

TEXAS 
The Newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society *Blues*

Wills Point Bluebird Festival - April 23

Wills Point, the “Bluebird Capital of Texas” packs its downtown brick streets Saturday, April 23, for its 10th annual Bluebird Festival. Again this year, the Texas Bluebird Society section is up front and center at the entrance, just past the monument in the center of the street.

TBS will distribute educational materials, provide a bluebird-related lecture at specific times throughout the day, chat with those who stop by, sell t-shirts, and conduct membership/nestbox exchanges.

TBS needs members to help by accepting membership forms, handing nestboxes to new members, selling t-shirts, and running errands. A member need not be “knowledgeable” to work at the booth. Contact Pauline to volunteer (512.268.5678 or pauline@texasbluebirdsociety.org).

Across the county, bluebird driving routes will help visitors discover roads brimming with wildflowers and hundreds of active nestboxes. Free bus tours sponsored by the Wills Point Wilderness Society and narrated by Boy Scouts will go to Lake Tawakoni State Park to see the Texas Bluebird Society bluebird trail.

In December 2001, before the park opened, TBS provided the nestboxes for this trail, and they were installed by David Shiel’s Scout Troop of Kaufman. Later, HeatShields were added to the nestboxes. Carolyn Crowder, Park Hostess and TBS Member, served as monitor of the trail until earlier this month, when the Crowders relocated to Cedar Hill State Park (“thanks, Carolyn”).

With a carnival, tractor display, Bluebird Bake Off, quilt show, Little Miss Bluebird Pageant, antiques, Bluebird Express train rides for kids, arts and crafts, games, stage and street acts, armadillo racing, living history, educational nature programs, foods, and more, it will be a fun day! Info: 1-800-WP-BLUBIRD. Website: www.myrworld.com/wpbfa.

From Dallas, drive east on I-20, exit at Hwy. 80, go east through Terrell until you reach Wills Point (50 mile drive). From Tyler, drive 45 miles west on I-20, exit at Hwy 64, and go north. Bluebird Festival hours are 9:00-5:00.

Grand Saline, 15 minutes east of Wills Point, hosts its First Annual Bloomin’ Festival on Saturday, April 23.



TBS Bluebird Ambassadors promote TBS mission

Ann Thames, ann@texasbluebirdsociety.org, requests help for a TBS booth for the 2nd Annual Chappell Hill Birdfest, from Friday, April 29, to Sunday, May 1, 2005. Details on Birdfest are posted at: <http://www.chappellhillbirdfest.com/>. E-mail or phone Ann at 979.278.3053. Ann devoted a Sunday for a 4-hour round-trip nestbox delivery for two projects.

Dick Park, Boerne, has presented 2 bluebird talks, offering membership/nestbox exchange. Ten new TBS members. **Maggie Broyles, Wimberley’s “Bluebird Lady,”** set up a 2-month display about bluebirds at the Wimberley Library. She provided membership forms, and as a “TBS Bluebird Ambassador” offered a free nestbox to those who contacted her for a membership/nestbox exchange. Her efforts were successful - sixteen new memberships.

TBS Bluebird Ambassadors, page 4

Nesting season underway for bluebirds... and wrens!

by June Osborne

June is a TBS Featured Speaker at NABS Convention, April 27-30, 2006

South Carolina's state bird, Carolina Wren, is one of my favorite birds. Friendly and endearingly uninhibited around humans, this mite of a bird is little more than five inches from tip of long, down-curved bill to tip of up-turned tail. It's easy to identify with deep cinnamon above and warm buff below, white throat, and prominent white eye stripe. The sexes look alike, and a bonded pair may live together year 'round.

This perky wren sings at any time of day and all year long. Its vivacious, melodious song is surprisingly loud, belying its small size. "Teakettle, teakettle, teakettle!" or "Cheery, cheery, cheery!" are welcome sounds on frosty mornings when many other species are silent.

After I had knee replacement surgery five years ago, I moved into our guest bedroom to recuperate. An unexpected bonus was the company of a Carolina Wren sleeping in the hedge outside my window.

One evening at dusk, I saw the bird sneak into its leafy bedroom. Every night for two weeks I heard "tu, tu . . . tu, tu, tu," which may be a wren's equivalent of snoring. On long nights when sleep came in snatches and it seemed morning would never arrive, the wren's soft notes provided a little night music, comforting as a lullaby.

Carolina Wrens are nonmigratory. If they live in your backyard, you may see them at any time of year foraging in brush piles, wood piles, among leaf mulch, and at your feeders. They like all kinds of feeders except the plastic cylindrical types.

Carolinas are hyperactive and extremely quick. They make hasty forays for sunflower seeds, nutmeats, suet, mealworms, and peanut butter mixes. Carolina Wrens at my house love fruit cake, which I offer in a wire basket.

Wrens are in the family Troglodytidae from a Greek word meaning "creeper into holes, a cave dweller." When you learn their habits, you'll see they are aptly classified. Mouse-like and highly curious, Carolinas often disappear into drain pipes, barbecue pit chimneys, open mail boxes, or most any cavity. Adept at finding tiny entrances, they love to play "Now you see me. Now you don't."

Perhaps the best way to get wrens into your line of vision is to place nestboxes in strategic locations in your yard. John K. Terres (in *Songbirds in Your Garden*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1994) suggests making the entry of the box a rectangular slit instead of the standard round hole, 1 1/2" high and 3" wide to accommodate long twigs the birds carry in as a foundation for their nests. Floor to ceiling the box should be 7" high and 4" square, the entrance slot 4-6" above the floor.

If nestboxes are not available, Carolina Wrens will nest almost anywhere, from hanging baskets to pockets of old clothes. I've found their nests, messy collections of sticks and fibers, in quart jars, wash tubs, nestboxes, clothespin bags, barbecue pits, lamp chimneys, and a discarded cowboy boot.

Carol Adams in the Texas Hill Country has found Carolina Wren nests in the saddlebag of a bicycle hanging upside down from her garage ceiling, another tucked into a floral wreath on the back door, and one in a flower box.

At Virginia Rivers' summer home at Lake Limestone in Central Texas, a Carolina Wren flew through an open door and built a nest behind a wallhanging in her kitchen. After she discovered the nest, Virginia left the door open during the day until the nestlings fledged.

When the four to eight chicks are ready to leave the nest, they don't linger. One day the nest is crowded with noisy young. The next, it's empty and silent. I saw a pair of Carolinas leading four offspring across my backyard. The parents seemed to be teaching them the lay of the land: the locations of feeders, bird baths, suet logs. I'm glad one of them found the hedge outside my bedroom window to be a cozy place to sleep. (Copyright © 2005 June Osborne)

JOBirder@aol.com



CAROLINA WREN

Photo: ERIC ISLEY

Carolina Wren nest description

NEST: Bulky mass of twigs, leaves, rootlets, bark strips, and debris such as string.

LOCATION: Natural cavity, old woodpecker hole, stone wall, nook or cranny or sheltered spot (such as flower pot) in or around human dwellings or outbuildings.



FEMALE EASTERN BLUEBIRD at Hornsby Bend, Austin. Bluebird Trail is a joint project of TBS and Travis Audubon. This is one of OUR bluebirds! March 2005 Photo: ERIC ISLEY

Many due thanks for helping feather the TBS nest

During fiscal year 2004, numerous individuals and couples have provided unexpected funding to the Texas Bluebird Society in addition to their regular membership dues. The Board of Directors greatly appreciates and sincerely thanks all 2004 Patrons for their generosity. As a non-profit group devoted to public education and the restoration and conservation of Bluebird populations in the state, TBS is officially recognized as a 501(c)3 organization. Financial gifts can be made at any time through our website (www.texasbluebirdsociety.org) or by mailing a check marked "Donation" to The Texas Bluebird Society, P.O. Box 40868, Austin, TX 78704.

Thank you, 2004 TBS Financial Patrons!

Dale & JoAnn Chitwood	Edith DeGolyer	James Growney
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Ed Melson	Angela Morrison	Charles Post
Charlotte Presnull	Mary Rabien	Judith Reader
Dick Rector	Charles Robbins	Delbert Rogers
Doug & Karen Rohde	Ron & Pauline Tom	
James Vynalek	Billy & Ricky Walker	
Dr. Thomas Wheeler		

NABS 2006 - "Red, White & Bluebirds"

TBS will host the 2006 North American Bluebird Society Convention the fifth weekend in April (April 26-30). Plans are to showcase the San Antonio / Hill Country locales.

Take a look at the following list, see where you can volunteer, and contact TBS to volunteer your talents and expertise.

Needs for NABS 2006 - volunteering@NABS2006.com

Individuals are needed now for these selected tasks:

- Serve as Registrar (most registrations will be completed via the TBS website, www.texasbluebirdsociety.org)
- Coordinate and supervise Volunteers
- Coordinate Revenue/Sponsorships
- Coordinate Publicity/PR and Marketing Tourism
- Create/prepare 10-min. video/DVD or PowerPoint to promote NABS 2006 at upcoming NABS convention May 19-22 in Asheville, NC. Item must market Texas, San Antonio, our venues and our featured speakers. Deadline: May 15.
- Design a 1-page notice for packets at nature festivals
- Create a database of potential attendees from lists of attendees at recent NABS conventions
- Acquire donated items for NABS 2006 Auction (proceeds to benefit TBS and NABS)
- Plot bluebird trails on public property in Texas that visitors can enjoy (for use on website and printed materials)
- Coordinate Flag Project (establish system to obtain and display flag from each NABS affiliate state and province)
- Accept a sponsorship package; contact potential sponsors
- Enter standard set of event information on online nature and tourism calendars; maintain a list for updating

People filling a "Needs for NABS 2006" will ensure that next year's convention is a resounding success. If you have time, skills, expertise, and/or contacts, please consider helping.

Info: Pauline Tom, TBS president, 512.268.5678.

New coordinator needed for "Start with Five"

The "Start With Five: TBS Trail Launch Initiative" is a pilot project. Under certain circumstances when budgeted funds are available and an application is approved, TBS provides 5 nestboxes with installation hardware. In turn, the nestboxes are monitored and records are submitted to TBS for research purposes.

TBS needs a new volunteer project coordinator to continue this worthy cause. Among recent start-ups:

Lady Bird Johnson Park Bluebird Trail in

Fredericksburg was installed on Valentine's Day 2005 by Master Naturalist (Hill Country Chapter) Dan Behringer, Sharon Corley, Gene Smith, and Jane Crone, with Friends of the Fredericksburg Nature Center Bill Lindemann and John Crone, and a local land owner, Clifford Ernst.

TBS officers Pauline Tom and Sharon Kersten surveyed the municipal park with project representatives in early January. Other communities are standing in line to launch trails through the "Start with Five" initiative.

Interested? Please call today!

Info: TBS President Pauline Tom, 512.268.5678.

Bird Butter with Natural Ingredients

- 1 cup chunky peanut butter
- 1 cup lard
- 4 cups whole grain corn meal (May be stone ground)
- 1 cup whole wheat flour

The following "extra" additions are nice and may vary depending on what is available in your area.

- 1 cup peanut hearts
- 1 cup sunflower chips
- 1 cup currants

This recipe for Bird Butter can be mixed and formed into "potatoes" or flattened into squares - whatever works for your feeder. Wrap in individual chunks and keep in the freezer until needed. Happy Birding!

*Compliments of Lysle Mockler
TBS Board Member, Waxahachie*

TBS will host NABS 2006 Convention at Airport Hilton Hotel in San Antonio

Get involved now in the plans. Workers needed for activities April 26-30, 2006.

volunteering@NABS2006.com



Bluebird moms are unflappable

The experience of observing inside a nestbox is quite marvelous, as Naomi shared on the Message Board (www.texasbluebirdsociety.org) after she saw blue eggs for the first time.

We encourage members to keep nesting records and submit them at the end of the nesting season for the purpose of research. Often, the startled response is, "Won't I disrupt? Won't they desert the nest?"

The answer is "no." Researchers and banders open nestboxes daily. A bander says, "Once in my career, a hen deserted the nest."

The BirdHouse Network (Cornell University Lab of Ornithology) recommends observing inside the nestbox ("monitoring") **every three or four days during nesting season**. Waiting a week between nest checks could result in being unable to accurately record important nesting events such as first egg date, hatching, etc.

Keeping records supports bluebird conservation and our mission. As TBS is recognized by the IRS as a non-profit organization with educational and scientific purposes, the data collected and analyzed by TBS will be used for the continued study and conservation of cavity-nesting birds in Texas and the US. TBS members are able to investigate what factors may affect nesting success of native cavity-nesting birds in their counties. This is awesome!

Melanie in Wellborn writes: We were also frustrated to find that we can't see inside the box very easily. I am literally lifting my 6 yr old to look inside and he says the angle between the hinged opening and the nest is very difficult to see. Is there a secret we're missing?

Oh yes! The secret! A mechanic's mirror with an extending handle is the tool you need! Try the small, round style or the larger rectangular mechanic's mirror that's even more effective.

Pauline Tom, president, Texas Bluebird Society

Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time

2005 Springtime Photo Gallery

Enjoy other images on the TBS website



MALE EASTERN BLUEBIRD at "Bluebird Hill Trail" on Indian Blanket Ranch near Utopia, Texas, and Garner State Park.

Photo by TBS VP LeAnn SHARP

TBS Bluebird Ambassadors (from page 1)

Charles Post of Liberty enrolled a member, Kay, who, when renewing her membership for 2005, reported that she since has seen her two nestboxes fledge 4 bluebirds in 2003 and 8 bluebirds in 2004.

Melanie Welch, melanie@texasbluebirdsociety.org, has initiated the "Wellborn Bluebird Trail." Five houses have been officially placed on the trail in and around Wellborn in South Brazos County. Nine membership/nestbox exchanges.

Bill & Athena Petty set up a TBS Booth at the Lufkin Home & Garden Show on March 5th, offering a starter nestbox. Lufkin Daily News reported, "One of the most attractive presentations was the Texas Bluebird Society booth, with colorful photographs of birds and their nests." The Pettys enrolled several new members.

Philip Walker of Kyle, assisted by Pauline Tom, staffed a TBS Booth at the Statewide Land Trust Conference in Austin, February 24-25. Sixteen membership/nestbox exchanges were recorded.

Texas Bluebird Society Board of Directors

Cheryl Anderson; Judy Brummett; John Cys; Lee Hutchins; Lysle Mockler; Charles Post; Mike Scarbrough; Pauline Tom; LeAnn Sharp; Dan Hanan; Sandy Coggins; Mary Leyendecker (editor, Texas Blues)

North American Bluebird Society Convention

NABS 2005

**Thursday-Sunday, May 19-22, 2005
Asheville, North Carolina**

10 TBS members registered, to date

Convention details on NABS website

Visit: www.nabluebirdsociety.org

Mealworms can be ordered online!
NABS gives a 15% discount on mealworm purchases through two distributors to their members, and a coupon for 1,000 free mealworms to new members! Details, NABS website.



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**THE TEXAS BLUEBIRD SOCIETY
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Austin, TX 78704**

*www.texasbluebirdsociety.org
info@texasbluebirdsociety.org*

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president@texasbluebirdsociety.org
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Nestbox Observation Worksheet for 20__

Use a separate sheet for each nestbox.
At the end of the season, compile your results on the **Season Summary form**.

To use this worksheet in a simplified way that will solely record the data for the season summary form, record only data for the columns in **bold font**.

Eastern Bluebird: EABL

Ladder-Backed Woodpecker: **LBWO**

Downy Woodpecker: **DOWO**

Ash-Throated Flycatcher: **ATFL**

Great Crested Flycatcher: **GCFL**

Carolina Chickadee: **CACH**

Tufted Titmouse: **TUTI**

Black-Crested Titmouse: **BCTI**

Brown-Headed Nuthatch: **BHNU**

Carolina Wren: **CAWR**

Bewick's Wren: **BEWR**

Western Bluebird: **WEBL**

Prothonotary Warbler: **PRWA**

House Finch: **HOFI**

Other: *Please write in name of species*

Unidentified: **UNID**

Habitat type:

Forest: large trees with crowns touching, forming an overhead canopy of branches

Woodland: small trees and shrubs, frequently dense, without overhead canopy

Parkland: large trees widely spaced

Open: smaller trees and shrubs, or none

Commercial: little or no green space

Habitat site

Urban Yard

Rural Yard

Cemetery

City/State Park

Farmland

Golf Course

Ranchland

Mesquite Grassland

Rural Roadside

Urban Roadside

Ashe Juniper (cedar) Acreage

Date	Empty Box	Partial Nest	Complete Nest	***** # Eggs *****	Date 1st egg laid	Projected Hatch Date	***** # Young *****	Actual Hatch Date	Projected Earliest Fledge Date	***** # Fledged *****	Actual / Probable Fledge Date	House Sparrow Nest Attempt	# Eggs Destroyed or Missing *	# Dead*	Species (codes below)
Location:		Box No. or Name:													



Nestbox Summary:
Approximate Date & Species of First Fledge: _____
Last Fledge: _____

1st Nesting:
Species: _____ # eggs: _____
nestlings: _____ # fledged: _____
Other: _____

2nd Nesting:
Species: _____ # eggs: _____
nestlings: _____ # fledged: _____
Other: _____

3rd Nesting:
Species: _____ # eggs: _____
nestlings: _____ # fledged: _____
Other: _____

4th Nesting:
Species: _____ # eggs: _____
nestlings: _____ # fledged: _____
Other: _____

5th Nesting:
Species: _____ # eggs: _____
nestlings: _____ # fledged: _____
Other: _____

Predator control:
 None Smooth Metal Pole
 Greased Pipe PVC Baffle
 Cone Baffle Stovepipe Baffle
Other: _____

Heat protection:
 HeatShield Shade
 Partial HeatShield (i.e., extra roof)
 Solarscreen Other: _____

Nestbox style: _____
version: 02/10/200