



## The Bluebirder

Fall/Winter 2021

Edition 7

Leaves are changing color and are starting to fall, and all of the chicks that have fledged are starting the first year of their lives. All of our nest boxes have been cleaned out and may be used later this season for birds looking for a warmer place to hole up for the winter. This edition of the Bluebirder offers our 2021 bluebird statistics, how our local artists share their time and talent with BVBS, providing insight for your garden with native plants for all seasons, and much more!

As a reminder, if you have any ideas, interesting stories, suggestions or have questions that you'd like us to answer via "Dear Bluebirder," please feel free to e-mail us at [JSBlueBirder@gmail.com](mailto:JSBlueBirder@gmail.com). Also be sure to like us on Facebook!

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#### **One Photo Started Everything** story related by Keith Kridler

It doesn't have to be cold for bluebirds to roost inside nesting boxes at night. The Michael Smith photo was from his home in Maryland. His family of bluebirds went into the same nesting box each night. He set up the photo



Photo by Michael Smith

shoot with camera pre-focused, lights preset, and went out in the middle of the night, lifted off the top, and shot *one* photo. When Michael started sharing his photo, he had no idea what a profound impact it would have.

In 1977, Dr. Laurence Zeleny used Michael's photo in his article, "Hope for the Bluebird," published in the June issue of *National Geographic*. Dr. Zeleny received so much mail from that article that he and his friends started the North American Bluebird Society (NABS) in 1978.

Keith Kridler remembered, "my wife Sandy and I were charter members. Years later, Pauline and Ron Tom, and some of my bluebird friends met, and we started the Texas Bluebird Society. In a way, if Michael Smith had not taken these photos for Dr. Larry Zeleny, then NABS, nor the Texas Bluebird Society, would have ever been formed!"

This article first appeared in the March 2021 issue of [Texas Blues](#) and appears here with permission from the editor.

## **Volunteer Spotlight – Tim Garton**

Interviewed by Jacqui Stockman

### ***JS - How long have you lived in Bella Vista and where did you arrive from (if not here your whole life)?***

TG - I moved to Arkansas in October of 2016 after 20 years in Washington State. I rented a home in Bentonville for a year while looking at the area and settled in Bella Vista in October of 2017. I grew up in Wichita and my dad grew up on a farm near Kingston, AR. So, we have been passing through NW Arkansas all my life on trips from Wichita to the farm.



*Tim building a bike at Pedal It Forward*

### ***JS - When did you first become interested in bluebirds?***

TG - As I recall it was a few years ago through my association with Ray Matkowski, who is a Board Member and trail boss with BVBBS. Ray is also a member of the Bella Vista Fly Tyers and a volunteer at Pedal It Forward and that is where I met him. It was chatting with Ray while working on bikes that I became interested in bluebirds. Being retired I looked for things to keep myself occupied and volunteering with the Bella Vista Bluebird Society sounded like an interesting and worthwhile pastime.

### ***JS - When did you become involved as a volunteer with the BVBBS?***

TG - I believe it was back in spring of 2018 that I joined the society. At the time they were looking for box builders. I like to work with my hands, so I volunteered to build boxes. I also was going with Ray to do customer installations of the nest boxes.

### ***JS - What volunteer positions have you held?***

TG - I started as a box builder and assisted Ray with installations. I gradually shifted to doing installations on my own. I also helped Ray with the trail boss duties on the Dogwood course and have gradually moved into manning that course as a trail boss and occasional monitor this year.

### ***JS - Any funny or rewarding bluebird moments throughout your years as a volunteer?***

TG - I find it pretty rewarding to be part of such a dedicated organization as the BVBBS in a worthwhile effort. I have my own bluebird box in the backyard which has fledged many broods. It's been interesting to watch how protective the male bluebird is of the box territory. He will sit in a nearby tree and dive bomb any squirrels that dare to come near the post the box is on. I once saw him chase a squirrel from treetop to treetop. I've also done some highspeed photography of the bluebirds as they come in to land in the box. They are amazingly agile.



*bluebird nest boxes built by Tim*



*Tim fishing*

### ***JS - Besides BVBBS, what are your other interests, and do you volunteer with any other organizations?***

TG - I also volunteer at a non-profit bike repair group called Pedal It Forward. And I've come to appreciate the NW Arkansas outdoors through a lot of hiking, biking, fly fishing and kayaking.

***Thank you, Tim, for your continued service to the BVBBS. We truly appreciate all that you do to help!***

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## **Support BVBBS through AmazonSmile**

You may already be familiar with AmazonSmile. When you use [AmazonSmile](https://www.amazon.com/smile), every time you order something, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases *at no extra cost to you*. You can make the Bella Vista Bluebird Society your charity at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), or by visiting our website under [Support Us](#) and click on the AmazonSmile box. Be sure to add Bella Vista Bluebird Society as your supporting charity.

**Local Artists**  
**by Laura Claggett**

One of the many things I like about living in Bella Vista includes friendly people who generously share their time and talent. Through the bluebird society, and other volunteer work, I have had the chance to meet many people who fit that description.

Since bluebirds are always on my mind, when I see a beautiful bluebird photo, I often ask the

photographer if I can use it on our website as a monthly feature above our Latest News. The screenshot below has a photo by Jean Justice, an avid bird watcher, who entered our photo contest last year.

Just lately, I updated the four small photos on our homepage using pictures from local artists.

The Buy A Nest Box photo above is by Mindy Musick King. Mindy moved to Bella Vista with her husband Tim about a year ago. When she posted the photo on Bella Vista Arkansas Bird Lovers Facebook page, of the male and female bluebirds getting ready to nest in one of the BVBBS nest boxes, I couldn't resist asking her if I could use it on our homepage.

Mindy has been an wildlife and nature photographer for many years and has an amazing array of photographs at [Mindy Musick King Photo](#). I would love to know how she got the wild mustang pictures. It looks like she was right in the field with them - awesome!

John Craig, also a long-time photographer, took the picture of the male bluebird we're using for About Bluebirds. John, and his wife Mary Ann, have been BVBBS volunteers for three years. John has a passion

for the outdoors and nature photography which shows in his work.

You can view John's collection at [J.L.Craig Photo](#). Don't miss seeing his breathtaking Birds in Flight pictures. I'm a bird lover and have thought about ordering one of John's birds in flight prints, but every time I think one is my favorite, I see another one I like just as much. Guess I could have a whole room of them!

Back to our homepage. The fellow peeking in the bluebird box, signifying more info on Monitor Your Home Box, is Quin Warsaw. Quin's mom Michele took this photo of him, and she wrote an article about Quin that appears on pages 5 & 6 of this newsletter. (We are using Quin's photo taken at Branchwood for About Bella Vista.)

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Quin is a very talented outdoor photographer, and I have bought several of his wonderful cards with his bird photos on them at The Bluebird Shed. His work, that includes more than just birds, can be viewed at his website [Snappy's View](#). The one of the snapping turtle, that I'm guessing had just come from its winter digs, is priceless.

And since I'm mentioning friendly people who generously share their time and talent, I would be amiss if I didn't recognize our wonderful BVBBS volunteers. Talk about talented! Our box builders do an excellent job creating beautiful cedar nest boxes. One of them formerly built houses, and another's avocation was making furniture. I am so glad they found us.

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### **Photo Contest**

Thank you to everyone who entered our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Photo Contest. This year's first place winner is Mickey Arlow. To see all the winners, visit [Photo Contest](#) on our website.

We will showcase all the photos submitted this year, in our 2022 Spring/Summer issue when we kick off our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Photo Contest.



*Mickey Arlow – 1<sup>st</sup> Place photo*

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### **BVBBS Grant**

For the first time in its 41-year history, the Bella Vista Bluebird Society is offering a cash grant to those doing research involving Eastern Bluebirds. This year, the grant will be \$1,000, and the BVBBS Board of Directors hopes to offer similar grants annually if funds are available.

A request for proposals has been sent to the Arkansas college and university department chairs and others with access to potential grantees. Non-professionals, undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to apply. This year, November 30th is the deadline for applications. You may obtain more information on our website at [Grant](#).

BVBBS board members Leon Wehmeyer and Randy Hamm are being assisted on the selection committee by Butch Tetzlaff, co-owner of The Bluebird Shed with a degree in ecology and several years of master's degree work in ornithology, and Dr. Jennifer Mortensen, faculty member in biological sciences at the University of Arkansas. For questions about the grant, contact [Randy Hamm](#).

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### **Thank You**

The Bella Vista Bluebird Society has much to be thankful for. We are thankful for:

All our volunteers who work hard making, monitoring, and maintaining our nest boxes,

everyone who donates to our cause and join as members,

and for our kind and generous company sponsors: The Bluebird Shed, for selling our volunteer-made cedar bluebird houses, to TH Rogers, for donating and discounting cedar; to Lowe's, for donating and discounting screws, T-posts, and PVC; and to the Bella Vista POA for donating storage.





**A Young Naturalist Finds Inspiration Through Bird Photography**  
**by Michele Warsaw**

When we first moved halfway across country in May of 2017, I wrote the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC). I shared that Quin, my then 13-year-old son with Autism loved nature. I asked if AGFC had any resources I could use during our homeschooling to help him learn about nature in his new state and adjust to the move. I was thinking I would be directed to a link, but AGFC surprised him with a box of goodies!



*Quin with nature guides sent to him by the AGFC*

Throughout all the items, he commented mostly on the beautiful photography. He was also drawn to the Arkansas Backyard Birds mini book where we learned about the Wings Over Arkansas program. He decided to do that program but included the additional challenge to only count species he was able to photograph. He has now photographed 133 bird species in Arkansas, earning the “Belted Kingfisher” level in the WOA program.

Another item that was special to him from the moment he opened the box, was the AGFC hat. He displays his WOA pins proudly on his hat during excursions to his favorite birding spot, the C.B. “Charlie” Craig State Fish Hatchery in Centerton, which happens to be run by the AGFC. We are very grateful to be able to admire and document the abundant nature on the grounds at the hatchery.

I wanted to share what an impact the kind gesture of AGFC has had on this young naturalist, turned young Arkansas photographer. AGFC has certainly made a difference in his life and he’s passing it on. He chuckled and said, “Someday maybe I’ll be a photographer for the AGFC.”

He has expanded on his birding interest by helping to make our yard more bird friendly, participating in monthly bluebird research with Butch Tetzlaff, and volunteering his time and photography for several nature documentation projects. Quin has been fortunate to meet and bird with some of Arkansas’s top birders, many of which have become his mentors. Quin has birded with Ellen Turner and met Pooja Panwar at a birding event at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. He’s observed Jen Mortensen banding birds at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area and got to carry the birds upstairs for the Birds and Breakfast program. He’s observed and photographed Mitchell Pruitt’s Saw-whet Owl banding at the Ozark National Science Center.



*Shovelers at the C B Craig State Fish Hatchery*

Quin has joined field trips with the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society where he met Joe Neal. He has met Mike Martin, Terry Stanfill, Karen Garrett, and Phillip Martin, along with many other NWA birders, while out in the field photographing birds. Charles Mills first helped confirm the ID of a Cape May Warbler Quin photographed in our Bella Vista backyard when we were unable to find eBird records of it in Benton County. From that point on, Charles became a photography mentor and encouraged me to share Quin’s story. The Arkansas birding community welcomed us with open arms and provided a supportive network to help foster Quin’s passion for birds and photography.

Quin was previously a non-verbal child who did not fit traditional learning approaches or sequences, but nature has helped him immerse in and interact with the world around him. He learned flexibility through exploring different parks, patience through wildlife photography, and social skills through birding and photography clubs. He has even built reading fluency through nature materials and math skills through photography and birding. Nature is very grounding and calming for the senses, creating the learning environment that Quin needed to thrive.

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You can explore Quin’s photography at his online gallery, found at [Snappy’s View](#), or you can request to join over 500 other followers on his Facebook group, [Snappy’s View Facebook](#).



*Collage featuring some of the 133 species Quin Warsaw has photographically documented in Arkansas*

This article was originally published in the Spring 2021 issue of *Arkansas Birds*, newsletter of the Arkansas Audubon Society. It is reproduced by permission of the author and editor. Quin is the youngest BVBBS volunteer.

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### **Bluebird 2021 Statistics**

A full report of the [2021 statistics](#) are now available for you to view on our website. The overall count for all Eastern Bluebirds fledged from all nesting sources this season is 2,154. The BVBBS trails fledged 1,433 bluebirds plus 45 at monitors home boxes, with 676 more added from call-ins from 90 Bella Vista residents.

The BVBBS currently monitors and maintains 582 bluebird nest boxes around Bella Vista. Since 1980, when we were founded, we have helped fledge a cumulative total of 51,497 bluebirds. In addition, other bird species use our boxes such as the Tree Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, House Wren, and Titmouse. These other species are noted in our statistics as well.



*Jacqui Stockman monitoring a nest box*

Unfortunately, our numbers were down this year, in part no doubt from the bitter cold weather in February when we lost many bluebirds. Other factors could be a higher number of House Sparrows using our nest boxes, growth population of residential homes, and severe storms and high winds that uprooted trees and flooded golf courses where our nest boxes are placed. We look forward to the new season and hope to get our counts back up.

Thank you to all the Bella Vista residents who have bluebird houses and contacted us with their totals. For residents, here is more info about [Monitoring Your Home Bluebird Nest Box](#).

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### **Bella Vista Birders**

Bella Vista Birders is a bird watching group that was founded in February 2019 by Gail Storm & Butch Tetzlaff. They have seasonal gatherings, meet and greets that include talks about bird watching, and they also go on field trips to places with good birding opportunities. If you’re interested in becoming a BV Birder, contact Gail Storm at [bvbirders@gmail.com](mailto:bvbirders@gmail.com).



**Native Plants for All Seasons and the Right Reasons**

**by Rose Gergerich and Kitty Sanders**

**Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists**

A well-chosen and maintained native plant garden will provide needed sustenance and habitat throughout the year for numerous birds, insects, and other animals while at the same time exhibiting an esthetically pleasing landscape. It's hard to assign value to the enjoyment we receive from the beauty of our favorite birds and butterflies as they enjoy the products of our native plant gardens.

The varied reasons for growing native plants include provision of the following for different organisms:

- \*Nectar
- \*Pollen
- \*Fruit
- \*Seeds

- \*Habitat
- \*Providing nesting materials
- \*Appealing landscapes
- \*Eye-catching bird and insect visitors

A mixture of native plants will support various organisms throughout the year. For example, early flowering natives such as serviceberry and columbine provide nectar in early spring, while elderberry and milkweed provide nectar in the summer, and asters and goldenrods are good nectar sources in late summer and fall. Additionally, all these plants serve as sources of pollen at their respective flowering times.



*Alleghany Serviceberry*



*Columbine*



*Milkweed*



*Goldenrod*

A diverse collection of native plants is also useful for year-round support of many of our songbirds. For example, during the spring and summer months, the diet of bluebirds consists mostly of insects (65%), while during the winter they depend more heavily on fruit (50%). Several birds feed on the bees and wasps which are drawn to native plants for pollen and nectar. If you love butterflies and birds, a selection of native host plants that support the larvae of butterflies will attract butterflies and provide food for the larvae which will in turn provide nutritious food for the songbirds. For those larvae that are fortunate enough to escape predation, a new generation of butterflies will develop. Almost all butterfly caterpillars have specialized diets and can survive only on the leaves of one or a few types of plants. A well-known example is the monarch caterpillar which can only survive on a diet of milkweed leaves. Other native plant hosts that provide food for specific caterpillars include pipevine (for the pipevine swallowtail) and spicebush (for the spicebush swallowtail). This means that you can design your native plant selections to support the growth of your favorite butterflies. It is recommended that native plants should be planted in groups of 3-4 plants since a group of perennials will be more likely to attract insects and help to ensure that your caterpillars do not consume all the plant leaves and possibly kill their host plants.



*Aster*



*Spicebush*

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During the winter months, many native plants provide seeds and berries for overwintering birds and other animals. Several attractive ornamental grasses such as Muhly grass and little bluestem produce seeds that provide nutritious fare for birds and other animals during the winter months. Native shrubs such as red and black chokeberry (*Aronia*) and American beautyberry provide many clusters of berries and fantastic fall color. These woody shrubs as well as the earlier mentioned elderberry, serviceberry and spicebush also provide shelter during the winter.



*Muhly Grass*



*Beautyberry*

This article highlights only a few of our favorite attractive and nutritious plants that are native to the Ozark region. The selection of native plants for your garden will undoubtedly be influenced by other considerations such as deer pressure, soil type, sun/shade, plant height, and your preferences for the type of plant (shrubs, grasses, trees, flowering perennials). If you wish to further explore the utility and beauty of native plants, we recommend the following resources:

*Douglas Tallamy. Bringing Nature Home: How you Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants. 2009*

*Rick Darke and Douglas Tallamy. The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden. 2014*

*Douglas Tallamy. Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Backyard. 2019*

*Branhagen, Alan. Native Plants of the Midwest: A Comprehensive Guide to the Best 500 Species for the Garden. 2016*

*Spencer, Lori A. Arkansas Butterflies and Moths. 2006*

Arkansas Native Plants can be found at [Arkansas Monarchs Organization](#)

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### **BVBBS Merchandise**



Don't forget, the Bella Vista Bluebird Society hats are now available in two styles, as shown on the left. The baseball caps have an adjustable band w/metal clip in the back for perfect sizing. They are sold at [The Bluebird Shed](#) in Bella Vista, and proceeds help fund our nest boxes and grant. They also sell our volunteer-made cedar nest boxes.







Photo by Carl Ball

### **Dear Bluebirder....**

Have questions about bluebirds, nest boxes, problems, or concerns? Any comments or suggestions for an article or an event we should attend? Write to us at [JSBlueBirder@gmail.com](mailto:JSBlueBirder@gmail.com) and in the Subject Line add "Dear Bluebirder". We will answer your questions in our next edition! As always, you can visit the [BVBS](http://BVBS) website for up-to-date information.

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### **Bella Vista Bluebird Society Facebook Page**



Since we created our own society FB group page, we now have 357 people following our group, have had 447 "likes" on our event page, and have generated questions, comments, and have had pictures posted about bluebirds and other birds in general. This helps create more interest in the Eastern Bluebird and will help with our growth and mission.

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To become a member or donate to the BVBS, go to [Make a Donation or Become a Member](#). If you are interested in becoming a BVBS volunteer, you can email us at [bellavistabluebird@gmail.com](mailto:bellavistabluebird@gmail.com), or fill out and send our [Volunteer Application](#).

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### **Some Notes About Eggs**



It is not unusual for bluebird eggs to white.  
Photo by Bet Zimmerman



This box had a tiny egg, an anomaly that sometimes happens.



Although you can't see them all, this nest had 10 eggs laid by two female bluebirds!

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The Bella Vista Bluebird Society (BVBS) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organized for wildlife protection & preservation. For more information go to our website [bvbluebirds.com](http://bvbluebirds.com) or email us at [bellavistabluebird@gmail.com](mailto:bellavistabluebird@gmail.com).

Dedicated to increasing and protecting the Eastern Bluebird population of Bella Vista, Arkansas

#### **BVBS Board**

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