



Fall 2014

In This Issue:

From The President's Perch.....2  
 Discovery Preserve at Euclid Park .....2  
 A Pole System to Thwart Cats.....3  
 Renewal Form.....4  
 House Sparrow Control in Winter.... 4  
 Papa Blue Story.....5  
 Bluebird Q & A.....5  
 New and Renewing Members..... 6  
 MBS Contact List .....7  
 MBS Fall Festival.....8  
 Helping Hatchlings.....8

# The Bluebird Flyer

Newsletter of the Michigan Bluebird Society

## Using Roost Boxes for Winter Bluebirds

By John Harville,  
 MBS County Coordinator for Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties



If you are fortunate in your region of Michigan to have bluebirds present during winter and wish to continue your bluebirding experience, roost boxes are for you. You will find numerous free designs on the Internet or boxes for sale in better bird stores. Most will work well.

It is important to understand how and when bluebirds use roost boxes. Creatures of habit they are, and they will likely already have a well-protected area close to a food source to which they have been returning each night. You may not see any bluebird activity, however, until the weather gets particularly nasty with cold temperatures and blowing snow - weather that may push them out looking for another food source. This is when they will find your box. During warmer winters, you may not see them at all.

Sooner or later they will find your box. It is advisable to get it up early in the season so that they can know where it is located during their fall carousing. Once they do begin using your box, you can expect to see your creatures of habit come every night, often for a number of weeks.



*3 bluebirds at a nest box and a Downy Woodpecker checks out a roost box*

*Photograph by John Harville*

Unlike summer, when you will see them sitting on your nest box routinely, they use winter roost boxes for one reason only: roosting over-night. Usually they will zip in near dark and leave at first light, meaning that you will have to pay close attention so as not to miss them. However, the fact that they usually come in a mob, often 10 or more birds, makes them much more easy to spot.

The roost boxes I am going to write about are wood boxes. While I use a fair number of Gilbertson PVC boxes for nesting, I have no experience with any species using a PVC box for roosting in winter.

The roost boxes themselves are larger than nest boxes, insulated, and caulked and often have the entrance hole near the bottom

because heat rises. The boxes may have six or more perches inside where 18 or more bluebirds can huddle together for warmth.

Roost boxes don't need to be monitored as frequently as nest boxes, but there are times when it is advisable to clear out mounds of droppings that could challenge the entrance if large numbers of birds are using the box.

### We Need Your Nesting Data!

Now that nesting season is over and the leaves are falling, it's time to submit your **End-of-Season Nesting Summary Report**. The MBS needs this data to identify nesting trends across the state and areas of possible improvement. The report is very easy to fill out. We included a copy of it in the last newsletter. Once the report is filled out, it can be folded, sealed with tape, stamped, and mailed. We also have a link on the home page of the MBS web site where you can download and print a copy. In our winter Flyer, we'll print a summary report of the 2014 nesting season.

### Renewal Notice

**The expiration date of your MBS membership is printed on the label of your MBS quarterly Flyer. See the form on page 4 for membership renewal information.**

*(Continued on page 4)*

## From the President's Perch

By Kurt Hagemeister



Once again, as the leaves turn color and start to fall, I wonder where the time went this year! It seems like just last week that we returned from our big Spring Bluebird Festival in Traverse City. And now, the nesting boxes have been taken in for the winter, the roost boxes have been put out, and I'm already starting to plan next spring's "bluebird strategy."

Thank you to all who have mailed, emailed, or handed to me your 2014 Nesting Season Reports. If you haven't already done so, please consider doing it soon. The report is very easy to fill out and the data helps us to spot nesting trends. To find the form, look in your last MBS issue of *The Flyer* or go to our website home page at [www.michiganbluebirds.org](http://www.michiganbluebirds.org) for a link to download a printable copy.

From the reports I've received so far, it seems like there has been nesting success across the board in 2014. Some trails did very well, others average, and others had a poor year. The long, harsh winter definitely had an adverse effect on some trails. Greg Miller of Benzie County, who usually has very good nesting success, reported a very quiet year on his trails with some normally occupied boxes empty all summer. Then again, members Lynn Ward, George Agin, Ted Oldham, Mark Muhich, and others who live further south reported strong results.

One clear theme in many reports and anecdotal conversations was that house wrens were **much** more numerous this year in most areas of the state. This resulted in many more reports of lost nests due to wren predation. We will know more once all the reports are in and I've compiled all the data. As usual, look for a summary in the Winter edition of *The Flyer*.

It was really great to see many members and some new people at the **Fall Festival** meeting at Dahlem Center in Jackson on Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>. Although 35 people doesn't sound like a lot, it was easily our largest turnout at a fall event. The meeting room was full, and there were lots of wonderful stories and conversations about bluebird nesting this year. Also, it was a great meeting to learn about roost boxes from Vice President Phil Peterson and about the kestrel nesting box program in fruit orchards up north from our guest speaker, Megan Shave.

If you are fortunate enough to have bluebirds around your yard during the winter months, you'll want to take steps now to care for them. Put out a birdbath with a heater to provide water for drinking and bathing. Also consider putting out a winterized nesting or roost box in which birds can spend the nights (see John Harville's excellent article on page 1).

Finally, I encourage you to get out and enjoy birds and wildlife this fall before the cold arrives. Any local park or nature area with cover and water is a good potential place to see migrating birds. If you'd like to take a drive, Baker Sanctuary in Bellevue and Haehnle Sanctuary near Jackson are two great places to see migrating birds, especially Sandhill Cranes, into early November. Maybe I'll see you out there!

## Discovery Preserve at Euclid Park

MBS Vice President Phil Peterson assisted local volunteers with the installation of bluebird nest boxes at the Discovery Preserve on June 23, 2014. Six Gilbertson boxes were installed at locations throughout the urban preserve. Phil instructed volunteers on how to use the conduit/rebar system for the nest box installation (see the Summer, 2014 *Flyer* for this article.)

The Discovery Preserve at Euclid Park is a 12-acre preserve under the care of the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy. The park was formerly known as the Euclid Linear Park and is located at 1701 S. Euclid Avenue, Bay City, MI 48706. The park has benefited from several grants and from significant volunteer efforts. Improvements include enhanced landscaping, bridge repair, removal of invasive species, reintroduction of native species, upgraded restroom facilities, and new interpretive signage. A paved trail provides easy access, and a viewing platform allows observation of wildlife in the preserve's pond at the end of the paved trail.

Information about the Discovery Preserve can be found at their web site:

<http://www.sblc-mi.org/discovery-preserve.html>

The MBS is always willing to assist with nest box trail projects. Our main goals with all projects are that the habitat is good for bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds and that concrete provisions are in place for the boxes to be maintained and monitored. Contact us if you have a good location for a bluebird nest box project.



Volunteers pose next to the first of six Gilbertson nest boxes installed in the Discovery Preserve in Bay City, MI, on June 23, 2014.



[www.facebook.com/michiganbluebirdsociety](http://www.facebook.com/michiganbluebirdsociety)

# A Pole System Designed to Keep Cats from Nest Boxes

By MBS Member Peter Alberda

Twenty-five years ago, I got a lesson about cats and bluebirds. On our farm near Zeeland, I had bluebirds in a box bordering a hay-field. As I approached the box, I saw a cat teaching a kitten how to catch birds. The cat was hiding in the hay about 10 feet directly in front of the nest box. As the bird flew away from the box, it would drop a foot or two on takeoff and be caught by the cat.

After that, I never put a box facing a field but rather facing a fence line whenever possible. Since my fences are electrified, a cat cannot sit and wait for the bird in front of the box opening.

As far as I know, I've never had predation from cats or raccoons climbing the pole on which the box is mounted, so I've always had pretty good nest success. A few years ago, I switched everything over to a five-foot section of 1/2" conduit, with a two-foot section of 4" PVC pipe to stop snakes. If you ever have eggs missing with no shell pieces on the ground in front of the box, you've had a snake attack. I've never had snake problems since I started using these baffles. The baffles also stop mice from fouling the nest box during fall and winter.

This past spring, I had a stretch of boxes at home that was exceptional. Right behind our house, I had chickadees in a PVC box. The next box was a traditional house that I had converted to an X-box style, and it had a pair of bluebirds with young chicks. The following X-box had tree swallows. On the other side of the bluebird box was another chickadee nest with eggs in a PVC box, followed by another tree swallow pair in an X-box. That's five boxes containing five pairs of beautiful birds. It doesn't get any better than that!

One day, we had some bird-loving friends over, so I thought I'd show them the section of my trail that boasted these remarkable bird families. The first chickadee box was empty and the nest was on the ground. The bluebirds' box had only one chick left, and it was dead. The other chickadee box also had its nest on the ground, but the pair had re-nested and had three new eggs in that nest. Fortunately, the two tree swallow nests were both still intact. What had happened? It couldn't have been raccoons as the boxes were on conduit poles, protected by both a baffle and an electric fence. We studied the boxes carefully and found a couple of faint scratches. We decided that the only thing that could get to the boxes was a cat, as it can quite easily jump five feet.

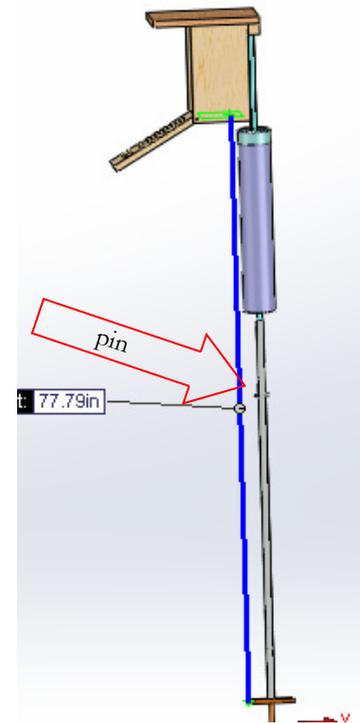
I remembered that last year, Lynn Ward had written



Pete stands next to one of the cat-proof pole systems he designed.

an article in *The Bluebird Flyer* about a cat attack she had that was solved by placing her boxes on seven-foot poles. I started thinking about her solution and, over the winter, designed and built five expandable poles. My design put the boxes seven feet off the ground. I installed the five poles in locations that didn't have electric fencing.

Performing a nest check on the seven-foot poles is quite simple. If you look closely at the drawing to the right, you can see a pin in the middle of the tube. By removing that pin, the upper 1/2" conduit will slide down inside the lower 3/4" conduit, which places the box at a height of about five feet. When finished checking the box, lift the upper section, reinstall the pin, and the nest box is back at the top of the pole. There's nothing to it!

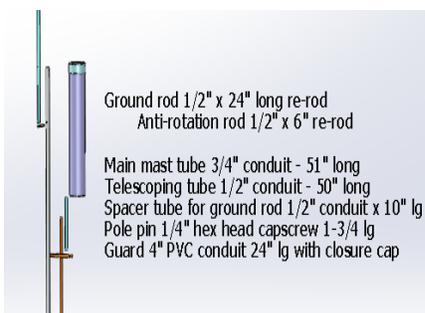


Drawing of seven-foot pole with PVC baffle

Bluebirds quickly took over the box from the first pair of chickadees and fledged five chicks. The chickadees that had re-nested unfortunately lost their nest a second time to another pair of bluebirds who successfully fledged four chicks. The next time I have

chickadees in a box, I'm going to put a plate over the hole to reduce the opening to 1 1/4". I only get two or three pairs of chickadees a year, and feel I need to give them a little help.

Now I have another winter project lined up: I plan to build enough poles so all



List of materials needed and a drawing of how they fit together to create the telescoping system

potentially vulnerable boxes are safe from cat attacks. I feel that we landlords need to do everything we can to protect our feathered friends. I hope you think so too and become proactive by outfitting your boxes as well.

Now if I can only figure out a way to stop those pesky wrens...

For additional information or questions regarding Pete's pole design, feel free to contact him at (616) 283-8547 or email him at [palberda@allcom.net](mailto:palberda@allcom.net). His web site is <http://www.twinmaplefarm.net>.

## Using Roost Boxes for Winter

(Continued from page 1)

A good alternative to a roost box, and the one I use, is to clean out your nest box and leave it in place. In the years 2006, 2007, and 2008, I had a nest box and a roost box mounted on the same 10-foot pole. The nest box was in its usual position, with the roost box at the top. I learned that bluebirds seemed to favor the nest box over the roost box in each of those three years.

While the direction the opening faces may not be important to us in Michigan in summer, it is very important in winter. All boxes should be facing away from the prevailing weather so as to avoid birds becoming trapped in the box if ice and snow build up. For us, this means facing the boxes in a south/southeast direction.

Much more common in winter are Downy Woodpeckers using your nest box for roosting. I would go out on a limb and say that 90% of clean nest boxes have been used by Downys. The box will be used by a single bird only. Once he or she acclimates, the bird will zip into the box just before dark and will zip out at first light - very easy to miss if you are not watching at just the right time. Unlike bluebirds, Downys do not defecate in the box, which is extraordinary when you think that they are in there about 14 hours in the dead of winter. Fairly often they will peck at the sides of your box, and you will find wood shavings on the floor. This is usually the only clue that you had a Downy using your box.

To date, I routinely see Downys using wood nest boxes but have not seen them use a roost box. They cling to the wall of the box usually just under the entrance, most likely for quick escape. You won't see them sitting on the floor. How do we know this? This reporter has used several in-box cameras since 2005. Downys are not aggressive and will leave if and when bluebirds show up. Downys do not wait for bad weather. They're in there now. I suspect they might use them the year around, given the opportunity.

A note of caution: House Sparrows will also roost in nest boxes and sometimes in roost boxes. This means vigilance is required just as in the nesting season. If they are allowed to roost in your nest box, the chances of them holding it into the nesting season are very high (see the article in the next column regarding House Sparrow control during the winter).

I will gladly help you with any questions you may have. You can contact me at: [john\\_s\\_harville@comcast.net](mailto:john_s_harville@comcast.net)

## House Sparrow Control in Winter

By Kurt Hagemester

As we all are painfully aware, House Sparrows are often the single biggest roadblock to fledging more bluebirds from our boxes. During nesting season, watching for and controlling House Sparrows is a critical task to ensure bluebirds can nest safely. It is possible to alleviate the severity of House Sparrow problems in the spring, however, with some preventative actions during the cold weather months.

Like many birds, the life of sparrows in winter consists mainly of finding food and water, staying warm, and returning to their roosting sites at dusk to spend the night. House Sparrows will typically roost in sheltered spaces in sheds, eaves, buildings, tree cavities, vent pipes, holes in siding, and nest boxes left out all winter. By the onset of cold weather, sparrows have found a favorite nighttime roosting spot to which they will return every late afternoon or evening.

It is believed that most House Sparrows are unable to survive cold weather without a sheltered place to roost at night and that a week of cold weather without a protected roosting place will result in their demise (L. Krog, *Bluebird News* – BBRP Feb. 2009). Of course, this will depend on a number of factors, not the least of which is the severity of the winter weather. But this situation can provide an opportunity for proactive bluebird landlords to reduce House Sparrow numbers by eliminating their potential roosting places wherever possible.

Here are some actions you can take to make it harder for House Sparrows to survive the winter. Doing this can potentially make your life as a bluebirder in the spring much easier.

- Look all around the outside of your house, garage, sheds, and outbuildings for any holes, large crevices, and gaps large

(Continued on page 6)

### We'd Like to Hear from YOU!

Do you have a bluebird anecdote or short story you'd like to share with other MBS members? A question you'd like answered? If so, please send it to us for possible publication in an upcoming *Flyer*.

Our address is: [newsletter@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:newsletter@michiganbluebirds.org)

## Please Join Us in Our Efforts to Help Michigan's Eastern Bluebirds to Thrive.

Now is the perfect time to help by joining the MBS or renewing your membership.

### Here are some easy ways to join MBS:

- Fill out this form and mail it with your check.
- Phone our membership chairman, Lynette Myers (517) 206-7066.
- Join online by going to [www.michiganbluebirds.org/join-mbs](http://www.michiganbluebirds.org/join-mbs)

Please indicate your preferred membership:

- One-year individual or family—\$15.00
- Three-year membership—\$40.00
- Corporate membership—\$125.00

- Lifetime membership—\$300.00 (includes free MBS logo shirt)
- I will make a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_
- I have time to volunteer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your check, made payable to Michigan Bluebird Society, with this completed form to: Michigan Bluebird Society, P.O. Box 2028, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-2028

# A Fantastic Bluebird Story

By Mama Blue

Surprise, surprise! It's me, Mama Blue. You may be used to hearing from Papa Blue, or even our son Spike, but it is my turn to give you an update.

Papa Blue and I had a tough summer. I laid two clutches of five eggs each, and because of House Sparrows, cats, and bad luck, only three fledglings survived from each brood. In spite of the losses, we are so proud to have expanded our family by six new bluebirds this summer.

This fall has been a bit challenging, too. There seem to be fewer insects for us to eat. Papa and I have had to fly farther and farther each day to find enough insects for our meals. As we fly, looking for food, we meet many other bluebirds and see lots of nest boxes. Papa Blue will have many nest boxes to choose from next spring.

As the temperatures drop, especially at night, I start to think about winter and flying to a warmer place. At night, when the temperature falls below freezing, we roost in our old nest box at Old Man Peterson's. Sometimes a small number of other bluebirds join us to keep warm. Papa Blue and I have been discussing flying south to find warmer weather and more insects, which will make life a little easier. Papa wants to stay here, though, so he can be the first to find the best nest site come spring. I am hoping we fly to Missouri again this year, as we found so many bluebird friends there last winter. I would like to leave before the first snow fall.

One of us will keep you updated this winter from down south, if I convince Papa to go. Stay warm and say hi when you see us.

Love,

Mama Blue



Artwork by Elaine Morton

## Bluebird



**Q. I've heard that bluebirds will roost overnight in a nest box left outside during the fall and winter. Is this true?**

A. Yes, if you live in a part of the state where bluebirds winter over. In recent years, bluebirds have been commonly seen throughout the winter in the lower half of the Lower Peninsula. If you DO leave out a nest box in the winter, there are several things you should do to make it safer for the birds. First, plug up any ventilation gaps or holes with caulking or weather stripping that can later be removed. This will help keep out cold air. Second, make sure the orientation of the entrance hole is away from the northwest and north, the directions from which the prevailing fronts originate. Third, it's a good idea to put a bed of wood shavings on the bottom of the box. This makes it look more like a tree cavity and adds additional insulation. Finally, put a predator guard on the pole with a solid top and no gaps to prevent mice from climbing up and getting into the box.

**Q. I've seen some bluebirds in my yard this fall. Are they the same ones that nested here this summer?**

A. Maybe. Maybe not. In fall, bluebirds move around a lot while searching for food. You may be seeing local bluebirds or ones that migrate from further north in the state where they don't spend the winter. Without doing banding studies for which you need training and a license from the state, it's almost impossible to tell whether your nesting birds are still around. All this being said, it is believed by many bluebirders that birds do return to the general area where they were raised in order to breed the following year.

---

## Save Paper & Receive *The Flyer* by Email

Help the MBS save money, paper, and resources.

If you would like to only receive this newsletter electronically, send us an email at [newsletter@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:newsletter@michiganbluebirds.org).

Provide us with a working email address where we can send you a link to download a PDF file of *The Flyer* each month. To do this, you must have the Adobe Acrobat Reader program installed on your computer. The program is free and can be downloaded at [www.get.adobe.com/reader](http://www.get.adobe.com/reader).

## White Bluebird Eggs?

Most of us are accustomed to seeing blue eggs in our bluebird nest boxes. However, according to [sialis.org](http://sialis.org), between four and five percent of eggs laid by female bluebirds are white. The eggs may look pure white or may have a slight pinkish or bluish tinge.



*Photo of white bluebird eggs, taken by Molly Dallaire at For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum in Flint, MI.*

Normally, as the eggs pass through the female's oviduct, pigmentation is added to the eggs' shells from the cells lining the oviduct. If the eggs are white, the pigmentation has not been added. There is nothing wrong with white eggs; they are as fertile as blue eggs, and the white eggs will produce normal-colored offspring.

If a female lays white eggs, all of the eggs in the clutch will be white. Should you see white eggs in the nest box from the first brood, and the second brood has blue eggs in the nest, a different female has laid the second brood of eggs.

## House Sparrow Control in Winter

*(Continued from page 4)*

- enough to admit a house sparrow, and plug them up with caulk, wire mesh, wood, etc.
- Replace any broken windows in garages or outbuildings which could allow a sparrow to enter and spend the night.
  - If you feed the birds, eliminate cracked corn, white millet, and cheap seed mixes that have filler grains in them. Try using mainly hanging feeders that don't have big platform areas. If you find the sparrows are eating your sunflower seeds, try using safflower seeds in the feeders instead.
  - Don't leave bluebird or martin housing outside in cold weather (except as noted below relative to roosting).
  - If you have bluebirds roosting during winter, you can put out a roost box for them. It is important to monitor these boxes at dusk to make sure House Sparrows aren't using them. If you find they are, take the box(es) down, or turn the box into a "trap box."
  - If you've eliminated all other potential sparrow roosting spots, and the sparrows start using either a roost or nest box, you can potentially trap the sparrows in the box after they go into it in the evening. Sometime after you see them go in, plug up the entrance hole and remove the birds from the box into a large plastic bag like you would if live-trapping during the nesting season. Be careful to verify that no bluebirds, chickadees, or other native birds are in there as well.

Taking these simple steps can vastly improve your success with bluebirds in the spring.

*The content of this article was based on an article called "Winter House Sparrows" by Lance Krog, published in the Feb. 2009 issue of Bluebird News, the newsletter of the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota.*

## Thank You!

The MBS is grateful to the following people who have recently joined, renewed, or donated money.

### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Jan Fox - Williamsburg  
Linda Hayes - Jackson  
Gloria Juhnke - Fruitport  
John & Fran Kottke - Adrian

### WELCOME BACK, RENEWING MEMBERS!

Bob Birkholm - Scotts  
Peggy Falk - Rockford  
Garland Fitzpatrick - Oxford  
Pauline Furner - Berrien Springs  
Steve Jerant - Chelsea  
Terry Karjalainen - Fenton  
Robert Kohrman - Mt. Pleasant  
Sue Mabee - Charlevoix

### THANK YOU, DONORS!

Lisa Burke-Smalley - In Memory of Terry Hermesch  
Garland Fitzpatrick - Oxford

## New Bluebirds

Thirty fledglings  
On a high wire  
New blue new  
Bluebirds  
Teetering totter  
Through their first tempest  
Rain  
Beats their wings down towards ground  
Broodmates swoop them up  
Up  
They find  
Their strong flight.

*Written by MBS member Mark Mubich of Jackson, MI*

# About The Michigan Bluebird Society

**Our Mission: To improve the nesting success of the Eastern Bluebird and other native cavity-nesting birds in the State of Michigan through education of our members and the general public, as well as promoting active nest box management and habitat improvement.**



The Bluebird Flyer is a publication for the members of the Michigan Bluebird Society. It is published four times a year: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. Contributions including articles and photos are very welcome and can be mailed to: **The Michigan Bluebird Society, P.O. Box 2028, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-2028** or via email to [newsletter@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:newsletter@michiganbluebirds.org). Articles must be related to bluebirds or other cavity-nesting birds. The MBS retains the right to refuse article submissions. Non-profit, nature-related groups are encouraged to submit press releases of events and every effort will be made to find space in The Bluebird Flyer. Advertising is NOT accepted at this time. No reproductions of any material in this newsletter are permitted without permission from the MBS.

The Michigan Bluebird Society (MBS) was founded in 2001 and organized in 2004 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the state of Michigan. The MBS is an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society.

## County Coordinators

**Antrim, Charlevoix, & Kalkaska Counties,** Tom Comfort  
(231) 676-0565 [comfort@torchlake.com](mailto:comfort@torchlake.com)

**Berrien, Cass, & Van Buren Counties,** John Harville  
(269) 473-2667  
[john\\_s\\_harville@comcast.net](mailto:john_s_harville@comcast.net)

**Calhoun County,** Kristie Preston  
(269) 964-9592  
[kristie.preston@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kristie.preston@sbcglobal.net)

**Benzie, Leelenau, & Manistee Counties,** Greg Miller  
(231) 325-4883 [ridgeview@centurytel.net](mailto:ridgeview@centurytel.net)

**Emmet County,** Bob Otto  
(231) 526-9491 [gogitum247@charter.net](mailto:gogitum247@charter.net)

**Genesee County,** Mary Mason  
(810) 735-9877 [maryleemason@gmail.com](mailto:maryleemason@gmail.com)

**Ingham, Eaton, & Clinton Counties,** Gene Wasserman  
(517) 339-1161 [esw1216@msn.com](mailto:esw1216@msn.com)

**Jackson County,** Lynn Ward  
(517) 581-2961 [ward\\_lynn@comcast.net](mailto:ward_lynn@comcast.net)

**Kalamazoo & Barry Counties,** Jonathan Morgan  
(269) 344-1803 [gardenman13@yahoo.com](mailto:gardenman13@yahoo.com)

**Kent County,** Mark DeHaan  
(616) 822-3856 [mdehaan59@gmail.com](mailto:mdehaan59@gmail.com)

**Lapeer County,** Carla Caretto  
(810) 678-3276 [ccaretto@gmail.com](mailto:ccaretto@gmail.com)

**Muskegon Cty.,** Carol LaPres-Beyer  
(231) 780-3177 [CLaBy10@aol.com](mailto:CLaBy10@aol.com)

**Oakland County,** Duane Lanyon  
(248) 437-4227 [dal30950@yahoo.com](mailto:dal30950@yahoo.com)

**Ottawa County,** Leon Stille  
(616) 842-2273 [stillcon@aol.com](mailto:stillcon@aol.com)

**Washtenaw County,** Ana Hotaling  
(734) 475-3622  
[publicity@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:publicity@michiganbluebirds.org)

**Shiawasee County,** Phil Peterson  
(517) 256-4248  
[ppeterson@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:ppeterson@michiganbluebirds.org)

**Cadillac, Wexford, Missaukee, & Osceola Counties,** Dave Newhouse  
(231) 577-4240  
[danewhouse@gmail.com](mailto:danewhouse@gmail.com)

## Board of Directors

### PRESIDENT

Kurt Hagemeister, Ann Arbor, MI  
(734) 663-9746  
[khagemeister@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:khagemeister@michiganbluebirds.org)

### VICE PRESIDENT

Phil Peterson, Laingsburg, MI  
(517) 256-4248  
[ppeterson@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:ppeterson@michiganbluebirds.org)

### SECRETARY

Liz Hagemeister, Ann Arbor, MI  
(734) 663-9746  
[secretary@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:secretary@michiganbluebirds.org)

### TREASURER

Ann Gaultney, Haslett, MI  
(517) 339-1161  
[treasurer@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:treasurer@michiganbluebirds.org)

### PAST PRESIDENT

Lynn Ward, Jackson, MI  
(517) 581-2961  
[ward\\_lynn@comcast.net](mailto:ward_lynn@comcast.net)

### DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

Gene Wasserman, Haslett, MI  
(517) 339-1161  
[esw1216@msn.com](mailto:esw1216@msn.com)

### WEBMASTER

Jan Graves, Tecumseh, MI  
(517) 423-3467  
[webmaster@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:webmaster@michiganbluebirds.org)

### MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Lynette Myers, Michigan Center, MI  
(517) 206-7066  
[membership@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:membership@michiganbluebirds.org)

### PUBLICITY DIRECTOR

Ana Hotaling, Chelsea, MI  
(734) 475-3622  
[publicity@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:publicity@michiganbluebirds.org)

### NEWSLETTER DIRECTOR

Gail Chapman, Shorewood, IL  
(815) 730-1194  
[newsletter@michiganbluebirds.org](mailto:newsletter@michiganbluebirds.org)

# MBS Fall Festival Draws a Record Turnout

The Michigan Bluebird Society held its annual Fall Festival meeting at the Dahlem Nature Center in Jackson on September 7<sup>th</sup>. We had a record turnout of more than 35 members and guests join us on a beautiful, sunny day for an interesting program schedule. MBS Vice President Phil Peterson gave an informative presentation about using roost boxes during the fall and winter months. After his presentation, audience members shared valuable information regarding their own experiences with roost



*Attentive audience members absorb information from speakers Phil Peterson and Megan Shave.*



*Megan Shave spoke about kestrel nest boxes in Leelanau County, MI.*

boxes. Following Phil's program, Megan Shave, a graduate student at MSU, gave a fascinating talk on the agricultural and conservation impact of kestrel nest boxes in several fruit orchards in Leelanau County in northwestern Michigan. Audience members were intrigued by the high nesting success rate of the nest box program and expressed interest in attracting kestrels locally.

The MBS wishes to extend special thanks to both Dahlem Nature Center for allowing us to use their wonderful facility and to Phil Peterson who did most of the event planning and organizing. Also, the MBS would like to thank Lynn Ward and Liz Hagemeister for organizing the delicious lunch and thank all those who helped with the setup and cleanup. Finally, thanks go to Liz Hagemeister and Ann Gaultney for handling the registration and sales table.



*The proud winner of the raffle was... Connie Spotts!*

## Lending A Helping Hand to Hatchlings

By Jonathan Morgan

*In 2012, Jonathan Morgan, the MBS County Coordinator for Kalamazoo and Barry Counties and former wildlife rehabber, initiated a partnership with the City of Kalamazoo Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to place 14 bluebird nest boxes on the site of a former oil refinery. The rehabilitated site now boasts marshes, retention ponds, prairies, and wooded areas and is teeming with wildlife.*

The first brood of bluebirds to hatch on this site in 2013 was doing well until the weather suddenly turned rainy with freezing temperatures. One day, I found the five hatchlings stone cold and unresponsive, and the female had disappeared. Deciding to dispose of the limp hatchlings elsewhere, I gently cupped them in my hand inside my pants pocket and continued along my trail. Halfway around my loop, I felt movement in my hand! They were alive, but barely. I quickly went into action, taking them home and slowly warming them overnight. In the morning, they began to beg, so I fed them a waxworm porridge. This is a critical period of time, because to feed them 'handouts' for too long is risky; instead, the birds must be promptly placed with a brooding female who will accept them as her own.

Throughout the day, I observed the nest box repeatedly and never saw any sign of either parent. Fortunately, I run two large trails and was able to check my notes to locate two suitable boxes of the same-aged hatchlings where I could put these five to be fostered. Three hatchlings were fostered to one trail and two to another, giving me a total of seven hatchlings in the first box and six in the second.

I now was a very busy and attentive bluebird landlord, checking the two nest boxes almost daily. I supplemented both boxes with feeder cups screwed to the tops into which I placed mealworms

until I was certain all of the young were out of danger and the parents were not stressed. Those two sets of parents fed (and ate) a LOT of mealworms.

Although I was slightly disappointed that this freshman clutch of bluebirds from the new site did not actually fledge from the site, they did get to fledge. I believe that, due to my ability to



*A foster mother finds mealworms in the feeder cup.*

assess the situation rationally, knowledgeably, and promptly, this clutch was able to survive. The five hatchlings, along with all of their 'cousins' from the two boxes, fledged together several weeks later. This is proof that emergency fostering can be accomplished when absolutely necessary and given the right circumstances. It is one tool among many that bluebird landlords can use in their efforts to steward these wonderfully resilient creatures.