

November 2016

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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Letter from the President:

Winter is nearly upon us but that does not mean we will not make an occasional nest box visit. For most of us in Missouri Bluebirds are a year-round joy and many years they (and other cavity-nesters) will take refuge in our nest boxes for protection from weather at night. Please look over the suggestions on page 2 about "winterizing" nest boxes.

And, of course, I also want to encourage you to mail in your Trail Summary reports to our Nesting Data Chair Greg Samuel (address on form enclosed) . Over the years, when I have asked members about turning in nest box data, I have received two main objections: 1. they did not feel their "small" amount of data was important or 2. they did not believe anything useful was being done with the data. Well, one quick look at the terrific job Greg did with the forms turned in last year should put those concerns to rest! He did a great job compiling data submitted **from 2009 through 2015** and made some very insightful comparisons. I am looking forward to that for THIS season too! Please let your trail data be a part of that.

One last request: At the 2016 Bluebird Conference several comments on the provided Survey Forms stated they would like to see more workshops on "Beginning Bluebirding". In an effort to address that request, your Board of Directors has discussed the possibility of sponsoring some half day "Bluebirding 101" Workshops around the state. These would be workshops completely **organized and hosted by a local member** and MOBS would provide specific funding and materials. Interested? Call or email me!

Do what you can to help the Bluebirds,

Steve Garr, MOBS President



Photo by Steve Garr

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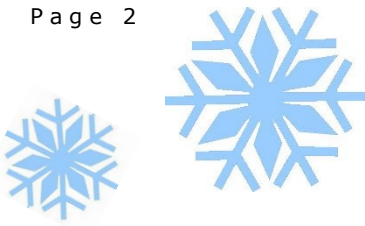
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Winterizing Nest Boxes

Text and photos by Steve and Regina Garr



A story of three nest boxes in winter....

The three nest boxes pictured in the top left blue box on this page provide a tangible look at how length of roof overhang, and placement of the entrance hole on a nest box, can make a significant difference in safety of the birds using the boxes in winter for roosting.

In the three pic series of boxes pictured here, the nest box in the top far left picture does not have a long enough roof overhang to prevent snow or icicles from trapping a roosting bird inside if the temperatures dropped severely during the night and STAYED cold for days. The nest box on the far right has icicles hanging down past the front of the entrance hole, however since the roof overhang is long enough (2.5—3 inches or better) the birds can turn right or left exiting the box and safely avoid being trapped inside. FYI: the nest box on the far left and the top center box were in the same yard, on the same day facing the same direction...the box top left had the entrance hole completely blocked by snow, the box pictured in the center did not. The biggest differences between the two boxes: The roof on the center box is longer **AND** the entrance hole is sufficiently high enough on the box to be protected by the longer roof overhang.



On the Practical Side:

Most of the “Winterizing Tips” on this page can be implemented on nest boxes in a yard or garden quite easily and quickly.....for larger trails however, trail monitors frequently have to use their best judgment to decide which boxes should be winterized. Start by determining which boxes are frequently used for roosting in the winter, and which boxes tend to receive the earliest occupancy during early Spring nesting.

Winterizing your Nest Boxes

1. Cover all ventilation holes and spaces.
2. Block drainage holes or add a false floor to prevent drafts.
3. Add a longer roof if needed to prevent birds from being trapped by ice or snow.
4. Do not allow House Sparrows to become “bonded” to your nest boxes by allowing them to roost in them in the Winter! It pays to occasionally monitor nest boxes during the winter months.



ABOVE: A strip of wood is attached at the top of this side-opening door on this nest box to cover the ventilation opening on this side. All ventilations slits and holes could be covered in this manner, and may actually be left on the box through the first spring nesting if the nestings occur in early spring and temps are cold. Other materials which have been used successfully for covering ventilation holes: cardboard, Duct Tape, or even Styrofoam.

The Cutest Owl in Missouri!

by Regina Garr

photos by Steve and Regina Garr

As we drive into the entrance of the Missouri River Bird Observatory's headquarters in Arrow Rock we realize we will only be catching the last couple of hours of this evening's banding event. It's the middle of the week and a workday for us.....and Arrow Rock is an hour and a half drive from where we live and work. Because we had attended the first public banding session of the season for this particular project only a few days earlier, we KNEW arriving for the program at 8:30 pm and not getting back home until after midnight was going to be time well spent! Entering the driveway, we meet two large church vans exiting. We were later to discover the vans held no less than **thirty** 12 year old boys from a local church group who, like us, had come to experience **Northern Saw-whet Owls**, up close and personal. I have no doubt they left that evening with a better admiration and respect for native wildlife—and perhaps even



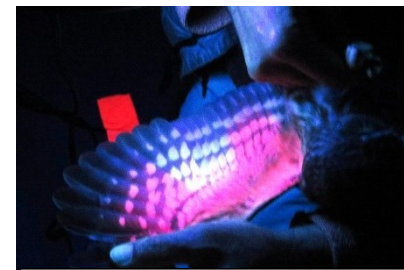
MRBO Assistant Director Ethan Duke (L) and Director Dana Ripper admire one of the 51 Saw-whet Owls they banded this fall!

with positive concepts about conservation that will stay with them as they grow into adulthood! It is one of the things we most admire and appreciate about MRBO's educational programs. Their infectious enthusiasm for what they do instills in us a concern for native wildlife right along side a healthy dose of awesome scientific facts and information.

For a few weeks each fall MRBO conducts a Northern Saw-whet Owl banding project. Similar to other banding projects, mesh nets are erected to "catch" the birds and federally-issued leg bands with a unique number are placed on the birds before releasing them. Measurements are taken and determinations



about age and sex are made. (see picture series right). This project follows guidelines set forth by Project Owl-net. There **is** one big difference between banding Saw-whet Owls and most other banding programs bird enthusiasts may have attended..... these little birds are highly nocturnal! So, while the nets and equipment are set up and ready to go around dusk, the capturing and actual banding of the owls takes place **after dark**. "Net runs" are made every 35-40 minutes into the night, and captured birds are banded, documented—and shown off -in between runs! There is no denying that these adorable owls are WAY up there on the cute scale and tend to elicit an immediate, charming effect on everyone privileged to see a "wild" one up close. But in addition to the sheer appreciation for the wonder of these little birds, important scientific work is being done here.



Above: a black light shined beneath the owl's wing is used to determine age based on consistency and vividness of pigmentation.



Attendees are treated to close-up owl encounters....and a fabulous presentation on "Owls of Missouri".

Due to the secretive and nocturnal nature of Northern Saw-whet Owls, very few were believed to be present in Missouri at any time. That's all changing with research. This fall alone MRBO banded 51 of the Owls! They also hosted over 100 people at the accompanying educational programs. Please consider supporting all their good work at www.mrbo.org!

.....Owls continued on Page 7

2017 Missouri Bluebird Conference!

July 14– 16th Warsaw, Missouri

Watch for updates on speakers, field trips, and more on the MOBS website and Facebook page and in upcoming issues of *The Fledgling*.

Many thanks to MOBS Vice-president, Larry Dobson for volunteering to chair the 2017 MOBS conference.

Do check out this link to the [Historic Community Building](#) which will be the site of next years Bluebird Conference. Or go to : www.welcometowarsaw.com



Is it time to Renew your MOBS Membership?

Memberships expire on **December 31st of the year of expiration**. Check your mailing label to see if you need to renew. Please mail your renewal form, along with your check or money order (payable to MOBS) to:

Missouri Bluebird Society/ P.O. Box 105830/ Jefferson City, MO 65110

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ city/state _____ Zip _____

County: _____ Email: _____

Membership Levels:

____ Individual one year membership \$9.00 ____ DONOR (Annual) \$50.00 ____ *Family LIFE Membership \$175.00
 ____ Individual two year membership \$16.00 ____ SUPPORTER (Annual) \$100.00
 ____ *Family one year membership \$15.00 How many nest boxes do you monitor? _____
 ____ *Family two year membership \$28.00 How long have you been a Bluebirder? _____
 *For individuals residing at the same address

A word about your 2016 Trail Summary/Nest Box Report.....

We say it often, but really it can't be over-emphasized. Everyone's nesting data is important. We so appreciate the folks who have consistently sent in nesting summaries but we really need to hear from more of our members. **(See form on page 5)**. Note in the chart below, over all, submitted reports have increased since 2009 however participation is still sorely out of proportion to our membership. Won't you please take a few moments to share your trail info with MOBS? It would be so helpful, and we are truly interested! **Thank you for providing and monitoring nest sites for our native cavity-nesters.....now we want you tell US about your trail!** (Thanks to Nest Box Data chair Greg Samuel for his good work in compiling MOBS nest box data)

Comparison Year to Year	Eastern Bluebird	All Other Species	Combined Total	Submitted
	Fledged	Fledged	Fledged	Reports
2009	1,107	180	1,287	10
2010	1,231	329	1,560	15
2011	1,383	1,264	2,647	15
2012	1,174	1,021	2,195	19
2013	1,444	1,272	2,716	22
2014	1,483	585	2,068	20
2015	1,773	1,565	3,338	28



Date: _____

Address: _____

Species	Total nesting attempts by species	Total successful Nest for Species *	# Eggs laid By species	Total chicks By species	Total fledged (by species)	Additional notes
TOTALS :						

How often was the trail monitored?

Last date monitored for this season:

PLEASE NOTE New Address! Please send this completed form to :

Please mail form to arrive by Dec. 31st

www.missouribluebird.org

Remember to send in your “Trail Summary Report” (page 5) so your data can be counted and compiled with other MOBS members!

Truly, everyone’s data is valuable— whether you monitor one box or hundreds! 2016 Trail results will be printed in an upcoming issue of *The Fledgling*!

Don’t let the deadline to report your trail data slip by.....see page 5 of this issue.



Bluebird Pics by
Greg Samuel



Greg Samuel



Samuel

These gorgeous images from the Finley Creek Farm Bluebird Trail, courtesy of MOBS member (and Trail Data Chair) Greg Samuel.



MOBS promotes our State Bird at “Missouri Day” Event

Over 600 Elementary school children streamed by our educational booth in a matter of a few hours on October 19th at the **First Missouri State Capitol Historic Site** in St. Charles. Each child received MOBS Educational materials to take home and special “teacher packets” were given to educators. Interactive displays gave young people a chance to learn about the Eastern Bluebird—Missouri’s State Bird! ***Editor’s Note:** A very special thank you to Pat Wood of Chesterfield, Missouri for her untiring assistance that day in equipping children with tools to become Bluebird Conservationists!*



Birdhouse business takes flight for Steve Smith

Anyone who has spent any time around the Missouri Bluebird Society has surely met **Steve and Ann Smith** of Sullivan. They are both *active* members of MOBS, current Board Members, and Ann is our Website and Facebook administrator. Recently their business, Ned's Nesting Boxes, and their own trails and "backyard retreat" were featured in an issue of the **Rural Missouri Magazine**! Well-deserved recognition, the article emphasized the Smith's dedication to providing habitat for a wide variety of native wildlife as well as their passion for educating others to do the same. Steve has been a Nestwatch and Feederwatch participant with Cornell for years and presents many programs for groups—always promoting regular nest box monitoring, of course. We here at the Missouri Bluebird Society have always been grateful for the Smith's contributions to MOBS. Congratulations Steve and Ann for such merited praise!

Owls ...continued from page 3



Above: "Rampant Cuteness"!! (Quote from MRBO Director, Dana Ripper)

About Northern Saw-whet Owls:

- One of the smallest Owls in North America, roughly 8 inches in length, approx. 17 inch wingspan, and a weight of about 2.8 oz.
- Nesting Range: Nests in northern areas of NA (southern Alaska, Canada, northern US) but nesting populations are also found in higher elevations farther south—such as the Rocky Mountains National Park and Great Smoky Mountains.
- They winter in forests across central and even southern US....research continues!
- Prey mostly on deer mice and other small rodents, but can also consume insects and even small birds.
- They are **Cavity Nesters!!** Nesting predominately in tree cavities made by woodpeckers in coniferous forests, they have been known to readily take to man-made nest boxes. The Custer National Forest, South Dakota has hosted a **Northern Saw-whet Owl nest box program** and study since 2003...read their very interesting [2015 report](#) and stats!



LEARN MORE

- The Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute has a nest box project for Saw-whets. Read more at www.carriep.org
- Visit Cornell's "[All About Birds](#)"
- Visit [Project Owl](#)
- Pick up a copy of **North American Owls** by Paul A. Johnsgard (2nd edition)



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- **Nest Box/Trail Summary Report Form enclosed!**
We can't wait to hear from you about "your" birds!
- Let's get Boxes ready for **WINTER** Bluebirds
- Meet a small, nocturnal, ADORABLY cute little cavity-nester.... who is much more common in Missouri than we once thought!
- Great **pics** from the **2016 Bluebird Trail**
- MOBS members doing outreach
- 2017 Bluebird Conference news
- Steve and Ann Smith in the Spotlight!

