

Additional Information for potential NABS grant applicants

NABS typically gets email inquiries with detailed questions from potential applicants. Most often these inquiries revolve around the eligibility requirements for NABS grantees as well as questions about what kinds of projects might qualify for funding and/or the amount of support NABS might typically award for individual grants.

In a typically year, NABS receives 5 – 12 applications to our annual “request for proposals” (RFP) that appears in the summer issue of our quarterly journal, **Bluebird**, and on the NABS website. Most of these proposals are requesting support for small research projects (or for sub-sections of a larger research project) that are directed toward bluebirds or some other native cavity nesting species. Usually, these projects are designed to be conducted by a graduate student, post-doctoral students, or more rarely from junior faculty members or even advanced undergraduates working in the biology, zoology, or ecology departments of a university. The “rank” of the P.I. is of no consequence to NABS. The names of all projects, the applicants, and the university departments of those proposals selected for funding are described in the spring issue of **Bluebird** each year.

Typical examples of research grants would be proposals to study the effect of external factors such as nest parasites, supplemental feeding (e.g., mealworms) regimens, ambient perturbances (e.g., temperature, noise, or other factors) on nestbox productivity or fledgling success). Projects that employ scientific methods to examine features involved in bluebirding (e.g., nestbox design, monitoring approaches or predator control) would also qualify. In most cases however proposals describe studies that will employ state-of-the-art tools and methods in biochemistry and molecular biology along with the field studies. Studies employing the weighing and measuring body parts (body/wings) the sampling of feathers, blood, enzymes, or other biochemical/molecular/genetic analysis (DNA splicing, cloning, pcr etc.) features in the birds or fledglings are typical. Any procedures that involved the collection of blood or tissues from adult birds or nestlings must provide assurance that the methods for the collection of blood or tissues, or feather sampling on small wild birds are covered in detailed and verified protocols that ensure that proper (useful) samples are collected, and that these collections will not harm the parent birds or nestlings. The methods of analysis, including some detail on the anticipated numbers of birds required for the statistical approaches that will be used to analyze the results.

The grants are carefully evaluated by the NABS grants committee and each committee member scores every grant on set of criteria as how well it addresses the list of pre-defined categories. Some of the more important categories which we score grants on are: 1) do the goals of the project support the NABS mission?; 2) are the project objectives and the intended benefits of the project well described?; are the methods and procedures clearly explained?; 3) have all federal and state level permits been acquired, 4) have all protocols for the safety of the birds been assured, and 5) is the budget reasonable and justified? Sometimes NABS will offer the grantee less than the full amount requested.

Applicants will notice that NABS puts heavy emphasis on projects that help us address our core mission. It is worth pointing out that NABS core mission clearly states that our goal is to "...promote the recovery of bluebirds and other native cavity nesting species." Translated this means that NABS is in the business of growing the continental populations and expanding (as ecologically appropriate) the ranges of these species. This could lead to disconnects between the applicants and the NABS grants evaluation committee. For example, a P.I. might submit a proposal that seeks to examine the propensity of environmental stressors to disrupt telomere length homeostasis in bluebirds. Such a project may (or may not) be of interest to the NABS core mission. In any case, if that is the goal of the project it is incumbent on the applicant to convince the selection committee that the measure of telomere length would be a useful tool to support NABS in its mission.

As to the funds available. NABS spends about \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year on research grants (and often an approximately equal amount for education and conservation grants). Typically, from the applications we may fund 2 – 6 research grants on a typical year. Thus, the amount of money offered to the awardees for a NABS research grant ranges from \$500 to \$5,000 depending on the kind of grant or the needs of the project described in it..

In the last decade NABS has had increasing interest in education and conservation grants and we typically award grants in these categories as well. Education and conservation grants are generally one-of-a-kind proposals, and they are evaluated by either the Education Committee (education grants) or the Grants Committee (conservation grants). Examples of education or conservation grants awarded in the past can probably best provide a description of these grants.

Recently, for example, NABS awarded an education grant to support the writing, illustration, and graphic design of a 70-page book for entitled "Get to know

bluebirds: A guide for young nature lovers". A few years before that NABS offered an education grant to have a university biologist collect series of detailed photos taken of Eastern Bluebird nestlings at each day of their development. These photos in turn were eventually used to create the NABS newest Fact Sheet entitled "Eastern Bluebird Nestling Growth Chart".

Like education grants, NABS conservations grants are typically unique projects. Some examples help explain the concept. A few years ago, NABS awarded a conservation grant to a state wildlife organization to build nestboxes for setting up an Eastern Bluebird monitoring program. On another occasion NABS released a conservation grant to help support the re-establishment of Western Bluebirds to a part of British Columbia where they had become extirpated. The funds awarded for education and conservation grants depends on the needs and the importance of the project and could vary from less than \$1000 to ten times that amount.

NABS asks each awardee to send a short report on the results of their research efforts with the project is completed