the bed and monitor, but it's a pain! We used a flange screwed to the top of a half round or any wooden post you are using, and a 2 1/2' steel rod with another flange on the bottom of the box. But the best part, the bluebirds and tree swallows have filled every one."

Recently, however, one of Bruce's next boxes did suffer a bear attack, despite being protected by the extended pole.



Top right: 3 foot x 3 foot hardware cloth deterrent on nestbox pole

Photo by Barney O'Meara

Bottom left: Bluebird nestbox elevated with a 12 1/2 foot pole extension to discourage bear attacks.

Photo by Bruce Jones

Special Thanks

With grateful appreciation to the following 2021/2022 Sustaining and Endowment members for their support of VBS:

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Marie Riedel
William Sawyer
Margaret Wester
Southside Bird Club

Joint Nesting in Bluebirds

By Pamela Wheatley, Chesterfield County

For the second year in a row now, at Pocahontas State Park, we have had the wonderful opportunity to see joint nesting in action. In each instance, there were 8 eggs brooded by two female bluebirds. This year we saw them together on the nest and last year they both left the box as it was opened. Recently we also observed two females and one male actively feeding the young. There is no indication that the same birds were involved both years since the boxes are in different areas of the park. All but one of the 16 nestlings successfully fledged!



This behavior is apparently rare in Eastern Bluebirds but more common in Western Bluebirds. It is likely due to limited availability of male bluebirds or an insufficient number of suitable nesting cavities.

Whatever the reason, we are very fortunate to observe and learn about this uncommon nesting adaptation on our trail.



Above left: Eight bluebird eggs in one nestbox (one egg is hidden by the others)

Above right: A jumble of nestlings, seven visible in this photo; we counted eight one week.

Photos by Pam Wheatley

Greene Community Park Bluebird Trail News

By Jen Lebendig, Greene County

Marianne Shepard and I, both members of Old Rag Master Naturalists, are the newest monitors of Greene Community Park's Bluebird Trail. We've established a routine of monitoring on Sundays and will often bring our dogs for a romp in the park at the same time.

"The trail consists of 10 boxes. So far this season we have one box being used by one bluebird couple, and several boxes with tree swallow nests and dummy nests. We currently have a second nesting of bluebirds in their preferred box. One of our active tree swallow nests has successfully hatched. The other active tree swallow nest seems to have succumbed to a predator as the eggs are no longer present. We hope to see more activity in the coming weeks.

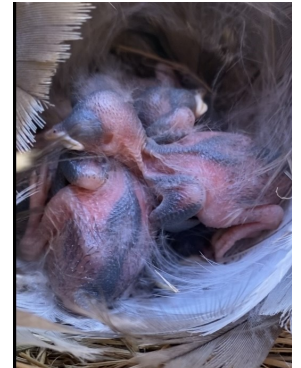
First photo: Our first brood of bluebirds on the last day they could be checked, May 16.

Second photo: Second batch of eggs close to hatching, June 5.

Third photo: Typical shallow tree swallow nest lined with feathers.

Fourth photo: Tree Swallow hatchlings, about five days old, June 5.

Photos by Jen Lebendig



What's Happening With Educational Nestcam Grants

By Vickie Fuquay, VBS Vice President

We have had a busy spring. With the help of Charlene Talcott, our State Coordinator, we are in the process of reaching out to schools that have nest cams. This program started in 2011 and after a slow beginning by 2013, the requests started rolling in. In the past year we changed the name of the grant from School Nestcam Grant to Educational Nestcam Grant, broadening our scope of who can apply. The new title shows we are all about educating the school children, as well as the general public. What better way than to include visitor centers in state parks that have active bluebird trails!

We now have nest cams in three state parks, with a request just coming in for another. We are receiving great feedback on how visitors are loving to watch the monitors with a view from inside the nest box. The newest state park to come aboard is Shenandoah River State Park, [General information \(virginia.gov\)](http://www.virginia.gov). The nest box and camera were shipped out in late April and I recently learned they have a bluebird nest being built right now.

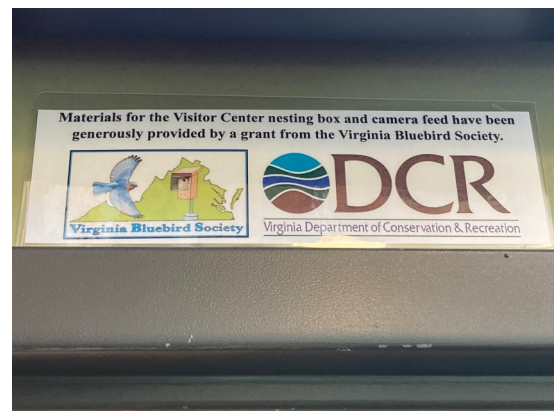
In contacting the lead, Davey Allen, about the box, he sent photos and the following statement:

"Shenandoah River State Park is proud to be working with the Virginia Bluebird Society on this bluebird nest camera project. We have well over a hundred bird boxes in our park, but have been in need of a good way to show our guests exactly how they help the native wildlife. The box and camera provided by VBS are invaluable interpretive tools. It's great to see that bluebirds have begun a nest within just a few weeks of the box being installed, and we're excited to see how things progress from here."

My other activity is in response to Charlene reaching out to schools that already have camera boxes. I have shipped out two cameras to schools with non-functioning cameras. They are back up and running with active nests. One teacher was never able to get wiring into the school so we have traded out his camera for a wireless model since he has an electrical outlet outside near the nest box.

Teachers who received cameras in previous years may have moved, retired, or transferred to another school. If you are with a school that has a nest box with a camera that is no longer being used, please contact us. We will help you get it up and going and ready to bring the excitement and wonder into the class room. VBS also wants to remind you that once school is out to please continue to have weekly checks to monitor the nest box. We want to make sure only native cavity nesters use our boxes and that old nests are removed making room for a new family to raise their young.

For more information about educational nestcams, contact vickiefuquay@comcast.net



Top left: Nest box camera feed showing five bluebird eggs, at Shenandoah River State Park.

Top right: Information sign at the Visitor Center at Shenandoah River State Park.

Bottom left: Bluebird nest in a box with live feed camera.

Bottom right: First egg.

Photos by Davey Allen

Spotlight on County Coordinators

Virginia Bluebird Society is fortunate to have County Coordinators that serve on the North American Bluebird Society board. The following information is from their biographies on Board of Directors – North American Bluebird Society (nbluebirdsociety.org)

Cathy Hindman, County Coordinator for Prince William along with VBS President Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, monitors three trails. She enjoyed identifying backyard birds with a field guide in childhood, and was introduced to bluebird conservation in Bermuda when her husband was stationed there with the US Navy from 1987-1990. Cathy has monitored nest boxes for over 20 years, and served as president of the Virginia Bluebird Society for four years. A lifelong learner, she never tires of opening a nest box and discovering a new life.



Christine Boran, County Coordinator for Floyd, Franklin, and Patrick Counties relishes

retirement in the Blue Ridge Highlands of Southwest Virginia. Never seeing a bluebird before, it was here in early spring 2006, upon moving into a vintage farmhouse, she experienced her first sight of a bluebird couple feeding hatchlings at an existing weathered nestbox installed by the previous owners on a wooden post on the home grounds. Much to her disappointment, both bluebird broods that season perished from snake predation and 100-degree heat. She then attempted to troubleshoot why those nestings failed at the nestbox and started researching bluebirds and proper nestbox installations online. She found NABS and later the Virginia Bluebird Society, joined both organizations, and then planned and installed a bluebird trail of the first 14 nest boxes in her quaint mountain community and named it the Woolwine House Bluebird Trail. She manages a website with a coordinating Facebook page by the trail's name featuring the weekly trail

highlights. Today, the trail is at her goal of fifty nestboxes. She monitors and reports the nesting records to the Virginia Bluebird Society and to Cornell NestWatch. She enjoys educating others on monitoring protocols and nest box management of all native cavity nesting birds that use bluebird nestboxes. Christine maintains annual certification with the Virginia Master Naturalists. Her other hobbies include macro photography, weather monitoring and reporting, birding by ear, hummingbirds, music, antiques, and hiking. Christine is a NABS Life Member, chairs the NABS Facebook Committee and is a member of the Education, Hotline, and Nestbox committees. Christine also serves the Virginia Bluebird Society on the Board of Directors and as a County Coordinator, and previously served as Virginia Bluebird Society's State Coordinator for four years.

VBS member **Peggy McKee** is not a County Coordinator, but serves as a Treasurer for NABS, as well as chairing the NABS Finance Committee. Peggy and her husband Pat have lived in Frederick County, Virginia since 1989, when they bought a historic farmhouse on a few acres of open pastureland and moved from Alexandria, Virginia. Peggy retired from a career in education and non-profit management, during which she founded and advanced several organization including the Lord Fairfax Association for the Education of Young Children and the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, and was an advancement contractor for the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. Peggy's first memory of birdwatching was when her mother hung a feeder right outside the kitchen window, and she and her brother and sister learned to name towhees, cardinals, titmice, nuthatches, and chickadees. From those days until the present she has loved watching, feeding, counting, and learning about these fascinating and indispensable creatures. Her most recent accomplishment regarding avian life is her completion of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Comprehensive Bird Biology online course. Peggy and Pat are devoted to the task of

eliminating invasive plant species from their fourteen acres and planting native species of trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. They put up six bluebird nesting boxes in 2020 and are monitoring them. In 2021, they planted more than fifty native trees. Peggy's other hobbies include gardening, cooking, hiking, and above all, spending time with three adorable grandchildren.

Virginia Bluebird Society is fortunate to be so well represented on the board of the North American Bluebird Society.



Attracting (and Feeding) Birds with Native Plants

By Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, VBS President

In previous articles, I discussed berry-producing native shrubs that serve as important winter food sources for bluebirds. Switching things up a bit, this article is going to focus on providing food for the hatchlings: Growing the plants, that grow the caterpillars, that feed the nestlings, that become our beloved Blues.

According to Doug Tallamy, a professor of entomology and wildlife ecology at the University of Delaware, “Even though it is a member of the thrush family and is related to robins, the Eastern Bluebird relies more on caterpillars than any other food source while feeding its young.”

In a March 11, 2015, *New York Times* op-ed entitled, “The Chickadee’s Guide to Gardening,” Dr. Tallamy wrote that, “an incredible 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars are required to make one clutch of chickadees.” It’s not a far stretch to think it takes at minimum an equal number to raise a clutch of Eastern Bluebirds. The question then becomes, what are we doing to grow caterpillars in our backyards?

While I’m sure a baby Blue would be happy with just about any caterpillar, I decided to focus this article on growing one species of caterpillar: the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, *Papilio glaucus*. Why, you ask? Because it’s quite likely the butterfly we see most frequently, and it happens to be the Official State Insect of Virginia.

The Female Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, during its very brief life span of about two weeks, will lay as many as 250 eggs, a few at a time, on plants in the magnolia and rose families. The caterpillar hatches in 10 - 14 days, and over



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly
Photo by Valerie Kenyon Gaffney



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail caterpillar
Photo by Judy Gallagher

the course of the next three to four weeks, goes through five instars. From something that looks remarkably like bird droppings, it becomes fat, juicy, highly nutritious bird food.



Tulip Tree blossom

Host plants for these hundreds of eggs include the Tulip-tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), the Wild Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) and the Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*).

The Tulip Tree (also known as Tulip Poplar, or Yellow Poplar) is a member of the magnolia family. One of the tallest and most beautiful eastern hardwoods, it has a long, straight trunk, a narrow crown that spreads with age, and large showy flowers resembling tulips or lilies. Insect and disease free, it grows very rapidly in deep, rich, well-drained soils. The Tulip Tree is a favorite nesting tree for birds, the flowers attract hummingbirds, and more importantly for today’s discussion, it’s a host plant for the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail.

A member of the rose family, Wild Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) is the largest and most important native cherry. Handsome trunk and branches, attractive foliage, easy to grow, with ornamental blooms and luscious fruit. What’s not to love? The fruit is consumed by no less than 33 species of birds, plus humans (think wild cherry cough syrup, cherry jelly,



Above: Blossoms of Wild Cherry

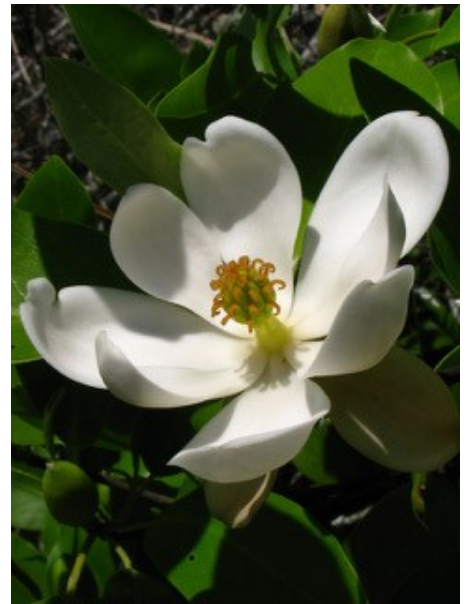
and cherry wine) and has special value to native bumblebees and honeybees. In addition to the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Wild Black Cherry is the host plant for nine additional species of lepidoptera.

The third of the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail host plants, Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*) is described on the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center as ‘attractive, aromatic, showy’ and ‘without serious disease or insect problems.’ Native to both the Piedmont and Coastal Plain, this slow growing, semi-evergreen tree makes a good choice as a specimen tree or for a small patio. The creamy white, fragrant blossoms produce dark red, conelike fruits with bright red seeds in September. In fact, the Sweetbay Magnolia is practically a one-stop shop: nectar for the adult butterfly, succulent leaves for the caterpillars, and juicy caterpillars for the birds.

While the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail larva are feeding on our Tulip Trees and Wild Black Cherries and Sweetbay Magnolias, and the nestling bluebirds are chowing down on the larva, the adult butterflies are getting their sustenance from the nectar of a whole host of native plants: *Monarda fistulosa* (Wild Bergamot), *Eutrochium fistulosum* (Hollow Joe-pye-weed), *Pycnanthemum tenuifolium* (Narrow-leaf Mountain-mint) to mention just a few. But we’ll leave that discussion for another time. Right now, there’s a nest box full of gaping hatchlings to be fed.

Resources:

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Above Right: Blossom of Sweetbay Magnolia.

Left: Sweetbay Magnolia seed pod.

The President's Box

Four months and counting! The VBS board is hard at work planning our conference, **Twenty-Five + 1** in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of Virginia Bluebird Society. We'll be gathering on November 11 and 12 in northern Virginia -- nowhere more appropriate since that was the site of the first VBS conference. And we are thrilled to have as keynote speaker **Julie Zickefoose**, who was keynote speaker at that first conference.



We listened to your feedback following the 2019 conference and already have some fun and informative breakout sessions planned -- more and longer as requested. Our own **Anne Little**, a founding member and former president of VBS will present on **Bluebirding 101 & 102: Getting Started With Bluebirds**.

Bet Zimmerman Smith, lifetime North American Bluebird Society member, owner of the website sialis.org, and keynote speaker at our 2019 conference, will be returning. Bet, along with NABS director **Kathy Kremnitzer**, will share answers to the tough questions, some that never occur to you until it's an emergency.

Jessica Ruthenberg, Watchable Wildlife Biologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources will present on creating backyard habitat. Yes, if you build it they will come, and Jessica will give you tips and tricks on building bluebird habitat in your own backyard.

And that's not all. Along with time built in for networking with your fellow bluebirders, we're also in discussions to offer additional breakout sessions, plus an early Saturday morning bird walk along the [Neabsco Creek Boardwalk](#).

I hope you'll mark your calendars to join us **November 11 and 12** at the Woodbridge campus of **Northern Virginia Community College** as we celebrate **Twenty-Five + 1**.

Award Nominees Desired

Virginia Bluebird Society is celebrating **25 + 1** in November. As part of that celebration we are seeking bluebirders in Virginia who might qualify for our awards. These dedicated individuals are out in the field monitoring our trails and recruiting monitors for established and new trails. Without their efforts the outcomes for the Blue bird population would be diminished.

Charlene Talcott, Anne Little and Mary Lohman are the Awards Committee members on the hunt for potential award recipients. Do you know one or more individuals who are especially deserving of recognition? If so, we would like to hear from you. Along with the nominee's name, please tell us why you think they deserve such recognition. We present awards in four categories:

County Coordinator of the Year

We are seeking county coordinators who go beyond basic collection and collation of the data from their county. Some coordinators write articles for publication in local papers and do speaking engagements to raise awareness of the mission of VBS.

Bluebirder of the Year

An individual worthy of this award recognition is a leader in promoting Bluebirds in Virginia. The person chosen promotes the profile of the bluebird as an indigenous species challenged by development and a changing environment. These dedicated individuals take advantage of outreach to community groups, schools, and media to promote VBS's dedication and love of bluebirds.

Volunteer of the Year

This award honors an individual who promotes and enhances the Virginia Bluebird Society. Organizations like VBS don't stand still. They need to grow and flourish if they are to remain relevant. We are looking for someone who helps us do just that.

The VBS "Heritage Award"

This special award is not given every year. The award recognizes an individual dedicated to the care and rescue of the Bluebird. This Bluebirder has been active over many years promoting a love of all things Bluebird.

Please send this email to your monitors for their suggestions.

Suggestions including reasons for the nomination should be emailed to the following:

Charlene Talcott vabluebirdscoordinator@gmail.com

Anne Little thegate@cox.net

Mary Lohman lmlohman@yahoo.com

Selected awardees will be notified prior to our VBS Conference in November where the awards will be presented. This is going to be a very special celebration!



Newsletter of the
Virginia Bluebird Society
www.virginiabluebirds.org

Our email address is:
vbs@virginiabluebirds.org

If you have a new email address, or have recently changed it, please let us know.

Valerie Kenyon Gaffney, President
 (c) 703-973-9194
 email: vkg3105@gmail.com

Vickie Fuquay, Vice President, Education
 (c) 434-822-0930
 email: vickiefuquay@comcast.net

Doug Rogers, Vice President, Trails
 (c) 434-409-8156
 email: birdphotog76@gmail.com

Cathy Hindman, Secretary
 (h) 703-590-0715
 email: cathy20112@gmail.com

Mary Lohman, Treasurer
 (c) 703-994-9196
 email: mllohman@yahoo.com

Directors:

Christine Boran (c) 276-229-8648
 email: woolwinehouse@gmail.com

Tony Daniel (c) 804-892-6139
 email: pathfinderpotter@gmail.com

Sandy Jeter (c) 703-867-3444
 email: sanmar@aol.com

Mark Murphy
 email: mark@mmurphy.net

Courtney Sokolowski
 email: csokolowski@harrisonburg.k12.va.us

Cathy Hindman, Past President (h) 703-590-0715
 email: cathy20112@gmail.com

Ann Dunn, Data Manager
 (h) 434-296-3496
 email: amddunn@gmail.com

Charlene Talcott, State Coordinator
 (c) 804-462-0227
 email: vabluebirdscordinator@gmail.com

Judy Hall, The Bird Box Editor
 (h) 804-790-0437
 email: birdboxeditor@gmail.com

We welcome your written items and artwork (photos and drawings) for *The Bird Box*.
 Email your materials to Judy Hall.

The Bluebird Advisor

By Christine Boran and Anne Little



Bird Rescue

Q: I found a baby bird. What should I do?

A: Before attempting to rescue a baby bird, you **must make sure it is truly orphaned**. Observe a nest you THINK might be abandoned for 2 hours before rescuing. Parents may fly in and out of nest within seconds while feeding. Nestlings can live 24 hours without food. **See more on widows/widowers and what to do if one or both parents are gone**.

If the bird is clearly orphaned, and does need to be rescued **bring it to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator** as soon as possible. Some rehabbers are very busy (many mouths to feed, other jobs, etc.) and may not return calls right away.

In the interim:

Put the orphaned bird in a small box or bowl lined with a paper towel or coffee filter that can be changed out underneath, cover it lightly with a smooth cloth (this will help it conserve heat and prevent it from becoming even more stressed- darkness calms them down), and keep it warm (e.g., set the container on a heating pad set on LOW or use a warmed sock filled with rice - see above.)

- Keep it away from people and pets and avoid handling it, which will stress it out even further.
- You should not put **anything** in the baby's mouth. **NEVER give baby songbirds water or liquids** - they can inhale it and die. Songbird nestlings get their moisture from food (unlike pigeons and doves.)
- Do not put food or liquid into the container - baby birds do not feed themselves.

Never feed anything to an animal that is debilitated or dehydrated - even if it is begging. Food fed to a cold bird can sit in its crop and ferment because their digestive system is shutting down. They need to be re-hydrated using a special solution, by a licensed wildlife rehabber.

It is best not to feed the bird - as noted above, they can go 24 hours without eating. Each type of bird has different dietary requirements. Most songbird nestlings eat insects, but some like House Finches don't.

SOMETIMES it is possible to "foster" an orphaned bird into an active nest if it is the **same species** (e.g., a bluebird nestling in a bluebird nest), and the birds are the **same age (or the orphan is a day or two older)** - see more info.

I'll say it again - **get any orphaned or injured wild bird to a licensed wildlife rehabber as soon as you possibly can**. Do not attempt to raise a wild baby bird. **Many are killed by good intentions and might have survived if brought to a trained professional**. Under no circumstances try to make a pet out of a wild native bird.

NOTE: This issue's advice is copied with permission from www.sialis.com.

You can also visit [Wildlife Rescue — Virginia Bluebird Society](http://WildlifeRescue-VirginiaBluebirdSociety) for information. North American Bluebird Society also maintains a hotline for bluebird emergencies: [Hotline – North American Bluebird Society \(nabluebirdsociety.org\)](http://Hotline-NorthAmericanBluebirdSociety(nabluebirdsociety.org)) .

Do you have a question for the next newsletter's Bluebird Advisor? Send it to: woolwinehouse@gmail.com.

Mark Your Calendars

- June and July** Continue monitoring nest boxes; check for parasites such as wasps, blowflies, and ants.
- July 16, 10:00 am** Quarterly VBS board meeting via Zoom. Check your email for further details, or contact vbs@virginiabluebirds.org for link to attend meeting.
- August 30** Deadline for submitting articles, photos, ideas, and artwork for fall newsletter.
- September** Collect trail data and send to county coordinator and State Coordinator Charlene Talcott at vabluebirdscoordinator@gmail.com.
- October 29, 11:00 am** NABS Virtual Conference: <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/Conference/>
- November 11-12, 2022** Save the date! VBS Conference **Twenty-five + One**

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.

How To Join

Go to [Virginia Bluebird Society](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org) and click on Support VBS. You can also join or renew by snail mail. Send your name, address, phone number and/or email address along with a check for

- \$25 for a one-year General membership
- \$75 for a three-year General membership
- \$60 for a one-year Sustaining membership
- \$100 for a one-year Endowment membership to:

Virginia Bluebird Society
726 William Street
Fredericksburg VA 22401

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

You are invited ...



to join the North American Bluebird Society! Our Virginia Bluebird Society is an affiliate of NABS which is also a 501c3 non-profit who shares our mission of conservation of native cavity nesting birds. Your support of NABS with a membership provides annual grants in education, conservation and research. NABS provides a telephone hotline for real time help with nest box problems. NABS provides four issues of *Bluebird*, a color journal, and fact sheets with information on how to become a successful bluebirder. Please support NABS today. More information is available at www.nabluebirdsociety.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. Send your original articles, photos, or artwork, or suggest a topic for a future newsletter. Submit materials to Judy Hall, Editor, at birdboxeditor@gmail.com by August 30 to be considered for the fall newsletter. Please include your location, identification of people and birds in photos, and name of photographer or artist. Please send photos separately as jpg files if at all possible.