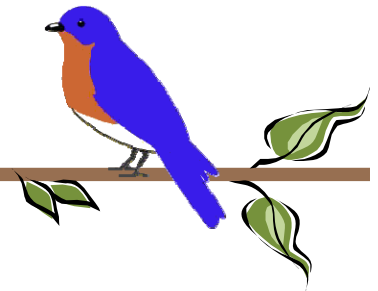


TEXAS Blues



The Newsletter of the Texas Bluebird Society ■ Volume 7, Issue 1



Far left & left: Photos by new member Nancy Nichols, Food Editor of *D Magazine*. Watch future issues of *Texas Blues* for articles by Nancy!

Below: Photo by Karen Hodges of Midlothian titled "Bluebirds Huddled for Warmth in Barn Swallow Nest." See p. 7 for a letter from Karen.



Far left, above & below: Photos by Keith Kridler, TBS Co-founder. Read about nestbox building in Graham on p. 2 & 3.

Center: Photo by Dan Hanan of Bastrop. With a greased PVC sleeve over the nestbox pole, he experienced no losses to snakes. See p. 6 for more details.

Far right, above & below: Photos by LeAnn Sharp, taken at EXPO 2007. Guess how many visited TBS Booth at TPWD EXPO 2007? (A) Almost 5,000; (B) 10,031; (C) Over 18,000 (see p. 4 for answer).



a day for the birds

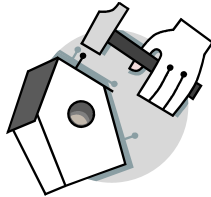
Tuesday, December 11, 2007

By David Rupkalvis of the Graham Daily Leader (reprinted with permission)

On one of the coldest days of the year, kindergartners at Pioneer Elementary had visions of spring dancing in their heads—complete with flowers and baby bluebirds.

While a cold breeze blew outside, the young students worked hard inside, making hundreds of birdhouses that will soon be seen around the city.

Keith Kridler with the Texas Bluebird Society visited the school to teach the children about birds and help them build the nest boxes. The society was formed in 2001 and has a motto of “Bluebirds across Texas ... one nest box at a time.”



As the students gathered in the gymnasium, Kridler showed a series of slides showing the birds that can be seen in the Graham area. He explained that many of the birds will use a nest box for a home. “All of the birds we’re going to show pictures of are birds that will use a birdhouse or a nest box to nest in,” Kridler said. “When they’re young, there will be five, six or seven birds sharing this house.”

Kridler said students could expect to see woodpeckers, wrens and, of course, bluebirds in the homes. “There are nine different species of birds that will use the nest box around here,” he said. “In March, it may be a wren’s nest, and in the summer, it can be a bluebird nest.”

As he showed the different pictures of the birds, some grew oohs and aahs as the children recognized birds they had seen in the outdoor habitat at Pioneer.

The bluebird nests continued an effort by Pioneer to teach children about nature and the animals that live in it. After more than a year of work, the school unveiled its outdoor habitat last year. Since then, students have watched plants, animals, birds and fish in a natural setting.

“Boys and girls, listen to the names of the birds because you may see them in our habitat,” Judy Fields told the students.

The boxes were built with loving care as volunteer parents and teachers helped the students nail together the pieces of wood the Texas Bluebird Society had brought to Graham.

The sound of hammers pounding nails filtered through Pioneer throughout the day as class after class took their turn building nest boxes.

Once the boxes were finished, Kridler encouraged each student to decorate their box however they wanted. “If you’re going to take it home and give it to mom or dad or grandma and grandpa, you can write Merry Christmas on it,” he said.



Jazz Miller hammers a nail in his nestbox (photo by Keith Kridler)

As he showed the different pictures of the birds, some grew oohs and aahs as the children recognized birds they had seen in the outdoor habitat at Pioneer. One picture seemed out of place, as the picture showed a house from far above.

“When you go out and you’re driving around and you see the buzzards or hawks flying over, they can see your house like that,” Kridler said. “Think about how much they can see.”

Kridler said birds have been known to use mailboxes, hard hats and empty gourds as nests. But they prefer the nest boxes. In one picture, Kridler showed 13 bluebirds huddled together in one box. He explained that in the winter, the birds will nest together for warmth.

“Wouldn’t it be bad if you all slept in one bed?” he asked. “There would be 400 of you.”

The nest boxes will also be used as a science experiment for the children. He encouraged the students to keep a close eye on any occupants, watching how birds make boxes a home.

“When a bird lays eggs in this box, mark it on the calendar,” Kridler said. “In two weeks, the eggs will be ready to hatch. In only 16 or 17 days, the birds will be ready to leave the nest. They grow almost a year every day. Just a few days after they are born, they are already out of kindergarten. After 16 days, they are out of high school and ready to move out on their own.”

Note: TBS uses the word “nestbox.” We reprinted this article verbatim, including the inconsistent spelling.



Behind the Scenes of “A Day for the Birds”

By Keith Kridler

I personally believe that spreading the joy and wonder of birding *must* begin at an early age! Especially in today’s fast paced world of glitzy toys and fancy computer games and audio/visual gadgets that all infants now grow up being exposed to before they can even talk or walk!

Graham, Texas, is 200 miles west of Mt. Pleasant, but you have to drive 260 miles to get there. This is the absolute northern edge of the Texas Hill Country. They have Post Oaks and mesquite trees of a size big enough to provide cavities for



bluebirds though it takes an extra hundred years to grow them as big as average hardwoods in the southeastern states. There’s no such thing as local sawmills in this part of the state. If you dig a hole or attempt to drive a metal fence post you are going to hit rock. Fossils and seashells are thick at every highway cut through a hill.

Anyway, we ended up hauling out 250 nestbox kits or 1,500 individual parts for a class of 226 kindergarten children (you *always* take extra parts to *any* event!). We loaded up truck and trailer on Friday in record heat of 85°F. Graham was predicted to be in the 70s for the outside nestbox building on Monday.

Well, you should always plan on problems, right? On Sunday, sleet, rain and flakes of snow hit that part of Texas. Temperatures dropped from a high of 85°F to only 34°F. We drove around checking and cleaning out nestboxes that were coated in ice on the north sides of the boxes. Eastern Bluebirds were huddled near some of the nestboxes. The wind was ripping through our newly purchased gloves and insulated coveralls and numbing our ears, fingers and toes. Electric wind turbine farms were shut down to keep them from over revving.

On Monday at 4:30 AM, Don Hutchings sat chugging coffee and listening to the local news as they ticked off the closed schools and businesses while I snored peacefully away into my warm pillow. Despite predictions of closed or delayed school openings, Graham school district opened at regular hours. Our truck and trailer were covered in a thin layer of ice, but we thawed out the truck and headed out in a dense pea-soup fog.

Our schedule began with a half-hour cavity nester slide program in the morning for all of the children and teachers on campus. Then we had seven half-hour nestbox building sessions for 16–21 students before lunch and five half-hour sessions after lunch. Fortunately, we had 39 volunteers (plus others who came in to help without registering) and teachers to help us with the nestbox building. Don and I trained the first group of volunteers, and some of those women helped train each new batch of volunteers. At one point we had more

volunteers than children, but most of the time the adults were helping two or three children *and* teaching nearby new adults how to build a nestbox that *opened*. ☺ (By the way, women are MUCH better at multi tasking and following directions than men are!) Diane Cody greatly helped the process by drilling all of the mounting holes in the backs of the boxes, drilling and pinning all of the side opening doors, and inspecting the doors for easy opening/cleaning.

At the end of the day, we completed 239 nestboxes and finished 30 minutes ahead of schedule. We used about 15 pounds of 6D nails and only bent about a pound of them using about 30 different hammers! We also finished each nestbox building session at least 10 minutes early—that’s including the time spent training the parents, grandparents, step parents, friends and neighbors that showed up to help.

Maybe the cutest story was from a child that came to school late due to the fog and missed the morning program. This little pre-K child went up to her teacher and asked if she could go down the hall because she thought she could hear Santa’s Elves tap-tapping right there in her school, building toys for Christmas. In a way she was right. They were the BEST group of “Elves” Don and I have ever worked with.

Two Advil for my stiff back, caffeine for the brain, and warm memories for the heart made for a short drive home!

About the Page 1 Photo (Bottom Left):

We only had this one tiny room that was full of tables and desks to work in, and the whole room was wall-to-wall kids. Don and I had to squeeze through these narrow walk areas every time someone had a problem, and we were actually stepping over the adults and kids or leaning over a pair of workers to help another, just as Don was doing in the photo. There was so much noise and so many people stepping around you.

I doubt we could have stayed on schedule had we not put the side and the bottom together. If the bottom is not lined up within a 1/16" side-to-side and up-and-down, then the whole box will be out of square and every piece will get further and further out of square until in the end the door will *not* open. If the bottom is done right then every other piece can be a little off and the box will still work. Don came up with shooting them together before each class came in.

Don and I were so busy all the time that I’m not sure how this got done. Some of the women just took charge and were leading kids in and out with the finished boxes. They were the ones who made the assembly line work smoothly after the second class.

—KK



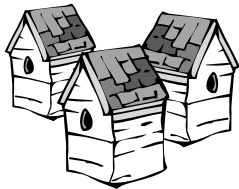
Welcome to our New Members!

Lisa Ancelet
Teresa Anderson
Janice Attaway
Stan Austin
Brenda Baker-Newell
Sandy Barron
Marta & John Bianchi
Daphne & Cletus Bianchi
Michelle Bobinchuck
Dorothy Borders
Caryn Brewer
Harold Bridwell
Pat Burgdorff
Rick & Tanja Burkinshaw
Kristin Burkland
Melissa Caldwell
Bebs Campbell
Joyce Canada
Martha Carlson
Joy Caviness
Caludia Chiquillo
Linda Cook
Lynn Cooper
Sharon Corzine
Katy Couvillion
Robert Dailey
Jane Dalton

Tanya Dawson
Dianne Detrick
Dot Dollar
Mary Dorris
Robert Ferguson
Carolyn Fields
Mary Firme
Terry Fitch
Teri Folks
Bill Fort
Beth & Tom Frantes
Janet Frick
Angela Fuller
Wendee Gamble
Geni & Doug Garrison
Flo Giles
Mary Gonzalez
Kalyn Green
Bill Griffith
Bryan Grinnell
Vikki Hale
Anita Harris
Deborah Hettinger
Ann Marie Hopkins
Sheryl Hrcirik
B. Jaramillo
Bill & Betsy Jones
E. Kepner
Noni Kersh
Cheryl King
Jamie King
Kris Kircus

Sharon Kornegay
Linda Korreck
James Krajicek
Danielle LaRo
Monique Lehning
Echo Lindan
Jan Long
Barb Lytle
Robert & Linda Mace
Margee Manning
Marilyn Marion
Andrea Martin
Neusa McWilliams
Carol McWilliams
Leslie Michalak
Susie Monroe
Carla & Jim Muldrow
Nancy Nichols
Jodi Olson
Lucinda Owen
Carol Palmer
Kathryn Papillon
Larry Parker
Nina Parks
Carolyn Patterson
Albert & Susan Peacock
Frances Pereira
Rich Poulton
Lynn Ragain
Jane Reed
Marianne Reese
Cynthia Reid

Angela Ried
Steven Riedmuller
Pam Ripley
Jo Nell Rogers
Brenda Savell
Meg Scamman
George Scheuchenzuber
LaNell Shannon
Danny Shedd
Walter Sherwood
Carol Ann Short
Arnold & Nene Simmons
Suzie Simon
Nancy Soechting
Steve Taylor
Susan Taylor
Linda Thiel
Charlotte Thompson
Michelle Torres
Larry & Carolyn Townley
Pat Vigliorolo
Melinda Walker
Beverly Welch
Pam Wells
Sandra Williams
Connie Williams
Joan Woodard
Judy Worthy
Antonio & Lindsey Zuniga



Dozens of “One Nestbox” Nestboxes Are Going Up “Across Texas”

(unless new members are leaving them in their garage...)



Over 10 dozen joined Texas Bluebird Society through our “One Nestbox” membership/nestbox exchange during October and November 2007. In addition, a handful found us through the Internet and joined on-line. (These new members may claim a starter nestbox by visiting any “One Nestbox” booth during the year; see schedule of events on page 7.)

Over 18,000 passed through the Texas Bluebird Society booth the first weekend in October, during the Texas Parks & Wildlife EXPO in Austin. Outside the booth, David Gwin constructed two large eye-catching pyramids of nestboxes. One Texas flag-canopied section housed our bird nests and eggs display. In another section, we offered “One Nestbox,” a starter nestbox with a \$15.00 household membership. Over 40 families joined TBS during EXPO, and each received a New Member packet. What a huge success!

TBS Members who worked during EXPO include LeAnn and Anthony Sharp, Johnny and Jennifer Fleming, David Gwin, and Ron and Pauline Tom.

What about the more than six dozen others listed on this page? Most joined through the single-handed efforts of one member, Linda Crum! Linda offered the “One Nestbox” membership/nestbox exchange before, during, and after two bluebird programs she presented. Kudos to Linda for a job well done!

TBS’ signature “One Nestbox” program promotes “Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time,” an educational and scientific purpose that qualifies us for IRS tax exempt status. It’s our membership and contribution dollars at work! (In December, we expended \$3,559 for lumber and screws for nestbox construction to replenish our supply.)



Texas Native Plants that Provide Food for Eastern Bluebirds

	Scientific Name	Common Name*	Favorite
Trees	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>	Service Berry	✓
	<i>Celtis laevigata</i>	Hackberry, Sugar Berry	
	<i>Cornus drummondii</i>	Dogwood Rough-leaf	✓
	<i>Morus rubra</i>	Red Mulberry	✓
	<i>Juniperus ashei</i>	Ashe juniper	
	<i>Juniperus pinchotii</i>	Red-berry Juniper	
	<i>J. virginiana</i>	Eastern Red-cedar	
	<i>Prunus serotina var. eximia</i>	Escarpment Black Cherry	✓

Shrubs, Vines and Small Trees	<i>Ampelopsis arborea</i>	Peppervine	
	<i>Callicarpa Americana</i>	American Beautyberry	
	<i>Capsicum Annuum</i>	Chile Pequin	
	<i>C. opaca</i>	Mayhaw	
	<i>Ilex decidua</i>	Possumhaw	
	<i>Ilex opaca</i>	Hollies - American	
	<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	Yaupon	✓
	<i>Lantana camara</i>	Texas Lantana	✓
	<i>Mahonia trifoliolata</i>	Agarita	
	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	Virginia Creeper	✓
	<i>Phytolacca americana</i>	Pokeweed	✓
	<i>Prunus Mexicana</i>	Mexican Plum	
	<i>Rhamnus caroliniana</i>	Carolina Buckthorn	
	<i>Rhus aromatica</i>	Fragrant Sumac	
	<i>Rhus copallinum L.</i>	Flame-leaf Sumac	✓
	<i>Rhus virens</i>	Evergreen Sumac	
	<i>Rubus spp.</i>	Blackberry and Dewberry	✓
	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	Elderberry	✓
	<i>Symphoricarpos orbiculatus</i>	Coralberry	
	<i>Toxicodendron rydbergi</i>	Poison ivy	
<i>Viburnum rufidulum</i>	Southern Blackhaw		

Other	<i>Phorandendron leucarpun</i>	Mistletoe (parasite)	✓
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*Plants may have additional common names

The species on this list are native to parts but not necessarily all of Texas. Please check with your local native plant specialist to determine suitability in your eco-region. While other native plants are valuable to other wildlife and the ecosystem, this list answers the question, "What plants provide food for bluebirds in Texas?"

This plant list can be downloaded from the Resource section of our website, www.texasbluebirdsociety.org. Please notify Texas Bluebird Society if you know of any species that should be added to or removed from this list.

Note from the Publisher: Instead of sending our usual newsletter in October 2007, we sent a two-page "Mini Edition." The abbreviated edition was meant to be a timely reminder about our Annual Meeting and the 2007 TPWD EXPO. Unfortunately, the issue arrived late in many mailboxes. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.



Access to online data entry for NestWatch 2007 data has been closed so that we can prepare the database for 2008. You will still be able to view your data summary reports and maps if you have submitted summary data but you will no longer be able to add or make changes to the 2007 data. Some of you have written to us and described errors with your summary data exports. We are aware of this problem and this is something we will be fixing during the temporary shut down. In February, online data entry will reopen to accept current year data (2008). For those of you that were unable to complete data entry for 2007, hold on to your nest records—in the very near future we will allow participants to enter historic data! We appreciate your patience while we prepare the database for these changes. Thank you for your dedication to nest monitoring & for submitting your data to NestWatch!

Letters from the TransTexas Nestbox Network

Keep those letters coming! We always love to hear from our members and see their photos.

Here are my 2007 results for bluebirds and chickadees:

28 nests
125 eggs
74 babies
66 fledged
8 died in nest (they were about a week old and I think they froze to death.)
0 lost to snakes

All my nestboxes were guarded with greased 3" diameter PVC pipes.

My fledging numbers were down considerably for 2007. I fledged 104 babies in both 2005 and 2006 but only 66 in 2007. There was plenty of rain and milder temperatures well into the summer months, which I thought would lead to bumper year; it did not. Part of the decrease in number of fledged babies was from a higher number of infertile eggs, but more significantly, there were also decreases in numbers of nests and eggs.

I have my version of a hanging nestbox and mount that I will try in 2008, but I do not know any way to guard it from snakes coming down from above. I also hope to test a nestbox mounted on a fence line t-post that has a greased PVC snake guard associated with it.

—Dan Hanan, Bastrop

Would you please provide a photo of your greased PVC pipe and share details of how you remove the grease at the end of the season?

The only picture of a greased pole that I have is attached (*we've printed it on page 1*). It does not show the grease very well; the grease appears very thin and more like motor oil. Normally, the grease is darker and almost black.

The photo has an inverted bucket as well as a greased pole. I do not suggest using the bucket and I am currently removing

them as they weather and become cracked. I do not grease the pole until the box has a nest with an egg in it.

I remove the grease by taking a piece of old cloth (about 30" x 6" in size) and soaking the middle in gasoline. Then holding it by its ends, I loop it around the pole (1 turn, 180 degrees) and pull it back and forth while working the cloth up and down the full length of the pole. A second clean cloth with a bit of gasoline cleans the pole up nicely. It is messy.

—DH

Background: In 2007, Lysle slipped a 5-foot section of 4" diameter PVC pipe over the EMT conduit pole on which she mounted her nestboxes. Then, according to instructions provided by Dan Hanan, she painted the PVC with a grease mixture (4 parts gun grease to 1 part motor oil) in a successful effort to prevent snake predation.

Here are my 2007 results:

Eastern Blue - 14
Carolina Chickadee - 16
Tufted Titmouse - 11
Carolina Wren - 4
Lost to snakes - 0

Is this what you want or is there some way to have Cornell (*which houses www.nestbox.org*) list all this with TBS? The greased poles gave me the first success with the bluebirds. I will never use any other predator guard. Interesting, by snake markings on the 4" PVC, I discovered that there were snake visits even when there were no baby birds and had not been for quite some times. That tells me that the snakes have a memory. There was no successful snake predation according to the pole markings. It is very easy to see when a snake has made an attempt to get up the pole

—Lysle Mockler, Waxahachie

When you enter your data at www.nestbox.org, Texas Bluebird Society has access to the information. There is no longer a need to submit nesting data to TBS; however, we do love hearing and learning from our members' experiences.

Important: NestWatch is temporarily closed while it is being upgraded for 2008. In the meantime, please continue to visit your nestbox(es) and keep detailed notes. NestWatch will be ready for data entry in February (see above announcement from NestWatch for more information).



TransTexas Letters

Continued from p. 6

We have enjoyed a population explosion in our yard and nestboxes. Even more we have enjoyed making our yard “home” to about 30 Eastern Bluebirds this year.

I knew it was home when the two in the attached photo took up residence in a barn swallow nest that we had not taken down. (Photo is on Page 1.) It was cold and these two were determined to stay warm. I got lucky taking these shots!

We got our first box from TBS at the Waxahachie Exposition in 2004. We are about to put up our third box. The 2 we have, stay active all season. Our box in the back gave us 4 broods this last year, 5 each time! Our front box gave us two broods of 5 each. It is amazing to see the vibrant blue of our littlest family members darting all over our neighborhood.

I am seeking approval from our HOA to start a Bluebird trail here in the neighborhood. Apparently we have a perfect location to help the Bluebird’s population expand.

—Karen Hodges (Midlothian, Texas)

What a delight to receive your message with photo! It’s fairly common for bluebirds to congregate in a nestbox on a cold winter night. But, how interesting to see the bluebirds roosting in a Barn Swallow nest! Is the nest on a porch? ... Just how cold was it? ... Was it taken during the day or at night?

Thanks for the “Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time” work you’re doing in your area!

The nest is on the porch. It was in the high 30s and it was dark. I had to take about 15 shots to get the birds. They stayed many nights. Then, once it warmed up, they departed.

—KH

2008 Event Calendar

At all events, the TBS “One Nestbox” membership/nestbox exchange will be available. For more information, visit www.texasbluebirdsociety.org. TBS will provide a starter nestbox. Visit www.texasbluebirdsociety.org to see the most recent events.

Tuesday, January 22, 2008 (2:30 pm)

Utopia Garden Club
Utopia Methodist Church
LeAnn Sharp, presenter
leann@friolodging.com or 830.966.2320

Monday, February 25, 2008

TPWD Wildlife Practices Management Workshop
(Bastrop County and Caldwell County)
Pauline Tom, presenter
pauline@texasbluebirdsociety.org
Meredith Longoria, 512.332.7280 (for more information)

Saturday, April 12, 2008 (10 a.m. – 3 p.m.)

Earth Day, The Woodlands @ The Woodlands High School
“One Nestbox” Booth
Linda Crum, Coordinator
lpocrum@catw-tx.org

Saturday, April 19, 2008 (10 am–3 pm)

Earth Day, College Station Veterans Park
“One Nestbox” Booth
David Gwin, Coordinator
dgwin@cstx.gov or 979.764.3753

Saturday, April 26, 2008

Wills Point Bluebird Festival
“One Nestbox” Booth
Barb Ohlman, Coordinator
bohere@verizon.net or 817.482.1930

Saturday, June 14, 2008

Texas Blueberry Festival, Nacogdoches
“One Nestbox” Booth
Norm Shoemaker, coordinator
otaybuckwheat@sbcglobal.net or 936.569.0480

Saturday, August 16, 2008

TBS Summer Symposium & Silent Auction
The Woodlands (venue TBA)
Linda Crum, coordinator
txorganicgardener@gmail.com or 281.744.1228

Friday, October 3, 2008

TBS Annual Meeting & Dinner
Austin (venue TBA)
Pauline Tom, coordinator
ptom5678@gmail.com or 512.268.5678

Saturday & Sunday, October 4 & 5, 2008

Texas Parks & Wildlife EXPO, Austin
“One Nestbox” Booth
Ann Thames, coordinator
semahta@yahoo.com or 979.278.3053

Help!

We need volunteers for each “One Nestbox” Booth. Contact the coordinator if you will help. No experience or knowledge necessary!



News Roundup



NestWatch may be offline, but the bluebirds aren't waiting! Some TBS members have reported nest start-ups as early as January. If feasible, please begin visiting your nestbox(es) every 5–7 days and keeping notes (include date and time). Submit your observations when NestWatch reopens in February (see p.6).

2008 North American Bluebird Society Convention

This year's convention will be held in conjunction with Great Plains Sandhill Crane & Bluebird Festival in Kearney NE, March 6–9. See www.bbne.org/cranefestival/ or call 402.334.8691 for more information.

New Logo Detail: Registered Trademark

After a process that took several years, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office approved our logo (with our slogan) as a registered trademark on September 11, 2007. Now it must be displayed with an official indication of this designation, such as the “®” symbol.

Thanks again to Cheryl Anderson, Jim Collier, and attorney Ann Livingston for their generous donations which made possible this protection of a valuable asset.

Special Thanks to Melinda Walker

Melinda, Philip Walker's mom, invited a TBS Work Group to meet and eat at her lovely home in Round Top, a half-way point for Linda (The Woodlands) and Pauline (Mountain City). Joined by TBS Ambassador Ann Thames (Giddings) and Philip Walker, they assembled 150 new member packets on a beautiful day in November. (Notice Melinda's name on the “Welcome, New Members” list—she joined that day!)

Volunteer Opportunity: TBF Program Coordinator

We are looking for someone to oversee our “True Blue Friend” memorial nestbox plaque program. Contact Pauline Tom at 512.268.5678 or ptom5678@gmail.com.

Longtime Members: Need a New Member Packet?

If you joined TBS before we started sending out New Member Packets, we will mail you one on request. Contact Ann Thames at 979.278.3053 or semahta@yahoo.com.

Texas Bluebird Society
PO Box 40868
Austin TX 78704



Don't let your membership expire!

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This newsletter of Texas Bluebird Society
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P O Box 40868
Austin TX 78704

www.texasbluebirdsociety.org

Pauline Tom, 512.268.5678 (home)
LeAnn Sharp, 830.966.2320 (work)

