



Bella Vista Bluebird Society
All Volunteers Season Kickoff Meeting
March 11, 2023

The volunteers meeting was held from 10:30 to 12:00 at the Community Room in the Bella Vista Library. Special thanks to Susan Skaggs for providing cookies and popcorn.

I. Forty-five (45) members and guests were in attendance: Morgan Baumgardner, Roger and Bonnie Bohm, Jerry Butler, Laura Claggett, Kim Eveland, Tim Garton, Rick and Tracy Girardi, Sue Gustafson, Randy Hamm, Judy Jeffrey, Denise Klinger, Amy Lease, Cynthia Marshall, Bonnie Martineck, Ray Matkowski, Lauren McGrath, Clay and Carolyn Merritt, Tami Moore, Karen Owens, George Pickell, Mark Richardson, Jayne Roth, Buzz Schoenhard, Pat Schrad, Deb Shoemaker, Steve and Susan Skaggs, Jacqui Stockman, Butch Tetzlaff, Gracie Turley, Dick Washburn, Deb Webber, Leon Wehmeyer, B. J. and Marcia Westhoff, Rich and Gayle Winsor, Brian and Susan Woodruff and Myrlene Zimmerman. Guest speakers were Jennifer Mortensen and Shannon Kitchen.

II. President Laura Claggett opened the meeting with a welcome to those in attendance and advised them to take any books and pamphlets about bluebirds on the table. For more information go to the BVBBS website, bvbluebirds.com.

III. New monitor volunteers are Morgan Baumgardner, Dick Washburn (BVCC) and Gayle & Rich Winsor (BVCC). Substitute monitors are Morgan Baumgardner, Tami Moore and Becky Pratt.

IV. Positions needed are monitors for Dogwood and Scotsdale and a Website Editor. Go to this link for [BVBBS Position Descriptions](#).

V. What's New?

- Adopt A Highway is a reality. Jacqui Stockman & Becky Pratt worked with ARDOT (Arkansas Department of Transportation) to adopt one mile on Rt 71 from Lancashire to Trafalgar. First litter pickup was Saturday, Oct 22, 2022 with 17 volunteers. We will coordinate with Six in Sixty on Saturday March 25, 2023 from 10 to 1. Volunteers can meet at the parking area at the corner of Rt 71 & Trafalgar or at Allen's grocery store. Hot dogs and hamburgers will be provided at Allen's at 1 PM.
- Our 2nd Annual Grant for \$1000 and was awarded to Shannon Kitchen and Dr. Jennifer Mortensen, University of Arkansas, Department of Biological Sciences for research on winter roosting behavior of bluebirds. Information on the BVBBS grant is located on our website - [Grant](#).
- The [Research Project](#) with Dr. Mortensen and Butch Tetzlaff will be extended 4 years through 2023.
- Stovepipe Baffle Project: Steve Skaggs tested 11 stovepipe baffles in 2022. Contact Steve if you can assist in making the baffles or if you need any for your trails.
- A refresher for monitors, called Eggs, Chicks, Birds, is available on our website at [BVBBS Procedures](#).

V. Problems with Other Birds Using Nest Boxes: Carolina Wrens have been using our nest boxes. They are uncommon, but they are a protected species. They make a messy nest and lay tiny brown speckled eggs. House Sparrow also make messy nest, but often include litter in it. Never let a House Sparrow fledge in a bluebird box. They are destructive, non-native species that will destroy eggs and kill baby & adult bluebirds. Remove House Sparrow nests after eggs are laid.

VI. Monitoring Best Practices:

- Monitor your boxes the same day of the week every week
- Check your sheet for previous week's findings so you know what to expect before you open each box
- Record findings while standing by the box
- If female is on the nest, step back until she flies out
- If a nest is 21 days in the box and never used, remove it (AB)
- If eggs are in the nest 21 days, from day the last egg was laid, remove them & the nest (AB)
- If you are unable to monitor your boxes after 9 days, contact a sub, your trail box or Laura. We do not need to know why you are unable to monitor your boxes. Loss of data is totally preventable by having someone assist you. Keep your data sheet up to date on a weekly basis.

VII. Google Sheets for Monitoring

- At your desktop/laptop/tablet computer the functionality is better with Google Chrome
- Download the Google Sheet app to use on your phone
- 2023 sheets are ready
- Google Sheets allows collaboration with your Trail Boss & substitute monitors

VIII. Trail Boss Best Practices

- Get to know your monitors
- Inspect and repair, or replace boxes/posts/baffles as needed
- Install additional predator guards if needed
- Add twin box if tree swallows regularly use a box
- Relocate boxes if needed
- Contact Steve Skaggs with any questions/issues

IX. Presentation by Dr. Jennifer Mortensen and Shannon Kitchen on Research Grant: The Research objectives are to calculate recruitment into the local bluebird population, to study winter roosting behavior of adults and non-dispersing HYs (hatch year) and to determine what factors influence box occupancy and productivity. They gave an interesting overview of how they collect the data. For example, to determine if the birds were wintering in the boxes, Shannon would check the boxes before sunlight in the bitter cold. In their research, they continue to monitor 100 selected boxes in Bella Vista twice a week during the nesting season. This is done by both Jennifer and Shannon along with Butch from the Bluebird Shed and Sue Gustafson. As their information is documented, it will be available on our website.

IX. Closing Comments:

- The Bluebird Shed, 648 W. Lancashire sells our boxes, hats and wood bluebird pudding feeders.
- We now monitor & maintain 581 nest boxes in Bella Vista
- From 1980 - 2022 we helped fledge 53,000 Eastern Bluebirds
- We have: 47 Monitors, 12 Trail Bosses, 9 Board Members, 8 Resident Installers, 5 Box Builders, 4 Corporate Supporters (The Bluebird Shed, T.H. Rogers, Lowe's, Bella Vista POA) and 1 Cookie Baker (Susan Skaggs)
- We thank all the amazing volunteers and corporate supporters

Submitted by Buzz Schoenhard.