

Nestbox building is booming for Bluebirds of Happiness

TBS distributes nestboxes built by volunteers with materials purchased with donations.

Through our signature "One Nestbox" booths at local festivals, we distribute a starter nestbox and a packet of educational materials in exchange for a TBS membership.

We're enjoying a nestbox building boom!

Festival outreach brought 375 people into Texas Bluebird Society with the "One Nestbox" offer in 2008. New members located their 375 nestboxes on private property in Texas. Each nestbox is well constructed and designed for Texas conditions. Over 80% of the individuals who joined through this plan were not previously involved in bluebird conservation.

Texas Bluebird Society spends no dollars on fund-raising and very little on administration as we spread "Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time."

\$8.00 purchases materials for a nestbox. Please consider a donation just for "nestbox lumber."

The IRS recognizes Texas Bluebird Society as a "charitable" 501c3 organization. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. Your extra gift, in any amount, would be most helpful.

Interested? Donate through the secured donations section on the website or mail to the TBS address shown on this page.

We extend a special thank you to those who made an end of the year donation for nestbox lumber before this edition's printing deadline.

Nestbox Lumber Donors:

Eva Schulze

Dayle Enderson

Catherine Gero

Joyce Valdez

Judith Deaton

Michelle Mahaffey



Take a look at our Flickr photostream online

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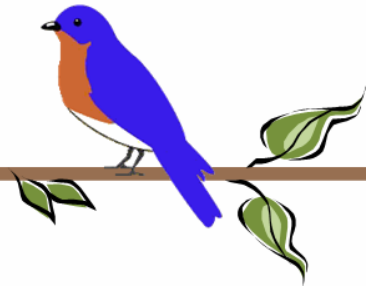
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TEXAS Blues



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Linda Crum

2008 Volunteer Extraordinaire

Debbie Bradshaw Park introduces TBS Blue Feather Award Winner

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TBS Members—we're among the first outsiders to view these two rarest of rare Bluebird eggs!!

Mary Leyendecker describes incredible details. Page 2



(c) LgPacker, Abnormal Eastern Bluebird Eggs from Erath County, Oct 2008

TBS Photo Stream rolling on Flickr

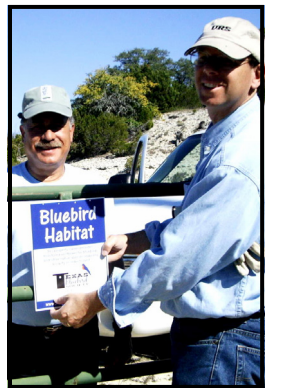
easy to access, fun to use

The [Photo Library of Texas Bluebird Society](http://www.texasbluebirdsociety.org) now appears as a Flickr Photo Stream. It is a work in progress, currently divided into six sections: Bluebirds; Bluebird Life Cycle; Bluebird Nests and Nestboxes; Other Cavity Nesters; Predators; Events. Access the photo stream through the Photo Gallery section of www.texasbluebirdsociety.org.

Photographers of all skill levels are invited to submit images – especially, photos taken in Texas. It's easy to donate a photo to the TBS Photo Gallery. Please follow the instructions found online. TBS accepts photos only from the photographer.

SIGNMAKER NEEDED

Our "Bluebird Habitat" sign program hit a snag after Mike Whelan (at right) installed the first one on his gate in Oatmeal with Ron Tom (at left). TBS seeks a vendor able to accept one-by-one online orders for a weather-resistant 9" x 12" sign at a reasonable price that includes Priority Mail shipping. For bid information or to recommend a source, please contact Pauline Tom, 512.268.5678.



Mountain Bluebird in Central Texas

Brush Freeman has reported, on TexBirds, a female Mountain Bluebird in a mesquite tree on private land near Komensky (Lavaca County) on 11/18/08. Mountain Bluebirds occur in Central Texas in irruption years. "This was just a bit early."

An photo snapped on 1/26/08 by Susan Schaezler represents the 4th record for Comal County. Comal County is west of Lavaca County. The image is #6 on Flickr. Go to www.texasbluebirdsociety.org Photo Gallery; search for *Mountain Bluebird*.

"Keep your eyes open. Both Mountain Bluebirds and Western Bluebirds are sometimes seen among Eastern Bluebirds in Texas during the winter," advises Pauline Tom.



Mountain Bluebird photographed by TBS member Laura Packer on Valentines' Day 2007 in Abilene.

Early Birds — SYMPOSIUM 2009

Lysle Mockler has donated this beautiful framed oil painting (below) by noted Texas artist Mary Rabien for the 2009 Symposium Early Bird Registration drawing. Sign-up opens this spring for the August 8 event at Lakeview Camp in Waxahachie. Our featured speaker is Keith Kridler. Guest rooms are available directly through Lakeview Camp at a discount, "first come, first served."



Two abnormal bluebird eggs saved, donated to TBS

By Mary Leyendecker

Abnormal bluebird eggs declared "one in 10 million" have been donated to the TBS permanent collection for viewing by thousands at EXPO, announced Pauline Tom, president.

The clutch, a dwarf and a double yolk, startled Dorothy Reeves, an avid bluebirder and bluebird trail monitor for over 20 years. Having experienced numerous successful fledglings over the years, Dorothy expected "no surprises" during her routine fall maintenance in October 2008.

Dorothy recalls that the box had a nest early in the year that fledged three birds, with no eggs left unhatched. "Then when I went to clean it out, there were these two weird eggs!" The nestbox where these eggs were found is located 19 miles east of Stephenville in Erath County.

The copyrighted photograph provided on Pg. 1 by the Reeves Family includes a normal egg added for comparison. TBS members are among the first to view this photo. It will be shared with Cornell Lab of Ornithology and select birding magazines.

The bizarre discovery was greeted with jubilation by Keith Kridler, TBS Technical Advisor.

"I have never seen or heard of anyone finding both a dwarf egg and a double yolk egg in the same bluebird nestbox. The long egg is probably a double yolk. Two of the yolks accidentally moved up into the oviduct at the same time rather than just one moving up a day.

"Since this threw out the normal progression of one egg a day forming around a normal yolk, the following day the small eggshell formed around just the white without a yolk. This creating the dwarf egg in the photo. Of course this could have been reversed and the dwarf formed first and then the double yolk egg, as is common in laying hens.

"Finding either a dwarf or double yolk is probably one in 10,000 in bluebird nests. I have only found three in forty years of checking nests. So this is probably a one in 10 million chance," said Kridler.

Texas Bluebird Society holds a Salvage Permit from USF&W and TP&W that allows those on the permit to collect eggs and nests. In compliance with the permit, a courier will transport the irreplaceable eggs from West Texas to Central Texas.

Welcome, New Members!

CP, Conroe	Elizabeth McDaniel,	JH, Pflugerville	FC, San Antonio
LR, Spring	Groesbeck		MA, Elgin
		Ariana Rodriguez, Austin	GC, Rockwall
JB, Tomball	Maria Isela Reyna, Austin		DC, Round Rock
JN, Lewisville		Theresa Pella, Cedar Park	PR, Junction
		Deborah & Jimmy Gloria, Mansfield	TR, Austin
CF, Utopia			RS, Austin
PR, Brenham	MK, Austin	Cook's Canoes, Elgin	TY, Marble Falls
			LB, Pflugerville
ME, Schulenburg	CK, Grapevine	Konny Moore, Austin	JE, Arlington
			CM, Austin
BD, Dripping Springs	CS, Lago Vista	Mark & Cathy Greenfield, Austin	MA, Austin
			SA, Llano
MK, Skidmore	Sophia Delcore, Austin	Larry W Lamely, Palestine	Will Murley, Austin
			Melissa Estaville, Del Valle
PH, Willis		Doohi Teipathi, Austin	SB, Florence
			Gaynelle Vance, Lufkin
MH, Trinity		James Conner, Austin	Allen Sirois, Salado
			Oscar Hernandez, Austin
DL, Montgomery		Ian Steusloff, Manor	Tom Foster, Leander
			James & Debbie Giroux, Austin
JM, Austin			Augie & Pearl De La Cruz, Atascosa
			WB, Navasota
CC, Wimberley	GB, Hutto	Mark & Sara Carlson, Athens	BD, Spring Hill
			HD, Driftwood
BG, Weatherford	T.J. Bulgerin, Hutto	CC, Mason	MS, Brenham
			PC,
Jennifer Voss, Austin	John Hoffmann, Austin	KB, Mason	DB, Mexia
			BC, Mountain City
Sharon Frels, Seguin	Stephanie & Jeff Todd, Elgin	JD, Mason	Ann Marie Oswald, Kyle
			Cathie Lehman, Kyle
Susan Stull, Dale			CG, Maypearl
			Carol DeLong, Denton
Linda McKaskle, Cedar Creek	Cynthia Perez, Austin	GT, Fredonia	Catherine Bass, Denton
			PO, Denton
			Vonnie Eggleston, Denton

Signmaker

Needed.

Contact

Pauline!



TBS members travel all over Texas for the cause of bluebirds. Ron and Pauline Tom (above) paused in their drive to deliver a habitat sign to landowner Mike Whelan (story, p. 1), for this 'totally Texas' moment. Two miles from the Whelan property, the citizens of Oatmeal have, yes indeed, installed an oatmeal box to advertise their community's special event!

Bluebird Habitat

This property owner provides monitored nestboxes for bluebirds and other native species requiring a cavity in order to nest



www.texasbluebirdsociety.org

Linda is TBS Volunteer Extraordinaire!

Congratulations to Linda Crum, recipient of the 2008 TBS Blue Feather Award!

By Debbie Bradshaw Park

What is the *Blue Feather Award*, one might ask? It's our group's significant kudo to an individual who has made extraordinary efforts to promote the conservation of bluebirds, which makes them a "true blue" bluebird friend.

Linda has made a variety of contributions to TBS this year. First and foremost her talent as a speaker has put her at the top of the list for various organizations requesting bluebird presentations. Linda customized the Texas Bluebird Society's educational slide presentation with her own photographs; some of the pictures are from her own backyard. The presentation, along with her bluebird knowledge and enthusiasm, encouraged scores of participants to join TBS and install nestboxes in their own backyards. Linda has made presentations to the Montgomery County Master Gardeners, Texas Master Naturalists (through the Lonestar College ALL Program), Fifth and Sixth grade students at Wilkerson Intermediate School, and Arbor Gate Nursery.

Linda's volunteer skills were put to the test when she became the 2008 Summer Symposium Coordinator. Along with the help of a few other volunteers, Linda coordinated every aspect of this highly successful event from start to finish. The Symposium, a daylong program about bluebirds, attracted 34 participants to the sessions held in The Woodlands. As well as running the show, Linda found the time to speak on a subject she is very concerned about, "How to Deal with House Sparrows." Linda has passed the coordinator torch to Lysle Mockler for Summer Symposium 2009 to be held in Waxahachie.

Linda contributed "[Sparrow Spooker Protects Bluebirds](#)" to *Texas Blues* Volume 6 Issue 2. Read up on shocking sparrow facts and proven solutions to stop their insidious behavior once a helpless bluebird begins to lay her eggs.

A totally different type of learning activity absorbed more of Linda's "free" time — QuickBooks, a financial software program. Linda serves as the treasurer of TBS. Not only has she counted the money, she has "spent" her time deciphering how to automate TBS' financial process. QuickBooks empowers Linda to demonstrate TBS' compliance as a 501c3 Non-Profit organization and facilitate any financial audits as required.

Birder, Master Naturalist, Master Gardener, Quilter, wife, mother – Linda has held a special place in her heart for bluebirds since 2000 when her beloved cat passed away.

"I was so sad. A pair of bluebirds began coming to my yard and gave me such pleasure that I felt God had sent them to cheer me up! I joined TBS in 2005 and have enjoyed watching the nesting and fledging activity ever since. I feed my bluebird friends mealworms. I whistle every time I put the mealworms in the feeder. What fun to watch the parents and kids fly in to feed on cue!" Linda admits she even names her bluebird friends.

Linda is a certified Master Gardner and averages about 300 volunteer hours a year at the Montgomery County Extension Office in the Floral Gardens section.

"Becoming a Master Gardner helped me to learn how to stop killing plants." Linda loves flowers but her real passion is vegetable gardening. "All the time I spent with my grandfather in his vegetable garden was a big influence." Linda comments that "growing vegetables really doesn't save money over store bought; they just taste better straight from the garden." This spring Linda will be sharing her knowledge in a series of articles for *Texas Blues* on "Planting for Bluebirds."

Upon her retirement from Community Association of The Woodlands, an organization equivalent to a City Hall which handles environmental services, Linda anticipates "more of the same."

In the new year, she vows to continue to raise earthworms in her sewing room (for her garden, *not* for bluebirds), volunteer at the County Extension Office as a Master Gardener, volunteer to teach compost classes, and continue her treasurer responsibilities and speaker schedule for TBS.

Who knows what else she might volunteer to do! After all, the very *first* volunteer duty Linda performed was as Registrar for the 2006 National Bluebird Association Conference in San Antonio. That was no small chore; to say the least, Linda thrives on large-scale projects, such as supporting the TBS goal of "Bluebirds Across Texas ... *one nestbox at a time.*"

TBS members, associates, and professional colleagues in the birding world congratulate Linda Crum and affirm their "Thanks for all the wonderful volunteer chores you have accomplished for TBS. There is no one who deserves the *Blue Feather Award* more than you!"

Gratitude and thanks!

Items plus Buyers equal Success! Incredible response to the 2008 Symposium Silent Auction generated \$1,034.00 for TBS bluebird conservation efforts.

Symposium Auction Donors:

Angie Bokanyi Handmade Jewelry
Ann Marie Hopkins
Barby Smith
Bill Griffith
Carla Harrington, drollyankees
Carol Diaz aspects@aspects, inc
CATW Environmental Services Dept.
Cynthia Reed
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Jim Anding David Gwin Matt Jordan
Debbie and John Park
Dick and Chris Park
Ron and Pauline Tom Barbara Vinson
Philip Walker

Presentation to Robson Ranch Garden Club

Doug Rohde, Presenter

Barb Ohlman, Coordinator

Harry Evans

Susan Tartaglino

Ron and Pauline Tom

Hornsby Bend Bluebird Trail restored to successful habitat

by Barbara Vinson

Pauline Tom, President of the Texas Bluebird Society contacted me in March 2008, asking me if I would be interested in monitoring nestboxes at Hornsby Bend Water Treatment Facility (near Austin Bergstrom International Airport) during nesting season. I let Pauline know that I would be delighted to take on the project with her guidance. I found the prospect of monitoring the nestboxes at Hornsby Bend of interest both as a learning experience as well as working to further the bluebird population.

Because I had been unsuccessful in attracting bluebirds to my property, I hoped to learn what would attract them. I also liked the idea of experiencing the incredible diversity of wildlife found at Hornsby Bend on a regular basis.

I met with Pauline Tom and Priscilla Muir from Travis Audubon Society on April 4 at Hornsby Bend where we located seven nestboxes. Four boxes were located along Platt Lane. Several of these had become occupied by carpenter ant colonies which made them unusable by bluebirds. Two nestboxes were located along the southern edge of the South Pond and one box was located in the pecan grove surrounding the Center for Environmental Research (CER) facility. Much to our delight during our tour of Hornsby Bend, a pair of Bluebirds was spotted in the vicinity of the CER.

On April 12, I returned to Hornsby Bend to start monitoring nestboxes. I decided which ones to replace and/or move and confirmed the location of all nestboxes with Kevin Anderson, the CER Coordinator. After discussions with Pauline, Priscilla, and Kevin, I put up five more bluebird nestboxes. Pauline suggested putting updated signs on the nestboxes which would serve to inform interested parties about the nestboxes and who to contact if they had needed more information.

By the end of April, I located all of the nestbox locations by GPS, added new signs to the exteriors of the nestboxes, and created a Hornsby Bend Nest-Watch program.

NestWatch, created by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a website to document in one central location the results of nest monitoring. Data can be entered into their online site at www.nestwatch.org.

I discovered the first eggs of the season on May 8: five bluebird eggs in one of the nestboxes by CER.

By the beginning of June there were four nestboxes being used; three by bluebirds and one by a Carolina Wren. The bluebird nesting season for central Texas is usually February through July, but I did not get started monitoring and establishing new nestboxes until the middle of April. Even with this late start, the birds responded with five nests and 22 eggs. Although the eggs from the Carolina Wren nest and one bluebird nest did not hatch, one pair of bluebirds successfully raised two broods.

An interesting observation is that the nestboxes placed within the shady pecan grove were the only ones used by the bluebirds.

This was a surprise because all the articles I had read recommended placement of bluebird nestboxes in open grassland away from trees. I'm guessing that because of the heat, especially with the high temperatures that central Texas experienced this year, it becomes too hot within the nestbox for eggs and nestlings to survive later in the season.

In summary, an average of four eggs was laid per bluebird nest. Thirty percent of the eggs hatched. A total of five bluebird nestlings fledged. The last two bluebird nestlings fledged about August 11. It seems that the bluebirds will extend their nesting season by choosing cooler nesting sites if they are available. Plans for the 2009 season are to start monitoring earlier in the nesting season and to place more nestboxes in open shady locations.

Backstory: TBS installed nestboxes donated by co-founder Keith Kridler at Hornsby Bend during our first year (2001-2002.) Thereafter, its monitor relocated and the trail lost maintenance. When Priscilla Muir, Travis Audubon Society, advised TBS of nestbox conditions, thanks to TBS upgrades of technology by skilled volunteers, I referred to the new TBS Membership Map and found Barbara residing within a 30-min. drive of Hornsby Bend!

Barbara is test-driving NestWatch, a partnership technology embraced by TBS in support of national conservation research. Barbara enters her findings at each visit into NestWatch. This system is applicable to all TBS-sponsored trails. Records are online and easy to update. A substitute can monitor a trail and enter observations into the official records. Barbara's weekly notes in NestWatch are reviewed by a TBS volunteer to provide electronic training. — Pauline Tom, interim Volunteer Coordinator



PLEASE
DO NOT DISTURB

Registered with NestWatch database,
a continent-wide citizen-science project
and nest-monitoring scheme of the
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
www.nestwatch.org








See activity or problems?

Please report to:
Hornsby Bend Nestbox Coordinator Barbara Vinson
512.295.2710 • windhill@itouch.net

Refer to nestbox by name:

Value-added membership TBS Volunteers are Awesome

TBS MEMBERS donate a wealth of life experiences to our cause, "Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time." Seeing the need,



Barbara Vinson offered to print on waterproof paper a new type of signage for the TBS-sponsored Hornsby Bend Trail. A VolunteerMatch graphic artist created the layout

which promotes NestWatch and credits each entity that's a part of the project. Barbara also has a camera! Among treasured images are the sight of a male Eastern Bluebird on a nestbox and the gorgeous bluebird eggs (shown).

"Thanks to Barbara's initiative, we now expect to add similar custom signage to other TBS-sponsored projects, such as "Start With Five," says Pauline Tom, TBS president. *Start With Five is an outreach program through which TBS provides five nestboxes for non-private property under a set of conditions. Interested? Contact Sharon Kersten, Start With Five coordinator and Nest-Watch Ambassador at sharonkersten@earthlink.net.*



Roland Garza, Barbara Vinson

ROLAND GARZA of Mountain City parked his commercial smoker in the Tom oval driveway for TBS Board's annual face-to-face meeting, and proceeded, for the TBS Membership Annual Meeting dinner, to serve delectable smoked chicken and pork and out-of-this-world stuffed jalapenos. *Thanks, Chef Roland!*

AMBASSADOR BARBARA VINSON added to the Annual Meeting with her findings from Hornsby Bend. Everyone was amazed to hear that only nestboxes in the shade in the pecan grove had bluebird nesting activity.