

Bluebird volunteers still helping

LYNN ATKINS

latkins@nwadg.com

In April one of Bella Vista's oldest volunteer groups had to postpone its 40th-anniversary party, but it didn't postpone its mission. For many of the 70 volunteers, it's business as usual for the Bella Vista Bluebird Society.

By the end of this summer, the local Bluebird Society will probably have fledged more than 50,000 bluebirds, society president Laura Claggert said. When the group got together in 1980, the number of bluebirds was declining, according to the society's web page, bvbluebirds.com/index.php?id=history.

Since bluebirds prefer to nest in a cavity located near an open area, golf courses seemed like the perfect location for the boxes and, for 40 years, dozens of boxes have been placed on each of Bella Vista's golf courses. At one time, the boxes were used to mark the courses, as well as to raise baby birds.

Once the boxes are up, volunteers care for them. Usually, one volunteer is assigned to a trail that is made up of several boxes. A trail boss oversees a group of trails and acts as backup for the volunteer. Besides the golf courses, there are trails at local churches, the cemetery and all the POA parks.

"Once a week during the breeding season, they



Photo courtesy of Quin Warsaw

A bluebird fledged in one of the many bluebird houses around Bella Vista.



Photo courtesy of Quin Warsaw

These baby birds were probably fledged in the photographer's yard and are about one month old.

postponed, the Bluebird Society is still running its 40th-anniversary photo contest.

Stockman said the contest will be open to anyone, not just members of the Bluebird Society.

Individuals may submit up to four total photos, including two color and two black and white, by the September 14 deadline. These photos can include any other species, but must include a bluebird, she said.

Entry information can be found on the society's website at bvbluebirds.com.

Winners will be announced in October. Prizes for first, second and third places include a \$50 Bluebird Shed gift card, a \$25 Bluebird Shed gift card

go and check the boxes," member Jacqui Stockman said. "If there are eggs, they make sure what species."

New volunteers sometimes work with an experienced member and they're given information to study as well.

"Bluebird eggs are always blue," Stockman said. "Eggs can also be of different sizes. Also, the nest is different. For instance,

chickadees use wild moss."

Some other species are welcome to use the boxes, but some are not. Sparrows can be aggressive and will kill adult bluebirds to take over the nesting site.

The volunteers keep track of eggs and then fledglings. The chicks stay in the nest for about three weeks. Once the nest is empty, volunteers remove it so the birds can build a

new nest and lay another set of eggs. One box can be home to three sets of fledglings each summer.

Also watching the bluebird boxes is Butch Tetzlaff, owner of the Bluebird Shed. He is collaborating with U of A professor Jen Mortensen to learn more about bluebird migration, and they have drafted volunteers to help.

Although the party was

and a Bella Vista Bluebird Society shirt or cap.

The group hasn't yet made a decision on the anniversary party, Claggert said. It was planned as an outdoor event in the Lake Avalon pavilion and that may be possible this fall.

For more information about the society or the photo contest, visit its webpage, bvbluebirds.com.