

Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania Honors Ken Knapp

Bluebirder of the Year, 2021

Three years ago, as part time employee of the Latodomi Nature Center in North Park, Allegheny County, **Ken Knapp** decided to locate, clean, fix, and register several hundred nestboxes that had been installed by various groups and individuals over many years. Two years ago, Ken recruited about 20 volunteers to monitor those boxes along with a number of new boxes. Each volunteer was trained and used their cell phones and laptops to report each week on the progress in each box. Last winter Ken and three volunteers built 100 new unique boxes designed with white plastic roof covers and slot openings. New mounting methods were developed and these boxes were installed and many of the older boxes were replaced and/or relocated to better bluebird territory. Fifty new monitors were recruited and trained. Of most importance was that every box was GPS located and received a unique QR code which allowed the monitors to instantly report the happenings of the past week. Ken took the leadership to find a student and develop the Google forms, etc. to make this online reporting possible. This student, Nithin Bhandari, [received a special award along with lots of media coverage for this accomplishment](#). A total of 385 nestboxes were coded and monitored this way. With the experience from the previous year helping to determine the best possible locations for boxes, additional boxes, and with better monitoring, the number of eggs and fledglings doubled in 2021. Nestboxes were also installed with HOA approval in my housing plan with the help of Ken, and in Riverview Park in Pittsburgh, and approval has been recently obtained to place boxes in two additional communities this winter. Plans are to build 100 additional nestboxes this winter to add to the total number, and more importantly to replace many of the very old nestboxes. Last month, Ken held a picnic and event for the monitors-the highlight was a visit and bluebird talk by Dean Rust. Dean is certainly aware of the significant leadership of Ken in making this Bluebird program here in Allegheny a huge success. Not only has Ken involved more than 50 people as monitors, but he is also the glue that has developed and held this ongoing program together. The boxes are very visible in the park, and hardly a day goes by that the Friends of North Park Facebook Page doesn't have some positive comments about the boxes. In addition to newspaper coverage, the program has been recognized by the Western PA Audubon Society and the Allegheny Land Trust.

I have worked closely with Ken over the entire time and can attest to his dedication to increasing the numbers and health of Bluebirds in our area. We became PA Master Naturalists together in 2018 and Master Birders in 2019. Ken is an inspiration to all of those fellow outdoors people he comes in contact with. While he is a part-time employee of the Nature Center, he puts in hundreds of hours of his personal time on this program.

Nominated by Ray Morris