

Ruth Beasley, TBS Member, presented this delightful essay in the Opening Session. It set the tone for NABS 2006. The session included an honor guard presentation of the national and Texas flags. Flags from affiliates of NABS were taken to the edge of the stage and dipped in honor by Anthony Sharp and Lee Haile (dressed in 1800's Texian clothing.) The ceremony was choreographed and accompanied by Kenny Kleinpeter of Baton Rouge. Rob Barron came two weeks ahead of time from Virginia to handcraft and paint the flag stands and flag poles.

RED, WHITE & BLUEBIRDS

Ruth Beasley

It's a thrill and honor to be in one room with so many bluebirders! My name is Ruth Beasley, and I write a little thing called "Learning the Birds." As the name implies, I don't pretend to be an expert. Having only recently begun my study of birds, I have the fervor of the newly converted, but I have no credentials worth mentioning.

I do inhabit a specific niche, a microhabitat, if you will, in that I preach largely to the unconverted. My audience tends to be those people who *are* bird people, deep down, but who haven't quite acted on the urge yet.

If we can only hold their interest, well, surely interest can lead to things like involve-ment, action, and even conservation.

One doesn't have to be an expert to love the bluebirds. They have long occupied our continent and our history, they grace our analogies, and inhabit our fondest dreams. Long before the white man came, the red man honored the blue birds. Pima legend has the bluebird bathing in a magic lake to get its color, while Longfellow's bluebird piped in thicket and meadow. Blue is the color of the North, or the East, depending on the legend, and it has long been associated with serenity and creative expression. And happiness, of course!

The colonists that landed at Plymouth Rock were notably fond of the bluebirds they found, and called them "blue robins." My oldest bird book, a *Birds of America* published in 1936, calls them simply American Bluebirds.

Red, White, & Bluebirds is an accurate description as well as a clever allusion to several famous flags, Old Glory and the Lone Star Flag among them. But in welcoming our NABS neighbors to the north and south, I've been thinking about their flags, too, and trying to make the slogan fit.

For the Canadian flag, we simply imagine the red & white maple-leaf with a bluebird flying right *in front of* it — and you get red, white, & blue. Mexico is a bit trickier — there's some green, for one thing, but green is said to mean hope, a hope we share for the future of our continental red, white, and bluebirds, so *that's*

OK. There is also an eagle on a cactus holding a serpent, and perhaps room for a small imaginary bluebird there, as well.

There are several different birds that could fit our slogan. Kingfishers wear a blue-gray bathing costume with red and white stripes. In certain lights, the black in a Red-headed Woodpecker can appear to be blue, which accounts for several antiquated nicknames including (speaking of flags) Flag Bird, Tricolor, and the Patriotic Bird. Another bird in tricolor is the Harlequin Duck, at least the male is, when in breeding season.

All these birds could well fly under our banner, but the only true blue birds that live up to the name are the Eastern and Western Bluebirds — with feathers of genuine blue, accessorized in red and white.

Except for the fact that blue feathers are not really blue, but that's an entirely different conversation. The bluebirds in question do have feather hues of three different types: the red ones are drenched in actual pigment, the white feathers reflect light; and the blue ones refract it. So, we could say drenched, reflective, and refracted — but red, white, & blue is clearly better.

The blue we perceive in a bluebird is not American-flag-blue, or even Lone-Star-flag-blue. Spine-tingling blue is how I'd describe it, but indigo, cerulean, turquoise, campanula, and cobalt also work.

Come to think of it, the red in a bluebird is not flag-red, either, but closer to brick or rust. I'm still learning the difference between ruddy and rufous, sooty and slaty, mottled and splotched. In Bird World, nothing is ever simple. White, however, is still white, so an accurate description of our tricolored bluebirds would be something like rufous, white, and campanula.

No matter how you say it, color helps galvanize us into action, for we are naturally moved by beauty. But the more I learn about bluebird trails, the more I think of Johnny Appleseed. Trails and orchards both brought into being by conservative initiative. It doesn't take an expert to see that this proud spirit is kept alive by bluebirders like yourselves.



TEXAS

Blues

The Newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society

Volume 5, Issue 2

July 2006

NABS 2006 CONVENTION "AFTERGLOW" EDITION

Yeehaw!!!!

TBS planned, prepared and presented the 2006 Convention of the North American Bluebird Society, April 26th – 30th at the San Antonio Airport Hilton Hotel.

What a GRAND convention! The summer issue of "Bluebird," the NABS journal, gives coverage to "our" convention. (For TBS members who are not a member of NABS, it's included with this newsletter.) We can be very proud of the accomplishment!

We had fun, too ... and make friends as we worked together.

"Did we make money?" We do not have a final accounting. We know we came close to breaking even. But, we did not make money.

That's okay. We did not need to make money. We built a war chest in order to take our turn with preparing & presenting "the bluebird convention." And, we raised \$1,000's to supplement the cost of the convention.

In 2005, the TBS Board made a recommitment to NABS 2006, deciding that TBS would "throw a big party" to draw attention to bluebird conservation that would honor and encourage those who have bluebird trails across the continent.

We even splurged! When the door opened to add David Luneau, who photographed the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, we committed \$800 (We shared travel expenses with another Texas festival.) What a lot of bang for the buck! What a party favor!

One guest left us with a "hostess gift." At the TBS 2006 Convention, we'll all share a bit of the 3-liter bottle of "Clancy's 2002" vintage purchased for TBS at the Saturday night live auction. All that TBS did was appreciated by all!

Pauline Tom, NABS 2006 Chairperson



A big applause for those who made the trip to NABS 2006 to work (and, some of these put in 100's of hours beforehand)

Pauline & Ron Tom • LeAnn & Anthony Sharp • Linda & Fred Crum • Johnny & Jennifer Fleming • Dan Hanan • Lee Haile • Mindy Mitchell • Lysle Mockler • Dick & Chris Park • Maren Phillips • Charles & Jackie Post • Michelle Rider • Norm Shoemaker • Bain Walker • Philip Walker • Ricky Walker • Marsha Winfield

Thanks, too, to those with major roles in the planning & preparation who did not attend: Ann & Richard Thames • Joan Stanley • Lynne & Tim Warfield • Mary Leyendecker • Doug & Karen Rohde • Joan Goodkin • Kim Perez

Is your name missing? Please let us know. We know we inadvertently missed some.

TBS Board of Directors

Pauline Tom, Mountain City, President
LeAnn Sharp, Utopia, Vice-President
Norm Shoemaker, Secretary, Woden
Dan Hanan, Houston, Treasurer
Charles Post, Liberty • Mike Scarbrough,
Keller • Lee Hutchins, Sinton • Jennifer
Fleming, Orange
Philip Walker, Kyle

TEXAS BLUES

The newsletter of Texas Bluebird Society
is published about 5 times a year

Pauline Tom, 512.268.5678 (home)
ptom5678@gmail.com

LeAnn Sharp, 830.966.2320 (work)
leann@friolodging.com

Texas Bluebird Society

P O Box 40868

Austin TX 78704

August 19th Summer Symposium,
Pine Creek Lodge, Nacogdoches
October 28th, 5 Year Celebration
McKinney Roughs, Austin
www.texasbluesbirds.com

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit #444
Buda TX 78610



Elizabeth Withrow
Through My Binoculars

Elizabeth Withrow reflects on her recent honor

In February of this year I was visiting my San Antonio family when I received an e-mail from June Osborne, my friend and birding teacher for numerous courses in the Continuing Education Program of Baylor University, and leader in birding trips in Southern England, the Everglades in Florida, Arizona, and throughout Texas. She asked if I could be in San Antonio the 29th of April for the convention of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS). If so, she would like to nominate me to receive an award from them for my work with bluebirds.

March 11, 2006 I received a call from David Cook of San Jose, California, chairman of the Awards Committee, telling me that I had been selected! I couldn't believe it! Out of all the states in the U.S. and some provinces in Canada, I was chosen!

Here is the letter June wrote (with some deletions in the interest of space) that made it happen. She insists I had done it all. She just called it to their attention.

February 26, 2006
Hello David,

June Osborne here —one of the speakers at the NABS '06 Convention in San Antonio. I'd like to nominate Elizabeth Withrow of Mexia, Texas to receive an award at the NABS banquet on Saturday night, April 29. She is 93 years old.

In 1986 at the request of the Park Superintendent, she started a Bluebird Trail at Ft. Parker State Park located between Mexia and Groesbeck, Tx. She recruited and organized volunteers and maintained

and monitored the trail for almost 20 years, until late 2005 when she was 92.

I first met Liz (as her family and close friends call her) when she was 72 when she signed up for a Bird I.D. course that I was teaching in Baylor University's Continuing Education Division in Waco, Tx. At the time, she said she wanted to learn more about birds to go along with her "new hobby" of backpacking! That should tell you something about Liz's spunk and joie de vive.

Liz saw her first Eastern Bluebird during one of the field trips for my

started writing a weekly column, "Through My Binoculars" for the Mexia Daily News, which she is still writing on a monthly basis. Through her writing, an entire three-county was alerted to the presence of many species of birds in the area as well as the plight of the bluebird. She implored her readers to put out bluebird nesting boxes which they did beyond her wildest expectations. As a result of her bluebird trail at the park and the many boxes put up by her readers, Eastern Bluebirds have become a familiar sight on utility wires and fences in the surrounding



June Osborne and Elizabeth Withrow. June nominated me for the Award I received from NABS. was one of the speakers for the Convention her subject was "Treasures of the Texas Hill Country" During "Tea for Texas Authors" June autographed her books.

Photo by Betty Williamson

class. She fell in love with the bird at first sight, and when she learned that bluebirds needed our help, one of her goals in life became doing whatever she could do to "bring back the bluebird".

Here's what she did. In 1985 she

area.

The Friends of Ft. Parker honored Liz with a party on January 13, 2005. The manager of the park, Tom Fisher, presented her with a painting of one of her nest boxes with a bluebird perched on the predator guard with



Pauline Tom and Elizabeth Withrow Pauline Tom is president of the Texas Bluebird Society, host for the NABS 2006 Convention held at the San Antonio Airport Hilton Hotel.

Photo by Betty Williamson

this inscription "In appreciation for the many hours of service to Ft. Parker State Park, developing the Bluebird Trail and many other projects across the years Thank you for your dedication and inspiration to us all . Tom Fisher, Manager of Ft. Parker State Park 1-13-05. (The artist was talented Mary Ann Goodall)

Liz very reluctantly gave up her Bluebird Trail at the age of 92, only after finding someone she could trust to carry on her legacy. (That someone is Dan Blackstock with the able assistance of his wife, Betty. They are faithful to the task. E.W.) Liz still takes turns monitoring the trail.

I hereby nominate Elizabeth Withrow to receive a lifetime award from the North American Bluebird

Society for her monumental efforts to bring back the bluebird.

June Osborne

Isn't that a beautiful letter? Thank you, June.

The Convention hosted and planned by the Texas Bluebird Society was a delight. The speakers were excellent, authorities in their field. and the field trips were outstanding; planned to give the members of the North American Bluebird Society who came from far and wide a Taste of Texas. This included Birding and Nature Field Trips, trips to historical sites, ranches, San Marcos Outlet Mall, LadyBird Johnson Wildflower Center, etc. Vendors were allowed time to show

their wares.

At the helm of the Texas Bluebird Society was their President Pauline Tom. What a joy she was! She appeared so calm and composed that you would never know that the weight of the convention was on her shoulders. In a convention that large there were bound to be some fiascos but every thing was so well organized that you would never have known.

On March 16 I received this note from Pauline,

Dear Liz,

Congratulations on your selection for a NABS Achievement Award.

The Texas Bluebird Society (TBS) host of the NABS 2006 is proud and

honored – and we want to provide you with a complimentary ticket for Blueblacion!, the Saturday night banquet at 7 pm.

Texas Bluebird Society will provide free registration for you and your daughter for admission to June's presentation on Thursday afternoon at 3:30 and any other segments of the conference that you would like to attend.

Again, congratulations on your award.

Pauline Tom
President, Texas Bluebird Society (host of 2006 North American Bluebird Society Convention)

I would like to point out a very important thing I said in my acceptance speech when I received the plaque.

"I share this award with the many volunteers who checked the trail with me for over 20 years and the master craftsmen who built the boxes and tended to the repairs. The trail would not have been a success had it not been for them."

This column is too long so I'm going to continue in my next article: more about Pauline and a whole new idea presented by the President of the North American Bluebird Society, Steve Garr. He has brought bluebirds to downtown Nashville. His talk to us was "Bluebirds – Not Just for the Country" One of his points was that each producing bluebird nesting box is a pathway to a new producing bluebird nesting box.

Mary and Ed Marcotte, Ed Cunningham, and Pam Crider have taken some wonderful bird pictures that I want you to see and read their comments. Next article.

THANKS to sponsors, donors & contributors (of time, money, product and services): Which names did we miss? Please let us know. Inn Above Onion Creek (Kyle) • Rio Frio Lodging & Hill Country Nature Tours • Loomis Austin • SparrowTraps.net • Morning Star Ranch – Works Washington County Wildlife Society • Billy & Ricky Walker (Bandera) • Dick & Chris Park (Boerne) • Dr. Thomas M. Wheeler (Houston) • James Collier (Azle) Continental Airlines • Bat Conservancy International • SweetLeaf Tea • Paw Print Press (Joan Stanley) • PeoriaDesignWeb.com • FulgentWeb.com • New York Bluebird Society Olive Collier • San Antonio Audubon • Keith Kridler • Ron & Pauline Tom • LeAnn & Anthony Sharp • Lee Haile • Inn of the Hills (Kerrville) • BirdHouse SpyCam • American Birding Association • Goldcrest Distributing • John O'Neill • Kenn Kaufman • Nacogdoches CVB • Lora B. Garrison • Bain Walker Sportsman's Warehouse Trust for Public Land Eagle Optics Pleasant Hill Winery Bluebirds 'N Birdfeeders San Antonio New World Wine & Food Festival American Birding Assoc. North Carolina Bluebird Society New York Bluebird Society Jonathan & Lynn Ridgeway Kalmbach Publishing Tim & Lynne Warfield Lodge at Creekside (Wimberley) Julie Zickefoose BirdWatcher's Digest Geoffrey Goodkin Linda Walker (Gainesville VA) Carol Schock Sunshine Mealworms Field Vineyards Audubon Texas Droll Yankee Bird House of Cape May Galveston Ornithological Society Spotted Babies Marco Marchetti Becker Vineyards OwlShack.com Marcia Matcham Jennifer & Johnny Fleming Jeremy Woodhouse Evelyn Cooper Kenny Kleinpeter Joan Harmet Michelle Rider Mindy Mitchell Wild Birds Unlimited Ann Thames Shaka Studios Daude Haus Nursery Dan Hanan Naomi Josephson A Little Nature Store (Boerne) Dave Welling Steve Ollis Patricia Johnson Priscilla Johnson Leslie Galloway Lana Sumpner Karen Segall Melane Bowers Debra Tremper Debra Scheurmann-Home Kim Hyunwo Sara Gibbs Stuart Gibbs Chelsea Berkely BluebirdNut.com • Dolores Unique Designs • Driftwood Wildlife Assoc • Fermatta • Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary • Heavenly Wings 'n Things • Wildlines Flora and Fauna (Maren Phillips) • Morning Star Ranch-Works (Body-Works) • Morning Star Ranch—Works (Craft-Works) • Purple Martin Conservation Association • San Antonio Audubon Society • Van Ert Enterprises