

Sialia

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Sialia means bluebirds. Hence the title of this journal. Technically, **sialia** is the Latinized, neuter plural version of the Greek word **sialls**, a noun meaning a "kind of bird." Since the Eastern Bluebird was the first bluebird classified by Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), he gave it the species name **sialls**, though he placed it in the genus **Motacilla** which is now reserved for the wagtails. It was William Swainson (1789-1855), who, in 1827, decided that the bluebirds needed a genus of their own within the thrush family (Turdidae). He selected the generic name **Sialia** which he simply adapted from the species name **sialls** which Linnaeus had used. Therefore, the scientific name for the Eastern Bluebird is **Sialia sialls** (pronounced see-ahl'-ee-ah see'-ahl-iss). Similarly, the Western Bluebird and Mountain Bluebird, the two other species within the genus, were named **Sialia mexicana** and **Sialia currucoides** (coo-roo-coy-dees) respectively. Their species names are descriptive of their locations. All three bluebird species are native only to the North American continent, although each inhabits different regions generally separated by the Rocky Mountains and by altitudinal 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 juvenal 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 that this theme will remind all about the plight of the bluebird, and will stimulate action which will allow this beautiful creature to prosper.

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Sialia

The Quarterly Journal
About Bluebirds

Volume 4, Number 3
Summer 1982
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COVER

The cover silkscreen of an Eastern Bluebird is by Margaret Whittemore of Sarasota, Florida.

Sialia welcomes the submission of articles, artwork and photographs for publication. Although this journal is dedicated primarily to the bluebird, material relating to all native cavity nesting species will be considered. Manuscripts should be neatly typed and double-spaced. All material submitted for publication is subject to editing or rewriting. Include a duplicate copy if you wish to proof the manuscript before publication. All manuscripts will be acknowledged. Black and white glossy photographs are preferred. Print the subject, names of individuals pictured, photographer and return address on back of each photograph. Before preparing tables, graphs or other display material, please check with the editor. Art is welcome and should be in black pen-and-ink. We do not assume responsibility for manuscripts, photographs or art submitted. The editor's address is 10617 Graeoloch Road, Laurel, Maryland 20707.

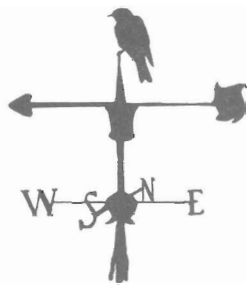
Presidential Points

Jeanne Price

It was a pitiful sight! The tiny bird was sitting with closed eyes among his dead brothers and sisters in a bluebird box. I had called Bob Hahn, who bands all our birds on the Gunston Hall Plantation Bluebird Trail, and told him that we had not seen the male Eastern Bluebird for days and the female was coming less frequently, even though the babies had been hatched a full week. I had become alarmed while watching the box to find that she let as much as two hours pass between feeding trips.

Bob, a teacher, decided to take the surviving nestling with him. With the bird in a cage on his desk, he had no trouble remembering to feed the bird every fifteen minutes. When Blueboy was three weeks old and doing well, Bob telephoned to ask if I could care for the fledgling because the young bird now needed the freedom of a screened area in order to try his wings. I had just purchased new furniture and a rug for our big porch off the living room, so I turned from the phone and asked my husband how he felt about it. Without hesitating he answered, "Anything for bluebirds. Tell Bob to bring the bird out."

From the moment Blueboy arrived in mid-June the family and all our friends and visitors were captivated by his sweet chirping and endearing personality; in fact, we were enslaved by his charm. Feeding him or watching him bathe or fly around was a delight. This little bluebird had just a few blue feathers among the gray and tan ones that covered his body. His bright yellow bill was continually open for food. We fed him ground lean beef mixed with hard-boiled egg yolk, scraped dog biscuit and dibasic calcium phosphate with Vitamin D (to build better bones). At three weeks I fed him every 30 minutes from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. from the blunt end of a toothpick. It was necessary to hold the toothpick very firmly or he would have swallowed it along with the food.



At first we put Blueboy back into his cage at night covering half of it. He slept on his perch. The cage was left on the dining room table. Two doors were closed between that room and our bedroom on the second floor, but still I would be awakened about 6:30 every morning by his persistent chirping for attention. When he was outside I could hear him from 300 yards away above all the numerous bird songs in the gardens.

As soon as he was dressed in the morning, my husband was sent to the vegetable garden to dig earthworms which he put into a glass jar for we added these delectables to the diet. Cut into small pieces, they were hand fed. When Blueboy could eat a whole worm he slurped it down like spaghetti. Sometimes, to our amusement, the worm would be too long for him. We'd watch him stand very still while the worm slowly reappeared through his bill. About the time an inch of earthworm became visible, Blueboy would gulp again and the worm would disappear completely.

Blueboy would wait for me on the back of the chair nearest to the porch door. Before I could get the door fully open and step over the threshold, he would fly to my shoulder or land on my head. After a few "words" he would fly straight to the glass jar of worms and wait for a handout. Soon we made him pick up the worms himself from the table top. He was very clever in the way he maneuvered around the crawling worm to find the best angle for attack.

It was not just food Blueboy wanted from us. He loved to tuck himself under the collar of my shirt and

(continued on page 110)

A Review of Capture Techniques for Eastern Bluebirds

Theodore W. Gutzke

Individuals studying the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) often find it imperative that adult and juvenile birds be captured for banding. The subsequent banding data has a multitude of uses such as documenting nest use, mate continuance, movement, and age-specific mortality, to name a few. However, before any of this can be accomplished the birds must be captured, a problem that is not always as simple as it sounds. Although there are numerous techniques available to capture bluebirds, not all work with the same efficiency or at the same time. Some methods can be quite successful during certain periods, while the same method employed at the wrong time may result in nest abandonment or mortality. This paper is an attempt to bring together the numerous techniques available as well as to review, discuss and evaluate the time and place they should be utilized in order to provide the greatest advantage to the bander and bird alike.

DISCUSSION

Bluebird capture techniques are usually associated with an active nest, and most often a nestbox. This is a time when the adult pair can be located easily while building a nest, incubating eggs or feeding young. The nestlings can also be removed from a box for banding, a situation that is not possible at many natural nests. Most capture techniques can be classified into one or more of the following categories: hand capture, nestbox trap, mist net and bird trap.

Hand Capture

Diurnal Hand Capture

Capturing bluebirds by hand during the day while they are in a nestbox is probably the simplest method available. However, rarely is an adult bird captured because they usually hear the bander's approach and exit the box quickly. If a parent bird is captured, it is usually the female. This is not a good method for female capture because she may desert the nest if disturbed while nest building (pers. ob.), in the early stages of incubation (Krieg

1971), or soon after the eggs hatch (Gutzke 1980a). Consequently, this is an inefficient and possibly hazardous method for adult capture.

Diurnal hand capture is a safe and efficient method for the capture of nestling bluebirds when proper guidelines are followed. Nestlings should be banded at 12-14 days of age. At this time the birds are not developed enough to fledge prematurely, yet have gained enough feather growth to determine sex by the amount of blue on the remiges (Pinkowski 1974a). Individual nestlings should be removed, banded and returned to the nest with the least amount of disturbance possible. It must be noted that nestlings may fledge prematurely if handled after 14 days of age. Once they have fledged they will not stay in the nest no matter how many times they are put back. Fledging before they are properly developed results in the bird remaining on the ground, unable to fly. This leads to a very high mortality from predation or exposure (Pinkowski 1974b, Zeleny 1976). It is important to know the age of the nestlings before handling takes place. Following the descriptions of Jung (1979) should provide the necessary information.

Nestbox Restrictor

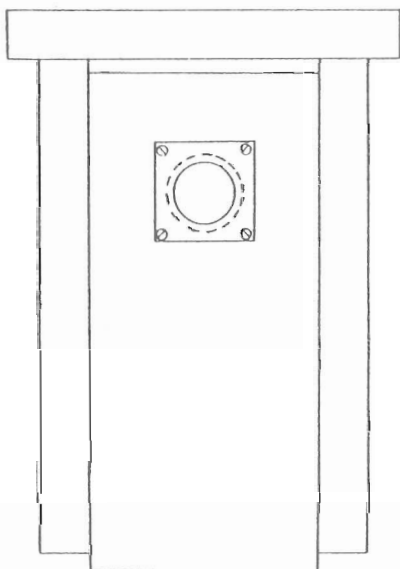
Often a bander will come upon an active nestbox and not know how old the nestlings are or arrive at a nest when the young are over 14 days of age. A decision must be made to band the birds and possibly have them fledge prematurely or not band them and lose valuable information. It is also possible that just viewing the nest contents may be enough disturbance for the nestlings to fledge prematurely. This problem can be eliminated through the use of a nestbox restrictor (Gutzke 1982).

A restrictor (Fig. 1) is a 2 inch square piece of 1/4 inch plyboard with a 1 inch hole in the center and holes drilled at each corner to accommodate 1/2 inch x no. 4 wood screws. The device is placed over the entrance hole of a nestbox and inhibits the young birds from exiting. This does not preclude the adults from feeding them, for food is passed through the hole or nestlings stick their heads out to receive it. The restrictor remains on the box until the nestlings have developed enough to fledge properly, usually at 18 or 19 days of age. The bander then removes the restrictor and leaves the area allowing the birds to fledge on their own. The nestbox restrictor allows all nestlings to be captured and banded no matter what their age and eliminates the possibility of birds fledging prematurely.

Nocturnal Hand Capture

Female bluebirds carry out the duties of egg incubation and brooding exclusively (Hartshorne 1962, Pinkowski 1974b). Because of this they can be captured by hand with a high degree of efficiency (Gutzke, 1980b) during the evening while performing such duties (Krieg 1971). The technique is quite simple. A bander waits until evening and quietly approaches an active nestbox from the rear. A cloth is quickly stuffed into the entrance hole to block any escape. The nestbox is slowly opened and the female removed and banded, her data are recorded, and she is placed back on the nest.

Figure 1. Gutzke Nestbox Restrictor.



Nestbox restrictor attached to an active bluebird nesting box.

After waiting approximately five minutes for her to become re-accustomed to the nest, the cloth is removed and the bander walks slowly and quietly away. Often the bird will remain on the nest and continue incubation; however, should she become very agitated when placed back in the box, the cloth should be removed immediately allowing her to exit before the eggs are harmed. This technique must be used with extreme care, at the proper time and under optimum conditions; if not, nest desertion will result.

Gutzke (1980b) had good success using this method on warm nights during the latter stages of incubation i.e., 10-14 days, without nest abandonment and a 95% capture rate. However, abandonment is very possible if the technique is attempted during the early stages of incubation or soon after the young have hatched. These periods are critical and must be avoided. A female parent may be captured without incident when nestlings are 5-10 days of age but, due to their size, the female tends to remain off the nest at night and not brood, eliminating an opportunity for her capture.

Nestbox Traps

Many varieties of box traps have been developed to capture adult birds as they enter a nestbox during various stages of nesting. All of the traps, although different in design, function similarly by blocking the entrance hole, thus trapping the bird inside. These devices can be grouped into three categories: automatic, manual and electronically controlled.

Automatic

Automatic traps are set within a nestbox and are triggered when the adult bird enters the nest and hits a treadle which releases a device that blocks the entrance hole (DeHaven and Guarino 1969, Stewart 1971, EBBA 1977, Huber 1981). All of these designs are very similar and are really variations of one another (Fig. 2). They will capture any bird that enters the nestbox.

The optimum time for utilizing an automatic trap is when nestlings are 5-10 days old. At this time the young are fed quite frequently by both parents so there are numerous opportun-

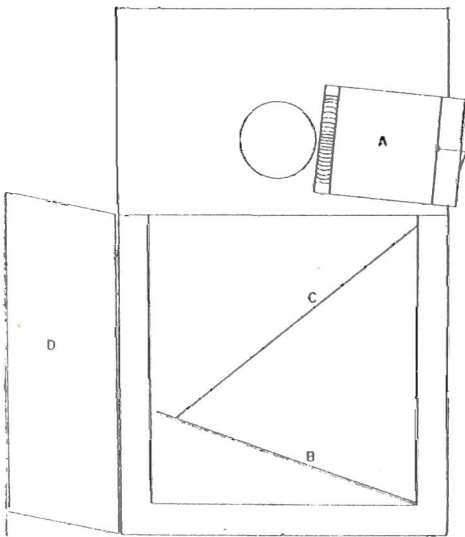
ities for capture, and it is a period when adults will not usually abandon the nest (Kibler 1969). Pinkowski (1978) found that although male and female bluebirds feed nestlings at similar rates, males become much more wary when a trap device is placed on a nestbox and reduce their frequency of feeding. Automatic traps are non-selective and consequently tend to capture female birds more often.

Manual

Manual box traps use a shutter device that is attached to the outside of the nestbox and is released by a hand held string once the bird has entered the nest (Fischer 1944, Kibler 1968). This technique is used at the same stage of nestling development as the automatic trap for the capture of nesting pairs (Fig. 3). It is a selective method because the bander can engage the trap at any time to capture individual birds, and is very effective (Krieg 1971, Pinkowski 1978, Gutzke 1980b).

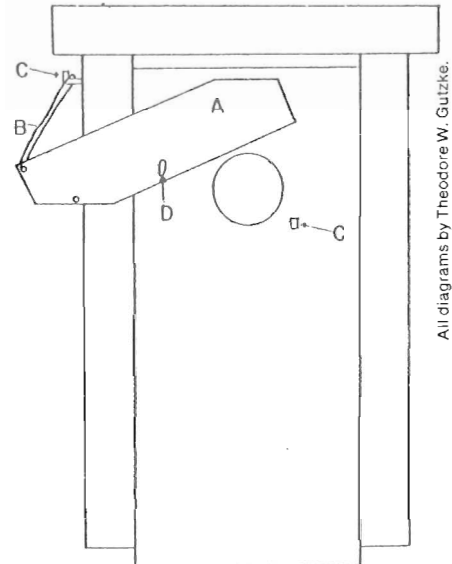
One drawback to this method is that the bander must seek cover anywhere from 40-100 feet from the nestbox in order to wait for the desired bird

Figure 2. DeHaven-Guarino Trap.



An automatic box trap affixed to a nesting box. A-converted mouse trap; B-treadle; C-string; D-nesting box door.

Figure 3. Kibler Box Trap.



A manual box trap attached to the outside of the nesting box. A-shutter; B-rubber band; C-angle screw; D-screw eye.

All diagrams by Theodore W. Gutzke.

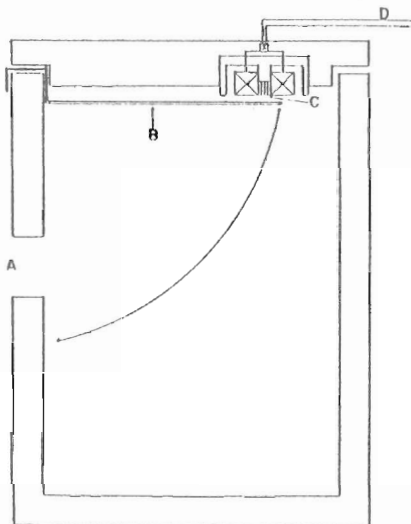
to enter. This can take anywhere from one minute to several hours (pers. ob.) depending on the bird selected. If time is a limiting factor for the bander, this method could be undesirable.

Electronically Controlled

Electronically controlled box traps are very similar to manual traps except that the triggering mechanism is an electronic signal that releases a shutter or door that blocks the entrance hole. Kibler (1968) developed a device on the outside of a nestbox just like his manual design, the only difference being that an electric motor controlled by a radio signal activated the triggering mechanism. Dhondt and Van Outryve (1971) developed an internal device that when electronically activated released a wire mesh door from the ceiling of the nestbox that swung down blocking the entrance hole (Fig. 4).

Both techniques are selective in that the bander activates the device when the desired bird has entered the nestbox. The drawbacks are the same as those for the manual devices in that the bander must wait in a concealed spot for the right opportunity.

Figure 4. Dhondt-Van Outryve Trap.



An electronically controlled box trap that is affixed inside the nesting box. A-entrance hole; B-wire mesh door; C-electronic magnet; D-wire connection to battery.

Mist Nets

Mist nets have been used with good success for the capture of passerines and are no doubt the currently preferred method (Stamm et al. 1960, Bleitz 1970). Utilizing mist nets for bluebird capture can be successful during the nesting season, while birds are often captured incidentally during migration at various banding stations. Mist nets come in different mesh sizes, lengths and dimensions and are designed for various capture methods.

Standard Mist Net

A standard mist net for passerine birds is usually 12 m in length, 2 m in depth, and 4 shelved with a mesh size of 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 inches, which is a good type to use for bluebirds. A net of this size can be placed within a bluebird territory (Pinkowski 1974b) and other areas known to be frequented by the birds such as perches, roosting sites or feeding areas. A capture is accomplished when the birds move between these areas. Capture efficiency is increased when a net is situated in front of an active nestbox when nestlings are 4-12 days old. To accomplish this, a net should be set up near the nest a day or two before netting operations are initiated. This helps to acclimate the birds to the net and promote normal activity. After acclimation the net is opened and the bander retreats to a secluded area and waits for the birds to become ensnared. This technique is often successful, but it does have its drawbacks. Mist nets are most often set up in open areas in good bluebird habitat, but, due to the open field of view, the birds often see the nets and avoid them. Also, the nets must be tended every 15 minutes or situated so the bander can observe them. It is not advisable or ethical to leave nets unattended because a captured bluebird could die of exposure, predation or stress if left in a net too long. This procedure may take a long time to accomplish; consequently, if time is a limiting factor to the bander, this method is not desirable. Also, the transportation of net poles, nets and other necessary supplies into the field

is cumbersome and, should the mist netting site be distant, it may be unrealistic to attempt.

Decoy and Mist Net

Sloan and Carlson (1980) had very good success capturing male Eastern Bluebirds using a mounted bluebird as a decoy under a mist net. A net was erected within an active bluebird territory once a full clutch of eggs had been laid and incubation was initiated. The net was opened and a tape recorder playing a bluebird song was placed under the decoy. The male bluebird would attack the decoy intruder and become ensnared in the net, usually in two or three minutes. The technique seems to work quite well but is limited to territorial adult males and requires a mounted bird, something that is not available to most banders.

Mist Net with Box Restrictor

I have had very good success using a 5 m mist net and a nestbox restrictor for the capture of both parent birds. The procedure is simple. A mist net is set up near a nest when nestlings are over 12 days old. A nestbox restrictor is attached to the box and the nestlings removed, banded and returned to the nest. The last nestling banded is held by the bander while kneeling under the net. The handling of the nestling often causes it to emit a distress call. If it does not, it can be encouraged to do so by holding it by the upper legs (tibia) and turning it gently upside down. This will not harm the bird but will cause it to emit a distress call (it is possible a tape recording of a distress call may also work). This will stimulate an immediate attack from the parent birds with the male usually the more aggressive. While attempting to attack the bander they become ensnared in the mist net. Should either parent be caught, the nestling is placed back in the nestbox, and the captured bird utilized as the decoy. This method proved to be 100% effective in capturing the male and to a lesser degree the female. Occasionally, if the male is caught first

the female will not continue the attack, but, if the female is captured first, the male will always keep up the attack. The disturbance to the nest site will be enough to cause the nestlings to fledge; however, with the nestbox restrictor in place they are blocked from leaving. Removing the restrictor at a later date when the young are ready to fledge produces no nestling mortality.

The drawbacks to this method are that all materials must be carried into the field, as with a standard mist net, and the site must be revisited at a later date to remove the restrictor.

Hand Mist Net

A portable hand held mist net was developed by Gutzke (1980b, 1981) for the capture of nesting male bluebirds. The hand net is constructed from a 6 foot section of mist net salvaged from an old 12 m net. It is attached to two 1 inch diameter extendable tent poles or two 6 foot sections of 1/2 inch steel conduit with net loops so that the net can move easily up and down the poles allowing for varying sizes of the net and easy roll up for transportation.

The procedure for capture is similar to the method of using a mist net and box restrictor. The bander and assistant arrive at the nest when the young are over 12 days old, attach a restrictor to the box and use a nestling as a decoy. The assistant holds the nestling and stimulates it to call which will initiate an attack by the male parent and to a lesser degree the female. The bander stands by the assistant with the hand net open but down. By allowing the male to make a few passes he becomes more bold and will come very close to the assistant. During such an attack the bander holds the net upright and a capture can be made.

This is a good technique for the capture of nesting male bluebirds but not reliable for female capture. Her attacks are not as aggressive as the male's; consequently, she is not always captured. The disadvantages of this technique are that two individuals are needed, the male is usually the only

bird captured and the bander must return at a later date to remove the restricter. The advantages are that it is successful in capturing the male and is very portable and easy to carry into the field to distant areas.

Bird Traps

Bird traps were used for years to capture many bird species. It was a very popular method prior to the widespread use of mist nets. Traps range in size and complexity depending on the species a bander is attempting to capture. Some of the more popular traps are small in size making them economical to construct and easy to transport (Bailey 1951, McCamey 1961, Merritt 1975) while larger traps could capture and hold many birds (Funnel Trap, All-Purpose Trap, EBBA 1977). Most bird traps have the potential for capturing bluebirds: however, their use has been somewhat limited, probably because trapping related to nesting birds was much easier. The one trap that has been used and found effective is the Potter trap.

Potter Trap

A Potter trap is constructed of 1/2 inch mesh hardware cloth formed to make a box 8 x 8 x 8 inches with a 4 x 6 inch opening at one end equipped with a sliding 4 x 7 inch door and a 4 x 7 inch trip plate. The device operates when a bird enters the trap in search of bait and steps on the trip plate; it releases the door which falls, trapping the bird.

Pinkowski (1974b) had good success using this trap in the early spring when bluebirds are beginning to establish territories. He set the traps on top of nestboxes baited with meal worms (*Tenebrio* sp.) placed in a transparent plastic container.

This technique has the advantage of being able to leave the trap set for a period before it is checked. A trapped bird would most likely be unharmed even if it remained in the trap a while, for it is at a time of the year when the birds are not yet nesting which eliminates potential nest loss.

The disadvantage of this device is that it is non-selective, the bander having no choice in what parent bird is

caught. Also, if captured birds were not color-banded, one could not be sure if they would remain in the capture territory to nest. Another capture would be necessary to confirm this.

SUMMARY

Numerous techniques are available to capture Eastern Bluebirds of all age classes and sexes. Most of the methods involve the nest site and consist of four major techniques: hand capture, box traps, mist nets, and bird traps.

Capturing, banding and sexing of nestlings can be accomplished without incident by hand capture when they are 12-14 days old. Adults can be caught by an array of techniques or a combination of more than one. Nesting females can be easily captured by hand at night while incubating eggs, brooding nestlings or conducting various nesting duties during the day. Critical times during the nesting cycle for the female include nest building, early stages of incubation and the period immediately after the young have hatched. Capture must not be attempted during these stages in order to avoid nest abandonment. The male bluebird can be captured during most of the nesting cycle using many techniques; however, opportunity is enhanced after hatching has occurred and he is active feeding nestlings or protecting offspring. ■

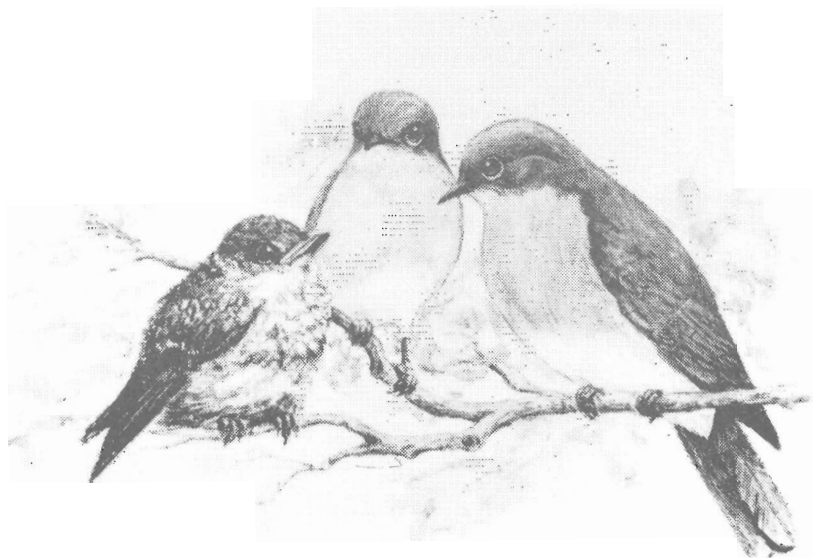
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Editor's Note: This paper was presented at the Fourth Annual Meeting of the North American Bluebird Society, 17 October 1981.



Bluebirds and Gypsy Moth Control

Because gypsy moths have become an increasing problem in the northeastern portion of the United States, the following letter and its reply by Lawrence Zeleny may be of interest to many bluebirders.

Dear Editor:

We are considering spraying the important trees around our house against the gypsy moth this year. If we do this, the tree men we have selected will use methoxychlor.

Since bluebirds have nested on our property for the past four years, we are anxious not to disturb or harm them. Do you have any information on the effect of this chemical on wildlife, the bluebird in particular?

Last year all our neighbors sprayed and we did not (we used Tanglefoot with mixed results). The chemicals used were Sevin and malathion and the bluebirds seemed unaffected and are back in the area and on our land this year.

Sally Wylie
Bedford, New York

Dear Ms. Wylie:

Your letter of March 22 concerning the control of the gypsy moth and the possible hazards of control measures to bluebirds has been referred to me. You asked about spraying your trees with carbaryl (Sevin), malathion, or methoxychlor. I have discussed this problem with officials of the Rachel Carson Council who have studied the gypsy moth problem in considerable depth.

The three chemicals you mentioned are all broad-spectrum pesticides. They are toxic and, in sufficient concentrations, lethal to virtually all insects, reptiles, birds, and mammals including man. Thus their use presents definite hazards.

The Council recommends the use of *bacillus thuringiensis* rather than chemical insecticides for the control of the gypsy moth. This bacterial preparation, when properly used, is said to be highly effective in the control of a small group of insects including the gypsy moth, and to be harmless to all warm-blooded animals.

For more complete information on this subject you may wish to write to the Rachel Carson Council, 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

Your concern for the safety of bluebirds and other wildlife in solving your problem is greatly appreciated.

Lawrence Zeleny
Founder

Peaceful Coexistence Observed Among Cavity Nesters

Bluebirds, Flycatchers, Wrens and Kestrels Share an Area Near Antietam National Battlefield

Mark J. Raabe

Last summer, my wife, Jean, and I had American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) and Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) nesting within 100 feet of each other on our property adjacent to Antietam National Battlefield. In the immediate vicinity, two nesting boxes contained broods of Great Crested Flycatchers (*Myiarchus crinitus*) and House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*). All four species appeared to have fledged successfully.

We saw our first bluebird in February of 1973 outside our Antietam cabin. Shortly thereafter, our attention was drawn to an article about bluebirds written by Lawrence Zeleny. We followed his advice, put up a bluebird nesting box and promptly had a nesting pair. That first summer they fledged two broods for a total of eight—and we were hooked on bluebirds. This nesting box has remained our Number One House even though we now have a trail of 50 bluebird nesting boxes, 40 of which are located throughout the battlefield. It is this Number One House which is positioned in the vicinity of the kestrel nesting box mentioned above.

In 1977, I put the kestrel box on a utility pole 100 feet south of the Number One House. Since then, it has been used twice: once by bluebirds in 1978 and once by kestrels in 1981.

The year the bluebirds nested in the kestrel house, they began nesting in the Number One House. Soon after the fifth egg was laid in that box, House Wrens raided the nest destroying the eggs and building their nest on top of the bluebird nest. Within a week, I observed the female bluebird entering and exiting the three-inch opening in the nearby kestrel nesting



box mounted 13 feet high on a utility pole. An examination of the interior revealed that the entire floor of the 8 x 10 inch kestrel nesting box had been filled with bluebird nesting grasses. Two perfect egg cups were positioned in opposite corners of the box. Two eggs were laid in one of the nest cups; the other one was unused.

After the two bluebird fledgings left the kestrel house, I removed all of the nesting material. Within three weeks the box was again filled with a thick layer of nesting material and again two perfectly constructed egg cups were situated in opposite corners of the box. This time, five eggs were laid. The five nestlings remained in the box full term and appeared to fledge successfully.

Throughout the two-brood nesting period unoccupied bluebird nesting boxes were available nearby. Perhaps the bluebirds felt the kestrel box provided a safer refuge from further wren attacks than did the conventional boxes at a lower height.

Nesting Box Activity

Date 1981	American Kestrel	Eastern Bluebird (Number One House)	House Wren	Great Crested Flycatcher
April 3	Pair observed in area	Partially completed nest	No activity	
April 18	Kestrel on eggs	5 eggs	No activity	
May 2	Kestrel on eggs	5 nestlings 2 days old	Completed wren nest	
May 17	5 hatching	5 nestlings 17 days old	6 eggs	
May 24	5 nestlings 1 week old	Flat nest removed	6 young	
May 30	5 nestlings 2 weeks old	Adult bluebirds seen feeding young	6 young	
June 6	5 nestlings 3 weeks old (5 young were banded—all males)	Bluebird nest started		
June 13	Fledging occurred (much kestrel activity noted in area)	Bluebird nest completed	Used nest removed	First check of box revealed 6 eggs in nest complete with snakeskin
June 20	Kestrels with young observed in area	4 eggs		6 nestlings 4 days old
June 27	Kestrels in area	4 eggs		6 nestlings fully feathered
July 4	Kestrels in area	4 just hatched young		Adults seen entering house
July 18	Kestrels in area	4 nestlings 14 days old		Used nest removed
July 25		Flat nest removed		

The second time the kestrel nesting box was used was last year, this time by a pair of kestrels. During the kestrel brooding and nesting period, one brood of five bluebirds fledged from the Number One House and a second clutch of four eggs eventually fledged successfully. At the same time, successful broods of Great Crested Flycatchers and House Wrens were also underway in nearby nesting boxes. The positions of the key nesting boxes are indicated in Fig. 1.

Throughout the entire nesting period, considerable bluebird and kestrel activity was observed in the vicinity of the nesting boxes. During this time, there were no indications of

bluebird intimidation. To the contrary, on more than one occasion, a kestrel was seen perched on a power line approximately eight to ten feet above an apparently unconcerned adult bluebird sitting on a lower wire. (Since our cabin is not a full-time residence, our observations were limited primarily to weekends.) While we do not know with certainty the fate of the bluebird fledglings, an adult pair and seven young were seen in the area during September. What we *do* know is that the bluebirds betrayed not the slightest bit of nervousness in the presence of the kestrels.

Two additional factors are of interest regarding the juxtaposition of the

bluebird and kestrel boxes. The openings in the Number One House and the kestrel box generally face each other. Even though the two boxes are mounted five feet and thirteen feet above the ground respectively, their openings are almost horizontally across from each other due to the slope of the ground. It should also be noted that other unoccupied bluebird boxes were in the immediate area throughout the two-brood nesting in the Number One House. A particularly attractive vacant box is noted in the diagram. By nesting there, the bluebirds would have been largely shielded from the kestrel box by a line of pine trees 12 feet high. For some inexplicable reason they chose to nest twice in the shadow of the kestrels.

On the subject of coexistence, we had another interesting experience involving Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*). For the past two years, Tree Swallows have occupied several bluebird nesting boxes on the Battlefield Trail. This past year, after a pair be-

gan nesting in a box on the fence line just east of the Antietam National Cemetery in Sharpsburg (south of Highway No. 34), I placed another box 90 feet away on the same fence line. Within a week, a pair of bluebirds took possession. Both the Tree Swallows and the bluebirds fledged broods successfully.

Bluebirds will always be our first love, but great pleasure can be derived from providing nesting boxes for many species. In the days ahead, as native cavity nesters find it increasingly more difficult to locate suitable nesting sites, our efforts in providing nesting boxes for all of them will be not only rewarding, but necessary, if we are to prevent a dangerous decline in some of the species. ■

3300 Circle Hill Rd.
Alexandria, VA 22305

For more information on kestrels and box plans, send a self-addressed, stamped business envelope to Kestrel Karetakers, 3549 Devon Drive, Falls Church, VA 22042.

Figure 1. Positions of Key Nesting Boxes on Trail Near Antietam Battlefield, Maryland.

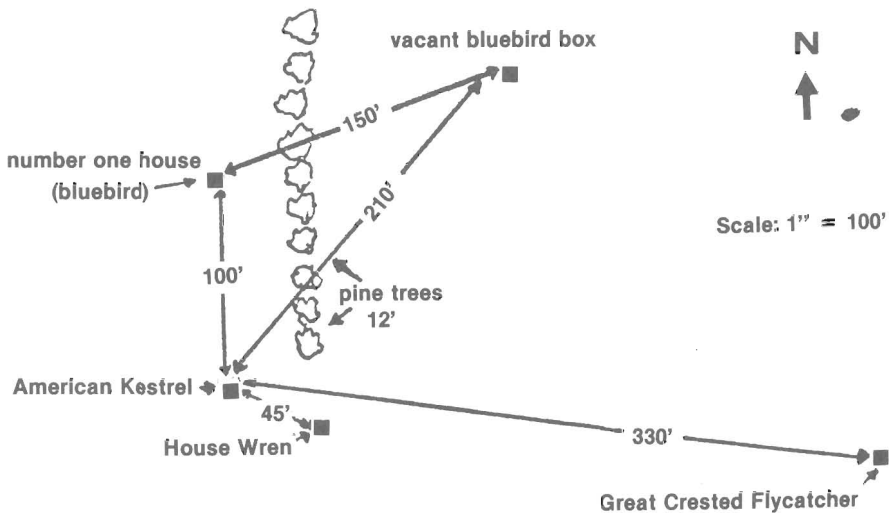


Diagram by Mark J. Raabe.

Review of Recent Literature on Bluebirds

Theodore W. Gutzke and Ben Pinkowski

Dunn, J. 1981. The identification of female bluebirds. *Birding* 13:4-11.—Identification of male bluebirds of all three North American species has not been a problem to most observers, but confusion over female identification has. Comparisons of female plumage, vocalization, habitat preference, behavior, and distribution are discussed in an attempt to clarify individual species characteristics and aid in identification. Color plates and range maps are included.

Henny, C.J., R.A. Olson and A.L. Meeker. 1977. Residues in Common Flicker and Mountain Bluebird eggs one year after a DDT application. *Bulletin of Environmental Contamination & Toxicology* 18:115-122.—Common Flicker and Mountain Bluebird eggs were examined from northwest Oregon and northern Idaho one year after an application of DDT at a rate of 0.75 lb per acre. Analysis determined that flicker eggs contained residue levels 0.34 ppm higher in the sprayed area compared to an unaffected area. Bluebird eggs contained levels 3.62 ppm greater than an unsprayed area. Differences in DDT levels for the two species were attributed to movement and feeding habits.

Herlugson, C.J. 1981. Nest site selection in Mountain Bluebirds. *Condor* 83:252-255.—Female Mountain Bluebirds in Klickitat Co., Washington tended to return to the same territory and nesting box as used in the previous year if successful. Age and sex also influenced site selection. First year birds selected boxes similar to their natal sites.

Pinkowski, B.C. 1977. Blowfly parasitism of Eastern Bluebirds in natural and artificial nest sites. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 41:272-276.—Parasitism of natural and artificial nests by blowflies (*Apaulina* sp.) was studied from 1970 to 1974 in Michigan. Parasitism frequency was nearly equal for natural and artificial

nests; however, a greater number of parasites were located in artificial nests, possibly because of a greater amount of nest material. More young fledged from nonparasitized nests (90%) than parasitized nests (66%), while parasitism was greater in June and July than other times. Larger broods had a greater number of parasites, and more parasites were found in nests of food-deprived young than those adequately fed.

Power, H.W. 1980. The foraging behavior of Mountain Bluebirds, with emphasis on sexual foraging differences. *Ornithological Monographs* No. 28, 72 pp.—This experimental study in the Little Belt Mountains, Cascade Co., Montana during 1970-1977 demonstrates that Mountain Bluebirds employ three levels of increasingly costly foraging behavior in response to increases in hunger or work load (number of young per adult). Level I foraging involves perch-foraging, Level II entails hover-foraging, and Level III, the most intense, involves foraging in tall grass and hawking after flying insects. Foraging tactics, movement between foraging levels, and predation risks are among the factors examined for the two sexes. ■

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, R.D. #1, Box 148, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920 (Gutzke); Fort Berthold Community College, P.O. Box 490, New Town, ND 58763 (Pinkowski).

WANTED

Back issues of *Sialia*—

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Volume 1, Number 2

You may claim a tax deduction of \$2.50 for each of the above issues returned to headquarters:

North American Bluebird Society

Box 6295

Silver Spring, MD 20906

CANADIAN NESTBOX REPORT, 1981

Twenty-first Annual Report from "The Friends of
the Bluebirds," Brandon, Manitoba

Table 1. Occupancy of Nesting Boxes in the Brandon, Manitoba Area, 1981.

Occupant	No. of Nestings
Mountain Bluebirds	727
Eastern Bluebirds	43
Bluebirds (not identified as to species)	12
Cross-nesting Bluebirds (Eastern x Mountain)	1
Tree Swallows	680
House Sparrows	178
House Wrens	54
European Starlings	2
Mice	60
Squirrels	8

Again the Eastern Bluebird seemed to be concentrated in the sandy areas of the Carberry and Lauder Sandhills. It is interesting to note that Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Thomas, Hartney, reported three boxes where two broods of Eastern Bluebirds were raised.

Another case of hybridization was reported, this one by Peter Sawatzky in box 677 on the Carberry-Glenboro line. A Mountain Bluebird female and an Eastern Bluebird male successfully raised six hybrid young.

A few unusual nests were found. Mrs. Elsie Duthie, Lauder, found Mountain Bluebirds nesting in a stack of rye bales. Mr. Gordon Hammell, Erickson, reported a Mountain Bluebird nest in a hole (made either by rats or a woodpecker) in the fascia board of the eaves of a barn where an addition was under construction. Despite the disturbance the bluebirds raised a family. Barbara Robinson, Brandon, found a nest made of cassette tape.

Betty Shankland had a particularly successful year on her line near Oak Lake resort. She had 51 nestings in the 28 boxes on her line, 35 nestings were Mountain Bluebirds.

Results of data submitted by dozens of volunteers were compiled by Norah Lane, Mamie McCowan, Barbara Robinson, Hazel Patmore and Ann Smith.

Annual Report from Mountain Bluebird Trail, Lethbridge, Alberta.

This was a hard year for bluebirds throughout southern Alberta. Many more bluebird pairs used nesting boxes and more eggs were laid than last year, but only 13 more young were fledged. The cold, wet weather at the end of May and the first two weeks of June may have been the reason for the small increase. Boxes which last year fledged five and six young fledged only two or three this year. There were several clutches of seven, and six pairs fledged second broods. One pair raised a total of 13 young.

The Mountain Bluebird Trail report was compiled by Duncan J. Mackintosh.

Table 2. Occupancy of Nesting Boxes on the Mountain Bluebird Trail, Lethbridge, Alberta, 1981.

Nesting boxes available	598
Boxes used by bluebirds	.86
Bluebird eggs laid	359
Bluebirds fledged	260
Bluebirds banded	185
Sterile eggs	.99
Tree Swallow nests	.58
Tree Swallows fledged	.311
Successful Tree Swallow nests	.56
Tree Swallow eggs laid	336
House Wren nests	.13
Number of boxes used	157

Calgary, Alberta, Area Bluebird Trail Report

Table 3. Occupancy of Nesting Boxes on Calgary, Alberta, Bluebird Trails, 1981.

Nesting boxes available	743
Number of bluebird nests	203
Bluebird eggs laid	1090
Bluebirds fledged	758*
Bluebirds banded	.46
Tree Swallow nests	432
Successful Tree Swallow nests	356*
Tree Swallow eggs laid	2336
Tree Swallows fledged	1757*
Tree Swallows banded	.96
House Sparrow nests	.59
House Wren nests	.9
Number of boxes used	682

*estimated

Numbers of bluebirds in general were down from last year despite a warm early May. In some cases Tree Swallows took over boxes in which bluebirds had begun nesting, but overall Tree Swallow numbers were also down.

Some interesting incidents were recorded on the trails. Kay Morck watched a box in which the male of the pair had one leg which dangled uselessly. She watched him during the breeding season and noted that he had difficulty in getting in and out of the nesting box. It is remarkable, under the circumstances, that this pair raised eight young when five or six is the size of the average brood.

Ray Woods reported that someone pushed a large rock into one of his boxes which forced the sides apart.

When he removed the rock he found a female bluebird sitting on eggs. With the rock in place she had had barely enough space to get in and out. Although Ray repaired the box, later predation prevented a successful nesting.

Darlene Warbanski found a male bluebird in the second box she monitored east of Didsbury. It is worthy of note because males are not often found in the nest.

Material for this report was compiled by Don Stiles. ■

This report was first published in *PICA*, the quarterly bulletin of the Calgary Field Naturalists Society 2(3):93-97.

1701 Lorne Avenue, Brandon, Manitoba R7A OW2 (Lane); 1919 - 9th Avenue, South, Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 1W8 (Mackintosh); 20 Lake Wapta Rise SE, Calgary, Alberta T2J 3M9 (Stiles).

PLANTINGS FOR BLUEBIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Something for Nothing in Wildlife Gardening: Cuttings

Karen Blackburn

In the spring issue "layering" was presented as one alternative to propagating wildlife plants from seed. Another alternative, and one that can be more readily applied to the collection of native plant species, is the use of cuttings. Both of these methods of vegetative propagation have several advantages over the use of seeds in establishing wildlife areas of modest proportions. Perhaps most obvious is the time saved when vegetative propagation is used to obtain new plants. The seeds of many of our native trees and shrubs exhibit dormancy and may require a year or more to germinate. The seeds of some hollies (*Ilex* sp.), for example, remain dormant for up to three years. By the time some of these "late-bloomers" begin to sprout, plants obtained from vegetative means may already have reached fruiting size. Then too, cuttings may be collected from a number of native plants throughout the growing season, while the collection of seeds is restricted to the fruiting period. Often only young specimens of desirable plants can be found, and though they may not be mature enough to produce fruit, they may still provide the collector with a few cuttings. Finally, seeds do not necessarily guarantee plants which will display the desirable characteristics of the plant that produced them, but plants developed from vegetative methods are actually clones of the parent plant and will have the same features when grown under similar conditions.

As mentioned in the last issue, layering is a reliable way to obtain a limited number of new plants from species already present on our property. Cuttings, since they can be collected in quantity from a wide range of

wild specimens, enable us to add variety to our wildlife gardens. Of course, sources closer to home need not be overlooked. If, for example, all the birds in your area flock to feast on the fruit of attractive shrubs in your neighbor's yard, just arrange to visit him when he's pruning. No doubt he'll welcome your offer to "clean up" the clippings, and if he happens to share your interest in wildlife gardening, plants or cuttings could be exchanged benefiting both parties (as well as area wildlife).

When taking cuttings, choose stems of pencil thickness from a healthy plant and cut into 5" lengths, making cuts about ¼" below a leaf or bud. If the cuttings are in leaf, strip the leaves from the lower inch or so. Scrape away a bit of the bark from this area and dust it with a root-promoting hormone (available in powder form in most garden shops). The cuttings are then "planted" in flats filled with clean coarse sand or vermiculite which is kept moist. The flats are placed where they will receive filtered sunlight. Warmth and humidity (especially important for leafy cuttings) also encourage good rooting. To raise humidity, cover the cuttings with glass or plastic to create a miniature "greenhouse." With most species rooting will occur in a matter of weeks, while some may require a longer period of time. Check to make sure that a strong root system has developed before setting the new plants out in the garden.

The chart which follows indicates a number of plants for wildlife use which may be propagated by two types of stem cuttings—"hardwood" or

"softwood." Hardwood cuttings are simply those taken during the plant's dormant season—usually in early spring. Softwood cuttings are prepared from leafy growth during the growing season. Those species which reproduce naturally with suckers or sprouts that can be separated from the

parent plant are indicated under the heading "division." This chart, however, is intended only as a general guide, so don't be afraid to experiment with these or other plants when creating your wildlife paradise. ■

P.O. Box 110
E. Hampstead, NH 03826

Guide to the Propagation of Wildlife Plants

SPECIES	SUGGESTED METHODS OF PROPAGATION				COMMENTS
	HARDWOOD CUTTINGS	SOFTWOOD CUTTINGS	LAYERING	DIVISION	
Autumn Olive/ Russian Olive (<i>Elaeagnus</i> sp.)	X	XSpSF	X		
Bittersweet (<i>Celastrus</i> sp.)	X	XMS	X		Collect cuttings from both male and female plants
Brambles (<i>Rubus</i> sp.)			X	X	
Cotoneaster (<i>Cotoneaster</i> sp.)		XSpS	X		
Dogwood (<i>Cornus</i> sp.) White Flowering* (<i>C. florida</i>)		X			Collect cuttings from new growth after flowering. Use only tips of branches.
Red-osier (<i>C. stolonifera</i>)		XMS	X	X	
Gray (<i>C. racemosa</i>)			X	X	
Elderberry (<i>Sambucus</i> sp.)		XSpS			
Firethorn (<i>Pyracantha</i>)		XSpSF			
Holly (<i>Ilex</i> sp.)		XMSF	X	X	Collect tip cuttings from both male and female plants. Fill flats with moist peat moss. Provide humidity.

Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera</i> sp.)	X				
Vine Types			X		
Mulberry (<i>Morus</i> sp.)	X				Collect 10" tip cuttings from male and female plants.
Rose (<i>Rosa</i> sp.)	X	XSpS	X	X	
Serviceberries (<i>Amelanchier</i> sp.)		XSpF		X	
Sumac (<i>Rhus</i> sp.)		XMS			Some species have male and female plants. Some produce suckers.
Viburnum (<i>Viburnum</i> sp.)		XSpMS	X		Allow extensive root system to develop or transplants will fail.

The seasons recommended for taking softwood cuttings are indicated on the chart as follows: Sp-Spring; S-Summer; MS-Mid-summer; F-Fall.

Hardwood cuttings are usually taken in very early spring while plants are dormant.

Layering is usually done in early spring.

*The Red Flowering Dogwood is considered very difficult to start from cuttings.



Sharing a Bluebird Walk

Valerie K.M. Schutsky

"Look, look, there's one. Over there in the tree. See, he's sitting on the branch on the left, the low branch. Do you see him! Oh, how beautiful he is."

I was astonished to hear myself excitedly calling out to the group, helping them to locate the bluebird I had just sighted. I'm usually more reserved than that, but I was suffering from bluebird fever.

It was a lovely summer day in July when I arrived at Muddy Run Park located in the rolling Susquehanna River hills of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. I was there specifically to go on a bluebird walk. Birding is one of my favorite pastimes and I do a lot of it, but I had no idea of the indescribable thrill I would experience when I sighted that brilliant flash of sapphire blue. My first bluebird!

Bob, a young naturalist, was waiting for us at the nature center. There were 28 of us ranging in age from 6 to 73. We had come from near and far; one couple had driven from Arlington, Virginia. Equipped with binoculars we were ready and eager to start.

Before beginning our walk Bob gave us a short introduction. Then, swinging his spotting scope onto his shoulder and warning us to watch out for groundhog holes, we started out to look at bluebirds and their nesting boxes. As we walked, Bob provided information that he had learned from his five years of maintaining a nesting box trail and giving nature walks. He became interested in the bluebird when he realized that, for many reasons, it was in trouble. The lack of suitable nesting cavities was one of their major problems, so the Muddy Run Bluebird Trail came into being.

At one of the boxes Bob explained, "I would like you to take just a quick look, then I'll close the box and we'll move away and watch. Over there, in that small tree, is the female. I'm sure she has young in here and wants to get back to them."

"You're right," said the first person to peek. "There are three babies in here."

Bob set up his scope so that all of us could observe the female more closely. It was a thrill to be able to see her so clearly. The softly muted shadings of her blue-gray back and light chestnut breast were beautiful and she appeared to be so close I wanted to reach out and touch her.

Leaving her we moved on to discover what awaited us farther along the trail. Moments later there were murmurs of outrage as we came upon a nesting box that someone had deliberately pulled up and thrown on the ground. We watched as Bob opened the box and found three babies inside. Swiftly he removed his cap, lined it with his handkerchief and placed two of the babies in it. The third nestling had not survived the vandalism. Willing hands helped him put the metal pipe with the box attached back into the ground. Bob replaced the nest and gently checked the young birds before returning them to it. The swiftness and sureness of his actions impressed me.

"Will they be all right?" someone in the group asked.

"I can't say for sure, but they have a good chance. I'm pretty sure the parents are still feeding them, but, just



Photograph by Valerie Schutsky

Two participants on a nature walk at Muddy Run Park, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, check a bluebird nesting box.

to make sure, I'll come back as soon as the walk is over and watch. If I find that the parents have abandoned them, I'll take them to another box where there are young about the same age. Those parents will raise them. It's called 'foster-parenting' and it works."

The near-tragedy and its implications had dampened the enthusiasm of the group.

"Does this sort of thing happen often, Bob?" I asked hesitantly. I wanted to know but was reluctant to have my worst fears confirmed.

"Oh no," he replied, and you could almost hear a sigh of relief go through the group. "No, in the five years of taking care of this trail, this is the first time I have found signs of willful human destruction. When you consider the vast numbers of people that visit the park each year, that's a pretty good record."

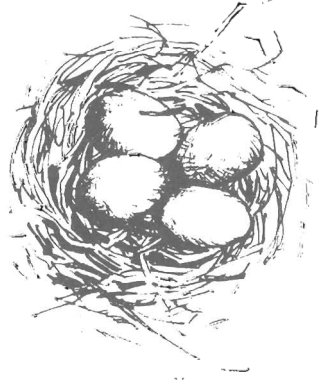
Our spirits revived, we concluded our walk. We stopped at 11 boxes in all. One box contained a dummy nest made by a wren to reserve it for future use. Most of the boxes were empty because the young had already fledged and left with their parents; in fact, for that reason, it was the last bluebird walk of the season. Although we didn't see many nestlings, we had the bonus of seeing these same families in flight or perched in the surrounding area.

Back at the nature center Bob said goodbye to the group. As I watched, I remembered the time, years ago, when his father had gently placed a live butterfly in his small cupped hands. Could it have been that simple act that fostered a love of nature in my son, Bob? ■

Box 201
Atglen, PA 19310

QUESTION CORNER

Lawrence Zeleny



When the temperature is well over 90°F, the female and occasionally the male bluebird will sometimes sit on the box or stick their heads out of the opening with their bills wide open. Are they too hot and, if so, can you suggest how we could help them?

Mrs. Don E. Howard
St. Francisville, Louisiana

Birds, like dogs, frequently hold their mouths open in very hot weather to take advantage of the cooling effect of the evaporation of saliva. A nearby supply of fresh water is important to most birds, especially in hot weather. Bluebird nesting boxes sometimes become hot enough under extreme weather conditions to spoil the eggs or even kill the bluebird nestlings. This seldom happens if the box is properly ventilated and not painted a dark color, and is made of lumber at least 5/8 inch thick. In very hot climates it also helps to locate the box where it is at least partially shaded during the hottest part of the day, keeping in mind that bluebirds prefer to nest in relatively open locations.

Bluebirds fly crazily into our picture window at the rear of the house. Why?

Jay C. Standish
Alpharetta, Georgia

Many birds are killed or injured by flying into large picture windows. Depending on the lighting the birds evidently see either what

appears to be a clear passageway through the window and out another window, or else they see a reflection of the landscape in the window and fail to detect the glass. Male birds of several species, including bluebirds, often see their own reflection in a window and believing it to be another male of the same species attempt to drive it away. This most commonly occurs during the nesting season when the male birds defend their territories against others of their kind.

Can I attract bluebirds to my area without putting up a box?

Thomas M. Mays
Geneseo, Illinois

Probably not during the nesting season. But in late summer, fall, and winter bluebirds are attracted to areas where there are wild or ornamental trees, shrubs, or vines that bear berries or other small fruits. Articles by George Grant in earlier issues of *Sialia* list many of the most useful plantings. Your local nurseryman should be able to help you choose varieties best suited to your locality.

British Naturalist Finds a “Bloody Bluebird” in Massachusetts

Lillian Lund Files

On 11 July, 1981, Mr. William Condry of Wales, a distinguished naturalist in Britain, was a guest speaker at the annual Thoreau Society's conference in Concord, Massachusetts. He is warden of a nature reserve owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in Wales and has long been active in the nature conservation movement. Mr. Condry is a writer, broadcaster and lecturer on wild animals, fossils and plants. He also is a regular contributor to *Country Life* and the *Guardian's* "Country Diary." Some of his books are *Exploring Wales, Birds and Wild Africa, Woodlands, The Snowdonia National Park, Pathway to the Wild, and Thoreau.*

On Mr. Condry's ten day visit to Massachusetts he birded at some of the local bird sanctuaries and canoed the Concord River. The bluebird headed the list of birds he wanted to see, but he had been warned before he left home that he'd never find a bluebird in Massachusetts.

On 14 July, I received a phone call from a fellow Thoreauvian asking if I still had any bluebirds in my yard. At that time I happened to have two nesting pairs with five nestlings in each box plus four juveniles flying about from a previous clutch. She asked if she could bring Mr. Condry to see them; of course I told her she could.

After arriving my friend said that on the way to my place Mr. Condry told her he was so anxious to see a bluebird that he felt like he was "in search of the Holy Grail." We took a walk down the field and stopped before one of my boxes of nesting bluebirds. Within a few minutes a beautiful male landed on top of the box with a grasshopper for one of the nestlings. While I still had my binoculars in front of my eyes, Mr. Condry got so excited he surprised me with a big hug, saying that he had finally gotten his "bloody bluebird" after all. After the



Photograph by Lillian Lund Files

British naturalist, William Condry, and Lillian Files stand beside a bluebird box in Lil's yard in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts.

male bluebird left the box, we all took a peek at the nestlings. Mr. Condry wanted to photograph the bluebirds so I set up my homemade blind for him. He had a grand time taking pictures for over an hour.

Later, while having tea, he was also delighted to see Mt. Monadnock in New Hampshire from my backyard as Thoreau and Emerson used to climb this mountain once in a while. Seeing both bluebirds and Mt. Monadnock had certainly made it a special day for my guest.

Mr. Condry autographed his book, *Pathway to the Wild*, as follows:
For "Bring back the Bluebird" Lil Files

With best wishes

William Condry at Concord, July '81.
And thank you for an unforgettable bluebird experience. ■

Scribner Hill
Tyngsboro, MA 01879

PATHWAY 
TO THE WILD

by
William Condry

For "Bring back the Bluebirds" Hil Files
With best wishes
William Condry, at Concord,
July '81.
and thank you for an
unforgettable bluebird
experience.

FABER AND FABER
3 Queen Square London



A HELPING HAND FOR BLUEBIRDS

William Condry

My first encounter with bluebirds was many years ago when a student of French literature. Interested in natural history as well as in French writing I felt much drawn to the Belgian author, Maeterlinck, who was not only a great man of letters but also a fine naturalist, well-known for his study of the lives of bees and for other popular interpretations of science. From Maeterlinck the naturalist I went on to Maeterlinck the dramatist, was delighted by *Pelleas et Melisande* and even more by *L'Oiseau Bleu*, that much loved play in which two children go off on fairy-tale adventures, cage in hand, in a quest for the bluebird of happiness.

Bluebirds might long have remained for me just symbols of love, hope and happiness had I not, as a change from French literature, just then begun reading Thoreau's *Walden*. In that incomparable book I learned that there really are bluebirds and that the bluebird symbolism in Maeterlinck and in many a popular song had come from America. In Thoreau I read how the people of New England looked forward every spring to hearing the first gentle warblings of bluebirds in their copses and gardens, much as we in Britain rejoice in the first chiffchaffs that announce the ending of winter.

From Thoreau's pen, too, came the most quoted of all descriptions of the bluebird: it "carries the sky on its back and the earth on its breast." The male bluebird is brilliantly blue above, especially in early spring, and has a reddish-brown breast and grayish-white belly. The female is similar but much duller in all her colors. Bluebirds are seven inches long and so are a

little larger than House Sparrows. Confiding, conspicuous perchers and full of cheering song, they breed in cavities in trees or fence posts, and in nest boxes. Avoiding dense cover, they favor relatively open country with scattered trees, such as orchards, gardens, lanesides, and thin woodlands. They summer as far north as southern Canada, and range from southern Saskatchewan right across to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Most of these northerners migrate to the southern United States or Mexico for the winter, often in small flocks. Only America (as far south as Nicaragua) has bluebirds, and there are three species: the common or Eastern Bluebird which lives mainly east of the Rockies; the similar Western Bluebird of the Pacific side of the Rockies, and northwestern America's extremely beautiful Mountain Bluebird which is turquoise all over.

So tame, so eager to sing, so ruddy of breast, the Eastern Bluebird reminded the earliest English settlers of the robins in their gardens back home and "blue robin" became its earliest English name. It was a very common and popular bird, and was often mentioned by Thoreau in his journals. Sadly, the past 50 years have seen bluebirds decline very severely, especially in New England where their numbers may be down as much as 90%.

When I was planning to visit Concord in Massachusetts last summer I was told I would be lucky if I even glimpsed a bluebird anywhere in the state. And so it proved. I certainly would not have seen one if a kind

friend had not driven me to Tyngsboro, near the border with New Hampshire, where a remarkable woman, Mrs. Lillian Lund Files, has for years devoted much time and care to giving the bluebird a helping hand, not only by providing nesting sites and suitable habitats in her 20 acres of grounds but also by promoting bluebird conservation for many miles around.

It was Mrs. Files who introduced me to the whole fascinating story of the struggle to save the bluebirds, a campaign supported by the National Audubon Society and many local bird clubs and led by a specialist organization, the North American Bluebird Society, founded by Dr. Lawrence Zeleny, author of an inspiring book on bluebird protection. The decline of the bluebird is due to many reasons, such as the loss of food supplies inevitable in a world so polluted by insecticides. Also very significant has been habitat destruction, as housing and other developments have swallowed the countryside. A favorite nesting site used to be holes in apple trees, but most of the old orchards are now gone, and many other old trees full of cavities have been cut down for fuel for wood-burning stoves.

Perhaps most devastating of all has been competition for nest holes from the ever-increasing House Sparrows and starlings, descendants of those so unwisely introduced from Europe last century. The first impact of these two aggressive species was that the bluebird retreated from nearly all built-up areas into the countryside, where its decline has been to some extent slowed down by the provision of nesting boxes.

The bluebird conservation movement thinks big: in terms not only of small groups of boxes in people's gardens and orchards, but also of what it calls bluebird trails, which are long strings of bluebird boxes set up across country, perhaps starting with suburban cemeteries and golf courses and then going out along lanes and through farmlands into wilder areas. Such trails may consist of hundreds of

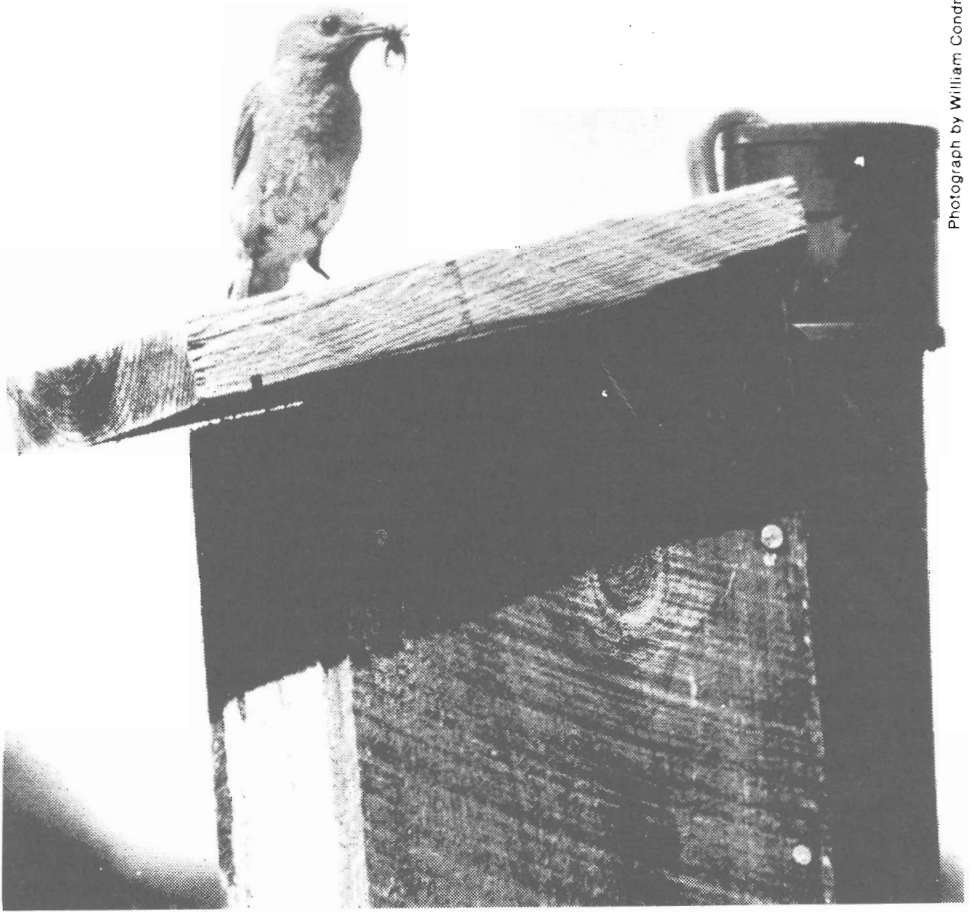
boxes spread over long distances, all regularly visited and reported on by eager volunteers.

The longest bluebird trail is in western Canada. It goes for 500 miles with side trails adding a further 1,500 miles. Both Mountain and Eastern bluebirds occupy over 7,000 boxes that annually produce about 5,000 young bluebirds as well as 10,000 Tree Swallows which are also regarded as a very desirable species. Plenty of literature is available advising people how to make nestboxes and where to site them with the best hope of attracting bluebirds. Many enthusiasts, including Lillian Lund Files, give bluebird lectures in winter and take people into the field to see the bluebirds in summer.

Because about 30 kinds of North American birds use nestboxes, the box intended for bluebirds needs to be specially designed to discourage as many competitive species as possible. The hole has to be a maximum of 1½ inches wide to keep out starlings, while to discourage House Sparrows it is best sited at low level and well away from buildings. Boxes placed too close to woodland are likely to be tenanted by wrens. Special guards can be fitted over the holes to deter raccoons. Climbing predators are further frustrated by the boxes being fitted to metal posts made slippery with grease. To reduce competition, it is desirable to supply more boxes than are ever likely to be occupied by bluebirds.

In Mrs. Files's Tyngsboro garden I saw some of the boxes not used by bluebirds tenanted by House Wrens and Tree Swallows. I spent only an hour or so there but had no difficulty in photographing a pair of her bluebirds from an improvised hide, for they were endearingly approachable.

If Maeterlinck were alive today he might well see some deep symbolism



A male Eastern Bluebird on the roof of its nesting box with food for its nestlings. The author photographed this bird in Lillian Files' yard in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts.

in the bluebird's decline. For him the bluebird of happiness was the world's most endangered species because people pursue it too desperately. Similarly, the real bluebirds are waning because we have interfered with the natural order of their lives. Maeterlinck's play ends with a touching scene in which the two children, having failed to catch the bluebird, come sadly home to their humble cottage. There they keep a captive turtle dove and, though it is a wrench to do so, they give it away to make a neighbor's sick child happy. Immediately the dove turns bright blue. So they find the bluebird of happiness on their own doorstep—through an act of unselfishness.

Is there not a symbolic parallel here with the efforts of American conservationists to save their bluebirds? In 1911, largely for *L'Oiseau Bleu*, Maeterlinck received the Nobel Prize. The prize won annually by America's devoted bluebird champions is the joy of knowing that they are helping a lovely and much cherished bird along the road to survival. ■

Ynys Edwin, Eglwysfach
Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8TA
Wales, United Kingdom

The preceding article appeared originally in Country Life, April 15, 1982. This periodical, published in London, England, kindly granted us reprint permission.

Bluebird Nesting Project in Carroll County Maryland Public Schools

Peter A. Zerhusen

Our bluebird project had its beginnings as a woodworking project for a group of elementary school children who had been placed in a special education class because of their long-standing behavioral, social, and educational problems in the regular educational program. These children had met with constant failure and saw themselves as "bad boys." We hoped that involving them in constructing bluebird nesting boxes would build their self-esteem while also reversing a growing negative attitude toward school. The project was a way to reward those who did well in school.

The effect this project had on the children was amazing. Their school behavior improved. They seemed genuinely pleased with themselves and what they were able to accomplish. They were once again excited about coming to school each day.

The results of the project were no less dramatic for the bluebirds themselves. After a slow start, our project met with increasing success each year.

During our first year (1979), six bluebird nesting boxes were placed around the perimeter of the school grounds with no successful nestings.

The next summer (1980) these same six boxes were placed at the homes of teachers where three successful nestings of bluebirds occurred. No counts were made of eggs, young, or fledglings.

Encouraged by our success during the summer of 1980, an additional 21 nesting boxes were built during the 1980-81 school year. All 27 boxes were placed at the homes of students, teachers, and administrators. The success rate, when compared to previous years, was astounding. Fourteen nesting boxes were used by blue-

birds during the course of the summer. Seven of the boxes were used for a second nesting and one box contained three successful nestings. A total of 100 eggs were laid with 70 young bluebirds successfully fledged.

We found that placing nesting boxes in the backyards of children, parents, teachers, and administrators in the Carroll County Public Schools offered several advantages over a bluebird trail:

1. Almost no loss of nestlings or eggs to vandalism;
2. Easier control of wren and House Sparrow predation;
3. More frequent monitoring and more detailed observation of bluebird behavior during each phase of nesting;
4. Participation by larger numbers of people, resulting in increased education of the public regarding the plight of the bluebird.

We are looking forward to the 1982 nesting season. During the fall and winter of 1981-82 we plan to build additional nesting boxes and further expand the project. Anyone desiring information may write to the author at the address below or contact him at 301-848-3900. ■

c/o Robert Moton Elementary School
1413 Washington Road
Westminster, MD 21157



Bluebird Notes of the Past

Edward Mullins

In our present location we had nesting bluebirds for 30 years. Frequently we had them winter with us and fed them raisins and peanut hearts.

Having bluebirds during winter recalls an incident involving our son when he was in grade school. The class was talking about the signs of spring; the teacher spoke of the return of the bluebirds as a sure omen. During that winter we were enjoying four at our feeder, three males and one female. My son informed the teacher that we had bluebirds during the winter. The teacher had read the bird books and argued that he must be mistaken and would not listen to his claim. When I inquired as to how the argument came out he said he let her have her way saying, "I was happy to have the bluebirds which raised two or three families in our yard a year."

The year we had the female bluebird with three "lovers" a friend about a mile away had a similar quartet. We wondered if they were the same birds and undertook to call each other when they appeared at our respective feeders. Our friend was feeding meal worms instead of peanut hearts. We never recorded them at our feeders at the same time and concluded that they were the same birds—which had a good thing going for them: peanut hearts and meal worms. Come spring we felt sorry for the female which had to choose among the three male beauties.

During the 30 years that bluebirds were a part of our garden I used many kinds of houses for

nesting purposes, including some designed for woodpeckers: Department of Agriculture regulation boxes (before there was a Dr. Zeleny), gourds, and a coconut shell. Near my home I found a beech tree stump about eight feet high and decided to use it in my yard to attract bluebirds. A friend and I sawed it down, gently letting it to the ground. I looked into the cavity and, to my amazement, it was full of nestling bluebirds. What was I to do? I wired the stump to a nearby oak tree and hid in high weeds to see what would happen when the adults returned to feed the young. The female appeared and barely hesitated in flying to her brood with food. How relieved I was! I later took the stump to my yard and it was used by bluebirds for several years. ■

5315 28th St., NW
Washington, DC 20015



The author with fledgling bluebird perched on his head, July 1969.

rest against my neck chirping softly in my ear. He appeared to be in ecstasy when I stroked his little head and back gently while he sat in the nest of my cupped hand. Soon he would be fast asleep—and there I'd be with a handful of sleeping bluebird!

After Blueboy was four weeks old, I started taking him out on the lawn. He always stayed within sight never flying up into tall trees. He seemed to have no trouble finding his own "bugs" and caterpillars. He was most obedient and flew to my shoulder whenever I called. Eventually, I left him outside a good part of the day. If he heard my voice through an open window, he would fly around the outside of the house and cling to the screen in the room where I was, begging to join me.

Blueboy's worst enemies were other bluebirds. In a flash the adults would dive on him and peck him. He always fought back bravely, but it seemed to be a bewildering experience for him. Other species of birds paid no attention to him. When he heard the song of a bluebird he would stand very still, lift his head and listen; the songs of mockingbirds, wrens or other birds seemed to fall on deaf ears.

The day finally came when Blueboy was ready to be completely on his own. He was six weeks old. Instead of bringing him into the porch at dusk, I left him outside. He seemed perfectly satisfied and flew away to find a perch. His first night outside was as bad for me as the first night our teenage son had the car! I thought of cats, hawks, owls, but never of a severe storm. I was awakened in the middle of the night by the sounds of a deluge. Where was Blueboy? Could he survive so much rain? Had he remembered to use the little oil gland at the base of his tail to waterproof his feathers? I finally got back to sleep, but even before the alarm went off I sprang out of bed, ran straight out on the lawn and whistled for "my" little bird. Within seconds a flash of blue came flying around the corner of the house, landing on my welcoming hand. Blueboy was as exuberant as ever and looked none the

worse for his night out. I wanted to hug him.

Soon I had a bigger problem. Blueboy was just too friendly—a real people lover. It was all right for him to join the gardeners in the mornings and sit on their heads or cling to their pants until they had turned over worms for him, but now he was dropping down on the table in our public picnic area. I'd hear excited screams from the tourists, and then someone would say, "It's a wild bird! And look, it's banded. Must belong to someone."

I began to fear that some thoughtless person would take this treasure home and cage him. At the end of a week of rescuing the little fellow, he stopped making these trips to the picnic area altogether. He had selected a territory for himself, the big woods behind our garage. A pair of bluebirds, raising their third brood of the year in a box next to his territory, appeared willing to allow him to be so close, but it was obvious that he was not to cross the fence that ran along one side of the garage. Blueboy was careful not to invade another territory. When I carried him to our other birdbath across the garden, he would take a quick drink and then fly directly to his own area, not even taking time for a bath. He loved to come when I called him to show off for visitors, but we had to be standing on his "turf."

My husband and I had planned a trip to Switzerland and Austria in August. A friend promised to leave raisins on a fence post for Blueboy every day. We arrived home at midnight after a two week absence. I thought that if Blueboy were still nearby in the morning my cup would run over. I jumped out of bed early and ran to the garage. I whistled softly. Within two minutes he flew straight out of the woods, landed on my shoulder and chirped excitedly. Bright blue patches of feathers were now visible on his back; below, he was losing his down which revealed a soft rust-colored breast. How glad he seemed to be that I had returned. He joined me each time I walked out of the house and took walks with me, flying from tree to tree. He seemed as tame as ever, but was

now less afraid to leave his territory. Most of the birds were through nesting for the summer and were more tolerant of each other. Little did I know that it was the beginning of the end of our close relationship.

By the time Blueboy was four months old he was coming to me less and less often. Oh I saw him often enough, but he would chirp at me from a high branch as if to say, "I'm doing fine. Don't worry about me anymore." One day I found him with five other bluebirds in a pine grove; it was clear that he didn't want to jeopardize his position with his new friends by associating with a human. In the early evening a few days later I was walking in the garden when I heard the familiar sweet call from a locust tree. His little head was cocked and he was looking right at me while he sang. Presently he dropped to a lower branch and a friend joined him—a little female from the summer's fledglings.

Although there is no longer a bluebird on my shoulder, there is still great joy in my heart. That joy is the gift Blueboy gave to everyone he met.

Editor's Note: Again we remind our readers that hand-raising young wild birds (other than House Sparrows and European Starlings) is illegal without a permit. Federal authorities grant permits to individuals who have demonstrated the necessary experience and skill. Well-meaning people often "adopt" nestlings or fledglings because they are unaware that many species encourage their young to leave the nest before they can care for themselves. If it is necessary to come to the aid of young birds, make every attempt to locate a licensed individual who can care for them. In some parts of the country it may not be possible to find such a person or he may be located a long distance away. If you feel that your only recourse is to attempt the job yourself, immediately make application for a permit from the nearest office of the Law Enforcement Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The diet Mrs. Price describes is a recommended one. Additional help may be obtained from Lawrence Zeleny's book *The Bluebird*. Remember that the younger the bird the poorer the chances that you will succeed. Hand-raised birds should be returned to the breeding population. They cannot be kept as pets. ■



Blueboy, nestled in a magnolia blossom, was painted by Carolyn Harper, President Price's sister.

BLUEBIRD EXPRESS

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!

Dear Editor:

My husband and I attended the Fourth Annual Meeting here in Ohio last fall and enjoyed it very much. I was especially impressed with how well the scientists and "just plain folks" can unite with such understanding when they share a common interest.

Norma Smith
Ravenna, Ohio

Dear Norma Smith:

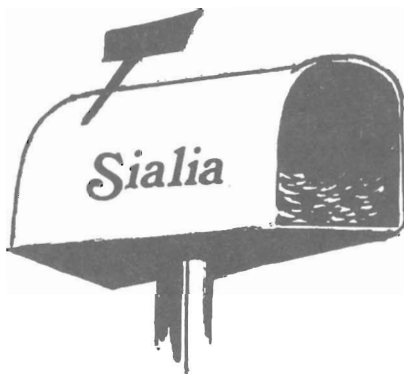
One of the aims of the Society is to bring amateurs and professionals together in order to help bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds. We're glad you think the effort is succeeding.

Dear Editor:

While putting up houses on a wild pasture hillside I had the pleasure of seeing almost instant occupancy.

Having placed the last of three houses on a quarter-mile fenceline, I doubled back and, as I approached the middle box, I saw a male Mountain Bluebird land on the fence several yards away. His bride-to-be perched ten yards or so away. He immediately entered the house, came out and fluttered about, then both went in.

It sure gave me a charge. I might mention that ours is very rough country. I'm 76 and packing a sack of houses is a chore. I now have between 50 and 60 houses up; some have produced broods for several years. Quite a



few swallows use them, too, which helps keep the mosquito population under control.

I'm a tree farmer and watching bluebirds spices my days.

Carl Lundberg
Colville, Washington

Dear Carl Lundberg:

With almost five dozen nesting you certainly are making sure that bluebirds will "spice your days." We hope your success continues.

Dear Editor:

I received my copy of *Sialia* today and it reminded me that I wanted to write to you of the possibility of your mentioning our film in a future issue. The film is available for rent (\$6.00 plus return postage) or purchase (\$300.00). *A Flying Piece of the Sky* is a 15-minute color film which deals with the Holden Arboretum's efforts to conserve the Eastern Bluebird and the efforts which can be undertaken by individuals to do the same. Printed educational materials are included.

Paul C. Spector
Mentor, Ohio

For readers who would be interested in rental, purchase, or more information about this film contact Paul C. Spector, Director of Education, The Holden Arboretum, 9500 Sperry Road, Mentor, OH 44060.

Dear Editor:

This is to report the favorable response which I have received from the citizens of Silsbee as well as other interested friends. One sizeable check came to me from as far away as Louisville, KY, with specific instructions to purchase four nesting boxes and place the name of a family member on each of them.

The editor of the Silsbee *Bee* printed in the October issue my invitation and intention of creating Avia's Bluebird Trail on my parents' small farm south of the outskirts of Silsbee, TX. As a result "my cup runneth over." Instead of the eight bluebird boxes which I had hoped to have mounted by January 1, 1982, we have the sum total of 36 nesting boxes! All of them are of outdoor marine plywood and meet the specifications of NABS.

On December 9, 1981, my husband and I delivered 33 of the 36 nesting boxes to my brother, David French Cook and his wife "Miss Polly" in Silsbee. They have joined me and another brother, Chester Edwin Cook, who lives in Dallas, in getting this project ready by the first part of January. These boxes will be appropriately placed and properly mounted to await the first sign of spring which comes early along the Gulf Coast.

Irene Cook Pipkin
Dallas, Texas

Dear Irene Pipkin:

We always welcome the announcement of new trails. This trail and your publicity should be a big boost to Hardin County bluebirds.

Dear Editor:

The *Pennsylvania Forests Magazine* (December 1981 issue) contained the following suggestion: "A paper silhouette of a flying hawk on your picture window will help prevent fatal songbird crashes."

Raymond Nelson
DuBois, Pennsylvania

Dear Raymond Nelson:

Thanks for passing along a useful tip for our readers. With fall migration beginning soon, your suggestion might reduce fatalities.

Dear Editor:

For years I have been involved in providing bird houses for bluebirds in a rural area of southeastern Alabama. I have even had success in placing two gourds approximately two feet apart attached to a two-inch strip of wood nailed to a fence post approximately five feet high. The bluebirds built a nest in one gourd where they reared their young, at the same time using the second gourd as a sort of guest room where the male apparently stayed at night during the nesting season. During the winter I removed droppings from one gourd and the nest from the other. Also, I have observed bluebirds moving into martin gourds after the martins departed in the early summer. The following spring when the martins returned the bluebirds repelled them and remained, contradicting what I have read about bluebirds being timid and lacking aggressiveness.

This year I am using the bird house designed by you on literature passed on to me by a friend. It is by far the best design I have seen for bluebird houses.

Sam McInnis
Ariton, Alabama

Dear Sam McInnis:

Thanks for sharing your interesting comments on gourd use by bluebirds. I hope the standard boxes will prove as successful for you.

Dear Editor:

It is with conservation awareness that we send along with our yearly renewal this letter to mention the beginnings of an effort to expand the bluebird trails in the south central region of Pennsylvania.

Glen (Ed) Maurer, President of the Appalachian Audubon Society, and our Board of Directors wish to show our full support of NABS by increasing our membership to the sustaining level.

Warren O. Hoffman
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Your increased support is commendable and much appreciated by the Society. We look forward to your continued partnership in bluebird conservation.

BLUEBIRD TALES

Mary D. Janetatos

The air of festivity which pervaded the Woodmoor Elementary School in Upper Marlboro, MD, had a distinctly spring-like quality on that day in early March. **Larry Zeleny** and I were invited guests attending the second annual Bluebird Festival in the school. Situated in a rural-suburban location in Prince Georges County, about 17 miles east of Washington, DC, Woodmoor had been blessed with nesting bluebirds on the school grounds. Bluebirder **Anna Urciolo**, music teacher in the school, had stimulated the imaginations of the principal, teachers and children to creative ways of acclaiming the official county bird, the Eastern Bluebird.

In the multipurpose room our slides and talk were met with attentive interest, and the children's thoughtful questions were answered. Larry spoke words of praise for their work.

In closing, we were treated to original songs and dances performed by the entire student body and selected solo performers. We then disbanded and regathered outside on the playground where the final bluebird nestbox in their five box trail was ceremoniously erected by Mrs. Urciolo and her student assistants. As we watched, bluebirds were sighted in the distance, aptly crowning a truly delightful morning.

Bluebirds were featured in the March issue of two separate publications. *Country Magazine's* fine cover story written by seasoned bluebirder **Eugenia Snyder** was accompanied by **Norman Miller's** how-to article on building nestboxes. The *New York Conservationist Magazine*, a first-rate publication, ran a beautifully written and illustrated bluebird article. Since each of these articles was aimed at a receptive audience and they both gave the NABS address, many packets of supplemental bluebird information were distributed and NABS gained many new members. This is reminiscent of the famous *Parade* article,



when NABS received over 80,000 requests for information, and acquired over 1,000 new members.

Speaking of the *Parade* article, its author, **Joan Rattner Heilman** now has a book out called *Bluebird Rescue*. Ms. Heilman documents the decline of the bluebird population and outlines steps for its recovery—all for the young reader. The book is beautifully illustrated in full color and, at \$10.95 for the clothbound edition, is available through NABS. (To order, see enclosed picture catalog.)

Many members across the continent have been able to provide local newspaper or television coverage for the bluebird cause. Some who were not previously mentioned in this column are **Mrs. Grace Pace**, of Atlanta, GA, and **Laurance** and **Adelaide Sawyer** of Ringgold, GA. Those who are successful in achieving local coverage are encouraged to send us the clippings or tell us about the TV programs. This aids us in knowing where to focus our educational efforts.

Speaking of TV programs, a local utility company, Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO), has filmed a sequence showing the initial placement of a nestbox on a right-of-way they own in a Prince Georges County, MD, park. On a blustery April day, PEPCO's chief forester, **Jim Parsons**, park naturalist **Sandy Lyons**, Larry Zeleny and I gathered to discuss the suitability of rights-of-way as bluebird trails. We hereby invite NABS members in Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties, MD, to become involved by

telephoning the office for details: (301) 384-2798. Imagine the potential if this idea spreads—bluebird trails stretching across the country along these rights-of-way.

Among the bluebird festivals held around Prince Georges County, MD, sponsored by the County Beautification Committee, two were held at the Goddard Space Flight Center. Goddard has had a bluebird trail ever since Ground Manager "**Chuck**" Dupree (also NABS' Treasurer) initiated one 15 years ago. Local organizations donate nestboxes, and various employees volunteer to monitor the trail. "Chuck" has banded many fledglings of several species. He calls it his Cavity Nester Trail (*Sialia* 3:127). There's a double thrill in store for visitors to Goddard—a breathtaking view of a rocket poised for launching, and a flock of bluebirds perched along the guy wires!

Speaking of "other" occupants of nestboxes, **Clyve W. Jackson** of Whispering Pines, NC, recounts that Brown-headed Nuthatches are using a wren box again this year, as they have for the past eleven years.

Among the ways members can spread the bluebird word, one very effective way is by presenting NABS' slide show to interested groups. There are many speakers I'm not aware of, though **Dick Tuttle**, Education Committee Chairman, reports heavy use of the slide program. One such speaker I do know: **Sam Hall**, of nearby Ashton, MD. Sam has given talks so numerous I'd be sure to be wrong if I gave a number.

Arlene Kunkel of Fredericktown, OH, reports that she raised 115 fledgling bluebirds in 37 nestboxes last year, and kindly adds, "Good luck to all of you hard working people in Silver Spring!" (Letters like yours keep us going, Arlene!) **Roberta Schaeffer** of Jefferson, MD, recounts her success in eliminating House Sparrows following use of the Huber sparrow traps. She also reports seeing bluebirds in a holly (*Ilex scutal*) hedge eating the black berries.

Spring always ushers in a potpourri of phone calls from near and far.

On a typical day recently one call from **Linda Payne** of Prattsburg, NY, told of Tree Swallows competing for nestboxes. Based on articles in *Sialia*, Winter, 1982, I suggested she put up many more boxes as near as nine feet from each other. That call was followed by one from **Anne Marie Wajtal** of nearby Herndon, VA, who was distressed at not seeing her back yard female bluebird in two days. Previously she had counted five eggs which the female was incubating. After several exploratory questions, the best I could do was put her in touch with member **Roni Lampmann** of McLean, VA, who would be sympathetic. Roni was not only happy to call her but then recounted her own weird experience: the tale of the bigamous male. Yes, she had a bluebird male who was protecting two nestboxes—each with its own female bluebird! So the "doings" of the bluebird world provide a never ending variety: comedy, beauty, drama, wonder and mystery. Who could ever be bored?

P.S. Inadvertently missing from recent columns of "Bluebird Tales" were the names of two volunteers. **Jenny Gale** helped the other youngsters listed as stuffing and sealing *Sialia*. And **Frances Ehlers** is so deeply involved in bluebirding that she deserves a gold medal. **Nancy MacClintock**, a professional indexer, has prepared the index for Volume 3 of *Sialia* which appears in this issue. An index increases the value and usefulness of any publication. Many thanks, Nancy, for an outstanding job. Another hooray for all our volunteers. ■

BLUEBIRD SLIDE SHOW

The NABS slide show is available for rental at \$5.00 or purchase at \$50.00. The show consists of 141 collated plastic-framed 35 mm slides and a printed script (no slide tray). If a cassette narration is desired add \$5.00 to the purchase price. To rent or purchase the show, write to Dick Tuttle, NABS Education Committee, 295 W. Central Ave., Delaware, OH 43015.

To a Bluebird

Bird of heaven's hue,
Breast of red earth, like fleece
Of lambs beneath, in peace
Thy way pursue.

Thy coat of blue,
As floats across the skies
Thy form, delights our eyes,
And fades from view.

Thy song is new—
The first of birds to sing—
When comes the expected spring
And falls the dew.

Birds' nests be few
That are more neatly made,
Four eggs of blue twice laid,
Nearby in view.

Thy brood just flew
Above my head, I heard
Their mellow note, no bird
Has voice more true.

At length ensue
Cold autumn days, when thou
Must leave my paths—then how
Thy loss I rue!

Now winds bestrew
The fields with winter's snow,
I long for skies aglow
And thy coat of blue.

O bird of blue,
Though thou must e'er depart,
Thou can't not bid my heart
At last adieu.

Brother Alphonsus, C.S.C.

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NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY, INC.
STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
NOVEMBER 1, 1980 THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 1981.

Cash Balance—November 1, 1980	\$ 17,980.39
Add:	
<u>Cash Received</u>	

Sale of <i>Sialia</i> Magazine	\$15,018.00	
Sale of boxes, books, pictures, stationery, etc.	45,149.19	
Contributions	2,009.91	
Membership dues	15,943.66	
Annual meeting	2,680.00	
Interest	1,471.32	
Sales tax collected	279.05	
	82,551.13	\$100,531.52

Less:

Cash Disbursements

Boxes, books, pictures, stationery, etc.	\$34,209.36	
<i>Sialia</i> Magazine	8,935.68	
Educational material	10,447.97	
Membership fulfillment	6,575.18	
Research	1,887.85	
Salaries	6,560.96	
Expense accounts	5,541.72	
Postage	5,517.34	
Office Supplies	995.48	
Bank Charges	158.65	
Maryland sales tax remitted	277.64	
Annual meeting	4,534.87	
	85,642.70	\$ 14,888.82

Cash Balance—October 31, 1981	\$ 14,888.82
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Accounted for as follows:

Citizens Bank & Trust Co.— Checking account	\$ 2,765.09	
Citizens Bank & Trust Co.— Savings account	271.75	
Citizens Bank & Trust Co.— Certificate of deposit	11,851.98	\$ 14,888.82

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