

Winter 2012

February 2012



The Fledgling



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

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Letter from the President:

Before we know it the time to start monitoring our nest boxes again will be here. It is a time so many of us look forward to! Some of us added boxes to our trails this winter or replaced boxes that needed to be removed. That means more available cavities for our native cavity-nesting birds to raise their young and more opportunities for us to enjoy them. I am so pleased that this issue of ***The Fledgling*** highlights yet another recipient of MOBS' Nest Box Grant program. I want to congratulate the Confluence Chapter of the Missouri Master Naturalists on being awarded nest boxes through the program and I **commend** them for their diligence in getting the boxes up and ready to go so quickly! They are a group of committed volunteers making a difference in their area . Good job! I know the same can be said about so many of MOBS' members. You are making a difference in the areas you live and work, both by helping to spread the word about Bluebird Conservation and by tending to your own nest boxes. I encourage everyone again to identify ways in your area to use the MOBS Educational Power Point Program and the Educational Brochure that are available to you. Right now, just prior to nesting season, would be a great time to share your knowledge about Bluebirds with community groups, church groups, schools, 4-H groups, other conservation organizations, garden clubs and more.

Do put the 2012 Missouri Bluebird Conference on your schedule now! A July conference gives us the opportunity to visit active Bluebird Trails. The four speakers who have generously given their time to be with us are all fantastic and sure to make for a memorable and informative conference.

I will be in Kearney, NE next month at the Sandhill Crane & Bluebird Festival. Read more about that in this issue and then join us there if you can!

Steve Garr, MOBS President

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President....Steve Garr steve@birds-i-view.biz 573-638-2473

Vice- President..Larry Dobson lldobson@aol.com 816-331-2888

Secretary & Fledgling Editor...Regina Garr regina@birds-i-view.biz 573-638-2473

Treasurer...Susan Reinagel susan.reinagel@mdc.mo.gov 573-979-2861 **Board Member**....Jim Rathert birdfoto@mchsi.com

Board Member....Steve Smith sws582003@yahoo.com 636-629-8267

Board Member & MOBS Webmaster ..Ann Smith thesmiths91@yahoo.com 636-629-8267

MOBS
PO BOX 105830
Jefferson City, MO 65110
www.missouribluebird.org

Nuthatches:

Cavity-Nesters worth getting to know!

by Regina Garr

White-breasted Nuthatches are prevalent year-round in Missouri. While **Red-breasted Nuthatches** nest to the north, Missourians often get to experience them coming to bird feeders during the winter months (some years in high concentrations, some years only a few sightings). There is another member of the Nuthatch family however that once nested in parts of Missouri but has not done so for about 100 years! The **Brown-headed Nuthatch** is an intriguing little cavity-nesting bird and will be the topic of a program presented at the **2012 Bluebird Conference** July 14th in Jefferson City. MOBS is honored to have **Rich Stanton** from the University of Missouri as one of our program speakers at the conference. He will share with conference attendees details about Brown-headed Nuthatches and even address the issue of reintroducing them into Missouri.

Printed below, with permission, is an excerpt from the January/February 2012 issue of *The Timberdoodle*, the newsletter of the River Bluffs Audubon Society:

The Brown-headed Nuthatch (*Sitta pusilla*) is on the Audubon Watch List since it's area became limited to the mature pine stands of the southeastern United States.

Very little documentation has been done for this species' post-breeding movements to determine how much loss of habitat due to logging, forest fragmentation and fire suppression threaten it.

These nuthatches historically nested as far north as southeastern Missouri but now only occur as far north as northeastern Texas, middle Tennessee, and eastward into far southern Pennsylvania.

Numbers are declining throughout it's entire range. Breeding Bird Surveys from 1966 through 2001 show an annual population fall of 2.2 percent.

Brown-headed Nuthatches (pictured right) are considered **Primary Cavity-nesters** because they usually excavate their own nesting cavity in dead wood, however they may reuse old cavities or enlarge existing cavities made by other nuthatches or by woodpeckers. They have also used nest boxes. *Photo by Keith Kridler*



The Brown-headed Nuthatch is on the Audubon Watch List. Although it once nested as far north as southeastern Missouri, it has been extirpated from that area for about one hundred years! Could a population be successfully reintroduced into Missouri?



Photo S. Garr

The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** (pictured above) **will also excavate it's own nesting cavity!**

Typically, they nest north of Missouri, but can be seen during winter months here, sometimes in mixed flocks with Chickadees and/or Woodpeckers. Depending upon available food sources north, Missourians may see many Red-breasted Nuthatches in the winter, or very few.



Above: White-breasted Nuthatch are year-round residents in Missouri and are secondary cavity nesters. They rarely excavate their own nesting cavity, instead using natural cavities or those made by other birds. They have used nest boxes as well. *Photo by S.Garr*



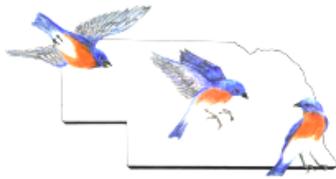
Left: MOBS member Keith Kridler of Mt, Pleasant, Texas took this photo of a friend "feeding" Brown-headed nuthatches (in TX) by holding a pecan in his mouth! Keith tells us as many as eight nuthatches at once would come to be fed this way!

Upcoming Bluebird Events!

Great Plains Sandhill Crane & Bluebird Festival II

March 22-25, 2012 Kearney, Nebraska

hosted by Bluebirds Across Nebraska



The folks at Bluebirds Across Nebraska (BAN) are known for having spectacular Bluebird Conferences. If you have never had the opportunity to attend one, THIS is one you won't want to miss!

- **Terrific Program Speakers** on Bluebirds, Sandhill Cranes, Mountain Lions, and Wildlife Adventures! Along with workshops on everything from Photography to mealworms to engaging children in nature. **MOBS President Steve Garr will be presenting a NEW program titled "Bluebirds Day to Day and Season to Season"!** Come join the Missouri folks attending this special conference.
- **THE LOCATION!** This area is rated as one of the Top Ten Birding Hot Spots in the World! The largest concentration of Sandhill Cranes in the World (over 500,000)! Lots of Field trip options— **check it all out at: www.nnbe.org** and make your reservations EARLY! (The hotels in Kearney fill up very quickly at this time of year).

2012 SUMMER Missouri Bluebird Conference

July 13-15, 2012 Jefferson City, Missouri

The Conference Speaker Programs will be held on Sat. July 14th at the "Clydesdale Room" at N.H. Schepper's Distributing Company (2300 Saint Marys Blvd., Jefferson City, Mo 65109) We have four fantastic program speakers scheduled to present some new and interesting topics. See Page Six of this issue for more details!

Check the MOBS website often : www.missouribird.org and be looking for a Conference Registration Form in your Spring Edition of *The Fledgling*.



"Nest Box Challenges" Survey

Your participation would be greatly appreciated!

We did something similar to this in *The Fledgling* about four years ago, but thought it would be interesting to get some more current feed back. Please take a look at the simple survey below **and email your answers to : regina@birds-i-view.biz (Please put "MOBS Survey" in the subject line) or mail your answers to: MOBS/ PO Box 105830/ Jefferson City, MO 65110) Thanks! Regina (please be sure to list your name, address, county and phone number with your answers)**

1. What do you consider to be the greatest challenge in your nest boxes/ trail?
 - A. Cats
 - B. House Sparrows
 - C. Raccoons
 - D. Snakes
 - E. Ants
 - F. Vandals/human interference
 - G. Weather (heat, cold, rain, etc)
 - H. Other (please describe)
2. How many nest boxes do you monitor?
3. How frequently do you monitor your nest boxes during the season?



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- **Who is this Bird?** It is only 4.5 inches long, historically nested in southeastern Missouri, is considered a **"Primary Cavity-nester"** (excavates its own nest cavity), **AND...it is NOT a woodpecker! Who is it? See page 2 of this issue to find out!**
- **Get to know your Missouri Bluebird Society Board Members**— meet two of them in this issue
- **"Nest Box Challenges" Survey** for members— We want your opinion and input.
- **Four GREAT Speakers** for the Summer 2012 Missouri Bluebird Conference. Read about them here!