

TEXAS Blues



Texas Bluebird Society Newsletter July 2014 • Volume 13. Issue 3

Time To Make Plans For Summer Symposium On August 23rd

Great speakers • Silent Auction FUNdraiser • Door Prizes • Demonstrations and Displays

The 2014 Bluebird Summer Symposium has something for everyone. Come join us for the day!

Featured Speakers: **Keith Kridler**, author and naturalist, “Bluebirds and More”

Jim Varnum, Texas Master Naturalist, “Native Plant Gardening to Attract Birds and Butterflies”

Other Presentations: Bluebird Basics, House Sparrow Control, and more

As always, our wonderful volunteers are working to ensure all of the little details that help make the day run efficiently and smoothly for you are already accomplished, in progress, or on the to-do list. We still need volunteers for ongoing tasks, helping with activities needed for setup, during the symposium, or packing up to go home - we have a chore for any and all volunteers. Contact us at eventplans@txblues.org and volunteer today!

Important Dates

Early Bird Registration July 23

Lodging Deadline Aug 1

Silent Auction items* Aug 1

Advanced Registration Aug 9

Social Dinner Aug 22

Symposium Aug 23

9:00am - 3:00pm

Doors open at 8:30am

* Ship auction items OR provide notification by Aug 1st



Location

Mansfield ISD Center for the Performing Arts
1110 West Debbie Lane
Mansfield, TX 76063

Friday Evening Dinner and Social

Cafeteria style dinner at Spring Creek Barbecue. Social will follow immediately at our guest hotel in the La Quinta Meeting Room.

(Margaritas provided, donations appreciated).

\$10.00 refundable dinner reservation deposit required. You will be refunded your deposit before dinner begins.

No deposit refunds for cancellations after August 9th.

Lodging

Lodging: La Quinta Inn & Suites
1503 Breckenridge Rd, Mansfield, TX 76063
Ask for the Texas Bluebird Society group rate, \$82 per night. Call (817) 453-5040.

Silent Auction Donations

Donated items/funds/notification should be sent by **August 1st**. Bringing your item? Email description, retail value, any pertinent info to auction@texasbluebirdsociety.org by August 1st.

Send item(s) to: **Beverly Davis**

2411 Stableridge Drive

Conroe, TX 77384

Questions? Benni (254) 968—6663.

Items missing deadline will be accepted. However, this puts extra stress and a lot of last minute processing work on our unpaid volunteers!

**Symposium Registration Form
is on page 6**

Native Plants Of Texas Attract Bluebirds: Roughleaf Dogwood

Bluebirds LOVE these berries!



Backyard photo by Linda Crum



Backyard photo by Linda Crum



© Plant Resources Center and Bio406d at the University of Texas at Austin

By **Linda Crum**, Master Gardener/Master Naturalist

For those of you who are still pining away about not being able to grow flowering dogwood, perhaps you will consider growing roughleaf dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*). The flowers are not as dramatic, but neither is this species a prima donna when it comes to growing conditions.

A common perennial, understory shrub or small tree to 16 feet in central to eastern Texas, roughleaf dogwood has opposite, shiny leaves with rough surface. Not really particular to soil type, the plant prefers moist, alkaline soil where it tends to form thickets by suckers from the roots. But it will tolerate drier soil conditions. It will grow in sun to shade. Flower, fruit production and purplish-red fall color is more abundant when it receives at least four hours of sun. It produces creamy-white four-petaled open flower clusters from April to early June that are followed by small white fruits that ripen from August to October during the time of fall migration. These fruits are a source of food for wildlife including at least 40 species of birds. The flowers lack the showy bracts of the flowering dogwood.



Range for Roughleaf Dogwood

Because of its ability to sucker and form thickets, roughleaf dogwood is excellent for erosion control. It is also ideal for making a hedge, border or cover for wildlife. In the deep sandy soil of my woodland front yard, roughleaf dogwood has decided to form a single trunk understory tree. It is several years old and has shown no sign of forming a thicket. Growing condition is probably the determinate factor in its tendency to form a thicket.

Several butterfly species as well as insects, including native bees, nectar on flowers of this tree. While trying to get a photo of the flowers, I noticed small insects obtaining nectar from the flowers. Suddenly a Carolina Chickadee flew in right next to me and began eating the insects. I froze in place so as not to frighten the bird. Since I have no photo to document the incident, you will just have to take my word.

To propagate, sow seeds immediately after collection or scarify and stratify and sow the following spring. Seeds are also dispersed by the birds. Roughleaf dogwood will root from softwood or semi-hardwood cuttings taken in summer. Root cuttings can also be taken in summer.

Like a number of other Texas plants, the species of this plant is named for Thomas Drummond, (ca. 1790-1835), naturalist, born in Scotland, around 1790. Drummond came to Texas in 1833 and collected 750 species of plants and 150 species birds. His collections are in several museums around the world.

Members Shares Nestbox Experiences



Photo and caption by **John Park**

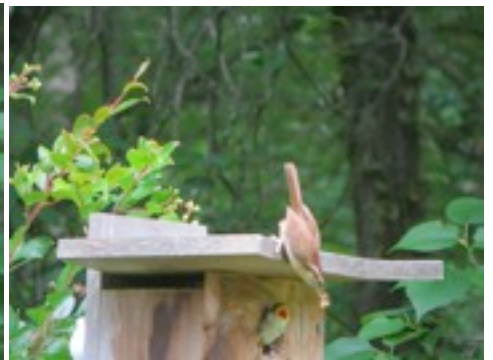
I was taking my morning stroll through our backyard to check on the various nesting activity - green herons, mockingbirds, thrashers, and bluebirds. Imagine my absolute delight as I peeked in the bluebird nestbox and discovered the three eggs were in the process of hatching! One was completely out of the shell, one was sitting in the bottom half of an eggshell, and one was just starting to crack thru the eggshell. I wanted to capture this rare moment so I ran full out to the house for my camera. By the time I returned to the nest mom had cleared out two of the eggshells. Look very closely at the photo. The third chick is almost out of his/her shell. All three babies are doing fine. Parents are busy feeding chicks.

Cool Fact
A single, captive male Carolina wren reportedly sang some 3,000 times in one day.



Photo and captions by **Pat Nail**

Earlier, both the male and female were on top of the nest box. (Left) I had assumed it was the female Carolina Wren that you see in the entry hole of the nest box...watching for her hubby to bring her some breakfast...and maybe to feed the babies. BUT...two of my bird "experts" said this looks like a juvenile Carolina Wren inside the nestbox...not the mama. (Right) Now, you can see the adult Carolina Wren transferring food to the bird inside the nestbox.



Ooooooh...how the baby Carolina Wren wants that tender morsel! Streeeeeetch! One of my bird "experts" said that this is common feeding behavior of these birds, with the adult encouraging the babies to stretch to get the food...to encourage them to fledge. The adult went to great lengths to feed the baby! See the baby's legs on the outside of the nestbox entry hole trying to hold on while reaching for the food from its parent. The adult bird must have a tight grip on the edge of the roof to be hanging there upside down! (Center photo. Notice the yellow-gaped mouth on the baby? The yellow beak/mouth lining distinguishes baby from adult.

- Share your experiences with us! Please send photos and anecdotes to editor@txblues.org
- View member photos online at www.txblues.org then click menu tab "Photos"
- Share immediately with Texas Bluebird Society on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/TexasBluebirdSociety)

Other Cavity Nesters: This Beauty Is A Beast!

By **Linda Crum**, Master Naturalist

All of us in urban settings are plagued with House Sparrows (HOSP), *Passer domesticus*, sometimes referred to as the English sparrow. The table is set for native birds and the House Sparrows crash the party. Uninvited and unwanted, but there none the less. Oh that we could just call the House Sparrow police and be done with them!

Native to Eurasia, North Africa and the Middle East, the House Sparrow was first introduced to the United States in Brooklyn, NY in 1851. They did not survive, so more House Sparrows were imported and now they are the most common "songbird" in the United States. By 1883, man saw the error of this unfortunate introduction of the House Sparrow. An article in The Messenger (Indiana, PA, 06/27/83) said "*The little sparrow has been declared an outlaw by legislative enactment and they can be killed at any time. They were imported into this country from Europe some years ago as a destroyer of insects, but it has been found they are not insectivorous. Besides they drive away all our native song birds and give no equivalent. Let them all be killed.*"

Why worry about the House Sparrow inhabiting your landscape? They will diminish if not completely eliminate the native songbird population. Anytime they are allowed access to an area, they harass native birds or even kill them in order to establish their territory. Passive, as well as active methods are required to effectively manage House Sparrows. U.S. federal law permits removing or destroying HOSP nests, eggs, young, and adults. Passive methods alone will not be effective in controlling the population. Refusing to trap and kill House Sparrows is certainly your choice, but the native bird population will suffer. If active methods are not employed, please do not put up a nestbox to attract native cavity nesters. To make an informed decision, visit <http://sialis.org/hosp.htm#theproblem>.

One of the most effective passive controls is to install a "sparrow spooker" on the nestbox the day the native female species lays her first egg. Check the nestbox on next afternoon to make sure she has laid another egg. I have used a sparrow spooker many times and the bluebirds have always accepted it. The spooker stays on the nestbox until the young fledge. For some reason, those Mylar strips spook the sparrows and they will not enter the nestbox. Replace the Mylar strips each season. If Chickadees or other smaller species are nesting, install a hole-reducer (1.25 inches) so that the HOSP cannot enter. House Sparrows are not found apart from humans. Rather their habitat is closely linked to humans. The areas they tend to avoid are woodlands, forests, large grasslands, and deserts.

Continued on page 5



Adult male breeding

- Black bill, mask, throat, and breast
- Gray cap, rufous nape
- Back and wings reddish with black streaks
- White stripe on shoulder

© [Robert J. Baker](#), Greene Co, Virginia
March 2007



Adult male nonbreeding

- Less black on throat and breast
- Gray cap, rufous nape
- Underparts gray
- Bill yellowish at base, darker towards tip

© [Sam Wilson](#), Phoenix, Arizona
December 2008

Continued from page 4

HOSP are stocky birds, 5.75 to 6.25 inches long with thick beaks. They are smaller than bluebirds but larger than Chipping Sparrows and wrens. The adult male has a v-shaped black bib (dominate males have larger black bibs) on the breast under the beak, grayish-brown feathers with a white horizontal bar on the wing. The cap of the head is gray. The Chipping Sparrow will have a chestnut-colored cap. The female HOSP is harder to identify. They are a dull gray with a white stripe behind the eye and brown coloration on the wings. They can be confused with other sparrows but lack stripes on the breast. Many, but not all, of the native sparrows have some stripes on the breast. The HOSP song is a one-note chirp. Native sparrows have varied and beautiful songs. To view similar species, go to http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/house_sparrow/id.

Nesting sites include holes of buildings and other structures such as streetlights, gas-station roofs, signs, overhanging fixtures that hold traffic lights, and nestboxes. They sometimes build nests in vines climbing the walls of buildings. Go to any big box store that has a plant nursery and HOSP can be found nesting in the rafters of the building. A HOSP nest is a loose jumble of odds and ends, including coarse grass with seeds, feathers, twigs and sometimes litter, and occasionally a sprig of green vegetation or roots. It has a tunnel like entrance. Clutch size is one to eight eggs. Eggs are speckled. House Sparrows nest from one to five times per year, beginning as early as February. Incubation and nesting periods last from 10 to 14 days each. HOSP are relatively long-lived, up to 13 years. So they can really increase their population rapidly. Patience, creativity and persistence are necessary to manage this non-native species. In the words of Winston Churchill, "Never, never, never give up."



Adult female

- Underparts grayish, upperparts brownish
- Back and wings brown with dark streaks
- Bill thick and yellowish

© [Kevin Bolton](#), Franklin Lake, New Jersey
November 2008

Clutch size: 1 - 8 eggs

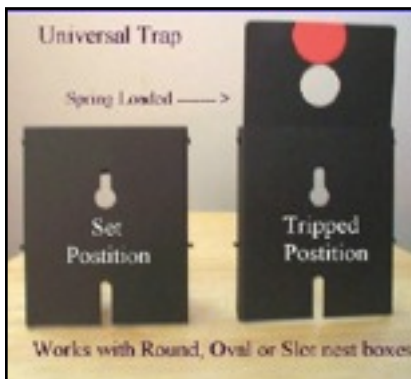
Broods: 1 - 4 per year

The oldest recorded House Sparrow was 15 years 9 months old.

References

allaboutbirds.org
sialis.org

Tools of the Trade for Sparrow Control



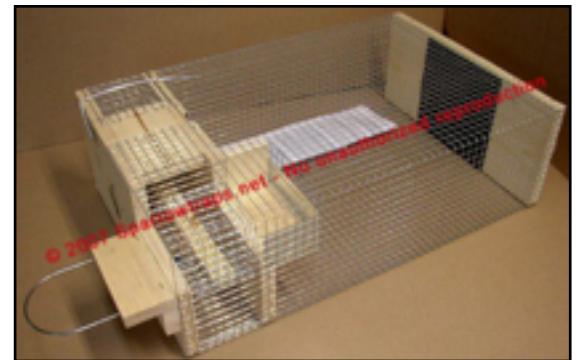
Van Ert Trap

TBS nestboxes already include hardware for mounting the Van Ert trap. Visit www.vanerttraps.com for installation instructions and purchasing details.



Sparrow Spooker and a Repeating Trap

To purchase a Sparrow Spooker (above left) or a repeating sparrow trap (above right) visit www.sparrowtraps.net. For instructions on how to build a Sparrow Spooker yourself, visit www.sialis.org.



2014 Summer Bluebird Symposium
(with Silent Auction FUNdraiser)



Saturday, August 23, 2014
Mansfield ISD Center for the Performing Arts, 1110 Debbie Lane, Mansfield, TX 76063

9:00 AM-3:00 PM
Doors open at 8:30 for Registration and Silent Auction

Featured Speakers

Keith Kridler, author and naturalist
Bluebirds and More

Jim Varnum, Texas Master Naturalist
Native Plant Gardening to Attract Birds and Butterflies

Other Presentations: Bluebird Basics, House Sparrow Control, and more

Registration Costs and Deadlines

Early Bird Advance Registration: \$15.00. Box Lunch and 10 Door prize tickets.
Deadline: July 23rd

Standard Advance Registration: \$15.00. Box Lunch and 2 Door prize tickets.
Deadline: August 9th

At-the-door Registration: \$6.00. No meal and no door prize tickets.

Friday Evening Dinner and Social
6:00 P.M.--Pay-as-you-go dinner at Spring Creek Barbeque, \$10.00 refundable deposit required on registration form. *
Social immediately after in La Quinta Meeting Room. BYOB (donations for Margaritas).
Deadline: August 9

Lodging: La Quinta Inn & Suites \$82.00. Ask for the Texas Bluebird Society group rate. (817) 453-5040
Deadline: August 1st

On-line registration available at <http://RSVPbook.com/2014Symposium>

FREE Nestbox to members who pledge to "NestWatch" at least two nestboxes
(submit observations to Cornell Lab of Ornithology through www.NestWatch.org)

To Donate a Silent Auction Item:** **For More Information:**
rex@texasbluebirdsociety.org
2411 Stableridge Dr
Conroe, TX 77384

Donations received after August 1st will miss the program publication deadline.

**TBS is recognized by the IRS as a 501c3 "charitable" organization. Donations are tax deductible, as allowed by law.

"Thank you" to GreatCities.com for use of the Mansfield Map Logo.

photo by Greg Lavy

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ADVANCE Registration (includes Box Lunch)

On-line registration available at <http://RSVPbook.com/2014Kickoff>
Registrant #1

Name _____ Name for Name Tag _____

Street Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Contact Phone _____ E-mail _____

Registrant #2 (same street address)

Name _____ Name for Name Tag _____

Contact Phone _____ E-mail _____

# Registrants (Please circle)	Description	Cost
1	2 Member	\$15.00
1	2 Non Member	\$15.00
1	2 Friday Dinner Deposit	*\$10.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Check <input type="checkbox"/> Cash Total Due:		

To register more attendees, please include an additional sheet with your mailing.

For Planning Purposes Only

1. TBS Members and New Members: TBS will give you a FREE nestbox at this event if you pledge to "NestWatch" at least 2 nestboxes (submit observations to Cornell Lab of Ornithology through www.nestbox.org).
Do you plan to participate? Yes No N/A

2. \$15 Nestboxes available for purchase (based upon availability). How many do you plan to purchase? _____

Mail Registration Form with Payment made payable to "Texas Bluebird Society" to:
Texas Bluebird Society Season Kickoff
c/o Rex Reves
439 Dawson Road
Waxahachie, TX 75167



EARLY BIRD Registration—Deadline July 23, 2014
STANDARD Registration—Deadline Aug 9, 2014
AT-THE-DOOR Registration available (no lunch or door prize chances)
Register now with your SmartPhone Newsletter

Register on-line! <http://RSVPbook.com/2014Symposium>

NestWatch

Where Birds Come to Life

Type to enter text

NestWatch eNewsletter

May 2014

Do Birds Prefer to Lay Their First Egg on Saturdays?

Phenology is the science of when things occur, and accurate phenology data are important for understanding conservation needs, climate change, and even basic biology. For birds, timing of spring arrival or the first egg of the year can tell us if reproductive trends are changing over time. First egg date, as reported by NestWatchers, is a critically important variable in scientific analyses of the NestWatch data.

In a [study](#) by Caren Cooper, research associate at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, an interesting finding came to light. Cooper found that 75% of attempts by cup-nesting species and 42% of attempts by box-nesting species were *not* visited by monitors during the egg-laying stage, resulting in a lack of information on first egg dates. Therefore, when possible, NestWatchers should try to visit the nest during the egg-laying stage. This is harder to do for species with small clutches such as hummingbirds and doves, which typically lay just two eggs. Watch for birds building nests—carrying grass, twigs, plant down, and other nesting material—and see where they go. By visiting newly-built nests every 3–4 days, you are more likely to determine first egg date for most species.



Photo by Carl Austin

Cooper also found that nest monitors were most likely to visit nests on Saturdays and least likely to visit nests on Fridays, producing a bias in which birds appear to favor Saturday for laying their first eggs. Of course, birds do not know which day of the week it is, and we know that they are equally likely to lay an egg on Friday as they are on Saturday. Fortunately, researchers can correct for this "Saturday bias" statistically, provided the nest was checked at some point during egg-laying.

To address this bias, we've added a check-box in data entry that asks if the nest was visited during the egg-laying period (note: the question does not refer to whether you saw a bird laying an egg, only whether you visited during this stage of the nesting cycle). Answer the question to the best of your knowledge, and remember, answering "no" doesn't mean we can't use your data. The check-box will also remind you to go out and check nests when eggs are anticipated. The check-box is located under the field where "First Egg Date" is entered. (Remember, First Egg Date is when you think the first egg was laid, not when you first saw an egg.) It might seem more important to report the total clutch size, but keep in mind that *when* birds begin to lay can also be very informative.

Reprint from Cornell Lab of Ornithology Email NestWatch Newsletter May 2014

Cool Facts About Bluebirds

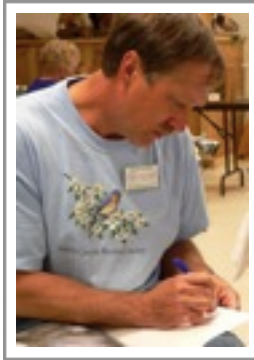
- Eastern Bluebirds eat mostly insects, wild fruit and berries. Occasionally, Eastern Bluebirds have also been observed capturing and eating larger prey items such as shrews, salamanders, snakes, lizards and tree frogs.
- A female Mountain Bluebird pays more attention to good nest sites than to attractive males. She chooses her mate solely on the basis of the location and quality of the nesting cavity he offers her—disregarding his attributes as a singer, a flier, or a looker.
- Western Bluebirds have a gentle look, but territory battles can get heated. Rival males may grab each other's legs, tumble to the ground, and then pin their opponent on the ground, stand over him, and jab at him with his bill.

Courtesy of www.allaboutbirds.org

Volunteers are APPRECIATED!

*Great volunteers are the foundation of a great organization.
TBS is lucky to have the **greatest!***

Caryn Brewer	Barb Ohlman
Katy Couvillion	John Park
Linda Crum	Michael Richards
Walt Davis	Kelly Russell
Jennifer Fleming	Meg Scamman
Johnny Fleming	Pauline Tom
Don Lawrence	Ron Tom
Kevin Nelson	Joanna Wright
Paul Nelson	



Co-founder Is Model Volunteer!

Voracious Presenter, author, popular forum contributor, nestbox builder, and trail monitor are just a few of the volunteer tasks Keith Kridler enjoys.



Keith will share his experiences at the Summer Symposium

Thanks For Your Financial \$upport!

Linda Alexander	JoAnna Harlan	Joe Pass
Truett & Kay Bennett	Sandy Henderson	Kathy & Chris Rogers
J. Fred Bucy III	Bruce & Vickie Houff	Peggy Romfh
Justina Dent	Mary Israel	Richard Schaffhauser
Ray Edmundson	Mike McMurry	Ken & Linda Sluis
Lyall Feather	Roy Morgan	Dr. Paul & Norma Sundin
Gerald Forrest	Mike Mullins	Ron & Pauline Tom
Phyllis Gerdes	Kathleen Murray	Sherri Wilson
Louis Golish	John P. O'Connell	Gerry Woodruff

Welcome New Members!

(New members who give us print permission on Membership Form)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Andry • John Askins • David Boatwright • Sara Bowers • Samantha Boyle • Martha Browning • Debbie Butynski • Brenda Ann Chilcoat • Gail Chock • Craig Clower • Amy & Scott Crow • Debbie Davis • Justina Dent • Cindy Durbin • Sarah Feagin • Ben & Stacy Fischer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debbie Ford • James M. Gerson • Patsy Glaze • Barbara Gosnell • Angela Grancea • JoAnna Harlan • Dede Hight • Linda Howard • Charles Hubbard • Mary A. Izworski • Suz Ann Jolly • Jerry & Dearnel Jordan • Amy Lambert • Ray Leblanc • Jim Masten • Charles & Lynda McQuaid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathleen Murray • Mary Nelson • Don Orman • Laura Penn • Pat Pryor • Roy & Margi Ramirez • John & Carol Riggall • Brooksie Roberts • Ruby Roland • Vickie stozen • Sandy Stack • Patricia Tenczynski • Carly Tucker • Cindy West • William Winston • Bruce D. Woodall |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA, Georgetown • WA, San Antonio • MT, Fort Worth • EB, Dallas • LB, Fort Worth • NB, Arlington • CC, Athens • MD, Fort Worth • ME, Canton | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SH, Terrell • YH, Flower Mound • MH, San Antonio • JJ, Keller • AK, Arlington • PM, Fort Worth • JM, Brazoria • VM, Fort Worth • AM, Dallas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CM, Fort Worth • AM, San Antonio • DM, Edgewood • SQ, Fort Worth • JR, Forney • MS, Fort Worth • JS, Fort Worth • TU, Fort Worth • JV, Willspoint |

*Bluebirds Across Texas ... one nestbox at a time***Board of Directors***President**Executive Committee***Pauline Tom**

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Vice President

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*New Members***Don Lawrence**

Whitesboro

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Garrison

*Linda Crum

Bookkeeping Advisor

Contact Us:

tbs@txblues.org

PO Box 40868

Austin, TX 78704

512.268.5678 (Pauline Tom)

Teamwork — Love It!Photo and article by **Ken and Judy Ray**

During a cold snap in mid-April, we lost six nestlings in the backyard. They froze to death. (Ken and Judy reside in Ovilla, TX)

But within three days, we noticed the bluebirds were again working on a new nest in a nearby nestbox. Moral of that story is that bluebirds do not live in the past. They move on quickly. Life is short.

We observed the female working exceptionally hard on the nest, bringing big beakfuls of grass and twigs. One time she had a twig so long that she needed several attempts to get it through the tiny hole of the nestbox.

The day after the nest was completed, eggs began appearing in the nestbox. The female was indeed a hard worker. One morning we watched the male and female on their favorite branch near the nestbox. Suddenly the male flew to the ground and grabbed a bug. Then he flew back to the female and gave the bug to her. He was taking good care of his mate! That's part of the reason we enjoy watching them.



They are aptly named as symbols of happiness.

**All cavity-nesting birds are protected by federal law.
Do not disturb birds or nest. Monitor and report to NestWatch.**



The Texas Bluebird Society
newsletter, *TX Blues*,
is published four times a year:
March ■ May ■ July ■ October
Debbie Bradshaw Park, Editor

Send street or email address
changes to John Park at:
records@txblues.org
or send to our P.O. Box.

**Need Nestboxes?**

Go to www.txblues.org
click *Nestbox Distributor* tab
for nearest location to you.