

TEXAS

The Newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society

Blues

Volume 5

Issue 4

2007 Texas Bluebird Society Calendar

Saturday, April 14th

Wills Point Bluebird Festival *

To volunteer to work our booth, contact Norm Shoemaker, sales@thriftyrubberstamp.com or 936-569-0480 This is our 6th year with a presence at this annual festival on the red brick streets of Wills Point (about an hour east of Dallas.)

Saturday, June 9th

Texas Blueberry Festival, Nacogdoches *

To volunteer to work our booth, contact Norm Shoemaker, sales@thriftyrubberstamp.com or 936-569-0480. This will be our first year with a booth at this festival. We're also a sponsor! Bluebirds & Blueberries in Deep East Texas!

Saturday, August 18th

TBS Bluebird Symposium, Camp Chaparral, Wichita Falls *

Keith Kridler, featured speaker. Also, Denise Townsend and Laura Packer. Early morning nature walk led by local birders. Optional tour of Wichita Falls Winery, just down the street. For details or to donate an auction item, contact John Cys, 940.691.5702.

Friday, October 5th

TBS Annual Dinner & Auction *

McKinney Roughs Dining Hall (Austin)

Our annual meeting will be in conjunction with the Texas Parks & Wildlife EXPO. Participants may plan to visit the 2-day event and volunteer under the red, white & blue Texas Bluebird Society canopy.

Saturday, October 6th & Sunday, October 7th

Texas Parks & Wildlife EXPO (Austin) *

To volunteer to work our booth, contact Ann Thames. semahta@yahoo.com or 979.278.3053. About 40,000 visit this festival!

* "One Nestbox" membership_nestbox exchange will be offered at these events. New members (and renewals) will receive a complimentary nestbox.

VOLUNTEER POSITION OPEN:

This newsletter needs an editor.
Please contact Pauline Tom, if interested



NABS Nestbox Approval Obtained by TBS Members

See story by Naomi Josephson on p. 3.



... as always ...

Today is the best day to set out a new nestbox ... especially one that's sitting on the floor of your garage!

Our bluebirds in Texas investigate possible nesting sites during "winter" and can begin successful nests in February.

Check your nestboxes in January to make certain they're cleaned out and ready for cavity-nesting birds.

Annual Meeting at McKinney Roughs—More Than Bluebirds

by Linda Crum

For those of you who did not attend the annual meeting in October at McKinney Roughs Nature Park, you missed a wonderful treat. Paul and Georgan Kyle were there to give a presentation about Chimney Swifts.

The Kyles moves to Austin in 1973 and purchased property in northwest Travis County high on a knoll overlooking the beautiful hill country of central Texas. They personally hand built their home and fell in love with the native wildlife and plants that surrounded them. The home includes a workshop where Georgan makes wooden toys that the Kyles sell from their shop in Austin. She not only designs the toys but cuts the pieces on her band saw and applies the finishes.

In 1982 the Paul and Georgan attended a wildlife-rehabilitation class and obtained state and federal permits to rehabilitate wildlife. Many species of wildlife were brought to them but none captivated their interest and won their hearts as did a small, sleek, black bird brought to them in 1983. They took one look into the “most remarkable eyes they had ever seen.” Not knowing the bird’s identity sent them to Peterson’s field guide where they found a match—the adult Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*). What developed from that first encounter with the Chimney Swift is a captivating story.

As soon as Paul began his Power Point presentation, he had everyone’s attention. The most dramatic part of the program was the video portion. The Kyles have a video camera mounted in one of their Chimney Swift towers. We actually viewed film of Chimney Swifts from courtship and nest building to fledging of the young. Describing the Chimney Swift’s eyes as “the most remarkable eyes they had ever seen,” is a true statement by the Kyles. One look at those little birds and I was in love.

The next morning we traveled to Paul and Georgan’s property, known as Chaetura Canyon. Their home is in a subdivision, but they have managed to purchase several lots for a total of about 8 acres. The Kyles have recently transferred ownership of the property to the Travis Audubon Society. They will continue to live there and manage the property. They also serve as project directors of the Driftwood Wildlife Association’s North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project.

Chaetura Canyon is truly a wildlife sanctuary, not only for chimney swifts, but other species of birds and wildlife. Our field trip through the property was fabulous! The Kyles are stewards of their land, preserving and restoring the native habitat. We were told to stay on the trail

because even stepping on the ground could cause compaction. Restoration of the soil is a very slow process. All along the trail we viewed various structures built for wildlife such as logs stacked for lizard habitat and brush piles for birds to retreat to safety.

Many styles of towers had been built as nesting sites for chimney swifts. These amazing birds are very territorial during nesting season so only one pair will nest in each tower. After nesting and fledging of the young, the chimney swifts become friendly with one another again and many swifts will roost in the towers at night at the time of fall migration. All the little chimney swifts had already migrated to their winter home in South America but they will return next spring in March.

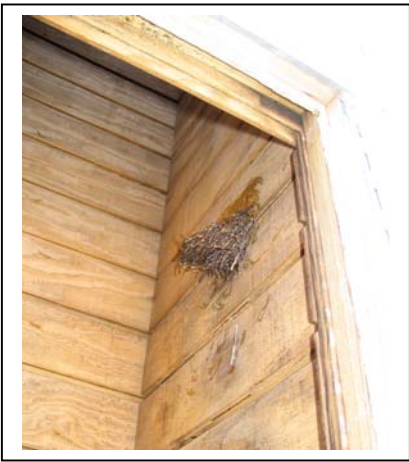
After tromping through the woods – on the trails, of course – Georgan had a delicious lunch prepared for us. Eating lunch on the deck in gorgeous weather, while watching little birds come for meal worms, made for a perfect ending to our field trip.

To learn more about Chimney Swifts and how to provide nesting sites for them, take a look at Paul and Georgan Kyle’s two books: *Chimney Swifts – America’s Mysterious Birds above the Fireplace* and *Chimney Swift Towers – New Habitat for America’s Mysterious Birds*. Both books are published by Texas A&M University Press, www.tamu.edu/upress.

Linda Crum is Treasurer of TBS. She gave a presentation on “Composting,” her special interest, at the TBS annual meeting. She can be reached through email, organicgardener@houston.rr.com or phone,



Field Trip Photos by Linda Crum



To construct the nest, Chimney Swifts use their saliva to stick small twigs to the side of the tower wall



By examining the floor of the tower, the Kyles know how many eggs were laid and what percentage was successfully hatched.



Pauline Tom takes a look inside one of the Chimney Swift towers

*Bottom of Page 2:
During lunch, Paul Kyle shows one of their hand-made wooden toys to LeAnn and Anthony Sharp, Fred Crum and Ron Tom.*

Hand-crafted Nestlog© Provides Unique Bluebird Habitat by Naomi Josephson

Our company, Ranch-Works, is a family based business that sells high quality, hand-crafted products that have been designed, developed and made here at our central Texas ranch. We designed one of these products, "the Nestlog©", while meeting one of our Wildlife Exemption requirements making provisions for the Eastern Bluebird, our target species.

We contacted Pauline Tom, President of the Texas Bluebird Society inquiring about approval. Since TBS does not have a nestbox approval process, she directed us to the North American Bluebird Society website. There we found the procedure we needed to follow to be approved and / or endorsed by them. The process was spelled out simply and we wrote a letter with detailed plans of our nestlog and sent pictures with our letter.

We hoped that because of the uniqueness of our design, in recreating a true- to- life, wild bluebird habitat that we would be approved. We were thankful to find in about four weeks that we had been approved by NABS and received our personal letter just in time for the NABS 2006 convention in San Antonio.

Our letter from Steve Eno, the Chairman of the Box Approval Committee stated that our house contained all the elements needed to provide a safe environment for a bluebird to raise its young and to please consider our house officially approved. He also said "It is very attractive and you should do well with the sale of this box." Needless to say we were very honored to laminate and display this letter at our booth.

The Nestlog retails for \$99.00. Ranch-Works offers the Nestlog to TBS members for \$79.00, plus shipping. (Weight: about 4 lbs.) Phone 512.601.3271 to place an order. Ranch-Works provided a much-appreciated sponsorship for the 2006 NABS Convention.

North American Bluebird Society
Affiliate Member Special Rate for 2007 & 2008
\$15.00/year (for Individual or family)
includes quarterly journal, "Bluebird"

As a member of Texas Bluebird Society, in 2007 & 2008 you can join NABS (or renew membership) for \$15.00/year. (regular price: \$20 Individual / \$30 Family)

Send payment along with your name & contact information and indicate "TBS Special Rate."

With this special offer, NABS will designate \$5.00 of each year's payment to The Zeleny Fund. Please consider adding an additional donation "earmarked" for The Zeleny Fund.

Mail to: NABS, P O Box 43, Miamiville OH 45147

TBS encourages joint membership in TBS and NABS.

President's Corner

Bluebirds in the College Station / Bryan area have a new friend, David Gwin. When David moved away from his trail (with dozens of nestboxes) in the DFW area, he scouted his new community for suitable bluebird habitat and found numerous appropriate spots. He put out a plea for donated nestboxes, and I responded with word about our "Start With Five" offer:

David, because we have no volunteer "running" the "Start With Five," it's loosely organized and requests go through the default person who does a job if no one else is doing it - the president.

"Start With Five" exists so TBS can help start many trails and because we encourage those starting out with a trail to start small. (It's MUCH easier to put up a trail than it is to monitor the trail. We don't want to be a part of trails that are abandoned the first summer.)

We ask that applicants send a "Start With Five" informal proposal by email for each trail with a name for the trail (i.e., "20 Acres Near TAMU"; "_____ Nature Preserve, College Station," "_____ Cemetery, College Station"), a bit of information about the proposed trail (i.e., size, setting, property ownership) and a commitment from a contact person to plan to provide systems for predator control (as needed) and to return an annual report (from regular monitoring) to TBS.*

If approved, Texas Bluebird Society provides five sets of nestboxes and mounting hardware (or a reimbursement for the hardware.) The applicant must pick up the donation near Kyle or make arrangements to meet a TBS volunteer traveling in their direction.

David submitted requests for SIX "Start With Five" trails, and since he has a history of regularly monitoring dozens of nestboxes, the requests were approved.

Ron & I traveled to Deep East Texas the following week for Thanksgiving, and David made arrangements to meet us as we passed through Bryan. In a service station parking lot, the transfer took place!



The hand-painted blue poles are the "recycled" flagpoles that we used on stage at the NABS Convention in San Antonio!

If you're interested in administering "Start With Five" ... please contact me.

Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time

Yours, Pauline
512.268.5678 / ptom5678@gmail.com

P O Box 40868
Austin TX 78704

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