

# Bluebird Society still fledging

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For 40 years, some of Bella Vista's smallest residents have been getting a little help from volunteers. Last week, the Bella Vista Bluebird Society held its annual public meeting as it's done since 1978.

According to the society's webpage, [bvbluebirds.com](http://bvbluebirds.com), the group maintains 500 bluebird nesting boxes and has helped to fledge 45,000 bluebirds over the years.

Most of the boxes are arranged along trails, club president Leon Wehmeyer said. The trails are located on golf courses and parks. Bluebirds, Wehmeyer said, like open areas. One person monitors the trail which includes about five boxes.

The season begins in early March and visits should be about once a week, according to the webpage. The box needs to be cleaned out after each set of fledglings.

The box monitor may also need to deal with insects or house sparrows. Sparrows may try to take over the box and may kill the blue birds or the fledglings. The webpage recommends waiting until a sparrow builds a nest and lays eggs and then disposing of both nest and eggs. After a couple of tries, the sparrow will probably move on. If not, it might be time to move the box.

A newer style of box, with a slot instead of a hole, helps deter sparrows, Butch Tetzlaff of the Bluebird Shed said.

If ants get into a nest, the recommended procedure is to

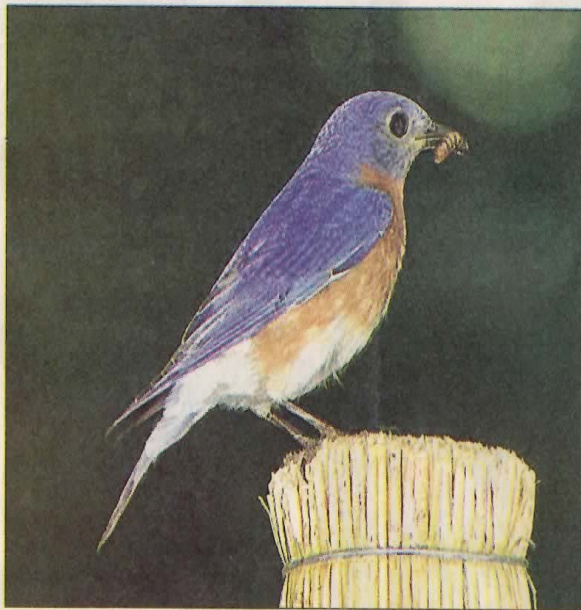


Photo submitted

Bluebirds were once endangered due to loss of their natural habitat, but volunteers, including the Bella Vista Bluebird Society, helped the small birds make a comeback. The group met on Saturday at the Bella Vista Library.

move the chicks into a new box and a different nest. An old nest may be recycled. The infested box should be sprayed with insect repellent and set aside for the next season. Wasps can be sprayed with cooking oil, which will kill the wasps without harming the birds.

When Tetzlaff opened his shop in the summer of 2017, he knew he wanted to work with the Bluebird Society. It's a win-win situation, he said. The Bluebird Society needs income, Tetzlaff explained, because there are costs associated with maintaining all the boxes. Traditionally, volunteers built extra boxes and sold them for the club. But you had to know a club member to buy a box. Now, the boxes, still handmade by volunteers, are available

from The Bluebird Shed.

The boxes can be purchased by themselves or with a pole. Volunteers from the club will install them if desired, Tetzlaff said. He takes the necessary information and passes it on to the club.

Tetzlaff takes care of all the paperwork and sends the proceeds on to the club. In return, he gets more foot traffic into his store where he sells all kinds of feeders and food, as well as bird décor items for both inside and outside. He's also happy to help advise any bird lover who needs his help.

Bluebird numbers were steadily rising in Bella Vista, Wehmeyer said, but there was a set back in 2017 when the same flooding that damaged the golf courses, washed away not only the bird-



Lynn Atkins/The Weekly Vista

Handmade bluebird houses and the information on how to care for them are available at The Bluebird Shed on Lancashire Blvd.

houses but also the young birds inside.

"It's just part of living in Bella Vista," he said. The Bluebird Society has since replaced the boxes.

Each year, all the trail monitors and several volunteers who have a Bluebird box in their home turn their numbers in. They track all

the birds and all their activity on a worksheet and give it back to Wehmeyer.

At the end of each bluebird season, the nests are cleaned out and the box is checked for leaks or cracks. The spring and nesting season can start as early as March and last through August.