



Western Bluebird with caterpillar. Photo provided by Wild Farm Alliance.

## SBALT NEWS

# Songbird Farm Trail: Supporting beneficial birds on working lands

By Karminder Brown

This month we're highlighting the work of a partner organization, the Watsonville-based Wild Farm Alliance (WFA), which helps farmers benefit from and support wild nature, while producing food.

Wild songbirds are indicators of a healthy, functioning ecosystem, providing pest control, pollination and seed dispersal. They can also keep rodents and pest birds at bay. The worldwide loss of billions of birds since 1970 due to various environmental factors, a well-documented crisis, has significantly impacted these no-cost natural allies to farms and farmers.

The installation of songbird nest boxes on farms to replace cavities that have been lost due to natural habitat destruction can increase the presence of beneficial birds, such as insectivorous Bluebirds, Swallows and Titmice. Farmers can help bring back songbirds and also benefit from avian pest control by providing places where birds can raise their young – a win-win for nature and agriculture.

WFA's Songbird Farm Trail project has the goal of one million nest boxes installed on farms from Baja to British Columbia along North America's Pacific Coast. SBALT Board Member and farmer Paul Hain has been doing his part by building and installing songbird nest boxes on farms in San Benito County, including

San Benito Agricultural



SBALT agricultural conservation easement properties and other local farms.

WFA will be tracking occupancy of bird boxes over time

to collect data about the changes in local bird populations in hopes that the Songbird Farm Trail will serve as a model that can be replicated on farmland throughout the US. Learn more about the project, including ways to get involved, at [bit.ly/SongbirdFarmTrail](https://bit.ly/SongbirdFarmTrail). ■



SBALT Vice President Paul Hain installing nest box as part of the Songbird Farm Trail. Photo by Julie Morris.