

Winter 2010/2011

December 2010



The Fledgling

The official Newsletter of the Missouri Bluebird Society



The Missouri Bluebird Society is an Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

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From the President...

I want to start by thanking all our Board Members and all of the other MOBS volunteers who worked so hard to make our 2010 Annual Conference a successful event. I appreciate the speakers and Field Trip leaders donating their time, and everyone who worked on all other aspects of this event. It goes without saying that we are continuing the tradition of helping bluebirds in Missouri.

I encourage you to **renew your membership and help us keep the tradition of bluebirds in Missouri something we can be proud of.** Missouri is one of only two states that has the Eastern Bluebird as their state bird.

I am certainly looking forward to our first Bluebird Conference in the St. Louis area (Sept. 30 & Oct. 1st, 2011). The Doubletree Hotel in Chesterfield is accepting reservations now! Our featured speakers are doing outstanding, important work in their communities, and I am anxious to learn more from them. I think the addition of the Friday evening Banquet to the Conference is going to prove to be a wonderful opportunity for Bluebirders to get to know one another!

Just a reminder to **send in your nest box/trail Summary Reports** to Janelle! Everyone's data is important and helpful. We have some exciting opportunities with regard to nest box data on our horizon, and it all starts with the reports we get from you– so please participate; a reporting form is enclosed in this Newsletter.

Happy New Year!

Steve Garr

MOBS

PO BOX 105830

Jefferson City, MO 65110

www.missouribluebird.org

Mark your Calendar now:

2011 Missouri Bluebird Conference

Sept. 30th & October 1st - St. Louis!

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Meet the *Missouri River Bird Observatory!*

by Regina Garr



Recently, Steve and I had the very good fortune to be introduced to a wonderful new not-for-profit organization headquartered in Marshall, Missouri : **The Missouri River Bird Observatory.** Having only been aware of this organization for the past couple of months, we are already convinced it is an outstanding organization, founded and maintained by dedicated folks committed to avian conservation. We were particularly encouraged by what a strong emphasis this organization places on education. **AND...**we could not be more pleased to announce that the Missouri River Bird Observatory (MRBO) will be manning a display at our **2011 Missouri Bluebird conference** Sept 30th—October 1st in St. Charles.

The organization founders are Dana Ripper (Director) and Ethan Duke (Assistant Director). Read their very impressive resumes on the organizations' website at: www.mrbo.org . As listed on their website, here is the **MRBO Mission:**

- *To contribute to the conservation of Missouri's migratory and resident birds through scientific research and monitoring, community outreach, and education.*
- *To gather information about avian communities and habitat use that will assist state, federal, and private natural resource managers in their efforts to implement conservation programs.*
- *To provide opportunities for Missouri students to learn about species and habitat conservation.*

The wide variety of projects that MRBO has implemented are too vast to cover here, but please do check out their site, and, of course , plan to see them at the MOBS Conference next fall. I could not help but notice they do sport an impressive "Cavity Nester" on their Logo (above left). Further proof of their merit in our eyes!

This organization is certainly doing wonderful things to preserve and prosper native birds including **native cavity-nesters like our wonderful Eastern Bluebirds!** Pictured below (from the MRBO website) are the founders of the Missouri River Bird Observatory, (L-R) Ethan Duke and Dana Ripper.

I hope you get the opportunity to take part in some of the many outreach programs the Missouri River Bird Observatory sponsors, and please consider contributing to their good work. You can do so right on their website at : www.mrbo.org.

One final note about MRBO: we have to give a very special thank you to Kevin Berner of Richmond, NY for putting co-founder Ethan Duke in touch with us. Many MOBS members will remember that Kevin was our fabulous key note speaker at our 2007 Missouri Bluebird Conference in Jefferson City. Thank you Kevin for yet another kind favor for MOBS!

Missouri River Bird Observatory
Marshall, MO
660-886-8788
www.mrbo.org



MRBO founders Ethan Duke and Dana Ripper
(holding Screech Owls)

Celebrating “Cavity-Nesters in Public Spaces”!

Announcing the 2011 Missouri Bluebird Conference

Sept 30th & Oct. 1st, 2011

Doubletree Hotel in Chesterfield, Missouri

(see more about this hotel & beautiful grounds on page 6 of this issue and on their website below)

www.stlouishotelandconferencecenter.doubletree.com



featuring:

- **Bob & Judy Peak** coming to us from their nest box trails at Land between the Lakes and the John James Audubon Park in Henderson , KY. (Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and Prothonotary Warblers).
- **John Miller** manager of the Purple Martin housing in Forest Park and the Missouri Botanical Gardens in St. Louis. John also assists at the martin colony at the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Illinois.

Prothonotary Warbler photo by Bob Peak



As always, **Lunch and an Educational Bluebird Packet will be included** with your registration fee to the Missouri Bluebird Conference.

NEW at this conference:

Friday Evening Banquet & Program!

As most regular conference attendees know, MOBS has a tradition of getting together informally for dinner as a group on the Friday night prior to the conference. Generally , we do this at a local restaurant, however at the 2011 conference MOBS has reserved a ballroom at the hotel for a catered meal we can all enjoy together. As in the past, the Friday evening dinner get –together will be optional for the attendee. There will be an additional fee for the dinner and attendees wishing to attend the banquet will be able to make reservations on the Conference Registration form. Your MOBS Board of Directors really see this as a great opportunity to achieve Social interaction during the conference .With this new format, we believe Conference Attendees will have a MUCH better opportunity to mingle and visit as a group. We are looking forward to seeing you there!



John Miller at his Martin colony in Forest Park in St. Louis, Missouri. Photo by Carolyn Schuester

**See more
2011 conference Info
on Page 6!**

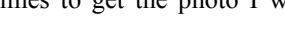
(taken from his Bluebird Column in the November issue of the *Nature Society News*)

The bluebird and many cavity nesting birds are almost a captive subject from a photographic standpoint during nesting season. Constant trips between a food source and a nest box on a daily basis allow me time for trial and error during feeding trips. These constant trips by my bluebird allow me to try different light settings and different shutter speeds. I also place perching areas close to the nest box where I set my photo blind.

Besides a photo blind to improve the quality of your photos you might consider a tripod. I can always tell the difference between the photos I take with a tripod compared to when I take photos hand held. This is especially true in low light conditions when I am photographing at a very slow shutter speed. Consider using a tripod when you are shooting below 125th of a second. When I am taking photos of birds it is not unusual for

them to change positions or move at the last second and with many of the less expensive digitals there is a slight delay between the time the button is pressed and the photo itself. Sometimes this delay causes me to completely miss the bird. That split second when my screen goes blank while the camera is capturing that special bluebird expression almost always has a crisper image when I use a tripod. When I take photos from my car the car works as a photo blind. Birds have become accustomed to cars and many of my nest boxes are in a location that I can park my car within 20 feet of where the bluebirds will be perching. I also use a window tripod that mounts securely to the top of a partially opened car window.

Sometimes to get the photo I want I have to take the picture through a window. It is important for the best photos that I remove the screen and clean the glass.



(Continued
on Page 7)

www.missouribluebird.org

Below: Tammy Simmons & Janelle Schulte
"Ready" the Auction/Raffle goods.



2010 Missouri Bluebird Conference North Jefferson City Multi Purpose Bldg Jefferson City, MO Sept. 25, 20210

Below: Steve Garr presents "Bluebirding for Everyone" on 9/24/10 to kick off the Bluebird Conference!

**Thanks to the
Great help of
many volun-
teers the 2010
conference was
a fun and
educational
event!**



Photo by T. Simmons



Left:
Janelle Schulte ,
with the help of
Tammy Simmons,
put together
a great In-
formation
Center for
MOBS.



Above: Jim Rathert had many roles at this conference : Keynote Speaker, Field Trip Leader, and Booth Vendor. And he did them ALL superbly.



Left: Steve Smith
(pictured on right
side of photo) holds
a box he made
when he was young
with his father (left
side of photo).
Steve presented a
terrific program on
nest boxes for all
types of cavity –
nesters.



Photo by T. Simmons

**Left: Members
Chuck & Sheryl
Wright served as
our Dynamic
"Hospitality Duo"!
Our members do-
nated WONDER-
FUL refreshments
for this conference!**

Right: Conference atten-
dees make a mad dash
for their "winnings" in
the silent Auction before
taking off for the after-
noon Field trips!



**Jack Dodson inspects Ivan
Ray Miller's "Bluebird"
Bluebird box!**



(Continued from Page 3)

Cavity-Nesters in Public Spaces!

The 2011 Missouri Bluebird Conference

Following is an excerpt from the 2010 Nesting Report of two of our Conference Speakers Bob & Judy Peak. The Peaks have extensive bluebird/ nest box trails on public lands and maintain meticulous records. We are so excited to have them as featured speakers at our conference. Their trails are located on the following properties: Land Between the Lakes National Recreational Area (LBL), Lake Barkley State Resort Park, (both since 1990) and John James Audubon State Park (since 2005). With **21 years of data collected**, the Peaks have fascinating information to share with us! Their trails **produced 1714 Eastern Bluebird fledglings during the 2010 nesting season**—and that does not count the many other native cavity nesters fledged! Please find below, copied from their 2010 report **“SOS Save Our Sialia”** the words of Bob & Judy Peak:

“As always, the goal of Project SOS is to maintain a core population of bluebirds to counterbalance severe seasonal conditions, particularly winter conditions comparable to the winters of 1977 and 1978, which proved to be devastating for bluebirds and many other songbirds. Furthermore, since birding is one of the most prevalent recreational ac-

tivities in the United States, and eco-tourism has become a driving force in the recreational pursuits of millions of Americans, the economic benefits of Project SOS are immeasurable. For that reason, in future years, the project should continue to be a valuable enhancement for Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area, Lake Barkley State Resort Park, and John James Audubon State Park.

As an added endorsement of the project, the eastern bluebird has been selected by the USDA-Forest Service as a management indicator species for LBL. Management indicator species are animal (or plant) species selected for use as a planning tool in accordance with the regulations of the National Forest Management Act (1982). These indicator species are used to help set management objectives, analyze effects of alternatives, and monitor plan implementation. The eastern bluebird has been chosen because its population changes are believed to indicate the effects of management on selected biological components (i.e. snags in open forest situations and non-game species of interest).”



Situated on **twenty two wooded acres**, our Conference host hotel is sure to be a lovely venue for the 2011 Missouri bluebird conference! The Hotel has offered special rates for our conference attendees: mention the **Missouri Bluebird Society**. Single or Double Rooms are **\$79.00 per night (special rate)** for the nights of Sept 30th and/or **October 1st.**

All Conference Programs & presentations, as well as the Friday evening Banquet, will be held at the Doubletree. Conference Field Trips will depart from the Doubletree as well. (more info on field trips coming soon!)

You can make Reservations NOW!

Call **636-532-500** and remember to reference the Missouri Bluebird Society.

Doubletree Hotel & Conference Center St. Louis

16625 Swingley Ridge Road

Chesterfield, MO 63017

636-532-5000

www.doubletree.com

1-800-222-TREE (8733) Local phone: 636-532-5000



Upcoming Events!

- **February 18-21.....The Great Backyard Bird Count!** Everyone's participation is welcomed. Sponsored by Audubon & the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Visit www.birdcount.org for all the info you need!
- **April 8-9.....Bluebirds Across Nebraska Annual Conference, Crete, NE** Most MOBS members know how incredibly generous and supportive Bluebirds Across Nebraska (BAN) has been to our own Bluebird Organization. BAN is a terrific group and they always have wonderful, informative Conferences. Attending this conference is sure to be one of your best "bluebirding" decisions! Get more details at : www.bbne.org or email info@bbne.org
- **September 30 –October 1.....The Missouri Bluebird Conference !** The Doubletree Hotel, St. Charles, MO. With a theme of " **Cavity –Nesters in Public Spaces**", we will have two days of wonderful Seminars, Field Trips in the St. Louis area, and an evening Banquet on Sept. 30th. Registration form in the April Issue of the *Fledgling* and available sooner on the MOBS website: www.missouribluebird.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

(Continued from Page 4) **Photographing Bluebirds** text and photos by Steve Garr
(taken from his Bluebird Column in the November 2010 issue of the *Nature Society News*)

The house makes a good photo blind, but anytime you take a photo through a window you lose some clarity. The windows that I view my bird feeders from are always the cleanest. Nature always surprises me when I least expect it.



Another device I use

when photographing birds is a portable perch. My portable perch is usually a small branch or twig that I will fasten to a deck, shepherd's hook or even stick in the ground near the nest box, feeding location or bird bath. I will focus my camera on the branch and wait patiently for the bird to stop at a spot where everything is ready to go and all I have to do is snap the photo. I refer to these twigs as "pocket perches" because I usually bring them with me if I am going to a different location to take more natural photos.

Food -usually live mealworms- have been an added bonus when I am trying to photograph bluebirds, especially when they are feeding their young. A perch near the mealworm feeder is an easy way to get multiple photos of the adults stopping and perching as they survey the surrounding area before they collect a meal for their young.

Late fall and winter is the best time to get Bluebird "group photos" because they are not territorial at this time. Mealworms, suet dough and home-made suet, along with sunflower hearts (out of the shell), can all be great draws to attract Bluebirds in number. Do remember to have your camera equipment all set up and ready to go *before* putting out the food and signaling the birds that the food is ready. Usually, the Bluebirds learn to come quickly and devour the special food and this

feeding frenzy can be over in a matter of minutes. Be ready for them. Of course, feeding the birds these special treats at about the same time every day, and cueing them with a specific signal (like a whistle, bell or call) can really make photo-taking much more predictable.

Heated bird baths are hard to beat to attract Bluebirds in groups in the winter. At this time of year they certainly have no problem sharing and making good use of every inch of a heated bath! Provide lots of perch area around your heated bath to encourage the birds to gather in groups.

Tips for photographing backyard birds:

1. Be patient. If you spook the bird at a feeder they will usually be back within 15 to 30 minutes. Learn the bird and its habits.
2. Try to avoid taking photos into the sun - you will lose detail. The colors usually look richer on overcast days or out of direct sun
3. If taking photos from inside the house clean both inside and outside of the window and remember to remove the screen. Turn off the lights inside your house to cut down on reflections
4. Get as close as possible for the clearest photo. Take multiple photos. A photo blind is usually cheaper than an expensive camera lens
5. Remember to take some photos just for fun! Not every shot has to be perfect, and some of your favorite memories of bird watching may be captured in those images that are less than "photographically -correct".