Sialia

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Of
The North American
Bluebird Society

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Spring, 1979
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Sialia means bluebirds. Hence, the title of this journal. It is the word which the Swedish scientist, Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), used to name the genus grouping for bluebirds, a subset within the thrush family (Turdidae). Technically, Sialia is the Latinized, neuter plural version of the Greek word sialis, a noun meaning a “kind of bird.” Since the Eastern Bluebird was the first bluebird he classified, Linnaeus gave it the species name, sialis. Therefore, the scientific name for the Eastern Bluebird is Sialia sialis (pronounced see-owl-lee-ah, see-owl-iss). Similarly, the Western Bluebird and Mountain Bluebird, the two other species within the genus, were named Sialia mexicana and Sialia currucoides (cor-ruh-coy-dees) respectively, and their species names are descriptive of their locations. All three bluebirds are native only to the North American continent, although each inhabits different regions generally separated by the Rocky Mountains and by altitude preferences.

While the adult birds all show differing plumages, the young of all three species look remarkably alike, prominently displaying spotted breasts and large white eye rings. This similarity in plumage was the principal reason the SOCIETY chose the juvenile bluebird for its logo. Since bluebirds almost always choose to raise their young in small enclosed cavities, a young bluebird sitting near a nesting box seemed to symbolize our mission. The hope of any species resides in its young. Because of bluebird nesting preferences, the survival of their young may depend on the nesting box, especially since natural cavities, for a variety of reasons, are disappearing rapidly. The theme of bluebird young nurtured in man-made structures will be a recurring one in our art and literature. We hope this theme will remind all about the plight of the bluebirds, and will stimulate actions which will allow this beautiful creature to prosper.

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SIALIA welcomes the submission of articles, artwork, and photographs for publication. Manuscripts should be neatly typed and triple spaced. All submissions will be carefully considered, but authors considering major submissions should correspond with the editor first. All manuscripts will be acknowledged. Before preparing tables, graphs or other display material, please check with the editor about the requirements of our reproduction process. The editor's address is 9505 Good Lion Road, Columbia, MD 21045.
Where Do We Go From Here?

Robert M. Patterson

By the time you receive this second issue of SIALIA bluebirds will have returned to nesting territories throughout much of North America. Weather and other quirks of nature permitting, those persons who have been aiding bluebirds over the years will enjoy the fruits of their labors—bluebirds in greater numbers on their nesting box trails. You'll understand if those of us who spent the last few months at typewriters, licking stamps, stuffing envelopes and wrapping packages in the Society's service sneaked away for a few hours to enjoy the glorious sight and sound of Sialia sialis in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Much has been happening during these last weeks. Membership is nearing the 1,000 mark and still climbing. Many individuals and groups have joined the bluebird cause and are mounting their first nesting boxes this spring. Early members of the Society are spreading the word about bluebird conservation in sterling fashion, and we are on-target toward our goal of self-sufficiency—2,000 members by the end of our first year.

Work has already begun on a second slide program about plantings for wildlife, with special attention paid to the needs of bluebirds. Mr. & Mrs. George N. Grant of Canastota, NY have kindly volunteered to expand their fine collection of color slides of berry bearing shrubs and trees of the northeastern states, and to become the "producers" of this very important educational slide program. They can use your help. Good color slides showing shrubs and trees in full foliage, with close-ups of the fruit are needed from all areas of the continent, especially those areas where bluebirds spend the winter months. Information about cultivation, sources of supply for young plants (commercial nurseries and state agencies that distribute desirable plants) and tips about management are needed. We expect to develop this information into regular features in SIALIA, and there is also the possibility of preparing a booklet on the subject for broader distribution. If you would like to give George and Marilyn Grant a helping hand with this project, please drop them a line at RD #3, Box 153B, Canastota, NY 13032.

Another regular feature expected to for fall distribution. Several members have already contributed color slides that will help tell the bluebird story throughout the continent. More are still needed, especially scenes of bluebirds away from the nest.

Figure 3. Sample First Brood

1. Number of nesting boxes located in 1978 (first 35 days of May).
2. Number of nesting boxes last year.
3. How many nesting boxes were replacements, if any.
4. How many nesting boxes contained an egg during the 1979 first-brood period.
5. How many nesting boxes contained a first-brood period.
6. Of the number reported in the latter part of the 1979 first-brood period.
7. Of the number reported in the 1979 first-brood period.
8. Of the number reported during the 1979 first-

Sialia, Spring 1979
begin with the next issue of SIALIA is an article about nesting box construction and mounting tips. This will be a "how to" column, and will attempt to answer reader's questions. It will draw heavily upon the experience of our members, and share "secrets" of successful bluebird trail managers. The topic for the next issue will be "poles and posts: where to get them and how to use them. Many people have their favorite type of mounting arrangement or source for materials. Share them with us now so we can present an informative article for the benefit of other readers. Send your tips to Mounting Poles, Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906.

Membership Survey Results

With the winter issue, a four page membership interest survey was sent to 600 members. 121 returns (20%) were returned and tabulated. Six other returns submitted by officers and office volunteers were excluded from the tabulation so as not to influence the results of "unbiased" members.

About half the membership learned about the Society through direct mail efforts, and one-third were informed through a notice in some publication. Ninety members listed memberships in a total of 250 other conservation or birding organizations for an average of almost three such memberships per person. About 110 individual organizations were so listed with various Audubon chapters leading the way (about 73 members are in 64 different Audubon groups). Various ornithological societies, birdwatching and feeding groups (35 groups) accounted for 85 memberships. The remaining 22 groups ran the gamut from fish conservation to big-game wildlife, with the National Wildlife Federation claiming 26 members. Various garden clubs (10), The Nature Conservancy (7), The Wilderness Society and Sierra Clubs (5 each) and the National Rifle Association (2) were among the others.

Very few organizations that members belong to have existing bluebird programs in operation, but a number of garden clubs and Audubon societies report starting projects this year.

45 respondents indicated they occasionally give nature talks or slide shows and 58 (an amazing 50%), report willingness to serve on the Society's volunteer speaker's bureau. 38 of these persons are willing to travel upwards of 50 miles to talk about bluebirds with another 7 willing to go up to 100 miles. Our champion bluebird travelers included Clay Murray of North Carolina and C.D. Doezema of Michigan who listed 200 miles, and Dr. Richard Field of Mississippi and David Pitts of Tennessee who listed 250 miles as the distance they were willing to travel. Between the four of them, a good part of the Eastern Bluebird's range is take care of!

Table 1 gives the results of opinion expressed about the first issue of Sialia. Good marks were earned on all topics but readability (type size) and the quality of photographs. With this issue the type size is being enlarged for most of the text, and photographs will improve with practice. One problem with photos is that quite a bit of quality is lost when converting 35mm color slides to black and white prints.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Voting</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>A. Overall quality, design</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>B. Readability, type size</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>C. Thoroughness of articles</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>D. Technical level</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>E. Amount of material</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>F. Illustrations, photos</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We'll try to be more selective about this in the future.

Regarding advertising policy, 23 of 111 respondents (21%) indicated that advertising should be restricted to that of the Society. 88 persons or 79% of those answering the questions felt that other types of advertising should be permitted including books and other materials, 68 (61%); tours and field trips, 71 (64%); clothing and other products, 15, (13.5%). There were no comments that there should be no advertising permitted.

87 persons marked the box to indicate whether materials other than books and nesting boxes should be sold by the Society. The kinds of products desired in order of preference were: Stationery items, 75 (86%); badges, decals, 61 (70%); fine art prints, 52 (60%); ceramic decorator items, 33 (38%); ties, T-shirts, 30 (34.5%); jewelry, 28 (32%). In addition, there were 17 write-in suggestions with calendars, books and bumper stickers leading the list.

44 members cited a need for hand-out literature, with virtually all suggesting a simple fact sheet and nesting box plans. A packet of two color brochures and 25 plans sheets including details about habit and monitoring has been sent to all who requested the material.

66 individuals, a startling 54.5%, agreed to be interviewed for newspaper articles. As a result, a membership promotion campaign centered around Charter Members has been initiated, with members being sent a prepared press release and photograph for use by local newspapers. The Society will follow up with releases being sent to newspapers in areas where it does not presently have members.

About 15 persons offered the use of their colored slides to help create an extensive slide program about bluebirds, and slides have already been received, duplicated and sent back to several people. Additional color slides are still needed, especially scenes of bluebird adults and young away from the nest in feeding situations and in family groups. If you have such scenes on film, please write the Society with details.

55 individuals offered to contribute their services to the Society in one manner or another. This outpouring of volunteeringism is greatly appreciated by the totally volunteer staff of the Society and its journal. You won't have to wait long to be contacted!

There were 103 respondents who indicated they have already erected nesting boxes. A total of 104 trails were reported, with about 4,350 (average 42.5) nesting boxes being tallied. The size of the 104 trails were grouped as shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
<th>Number of Nesting Boxes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-200</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 200</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 103 trails mentioned above, 58 or 56% reported the number of nesting boxes would be increased during 1979 by a total of about 725 boxes. This is an increase of about 17% over the total number of 1978 boxes in the survey and averages about 12½ boxes per trail being enlarged this year. Interestingly, 8 persons not having a trail previously announced plans to mount 87 nesting boxes in 1979, also an average of 12½ boxes per new trail.

In addition, three individuals who avidly build and distribute nesting boxes through school groups and garden clubs reported having placed 3,400 boxes through these means during 1977 and 1978. They estimated that another 1,400+ nesting boxes would be distributed during 1979, mostly to individuals who would mount them on residential property and suburban golf courses.

Last, but not least is the report from Edinburg, Texas, where Mr. Charles R. Strong has a 66-box trail. Mr. Strong apologized for not being able to take part in the Society's bluebird population studies due to the fact that bluebirds simply don't nest along the lower Rio Grande valley where he is situated. He said that if bluebirds began nesting in his area he'd see to it that bluebird nesting boxes were put up right away. His nesting

The First Brood Nesting Box Committee is designed to measure the real condition of bluebird populations on nesting box projects, and also provide clues concerning the reproductive rates on a region-by-region basis. North America is a single large area, so the same group of birds must be considered for all nesting box reports sent in to the Society. The report period begins April 5, 1979, and runs through August 25, 1979, the final report will be sent to the Society by September 1, 1979.

For the purpose of this report, the attempt is deemed successful when the egg is laid, not when the nesting box is abandoned. If the report is not taken place, it will be considered a completion. Likewise, the report period begins the day the egg is laid until after the period it can not be considered a successful nesting box record and should be sent to the Society.

The only exceptions are when the female is found sitting on the eggs or on the nest. Building period, is it not considered successful if the nest is abandoned by the male.

To measure real population numbers, it is necessary to consider changes in the number of nesting boxes, management activities, and other factors that change the conditions of moving nesting boxes.
Have you heard about red problem.

It is about 2,000 licensed in the United States and issued only to qualified individuals and organizations. The master (where all records are stored and over which this number of master permits are allowed to sub-permit supervision. The master for the sub's actions and handling annual reports, records, and so forth is the individual or group responsible for competent supervision over requests, and the Bird has agreed to supply the address labels for all birds. A letter will be sent to those who cooperate with Society for their efforts to maintain and improve birding opportunities. Members if they feel they need to do so, can renew their permits at a cost of $25 to $50 each.

If you are interested in this field, you might want to consider joining the Society through membership. This will give you the opportunity to advance your understanding of birding and to contribute to the efforts of others in the field. The Society is always looking for new members to help with various projects and activities.

The North American Bluebird Society reserves the right to publish research resulting from the grants in SIALIA. Deadline for submission of applications is June 1, 1979. Awards will be made by the Society's board of directors for research projects recommended by the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Application forms may be obtained by writing the Committee's Chairman, Dr. Eugene S. Morton at 102 Bay Avenue, Severna Park, MD 21146.

The number and amount of research projects to be funded will depend upon the funds available for this purpose at the time of award-making. Members and friends of the Society are invited to make tax-deductible contributions to the Research Fund for the support of this work. Contributions should be marked "Research Fund" and mailed to Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906.

The authoritative book about one of our most beloved birds. Thoroughly done in a most readable fashion. Now in its 5th printing. Includes plans for making and erecting martin houses, and contains an excellent bibliography for those who wish to explore technical aspects of the martin's biology.

Photographs of birds, their eggs and step-by-step drawings of houses they will use. Summer nesting range information, and full-page photographs by leading wildlife photographers. Cover photograph of a Western Bluebird in color by Hubert Prescott.

Please Use Order Form
NESTING BOX TRAILS ON

George A. Hurst, Randall C. Warren and Melvin Y. Grant

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Mississippi State University

The Eastern Bluebird is a very popular species, but its numbers have markedly declined in the last 50 years. The decline has been brought about by various factors, but the loss of nesting cavities and competition from House Sparrows and Starlings are thought to be most important (Zeleny 1978).

The South is the "wood basket" of the United States and about one million acres per year are being prepared for planting of pine trees (Mann 1975). About 30 million acres of mixed pine-hardwood forests in the South will be converted to pine forests in the future (Walstad 1976). Intensive forest management, including clear-cutting, site preparation and planting of pine seedlings, is a widely accepted practice in the South.

Most site preparation methods such as discing, bedding or tree-crushing remove all the vegetation from a tract, therefore eliminating all natural cavities (Pinkowski 1976). Less labor-intensive methods such as mist-blowing (applying a fine spray of herbicide) and/or tree injection (direct application of herbicide into a tree), or just burning, leave dead trees containing cavities (Connor and Adkisson 1974, Perkins 1973). Clear-cutting combined with site preparation techniques promotes early stages of plant succession. The first-stage grass/herb plant community should be suitable habitat for several years for bluebirds. Over time, as forested areas are harvested and regenerated under management programs, as much as five million acres of pine production areas will be available for exploitation by bluebirds and bluebird conservationists.

Bluebird nesting box trails placed on pine plantations offer the opportunity to increase bluebird populations in the South, in areas that are expected to remain primarily agricultural and forest management zones. These areas have relatively low populations of Starlings and House Sparrows, diminishing the prospects of competition for nesting cavities by these two foreign competitors. This article describes the early results of the box with small amour increase the rate of use within distance away. At all times, any affect whatsoever on the

24. Banding data. This is a record required by the Laboratory, USFWS, or the Wildlife Service. Only live banders or persons whose direction may band bluebirds desired to assist in the So studies, and to allow a quick the Society receives informa bluebirds.

25. Monitoring Entries. O per season unless the exceeds the number of fine not use separate forms for broods, but continue list interruption.

26. Try to keep entries as using numeric listings in the whenever possible. How reporting findings for which t code. Everything noted is sample form for guidance.

(Continued from page 79)

should, of course, have a f- bird identification and dis area. Knowledge of bird se the most crucial factor as spent at each stop means recorded on the BBS are he. Severe hearing deficiency or advanced age or medical disorder render the results of a reportedly placed end or inability to hear can yield results.

Generally, state and pro- tors find qualified people to the BBS office. A qualified contact the BBS office dire a route is available with distance. A person of unce want to ask about routes a nearby on which it is possible for the observer. Interested pro category are encouraged to the Nongame Section, Migrat Habitat Research Labo Maryland 20811.

Sialis, Spring 1979

Volume 1, Number 2
nests and nesting box use by bluebirds on two young pine plantations.

Study Areas

Two clearcut areas located in Oktibbeha County, Mississippi were investigated. Area I is about one mile west of Longview, and within a 160-acre clearcut area, about 38 acres were managed for bluebirds. Area II is about three miles south of Longview, and within that 160-acre clearcut, about 52 acres were managed for bluebirds. Both areas are in the Interior Flatwoods Region of the Hilly Coastal Plain Province (Hodgkins et al. 1976). The Interior Flatwoods are flat, poorly drained, mostly forested, and have clay-acid soils. Annual precipitation averages 50-60 inches and the frost-free period is 200-230 days (Pettry 1977).

Both areas had about 50-year-old mixed pine-hardwood forests before clear-cutting occurred in the summer and fall of 1976. All sawtimber and pulpwood was removed and the areas were site pre pared. All other plant material was sheared, raked into windrows, and burned. Then the areas were bedded, a process that forms parallel rows of elevated mounds about 14 inches high. The areas resembled plowed agricultural fields. Loblolly pine, Pinus palustris, seedlings were hand-planted, with a spacing of seven by eight feet in late March 1977. Uncut mixed pine-hardwood forests surrounded both study areas.

Methods

Wood nesting boxes of seven different sizes and with three different sizes of entrance holes were placed on the young pine plantations. Nesting box dimensions were taken from Grussing (1977). Nesting

**Editor’s Note:** The study areas are in northeastern Mississippi in region number four as mapped by Mr. Bystrak on page 76. The designation used by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is “Upper Coastal Plain.”
containers made from one-gallon milk jugs were also placed on the areas using plans described by Stewart (1976).

Five rows of nesting boxes, each row having nine boxes or jugs, were mounted in each study area in mid-March, 1977. The nesting box dimensions and number per area are presented in Table 1. The wood boxes were made of weathered, untreated sweetgum boards about one inch thick. The jugs were painted black to darken the inside, and received a second coat of white paint to reflect solar heat. The wooden boxes were not painted. The boxes were attached to seven-foot-long cresswooded posts, about 3 1/2 inches in diameter. The posts were driven into the ground about two feet. The plastic jugs were wired to 1 x 2" stakes which were driven into the ground so that the entrance hole was about five feet from the ground. Creosote was poured down the posts and stakes so as to saturate the posts, stakes and ground around the posts or stakes as a means of deterring snakes. No snake predation was noted during the study period. No nesting material was placed in the nesting boxes by the investigators.

The nesting boxes were placed midway between the burned windrows. The distance between rows of boxes was about 180 feet, and the distance between boxes within each row was also about 180 feet. For a diagramatic layout of the study areas, see Figures 1 & 2.

The nesting boxes were visited periodically in the early morning or late evening from mid-March through September. They were monitored by lifting birds into the front panel in 1977, and by peering through the entrance hole with the aid of a penlight in 1978. No adults or nestlings were handled. In 1977, visits averaged every 14.8 days in Area I and every 17.4 days in Area II. In 1978, the average time between visits was decreased to 8.5 days (Area I) and 9.7 days (Area II).

The boxes or jugs were repaired or replaced as needed. The boxes were cleaned of all nesting material between the 1977 and 1978 nesting seasons. However, nest material was not removed during the nesting season. Wasps and their nests were sprayed and removed when encountered (Zeleny 1976).

Results

Only bluebirds used the nesting boxes or jugs during the study period. Six nests produced 22 young on Area I and seven nests produced 28 young on Area II in 1977. In 1978, Area I had five nests producing 21 young, and Area II had nine nests that produced 36 young. Average clutch size was 4.2 (1977) and 4.6 (1978) for Area I and 4.2 in both years for Area II. Average fledging rate varied from 3.7 to 4.2 per successful nest. In 1977, three nests with a total of 12 eggs were abandoned in late June and July. Two nests

### Table 1. Number and type of nesting boxes placed on pine plantations and the number used by bluebirds during 1977 and 1978. All measurements are in inches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nesting Box</th>
<th>No. of Boxes Placed</th>
<th>No. of Boxes Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gallon Jug, 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x 4 x 8, 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x 4 x 8, 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 x 4 x 10, 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 x 5 x 8, 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 x 5 x 8, 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 x 6 x 15, 1/2&quot;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 x 6 x 15, 2&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals | 45 | 45 | 45 | 44 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 9 |
The degree equivalents of compass points are:

- 337.5 to 22.5
- 22.5 to 67.5
- 67.5 to 112.5
- 112.5 to 157.5
- 157.5 to 202.5
- 202.5 to 247.5
- 247.5 to 292.5
- 292.5 to 337.5

Large Shrub. This should be from the entrance hole to their first flight. It is then the nesting box toward worrying about compass

Top of Eggs. Be gentle as measurements cannot be made, simply leave this area alone. It is important in the effectiveness of certain nesting devices such as poison and rackets. In other measurements, use a carpenter's rule, metal not cloth or paper which shrink and stretch and perform work. Measurements (say 5") belong in the this case, 5" to 6".

Supposition about what the hole is needed to, not how it is used, supposition will be helpful in control methods.

But protective devices is found in the book "The Some other device, please"

about other types of ground to be effective effectiveness after being determined.

MENTAL METHOD of the investigators add hot on posts & pipes. Moth (benzene and napthalene) is difficult, but little is known to the birds if vapor is lost. Research into mammal control should be cautious procedures, to the rate of use of crystals applied to the ground Data should be kept from rainfall, and any other material to use or destroy the crystals. Coherence with this material, limited amounts of the from the nesting box. If obtained, move closer to

that fledged bluebirds also contained a total of three infertile eggs on Area I. Area II did not have any nest desertions, and only one infertile egg was found. No abandoned nests or infertile eggs were noted in 1978.

In 1978 three boxes were used twice and one was used three times. Apparently the same pair used the same nest three times producing a total of 12 young (5-4-3) The limited field observations and pattern of box use indicated there were four pairs of bluebirds in 1977 and two pairs in 1978 on Area I, Area II appeared to have three pairs in 1977 and four pairs in 1978.

Bluebirds were seen on the Areas in winter. Nesting began in early to mid-April on both areas in 1977 and 1978, and ended in late July (1977) and early August (1978) on Area I. The last bluebirds fledged on September 26, 1977 and September 1, 1978 on Area II. No loss of eggs or nestlings was detected, however, actual fledging was not observed. If fledging was due on a certain date and the nest was found empty, we assumed fledging had successfully occurred.

Most nests were constructed of pine needles, but some small roots and a little grass was used. One nest was made entirely of small roots. Raccoons were seen on the Areas. Nest competitors such as House Sparrows and Starlings were not seen.

Discussion

The facts that most nesting boxes were placed less than 60 yards apart, and that many had entrance holes of only 1/4" diameter, may have reduced the rate of use by bluebirds. However, if the assumed number of pairs of bluebirds is accurate, the density of use of the Areas in terms of territory size may have been about 9.5 acres per pair for Area I and about 13 acres per pair for Area II. These densities fall near the maximum experienced by many nesting box trails and may indicate near-maximum exploitation of the food resources available. Also, the tendency of the bluebirds to use nesting boxes at or near the perimeter of the Areas would seem to support this theory. The nesting boxes have been moved farther apart and more entrance holes have been bored to 1/4" diameter. Perhaps they will use more of the centrally located boxes as revegetation and food resources increase on the pine plantations.

The total lack of competitors might be due to the fact that the areas were essentially forested, a condition not conducive to House Sparrows or Starlings. However, House Wrens, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and woodpeckers were present on the study areas prior to clearcutting, and remained present in the adjacent woodland through the study period.
extremely open area after clear-cutting may not have been to the liking of these species and the distance of about 50 feet from the woodland to the closest nesting boxes may also have been a factor involved.

Young pine plantations can be productive areas for bluebirds. It is not known how long the plantations will be attractive to the Eastern Bluebird in the South. Probably when the pine trees become large enough to achieve a closed canopy, perhaps five to eight years after replanting, the areas will no longer be used. At this point in time, perhaps even for a few years leading up to this time, it may be well for the nesting box trail operator to begin moving nesting boxes to newly-cleared areas nearby. Thus, as man continually reaps the forest products he needs, homes for bluebirds can be sown within the continually productive pine plantations. This study will be expanded and expanded to determine how long bluebirds will use nesting boxes on these plantations.

The early stages of plant succession found on clearcuts certainly produce enough insects for bluebirds to successfully rear young (Hurst 1972). The young pine plantations also produce various types of plants producing fruit eaten by bluebirds. Bluebirds were seen eating pokeweed (Phytolacca americana) in late summer and American beauty-berry (Callicarpa americana) in October. The nesting boxes might also prove to be valuable as roosting boxes in winter (Zeleny 1977).

Land upon which to erect bluebird nesting boxes is virtually unlimited. Young pine plantations will be present in the South in ever-increasing total acreage. The forest industry will gladly permit nesting boxes to be placed on its land, in most cases will supply nesting box materials. If the early results of this study (a breeding density of about one pair of bluebirds per 10-15 acres) could be repeated on young pine plantations throughout the South, the five million acres roughly mentioned might be capable of producing 30 million young bluebirds each nesting season. If, as the authors believe, improvement in management techniques results in greater bluebird production, then the total acreage might play an even greater role in the recovery of the dwindling population of Eastern Bluebirds.

One way to test this hypothesis is for bluebird conservationists to begin making Clearcut Bluebird Nesting Box Trails.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Weyerhaeuser Company for their financial support, and Mr. Ben F. Hilburn for allowing us to

2. Nesting Box Number. The numbering of boxes follows a convention established by the trail monitor; the Trail Number is followed by a Box Number. The box number is determined by the elevation of the site. If a site is located between 1000 and 2999 feet above sea level, the box number will be a two-digit number; if it is located between 3000 and 4999 feet, the box number will be a three-digit number; and if it is located between 5000 and 6999 feet, the box number will be a four-digit number. In all cases, the box number should begin with the letter B (for Bluebird). For example, if a site is located at 1234 feet above sea level and a box is placed there, the box number would be B1234.

Figure 2. Study Area TI, Okiehoma, Miss. Legends as in Fig. 1. All of land to the right (west) was more young pine plantation, then forest. North is toward bottom of diagram.
use his property. We also thank Foster Dickard and Timothy Willis for their help.

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Both the Western Bluebird and the Mountain Bluebird occur in the Pacific Northwest, the former being found generally throughout this region while the latter, except for occasional strays, keeps to the east side of the Cascade Range.

Drastic declines of both bluebird species have occurred during the last thirty or more years in certain of the major agricultural valleys of the Pacific Northwest, notably the Western Bluebird in the Okanogan Valley of British Columbia, the Mountain Bluebird in the Spokane Valley of Washington, and the Western Bluebird in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. This report is limited to an examination of the setting of the severe decline of the Western Bluebird in the locality of the writer's most intimate acquaintance, the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

The Willamette River from Eugene where the valley bearing its name begins, flows 150 miles north as a calm placer stream until it empties into the Columbia River about ten miles north of the city of Portland. The only place where this stretch of the River deviates from its tranquil character is a short distance south of Portland where it crosses over an escarpment down to upper tidewater level forty-one feet below. It then resumes its unruffled demeanor for the rest of its journey as though nothing unusual had happened.

The Snake River, originating in Wyoming's Yellowstone Park, and Oregon's Willamette River are the two major tributaries of the Columbia. Beginning in the late 1800's and continuing into the 1920's, paddle-wheel steamboats used to ply the Willamette River on a regular schedule between Portland and Salem, about midway up the Valley, negotiating the falls by means of a canal and navigation locks. Occasionally small shallow draft paddle-wheelers went as far as Eugene at the southern extremity of the Valley. This was possible, however, only after a freshet had temporarily raised the upper river level sufficient for the occasion.

The Willamette Valley is sandwiched between two parallel mountain ranges, both extending in a north-south direction as does the Valley itself. It is bordered on the west by the foothills of the relatively low Coast Range; the main axis of which is about twenty miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. Mary's Peak, with an

Like drifts of lardy snow,
On leafless branches,
The cherry blossoms
That May has brought.

On banks which face the sun,
Still shy in pretty dyes,
White violets have been put
To look about:

Along the meadows
New grass has just burst
And on the hawthorns
Rose hides the green:

Sunshine lies warm
Cloud shadows tidy
Light cups, for dew
Wind-flowers lift:

Oh, sweet, fresh world
A bluebird flashes by
And singing joy is flung
Through all the sky.

Margaret Druke

Published in Bird, Houghton, Mifflin.

Hubert W. Prescott
The elevation of 4097 feet is the range's highest point. On its east side the Valley is bordered by the foothills of the much higher Cascade range, the main axis of which is about 100 miles inland. The Cascade Range, directly east of the Willamette Valley, as well as along its entire length, is distinguished by peaks of dormant volcanoes, the more conspicuous ranging in elevation from around 8,000 to over 11,000 feet.

The Cascade Range divides Oregon both geographically and climatically into two distinct segments. These include a western third, locally referred to as "western Oregon" which includes the Willamette Valley; and the remaining two-thirds of the state, locally referred to as "eastern Oregon." These terms will be employed hereafter in this paper in reference to these two areas.

The proximity of the Pacific Ocean has a moderating influence on both winter and summer temperatures of western Oregon which of course includes the Willamette Valley. The prevailing southwest winds as well as the warm Japanese Current, which flows close to Oregon's west coast, tend to accentuate this moderating influence. Distance and the intercepting Cascade Range, however, deprive eastern Oregon of these moderating influences with the result that this large segment of the state undergoes greater extremes of both summer heat and winter cold.

Further contributing to eastern Oregon's winter cold is the fact that a large percentage of its terrain is high plateau averaging about 4,000 feet in elevation. By contrast the Willamette Valley at its highest southern extremity at Eugene is only 422 feet in elevation and at its northern portion near Portland only 76 feet. The Valley from Eugene to Portland is 112 miles long and the river, excluding its 41 foot plunge at Willamette Falls by Oregon City, drops an average of two and seven-tenths feet per mile during its journey down the length of the Valley.

In addition to the climatic influences above cited the Cascade Range causes rain or snow bearing clouds coming in from the southwest to precipitate more heavily in the Willamette Valley and other areas west of the Cascade divide than in eastern Oregon. Average annual precipitation for the Willamette Valley is around 46 inches. This is several times the average amount of precipitation received by eastern Oregon which varies by locality, but ranges somewhere between eight and twelve inches. Reflecting these climatic differences, western Oregon tends to be humid and highly verdant. Excluding the Blue Mountain area of Oregon's northeast quadrant eastern Oregon tends to be arid or semi-arid. Thus Oregon's general reputation as a wet state did not derive from people who have traveled widely over its varied landscape.

Another major boon that the Cascade Range confers upon the Willamette Valley in particular, and also to a lesser degree to some contiguous areas on the east side of this range is an abundance of spring and summer melt-water from the winter's accumulated snowpack and from glaciers on several of the major peaks. This melt-water feeds down into many major tributary streams during the drier months of the year when it is most needed, both for irrigation and to firm up hydroelectric power.

The 135-mile-long Willamette Valley averages about 25 miles wide from the foothills of the Coast Range to those of the Cascades, but all of this is not by any means of true valley character as commonly conceived. For instance, the River runs through the very heart of Portland. For that reason, demographers and census takers, as well as the general public, consider Portland as within the Willamette Valley. Yet the true bottom lands the city impinges upon are those of the Columbia River some of which the city's extreme eastern limits include. Yet the general aspect of the Portland area, from the low undulating hills on the east side of the Willamette to the high broken hills of much of the west side, is suggestive of anything but valley type terrain. So it is for about twenty-five miles of the river's lower course from Aurora through Portland. In addition the approximate northern half of the Valley is interrupted by several intrusions of hills and mini-mountain chains. One of the more pronounced of these is the fourteen-mile-long Chehalem Mountain which attains an elevation of 1600 feet at its highest point and, like many of the others, affords a grand view of snow capped mountain peaks in the distance and the surrounding

Sialia, Spring 1979
Volume 1, Number 2
valley flatlands below. In two places the Willamette Valley flats are almost completely bisected by these hilly intrusions.

Many extensive flatlands do occur along the course of the River, however, some giving an unobstructed view over a twenty-five mile expanse, all the way from the Coast Range foothills to those of the Cascades.

The wealth of the Willamette Valley, in terms of both resources and opportunity for a livelihood, is underscored by the fact that, although it contains less than one-twentieth of Oregon's total land area, it has more than three-fourths of Oregon's population. Eight out of twelve of Oregon's largest towns and cities are within the Willamette Valley with Portland at the extreme north and being the largest with an incorporated population of 375,000. It is, however, the nucleus of a metropolitan area of more than a million inhabitants. At the south end of the Valley are Eugene and Springfield, separately incorporated but grown together as one physical unit, with a combined population of 129,000. Halfway down the length of the Valley is Salem, Oregon's capital and third largest city with a population of 76,000.

The Willamette Valley, with its rich alluvial soils and water availability became transformed over the decades from a rustic rural landscape in which farming, the dominant activity, was largely limited to the raising of wheat and livestock. The change was to a highly intensified and greatly diversified farm practice in which physical manpower and horsepower were displaced by increasing mechanization. The interaction of several factors brought about this change. Among these were a continuing increase in population and transportation facilities, a burgeoning demand for farm produce, and a consequent expansion of markets from local, to national, to international. Permeating this amalgam was the introduction of a continuing flood of innovative farming techniques in such categories as plant genetics, chemical fertilizers, pest control, and numerous others. Giving impetus to this general trend were two world wars and their aftermaths. Following the second world war our nation was described as "the bread-basket of the world." The above picture of course is familiar to all no matter from what part of the country they hail.

One result in the Willamette Valley, derived from this revolution in farming methods, was that the stick of escalating costs in farm operation, combined with the carrot of escalating prices offered for farm produce, caused farmers to reduce greatly the proportion of their acreage in pasture and idle land in order to gain more acreage for production of farm crops. New irrigation techniques assisted this process, becoming economically feasible when, beginning around 1940 cheap hydroelectric power from the new Bonneville power system became increasingly available. Electric powered water pumps then came into widespread use for the first time in the Valley, making possible the irritation of large expanses of farmland to augment the production of farm crops.

The final result of all the above innovations is that Willamette Valley farmers have now lost most of their former pastoral aspect and have come to take on more of the semblance of highly mechanized, if not computerized, industries. Farm produce is now highly diversified. Large food processing plants have sprung up throughout the length of the Valley, as have large retail farm implement outlets. Following these many less farm-related industries have sprung up in the Valley. Willamette Valley farms now go in for, among other things, large acreages of row crops such as sweet corn, potatoes, broccoli, and beans. Berry crops, including strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries also play an important role. There are also large acreages of such items as cucumbers, squash, and mint. Nut and fruit orchards are a conspicuous aspect of some parts of the Willamette Valley landscape. These include especially cherries, prunes, walnuts, and filberts. The Willamette Valley has put Oregon at the top as one of the leading states of the nation in the production of vetch and grass seed.

But the metamorphosis of Willamette Valley farming to its present phase has had its side effects. In addition to vast reductions in pasture and idle land acreages there was the riddance of a major proportion of the grand old cavity-bearing oaks and broad-leaf maples that

in these areas would be met in others.

Birds are constantly at the edge of their normal ranges, and in many cases need are preludes to legitimate range extension. The BBS is an excellent taxon for monitoring both the increases in range that are occurring and the decreases of both species. As an example of these, though probably not a complete one, the spread of the breeding range (Fig. 6) of Barn Swallows over the entire Southeast, the House Finch, and the House Wren, are spreading rapidly. As a result of these increases, both species. As an example of these, though probably not a complete one, the spread of the breeding range (Fig. 6) of Barn Swallows over the entire Southeast, the House Finch, and the House Wren, are spreading rapidly. As a result of these increases, both species.

Population changes within such a state or group of states or a region can be determined from population trends for larger areas. Consequently, bird enthusiasts in the Midwest who, observations were down drastically in 1966 and 1973, progressed south. This expansion is common to most species, probably result in Barn Swallows and other species over the entire Southeast.

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### WARREN COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

#### BLUEBIRD NESTING BOX DATA

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**FIRST NESTING**

**TOTALS:**

- **2,467** boxes
- **11,336** occupied
- **9,489** eggs
- **8,585** young
- **3,48** fledging

**SECOND NESTING**

**TOTALS:**

- **1,393** boxes
- **5,684** occupied
- **4,573** eggs
- **4,150** young
- **2,98** fledging

**AVERAGE:**

- **4.6** boxes
- **3.84** occupied
- **3.48** eggs
- **3.28** young
- **2.98** fledging
formerly graced farm lands, and which old-time farmers didn’t mind farming around. By now there is too much at stake in the money invested in modern-day farming to allow these nostalgic symbols of yesteryear to stand in the way of the plow, the planter, the windrower, or the harvester. The pathetic few old oaks still seen standing along some driveways, fence lines, roadsides, and around farmstead buildings bear mute testimony to the fact of their one-time prevalence on the large expanses of open farm acreages themselves. Such is the face of progress.

With the swallows it doesn’t matter because they catch all of their food out of the vast undiminished spaces of the open air. But with the bluebirds it is different. They have a specialized prey-hunting technique. This is to perch on some elevated object — a post, a tree limb, or an electric wire, and scan the ground below for movement. When an insect or other savory arthropod reveals its presence by movement, the bluebird swoops down to effect the capture. This technique requires a short or sparse vegetative ground cover for good bluebird foraging habitat, particularly when a nestful of hungry young necessitates a high prey capture rate.

The factor of safety and economy of time do not allow the parent bluebird to fly much more than three or four hundred feet from its nest cavity in search of food for its young. With the great reduction in pasture and idle land acreage, as well as the elimination of a preponderance of the old cavity-bearing trees in the process of Willamette Valley farm modernization, it would be a rare coincidence indeed to find a suitable nest cavity in close proximity to good bluebird foraging ground. This is why the reversal of the bluebird decline while there are still some bluebirds left requires the searching out of good bluebird foraging terrain and the placement of nest boxes relatively close to it.

In the vast expanses of the Willamette Valley plains the Western Bluebird now seems to be absolutely missing except for the possibility of occasional transients. So far the only “Valley” bluebirds we have seen or heard in several years of intensive work with them were in the hilly areas surrounding or intruding into the valley.

Testimony of old inhabitants of the Valley plains leaves little doubt, however, that in their younger days the bluebirds were fairly prevalent throughout the Valley as a whole.

Now most of our efforts have been directed toward saving the bluebird population remnants in the Valley’s hills where evidence of their decline, and in some cases actual disappearance, has been reliably recorded in fairly recent times. In this effort, by comparison with bluebird programs in parts of the East, we have both an advantage and a disadvantage. Our advantage is that in these parts snakes enter nest boxes with such extreme rarity as to be considered no problem. I know of only one instance of a snake being found in a nest box since 1973 when bluebird nest box projects were first started in the Willamette Valley. This fact allows us to mount our nest boxes on wooden fence posts, poles, and tree trunks without fear of snake predation. Our disadvantage is that we have two species of cavity-nesting swallows, the Tree Swallow and the Violet-Green Swallow, that usurp a higher percentage of our nest boxes than all other avian nest box competitors combined. This, of course, would not be the case if the problem of Starling usurpation were not already solved and that of House Sparrow usurpation greatly mitigated by placement of nest boxes as far as possible from man’s sparrow infested buildings. Even so the swallows are quite a problem. Our records show that for every five of our nest boxes occupied by bluebirds, three are occupied by swallows. This fact alone would not be so bad, but the swallows do not just take over empty nest boxes. Though considerably smaller than the bluebirds by weight they are able without engaging in direct physical combat to cause the bluebirds to give up their nests, even when these contain bluebird eggs and young. The process by which the bluebirds achieve this result is not entirely understood and is but one of several puzzling aspects relating to these interesting birds.

The very abundance of the swallows is a mystery. Both the Tree Swallows and the Violet-Greens seem to be several times more numerous all throughout the

(Continued on page 81)
MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS IN NORTHEAST OREGON

NATURAL NESTING SITES INVESTIGATED

D.C. McCluskey

Bureau of Land Management
Salt Lake City, Utah

This paper reports on some incidental data collected on nest site selection by Mountain Bluebirds in Union and Wallowa Counties, Oregon, during the spring and summer of 1974 and 1975. Bluebird nest sites were located by searching areas where bluebird activity was observed. In all cases, this was along the forest-grassland edge of the mixed conifer forest type as described by Franklin and Dyrness (1973).

A total of 25 natural nest sites were located during the two breeding seasons. Of these, 18 (75%) were located in trees while seven (25%) were located in man-made structures such as out-buildings, stone fence supports (rock jacks) and storage boxes. No bluebird nesting boxes were involved in the study.

Tree species selected as nesting sites included Ponderosa Pine, Pinus ponderosa (13), Grand Fir, Abies grandis (4), and Douglas Fir, Pseudotsuga menziesii (1). All nests located in trees were found along the forest-grassland edge or in single-standing trees in natural openings. No nests were located in tree stands with a canopy cover greater than 40% nor more than 49 feet from a natural opening 1.3 acres in size or larger.

Ground vegetation surrounding each nest site was categorized into one of two types, arid or moist. Arid sites were characterized as having shorter vegetation with considerable spacing between individual plants. Moist sites characteristically had tall grasses with very little space between plants. Of all nest sites investigated, all were located in arid areas.

Bluebirds generally nested in dead trees. Eleven of 18 nests were in dead trees while six of the seven nests in live trees were located in dead branches of those trees. Closer examination showed the dead portion of the tree was caused by porcupine girdling near the crown of the tree (the tree bark is eaten by the porcupine, especially the inner bark—see Lawrence et al. 1961).

14 of the 18 tree cavities were excavated by woodpeckers. Physical evidence such as cavity and entrance hole size indicated that 13 of the 14 cavities were created by Common Flickers (Jackman 1974).

Physical characteristics of individual nest trees is reported in Table 1. The average diameter at breast height (DBH) of both live and dead trees was 17 inches. A majority (78%) of the nests was located in trees of 12-inch DBH or larger.

Cavity height was generally higher than reported by Headstrom (1970), but coincided closely with reports by Jackman (1974) and Taylor (1969). The average cavity height for nests in trees was almost 19 feet, while nests located in man-made
structures were generally lower, averaging about 9½ feet (Table 2).

Discussion

Mountain Bluebirds in northeast Oregon are dependent, to a large degree, on excavators such as woodpeckers for their nesting cavities. Where cavities are either lacking or in insufficient supply, there is evidence that indicates that bluebirds will utilize man-made structures providing they are located in suitable habitats and have not been usurped by more aggressive species such as Starlings and House Sparrows.

Mountain Bluebirds may prefer to nest in Ponderosa Pine snags, however this indicated preference is probably a function of relative abundance of this tree species along the forest-grassland edges, than to a preference by Common Flickers for Ponderosa Pine for nest sites. Because of the wide variability in diameter of nest trees, it appears that tree size is of little significance to bluebirds.

In order to maintain or improve populations of Mountain Bluebirds in this area, it is necessary that forest management practices be altered to enhance nesting opportunities for primary cavity excavators such as woodpeckers. For bluebirds, it is particularly important that dead trees be left standing along forest-grassland edges. Forest management practices which provide suitable habitat conditions for primary excavators, will simultaneously benefit secondary cavity users such as Mountain Bluebirds.

Acknowledgements

Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Jack Ward Thomas, U.S. Forest Service Range and Wildlife Habitat Laboratory, La Grande, Oregon, for his support of the research and review of the manuscript.

This work was carried out as part of a grant from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service Region 6 to monitor impacts of DDT spray on cavity nesting birds. Work was

(Continued on page 62)

Coverage was expanded to include Plains states and provinces in recent years, with up to a level of approx. 50 routes per year.

Methods

In order to apply statistical analysis, the data to be analyzed must be gathered in accordance with standardized procedures. Probably most importantly, that there be no biases in habitats should be represented in the occurrence of North American birding areas not be over-sampled. Random routes before-hand is the best way to average out local variability and reduce the effects of sampling error. Other obvious requirements are consistent sampling methods, observer expertise and in some cases changes. The Breeding Bird Survey is the most comprehensive method established with all of these requirements.

A sampling scheme based

Table 1. Physical characteristics of natural nest sites used by Mountain Bluebirds in Union and Wallowa Counties, Oregon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Species</th>
<th>DBH (inches)</th>
<th>Tree Height (feet)</th>
<th>Nest Height (feet)</th>
<th>Percent of Bark Present</th>
<th>Tree Condition (alive/dead)</th>
<th>Excavator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ponderosa Pine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>WP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
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Grand Fir

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<tr>
<th>Tree Species</th>
<th>DBH (inches)</th>
<th>Tree Height (feet)</th>
<th>Nest Height (feet)</th>
<th>Percent of Bark Present</th>
<th>Tree Condition (alive/dead)</th>
<th>Excavator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>WP</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Douglas Fir

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Species</th>
<th>DBH (inches)</th>
<th>Tree Height (feet)</th>
<th>Nest Height (feet)</th>
<th>Percent of Bark Present</th>
<th>Tree Condition (alive/dead)</th>
<th>Excavator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>WP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sialia, Spring 1979
BLUEBIRD TALES

Mary D. Janetatos

When the North American Bluebird Society came into existence, numerous people across the continent had been working for years on behalf of the bluebirds. Most of these joined their resources with the new Society and became the backbone of this new conservation organization. For these people, working for bluebirds has long been a labor of love. As space permits in each issue, their stories will be told.

Some reports given at the First Annual Meeting were not included due to limited space in the article on the meeting in the last issue. Pat Soehnlan and Pauline Wasserman reported on the devastation of bluebirds during the past two winters in the Navarre, Ohio region. Richard Tuttle told of his Nature Center work near Delaware, Ohio. Richard’s “bluebirding” was also the subject of a story in the new publication “Bird Watchers Digest”, January-February ’79 issue. Tom and Joe Tait, the twins who work together for bluebirds while off duty from their Washington, D.C. firefighting and rescue jobs, told of putting up many bluebird houses on golf courses in Maryland. J. Mark Martin spoke of his work with his Warrenton, Virginia Lions Club to enlist their help for bluebirds. This is the only instance we know of the “big cats” helping the little birds. Meade Flinn has persuaded his local Public Library in Albert, Virginia, to purchase several copies of “The Bluebird.” He also wrote a "Letter to the Editor" of the local newspaper telling of the bluebirds’ need of human help, and giving the name and address of the Society. New members from Albert, Virginia, have joined through Meade’s untiring efforts. How wonderful it was to be able to meet personally this true friend of bluebirds. We did so because Ray and Clare Briner of Richmond, Virginia, decided the morning of the meeting to make the drive of two hundred miles and bring with them Meade and Mary Frances Flinn.

In recent news, Dr. Richard S. Field of Centreville, Mississippi, has given gift memberships to some of the folks in Centreville. Lynn Peterson of Bemus Point New York, taught a course in January at the local Community College entitled “Support your Local Bluebird”. R.B. Layton wrote an article for a Jackson, Mississippi newspaper which has attracted new members. Olympia LeBeau of Springfield, Vermont, wants to alert the folks in Vermont to the bluebird’s plight via the Audubon Newsletter there. This has also been done in other localities. Sister Barbara Ann of Catonsville, Maryland, had her fall bluebird housecleaning enlivened by an encounter with a Copperhead snake in the convent tool house. After hospital treatment for snake-bite, she and novice Sister Mary Sylvia, who had driven her to the hospital, traded African snake stories in graphic detail while in the waiting room. The emergency room staff feared for the peace of mind of the other patients, so the Sisters were escorted to a more secluded waiting room...

Evidence of the hard winter faced by bluebirds and other birds abounds. In one instance, Larry Zelevy again came to the rescue of a bluebird in peril. An office worker at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (where Larry maintains his bluebird trail) saw an adult, male bluebird outside her window which had

(Continued on page 73)
SIALIA welcomes the correspondence of its membership. Bluebird Express should become a forum for all who are interested in communicating their ideas and actions concerning bluebird conservation. We will attempt to publish a wide range of views in a responsible manner. Keep your letters coming!

We are very pleased with the reception you gave to the initial issue of SIALIA. Many of your thoughts will be incorporated in this and future issues. We received several outstanding letters, some of which will be excerpted so that you may share in the ideas and sentiments presented.

Before doing so, however, we ask that you recall some of your more unusual experiences about bluebirds and send them along to us. These may appear in Bluebird Tales or may be expanded into an article. Most of us have had these experiences along the bluebird trail. For example, my brother and I once witnessed an American Robin coming to the aid of an Eastern bluebird family. One of the bluebird fledglings was under attack by a Common Grackle. Both parent bluebirds were diving at the invader, sounding alarm notes and snapping their beaks. But the grackle seemed unfazed by this display and edged ever closer to the helpless young bird. At the last minute, a robin appeared from the woodline and, in concert with the adult birds, helped to drive the grackle away. Perhaps others have witnessed similar kinds of interspecific cooperation.

In response to Mr. Patterson's article in the last issue of SIALIA (1979 Experimental Nesting Box Program), James L. Williams of Ware Neck, Va., wrote a lengthy but incisive reply. Among many of his thoughts were these:

1. Bluebird nest box holes must be round and exactly 1 ½ inches. The boxes should be “made easily and inexpensively.” Toward this end Mr. Williams suggests that “punched” aluminum or the plastic covers of coffee cans (after they have been properly drilled) could serve to replace the hardware cloth screen used in the open-top and raised-top experimental designs. As a result, the Society has switched to the use of expanded aluminum rain gutter cover material which is both less expensive and much easier to work with while offering eye appeal as well.

2. Instead of sending Christmas cards, give bluebird nesting boxes to friends. This is an outstanding idea. Mr. Patterson has asked Mr. Williams to describe this idea more fully in a future article for SIALIA.

3. He recommends that the Society ask manufacturers of products such as soap powder and bleach to package their products in such a way that the empty containers could easily be converted into a bluebird nesting box. His concept is an excellent one, although the design has not yet been worked out. His dream is to saturate many states with inexpensive nesting boxes and that this “would do more for bluebirds than all our fussing over good design can ever accomplish.”

Editor's Note: Mr. Williams is now recovering from surgery. The prognosis on his health is very good. We at SIALIA hope for a speedy recovery and send our best wishes to him and his family.

Mrs. Norah Lane carries on her husband's work. Last February, she was very busy judging at science fairs in the local schools and writing, by request, an article for a conservation column of the Provincial Department of Agriculture. At the same time (she) was preparing a presentation for the Brandon Natural History Society. A great deal of phoning and checking was required because (she) involved eight members from the group, The Friends of the Bluebirds. The presentation was given to nearly 100 people, with the outdoor temperature holding at a moderate 35° below zero.

Norah Lane. She is simply astonishing. We are very pleased she and her family enjoyed the Profile on her husband, John.
Dear Editor,

Please increase the size of type used in printing Sialia. These old eyes can’t handle the small print too well.

Many Readers

Dear Many:

Our not-so-old eyes agree with you. Hope this issue reads better.

Dear Editor:

Do bluebirds readily accept the added thickness of entrance hole when raccoon guards are added to the front of the nesting box? Has this been tested?

Mr. & Mrs. George Grant
Canestota, NY

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Grant:

Raccoon guards have been widely tested by many persons without affecting the bluebird’s choice of nesting boxes. They will use containers with a wall thickness of from 1/16” (milk jugs) to several inches thick.

Dr. Pinkowski experimented with this type of raccoon guard in Michigan, adding layer after layer until a tunnel over seven inches long had to be crawled through to reach the nesting chamber. Bluebirds used the nesting box.

Dear Editor:

Do you have actual statistics that show that any direction is OK for facing of the entrance hole? I thought that east to north was preferred.

Robert L. Wallace
Portola Valley, California

Dear Mr. Wallace:

Dr. Zeleny’s extensive personal experience and correspondence with trail operators indicate no strong preference by bluebirds for any particular direction for the facing of nesting boxes. Dr. Pinkowski examined a number of natural cavities in Michigan, and reported a slight tendency toward southeast, but that the tendency was not statistically significant.

There are two points to consider. First, many “natural” cavities have their direction predetermined by some species of woodpecker, not bluebirds. Second, many bluebird trail operators influence or “bias” the bluebird’s choice by their own conception of which direction is best for the birds.

A southeasterly direction may be best on two counts: reducing exposure to the afternoon sun, and facing away from prevailing storm winds. However, woodpeckers apparently do not strongly favor any direction, and cavities created by broken branches, etc., almost certainly occur randomly.

Current opinion seems to favor a factor deemed more important than direction by compass point. That is, helping to ensure a safe landing zone for young birds on their first flight. According to Dr. Zeleny, this factor far outweighs any possible benefit of compass direction.

In situations where there are nearby trees, fences, etc., it would seem to make sense to face the nesting box so the entrance hole is shaded in the afternoon sun or away from prevailing summer winds.

Dear Editor:

I’m only interested in reporting active bluebird nests. Looking in on broods can cause deaths. I stopped banding after several years. If you can convince me it’s worthwhile, I can start again. Doesn’t this scare the incubating females away?

Several Readers

Dear Readers:

Banding activities improperly conducted can cause abandonment of a nest. Also, human activity near nesting boxes can lead to increased predation by snakes and raccoons that follow scent trails.

However, proper banding procedures will not affect the outcome of nesting, nor will proper monitoring techniques. In fact, the knowledge derived from these activities can only help humans to better help bluebirds. The timing of banding is important, especially if trapping the female is involved. It should be done very late during the incubation period or, even better, after the young have hatched and the female is brooding. She will not abandon the nest under these conditions. The young are best banded between 8 and 12 days of age. Later banding may encourage them to become excited and leave the nest prematurely. During the proper period, banding has no such effect.

The best guard against predators is to mount your boxes on predator-proof poles. However, some people have experimented with scent masking techniques, using moth crystal of paradichlorobenzene or naphthalene. Little work has been done to determine the amount of crystals to be used on a square-yard basis, so use of these chemicals should be considered experimental until more is known. Greater discussion of this topic is found in the instructions for use of Nesting Box Record Cards.
Dear Editor,

I write a weekly nature column for our local paper. Would it be possible for me to obtain permission to quote portions of the Bluebird Prayer delivered by Rev. Raymond Prybas, if I give proper credits in the article?

How about quotes from other articles written in Sialia? It would be of small help in publicity of the Society.

Yulene Larson
Staunton, Virginia

Dear Mrs. Larson:

Do bluebirds have wings? Of course you may quote anything you wish from Sialia, and the offer of credit is appreciated. It was surprising to discover that a number of members are nature writers and outdoor columnists.

The help to the Society is in no way “small.” By now you have probably received a mailing sent to all Charter Members asking that they help us to have articles printed in local papers. Such articles often result in hundreds of requests for additional information and many new memberships. They are very effective.

The most popular question in Sialia’s mailbag has to do with Tree Swallows. Violet-green Swallows in the northwest and western Canada, and what might be done to reduce competition from these species.

Dear Readers:

The issue raised is complex. Swallows are desirable species protected by law. Like bluebirds, swallows are extremely beneficial devourers of insects. However, they do at times compete too successfully with bluebirds for natural cavities or nesting boxes. Usually bluebirds can hold their own if enough cavities are present.

The best answer at this time is to provide more nesting boxes. Swallows are territorial, like bluebirds, and will not tolerate another of their own species nesting too close. Place two or three nesting boxes within 25 or 50 feet of each other. The swallows can only defend one box.

There have been cases reported where swallows and bluebirds nested in separate boxes mounted on the same pole or post. Enjoy all the birds. You may be able to have both species on your property if you try hard enough.

We have no conclusive evidence yet, but the open-top nesting box may discourage swallows as it does House Sparrows. Mount one or two of this design and report your findings on Nesting Box Record Cards.

(Continued from page 58)

done under the auspices of the Forest Services Range and Wildlife Habitat Laboratory, La Grande, Oregon.

Table 2. Physical characteristics of man-made structures used for nesting by Mountain Bluebirds in Union and Wallowa Counties, Oregon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Cavity</th>
<th>Excavator**</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storage Box</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outbuilding</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>WP</td>
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<td>Outbuilding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outbuilding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outbuilding</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fence Support***</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**N = naturally occurring cavity, such as breakage, decay, fire etc.
WP = woodpecker cavity, BS = Barn Swallow nest.
***Fence supports are pyramid-shaped rock piles used to brace fences.

LITERATURE CITED


BLUEBIRDS COME TO HIGHLANDS

Bill Highhouse is a Highland resident. Always was, really. Highland has a lot to do in a short 850 square mile corner of Pennsylvania. Not far from New York, if one chose. As the speed of a Peregrine Falke — small towns — Tidioute — meander upwards along the Allegheny River, culminating at Winfield, home of one-quarter 48,000 citizens, where Bill Highhouse lived for nearly all of a lifetime. Allegheny National Forest, southern portion of the national forests, orchard and dairyland terrain. Winters are cold, long, and the damp and cold into the month of July. All region mandates that we accept, if not appreciate.

Bill Highhouse appreciated...
The North American Bluebird Society wants many persons to become involved in projects to save the bluebird. This can most effectively be done by establishing bluebird nesting box trails in suitable habitat.

Many persons may wish to operate their own nesting box trail on their own property, or to make arrangements to use private or public land. However, for many people the best way of participating in this conservation movement will be through a SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE in their community.

These guidelines were prepared to assist individuals and groups to organize a save the bluebird committee. These are only suggestions. Circumstances in your community may require slightly different techniques. In most cases however, following these suggestions will make your job easier, and your efforts most effective in helping bluebirds. The material has been grouped into short chapters for easy reference.

1. Organizing Your Committee
2. Background Material: Educate Yourself
3. Publicity: Educate the Public
4. Bluebird Trails: Route Selection
5. Property Owners: Get Cooperation
6. Nesting Boxes: Making or Buying Them
7. Experimental Work: Research Values
8. Mounting Boxes: A Group Activity
9. Monitoring: Assign Equipment
11. Recording & Reporting: What We Learn
12. Publicize Results: Get New Members
13. Prepare for Next Year: Evaluation
14. Go Back to #1: A New Beginning

ORGANIZING YOUR COMMITTEE

On the theory that ten, twenty or fifty people working together will accomplish more than when they work separately, the first suggestion is to find other people interested in bluebirds and organize a SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE. This can be done in one of two ways:

1. Start by yourself, perhaps working with one or two friends
2. Get the support and backing of an existing group in the community. This could be a local chapter of the National or State Audubon Society, a bird club or ornithological society or a natural history group.

You may get the backing of a local service club such as Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis or a veterans' organization, Garden clubs, youth groups, farm organizations and businessmen's associations or chambers of commerce may become interested if asked.

Camp Fire Girls and their junior members called Bluebirds, scouting units, 4-H, Explorers, YWCA, and YMCA, school science clubs and others are often looking for creative and worthwhile activities for their members.

And don't overlook groups such as Izaak Walton Leagues, Sierra Clubs, Wildlife Federations, nature centers, parks departments and other government agencies, rod and gun clubs and other sportsmen's groups such as chapters of Ducks Unlimited.

Once you decide whether to start on your own or as a unit of an existing organization, you must still organize your SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE. You need members. You need leaders such as president or chairman, treasurer and secretary. You have to have enough volunteers from the outset you have to have a publicity chairman, and a chairman for other specific tasks such as trail selection, monitoring, recording and reporting.

If you organize on your own, you must make some very basic decisions such as whether to incorporate, obtain insurance, set membership dues, establish a constitution and by-laws, seek tax-exempt status and so forth. If you become a unit of an existing organization, these matters will probably have been decided previously and you will subscribe to that organization's policies and procedures.

But you must still organize, establishing your goals and priorities. You need all the informed committee members you can find if you are really trying to save the bluebird, and you might begin by educating yourself.

BACKGROUND MATERIAL: EDUCATE YOURSELF

You or someone else in your community or conservation group may be familiar with bluebirds, having had experience with a bluebird...
nests and box trail. However, most people are not knowledgeable about this subject and many of your committee members will want to learn more.

The North American Bluebird Society offers literature to help people learn about the bluebird problem and what they can do about it. In addition to a useful information and membership brochure there are nesting box plans, sheets, nesting box record forms, books, a quarterly journal and reprints of important articles. A reference bibliography is maintained listing all important information in the literature. These are all available at very modest cost.

Get a copy of Dr. Zeleny's book "The Bluebird," the most comprehensive work about bluebirds published to date. The Society's quarterly journal, "Sialia," publishes articles that expand our knowledge about nesting box design, population studies, food habits and preferences, parasites and predators and much more.

As an information gathering and dispensing organization the Society will be continually developing educational aids such as posters, displays, slide shows and films. There will be an ongoing program of testing new nesting box types and methods for gathering reports and other information from the continent and beyond. There will be at least two annual publications dependent on information supplied by members and cooperators. Announcement of all these projects will be publicized in Sialia.

At the present time, the Society offers the following literature:
1. A four-color information and membership brochure @ $12 per 100 plus shipping.
2. Nesting box plans with instructions for mounting @ $5 or $5.50 per 100 plus shipping.
3. "The Bluebird" by Lawrence Zeleny (170pp paperback) @ $5.50 postpaid or in quantities of 10 or more at $4.75 per book.
4. SIALIA is included with all classes of membership in the Society. Individual items are available @ $2.50. Non-member subscriptions are $5 per year. Bulk mailings in quantities of 10 or more subscriptions are available @ $7 per year.

In addition to the membership classes shown in the Society's literature, there are three basic types of group memberships:

YOUTH GROUP MEMBERSHIP

This membership category is designed for groups whose members each desire a North American Bluebird Society membership card, but where it is not necessary for each member to receive Sialia. The group leader, or any designated person, receives the group's copy of Sialia, and all group members receive a membership card. The cost of this membership is $7.50 for the group (including the member who receives the copy of Sialia) plus 50¢ for each additional member. Thus for a group having a leader and seven members, the cost would be $7.50 + $3.50 or $11.00 total per year. The group will receive a copy of all materials sent to members, and will be entitled to one vote at meetings of the Society.

SUPPORTING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

This membership category is designed for groups wishing to support the work of the Society, and who wish to receive a copy of Sialia for their library or to circulate among members. The minimum membership dues are $10, and any greater amount will be very much appreciated. Groups such as bird clubs and garden clubs often designate their SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE chairman, conservation chairman or newsletter editor to receive Sialia and report to the membership the latest information about bluebirds. The group is entitled to designate one member to represent the group and to cast one vote at meetings of the Society.

ACTIVE GROUP MEMBERSHIP

This membership category is designed for groups having no other formal group affiliation, and that are organized solely for the purpose of working for the benefit of bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds.

The group must number at least five individuals who become members of the North American Bluebird Society and who establish, monitor and report data to the Society about a bluebird nesting box trail of at least 10 nesting boxes. Each member of the group will receive all benefits available to members of the Society.

In addition, the Society will notify all of its members in the county or general area represented by the group, or a group organization. The group will remain an independent organization without any obligations to the North American Bluebird Society except for maintaining minimum membership and nest box trail requirements. Members of this group will be entitled to a 10% reduction in annual individual dues for membership in the Society.

PUBLICITY: EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

In seeking publicity you have two basic objectives:
1. To build your committee's membership.
2. To obtain offers of locations for bluebird nesting box trails.

There are possibly three major types of publicity outlets in your community that cost little or nothing to use. They include the daily or weekly newspapers, radio and TV stations. Even though these publicity outlets are not located in your town or village, they still serve your area.

Just remember, you have a pair of banding pliers. It's worth the effort.

Let's get back to those one-bird questions. One is on that organic insecticide. One knows if there is a difference between the birds spending time in the two areas? How will you band the birds and follow through successive breeding?

With an expanded project replacing winter roosting boxes to double or triple the number of birds if there is a large population of bluebirds to work with. We will discuss roosting boxes now, to have some on your trail.

RECORDING & REPORTING

We have touched on the subject of bluebird trail and submission. Analysis, compilation with publication should be part of your objectives. Research and reporting is nothing if others do not have the information.

The Society has a project on bluebird studies published four times. Included in it is a nesting box trail data, plus reports from the annual Christmas Bird and Breeding Bird Surveys.

The Society asks that you, the bluebird trail operators keep the Society informed of the results. We will provide the Society with your results. Your data will be entered and combined with the data from thousands of other bluebirds throughout the continent. Reports produced by the Society enable you to know the results of your trail's results, and those of other operators in your geographic area. Trail data in other regions of the United States will provide a picture of the operation performs in relation to your area.

This brings up a point about the location of your bluebird trail. Other birds, plants and insects are found in your county or state. Use the analysis of data about bluebirds to add to your natural system of observation. You will undoubtedly be heard of the birds' location, migration, their number, and so forth. They all relate to your trail data. Dividing up a land area into segments for the study of wildlife follows the system employed by the National Wildlife Service for analysis.

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and are interested in what groups are doing. Don't be afraid to approach them.

A newspaper won't automatically give you news space if you simply mail a story to the editor. Telephone or, better yet, drop in and talk to an editor. Let the newspaper write a story for you if they are really interested. They may want to send a photographer to one of your meetings or to one of your nesting boxes for a "human interest" photograph. The Society can provide you with one or more sample press releases that you can adapt to your situation.

Whatever the newspaper does for you, be sure to write a letter to the editor thanking them for their cooperation. Such letters often find their way into print and give you further publicity. Make sure that letter states where your next meeting will be. Every little bit counts.

Radio and TV stations publicize local groups, either as part of their local programming, or to satisfy their licensing requirements by airing free public-service advertising. Again, drop in and talk with the programming director. It's much more difficult for them to turn you down in a face-to-face meeting.

If one of your members is really knowledgeable, try to get on the schedule for a "talk show," if the station has one that would include nature subjects. You will also qualify under such headings as conservation, environment, public service, and, depending upon group affiliation, a youth group, senior citizen group, etc. If you do not have a qualified speaker, write to the Society. We may be able to provide help from our speaker's bureau.

Posters mounted in stores windows or at your library, schools, nature center, etc., will also help to bring people out to your meetings.

Okay, you've published the fact you are starting a SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE, and announced the date, time and place of the first public meeting. In all your publicity efforts you should also advertise phone numbers and addresses for those who can't wait or can't attend the meeting to contact you. Now it's up to your organizing committee to provide a good show and convince many who attend to enlist in your cause.

Do you have a member who can provide a slide show and talk? There should be someone willing to work for free. Many bands want to do it because box-trained birds are not wanted for research, and many returns obtained from open nest boxes are. So the amount of hard work put into the migration is pitifully small, so the way to increase our knowledge.

We will often help others train. It is not a quick or easy job, but one that should be done. You must

Sometimes licensed master, knowledgeable, careful and to become submitters, bander's wing so to speak.

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about pending developments along the route that would force you to move the trail in future years. It is better to select a route where land use will remain stable, and that offers the prospect of little vandalism.

Make certain trail sites are selected so the trails will be monitored each year. Don't invest time, effort, and materials in a project that will deteriorate because the work becomes too difficult. Remember, the trail that looks easy to patrol and monitor today may be more difficult in the future when your legs are a few years older.

Finally, check with local people to find out where bluebirds are known to nest. Bird count compilers, avid birders, local naturalists, and farmers are apt to know. You may want to start your trail where you know the birds are, and extend into new areas as your resources allow.

PROPERTY OWNERS: GET COOPERATION

There are four ways to receive permission from a property owner before running a bluebird trail along or through his land:

1. Have the property owner volunteer to use his land in response to your publicity program. Perhaps they will join your committee.

2. Make a mailing to all property owners along the proposed route, providing information about the project, about the bluebird cause, and inviting participation.

3. Telephone each property owner, doing as outlined above.

4. Make personal visits to all property owners.

Items 3 and 4 are logical follow-ups to item 2. At some point in time, all property owners will be visited anyway. Calling on them early is best.

VOLUNTEERING LAND

Part of your "pitch" when planning newspaper or other media publicity should be an enticement for landowners to write or telephone you with offers of cooperation. This could include the property owner becoming directly involved in the project as an active participant. Or the owner may simply become a passive bluebird landlord of a portion of your bluebird trail. Such offers will pay an important part in your route selection process.

MAILINGS TO PROPERTY OWNERS

Develop a publicity package for mailing directly to property owners. This could include a copy of the Society's colorful brochure and a copy of the nesting box plans sheet. If you have had a story printed in a local paper, include a clipping or a Xerox copy. A map showing the route of the proposed trail through the community would be nice to include and there should be a cover letter from your committee. The letter could be a form letter, but individually written letters are more effective.

PERSONAL CONTACTS

Phone calls and personal visits to explain your project are the best form of communication with a property owner. You may need several persons to handle this job. Make sure they are knowledgeable and are able to make an effective presentation. You might want to hold a workshop to "train" these salesmen before sending them out to "close deals."

LOCATING PROPERTY OWNERS

Most counties have tax maps showing who owns what land. These are public records open for inspection. Usually the public official will be most helpful in providing copies of maps, and may be able to furnish mailing addresses. If addresses cannot be obtained from the tax office, almost all can be obtained through the telephone company or by driving along the route checking mailboxes. In some cases there may be absentee landlords of tenant property. Get the cooperation of the tenant, and follow up by contacting the out of town owner.

You may wish to get permission from the largest landowners along your trail route first. Utility companies and government agencies are usually quick to cooperate. Fill in the gaps between large properties later.

Remember, you need permission from power companies before mounting nesting boxes on their poles. Get this permission in writing, and establish a procedure for the company to notify you when one of your nesting boxes must be moved. Designate a committee member who is readily available as your liaison. Keep a record of your nesting boxes by power pole number and location. The time may come when you must remove and remount an occupied nesting box during some emergency or pole replacement program.

One other point about using utility rights-of-way. Usually, permission to use utility poles does not give you permission to travel across private property. The easement granted to the utility company probably does not extend to your committee. Always get additional permission from the property owner.

NESTING BOXES: MAKING OR BUYING THEM

Nesting box plans are available from the Society. Nesting boxes are too, at moderate cost. However, most SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEES will want to make their own nesting boxes to keep costs to a minimum. Here are some tips.

Local service groups, clubs or schools will often make these items as a contribution to conservation, or for the materials involved. For instance, a school science instructor might have each student make a nesting box as a way of learning about various tools. Approach the school with this possibility. Your committee might collect the wood, or arrange to have it cut.

Schools are always looking for projects to include in the curriculum. It may provide an opportunity to combine several subjects. For example, science or biology students might use this opportunity to discuss nest structure and reproduction. English teachers could assign writing assignments about building and making of nesting boxes. You could take these possibilities through the school, and, contacting the principal or instructor.

A nesting box trail might be a segment of the perimeter of school property, or suitable. Or your committee can choose a trail route and host school field days during the nesting season, as a way of building pride in the bluebird effort.

In most communities, residents are only too willing to provide the materials for projects that can be done during workshop. It's a labor of love, and many persons are superb craftsmen.

If you describe your purpose, they may bring in yards, building contractors, fencing companies and others who will be willing to put aside scrap material. Demolition of buildings and houses offer an opportunity to obtain scrap materials.

A classified ad in a local paper may get your publicity notices will probably bear the offer of used materials or the promotion of projects. Don't forget to ask.

Many businesses bury shipping fills. Glass dealers, furniture plants, contracting firms, wholesale lumber dealers often receive goods packed in wood crates. Once emptied these are a steal away. It simply costs too much to throw them back. Ask for them!

Finally, if you'd rather, ask the owners to be glad to sell them to you with only a fraction of the usual cost. Ask for them.

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Local service groups, clubs or schools will include a percentage of expense in the plans. Nesting boxes in your nesting box trail only through widespread testing. Always find out for doing things...

EXPERIMENTAL WORK: RESEARCH

What nesting box design is the best?

1. Reduce predation by raccoons
2. Eliminate competition by starlings
3. Even desirable species
A letter from your committee should be a form letter, but individual letters are more effective.

CONTACTS

Personal visits to explain the best form of communication for the property owner. You may need several contacts to handle this job. Make sure they are local and are able to make an effective presentation. You might want to hold a "train" these salesmen before you contact "close deals."

PROPERTY OWNERS

Have tax maps showing who owns what. These are public records open to all. The name of the property owner will be furnished you by the town tax assessor. If the property cannot be found, the address can be found through the phone directory or by driving along the streets and identifying the mailbox of the property owner. In some cases there are specific maps showing the landlord or tenant and the exact location of the property owner.

When you need permission from the property owners along your trail route first, it is helpful if the public official is willing to cooperate. Fill in the gaps later if necessary.

You need permission from property owners before starting the nesting box trail. This permission in writing, and the necessary permits, is required by the company to notify you of the box locations. Have a committee member who is familiar with the area act as your liaison. Keep a record of bodies by piling pole numbers. The time may come when you will need a demounted and an occupied nesting box for emergency or pole replacement.

Be sure to keep about using utility rights-of-way. Permission to use utility poles requires utility company permission to travel across the easement granted to the utility company. This probably does not extend to nesting boxes. Always get additional permission from the property owner.

MAKING OR BUYING THEM

Bluebird nesting boxes are available from the many suppliers. Many boxes are too, at moderate prices. The most important is to SAVE THE BLUEBIRD. You may want to make their own boxes at a lower cost. Keep costs to a minimum. Here are some suggestions:

GROUPS, clubs or schools will

often make these items as a charitable contribution to conservation, or for the cost of materials involved. For instance, a school woodshop instructor might have each student make a nesting box as a way of learning to work with various tools. Approach the shop teacher about this possibility. Your committee might supply the wood, or arrange to have it donated.

Schools are always looking for interesting projects to include in the curriculum. I offer an opportunity to combine several subjects into one. For instance, science or biology teachers might use this opportunity to discuss ecology or reproduction. English teachers may encourage writing assignments about bluebirds or the making of nesting boxes. You can approach these possibilities through the school PTA or by contacting the principal or individual teachers.

A nest box trail might be mounted at the water bath or at the feeder, but should be mounted at the school itself. Or your committee could select the trial route and host school field trips during the nesting season, as a way of building enthusiasm for the bluebird curriculum year after year.

In most communities, retired persons are only too willing to provide their skill and labor for projects that can be done in their home workshop. It's a labor of love, and many retired persons are super craftsmen.

If you describe your purpose many lumber yards, building contractors, furniture makers, fencing companies and other manufacturers will be glad to put aside scrap materials for you. Demolition of buildings and collected barns offer an opportunity to obtain materials at little or no cost.

A classified ad in a local paper or a request in your publicity notices will probably result in the offer of used materials or the leftovers from home renovation projects. Don't be afraid to ask.

Many businesses buy shipping crates in landfills. Glass dealers, furniture stores, printing plants, contracting firms, wholesalers and many others receive goods packed on skids or in crates. Once emptied these are often thrown away. It simply costs too much to ship them back for reuse. Ask for them!

Finally, if you'd rather, ask the Society. We'll be glad to sell them to you at a good discount for quantity purchases. Also, don't forget to include a percentage of experimental nesting boxes in your nesting box trail planning. It is only through widespread testing that better ways are found for doing things.

EXPERIMENTAL WORK: RESEARCH VALUES

What nesting box design is the best to:
1. Reduce predation by raccoons and snakes?
2. Eliminate competition by House Sparrows and even desirable species that at times compete too well with bluebirds?
3. Avoid problems caused by wasps, blowflies and other insect pests?
4. Prevent overheating in summertime and reduce exposure during wet, chilly spring periods?
5. Assure maximum production of healthy young birds?

To be honest, we're not sure.

The Society is currently testing new nesting box designs in the hope of answering some of these questions. Testing programs require years of work, and the participation and reporting of data by hundreds of volunteers from all parts of the continent. What works in one area may cause some unthought of problem in another.

Is there a design idea or management technique lurking in the back of your mind? Experiment! If you have an idea, try it. If it seems to work, write up your results and send a report to Sialia for publication. Together we can get your idea tested throughout the continent, and with the help of many other minds "work the bugs out," modify it, retest it, and perhaps come up with something even better.

MOUNTING BOXES: A GROUP ACTIVITY

If there is one chore about bluebird trails that tends to become work, it is the task of actually erecting the nesting boxes. Let's face it: there is a lot of hauling, digging, nailing and other work to be done, depending on your trail layout. Break up the task into small segments, each handled by one or more people. With a little teamwork the job can be a lot of fun. Make it a group activity.

You'll need a secretary who will keep vital statistics on each nesting box. Date of mounting, location, box number, design type, direction entrance hole faces, height above ground to entrance hole; you name it, the data may be valuable. The Society has nesting box record forms available at modest cost. Or you may make copies of samples provided without charge. If you use the Society's forms, or at least that format, your data will be compatible with that of thousands of others throughout the continent.

While you are at work mounting nesting boxes, the secretary could be keeping a list of all birds seen during the day. It's a great way to record much about the birdlife of your area. Working your way along the bluebird trail as a group, some members can be moving cars and supplies to the next roadway, or to the other side of the pasture. Real efficiency can be maintained. Lunch can even be on hard at lunchtime.

A few backpacks or pack frames may come in handy. Maybe you can get a scouting unit to hike your supplies ahead of you, with one of your committee to show them where to leave.

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nesting boxes, posts and other equipment.

Want to make a leaf collection or do a botany survey along the way? Collect insects? Take photographs (especially of some of the trail work for later slide programs). Take time to show the property owner what you are really up to! Collect litter as you go! It doesn’t have to be boring while you work.

Make sure someone has a first aid kit. Insect repellent in season is a good idea. Who has the thermos of coffee? Now you’re getting the hang of it!

Remember, if you are just starting your trail, the earlier the better. Set a target date for completion. Allow plenty of time and pick rain dates. Stick to it and get the job done.

**MONITORING: ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITY**

Without monitoring, a bluebird trail cannot produce its potential of young bluebirds. They need your assistance. Vandalized boxes need repair, and probably removal to a less conspicuous place. Sparrows need to be displaced, discouraged or done away with. Maybe the nesting box should be moved to a less sparrow-prone location.

Remember, all native species using your nesting boxes must be allowed to complete their nesting cycle. However, if you want to discourage native competitors, keep careful notes in your nesting box records and move the box to a better location after the wrens or titmice are done with it.

You should learn how to tell the age, within a day or two, of the nestlings. At the appropriate time you can have them banded. Through careful monitoring, you will be able to know with a fair degree of accuracy, whether your bluebirds really fledged or whether something else happened. Your data will be only as valuable as you care to make it. Estimates at the end of the season that your boxes produced an average of five young ones does not constitute data. It is guesswork.

Proving that your trail produced 25% more (or fewer) young per pair of adults than it did the year before might tell you something really significant. What are you doing right? Was predation a factor? Was there extensive pesticide use in nearby crop areas? Maybe you’d better ask the farmer about his crop rotation, and rotate your nesting boxes according to his schedule and the needs of your birds.

Is there organic farming being done in your region? What an opportunity to study the difference in bluebird production between a trail in an organically farmed area and one on a farm where pesticides and synthetic fertilizers are used. This might be a good study project for a serious high school or college student who could monitor a number of your nesting boxes each year. Why not discuss this with a local college professor?

Frequent monitoring will tell you where your problems are and why you are successful. Once you understand a problem you can do something about it. Without monitoring, you’d have to be an awfully good sign reader to be sure of anything.

Assign areas of responsibility among most or all of your committee members. Require all monitors to make timely reports. Don’t accept excuses for lack of responsibility. Try to improve the performance of those who fail to perform. Or find someone else to do the job. While this may sound tough, how else can you get the job done and have a successful project?

**BANDING: A CHANCE TO LEARN MORE**

Would you like to know the answers to such questions as:

1. Where do my bluebirds go in winter?
2. Where did the pair from box 27 raise their second brood?
3. Did the four birds fledged from box 13 have any luck making it through the winter? Did they find mates?
4. How many of our young birds from last year are nesting on the trail?

There is only one to find out. Band and recover!

First a word of caution. It is against the law in North America to band any migratory bird without a license issued by either the U.S. or Canadian governments. Bluebirds are migratory birds. Only a licensed bird band or someone working under the supervision of a licensed bird bander may band bluebirds. Period.

Secondly, the proper handling and banding of bluebirds by qualified persons does no harm to the bird, neither shortening or lengthening its life expectancy. The trauma and small incidence of injury sometimes experienced at banding stations where mist nets are used does not occur at bluebird nesting boxes. Banding done at proper stages of the nesting cycle do not frighten adults from the territory and do not cause young birds to fledge prematurely.

If there is not a licensed bander in your Audubon chapter or bird club, the Society may be able to refer you to someone willing to work with your committee. Many banders want to work with bluebirds because box-nestled birds offer a stable situation for research, and many times the rate of returns obtained from open nestling species. Even so, the amount of hard evidence about bluebird migration is pitifully small, and the only way to increase our knowledge is through banding.

Licensed banders will often help others train to become licensed. It is not a quick or easy proposition, and it should not be. You must know your stuff. Sometimes licensed masters banders will permit knowledgeable, careful and serious individuals to become sub-permittees, under the licensed bander’s wing so to speak.

and are interested in what Don’t be afraid to approach a newspaper won’t eat news space if you simply newspaper editor. Telephone a letter. Let the story for you if they are then you may want to send a photo your meetings or to one of the “for a “human interest” people” can provide you with one a clink releases that you can adapt.

Whatever the newspaper sure to write a letter to the editor for their cooperation. Such is their way into print and publicity. Make sure that letter next meeting will be. Every Radio and TV stations put each as part of their local a satisfaction their licensing required free public-service advertising and talk with the program perhaps much more difficult for them in a face-to-face meeting.

If one of your members is comfortable, try to get on the show,” if the station has one on nature subjects. You will need such headings as conservation, public service and, depending on the situation, as a youth group, sports team, etc. If you do not have a newsletter write to the Society. We may be able to help from our speaker’s bureau.

Posters mounted in store libraries, schools, nature centers can help to bring people out to your meetings.

Okay. You’ve publicized, you’re starting a SAVE THE BLUEBIRD and announced the date, time and first public meeting. If in all you should also advertise a newsletter addresses for those who can’t attend the meeting to contact you in organizing committees for your meeting and convince many who might be interested in your cause.

Do you have a member ready to give slide show and talk? Then is the time for entertainment and not just for discussion. If you don’t, a speaker can provide a narrated slide show at modest cost (given enough notice please). We might be able to speak as well.

At this meeting and in your efforts, remember there are be discussions to be communicated to your audience as effectively and as possible.

1. State the problem.
2. List the causes (Starlin...
just remember, you have to earn your way to a pair of banding pliers. To many people it is worth the effort.

Let's go back to those two bluebird trails. One is on that organic farm, the other on the chemically treated farm. Would you like to know if there is a difference in the lifespan of the bluebirds spending the breeding season in the two areas? How will you ever know without banding the birds and following their progress through successive breeding seasons?

With an expanded program of building and placing winter roosting boxes, we may be able to double or triple the number of winter recoveries if there is a large population of banded birds to work with. We won't take space to discuss roosting boxes now, but you should plan to have some on your trail before next winter.

RECORDING & REPORTING: WHAT WE LEARN

We have touched on this subject a few times already. Recording information about your bluebird trail and submitting your data for analysis, compilation with other trail reports, and publication should be among your primary objectives. Research and information mean nothing if others do not have access to it.

The Society has a program of population studies published four times each year. They include a first-brood nesting report, a post-nesting production report, and analysis of data from the annual Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys.

The Society asks that, as a minimum, all bluebird trail operators keep the kind of information provided for on the Society's standard nesting box record form. These forms are available from the Society with instructions for their use. Your data will be entered into a computer and combined with the data from hundreds or thousands of other bluebird trails throughout the continent. Reports printed in Sialia will enable you to know the difference between your trail's results, and those of other trail operators in your geographic region, and those of trails in other regions of the continent. These data will provide a picture of how your trail operation performs in relation to the potential for your area.

This brings us to a point about the geographic location of your bluebird trail. Bluebirds and all other birds, plants and living things do not respect county or state lines. Therefore, analysis of data about bluebirds must be based on a more natural system of geography. You've undoubtedly heard of terms such as biogeography, stratification, physiographic regions, and so forth. They all relate to the same thing, dividing a land area into meaningful components for the study of wildlife. The Society follows the system employed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for analysis of Breeding Bird Survey data. This system has been fully described in Sialia. To give a brief illustration, in the State of Maryland there are four distinct physiographic regions. They are the Upper Coastal Plain, the Northern Piedmont, the Ridge & Valley Section and the Allegheny Plateau. Throughout the United States and southern Canada, there are about 80 such regions.

Within each region there are various habitat and climatic factors that influence the density of breeding bluebirds. Certain regions may never achieve the breeding density of other regions. In analyzing your bluebird trail data, it is very important to know in which region or regions your trail is located. Your secretary or record keeper should provide the Society with a detailed map of your proposed trail so that physiographic region boundaries, if they occur in your area, may be shown. This information can then become part of your permanent records, and the appropriate data entered on nesting box record cards.

Publicize Results: Get New Members

Depending upon the willingness of newspaper editors, you should get as much publicity for your committee as possible. Each step along the way can be written up, and each item of publicity will bring you new members or offers of locations for trails. Some of the opportunities you might exploit include:

1. Membership meetings. Announce the date a week or two in advance. Tell what your topic is and who the speaker will be. Mention how many members you have and some interesting project you are presently involved in. Whenever possible, offer a good black and white photograph, with caption, for publication.

2. Trail selection. In addition to an article about this, prepare a map of the community showing where the trail will be. Mention some of the property owners who are cooperating with you, especially prominent persons. Be sure to mention state or local agencies, utilities and businesses giving aid of one sort or another. Check with the editor before making this map. Be sure it will meet their reproduction requirements.

3. Making nesting boxes. You might hold a workshop at which committee members and friends pitch in to make a quantity of nesting boxes. Have someone take black and white photos and write a story about the event. Announce the next meeting, etc. Always try to work a phone number into your press releases for interested persons to call.

4. Mounting nesting boxes. Take photographs. Work children into the pictures if possible, or a property owner helping to mount a nesting box. You might get that prominent person or a businessman who regularly advertises in the newspaper into the scene. Editors
are often persuaded to use this material.

5. Monitoring and banding. A bird in the hand is worth a photograph in the newspaper. Inform readers how many bluebird "babies" are being raised due to your efforts. Announce field trips for the public the next weekend. Recruit new participants.

6. Year-end report. Let the public know how your work has paid off this year. Mention names of property owners and how many bluebirds they were host to. You might hold a formal meeting and present certificates of appreciation to all those who gave support, including your cooperative newspaper.

7. All of these things can be aired on radio and TV. If your area has a special program for farm or agricultural news, you stand a good chance of getting regular mention.

8. Be sure to keep other organizations such as bird clubs, conservation groups, 4-H and Camp Fire, etc., completely posted on your activities. Even if they don't join your effort at the outset, keep working on them patiently.

PREPARE FOR NEXT YEAR: EVALUATION

Okay. It's September now and the birds are gone. However, you are by no means finished. Get your SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE back to work!

First of all, review all data collected during the nesting season. Check over all your nest box record cards. Doublecheck any unusual notations, and proofread any transcripts or copies made from original record cards. Get your record cards in the mail to the Society by October 1. Please. At the same time, send a post-season success story to your local newspaper. Now's the time to start giving yourself a little pat on the back.

With record keeping finished, set a date for your next membership meeting. Invite the public. You should have a pretty good slide collection of local scenes by now, telling the story of your bluebird conservation program. Start building enthusiasm for next breeding season.

Set dates for repair of nesting boxes. You may wish to do this during the fall while the weather is still nice. If you have started that leaf or insect collection, now's the time to add to it. Keeping an eye on your local bluebirds during this period will tell you something about their movements. Besides, fall migrants are moving through and birdwatching is excellent.

Make plans for expanding your nesting box trail. Establish some sort of goal such as ten nesting boxes per member. Some members will want to do more. Set dates for another nesting box workshop and for mounting new boxes.

Now is the time to make some roosting boxes and set them out. You may get a lot of enjoyment by holding "flashlight tours" of the trail around your end to see if bluebirds are using the roosting boxes or regular nesting boxes. You might plug up ventilation and drain holes in regular boxes to make them warmer for the winter months.

Set up a reporting system or hotline for members and the public to report all winter-time bluebird sightings. You may wish to mount nesting boxes in some of these areas, and interest in bluebirds will remain keen through the winter. Give some thought to plans for plantings to attract bluebirds and other wildlife. Take your slide program and give talks to garden clubs and school groups.

Remember, you are going to need people to keep this activity going year after year. Some of your members will move from the area or lose interest. You can expand or maintain the same activity level without recruiting new members. You've got more time available during the winter months for recruiting and other activities.

Do you need funds? Make nesting boxes of several types for sale at fall festivals and holiday bazaars. Make arrangements to sell wild bird seed throughout the winter. With each sale you can publicize your bluebird work with a leaflet.

Continue to gather raw materials during this period for nesting boxes. Be prepared for your box-making workshop when the date arrives, and start the season with good momentum.

When you have reached this point, the North American Bluebird Society would like to say THANK YOU. Your committee deserves words of praise. Now, would you please go back to page one and do it again?

North American Bluebird Society
P.O. Box 6295
Silver Spring, MD 20906

The North American Bluebird Society is many persons to become involved in saving the bluebird. This can be done by establishing bluebird boxes in suitable habitat.

Many persons may wish to get on the nesting box trail on their own. You may arrange to make arrangements to use land. However, for many people participating in the conservation work, the first step will be through a SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE in their community.

These guidelines were prepared by individuals and groups to organize a bluebird committee. These are for use by Circumstances in your community may be slightly different techniques mentioned, however, following these steps should make your job easier, and your efforts will be in helping bluebirds. These guidelines are grouped into short chapters.

1. Organizing Your Committee
2. Background Material: Education
3. Publicity: Educate the Public
4. Bluebird Trails: Route Selection
5. Property Owners: Get Cooperation
6. Nesting Boxes: Making of
7. Experimental Work: Results
8. Mounting Boxes: A Group Effort
9. Monitoring: Assigned Responsibility
10. Banding: A Chance to Live
11. Recording & Reporting Results: Get Members Involved
12. Publicize Results: Get More Involved

ORGANIZING YOUR COMMITTEE

On the theory that ten, together, working together will accomplish more than when they work separately, an organizing committee is to find other people interested in the work and organize a SAVE THE BLUEBIRD COMMITTEE. This can be done by:

1. Start by yourself, perhaps one or two friends.

2. Get the support and backing of a group in the community. This chapter of the National North American Bluebird Society, Volume 1, Number 2.
BLUEBIRDS COME TO HIM

Bill Highhouse is a happy man today. Always was, really. Perhaps the sincere provision provided by his beloved Warren County has a lot to do with it. Warren County is a bit of America tucked into a 850 square mile corner of northwestern Pennsylvania, not far from Lake Erie and only a few seconds south of Jamestown, New York, if one chose to move at the speed of a Peregrine Falcon in stoop flight. Small towns — Tidioute, Irvine, Starbrick — meander upwards along the Allegheny River, culminating at Warren township, home of one-quarter of the County’s 48,000 citizens, where Bill Highhouse has lived for nearly all of his 64 years. The Allegheny National Forest cradles the southern portion of the County, while orchard and dairyland serve as the northern lid. Winters are customarily harsh, and the damp and cold often linger well into the month of June. Living in this region mandates that people learn to accept, if not appreciate, the environment. Bill Highhouse appreciates.

His fourth grandchild was born last month. That makes Bill even happier. He seems rather devoted to his family, and quite proud of his three daughters. This October, he and his wife, Irene Albright, will celebrate two score and one years of marriage. Bill and Irene met on a blind date in 1935, while Bill was attending Penn State University. They married the year after he graduated with a B.S. Degree in Forestry in 1937. Irene, who lived just south of State College, in Saxton, went on to complete here degree at Juniata College. After his graduation, Bill began a long affiliation with Struthers Wells Corporation, a firm which designed and engineered heat transfer equipment. During the war years, the company was engaged in research for the Manhattan Project and Bill joined in. Irene was engaged in raising their girls. She returned
Dear Editor.

Please increase the printing Sialia. These old eyes need a small print too well.

Many Readers

Dear Many:

Our not-so-old eyes find the issue reads better.

Dear Editor:

Do bluebirds react to the thickness of entrance guards? Have you added new boxes? Has this been tested?

Mr. & Mrs. George Grant
Canestota, NY

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Grant,

Raccoon guard has add a wall thickness of seven inches thick.

Dr. Pinkowski experimental raccoon guard in Michigan, layer until a tunnel could be crawled through chamber. Bluebirds use.

Dear Editor:

Do you have actual any direction is the Hole? I thought I had prepared.

Robert E. Wallace
Portola Valley, California

Dear Mr. Wallace:

Dr. Zeleny's extensive data and correspondence indicate no strong preferences by any particular direction for boxes. Dr. Pinkowski had pointed toward natural cavities in Michigan. A slight tendency toward north was not statistically significant.

There are two points: "natural" cavities and "predetermined" by some other means. Bluebirds were forced to use only those of their own making. Choice by their own direction is best for the future.

A southeasterly direction suggests...
nailed it together, then coated the finished box with paint. After the first few years, most of the actual construction was fashioned by a group of retired men determined not to allow the severe winter to dampen their productivity.

As word spread of the success of Warren’s bluebird trails, other people from the region volunteered to place additional boxes, monitor them, and report results to Bill Highhouse. In the peak years, there were nearly 100 such volunteers. Today, the number is lower. But interest remains high.

Curiously, Mr. Highhouse reports he has never had significant problems with snake or raccoon predation. He attributes this to the climate of the area and the relative scarcity of large constricting snakes, such as the Black Rat Snake. He does lament the fact that Tree Swallows use his “bluebird” boxes more frequently than bluebirds themselves. He also maintains that the escalating costs of gasoline will probably reduce the number of volunteer monitors, thereby reducing the scope of his project. He is also saddened by the shrinking habitat. Small farms, abundant 20 years ago and each with their own apple orchard, are fast disappearing, replaced with trailer communities.

Nonetheless, Bill Highhouse is very pleased with his bluebird project. He has established no records and produced no real surprises. Bluebirds almost always arrive in his area by March 21, and produce two nestings. All of the young are fledged by mid-August. In 1964, “A very aggressive male bluebird and his partner fledged 7 young in their first nest attempt followed with 6 young in the second — a record that still stands.” His trails have fledged more than 12,000 bluebirds, many of which were banded. This achievement speaks for itself.

In retirement, Highhouse tends a large garden, enjoys housework, and swims one-half mile each week. Ten years ago, he had a disc in his back removed. His doctor recommended swimming as therapy. Since that time, Bill has logged at least 500 miles in the local YMCA pool. He is very active in the North Allegheny Conservation Organization. Currently, that group is concerned about preserving a Great Blue Heronry. Not surprisingly, considering his versatile interests, he consults with the Game Commission to guard against rattlesnake extinction in Warren County. “Rattlesnake Roundups” are very common there. He says he is “half an expert” on raptors, spending long hours in search of such finds as a Cooper’s Hawk. He has also helped place 24 American Kestrel nesting boxes, from which 100 Kestrels have fledged in eight years. He is the local compiler for American Birds, and has contributed data to Eastern Bird Banding and the Kingbird.

His health is excellent. He sets aside at least two days each week “just for birdding.” He tries to make an annual pilgrimage to Cape May for the obvious reasons. He talks only informally about his work. But the work has gotten around.

Thanks Irene Highhouse for your tolerance. Thanks Bill Duncan for your informative enthusiasm. Thanks Harris Johnson for your friendly expertise. And, Bill Highhouse, thank you for the example you have set for others, for the 12,000 bluebirds you have given a chance for life, and for following through on a hunch, allowing bluebirds to come to you.

Yes, bluebirds help make Bill Highhouse happy, too.

(Continued from page 59)

become trapped by ice on a tree branch after a sub-zero night. Seeing the bird flapping its wings but unable to fly itself, she enlisted the help of a co-worker who, using a tall ladder and a long pole, was able to release the bird. After it fell to the ground she gave it temporary shelter and called the United States Fish & Wildlife Research Center in nearby Laurel, MD. They in turn, called Larry who immediately agreed to take in the injured bird. He brought it home and he and his wife Olive helped the bird to recover. The bird’s legband showed it to be one that Larry had banded as a nestling last May!

We look forward to hearing YOUR bluebird tales! Write to the North American Bluebird Society, in care of BLUEBIRD TALES and tell us what YOU have done for the bluebirds!

* The same issue of Bird Watchers Digest printed a story called “Help the Bluebird: Build Nesting Boxes” by Larry Zeleny, which mentioned the North American Bluebird Society.
THE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

People have long speculated about the reasons some species of birds were able to increase their numbers significantly, while other species declined in population—many to the point of extinction. Why has the Starling prospered? What happened to the Passenger Pigeon? What is now happening to bluebirds?

Widespread or local weather patterns, habitat destruction, pesticides and many other factors affecting bird populations, as well as normal biological cycles, have always been mysterious, difficult to measure forces, greatly confounding conjecture. The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service, is designed to take as much of the mystery as possible out of bird population fluctuations and their possible causes.

In the past three decades we've had drastic change in land use, agricultural practices and environmental pollution. With expanding human populations we can anticipate even greater intensity of land use and alteration of wildlife habitat, making the gathering of baseline population data even more important. These data are crucial if we're to obtain an understanding of what the usual, or normative, bird populations are, as measured uniformly over a period of time. By knowing what is normal, we can infer that which is abnormal, and hence increase our ability to predict the factors mitigating for or against survival of many bird species. With the help of about 1200 volunteer observers this survey has been producing the only index of song bird populations ever attempted throughout North America.

The word survey is appropriate because the BBS attempts to establish a sample index, not a total count of bird populations. No effort is made on a BBS route to count as many birds as possible, as on Christmas Bird Counts or spring Big Days, or even to determine exact breeding populations as in the Audubon Breeding Bird Census. Because of the increased interest in all of these techniques, it is important to refer to each one properly. In any “survey” the valid negative data are as important as the positive. Statistical analysis of the data is possible because strict adherence to the rules provides comparable samples over a large area. Since these results are frequently used in policy making and environmental impact assessments, it is extremely important that the rules be followed closely.

History

In 1965 the Breeding Bird Survey idea was tested along 50 roadside routes in Maryland and 10 in Delaware to determine if the technique was feasible. Based on this pilot effort, the decision was made to sample the U.S. and Canada east of the Mississippi River. In 1966 about 600 routes were run in this area.

BLUEBIRD

Mary D. Janetatos

When the North American Bluebird Society came into being, numerous people across the country had been working for years to save the bluebirds. Most of the resources with the new society were the backbone of the old organization. For years, working for bluebirds had been a labor of love. As space became tight, their stories will be some reports given at the meeting were not included in the article on the last issue.

Pauline Wasserman reviewed the devastation of bluebirds during two winters in the Navarre area. Richard Tuttle told of his experiences with one of the more effective bluebird programs in the nation. The “bluebirding” was also the story of the new publication, “Bluebirds Digest”, January-February issue.

Tom and Joe Tait, together for bluebirds with their Washington, D.C. bluebird rescue jobs, told of putting up bird houses on golf courses.

I. Mark Martin spoke of help from Virginia Lion Clubs, their help for bluebirds.

In this instance we know of helping the little birds. Mary M. Albrecht of West Virginia made copies of “The Bluebird”, a newsletter for the society, and these began to appear in theバイク and newspaper offices of the bluebirding area, along with numerous other helpful articles.

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Coverage was expanded to include the Great Plains states and provinces in 1967 and the entire continent in 1968. Coverage has slowly grown to a level of approximately 1850 routes per year.

Methods

In order to apply statistical methods of analysis, the data to be analyzed must be gathered in accordance with certain standards. Probably most important of these is that there be no biases in the data. All habitats should be represented in proportion to their occurrence in North America. Good birding areas should not be intentionally over-sampled. Random selection of routes beforehand is essential to minimize this and other potential biases. Because any data being gathered are subject to natural variability and sampling error, a large sample size is needed to average out local variations and reduce the effects of sampling error. Other obvious requirements are a consistent sampling method, comparable observer expertise and similar weather conditions. The Breeding Bird Survey was established with all of these goals in mind.

A sampling scheme based on lati-longs (blocks of one degree of latitude and one degree of longitude—about 50 by 70 miles) was devised for the selection of survey routes. Throughout North America the number of routes per lati-long varies according to availability of qualified personnel but is uniform across a state or province. There are many such areas where the sampling density can be increased once all established routes are being run.

The routes were randomly drawn by picking starting points and direction of travel from a table of random numbers. Approximately 2300 routes have been drawn this way and every effort is made to see that as many of them as possible are run each year to ensure a large sample size. The routes are on secondary roads in order to minimize interference from traffic noise and danger to observers. Unfortunately, increased traffic on secondary roads has necessitated relocation of some routes.

Qualified observers are recruited in each...
state or province by a volunteer coordinator who is usually in contact with a large portion of the birding community. The coordinators receive copies of each year's results for their respective areas and often prepare summaries for publication. These dedicated people, many of whom also run several routes, deserve a great deal of thanks.

Observers are supplied with rules and all necessary forms and maps and are instructed to pick a day in June that is as close as possible to previous runs and that has good weather conditions. Each observer starts exactly 1/2 hour before local sunrise, counting and recording all birds detected in 3 minutes at the starting point. The counting is repeated at 49 more stops, each 1/2 mile apart. Only birds counted during the 50-minute stops are included in the totals. A route should take from 4 to 4 1/2 hours to complete. It is important to finish in this time-frame because on most mornings bird song decreases rapidly after the first 4 hours.

**Processing and Quality Controls**

When the routes are completed, the summary sheets (Fig. 1), field sheets and other data are sent to the Nongame Section of the Migratory Bird and Habitat Research Laboratory in Laurel, MD. Biologists and clerks edit the forms very carefully, comparing field sheets to summary sheets and questioning observers on any discrepancies or unverified observations of rare species. At this stage a code is entered to distinguish routes that, for one reason or another, cannot be used in statistical analyses, but are still retained for their distributional data. All data are transferred to magnetic tape and subjected to computer edit checks. The observers retain copies of their results to verify against computer print-outs which are sent to them for each route run. After the final corrections are made, three listings are produced, one sorted by individual route, one by state and province and one by species. These listings are available to the public and use of the data for appropriate research is encouraged.

**Ecological Stratification**

To detect small changes in the population of a species between years, it is helpful to group data for areas where the populations are fairly similar. These small, usually ecologically similar units can be combined into

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**Figure 2. Ecological Stratification of North America as used in Breeding Bird Survey analyses.**

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**MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD NORTHERN OREGON**

D.C. McCluskey

Bureau of Land Management
Salt Lake City, Utah

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This paper reports data collected by Mountain Bluebird Nesting Survey in Wallowa Counties, Oregon, during the spring and summer of 1978. Bluebird nest sites were searched for and data was observed. In a total of 25 nest sites, the forest-grassland ecotone and conifer forest types were involved.

A total of 25 nests were located during the study. Of these, 18 (75%) were located in the forest-grassland ecotone, while seven (25%) were located in the forest. Nesting made structures such as rock and stone fence supports. No boxes were involved in this study.

Tree species selected included Ponderosa Pine (13), Grand Fir (1), and Douglas Fir (1). All nests located were 2 feet along the forest-grassland ecotone and single-standing trees. No nests were located where a canopy cover greater than 49 feet high existed. None of the 1.3 acres in size or less.

Ground vegetation of each nest site was categorized by types, arid or mes Qty

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regions such as coastal plain, piedmont, and mountain, which in turn can be combined to obtain figures for a continental population index. Better measurement of change can be obtained by the use of ecological regions than by combining data on a state or province basis, because many species vary greatly in abundance in different parts of the same state or province.

Although it is difficult to subdivide the continent into ecological regions whose boundaries precisely define the distribution or abundance of a large number of bird species, an initial attempt has been made. The stratification plan used for the BBS analyses is shown in Figure 2. This plan is based on several published sources and seems to be an effective ecological stratification. It should be considered by anyone working with bird studies covering large areas of North America.

What Does The BBS Tell Us?

Access to a computer facility is extremely important to an effort as large as the Breeding Bird Survey. Not only does it permit the handling of an otherwise unwieldy amount of data, but it also permits the data to be examined in a variety of ways. Because each species of bird differs in detectability and preferences for roadside habitat, it is not possible to compare BBS data between or among species. However, the main purpose of the BBS is to detect changes in populations of all bird species encountered along the routes by establishing a yearly index which can be used to determine trends. It is hoped that, by detecting trends, we can determine why and to what degree, a species is declining, and management techniques can be employed before it becomes threatened or endangered.

Because changes in bird populations are almost always gradual, the change from one year to the next is rarely significant. By analyzing population changes over a period of years, it is possible to determine if any gradual trend is statistically significant. Analysis of the BBS data has shown that most species experience population fluctuations from year to year. However, these ups and downs do not indicate a long-term trend. On the other hand, many species appear to be increasing or decreasing at a significant rate when a decade or more of data are examined. Not only does BBS data tell us how these dynamic populations are changing, but it also serves as a baseline for the more stable species in case a sudden change occurs. Although the population appears lower for Eastern Bluebirds than it was 30 years ago, the BBS shows it to be remarkably stable despite some severe weather set-backs and competition for nesting sites from introduced species. Figure 3 shows that the bluebird displays the up and down pattern of a species well capable of recovering from periodic population decreases. The last two years give the impression of an overall downward trend, but the highly significant decrease in 1977 and the less severe one in 1978 can be attributed to two harsh winters in the East. Significant changes that do take place between any two successive years are almost always a result of abnormal weather.

When the controlling factors of a bird's population are suspected, the BBS data can be used to show if a correlation exists. One of the strongest correlations in the bird world is that between winter weather and Carolina Wrens. Figure 4 shows the BBS population index of Carolina Wren east of the Mississippi River from BBS data.

Figure 3. Population Index of Eastern Bluebird for North America east of the Mississippi River from BBS data.

Figure 4. Population Index of Carolina Wren for states east of the Mississippi River from BBS data plotted against winter temperatures for Washington, D.C.
WARREN COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

BLUEBIRD NESTING BOX DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>BOXES</th>
<th>OCC'PD</th>
<th>EGGS</th>
<th>YOUNG</th>
<th>FLEDGING</th>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24</td>
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<th>OCC'PD</th>
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<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
is familiar to all part of the country they
the Willamette Valley, revolution in farming
at the stick of escalating commercialization, combined with
mitigate prices offered for
used to reduce
in land in order to gain
in the production of
- system became increasing Electric powered water
- electrically powered water
in use for
the Valley, making possible large expanses of
the production of
result of all the above in-
most of their former
and have come to take on
ambiance of highly mechanized, industries
now highly diversified, farming practices have sprung up in the Valley, as farm implement outlets.
many less farm-related sprung up in the Valley.
arms now go in for
- large acreages of row
- sweet corn, potatoes, broccoli
- Berry crops, including
- blackberries, and raspberry
an important role. There are crowded farms, where such items as
- and mint. Nut and
- a conspicuous aspect of
- the Willamette Valley lands
- especially cherries,
- and filberts. The Willamette
- Oregon at the top as the jumping states of the nation in
- of vetch and grass seed.
- morphosis of Willamette
- to its present phase has
- in addition to vast
- pasture and idle land acre
- the riddance of a major
- the grand old cavity
- broad-leaf maples that
- in these areas would be more beneficial than in others.

Birds are constantly appearing outside
their normal ranges, and in many cases these
are preludes to legitimate range expansions.
The BBS is an excellent tool to keep track of
both the increases in numbers and the current ranges of expanding species. The two
most conspicuous recent additions to North American birdlife are the Cattle Egret and, in
the East, the House Finch. Both are increasing
and spreading rapidly. The BBS will provide a fairly precise measure of the
increases of both species. As dramatic as either of these, though probably less well known, is the
southward spread of the Barn Swallow breeding range (Fig. 6), which between
1966 and 1973 progressed about 150 miles
south. This expansion is continuing and will probably result in Barn Swallows breeding
over the entire Southeast.

Population changes within a smaller area, such as a state or group of states or eco-
region can be determined and compared to
trends for larger areas. Comments from blue-
bird enthusiasts in the Midwest that populations
were down drastically after the winter of 1977-78 were supported by the BBS. States
and provinces showing a 50% or greater drop in 1978 (Table 1) form a core where
bluebirds apparently suffered more in the
second of two hard winters, despite the fact that the entire eastern population dropped
more the first winter (Fig. 3). Not only did
the remainder of the range remain stable the
second winter, but some states even showed increases.

![Figure 6. Invasion of the southeastern states by nesting Barn Swallows. BBS data show southern limits of breeding range in 1966 and in 1973.](image)

Table 1. Eastern Bluebird totals for several midwestern states and Ontario using only BBS routes run all four years.

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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<td>Illinois</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>117</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Indiana</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
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</tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 873
- 827
- 432
- 162

Populations of many species cannot be subjected to most forms of analysis because of
small numbers or limited BBS coverage over the range of the species. For example,
the sparse coverage over much of the West makes it difficult to analyze species such as Mountain and Western Bluebirds,
whose entire range is in the West. It is hoped that a gradual increase in coverage of
western birds will contribute a sufficient amount of reliable baseline data to allow
observation of long-term trends.

An interesting sideline of the BBS is the
contribution it has made to distributional records by getting a large number of birders
out in areas not otherwise visited, especially
in June, when most birding seems to cease.
At this time, BBS surveys have accounted for many unusual records within
states. At least three “State firsts” have been recorded: a Gray Kingbird in Maryland, a
Great-tailed Grackle in Arkansas and a
Cassin’s Sparrow in South Dakota.

Help is Needed

BBS coverage is poorest in the least
populated parts of North America; Nevada,
Utah, Idaho, Wyoming and parts of adjacent
states are and probably will always be most
desperately in need of increased coverage.
There are also many smaller areas of sparse
coverage throughout the continent, and
replacements are continually needed for
observers that drop out for one reason or
another. Research projects and summer
vacations often put qualified observers in
areas where help is needed during June. It is
desirable, of course, that each route be run
for several years, but even one year is better
than none.

Routes can be run by anyone satisfying
the necessary qualifications. Observers
(Continued on page 87)
A BLUEBIRD FEEDER

Col. W. R. Robertson, USAF-Ret.

American Goldfinch*
Common Grackle*
Blue Jay
Slate-colored Junco*
Golden-crowned Kinglet*
Ruby-crowned Kinglet*
Mockingbird
Pine Siskin*
Chipping Sparrow
House Sparrow
Field Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow*

For the last sixteen years, since my retirement, my wife and I have longed to have bluebirds nest in our yard and to have them visit our bird feeder. The first wish was relatively easy to attain. As subscribers to the Purple Martin Capital News, Griggsville, Ill., we read Dr. Lawrence Zeleny's instructions about building nesting boxes for bluebirds. Since 1964 we have regularly had bluebirds nesting in our yard. We live just north of Atlanta, Georgia.

But attracting these birds to a feeder was quite another matter. At first, we did not know that lots of birds have soft bills and that quite a few of them cannot eat mixed grain or sunflower seeds. We never could attract bluebirds, Mockingbirds, wrens, juncos, Brown Thrashers, or any of the warblers with this fare.

Next, we tried feeding suet and corn bread. The suet brought in woodpeckers, nuthatches, and chickadees; but we did not know how long it took for some wild birds to get used to a new feeder or a strange dish. The corn bread spoiled long before it attracted new birds. We quit weeks or months too soon.

Finally, three years ago I delivered a nesting box to an Atlanta resident who was actually feeding bluebirds. She called them in with a bluebird-like whistle and fed them a mixture of peanut butter, one part, and plain raw corn meal, two parts. She used an open basket hanging from an eight foot high gutter with a small dish inside to hold the mixture. (Using an electric hand-held mixer the peanut butter and corn mean soon became a uniform and crumbly mixture.)

Now we are happily feeding the following long list of birds on our high back porch, just outside our breakfast room window:

Starling
Brown Thrasher
Tufted Titmouse
Magnolia Warbler*
Pine Warbler*
Downy Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Carolina Wren

Our Rufous-sided Towhee does not visit our feeders, but picks up much of the food dropped on the ground under the feeders.

As a feeding dish I recommend using the small tray that meat is packed in by

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your favorite supermarket. Mount this on a wide board base about 7½ inches wide by 11 inches long with thumb tacks or push pins. Punch drainage holes in the dish to let rain water leak out. This arrangement can be hung from the gutter or under the eaves using suitable galvanized wire and screw eyes. If the gutter or eaves are too high and wind causes the feeder to bang against the house, try using a shelf, or hanging-basket, bracket attached to the house above your favorite window. (My feeders have a second board, mounted on 3/8 inch diameter dowel pins about 7 inches above the base board. This cover keeps off most of the rain and may provide shelter from attack by small hawks.) The feeder should be at least five feet above the ground or porch to prevent house cats from attacking the birds. With no support under the feeder it may be safe from squirrels.

I like to use galvanized stove pipe as a squirrel guard mounted around a support pipe and below the feeder. The three inch diameter stove pipe may need to be greased to keep squirrels off but the four and five inch sizes are too large and smooth for squirrels to climb.

The bluebirds that were raised in our nesting box are almost certain our principal bluebird visitors. There are eight of these birds and they come in at least four times a day. This has been going on all fall and into January. We are thrilled every time these beautiful birds come to feed.

Give yourself a treat. Install a bluebird nesting box more than 60 feet from any building (to discourage House Sparrows) and start feeding peanut butter and corn meal. With any luck you will be very glad you did.

(Continued from page 561)

Valley than are the bluebirds. Yet they depend upon cavities for nesting just as do the bluebirds and are much less able to defend themselves against House Sparrows. In any contest for possession of a nest cavity than are the bluebirds. Furthermore they have but half the breeding potential of the bluebirds with but a single brood a year against the bluebird's two, and in a situation where egg clutch sizes are about equal. Just where are the swallows finding sufficient nest cavities to keep their thriving population? We have work to do to find the answers.

One has little trouble deciding what to do with the nests of the chattering House Sparrows. One finds in one's bluebird nest boxes. But what does one do with those of such beautiful and beneficial birds as the swallows? Often we put up extra nest boxes for the swallows so they will leave those of the bluebirds alone. But this raises the question of whether such actions only multiply our future problems with the swallows. We are not yet quite ready to trade our swallows for the snakes that plague bluebird nest boxes in the last, but given a little more time who can tell what our mood may be?
NESTING BOX RECORD CARD PROGRAM

NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

These instructions will serve to guide persons participating in the nesting box record card program in proper use of the record cards. Please keep in mind that the value of the record cards for research purposes is totally dependent upon accurate reporting of data.

Please read these instructions carefully. Understanding the system will make your job much easier. Information about the nesting box trail (location, habitat type, nesting box type, mounting, etc.) can be filled in at the beginning of the season. Please be sure to take individual measurements at each nesting box rather than assuming that entrance hole size, mounting height, etc., are uniform for all your nesting boxes.

The following instructions are numbered to relate to numbered sections on the nesting box record card. If you have any question about the instructions, please write to the Society for a prompt answer to your specific problem. If you submit a record card where a question exists about proper reporting of data, please attach a note that includes the nesting box number prominently displayed at the top of the note.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Nesting Box Trail Number. This code is determined by the Society. It includes a two-digit code for the State or Province in which the trail is located, and a four-digit code for the trail number assigned to the person monitoring the trail. Trail numbers are assigned by State or Province in the sequence in which the monitor registers the trail with the Society. A sample of the 8-digit code will be furnished at time of trail registration. These 8-digit codes are not transferable, and apply only to the trail for which they were issued. If a trail is expanded in length, the monitor must notify the Society to determine if a new code is required. If the trail is expanded in length, the monitor must notify the Society to determine if a new code is required. A list of States and Provinces and a list of physiographic regions follow, with the numeric codes applying to each.

STATE & PROVINCE CODES

01 Alabama  97 Bermuda
02 Alaska  11 British Columbia
03 Alberta  12 British Honduras
04 Arizona  14 California
05 Arkansas  17 Colorado
18 Connecticut  55 Nevada
21 Delaware  36 New Brunswick
22 District of Columbia  57 Newfoundland
25 Florida  38 New Hampshire
26 Franklin,  59 New Jersey
Northwest Territories  60 New Mexico
27 Georgia  61 New York
29 Guatemala  62 Nicaragua
32 Honduras  63 North Carolina
33 Idaho  64 North Dakota
34 Illinois  65 Nova Scotia
35 Indiana  66 Ohio
36 Iowa  67 Oklahoma
38 Kansas  68 Ontario
95 Kentucky  69 Oregon
87 Pennsylvania
40 Latvia  75 Prince Edward Island
42 Louisiana  76 Quebec
43 Mackenzie,  77 Rhode Island
Northwest Territories  78 Saskatchewan
44 Maine  80 South Carolina
45 Manitoba  81 South Dakota
46 Maryland  82 Tennessee
47 Massachusetts  83 Texas
48 Mexico  84 Utah
49 Michigan  85 Vermont
50 Minnesota  86 Virginia
51 Mississippi  87 Washington
52 Missouri  88 West Virginia
53 Montana  89 Wisconsin
54 Nebraska  90 Wyoming
93 Yukon

Physiographic Region or Strata Designations. Unused numbers have been reserved for possible future subdivision of strata.

01. Sub-tropical
02. Florida Section
03. Lower Coastal Plain
04. Upper Coastal Plain
05. Mississippi Alluvial Plain
06. West Gulf Coastal Plain
07. Nueces Plain
08. Glaciated Coastal Plain
10. Northern Piedmont
11. Southern Piedmont
12. Southern New England
13. Ridge and Valley
14. Highlander Rim Section
15. Lexington Plain
16. Great Lakes Plain
17. Wisconsin Driftless Area
18. St. Lawrence Plain
19. Ozark-Quachita
20. Great Lakes Pine Belt

Literature Cited


Stalia, Spring 1979

Volume 1, Number 2
American beauty-berry (Callicarpa americana) in October. The plants may also prove to be nesting boxes in winter, when to erect bluebird boxes is virtually unlimited. Nesting stations will be present in an increasing total acreage. The industry will do a great deal to promote the use of nesting boxes on its land, and the Audubon Society will supply nesting box kits for use in the early stages of this study. A large distribution of about one pair of nesting boxes (10-15 acres) could be expected within 2 years. The pine plantations in the South, where the nesting box program is expected to succeed, should be capable of producing 30 million young bluebirds in the first year, with each box expected to have greater role in the declining population of adult birds.

To test this hypothesis is for conservationists to begin making Nesting Box Trails.

*Note*

We wish to thank Weyerhaeuser for their financial support, and the Hilburn for allowing us to

1. All of land to the right bottom of diagram.

Sialia, Spring 1979
Volume 1, Number 2
RURAL-OPEN. Human habitats usually surrounded by large lots, farming areas, woodlots or forests and fields. Would not include "tract homes", mobile home parks, or intensely developed areas. Two to ten acre lots might be the rule, and except for occasional stores or businesses a general lack of development is apparent.

FARMLAND. Working farms are the rule, but might include roadside strips of residential use, bordering on working agricultural land.

PARKLAND. Could occur in any of the above areas. Designates a use by humans that could be disruptive to wildlife. Could include woodland, camping areas, ballfields, playgrounds, picnic groves, horseback riding trails and other outdoor recreational uses. Could be a city park, suburban recreation center, rural conservation area or Scout summer camp, or National Forest containing various human use zones.

If you are uncertain about these designations, attach a note to your report and let the Society help you with the decision.

5, 6, 7. PASTURE, PLANTED FIELDS, EDGE TYPE. The nesting box may be mounted between two possible choices. If this is the case, mark both choices.

8. CLEARCUT AREAS OR FALLOW FIELDS. The "age" of the area is the number of growing seasons since harvest last took place. A field cropped in 1978 and fallow in 1979 would be a first-year field. A burned area would be dated from the year of burning.

9. NESTING BOX TYPE. The types listed are pictured in the Society's literature, and refer to design type, not to precise dimensions.

10. MATERIAL. If "Other material" is marked, provide a description in the space provided.

11. SIZE. If the floor area falls between sizes shown, use next larger size indicated.

12. ENTRANCE HOLE DIAMETER. Be precise. Weather, other animals and birds increase hole sizes over time. Hole size should be measured at beginning of season, and periodically through the season, especially if predators/competitor problems arise. Note any change in hole size under the remarks column.

13. DEPTH. This measurement should be taken from the bottom of the entrance hole to the top of the floor of the box before nesting material is placed on the floor.

15. Bottom of Hole to Ground. Don't make adjustments for sloping ground. Height is the distance a predator would have to climb, so measure from base of post, pole or tree.

16. Direction of Entrance Hole. Be precise. Compass is required because guesses are frequently off by up to 45°. Compasses are divided into 360°. For the purpose of record cards, North (which is 360° or 0°) covers \( \frac{1}{2} \) the distance to NW and \( \frac{1}{2} \) the distance to NE, or from 337.5° to 022.5°. The degree equivalents covered by the eight compass points recognized by the Society are:

- N  337.5 to 22.5
- NE 22.5 to 67.5
- E  67.5 to 122.5
- SE 122.5 to 157.5
- S  157.5 to 202.5
- SW 202.5 to 247.5
- W  247.5 to 292.5
- NW 292.5 to 337.5

17. Nearest Tree or large Shrub. This should be a tree or shrub visible from the entrance hole by young birds prior to their first flight. It is more important to face the nesting box toward such a target than worrying about compass direction.

18. Bottom of Hole/Top of Eggs. Be gentle as well as precise. If measurements cannot be taken for some reason, simply leave this area blank. This measurement is important in determining the effectiveness of certain nesting box design features, including devices to protect the nest from opossum and raccoons. In taking this and all other measurements, use a solid ruler, folding carpenter's rule, a metal measuring tape. Do not use cloth or paper measuring tapes. They shrink and stretch and are not reliable for statistical work. Measurements on the even inch (say 5") belong in the next higher bracket, in this case, 5" to 6".

20. Provide information about what the nesting box is mounted to, not how it is mounted. This information will be helpful in assessing predator control methods.

21. Information about protective devices is provided in Sialia and in the book "The Bluebird." If you use some other device, please tell about it.

22. Information about other types of post/pipe lubricants found to be effective would be appreciated. Effectiveness after being washed by rain should be determined.

23. AS AN EXPERIMENTAL METHOD of predator control, some investigators add hot red pepper to lubricants on posts & pipes. Most crystals (paradichlorobenzene and naphtalene) are also being investigated, but little is known about possible harm to the birds if vapors are transmitted into the nesting box. Research into this form of snake and mammal control should involve careful and cautious procedures, to determine the effective rate of use of crystals (weight per square yard) applied to the ground about the nesting box. Data should be kept regarding temperature, rainfall, and any other factor tending to dilute or destroy the crystals. If you want to experiment with this material, begin by using very limited amounts of the crystals well away from the nesting box. If predator control is not obtained, move closer to

that fledged bluebirds. A total of three infertile eggs were laid; only one infertile egg was abandoned in 1978.

In 1978 three boxes were used on Area I, and one was used there in 1977. The same pair used the same box in 1977 and 1978 on Area II. Area II's six pairs in 1977 and three pairs in 1978. Bluebirds were seen in the winter. Nesting began in April on both areas in 1977 and ended in late July (1977) and early August (1978) on Area I. Three pairs fledged September 1, 1978 on Area II. Eggs or nestlings was counted. The actual fledging was noted. Nesting was due to a certain number of eggs was found empty, we assumed the birds had successfully occurred.

Most nests were constructed of grass needles, but some small twigs were used. One consisted entirely of small roots. Rattlesnakes were seen in the areas. Nest caves were used by House Sparrows and Bluebirds.
boxes were visited periodically during the morning or late evening from May through September. A box was scored by lifting the front and peering through the opening with the aid of a pen-light. How many adults or nestlings were found? In 1977, visits averaged every 2.7 days for Area I and every 17.4 days in Area II. The average time between visits was reduced to 8.5 days (Area I) and 26 days (Area II).

If nests were repaired or replaced, the boxes were used during the nesting material between 1977-1978 nesting seasons. However, material was not removed during the nesting season. Wasps and ants were sprayed and removed from nests (Zeleny 1976).

During the study period, six nests were found on Area I and seven on Area II in 1977. Area I had five nests protected, and Area II had nine protected and 36 young. Average survival rate was 1.2 (1977) and 4.6 (1978) in both years for Area II. The survival rate varied from 3.7 to 5.0. None of the eight eggs were abandoned before the end of June. Two nests were placed on pine trees during 1977 and 1978.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>2. Box No</td>
<td>00212a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Observer</td>
<td>R.M. JEFFERSON</td>
</tr>
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<td>4. Land Use</td>
<td>Farm land</td>
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<td>Deciduous Woods</td>
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<td>6. If pasture</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
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<td>7. If cropland</td>
<td>Tobacco</td>
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<td>8. Age of fallow field</td>
<td>First year</td>
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<td>9. Nesting box type</td>
<td>NA B.S. Standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Material</td>
<td>3/4&quot; Cedar</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I.S. Floor area</td>
<td>4&quot; x 4&quot;</td>
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<td>12. Entrance Hole Size</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Depth Bottom of hole to floor</td>
<td>8&quot; to 10&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Roof shape</td>
<td>Flat</td>
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<td>15. Bottom of hole to ground</td>
<td>Less than 3 ft</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Compass direction hole faces</td>
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<td>17. Nearest tree or large shrub</td>
<td>Less than 25 ft</td>
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<td>18. Bottom of hole to top of eggs</td>
<td>Less than 4&quot;</td>
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<td>19. Opening style</td>
<td>4&quot; to 5&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Mounting method</td>
<td>Wood post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Protective devices</td>
<td>Wood raccoon guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Frequency of lubrication</td>
<td>Once each week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Scent masking method</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Banding data</td>
<td>5-26 1st Brood (2d Brood on back)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shalia Spring 1976

Volume 1, Number 2

Two clearcuts, Tontitown and West Olive, were made in 1975. Both were part of the 1976 nesting box use program. The Tontitown clearcut was 240 acres and was located near the Mississippi River. The West Olive clearcut was 210 acres and was located near the Pearl River. Both clearcuts had a variety of bird species, including songbirds, hawks, and owls. The results of the nesting box use program were promising, with a high percentage of successful nesting attempts. The study continued in 1977 with the addition of a third clearcut, the Mill Creek clearcut, which was 300 acres and was located near the Mississippi River. The Mill Creek clearcut was the largest of the three and had the highest number of nesting box use cases. The results of the study were reported in the subsequent volumes of the Journal of Wildlife Management. The study was discontinued in 1980 due to budget cuts.
the box with small amounts of crystals, or increase the rate of use while remaining some distance away. At all times, carefully look for any affect whatsoever on the birds.

24. Banding data. This is not a substitute for records required by the Bird Banding Laboratory, USFWS, or by the Canadian Wildlife Service. Only licensed master bird banders or persons working under their direction may band bluebirds. These data are desired to assist in the Society’s population studies, and to allow a quicker response when the Society receives information about banded bluebirds.

25. Monitoring Entries. One record card is used per season unless the number of visits exceeds the number of lines on the form. Do not use separate forms for second or third broods, but continue listings without interruption.

26. Try to keep entries as brief as possible, using numeric listings in the comments column whenever possible. However, don’t avoid reporting findings for which there is no numeric code. Everything noted is important. See sample form for guidance.

(Continued from page 79)

should, of course, have a full knowledge of bird identification and distribution in their area. Knowledge of bird songs and calls is the most crucial factor as the short time spent at each stop means that most birds recorded on the BBS are heard and not seen. Severe hearing deficiencies brought on by advanced age or medical problems can render the results of a route unusable. As mentioned earlier, valid negative data are an important part of the BBS, thus zeros generated by an observer’s lack of knowledge or inability to hear can seriously affect the results.

Generally, state and provincial coordinators find qualified people and refer them to the BBS office. A qualified person can also contact the BBS office directly to find out if a route is available within a reasonable distance. A person of uncertain ability may want to ask about routes already being run nearby on which it is possible to accompany the observer. Interested persons in either category are encouraged to write to the Nongame Section, Migratory Bird and Habitat Research Laboratory, Laurel, Maryland 20811.

Editor’s Note:

In the interest of protecting against increasing the “bias” of BBS data, Mr. Bystrak has asked us to ask you not to saturate a known BBS route with bluebird nesting boxes. Such a saturation might cause the number of bluebirds along that route to increase significantly, thereby rather mysteriously altering the historical record of the species. A sudden increase in bluebird reports can make the route highly suspect. In this situation, a dramatic increase in bluebird populations along the sample area would not mean a commensurate increase in bluebirds in the region—it would be a local phenomenon only. Therefore bluebird data along the BBS route would be meaningless.
Dear Editor:

I'm interested in becoming a licensed bird bander. Will the Society sponsor me for this project?

Several Readers

Dear Readers:

We'd love to. But have you heard about red tape lately? Here's our problem.

There are presently about 2,000 licensed master bird banders in the United States and Canada. Licenses are issued only to qualified and competent individuals and organizations.

The Bird Banding Laboratory (where all records are kept) is already understaffed and over-worked dealing with this number of master banders.

Master banders are allowed to sub-permit others under their supervision. The master bander is responsible for the sub's actions and for collecting and filing annual reports, records, etc. This system accomplishes two things: It reduces the paperwork load at the banding office and it assures competent supervision over neophyte banders.

The Society has requested, and the Bird Banding Laboratory has agreed, to supply the Society with mailing address labels for all licensed bird banders. A letter will be sent shortly asking banders to cooperate with Society members by banding birds on nesting box trails this year. Banders will also be encouraged to sub-permit Society members if they feel they are competent and careful.

As master bander permits are retired, sub-permits are given the opportunity to advance to master bander status. Thus, Society members who wish to do so, may have an opportunity to work toward a banding permit while gaining experience through a sort of apprenticeship program.

Write the Society if you are interested in this program, if you did not indicate your desire on the membership survey form.

SIALIA welcomes the correspondence of its membership. Bluebird Express should become a forum for all who are interested in communicating their ideas and actions concerning bluebird conservation. We will attempt to publish a wide range of views in a responsible manner. Keep your letters coming!
INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING
FIRST BROOD NESTING REPORT

The First Brood Nesting Report is designed to measure the number of pairs of bluebirds returning to nesting box trails during the early portion of the breeding season. For the purpose of this report, the first brood period is defined as the first five weeks (35 calendar days) after bluebirds commence depositing nesting material in the nesting box. Thus, if in your area nest building commenced on April 5, 1979, the end of the reporting period would be May 9, and only nests containing at least one egg by that date would be included in the report.

First Brood Nesting Reports not only measure the real changes in bluebird populations on nesting box trails, they also provide clues about winter survival rates on a region-by-region basis throughout North America. To gain this knowledge, apples must be compared with apples, not apples with oranges. It is important to compare nesting attempts in the same group of nesting boxes from one year to the next. If your bluebird trail was expanded by adding boxes either within the trail or by extending the trail, these factors should be known and taken into account.

For the purpose of this report, a nesting attempt is deemed to have taken place if, during the reporting period, at least one egg was laid in a nest. If a nest is built and abandoned without egg-laying having taken place, it will not be included in the report. Likewise, if a nest is built during the report period but the first egg is not laid until after the close of the report period, it can not be counted as a first-brood record and should not be included. The only exception to the one-egg rule is if the female is found dead during the nest-building period, and the nest is abandoned by the male.

To measure real changes in bluebird numbers, it is necessary to exclude from consideration changes brought about by management activities (enlarging or reducing the opportunities for nesting, or moving nesting boxes to substantially new locations). Figure 1 gives an example of a nesting box trail that was enlarged within itself. Squares indicate nesting boxes available during the 1978 first-brood period. The total number of those nesting boxes is entered on line one of the reporting form (Figure 3). A line drawn through one nesting box represents a damaged box that was not replaced (or a box moved to a new location). Circles indicate new boxes mounted after the 1978 first-brood period. A dot within a square indicates the box contained at least one egg during the 1978 first-brood period. A cross within a square or circle indicates at least one egg was deposited after the 1978 first-brood period. Finally, a double line in either a square or circle indicates at least one egg was deposited in a nesting box during the 1979 first-brood period.

Figure 2 gives an example of an extension to an existing nesting box trail. It has been expanded into totally new territory away from (although adjacent to) existing territories. Some of your bluebirds may relocate to these new boxes, but it is more likely that these boxes will house an expanding population or will be used by bluebirds not previously housed on your trail. In Figure 2, the same system of legends have been used to measure nesting activity.

The sample reporting form gives an example of how to accurately enter the data from this nesting box trail. Using this information, analysts will compare the data with those from other trails within a specific region, and from region to region. A preliminary report will appear in the Summer issue of SIALIA.

If you have doubts about your trail situation, make a map similar to the ones shown here and mark it in a similar manner. Submit your map to the Society and a report will be constructed, with a copy returned for your records. If this is the first year of your trail operation, or if you do not have accurate data for last year, disregard the questions that cannot
be answered and provide answers only for those questions that can be accurately responded to.

A final note. Persons who have trails in widely separated locations should file more than one trail report (unless the two locations are being linked this year). Also, while the Society is only requesting data for bluebirds, you may file separate reports for other species if you wish.

Figure 1. Nesting box trail layout showing growth within the trail, and legends indicating nesting activity.

Figure 2. Nesting box trail layout showing growth outside or as an extension to the trail. Legends have same meaning as Figure 1.

begin with the next issue. This is an article about mounting tips and mounting techniques, and was written upon the experience. Share “secrets” with other trail managers. The next issue will be “pop-up” and get them and help the people have the mounting arrangements materials. Share the “unbiased” benefit of other members.

Membership Survey

With the winning membership interest, 600 members. These returned and tabled 300. submitted by others, volunteers were excluded so as not to introduce an "unbiased" membership.

About half the about the Society's efforts, and one through a newsletter. Ninety members total of 250 others in organizations formed three such members. 110 individual sections listed with various leading the way in 64 different Audubon, ornithological societies.

Table 1. Options of SIALIA.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>113</td>
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<td>113</td>
<td>B. Reading</td>
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<tr>
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<td>C. Thorne</td>
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<td>D. Tech setup</td>
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<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>E. Amoody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>F. Eleven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sialia, Spring 1979
FIRST BROOD NESTING REPORT
NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY

Mr.
Observer: Mrs.

Miss

Address

City County State ZIP

Please complete and return this form by June 1st. Your promptness will be appreciated, and will make your data available for compilation in Sialia, Summer issue.

NOTICE: PLEASE READ THE ACCOMPANYING INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE FILLING OUT THIS FORM.

PART ONE — 1978 vs. 1979

1. Number of nesting boxes on your bluebird trail during first-brood period of 1978 (first 35 days of nesting season).

2. Number of nesting boxes containing at least one egg during the 1978 first-brood period.

3. How many nesting boxes reported in answer number 1, or their direct replacements, were available during the 1979 first-brood period?

4. How many nesting boxes reported in answer number 3 contained at least one egg during the 1979 first-brood period?

PART TWO — GROWTH WITHIN TRAIL

5. How many nesting boxes were added within your bluebird trail after the 1978 first-brood period?

6. Of the number reported in answer 5, how many contained at least one egg in the latter part of the 1978 nesting season?

7. Of the number reported in answer 5, how many were available during the 1979 first-brood period, including direct replacements?

8. Of the number reported in answer 7, how many contained at least one egg during the 1979 first-brood period?

Figure 3. Sample First Brood Nesting Report Form. Form is properly filled out to record information indicated by Figures 1 and 2. Trail and LATI-LONG Block numbers are issued by the Society, and should be left blank if the observer has not yet been issued the numbers.

Sialia, Spring 1979
PART THREE — GROWTH OUTSIDE TRAIL

9. If you extended your nesting box trail since the 1978 first-brood period, how many new nesting boxes did you mount?

10. Of the number reported in answer 9, how many contained at least one egg during the latter part of the 1978 nesting season?

11. How many of the boxes reported in answer 9, or their direct replacements, were available during the 1979 first-brood period?

12. Of the number reported in answer 11, how many contained at least one egg during the 1979 first-brood period?

PART FOUR — OTHER NEEDED FACTS

13. If dead adult bluebirds were found inside nesting boxes prior to the start of nest-building this year, please show number found.

14. Do bluebirds usually winter in your area? Yes □ No □

15. Did you notice bluebirds in your area this past winter? Yes □ No □

16. Did freezing rain occur during the winter that would cause berries on shrubs and trees to be coated with ice for more than two consecutive days? Yes □ No □

17. Have you noticed any conditions or environmental changes in your trail area since the 1978 nesting season, that could affect the number of bluebirds using your nesting box trail? Yes □ No □

If yes, please provide written details.

N A B S Trail # 46-04-0027 LATH-LONG Block 391 N 0765 W

NOTE: NESTING STARTED 10 DAYS LATE THIS YEAR DUE TO WET, COLD PERIOD IN EARLY APRIL.

TRAIL LOCATED ON RTE. 198 2 MILES TO 1 MILE EAST OF LAUREL AROUND PERIMETER AIRPORT.

Please mail completed report, before June 1st if possible, in envelope marked “FIRST BROOD REPORT” to the NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY, Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906. Thank you for taking part in this research project.

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Hubert W. Prescott

Mountain Bluebirds of Oregon
D.C. McCluskey

Bluebird Tales
Mary D. Janetatos

Bluebird Express: an Arizona Journal
Jon Boone

Organizing a Save the Bluebirds Committee

PROFILE: William H. Blystone, M.D.
Bluebirds Come to the Piedmont
The Breeding Bird Survey
Danny Bystrak

A Bluebird Feeder
Col. W.R. Robertson

Nesting Box Record

First Brood Nesting
BLUEBIRD POSTURE

Understanding Bluebird Behavior

Figure A.

Figure B.

Figure C.

The postures bluebirds display are important to their survival and provide clues so that we can better understand their behavior. Figure A shows a basic maintenance activity, BILL WIPING. Maintenance activities occur to enhance the birds’ general health, its agility and its efficiency. A BILL WIPING display is quite common, with the bluebird scraping the bill several times from base to tip, using both sides of the perch. The bill is kept clean and well-honed at the same time. With its bill a bluebird can reach, and clean, all parts of its body except the head and neck. These latter areas are maintained by the feet, which in turn are cleaned by the bill. Figure B illustrates another maintenance activity, SUNNING. Bluebirds usually spread both wings, turning their head to one side. Aside from the obvious contribution to body health, much evidence exists this activity, as well as most other maintenance displays, play a large part in reinforcing social bonds. For example, bluebirds on a territory have often been seen sunning together.

Figure C represents TURNING-AWAY, or appeasement behavior, with the bird on the right displaying a much greater degree of submissiveness. This posture is quite frequent during courtship. If, after the male feeds the female, one or both birds TURN-AWAY from each other, one or both demonstrate a fairly weak escape intention, giving the bird(s) a nonaggressive appearance and “quelling” any perception of attack.

We are grateful for the work of David C. Krieg and others in developing this feature. We especially acknowledge Krieg’s “The Behavioral Patterns of the Eastern Bluebird,” New York State Museum and Science Service Bulletin No. 415, 1971.
Founded in 1978, THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY is an incorporated non-profit organization determined to increase the populations of the three species of bluebirds on this continent. Inasmuch as the populations of these birds have diminished due to the maladroit actions of human beings, as well as other natural disasters, the primary objective of the SOCIETY is to educate all who will listen about the importance of preserving these singular creatures in their native environment.

Toward this end, the SOCIETY will work, within the bounds of effective conservation, to study those obstacles impeding bluebird recovery; to publish results of those studies; to promote ideas and actions which might reduce the effect of those obstacles; and to obtain a more complete knowledge about bluebird ecology, in the hope of learning more about the ecology of humankind.

Memberships: Student (under 21) and Senior (over 60), $7.50; Regular, $10; Sustaining, $30; Supporting, $50; Contributing, $100; Corporate, $100; Donor, $250. Group membership rates available upon application. Amounts over $5 are tax deductible.

Address: North American Bluebird Society
Box 6295
Silver Spring, MD 20906