

TEXAS



The Newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society

Volume 3, issue 6

December 2004

This is the DRAFT low-resolution version of our new "Texas Blues" banner.

IN THIS NEWSLETTER ...

This newsletter is sent along with the previous issue. It gets us "caught up". We'll start Volume 4 (2005) in January.

This particular issue features our new Executive Committee as writers.

LeAnn Sharp, Vice-President, tells a heartwarming story of bluebird hope for the Christmas Season.

Mary Leyendecker, Secretary, "afterglows" following her first convention.

Pauline Tom, President, shares a favorite recipe.

Happy Holidays!



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

from the Texas Bluebird Society Board of Directors

(left to right)

LeAnn Sharp, Concan

Lee Hutchins, Sinton

Pauline Tom, Mountain City

Judy Brummet, Paris

Dan Hanan, Houston / Bastrop

(Lamont Brown is no longer serving)

Mary Leyendecker, Corpus Christi
(not pictured)

Mark Klym, Bastrop

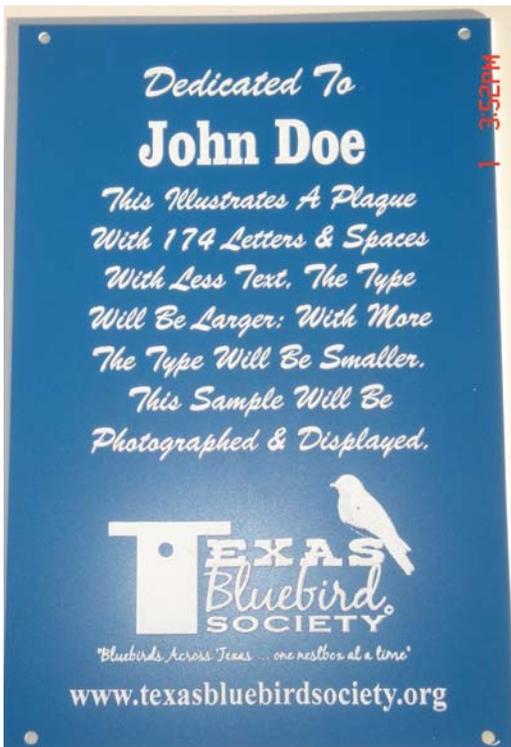
John Cys, Wichita Falls

Mike Scarbrough, Keller

Cheryl Anderson, Azle

Sharon Kersten, Cameron

Charles Post, Liberty



True Blue Friend

Order by December 14th
for delivery (of notification letter) by Dec 24th

Pictured is the preliminary sample.

The top line on the final version will read "True Blue Friend".

Other details may vary.

Allow 5 weeks for delivery.

Bluebird Trail Brings Christmas Gifts With Meaning

By LeAnn Sharp, TBS Vice-President

My parents Roger & Lora B. Garrison moved back to their Families' Hill Country Ranch near Utopia, Texas in 1973. For several years they enjoyed watching the Bluebirds that frequented their yard. Then they began reading articles about how Bluebirds had declined because of Urbanization. And because people were getting rid of rotten trees where Bluebirds & other cavity nesting birds used to make their homes. They read how people could help by putting up Bluebird Nestboxes and building Trails. Having learned this they made a decision to get involved and help the Bluebirds. They started their Bluebird Trail on Indian Blanket Ranch Jan.30, 1985. Dad built and put up 9 Bluebird Nestboxes from the North American Bluebird Society Plans.

In 1986 they opened their home to birders and started a Bed & Breakfast. They felt it was appropriate to call it- Bluebird Hill B&B. The Eastern Bluebirds here at Bluebird Hill brought many years of Happiness to our parents and to countless guests. But, in Feb. 2001 at age 80, my father was tragically murdered by an intruder. When Dad was no longer here to share in the care of the nestboxes and trail, Mom lost interest. The nestboxes were forgotten and neglected that year.

Since Bluebirds had been such a big part of the ranch I wanted the trail to continue. If the Bluebird Trail was going to survive we would have to take over responsibility of the remaining 6 nestboxes. Before Spring 2002 our son Bain Walker helped me map out the trail and do needed repairs to the existing Nestboxes. Not knowing much about any birds; I searched the Internet for info about Bluebirds and how to build Nestboxes to replace ones that were falling apart. I came across the web site for the newly formed Texas Bluebird Society. It seems that because Bluebird Nestboxes get too hot in the Texas summers, survival rates are lowered. What luck, to find an organization to help us make Nestboxes better suited to our climate. From their plans I designed and made some Nestboxes out of cedar boards, which we put up near our home. The top had a 4" overhang all the way around, to give the nestboxes shade from our hot Texas sun.

October 2002 my husband Anthony, son Bain & I joined the Texas Bluebird Society and attended the 1st Annual TBS Convention. We learned quite a lot about nestboxes, bluebirds, and other cavity nesting birds that might build nests in our Nestboxes. At the convention we bought 4 cedar Nestboxes and Bain and Anthony each won one as Door Prizes.

At the convention we bought 4 cedar Nestboxes and Bain and Anthony each won one as Door Prizes. So we came home with 6 new cedar Nestboxes for Mom's yard and the Bluebird Hill Trail. During Thanksgiving and Christmas that year we tried to include other family members in erecting the new Nestboxes on the ranch. Now the Trail has grown again to 13 Nestboxes.

Spring 2003 brought Bluebirds to Mom's yard again and put a smile back on her face. Several bright blue male Eastern Bluebirds perched on the rocking chairs on her porch, looking at their own reflections in the window. Once again Bluebirds brought her a glint of Happiness & Hope for the Future. And we are pleased to see Eastern Bluebirds thriving and bringing pleasure to guests at Bluebird Hill Bed & Breakfast.

Our Christmas Gift to Momma B. this year will be a **'True Blue Friend' TBS Tribute Plaque**. To be mounted on a Nestbox on our parents Bluebird Hill Trail. The Plaque is **'In Honor of the Many Dedicated Years Roger & Lora B. Garrison have given to Texas Bluebirds'**. This is such a meaningful gift, plus now visitors to the Bluebird Trail will know who Started the Trail and When.

Our parents had the Vision of helping Bluebirds by having a Bluebird Trail on their Ranch. We have enjoyed the Bluebirds and keeping our parents Vision Alive. Since my brothers and sister live in different Cities, they aren't often able to enjoy the Bluebirds here. By giving them Nestboxes with TBS Memberships this past Christmas, we hope to have sparked an interest in Bluebirds in their own backyards. And maybe now they can begin to share in Our Parents Vision and Passion for Bluebirds and the Bluebird Hill Trail.

The future Vision for my families Ranch is to open a Nature Center, Nature Store and start offering our own Workshops with Fieldtrips for guests and anyone interested. Different Workshops & Fieldtrips will be on Storytelling, Wildflowers, Bats, Birding, Butterflies, Gardening with Native Plants, Nature By Kayak, History of our Area, Champion Trees of Our Area, and of course Bluebirds. Throughout history Bluebirds have always been a sign of Hope & Happiness.

May a Bluebird of Hope & Happiness Visit Each of You This Coming Year!

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AFTERGLOW

Texas Bluebird Society 3rd Annual Convention, Parrie Haynes Ranch (near Ding Dong) October 30th, 2004

By Mary Leyendecker, who was elected as a new Board Member and Secretary

Accepting that hosting the North American Bluebird Society Convention in 2006 can make or break this club, 30 participants at the TBS Fall Convention have agreed to be "on call" for planning and two have declared their eagerness to swipe all the ideas they can find at NABS 2005 in Asheville.

Meanwhile, TBS will continue to host festival booths and extend its support of establishing bluebird trails in the TransTexas Nestbox Network by providing lumber in quantity to two members who are cranking out hundreds if not thousands of nestboxes for guided installations by individuals, youth and civic groups.

As working the booths brings in new members, and existing members are crucial in nurturing the public's interest in bluebirds, TBS further intends to initiate a "county adoption program." A knowledgeable member will agree to volunteer as an ambassador, encouraging membership (particularly in a neighboring county) and mentoring new members in installing and monitoring nestboxes in their yards, at pet cemeteries, parks or golf courses, and in the country.

Of the people who support bluebirds, few go to conventions, most do not, and all want to see the bird flourish in Texas and across the Transcontinental Bluebird Trail.

Patrons are asking for a return of the TBS' "Basic Fact Sheet" (the first resource TBS provided) and it will be posted at www.texasbluebirdsociety.org. Folks want time-tested tips to attract successful nesting pairs from February through September. "Refrain from feeding common mixed bird seed" will be their first bit of advice.

At convention, however, what fun was had as members gathered in the common cause of bluebirds and shared their 2004 Season Summaries and anecdotal discoveries. Afternoon shade is key to a good location. Bluebirds crave mealworms, are adaptable, and will even eat them out of your hand. HeatShields are helpful but consider orientating the nestbox away from the prevailing wind. In some cases, nestboxes can be part of a Wildlife Tax Exemption Plan.

All things considered, if you're going to branch out from bluebirding and get into "birding", get a reliable identification book, look first in dead trees, and learn to make peculiar noises. A convivial assembly listed 25 birds within an early morning hour at Parrie Haynes Ranch near Ding Dong (Killeen) and all shook hands (or hugged!) upon departure.



GRATITUDE to those who made donations for the Silent Auction! (apologies to any who brought a donation in hand, after the list was prepared)

Lenox, San Marcos; June Osborne; The Nature's Way; Droll Yankees; Rio Frio Lodging & Bluebird Hill B&B; Hill Country Adventure's / Bain Walker; The Bird House, Azle / Cheryl Anderson; Jennabirds; LeAnn & Anthony Sharp; Patricia Watts; Grubco, Inc; Cher, The Bluebird Nut; Mike Scarbrough; BirdWatchers Digest; Sam's Guides, Denise Townsend, Retail Sales; Lysle Mockler; Judy Brummett; Dan Hanan; Matthew Goff; Matthew Goff; Bat Conservation International; Mary Leyendecker

from the President's Kitchen

Bird Butter

Melt together in glass bowl in microwave on low setting:

1 cup lard (no substitutions)
1 cup crunchy peanut butter

Add:

2 cuts quick cooking oats
2 cups plain cornmeal
1 cup flour
1/3 cup sugar

Stir together and pat into an oblong baking dish to form 2" thick "suet".

Freeze and cut into squares.

Keep excess stored in freezer in baggies.

Take out squares as you need them and place in suet holder or plastic margarine tub with hanger.

This isn't my original recipe, but friends call it "Pauline's Bird Butter" since they get the recipe from me. I often quadruple the recipe. It DOES attract the birds. At my parents' house in Hemphill, they have a suet feeder hanging right outside their dining window. The bluebirds that feed on this year-round are less than 4 feet from their eyes.

Pauline Tom
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Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time

To :

"Texas Blues" is a bi-monthly publication

From:

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Please submit your 2004 nesting records for the TransTexas Nestbox Network database through our on-line Data Collection System. www.texasbluebirdsociety.org