

## 2024 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award

*As presented by Kimmie Whiteman at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 14, 2024.*

The John Thalheimer Volunteer Award has been presented annually since 1997. This award is dedicated to the first recipient, John Thalheimer, whose outstanding service to NH Audubon exemplified volunteer commitment, strengthened the organization, and provided an inspiring example for others.

I am honored to present the 2024 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award to Bob Krewson and Logan Young. Bob and Logan have been leading a bluebird monitoring community science project at the Massabesic Center since before 2010. When I say “leading,” I mean leading. Not only have they driven the data collection side of this project, but they’ve also built a dedicated volunteer community. Most importantly, they’ve made a significant impact on nesting success that has expanded beyond Eastern Bluebirds to other aerial insectivores.

Their passion for bluebirds and their commitment to New Hampshire Audubon was evident when I met them in the spring of 2021, during the pandemic closure. Despite limitations to data collection in 2020, Logan and Bob had continued to monitor the boxes for house sparrows and other impediments to nesting success and were eager not to miss a second year of data collection. Bob continued to secure funding and diligently filled me in on every aspect of the program almost immediately after I joined the team. Their enthusiasm was infectious! Before meeting and learning from them, I never realized just how much of a fanatic I am for aerial insectivores - tree swallows, in particular. They have stayed devoted to the data, the team, and the impact, as well as remaining patient and gracious as I have pushed to rebrand the bluebird titling into one that embraces the full story and scope of the project.

There is so much that goes into this project. I’d like to share a brief overview of what their dedication really looks like. Over the past 14 years or so, Bob and Logan have developed a streamlined process for recruitment and training of nest monitors. They facilitate an annual workshop for new recruits and the public, taking care to make sure their presentation and handouts reflect the most recent science. They engage in regular communication and support of their team for everything from identification, nest box repair, mitigation of parasites, predation prevention, poison ivy and wasp removal, to data entry and volunteer appreciation efforts. As a complementary team, they share in most of the work together but have also divided up their roles in a way that matches their strengths and their personalities.



*Logan Young (right) receiving NH Audubon’s 2024 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award from Kimmie Whiteman, on behalf of himself and Bob Krewson.*

*Photo by Zoe Dawson.*

Bob is meticulous about repairing and replacing boxes and baffles that need upkeep. He ensures monitoring kits are restocked and accessible for the volunteer team, replacing broken or missing items as needed, and updating maps for designated monitoring zones each year. Before his retirement, Bob also levied his professional role to secure annual grants from his employer, Eversource, to support maintenance needs.

Logan communicates with and encourages the volunteers throughout the season. In 2022, he initiated an official NestWatch Chapter based at Massabesic, which provides New Hampshire Audubon with educational resources and a network of experts who can offer advice and support. Logan immediately secured handouts for the center and engaged the forums for fresh ideas.

In early 2024, the three of us met with Senior Scientist Dr. Pam Hunt to pore over a decade's worth of data compiled by Logan into a detailed summary. We looked at visual map representations of different species' success rates based on location throughout the sanctuary, which took dozens of hours to compile. Analysis of this data enabled us to identify unsuccessful boxes and remove them before the new season began, which created less work for our volunteer team, and will hopefully have a positive impact on fledgling success rates this season. For context, we went down from about 90 boxes to 70.

During their tenure at the helm of Massabesic's NestWatch Project,

- 345 Eastern Bluebirds have fledged, an average of 23 birds per year.
- 1,100 Tree Swallows have fledged, an average of 74 birds per year.
- House Wrens are our third most common cavity nesters, but we've also seen chickadees, titmice, and others, including a surprise cowbird this past year.

This success, and the dataset, would not be possible without their leadership. Their involvement in developing educational exhibits to share this work is ongoing – we've only scratched the surface of the visitor impact of the nest boxes, but I don't have another 5 minutes up here – which only further exemplifies just how deserving they are of this award, and how much they embody the legacy of John Thalheimer.

On behalf of everyone at New Hampshire Audubon, and on behalf of the bluebirds, tree swallows, and other cavity nesters at Massabesic, I'd like to share our gratitude and joy for your volunteer efforts. I am proud to present Bob and Logan with the 2023 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award.

