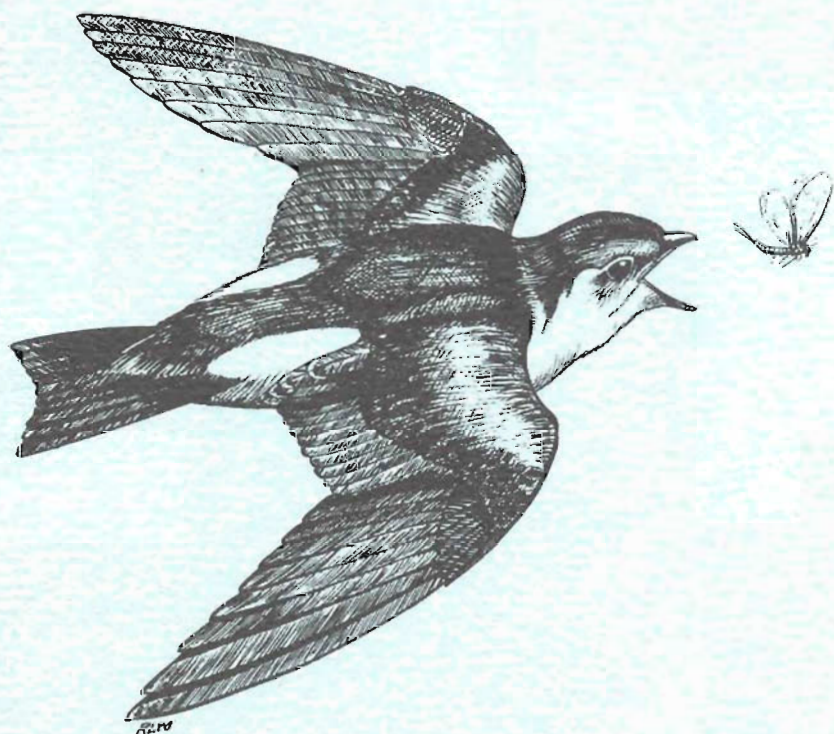


Sialia

Volume 5, Number 1
Winter 1983
Pages 1-40

The Quarterly Journal
Of
The North American
Bluebird Society



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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 *sialis*, 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 *sialis*, though he placed it in the genus *Motacilia* 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 *sialis* which Linnaeus had used. Therefore, the scientific name for the Eastern Bluebird is *Sialia sialis* (pronounced see-ah'-ee-ah see'-ah'-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 juvenile bluebird for its logo. Since bluebirds almost always choose to raise their young in small enclosed cavities, a young bluebird sitting near a nesting box seemed to symbolize our mission. The hope of any species resides in its young. Because of bluebird nesting preferences, the survival of their young may depend on the nesting box, especially since natural cavities, for a variety of reasons, are disappearing rapidly. The theme of bluebird young nurtured in man-made structures will be a recurring one in our art and literature. We hope 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 5, Number 1
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EDITOR

Joanne K. Solem

CONTRIBUTING

EDITOR

Lawrence Zeleny

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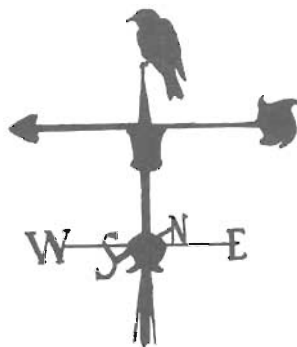
COVER

The Violet-green Swallow on the cover is the work of Richard L. Woodward of Marysville, Pennsylvania. An article beginning on page 7 deals with this attractive cavity nester.

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

Anne Sturm



The Fifth Annual Meeting of the North American Bluebird Society brought together a record number of bluebird enthusiasts. Thanks to Jack Finch and Gay Duncan bluebirders now know what Southern hospitality is all about.

Participants on the Sunday field trips witnessed the state of two cavity nesters. There were bluebirds everywhere—a moving tribute to the omnipresence of “Homes for Bluebirds.” Only a few birders caught a glimpse of the elusive Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Naturalist and trip leader, Jay Carter, predicts that this species will be extinct in a few years despite the fantastic amount of professional help being provided by federal studies.

Although the future of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker is very much in question, we are fortunate to be a part of a grass roots effort that is attempting to prevent the bluebird from being faced with the same perils. We have the wonderful feeling of knowing that well-monitored nestboxes are effective. Bluebird conservation works!

Awards Presented

This year, for the first time, NABS formally presented awards recognizing the outstanding contributions of individuals, corporations, and groups in the cause (both historical and current) of bluebird conservation. We look forward to paying tribute to many deserving recipients in the future. Toward this end, I invite our members to let me know of any individual, group, or organization that you feel has made a significant contribution so that they can be considered by the Awards Committee. Please write a letter documenting the work of your nominee.

The awards, named after pioneers in bluebird conservation, are listed below.

The **JOHN AND NORAH LANE AWARD** for outstanding contribution to bluebird conservation by an individual was made to the following people:

Jess and Elva Brinkerhoff, who have developed one of the largest and most successful Mountain Bluebird trails in the state of Washington. Their work also calls attention to possible modifications necessary to the standard bluebird box.

Jack R. Finch, who with the loving support of his wife, Ruby, has dedicated a lifetime to nestbox trails throughout North and South Carolina.

William L. Highhouse, who with “Bluebirds Unlimited” has placed thousands of nesting boxes throughout Warren County, Pennsylvania in the 25 years he has aided the bluebird.

Raleigh R. Stotz (posthumously awarded), who was the inspiring force behind the Grand Rapids Audubon Bluebird Project. This group did extensive research on predator control, and sold on a non-profit basis thousands of nestboxes and distributed countless pieces of educational bluebird literature.

The **LAWRENCE ZELENY AWARD** for outstanding contribution to bluebird conservation by an organization was given to the following group:

(Continued on page 26)

A Nestbox Restricter as a Management Tool for Eastern Bluebirds

Theodore W. Gutzke

Introduction

The Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) is probably one of the most studied and managed passerines in North America today. Literally thousands of nestboxes are provided for not only the eastern species but the Western Bluebird (*S. mexicana*) and Mountain Bluebird (*S. currucoides*) as well. Nestboxes are commonly situated along a trail so that many can be monitored in a short time (Lane 1980; Musselman 1934; Zeleny 1976).

Bluebirds will usually fledge 18-20 days after hatching (Pinkowski 1974a); however, this time can be reduced to as little as 15 days if nest disturbance occurs. Problems arise when a nestbox is checked or nestlings are banded at the wrong time, i.e., 15-20 days after hatching. Nestling bluebirds may fledge prematurely when disturbed prior to attaining enough development to fly adequately. This often results in young birds spending the first few days on the ground, which increases the chance of mortality from adverse weather conditions or predation (Pinkowski 1974a; Zeleny 1976).

An established way of reducing the possibility of premature fledging is to inspect nestboxes and band nestlings at 12-14 days of age. At this time, sex can be determined by the amount of blue on the remiges (Pinkowski 1974b), and the young are usually not developed enough to fledge. However, this timing is not always possible and visits to an active nest after 14 days often occur, resulting in a high potential for premature fledging and mortality.

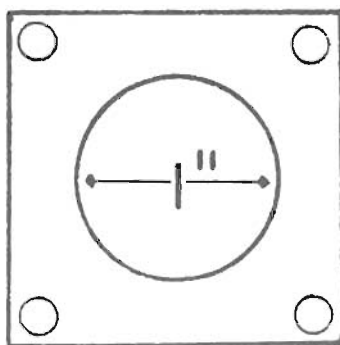
While conducting studies of the Eastern Bluebird during the 1981 nesting season, I made daily visits to active

nests, aware that these visits would eventually create enough disturbance to cause premature fledging. In an attempt to keep the young in the nest until they were developed enough to fly, various devices were experimented with to inhibit exit yet not obstruct parental feeding. A small portable nestbox restricter that fulfilled both of these criteria was developed.

Materials and Methods

A nestbox restricter is constructed using a 2 inch (5 cm) square piece of ¼ inch (6 mm) plyboard. A 1 inch (25 mm) hole is drilled in the center, and holes are drilled at each corner to accommodate ½ inch x No. 4 wood screws (Fig. 1). The device is attached to the outside of an active nestbox entrance hole (Fig. 2) when nest disturbance may cause premature fledging. Nestling bluebirds are inhibited from exiting the box until the restricter is removed by the trail operator, usually after the age of 16 days when the birds are developed enough to fledge properly.

Figure 1. Nestbox Restricter.



Results and Discussion

The nestbox restricter worked very well, not allowing enough clearance at the entrance hole for nestlings to pass through. The device was attached to nestboxes when nestlings were 16 days old (hatch date being day 0). At day 19, the restricter was removed and the young were allowed to fledge, which usually occurred within one-half hour.

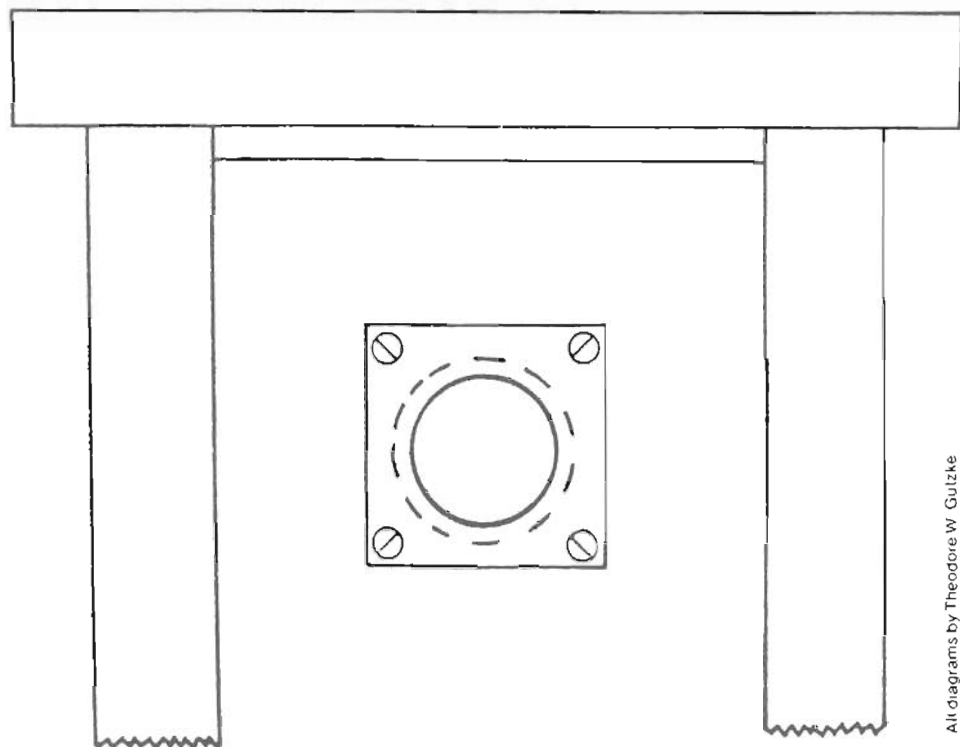
The nestbox restricter was used on 11 active boxes containing a total of 41 nestlings during the spring and summer of 1981. Eight of these boxes with 30 nestlings were visited daily and were used as experimental nests. The remaining three boxes had nestbox restricters attached after the banding of nestlings was completed and the birds were more than 15 days old (Jung 1979). The restricters were left on nestboxes for a minimum of one and a maximum of three days and were then removed. In each instance the nestlings

had developed enough during their confinement so that they were able to fledge without difficulty. Initial flights covered linear distances of 50 meters or more, but vertical flights were directed to an adjacent tree to a height of about 10 meters. These flights were very strong compared with those of prematurely fledged birds, which often fall to the ground or fly short distances of only one or two meters.

I observed the reaction of numerous adult pairs to the restricter; their behavioral characteristics were all similar. The initial response was confusion, followed by a temporary reduction in feeding frequency.

Typically, the male and female would land separately on the front of the nestbox with food, look around for approximately 10 seconds, then attempt to enter. They would struggle for two or three seconds, rest, and try again. After two or three attempts they

Figure 2. Nestbox Restricter Attached to Entrance of Nesting Box.



All diagrams by Theodore W. Gutzke

would fly to a nearby perch or the top of the box. Occasionally they would flutter around the entire nestbox, observing all sides as if looking for the proper entrance, then attempt to enter the box again. Eventually, the food item was passed through the restricter either by the adult sticking its head into the box or by the nestling putting its head out.

Nest sanitation was not a serious problem. The restricter did not allow adult birds to enter the nest and remove fecal sacs. However, the nestlings would defecate in the corners of the nestbox rather than throughout the nest, which tended to keep the nest uncluttered. This is similar to the situation with undisturbed nests, where adults may neglect nest sanitation the last day or two prior to the fledging of the young (Zeleny, pers. comm.).

A weight loss was noted for most of the 30 nestlings that were in experimental boxes. This ranged from 0 to 4 grams (mean 1.6, SD 0.97). Part of this loss was probably due to the existence of the restricter, which tended to reduce the feeding frequency of the adults. However, a weight loss was noted *before* the restricter was used (after days 10-13) and continued *after* the restricter was attached. Pinkowski (1975) observed a similar leveling off and a slight decline in weights of unrestricted nestlings after day 12 and up to day 16, but did not weigh nestlings thereafter.

A natural weight loss may take place prior to fledging as a result of reduced feeding. A lighter fledgling is probably better adapted for its first flight than a heavy one. Less bulk would make flight easier. The weight loss may also be due to the fact that nestlings have attained 90% of their adult weight by day 12, yet feather development is not yet complete. Energy between day 12 and the date of fledging may be directed to feather development rather than body weight. This is quite possible as Pinkowski (1975) observed feather development up to 35 days of age.

I must stress that the best procedure is not to disturb nestling bluebirds after day 14. However, when this

becomes necessary, a nestbox restricter is an excellent device for preventing premature fledging. In most cases the device should remain on the box no longer than one day. My experience has been that removing the restricter the next day, after the young have settled down, will lead to a resumption of normal nest activity. Trail operators must be very careful when using this technique. A restricter left on a nest box too long has a very high potential for nestling mortality, defeating the purpose of its use. Extreme care must be used at all times.

Summary

A simple nestbox restricter was developed and used successfully to inhibit nestling bluebirds from exiting boxes prior to attaining adequate flight feather development. Restricters were attached when nestlings were 16 days of age or when age was estimated at 15 days or more, and were retained for one to three days or until an estimated age of 19 days. Although parent birds continued to feed nestlings, a slight weight loss was noted. This did not hamper eventual fledging, which was stronger in birds from restricted boxes than from those fledging prematurely. ■

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Alberta Has Two Cases of Double Broods of Tree Swallows in Single Nestboxes

On 13 June 1982, while monitoring the East Didsbury Bluebird Trail, Don Stiles, Philip Stiles and Dan Cloutier discovered a Tree Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) nest with 12 eggs at nesting box no. 143, 20 miles (32 km) east of Didsbury. The eggs were clean and fresh-looking and the nest was active with an adult brooding. The bird was banded. On previous occasions in which large numbers of Tree Swallow eggs were found, the nest was unmade, the eggs were dirty and no subsequent hatchings occurred. In this case, on the next monitoring, on 1 July, there were 12 healthy-looking young. All were banded. Two days later, they were photographed and a decision was made to leave all 12 in the nest and not move some to nearby boxes as they seemed to be folding themselves over one another to avoid taking up the whole box. A final check on 20 July suggested that all had fledged successfully. Three adults flying around the nest on 13 June and 1 July, and five adults flying around on 3 July led us to believe it was a multiple effort which fledged the 12 Tree Swallows from a single nesting box.

Don Stiles

I have just a few nestboxes around the farm which is four miles south of Stettler. When Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) took possession of nesting box no. 7, several adult birds were seen flying around it. One egg was found on 15 May 1982. On 30 May there were 13 eggs with two hens brooding them. Both birds flew from the box. On 12 June one hen flew out as I looked in. I lifted the other one, counted the eggs, and put her back on the nest where she stayed. On 15 June when Lloyd Lohr came with me to observe the nest, the eggs were hatching. Lloyd noticed that there was only one male bird near and concluded that this was a case of polygamy. A few days later I removed three infertile eggs from the nest and then left the ten young birds alone for some time. When I next checked the box, it con-



tained the remains of two nearly full-grown birds. The rest, I assume, had fledged.

Grace P. Neill

The authors would appreciate information about other instances of double broods in Alberta. They believe these may be the first recorded for this species in the province.

Substantially the same material here printed has been published in several Alberta newsletters.

20 Lake Wapta Rise, S.E., Calgary, Alberta
T2J 2M9 (Stiles); Box 727, Stettler, Alberta
T0C 2L0 (Neill)

WANTED: Back Issues of *Sialia*

Don't discard back issues of *Sialia*! If, for any reason, you cannot keep past copies of the bluebird journal return them and claim a tax deduction of \$2.50 for each.

Many new members desire complete sets of back issues which we are unable to supply. Copies of Volume 1, Numbers 1 and 2 are particularly needed. Mail back issues to headquarters:

North American Bluebird Society
Box 6295
Silver Spring, MD 20906-0295

A House Sparrow-Proof Nesting Box for Violet-Green Swallows

Hubert W. Prescott

Twelve years ago when Mrs. Prescott and I first moved into Rose Villa (a retirement community with around 350 ground-level apartments), I noted a few Violet-green Swallows (*Tachycineta thalassina*) and Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) flying about, so I made some nesting boxes and set them up under the eaves of our apartment as well as those of some neighbors. Both Tree and Violet-green Swallows nested in most of them and succeeded in fledging broods when I was able to protect them from House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). All the apartment buildings have gentle sloping roofs with eaves that project four feet from the sides of the buildings providing excellent shelter for the boxes against rain and sun. That initial success led me into ambitious expansion. I made up about 30 more boxes for the grounds, but only succeeded in multiplying the population of House Sparrows. It was impossible for me to keep close surveillance over so many nestboxes scattered over so wide an area.

At that time all of my swallow boxes were provided with 1 1/4 inch diameter round entrance holes. In order to discourage House Sparrows I began to experiment with entrance holes of different sizes and shapes. In testing square, triangular, and elliptical holes, I discovered that the sparrows could not enter 1 1/8 inch round holes but could enter that diameter if the entrance were square, evidently utilizing the larger diagonal dimension. To my surprise, they were able to enter horizontally elliptical holes that were only 1 inch in height. This provided the clue I needed for further testing.

It had taken me several years to reach this stage so I decided to speed things up a bit. After all, waiting eight months of every year for the swallows to return from the South so I could resume the tests was slow business—



Photograph by Hubert W. Prescott

Violet-green Swallow at entrance hole of nesting box.

and I wasn't getting any younger. I already had on hand four traps which looked much like ordinary bird boxes that I could use for live-trapping House Sparrows. For testing purposes I built a small box (Fig. 1) with a sliding door on the top. The front of the box was constructed so that wooden panels with holes of various sizes and shapes could be slid into place. When the aperture size and shape to be tested was in place, I covered the front of the box with a clear cellophane bag. Through the top I then introduced a sparrow, closed the sliding door, and observed

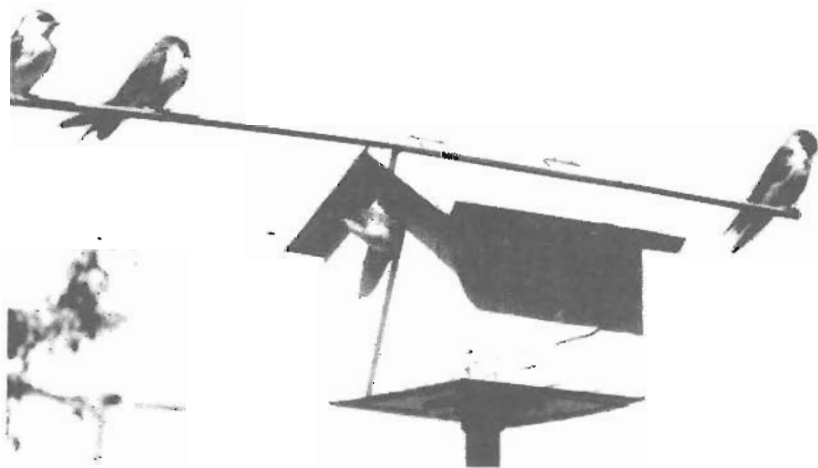
Figure 1. Experimental Box for Testing Nesting Box Entrances.



whether the bird was able to escape through the opening and, if so, the amount of effort required. The cellophane bag enabled me to test the same sparrow repeatedly on several different size openings. In all, I ran a total of about 20 sparrows through these tests. In addition to round, square, and elliptical holes, I tested flattened diamond-shaped as well as rectangular openings. Whether the hole was vertical or horizontal seemed to make no difference to the sparrows. I observed that, in order to prevent the sparrow's escape, the width of the entrance could be no greater than 7/8 inch.

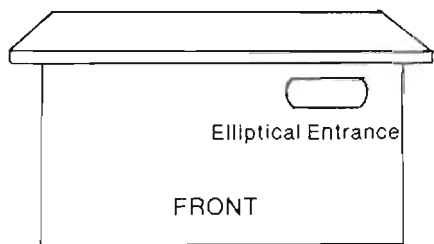
The next phase of my testing was to determine whether the Violet-green Swallow could enter an elongate 7/8 inch opening. Since I did not wish to subject the swallows to the trauma of being live-trapped and run through the testing box, I handled them differently. I reached into the nesting boxes during the day and caught the female swallows while they were incubating eggs or covering young. Each adult was placed in a light paper bag so that it could be weighed. I then immediately liberated the bird and watched its nesting box to make certain that it returned to its nest without undue delay. Each swallow invariably returned to its box within 10 or 15 minutes. I had suspected that the Violet-greens were smaller than the sparrows but was surprised to find how significant the difference was. The average Violet-green Swallow weighed a little over half as much as the average House Sparrow (15 g to 28 g). That suggested that an entrance hole that was barely small enough to exclude House Sparrows might be large enough to admit Violet-Green Swallows.

Four years ago I started setting up nesting boxes equipped with 7/8 inch



A group of recently fledged Violet-green Swallows "visiting" a box containing nestlings. This nesting box was located at Forest Grove, Oregon.

Figure 2. Front View of Violet-green Swallow Nesting Box.



high horizontally elongate openings—some of a flattened diamond shape and others rectangular. These I tested on the swallows by setting boxes under the eaves of Rose Villa buildings. These boxes were extremely successful. Of the thirteen boxes I set up in February 1981, the Violet-greens got off broods in eleven; only two were left empty, possibly because they were too close to boxes already occupied by other Violet-green Swallows. Not one of these thirteen boxes was occupied by House Sparrows, but it was not for lack of trying. I had many an amusing moment watching them struggle in vain to enter a box.

The Tree Swallow (at 18 g avg. wt.) is just enough larger than the Violet-green that the House Sparrow is able to enter any opening that Tree Swallows can use. While I have managed to keep two or three pairs nesting in my boxes, I regret that the House Sparrow seriously limits Tree Swallows at Rose Villa.

The horizontally elongate design of the nestbox (Fig. 2) resulted from the fact that this configuration fitted snugly against the 5 inch wide rafters supporting the eaves of Rose Villa apartments. In more rural areas the Violet-green Swallow takes quite readily to regular bluebird nesting boxes. That type of box should serve just as well in suburban situations provided the box were equipped with the 7/8 inch slot-type entrance. In the horizontally elongate box I have used, the entrance hole is necessarily much closer to floor level than is the case with the normal bluebird box. Under these conditions the swallows build their nests as far away from the entrance holes as

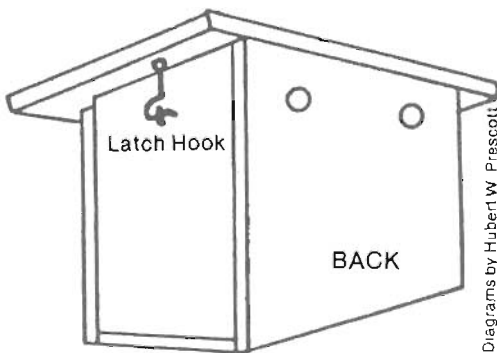
possible putting them in the end opposite the entrance.

The secret of a successful nesting box for Violet-green Swallows is in the precise width of the 2 1/4 inch long entrance. Although much latitude is allowable in other dimensions of the box, the slot-shaped opening must be exactly 7/8 inch wide. If the hole is even 1/16 inch wider, the House Sparrows will enter; 1/16 inch narrower and the Violet-green Swallows will be shut out. If an abnormally small House Sparrow should enter the slot, the application of a thin layer of plastic wood about 1/32 inch thick should solve the problem.

The nestbox that is illustrated has a 4 x 9 inch floor space with 3 inches to the bottom of the entrance. Exclusive of the roof, the box is 5 inches high in front and 6 inches in back. Two holes of 1/2 inch diameter are bored 8 inches apart through the back of the box. By means of these holes, the box can be hung on two nails driven with a pronounced upward slant into the wall of a building. Mounted in this fashion the box will be inaccessible to cats, raccoons, and opossums.

The roof of the box is designed to allow for inspection as well as easy removal of used nests after the young have fledged. Two 4 inch long wooden cleats nailed to the inside surface of the roof allow a snug fit. For added security two latch hooks may be used (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Back View of Violet-green Swallow Nesting Box.



Diagrams by Hubert W. Prescott

Nesting boxes with 1 1/8 inch diameter round entrances are fairly House Sparrow-proof and have been recommended for Violet-green Swallows, but, in my tests, at least half of such entrances were rejected by swallows. Their behavior suggested that, on preliminary inspection, they could not see the interior of the box adequately because their own bodies blocked the light. A period of intensive inspection before choosing a nesting box seems imperative to the swallows. The slot-shaped opening facilitates such an inspection. It also is relatively easy for the birds to take nesting material into the box through a slot. Such an entrance affords extra ventilation for the young and prevents one nestling from monopolizing the entrance space when they are old enough to receive food at the opening.

In the Far West, which is the only part of the continent where the Violet-

green Swallow is found, many suburbanites have nesting House Sparrows only. In these cases this nesting box is a special boon, for the small Violet-green Swallow is not only beautiful but is highly beneficial. Its food consists entirely of flying insects caught on the wing. Unlike the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), the Violet-green is quite clean about its nest. Though it weighs less than half as much as a bluebird and is far less well-adapted for direct physical combat, it has managed, by some mysterious means, to survive in tenuous numbers in those notorious House Sparrow strongholds—the cities and suburbs. With a little help from man in providing sparrow-proof nesting boxes, the numbers of this attractive cavity nester could be greatly increased. ■

13505 S.E. River Road
Portland, OR 97222

Bluebirds in Dutchess County New York

After a banner year in 1981, we had high hopes for our bluebird trail in 1982. Mother Nature deemed otherwise by surprising us with a record-breaking snowfall on 4 April, plus bitterly cold weather.

With early nesting already in progress, frozen eggs and dead adults were found by monitors after the storm. Abandoned nests indicated further losses.

In spite of this, bluebirds appeared and by mid-May families were nesting again. Our trail monitors have become proficient nest builders when blowfly larvae are present in large numbers. Monitors lift the entire nest out (including the young), gather dry grass or any other material at hand (one woman carries hay in her car), form a nest, then scrape all debris from the box and replace the young in the new nest. This approach to the problem has been completely satisfactory.

I banded the last brood on 4 September, a third brood which is rare even in a good season. A total of 220 fledglings were banded and another 60 or 70 fledged unbanded. The previous year (1981) produced 400 young from the same trail, less the 30 new boxes erected in 1982.

We are confident of continued success. More and more people are reporting seeing the Eastern Bluebird in our county where 20 years ago they were a rare sight even to alert birders. In 1981 and even through the nasty winter of 1982, our state bird, *Sialia sialis*, was reported to the Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club keeper every month of the year. ■

Florence Germond

Shunpike
Stanfordville, NY 12581

A Bath for All Seasons

Angeline S. Cromack

For many years I had thought bird-baths were more decorative than functional and, therefore, had never owned one. We bought a birdbath and placed it where it could be seen from inside during the winter of 1976 when Oregon experienced its worst drought in 100 years. Because the weather was abnormally dry, we decided to keep water in the bath throughout the winter. We observed Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*), which overwinter in western Oregon's mild climate, drinking and bathing in the bath regularly; in addition, many other species of birds also used it. During the following normal, rainy Willamette Valley winters, the bluebirds continued to bathe and drink from the bath on a regular basis.

Why should birds want to bathe when it's cold or rainy? Birds bathe to remove external parasites, to improve the insulating qualities of their feathers by cleaning them, and to cool off in hot weather. Bathing also is a social activity for birds.

The only difficulty in maintaining a fall and winter birdbath is that of keeping it ice-free. We solved this problem for a couple of years by sweeping out the water with a brush late in the day before freezing temperatures were predicted, then pouring in fresh water early the next morning. On mornings when we slept late, there often were several birds sitting patiently on the bath when we arose, waiting for their first drink of the day. During periods when the temperature remained below freezing, we had to add water after chipping the surface film of ice away several times daily. This can be quite a chore and is probably why so many people decide that maintaining a birdbath during the winter is not worth the effort.

A simple solution is to buy a thermostatically-controlled birdbath heater and use a grounded outdoor extension cord to hook it up. There are



several heaters available which are advertised in *Audubon* magazine or wild bird supply catalogs. The one we have saves energy by turning on at 40 F and off at 50 F. In freezing weather the water vapor rising from the bath makes it look like a hot tub for the birds!

When we had three Western Bluebirds roosting at night in our Audubon Society of Corvallis Bluebird Trail nest-box several winters ago, and five roosting last winter, we noticed that they regularly bathed lightly about an hour before going to roost. After bathing, they would methodically preen and oil their feathers. By doing this they improved the insulating quality of their feathers for the cold winter nights.

We have seen bluebirds bathing when the daytime high was 30 F in February. They also came to drink when snow or ice was on the ground in January. One winter we had as many as eight bluebirds bathing simultaneously in the bath.

During warmer weather the bird-bath is used heavily for drinking and bathing. The birds' feathers become quite wet, thus helping to cool them and remove external parasites. Each year nesting Western Bluebird pairs in our backyard have bathed together regularly several times a day while courting and during the nesting season. Bathing seems to be an important social activity during courtship. A few

days after baby bluebirds have fledged from the nest, their parents show them the bath, and they take their first dip. In *Bluebirds Seven* by R.B. Horsfall, there is a cute painting of a baby bluebird learning to bathe.

To insure the birds' safety, place a birdbath within ten feet of a large shrub or small tree, but not close to low cover where predators may hide. Many birds will not go to a bath if it is placed in the middle of a lawn with nothing nearby to land on before entering the bath. However, it is best to have the birdbath out in the open rather than under overhanging tree branches so that birds perched in nearby trees or flying over can see it easily. In this way it is a safer water source than brushy margins of fast-moving creeks. Our bath is very successful although there is a creek near our property where I had thought water was available to the birds. Place your birdbath close enough to the house so it can be seen and the birds it attracts enjoyed from inside during all kinds of weather. Putting it too near may inhibit the shy-er birds from using it. Ours is about 35 feet from the house; we can see it well from our kitchen, dining room and family room windows.

During hot weather or heavy usage we add fresh water daily to the bath using a pressure nozzle to hose out the water. Once or twice a week is adequate during the winter. If you pour out the old water by tipping the bowl, it often is difficult to replace it on the pedestal in a level position. To change water during the winter when hoses are stored, sweep the bowl with a clean broom or brush, then pour in fresh water from a bucket. A problem when the ground freezes or gophers or moles tunnel around the pedestal is that the pedestal will sink unevenly into the ground, resulting in a bowl which is not level. To prevent this, a cylindrical hole slightly larger in diameter than the birdbath pedestal's base should be dug 1½-2 feet deep where the bath will be placed. Pour cement into the hole to make a concrete pad upon which the birdbath pedestal will sit (after the concrete dries). Be sure to level the wet

cement carefully on the top surface of the pad before it sets up.

Although it costs more, a concrete birdbath is superior to a plastic one. The latter is quite slippery and birds seem afraid they will lose their footing while drinking or bathing. Pebbles may be placed in it, but this makes it more difficult to clean and the birds still slip on the outer rim while drinking. A concrete bath, in contrast, offers secure footing on its rough surface and does not deteriorate in the sun. During the seven years we have maintained a concrete bath, we have not had problems with it cracking or leaking by keeping it filled during the winter. Be sure to use cold rather than hot tap water when filling it during cold weather to prevent cracking.

Water should be about two inches deep in the center of the bowl because birds seem to be afraid of deeper water. When cleaning the bath, I have found that a wire brush works better than a bristle brush in removing dirt, iron deposits, hard water deposits, and algae from the rough surface.

If you are putting out a birdbath for the first time, don't expect the birds to come flocking to it right away. Sometimes it takes a year or so for birds to discover the bath in your yard and start using it regularly. Just be patient, continue to keep it clean and filled with fresh water, and you will be rewarded as I have been with many birds drinking and bathing in the bath. Species besides the Western Bluebird which have used our bath over the years are the Common Flicker, American Goldfinch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Oriole, Purple Finch, House Finch, Northern Junco, Scrub Jay, Stellar's Jay, American Robin, Rufous-sided Towhee, Varied Thrush, Song Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Mourning Dove, Lazuli Bunting, Barn Swallow, Red Crossbill, Evening Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Cedar Waxwing, Red-winged Blackbird and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

In conclusion, I highly recommend a birdbath for anyone wishing to attract bluebirds any time of the year. In some cases on the Corvallis Bluebird Trail, Western Bluebirds were first sighted in an area in a backyard bath which led the homeowner to contact the Audubon Society for a nest-box. We also have seen "new" unbanded bluebirds come to our birdbath during the year when we were familiar with the group of banded bluebirds which regularly frequented our yard.

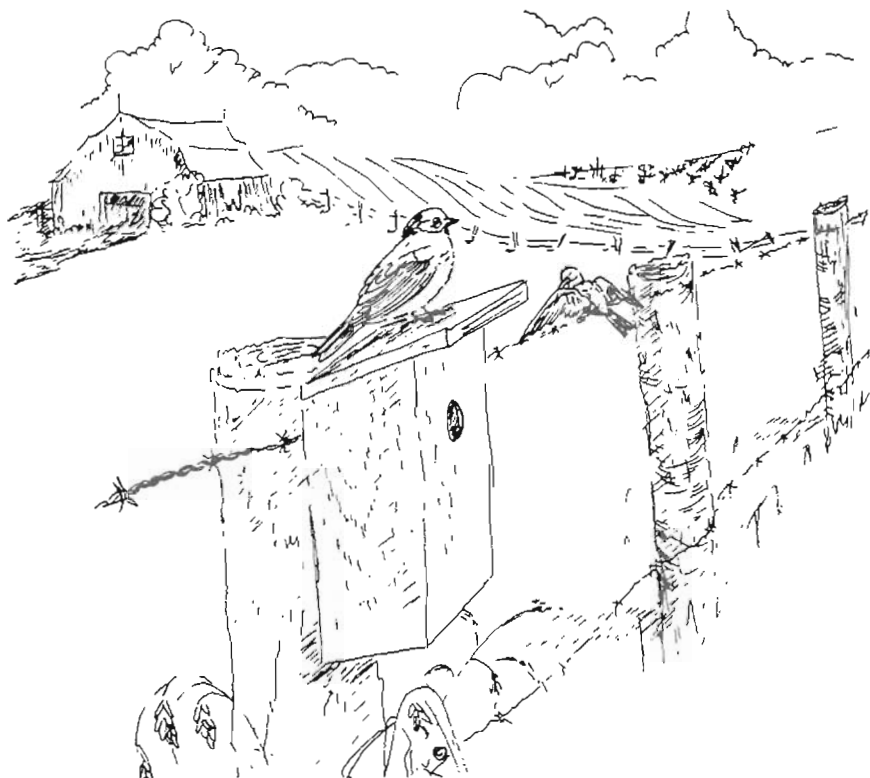
Why not try to keep your birdbath filled all year? It may be the only source of ice-free water in your neighborhood during freezing weather. I hope you will discover as we did that your birdbath is truly a bath for all seasons. ■

3350 NW Tanager Drive
Corvallis, OR 97330

A portion of this article was presented by Dr. Cromack at the Fourth Annual Meeting of the North American Bluebird Society, 17 October 1981.

Preliminary Announcement of First Western Regional Meeting

The North American Bluebird Society plans to hold its First Western Regional Meeting at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, June 17-19, 1983 (the weekend after the Portland Rose Festival). Registration forms and further information regarding speakers and field trips will appear in the Spring issue of *Sialia*.



Combating the Fire Ant

R.B. Layton

A nesting box infested with fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) is a great disappointment to any bluebird trail monitor. Instead of finding healthy young birds about to fledge, the bluebirder finds a deserted nest containing bare bones and feathers—the result of fire ant infestation which can happen suddenly.

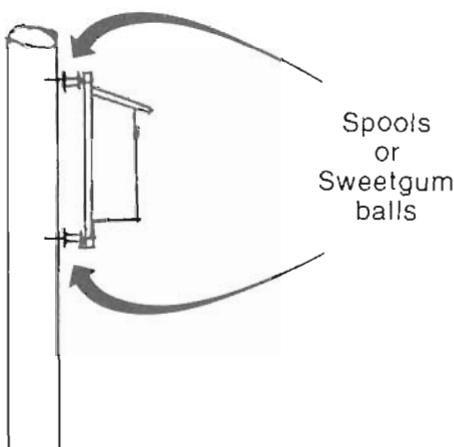
This predatorial ant found its way into Alabama from South America about 50 years ago. Despite years of chemical "warfare," the fire ant has spread from state to state across the south. It has now invaded untold acres of farms, forests, parks, and yards in most of the southern states.

Even though you may not have experienced, as yet, fire ant calamity with your bluebirds, be aware that it can happen at any time. If there are fire ant hills near your bluebird boxes, it is time to take some precautions.

In the search for a means of preventing fire ant infestation in bluebird boxes, I have looked for some way to keep these insects from reaching the house (killing the ants is a losing cause) and have come up with the following technique. By inserting spools (of the type thread is wound on) over the nestbox mounting nails before they are driven into a fence post, and then coating the spools with an adequate grease, a barrier is created (Fig. 1). Fire ants will not cross the grease to get into the box. Experiments with captured ants to assure the efficacy of this technique demonstrate that it works. Through testing I found that STP oil additive was the most long-lasting substance under the extremes of southern temperatures. Other substances, such as Vaseline and various pigeon goos, hardened in three weeks or less. Once it has hardened, ants can cross the barrier easily.

As an alternative to using spools, the dried ball of the Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) has several advantages. It is almost indestructible and will not split or crumble when nails are

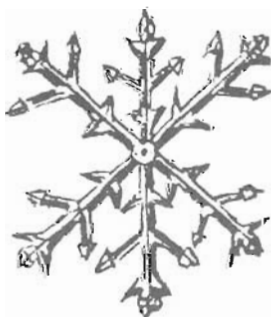
Figure 1. Position of Hold-offs in Relation to Mounted Nesting Box.



driven through it. The small holes where the "horns" break off offer extra holding power for the grease. These projections can be broken off prior to nailing to create a round ball.

Whether you use spools, Sweetgum balls, or some object of your own devising, it is important to use a well-greased hold-off to prevent fire ants from reaching your nesting boxes. Carry grease with you as you monitor your boxes. Touch-up with a one-inch paint brush is quick and easy. ■

P.O. Box 12157
Jackson, MS 39211



The Fledging of a Bluebird

Marian Sharp McGrath

Bluebirds have eluded me nearly all my life. But then it wasn't until fairly recently that I cared.

My first flicker of interest in bluebirds came in 1973 during a college ornithology lecture at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The professor mentioned that the very existence of the bluebird was being threatened by the aggressive starlings, as both competed for cavity nesting sites. How unfair! In my naiveté, I thought all birds were supposed to co-exist peacefully. Survival of the fittest shouldn't be carried that far!

My ornithology professor included the Eastern Bluebird among the 100 birds we were required to be able to identify on sight. Not once during the entire semester did any member of the class see even one bluebird during our weekly field trips.

Several years later (1980), Joan Rattner Heilman's bluebird article appeared in *Parade Magazine*. Not only did it reiterate the plight of the bluebird, it offered a concerted plan of remedial action. I immediately sent for more information, joined the North American Bluebird Society, and even bought a nesting box, which I installed, hopefully and immediately, in my suburban backyard.

And I waited. And waited. And waited. No bluebirds.

I received my first issue of *Sialia* in which everyone was reporting tremendous success with their bluebird trails (what was a trail anyway? The tracks made by bluebird feet in the snow?) Frustration began to settle in. The more I read, the worse it became—some people were even reporting little anecdotes about bluebird behavior and I had yet to even see one!

The cruelest blow of all came from my own household. One day, my gardening in the front yard was interrupted by my husband, pointing to the

backyard and yelling to come quick. Envisioning the dog strangled in the fence or perhaps the landing of a meteor, I ran into the house and peered out the window, only to see...nothing unusual. My husband assured me that two bluebirds had been investigating our nesting box.

Somewhat skeptical, since my nonbirding husband could not tell a condor from a canary, I asked him to describe the birds. Small, blue, red breast. It sounded like the real thing.

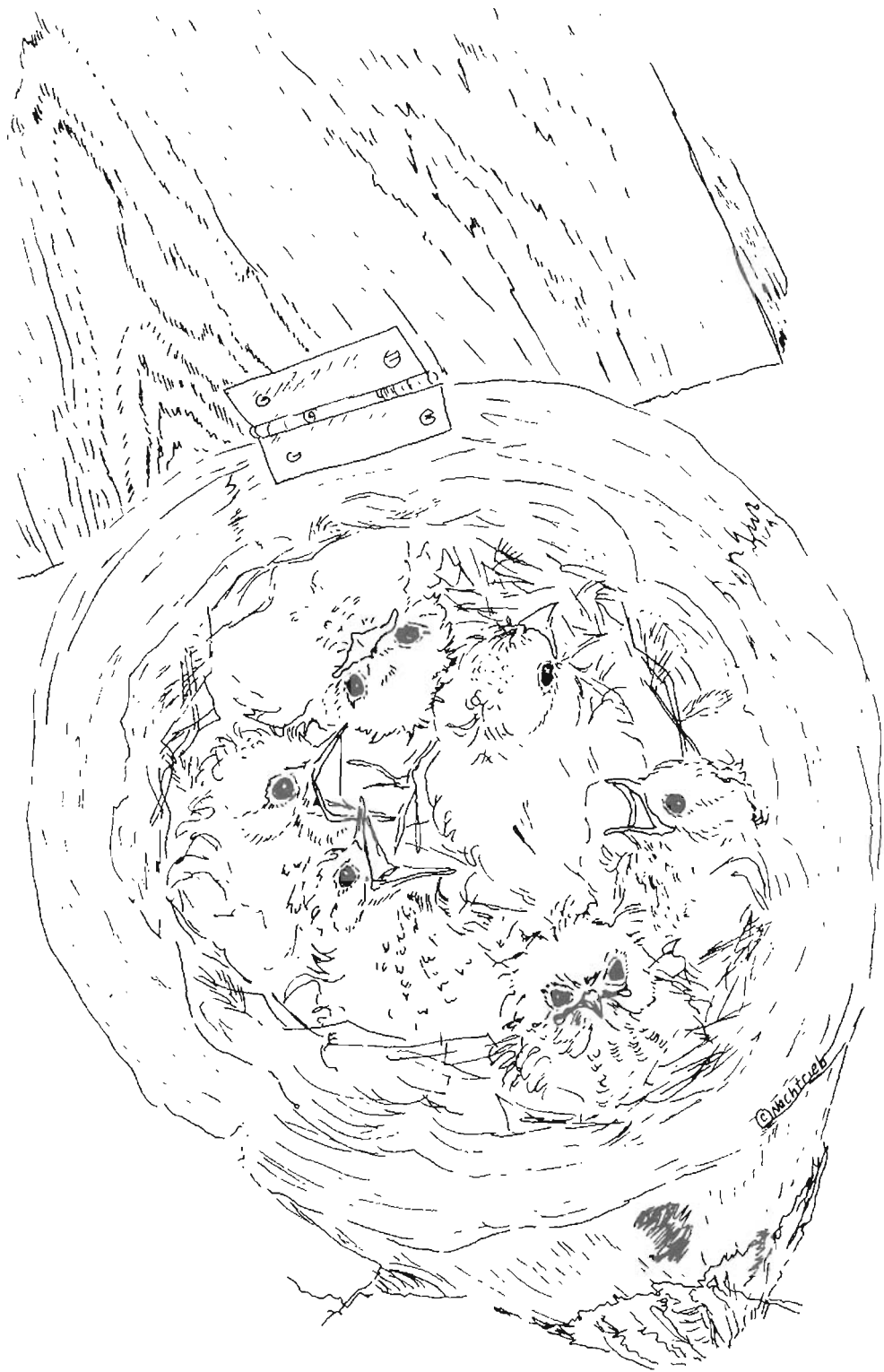
I waited at the window. And waited. And waited. They did not reappear.

Returning to my front yard gardening, amidst thoughts of how unfair it all was, I was again summoned urgently by my gesticulating husband. Another race to the back window, just in time to see two birds flying off in the distance, too far away to identify.

A few weeks later, the NABS, headquartered in my area (Silver Spring), asked if I'd like to do some volunteer work. Upon hearing that I had never seen a bluebird, Executive Director Mary Janetatos invited me to join Lawrence Zeleny on his next bluebird box rounds. A bluebird sighting was *guaranteed*.

Imagine my anticipation! A guaranteed glimpse of a bluebird (maybe even two) and in the company of the man who practically invented the bluebird!

The awaited day arrived—a hot and sunny Saturday in August. As we drove from box to box, I not only found out what a bluebird *trail* is but was also impressed with the knowledge of my fellow bluebirders. These people can spot a bluebird 100 yards away merely by its hunched silhouette, can identify by sound or by sight any other bird in the area, and can distinguish fertile and infertile eggs.



That day I also nearly reached nirvana: I saw bluebirds—adults, nestlings, and eggs. Gazing at a nestling not more than a few hours old, I couldn't help but think that it symbolized the plight of the bluebird. Here was a pitiful little creature: ugly, naked, and with a neck the thickness of a spaghetti strand. I commented to Dr. Zeleny my amazement that something so helpless could live. To this he replied that in a few days that youngster would be squawking its head off.

The following spring (1981), convinced that bluebirds *do* exist, I established two bluebird trails of 10 boxes each, both located on the grounds of historic mansions in suburban Maryland.

After monitoring nothing but empty boxes for 11 weeks, it was a real treat to discover that one of the boxes was finally occupied: it contained a stick nest with six speckled eggs. Of course, being a neophyte, I had no idea what species they belonged to but knew, since they weren't blue, that they weren't bluebird eggs. That was okay with me; anything was better than monitoring empty boxes.

At my next visit, six tiny faces stared peacefully up at me; the nestlings were arranged back to back in a circle with their tails in the middle and their heads facing out, like pioneers defending their camp against marauding Indians. A scolding parent in a nearby tree was enough to tell me these were wrens, which was the only species to use the boxes that year.

The following spring a new delight awaited me on the trail. At my first visit in late April, I discovered that many of the boxes already had nests which were of two types: one was composed of grass and leaves, and the other of moss, feathers, and fur. The latter had speckled eggs buried within. Experienced birders said that these were probably titmouse and chickadee nests, which turned out to be correct. Adding two more species to my list of nesting box users made me feel almost like a pro!

Meanwhile, in my own backyard, I had seen a bluebird sitting on my fence or on the neighbors' roofs on several occasions. I decided there must be something undesirable about my nesting box mounted on a tree trunk, so I rushed out and bought six feet of galvanized pipe and a pipe flange to mount another box on.

I waited. And waited. And waited. I never saw the bluebird in my yard again.

However, whoever tells the bluebirds what to do must have known that I was near hari-kari and decided to throw me a crumb. During my trail rounds on 1 May, I discovered a grass nest with four blue eggs. And sure enough, a male and female bluebird were sighted nearby. Eureka! I had finally arrived—I was to be a godparent of bluebirds!

Not so. The following week I found the box lying on the ground. It had weathered badly at its points of attachment to the pole, and had apparently pulled away from the bolts and dropped of its own accord. All the eggs were smashed, as were all my hopes of impending godparenthood.

I replaced the old box with a new one the same day, fastening it on with wire as well as bolts, hopeful yet skeptical that the bluebirds would nest there again. Who would go back to the very same spot after such a crushing blow? I knew I wouldn't.

Thank goodness bluebirds are more persistent than I am. Five weeks later, lo and behold, the new box had a nest with four blue eggs!

I checked on my godchildren weekly; I even entertained notions of camping out on the ground nearby to protect them from predators—and I have never camped a day in my life.

Apparently two of the four eggs were infertile since only two hatched. True to the words of Dr. Zeleny, the nestlings did seem much less vulnerable by the second week of life. But true also to the words of another bluebird, the fledglings had a look that "only a mother could love." Compared to the fledgling chickadees, which

wore exact miniature duplicates of their parents' plumage, the young bluebirds had a few rough edges that kept them from the sleek beauty of their parents.

Nevertheless, my trail has now passed muster. In fact, it's become almost addictive. I'm already thinking about next spring—maybe the bluebirds will raise more than one brood (I'm already assuming they'll be back). Maybe more than one pair will nest on

the trail. Maybe in addition to chickadees, wrens, titmice, and bluebirds, yet another species will be lured to the trail.

Is this the natural progression for bluebird neophytes? As soon as we're convinced that bluebirds *do* exist, they have us playing the numbers game. We become hopeless "trail junkies"! ■

2020 Sandstone Ct.
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Swallow Wing Guard May Be an Answer to the Swallow-Bluebird "Problem"

The 1983 nesting season is the time to field test an easily constructed device which is attached near the entrance to a bluebird nesting box. The wing guard appears to interfere with a Tree Swallow's wings so that it cannot enter the box. Preliminary tests look promising since bluebirds appear to be unhampered by wing guards.

If bluebirds and swallows compete for nesting boxes on your trail of 20 boxes or more, your help is needed. Write Dick Tuttle, 295 W. Central Ave., Delaware, OH 43015, for a simple construction plan, a digest of last season's observations, and a proposal for a coordinated field test across North America. If swallow wing guards work, bluebirds and swallows may be able to nest successfully on your trails.

NABS Calendar Planned for 1984

Full color photographs are required for a calendar which is being planned. Photos of bluebirds are needed, particularly those of birds away from the nestbox. Shots such as winter feeding and young after fledging will be included as well as nest shots and views of both sexes of the three species. All photographs must be of a horizontal format. Credit will be given to the photographer, but no royalties will be paid. Please submit duplicate slides or snapshot-sized prints only. *Do not send original slides or negatives initially.* If your shot is selected the original will be requested and a release form sent.

Submissions should be sent to the following address by March 1, 1983:

Bryan R. Shantz
Box 5501
Red Deer, Alberta
Canada T4J 6N1

Orders for the calendar will *not* be taken at this time.

QUESTION CORNER

Lawrence Zeleny

Can you look in (monitor) a bluebird house while the birds are nesting or would it be better to leave them undisturbed?

**Henriette Hall Miller
Columbia, South Carolina**

If the nesting box is constructed so that the top, one side, or the front can be opened easily for inspection, it is generally considered good practice to look in occasionally while the bluebirds are nesting. In doing this one should usually take a quick look, then close the box promptly and walk away. In the case of side-opening or front-opening boxes, it is usually best not to open them after the nestlings are 12 days old lest they become excited and leave the nest prematurely.

We had a pair of American Kestrels (sparrow hawks) nesting near us this summer. Will they kill bluebirds?

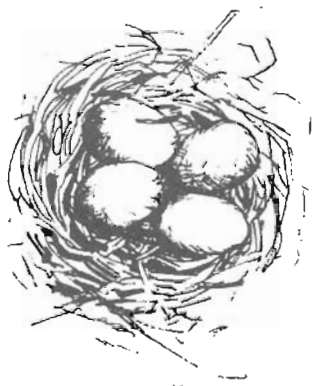
**Don Dabill
Pine River, Minnesota**

Kestrels live mainly on large insects and small rodents. Occasionally they will take a small bird, but they are not considered a serious threat to bluebirds.

How should a box be located relative to ground cover or other types of vegetation?

**R.S. Walker
Loveland, Colorado**

Bluebirds prefer to nest in reasonably open areas where there are scattered trees and where the ground cover is quite short or sparse. Thus large lawns, pas-



tures, golf courses, and cemeteries often offer ideal bluebird habitat.

One box was used twice by bluebirds but the second time they left after 2½ weeks. What might be the reason? In the first nest one egg did not hatch. Is this typical?

**Jeanne Shell
Carrollton, Georgia**

Possible reasons why your bluebirds abandoned their nest include loss of eggs or nestlings to a predator or vandal, unusual disturbance of some kind near the nesting site, failure of the eggs to hatch, and the death of one or both adult birds. It is not uncommon for one or more bluebird eggs in a clutch to fail to hatch.

I am interested in nesting box placement and construction. What are options for people living in urban areas?

**Mrs. Roy Campbell
Madison, Wisconsin**

Printed instructions for constructing and placing bluebird nesting boxes are available through the Society. Bluebirds rarely nest in urban areas, but city people often have relatives or friends in rural areas who are glad to permit placing nesting boxes on their properties.

Reducing Waste at Wild Bird Feeders

Delos C. Dupree

The cost of feeding wild birds is not chicken feed. Over \$170 million is spent annually for bird seed according to a 1980 report issued by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Unfortunately, a significant amount of that seed is wasted.

Researchers have determined that most desirable bird species do not readily eat sorghum (milo), wheat, cracked corn, oats, rice, flax, canary and rape. Most mixtures contain a large amount of these seeds. Sunflower, millet, and niger thistle are the preferred choices. Listed in declining order of preference birds choose the following seeds: black oil sunflower, black-striped sunflower, gray-striped sunflower, white proso millet, red proso millet, golden millet and, for selected species, thistle.

Selecting the proper seed not only reduces waste and saves money, but it helps attract those birds you most want to help through the winter. Save even more by buying black oil sunflower and white proso millet in bulk from a feed store. A few years ago I decided to stop attracting House Sparrows, grackles, cowbirds, and starlings to my feeders. I put sunflower seeds on a platform feeder and niger thistle seeds in a tube feeder. Most of the unwanted species rarely visited the feeders while cardinals, Blue Jays, chickadees, titmice, grosbeaks, Carolina Wrens, nuthatches, finches and native sparrows were frequent, if not daily, visitors.

Bluebirds cannot crack hard seeds and must depend on finding berries during the winter. Plantings of berry-bearing trees and shrubs provide

not only food but shelter as well. Seldom are birds attracted to feeders in areas lacking trees or shrubs, though open fields which are not maintained as lawns provide excellent habitat. No matter what their diet, all wintering birds can be helped by providing water at all times. (See "A Bath for All Seasons" in this issue.)

Suet (beef fat) is an excellent winter supplement to seeds and will attract birds such as woodpeckers which may not normally frequent feeders. Unfortunately, starlings and other less desirable species will be attracted to the suet also, so try to outsmart them if you can. Because it is difficult for starlings to use vertical perches, small pieces of wood in which holes have been drilled and then filled with suet can be hung vertically in an attempt to discourage them. Solid-sided feeders with a mesh-covered opening at the bottom may also successfully thwart them. Pine cones dipped in melted suet provide a feeder for small birds such as chickadees and titmice.

Two common myths that still persist are 1) don't start feeding birds in the winter unless you intend to do it every day and 2) start feeding in the fall. Birds are highly mobile and can cover quite a large area searching for food so don't worry if you miss a day or even more. There is usually enough food nearby except during heavy snow or ice storms. In most years there is an abundance of wild food in autumn. During the winter, when snow and ice cover the food supply, and in the spring, when most of the wild food crop has been consumed, birds are most in need of help. Some species

will visit feeders even in the summer occasionally bringing their young to share a feast.

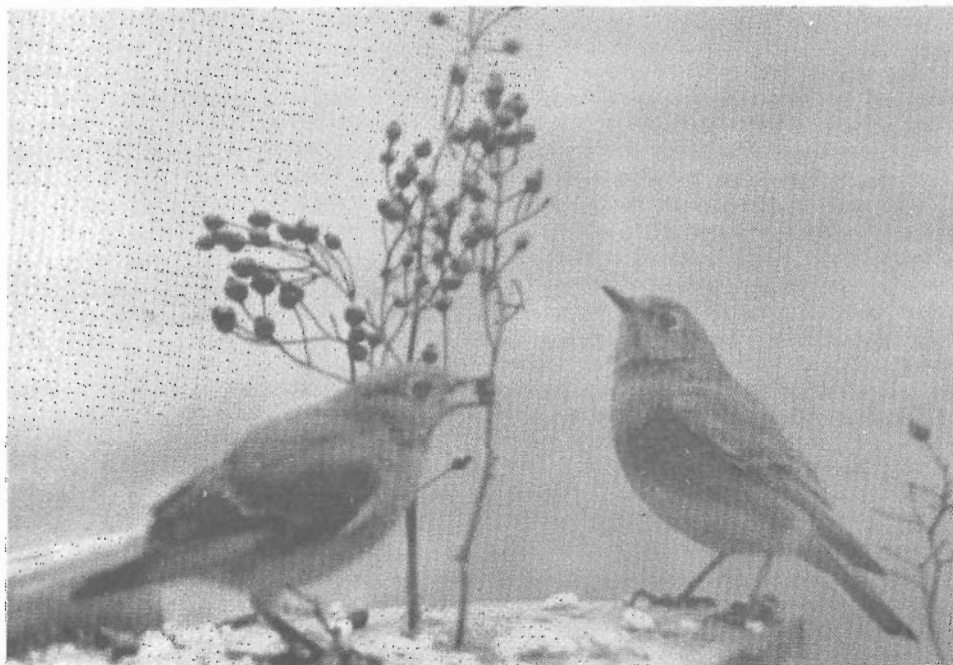
Feeding wild birds is a most rewarding experience for many people. Not only is it enjoyable to see these beautiful creatures during the bleakest time of the year, but it is gratifying to know that many will be helped during this time of stress. By using some of the suggestions in this article, you should be able to enjoy the maximum number of desirable species for the lowest possible cost. ■

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- Geis, A.D. 1980. *Relative Attractiveness of Different Foods at Wild Bird Feeders*. U.S. Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, Special Scientific Rep.-Wildlife No. 233, Washington, DC. 11 p.

6002 Hunt Club Rd.
Elkridge, MD 21227

Eastern Bluebirds Eat Multiflora Rose Hips at Huber Feeder



Photograph by Joe Huber

Joe Huber, of Heath, Ohio, has had success in attracting Eastern Bluebirds to his yard in winter by feeding Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) hips. He picks fruiting branches and inserts them into holes drilled in a board. Although the hips of this shrubby plant are highly attractive to bluebirds, the Society discourages planting it because of its invasive habits. In many parts of the East it is possible to find these plants in waste places.

PLANTINGS FOR BLUEBIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Highbush Cranberry

Karen Blackburn

Of the approximately 20 species of native North American viburnums, the Highbush Cranberry, or American Cranberrybush, is one of the few commonly grown in the home garden. Characteristic of the forest understory, viburnums are well adapted for growth under shaded conditions. With their showy spring flowers and colorful fall foliage, they make attractive ornamentals for shady areas. Since most viburnums do not provide "preferred" food for birds, much of the fruit is left on the branches for the winter months. It is then, when other food is scarce, that the viburnums become important as sources of emergency food. When choosing a viburnum for wildlife use, it is important to keep in mind that some of the varieties available commercially (usually referred to as "Snowball" types) have sterile flowers only and are, therefore, incapable of producing fruit.

Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*)

Native Range—Newfoundland to British Columbia south through New England to W. Virginia, Iowa, S. Dakota and Washington.

Hardiness—From Zones 2 to 8.

Habitat—In cool, moist woods and swamps.

Habit—An erect, deciduous shrub growing from 6 to 12 feet in height. Growth is dense, rapid once established. Begins fruiting in 3 to 5 years.,

Leaves, resembling maple leaves, are 3-lobed and 2 to 5 inches long.

Fruit and Flowers—Creamy-white, flat-topped flower clusters 2 to 4 inches across in May and June. Each cluster has a center of small fertile flowers surrounded by larger, sterile flowers. ¼" red, berry-like drupes resemble true cranberries and are edible, though tart. Ripening in September, they persist and are available to wildlife all winter.

Landscape Value—Attractive spring flowers, scarlet fall foliage and bright red "berries" all winter contribute to the ornamental value of *V. trilobum*. Because it doesn't require full sun, it is especially useful in wildlife borders along wood edges. Also fine as a specimen plant or in hedges.

Culture—Does well on soils ranging from well-drained to poorly drained, but not on excessively dry sites. Tolerates acid or alkaline conditions. Requires good fertility for best growth. Sun to shade. Propagate by stem cuttings or by layering. Seed sown immediately after collection may germinate the following spring, but germination occurs normally the second spring after planting.

Wildlife Value—Good nesting cover. Fruits cling to branches all winter and are taken, usually as emergency food, by 34 species of birds including Northern Cardinals, American Robins, *Eastern Bluebirds*, Ring-necked Pheasants, and Spruce and Ruffed Grouse. Fruits may be a preferred food of Bohemian and Cedar Waxwings and are also eaten by deer, rabbits and chipmunks.

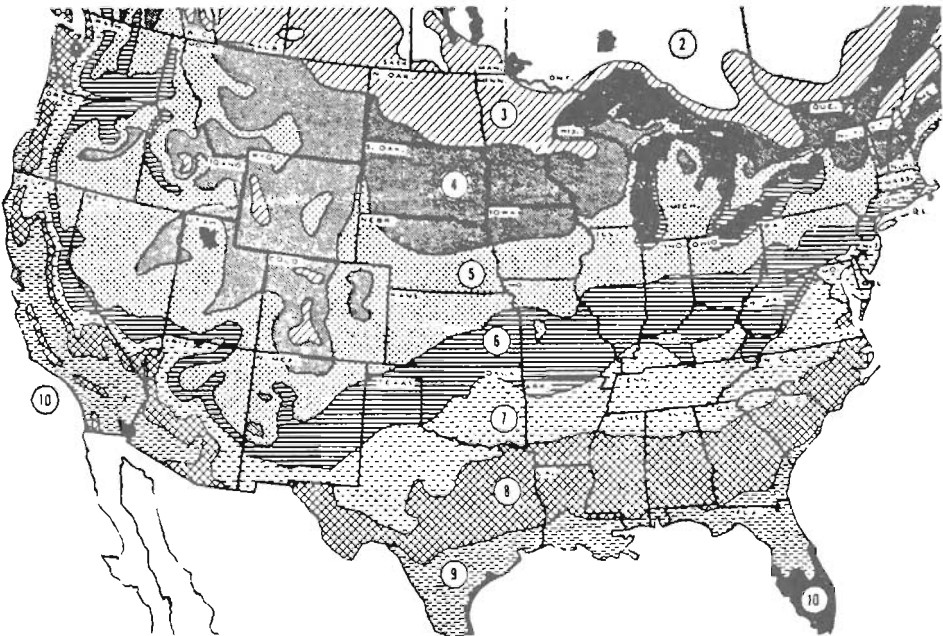
Special Uses—Fruits can be made into tart preserves or sauces much like those made from true cranberries.

Similar Species—European Cranberry-bush (*V. opulus*) resembles *V. trilobum* in all respects and is offered by a number of nurseries. Mapleleaf Viburnum (*V. acerifolium*) is a native shrub which is often confused with *V. trilobum* because of the similarity of the three-lobed leaves. Mapleleaf Viburnum is a smaller (2 to 6 foot) shrub common in moist to dry woods from Quebec to Minnesota and south to Georgia and Tennessee. Its fruits ripen to a deep blue-black color making it easier to distinguish from *V. trilobum* during the fruiting period. Fall foliage ranges from bronze to shades of purple. ■

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

This hardiness map was developed by the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. The hardiness zones 1-10 are based on the average annual minimum temperature for each zone and divide the United States and Canada into areas where specific plants are winter hardy. Many factors such as altitude, length of growing season, exposure, moisture, soil types, etc., can create variations within zones, but adhering to your specific zone will generally give you the best results.

ZONE 1	BELOW -50°
ZONE 2	-50° TO -40°
ZONE 3	-40° TO -30°
ZONE 4	-30° TO -20°
ZONE 5	-20° TO -10°
ZONE 6	-10° TO 0°
ZONE 7	0° TO 10°
ZONE 8	10° TO 20°
ZONE 9	20° TO 30°
ZONE 10	30° TO 40°



BLUEBIRD BOXES FOR THE ASKING

Richard J. Dolesh

How would you like to get a virtually unlimited supply of free bluebird boxes to give out to local youth organizations, conservation groups, parks, and individuals in your community?

Based on our experience in Prince Georges County, MD, with the cedar fence boards donated by Solis Fence Company and the several hundred boxes constructed by multiply-handicapped teens at Wheatley Special Center, it is really not that difficult to do if you are willing to make a little effort. This sample letter may be all that you need, or you can write your own more personalized letter. (If you would like copies of this letter, write and I'll send you some.)

Here are some tips: First, call the fence or lumber company and get the manager or owner's name. Write to him in care of the business. Of course, line up your bluebird box builders before you write. After the first donation be sure to ask them to save future scrap. When you have received the materials, write to Mary Janetatos, Executive Director, NABS, Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD, 20906-0295 describing the donation and its value. She will write to the company whose name and address you provide verifying the donation while also providing NABS' tax-exempt number and a receipt for tax purposes.

Once you have some boxes built and installed, publicize the involvement of those who helped. Write to your local newspapers, contact your local TV stations, and ask your local government officials to acknowledge the work. Be sure to write a personal letter of thanks to those who help.

Finally, if you devise any other innovative ways to obtain free materials or nestboxes, how about letting all of us know?

17800 Croom Road
Brandywine, MD 20613

December 3, 1982

Dear _____

As a member of the North American Bluebird Society, I am writing to ask your help in our community to save the bluebird.

If you are not familiar with the bluebird, a little background information may be instructive. The bluebird which was once very common in our area is in a desperate fight for survival. For many reasons, primarily the loss of suitable nest sites and competition from other birds, the bluebird has become nearly extinct in recent years. One hope for their future is that they will accept artificial nest sites. Many individuals and groups in our community have already erected nest boxes, and with your help we can do more.

This brings me to the purpose of this letter. The Bluebird Society is asking for a donation of whatever scrap lumber that you might be able to give for the construction of these boxes. I have enclosed a copy of bluebird nest box plans, and if you notice, the boxes can be made entirely from 1"x6" boards (cedar is best) or scrap 1/2" or 5/8" exterior plywood. I have spoken to a local high school shop teacher who has agreed to let his kids build the boxes if the materials can be obtained. The boxes would then be donated to youth organizations, conservation groups, and individuals who would install and monitor them.

Any donation, no matter how small, would be appreciated. Of additional benefit to your company besides the satisfaction and public recognition for helping is the donations are tax-deductible. I will be contacting you soon by phone to follow up this letter. Thank you in advance for the help that you might be able to provide.

Very truly yours,

(Presidential Points—continued from page 2)

Camp Fire, Inc. Since 1972 the Camp Fire organization has realized the importance of aiding their mascot. Their interest and support for bluebird conservation is national and has culminated in the U.S. Air Force Academy's three bluebird species trail in Boulder, Colorado.

The **T.E. MUSSELMAN AWARD** for outstanding contribution by a corporation went to the following companies:

Bowater Carolina Company, which has built and distributed thousands of nestboxes primarily in South Carolina and maintained accurate records for these boxes. They have been telling the story of the bluebird wherever their products are sold. The Bowater Bluebird Project is a case of industry taking the initiative in conservation.

The Philadelphia Electric Power Co. has been involved in bluebird trail work since 1977. Their trail at Muddy Run Park grew into a large educational program which in turn developed into a statewide trail system in the Pennsylvania state parks.

The **RESEARCH AWARD** for outstanding contribution to bluebird conserva-

tion went to the leader in bluebird research, Dr. Benedict C. Pinkowski.

An award to the Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs was made by the Society on June 13, 1982. Dr. Gustav A. Swanson, Professor Emeritus, of Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colorado, made the presentation. His remarks to the meeting at Writers Manor, Denver, Colorado, are printed following this column.

Selection of these recipients was most difficult because there were so many deserving candidates for these awards. In the future, we hope that more of the individuals and organizations contributing to our goals can be properly recognized. In the meantime, the lovely presence of the bluebird will reward us all.

As your new President, I would like to call attention to the indispensable work being done by our Executive Director, our number one volunteer, Mary Janetatos. Chuck Dupree, our diligent Treasurer, gives countless hours to NABS. Jo Solem, Editor of *Sialia*, does a professional job that goes well beyond her job description. *Sialia* is the lifeline of bluebird conservation communication, thanks to Jo's creative energies. ■



Photograph by Robert P. Solem

Elsie Eltzroth (left) receives the John and Norah Lane Award from Norah on behalf of Jess and Elva Brinkerhoff. President Anne Sturm is on the right.



Upper Left. Edward Haws, Jr. (right) receives the T.E. Musselman Award on behalf of the Bowater Carolina Company from President Anne Sturm. *Upper Right.* Robert M. Schulsky receives the T.E. Musselman Award from President Anne Sturm on behalf of the Philadelphia Electric Power Co. *Lower Right.* Jack R. Finch displays the John and Norah Lane Award made to him. His wife, Ruby, is on the right.

Remarks of Dr. Gustav A. Swanson to the Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs on Sunday, June 13, 1982, at Writers Manor, Denver, Colorado

I am delighted at the privilege of participating in the awards ceremony today, and I'd like to take a moment to tell you why. As a wildlife biologist for 45 years with government and universities, I have been interested in bluebirds as long as I can remember. In fact, my first article in a bird magazine, when I was 16, was about bluebirds. Many years later I became acquainted with Dr. Lawrence Zeleny and his project establishing bluebird trails in Maryland. When his fine book, *The Bluebird*, was published in 1976 he dedicated it to his wife.

In it he revealed that it was in an ornithology class taught by Dr. Thomas S. Roberts at the University of Minnesota that they met and "fell in love with birds and each other." This particularly fascinated me because it was only a few years later as a graduate student that I assisted Dr. Roberts in teaching this same course, and it was there that I met my wife to be. So Dr. Zeleny and I have had interests in common for a long time. It was natural that when he organized the North American Bluebird Society in 1978 I should become a charter member.

The Society has three aims: conservation, research, and management. Conservation of bluebirds is accomplished by encouraging people to provide bird houses

for bluebirds. Research and education are the purpose of the magazine the Society publishes, *Sialia*; in addition, the Society has available a superb series of 140 slides with printed or sound narration which presents in a very interesting manner much of what we know about the life of bluebirds. I commend to each of you that, as individuals or organizations, you join the Society so that you can get the magazine regularly, and that you secure the slide set for showing at your meetings. You should also have Dr. Zeleny's book for your reference.

A word of caution to those who put out bluebird boxes: Don't be too discouraged if they aren't immediately occupied by the bluebirds. In the first place, bluebirds may not nest in your part of the state. We have all three species in Colorado (the Eastern, the Western, and the Mountain Bluebird), but there are large portions of the state in which none of them are found nesting, or where they are very rare. Your efforts may take time, but may ultimately help the bluebirds extend their nesting range in the state. In the meantime, some of your boxes may be used by such other interesting birds as wrens, Tree Swallows, or chickadees. The 1980 summary in *Sialia* showed that, of the thousands of houses available and reported about, 22% were used by bluebirds and about the same proportion by other birds. And here's an example from closer to home. Last year a Boy Scout troop placed 38 boxes on the Scout Ranch 60 miles northwest of Ft. Collins and had these 38 boxes produce 39 broods of young the first year. Only three of these broods were Mountain Bluebirds, the others were House Wrens, Mountain Chickadees, and Pygmy Nuthatches. It was an exciting project for the Scouts.

And now to the real business of the meeting. It is a matter of great satisfaction to me to learn that the Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs has adopted bluebirds as one of its projects, and that you have been able to raise \$2300 for the purchase and placing of bird houses for bluebirds and other birds throughout the state. On behalf of the North American Bluebird Society, therefore, I am pleased to present this award to your President, Mrs. Jeanette George. We wish you the very best of success and satisfaction as you continue with your bluebird project. ■

The North American Bluebird Society is deeply grateful to Dr. Swanson for making this presentation.



Left. Dr. Gustav A. Swanson presents plaque to Mrs. Jeanette George, President, Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs. *Right.* Mary Janetatos, Executive Director, North American Bluebird Society, accepts from Dr. Zeleny the Lawrence Zeleny Award on behalf of Camp Fire, Inc.

The Bluebird

Neltje Blanchan

From time to time we reprint historical material which may be of interest to our readers. We thank Rosamond Munro who found the 1904 edition of *Bird Neighbors* in her library. The author was a resident of New York City.

With the first soft, plaintive warble of the bluebirds early in March, the sugar camps, waiting for their signal, take on a bustling activity; the farmer looks to his plough; orders are hurried off to the seedsmen; a fever to be out of doors seizes one: spring is here. Snowstorms may yet whiten fields and gardens, high winds may howl about the trees and chimneys, but the little blue heralds persistently proclaim from the orchard and garden that the spring procession has begun to move. *Tru-ah-ly, tru-ah-ly*, they sweetly assert to our incredulous ears.

The bluebird is not always a migrant, except in the more northern portions of the country. Some representatives there are always with us, but the great majority winter south and drop out of the spring procession on its way northward, the males a little ahead of their mates, which show housewifely instincts immediately after their arrival. A pair of these rather undemonstrative, matter-of-fact lovers go about looking for some deserted woodpecker's hole in the orchard, peering into cavities in the fence-rails, or into the bird-houses that, once set up in the old-fashioned gardens for their special benefit, are now appropriated too often by the ubiquitous sparrow. Wrens they can readily dispossess of an attractive tenement, and do. With a temper as heavenly as the color of their feathers, the bluebird's sense of justice is not always so adorable. But sparrows unnerve them into cowardice. The comparatively infrequent nesting of the bluebirds about our homes at the present time is one of the most deplorable results of unrestricted sparrow immigration. Formerly they were the commonest of bird neighbors.

Nest-building is not a favorite occupation with the bluebirds, that are conspicuously domestic none the less. Two, and even three, broods in a season fully occupy their time. As in most cases, the mother-bird does more than her share of the work. The male looks with wondering admiration at the housewifely activity, applauds her with song, feeds her as she sits brooding over the nestful of pale greenish-blue eggs, but his adoration of her virtues does not lead him into emulation.

"Shifting his light load of song,

From post to post along the cheerless fence,"

Lowell observed that he carried his duties quite as lightly.

When the young birds first emerge from the shell they are almost black; they come into their splendid heritage of color by degrees, lest their young heads might be turned. It is only as they spread their tiny wings for their first flight from the nest that we can see a few blue feathers.

With the first cool days of autumn the bluebirds collect in flocks, often associating with orioles and kingbirds in sheltered, sunny places where insects are still plentiful. Their steady, undulating flight now becomes erratic as they take food on the wing—a habit that they may have learned by association with the kingbirds, for they have also adopted the habit of perching upon some conspicuous lookout and then suddenly launching out into the air for a passing fly and returning to their perch. Long after their associates have gone southward, they linger like the last leaves on the tree. It is indeed "good-bye to summer" when the bluebirds withdraw their touch of brightness from the dreary November landscape.

The bluebirds from Canada and the northern portions of New England and New York migrate into Virginia and the Carolinas; the birds from the Middle States move down into the Gulf States to pass the winter. It was there that countless numbers were cut off by the severe winter of 1894-95, which was so severe in that section. ■

Excerpted from *Bird Neighbors* by Neltje Blanchan. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1904. pp. 99-101. Reprinted with permission of Doubleday & Co., Inc.

Thank You, Volunteers!

With each passing year interest in bluebirds and the Society has grown on the part of individuals, groups, and businesses. To handle this increasing interest NABS gratefully acknowledges the services of a large contingent of volunteers.

Many speakers across the continent buy and rent the NABS slide program. The details of mailing and supervising the multiple copies are superbly handled by Dick Tuttle of Delaware, OH, ongoing Chairman of the Education Committee. Dick recently completed a revision of the slide program.

Our 4,000 members are served from the Silver Spring, MD, office where Marjorie Mountjoy heads the "shipping department." She receives assistance from Frances Ehlers, Lois Carleton, Marty Chestem, Gerry Powers and Anna Llewellyn. Mail is collected and dealt with by Wally and Katie Knapp, assisted by Edith and Sarah Haviland, Paulette Badman and Edna Gendling. Quarterly, when *Sialia* appears, a special group arrives. Florence Porter of Rossmoor Leisure World gathers members of the Environmental Club and the Lion's Club: Harriet Shapiro, Lessie Garrison, Laurae Hay, Myron and Mabel Whitney, Alice McIntyre, Garnet and Helen Tunstall, May Bradford, and Mary Barker. Tom and Kathleen Tait, Joe and Pearl Tait and their children, as well as Elizabeth and Sam Hall also pitch in.

At times during the past year help came from neighborhood children: Jenny Gale, Jennifer Jennings, Karen Poulliot, Kirsten, Kate and Aaron Moore, Adriana and Monica Gutierrez, all of Countryside in Silver Spring. Summertime assistance was rendered by the Jewish Council on Aging, through the Montgomery County, MD, Volunteer Bureau along with the following additional helpers from Rossmoor: Edward and Dorothy McManus, Bill and Dorothy Matthews, Jake and Esther Levine, Betty Dean, Mabel Kingston, Liz Nelson, Mildred Benton, Charlotte and Joe Kimmel, and Anna Kathryn Crook. Eileen Clegg

from Columbia has also lent a hand.

The major portion of our educational material goes out by bulk mail. We are blessed to have the unfailing assistance of teachers (Mrs. Marguerite Helminiak and Mr. Jack Spencer) and students at Wheatley Special Center for the Handicapped in Forestville, MD, who stuff and seal thousands of envelopes each month for NABS. William Lloyd transports the finished work. Packaging of books and stationery is done by handicapped students at Cedar Lane School in Columbia, MD, led by teachers Mrs. Kathy Kvach and Mrs. Suzanne Parlette. These two schools provide services that we just couldn't do without!

Special projects are handled by Joe Ondrejko, Ann Jennings, and Sam Hall. Bob Solem (husband of *Sialia* editor, Jo Solem) is always ready to photograph articles or events for NABS, briefly departing from his hobby of wild flower photography. In October charter member John Judy of the Tennessee Valley Authority provided a fine program on bluebird conservation at the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, TN. He made use of a beautiful display that was developed by a new board member, Rich Dolesh, a park naturalist from Brandywine, MD. A major thank you to Bob Schutsky, former Research Committee Chairman, for the conscientious job he has done in that position for research is one of the most important aspects of the Society.

Editor Jo Solem produces *Sialia* with the excellent assistance of the following volunteers: Marian McGrath who helps with occasional editing and writing, Karen Blackburn who writes the valuable "Plantings" articles, and Sue Turner, who, through her wildlife drawings, has contributed so much to the appeal of the journal. Though Sue resigned recently as Art Editor, the



Student volunteers at the Wheatley Special Center for the Handicapped in Forestville, Maryland, stuff and seal envelopes for the North American Bluebird Society. This class is one of many groups and individuals donating valuable time and service in the cause of bluebird and native cavity nester conservation.

stamp of her work will long remain a part of the Society. Larry Zeleny provides advice, articles, and the benefit of his extensive experience. Professional Nancy E. MacClintock, who compiles the annual index, provides a service every reader appreciates. The contributions of all of these individuals, as well as those who submit articles, art, and other materials, is acknowledged and appreciated in the effort to maintain the quality of our fine quarterly journal.

The Society is indebted to all of the elected and appointed individuals who, during 1982, so generously donated their time, effort and expertise to further the goals of bluebird conservation.

This list would not be complete without a major thank you to Treasurer Chuck Dupree and his family. He and his wife, Betty, have extended their hospitality to NABS members; their

swimming pool has been the gathering place for cookouts; and Chuck's mother, Mrs. Frieda Plaski, prepares mail in huge amounts. Chuck manages financial matters of the Society in a truly impressive way, keeping NABS on an even keel with his unflinching wit and wisdom.

Standing before the whole organization is Larry Zeleny, our patiently persistent Founder. As he travels to various meetings, he meets many a bluebirder who got started by reading his work—either one of many articles or his book *The Bluebird*. While he may be constantly amazed to realize the extent to which we have rallied to his call to save the bluebird, he can be confident of our deep affection and respect!

A hundred thousand thanks to all of you!

Mary D. Janetatos
Executive Director

The Downey-Tackett-Wills-Berry Bluebird Trail

Ruth E. Downey

The story of the Downey-Tackett-Wills-Berry (now Downey-Tackett-Wills) Bluebird Trail on the South Natchez Trace started in the spring of 1979 at an Audubon Society meeting when Reber Layton showed his slides of his bluebird trail. Inspired by his success, I sent for three bluebird kits which I placed, with the advice of the others, on fence posts in appropriate habitat. It was late in the season, so we could only hope for second nestings. One box disappeared; one fell a victim to progress when a road was widened; a third was used by a little brown field mouse that fall. By the next spring, however, the mouse was gone, and there was a genuine bluebird feather in the box. We had put up three more boxes. One of the boxes contained a nest with two addled bluebird eggs so the box had been used.

Three more kits were ordered. Reber Layton contributed eight which he had made for a man who was flooded in the infamous Easter flood. We now had 14 boxes which we placed on fence posts 6 March 1980. One promptly disappeared again, but by 3 April nine boxes had nests started and we had seen bluebirds at some of the boxes. By 3 May there were eggs and even nestlings in one box. It is hard to describe the thrill of finding those beautiful blue eggs and then, later, a nest full of babies in a box you've erected. We felt like proud grandmothers—and we were hooked!

The trail grew rapidly. Eight more boxes were added 3 May. Fourteen were occupied by bluebirds, one was taken over by a House Sparrow (we evicted her), and one was used by a titmouse. Sixteen bluebirds were fledged that summer.

By the next year, 1981, the trail had grown to 32 boxes. This is the limit for a Saturday's work. Twenty-eight

of the boxes had bluebird nests; 71 young were fledged. There were also four chickadees fledged from one of the boxes. Fire ants ate the nestlings in two boxes.

In 1982 all the houses were occupied at one time or another, and in spite of snakes and ants, 79 bluebirds were fledged from the first nesting and 95 from the second nesting for a total of 174. On 2 August I was rewarded by seeing nine bluebirds on the wire at Williams Airport where I had never seen more than two or three, at the most, before. We also fledged six chickadees from two boxes. One pair of bluebirds laid two sets of *white* eggs.

We started the bluebird trail on the South Natchez Trace because that is our favorite spot for birding in spring and summer. The bluebirds have added extra enjoyment (as well as work) to watching for the return of the warblers, Bobolinks and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. It is work, too, because the posts have to be painted with STP once a week and the boxes cleaned and repaired, but, in good company, it's not a chore. We put a little blurb on laminated paper on each box describing how beneficial bluebirds are to farmers. We hope this will stop anyone tempted to tamper with the boxes.

If readers know of a substance which will stick to posts and not harden, I would like to hear from them. We have tried Tanglefoot, but it soon forms a crust which ants can cross.

1221 Greymont
Jackson, MS 39202

Editor's Note: R.B. Layton's article in this issue may help the author. If readers know of substances other than those described in either article, do pass them along to Mrs. Downey.

Report of Fifth Annual Meeting

Mary D. Janetatos

The Fifth Annual Meeting of the North American Bluebird Society was held November 5-7, 1982, at the Sheraton Inn, Southern Pines, North Carolina. One hundred forty people attended from sixteen states and two Canadian provinces. This was the highest attendance to date at an annual meeting.

Friday's activities were informal. The attendees registered and impromptu field trips took place.

The formal meeting began Saturday morning with Robert M. Schutsky as Master of Ceremonies. Dr. William Stone, President of Sandhills Community College, welcomed the group. During the invocation Haskell Duncan asked the Lord's blessing on work done on behalf of bluebirds.

Edward Haws, Jr., of the Bowater Carolina Company, described that company's participation in bluebird conservation. His slide program showed how Bowater gives nestboxes to those customers who agree to monitor the box and report their results.

Elsie Eltzroth of Corvallis, Oregon, reported "Unusual Observations on a Western Bluebird Trail in Oregon." Mrs. Eltzroth, who is actively engaged in wild bird rehabilitation, explained the dire mishaps befalling Western Bluebirds under her surveillance, but also sounded a hopeful note.

Following a coffee break, Morris Flewwelling began an account of the meeting between a large corporation, Union Carbide of Canada, and a determined bird lover, Charlie Ellis, of Red Deer, Alberta. When Union Carbide sought to buy Charlie Ellis' farm, he was willing to sell on two conditions: 1) that he and his sister, Winnie Ellis, would have the use of the place for the rest of their days, and 2) that the farm would continue to be managed to benefit Charlie's beloved bluebirds. The deal was struck: A separate corporation was established called Ellis Bird

Farm, Ltd. of which Mr. Flewwelling is the director. Wildlife biologist, Bryan Shantz, completed the presentation using the excellent slides he had taken during the process of creating the bird farm corporation.

Following lunch, NABS' Founder, Lawrence Zeleny, took a few moments to describe a type of nesting box (see *The Bluebird*, p. 62) which seems to be unattractive to House Sparrows but is used by bluebirds. This is the gallon-size plastic bleach jug. With two coats of exterior grade latex paint to insulate it, a few holes for mounting and drainage, and the ever-necessary 1½ inch entrance hole, the bluebirds have a home that sparrows seem to shun. Larry asked that we try one next spring.

Regional reports of the three bluebird species were given by Elsie Eltzroth (Western Bluebird), Bryan Shantz (Mountain Bluebird), and Mark Raabe (Eastern Bluebird).

The Annual Membership Meeting was chaired by Martha Chestem, Vice President, who stepped down during the election of officers because she was a nominee. Richard Tuttle presided over the election. The slate as submitted by the Nominating Committee was elected by a unanimous vote. President-elect, Anne Sturm, then assumed the chair for the balance of the meeting. She presented the Society's Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Bluebird Conservation. (See "Presidential Points" on page 2 in this issue).

The afternoon program began with the topic "How Bluebirds Spent Their Time" by wildlife biologist, Carroll Belser, which was based on a Clemson (SC) study in 1979. The detailed insight provided was welcomed by the bluebirders present who spend their time watching bluebirds whenever possible.

Norah Lane, of Brandon, Manitoba, presented "Field Trips of the



Left. Mark Raabe giving the Eastern Bluebird regional report. *Right.* Martha Chestem, Vice President, presiding over the initial portion of the convention.



Photographs by Robert P. Solem

J.H. Carter, III, wildlife research biologist, examines a banded Red-cockaded Woodpecker as Bob Bodine (PA) looks on.

Brandon Junior Birders." She and her late husband, John Lane, began running weekly programs and field trips in the early 1960's to help young boys observe and study nature. The Junior Birders built and erected nestboxes, then monitored and recorded the results under the careful tutelage of John Lane.

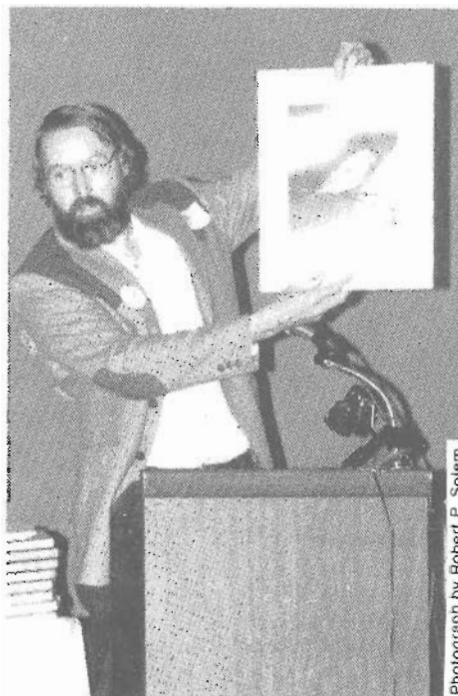
After dinner J.H. Carter, III and Terry Sharpe held a briefing for the Sunday field trips. Using slides, they introduced the Sand Hills Wildlife Management Area (NC), where the main focus is on the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. This endangered species has habits so specific that it now exists in only a few remnant populations throughout the South.

The final presentation of the evening was the "Bluebird Program in Northwest New Jersey Elementary Schools" given by the "Bluebird Man of Greene Township," Junius Birchard. The audience found Mr. Birchard an arresting speaker. Before their very eyes a pre-cut bluebird nesting box was constructed against great odds: nails bent in half as they were pounded in, edges barely matched, etc. All mishaps were summarily blamed on the bad hammer, and the audience collapsed in laughter.

While the newly-elected NABS' Board met, other individuals continued to view impromptu slide shows and movies. Edith Miller's ever-popular film about hand-raised bluebirds as well as other collections kept viewers entranced far into the evening.

Sunday morning dawned crisp and clear (nothing finer than Carolina in the morning). Field trip participants divided into two groups. One went with Jack Finch and Jay Carter to visit the Finch Bluebird Trail first; the other group went with Gay Duncan and Terry Sharpe to visit the Duncan home. Part-way through the morning the groups exchanged destinations.

Jack Finch has bluebird trails across North and South Carolina. During his years as a blueberry nurseryman, he spent much time making bluebird nestboxes and donating them to customers who were interested in help-



Photograph by Robert P. Solem

Bryan Shantz, wildlife biologist for Union Carbide Canada, Ltd., holds his color print of a Mountain Bluebird which is being sold to support the Ellis Bird Farm.

ing bluebirds. He started "Homes for Bluebirds, Inc." with help from the Raritan Club to further the scope of the project. A major problem on his trails has been flying squirrel predation. To a large extent this has been solved by removing the boxes from their tree trunk locations and placing them on metal poles in the open.

The visit to Haskell and Gay Duncan's beautiful home was extremely enjoyable. They have nestled their home in a bend of a large pond which is seen from every window on two sides of the house. It is easy to see that nature is at home with the Duncans, and vice versa.

The meeting was concluded at midday. Much had been learned, shared, and experienced—not the least of which was the Southern hospitality which, combined with the plentiful bluebirds, provided the attendees with another memorable annual meeting. ■

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:

I am writing in regard to the James R. Baxter article (*Sialia* 4:137-138) which suggests that House Sparrows apparently will not nest in a box below a certain cubic inch space.

I have a similar situation on one of my trails with two boxes of only slightly different dimensions than the one reported. They are at opposite ends of a fenced-in yard in which sparrows are abundant. This year a single pair of bluebirds did use the two boxes for their second and third nesting and were successful. The only difference in these boxes and Dr. Baxter's is that my farmer's boxes are around six feet off the ground on metal pipes.

I have made six of these smaller boxes for experimental purposes and placed them at other locations where both bluebirds and sparrows are present. I will report my findings next year.

Harry M. Trickey, Jr.
Jefferson City, Missouri

Dear Harry Trickey:

We'll look forward to receiving the results of your experimental boxes at the end of the next breeding season. Your limited experience so far sounds encouraging.

Dear Editor:

The bluebirds here are Mountain Bluebirds. For four years a couple re-

turned to my cabin and one spring I was lucky enough to watch the mother teach five young ones to fly. The fledglings were lined up on the barbed wire fence; then the mother would swoop off low over the sagebrush and curl around up to the branches of some young cottonwoods. One by one, the babies copied their mom and they'd go a little farther away and roost on a sagebrush. Then the lessons seemed to be repeated.

Now I have moved and had lots of bluebirds here but starlings have come around and I'd like to get rid of them. I can truly say in a rural, high-desert all covered with snow and sagebrush, seeing the first bluebirds is like finding oranges in mid-winter Yukon Territory. They are such a joy to watch. Do you think building nesting boxes would be in vain because of the starlings having been here last season?

Danica Radulovich
Mammoth Lakes, California

Dear Danica Radulovich:

Starlings alone should not prevent bluebirds from returning to at least check your area. Be sure the entrance holes in your boxes are precisely 1½ inches in diameter so starlings will not be able to use the boxes. Make sure the eaves, chimney, and attic area of your home are all starling-proof. Don't allow them to nest on your land. Remember, they are not a protected species.

Dear Editor:

I was delighted with the entire program at Southern Pines, NC, Nov. 5-7. Hazel Patmore and I were in attendance for the entire conference.

The beautiful scenery—Longleaf Pines, the oaks, the grasses, camellias and rhododendrons in bloom, persimmons ripe for eating—was a complete change for us. We loved it!

And then the birds... There were four new species for us: Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and Red-bellied Woodpecker. And for me an extra, the mockingbird. What a joy it was to see the lovely Eastern Bluebirds happily flitting about at Quail Hollow Farm, a joy we don't have here in winter. Gay Duncan's hospitality and knowledgeable tour remain deep in our memory.

How can I express the feeling I experienced while presenting the award established in Jack's and my name by NABS. A great honor for me and my family. To be recognized along with two special bluebird pioneers, Dr. Lawrence Zeleny and Dr. T.E. Musselman touched me deeply. The awardees were well chosen and I enjoyed meeting them.

Although the scenery in North Carolina was so different, I felt as though I had come home to a reunion with old friends. Hazel and I are inspired to do it all again in June in Portland (OR) and probably in Binghamton (NY) in October of 1983.

Till we meet again,

Norah Lane
Brandon, Manitoba

Dear Editor:

A couple of years ago I had success with multiple nestboxes for bluebirds and Tree Swallows and wrote to you to see if anyone else had tried it. I'm pleased to hear the results are good (*Sialia* 4:3-11). The person who had his boxes next to a lake is probably going to have nestbox takeover no matter how many boxes he puts up. Where food is plentiful the swallows will nest close together. We don't put our Western Bluebird boxes near a lake or pond, brush, houses, or in areas of trees. We have better success placing

them at the edge of open grazing land, on fence posts or poles.

Betty Ferguson
Portland, Oregon

Dear Betty Ferguson:

Tests are continuing in order to find ways to encourage both of these attractive cavity nesters so that they may share trails. It's nice to hear of your success.

Dear Editor:

A year ago a pair of bluebirds raised one brood of three young in the nesting box in my pasture. In the box in my front yard a titmouse raised six young. Last year the nesting box in the pasture did not get repaired in time for nesting, but a pair of bluebirds raised two broods in the box in my front yard. I hope to get the other box in good condition for the next nesting season.

Marolyn LeBlanc
Mauriceville, Texas

Dear Editor:

I have 35 boxes up here within three or four miles of my house. In addition to Eastern Bluebirds, I have had nests of Mountain Bluebirds, Bewick's Wrens, Bridled Titmice, Acorn Woodpeckers (twice, both times unsuccessful), and absolutely huge numbers of Ash-throated Flycatchers. So far this year they have occupied 14 boxes so it's the major box dweller. I banded 55 flycatchers last year (1981) and about the same number of Eastern Bluebirds. The bluebirds have not been very successful so far this year because of predation, starvation and blow flies. This year (1982) by 1 August I've only banded 12 Eastern Bluebirds and 25 Ash-throated Flycatchers. I now replace nests with young in them and rotenone the box lightly before the replacement.

Jane P. Church
Sonoita, Arizona

Dear Jane Church:

What an interesting assortment of cavity nesting species you have in your boxes. Few trail operators are so fortunate.

BLUEBIRD TALES

Mary D. Janetatos

The 350 mile trip to the Fifth Annual Meeting from Maryland to Southern Pines, North Carolina, began on a cloudy Thursday morning, November 4, 1982. The rain, which had begun at the North Carolina border, subsided late in the afternoon as we arrived at the Sheraton Inn. Driver, Chuck Dupree, and passengers Larry Zeleny, Betty Dupree, and myself were glad that the trip was over.

The following morning we discovered that Canadians Norah Lane and Hazel Patmore of Manitoba and Bryan Shantz, Morris Flewwelling and Fred Shutz of Alberta had arrived. Following breakfast, NABS' Vice President and Annual Meeting Chairperson, Marty Chestem, joined us. Off we went birding in a rented van driven by outgoing board member, Bob Schutsky. We were hoping to see two birds: the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and the Bachman's Sparrow. It was a crystal clear morning with fine fall foliage. Brown-headed Nuthatches squeaked at us from their heights. Soon the Red-cockaded Woodpecker swooped into view. Finally, the Bachman's Sparrow made our excursion complete playing hide-and-seek as we traipsed through sticky wire-grass in our attempt to see him.

Back we went to the hotel where attendees were registering with the help of incoming board member Gay Duncan and her sister, Elaine Grady, both of Southern Pines. Some of the arriving guests formed car pools for field trips. Others set up displays such as the painted china by Fran Hanes of Utica, NY, and Laurance and Adelaide Sawyer's (Ringgold, GA) hollowed cedar log feeders and bird houses. *Sialia* Editor Jo Solem and Marty Chestem set up the gift shop. Welcome assistance was given by Charlotte Jernigan and Priscilla Kingston. Larry Zeleny graciously autographed numerous copies of his book.

Orville and Alice Rowe came with two of their daughters, Mary Nelson and Barbara Macer. (Back home in Indiana, Orville works hard as NABS' supplier of pine and cedar nestboxes.) Anne Sturm, incoming presidential nominee, was delightfully surprised to meet old friends, Jim and Kathleen Bullard and their daughter, Cecelia, all of Richmond, VA. Ray and Clareine Brinser, also of Richmond, had brought Meade and Mary Frances Flinn of Alberta, VA.

Kenny and Mary Lee Jacobs of Milwaukee, WI, told me that the news of the annual meeting had reached them while



they were vacationing in Florida, so they simply rerouted their trip home to include a stop in North Carolina. Elsie and Merlin Eltzroth of Corvallis, OR, brought news of the West Coast bluebirders.

Many who were present answer to "Mr. Bluebird" or "The Bluebird Lady" back home. Besides the ones listed on the program or previously mentioned, they included Gerry Hartley, of Enterprise, AL, attending with his wife, Iris, his brother, Andy and his wife, Gloria; Reber and Gray Layton of Jackson, MS; Charlotte and Bill Jernigan of Wagoner, OK; outgoing board member Col. William R. Robertson, Jr. and his wife, Janet, of Roswell, GA; incoming board member, Sadie Dorber, of Binghamton, NY; and Lillian and Rinny Files of Tyngsboro, MA.

Sorely missed was NABS' outgoing President, Jeanne Price. The realities of moving to Hawaii prevented her attending and, in the words of one friend, "Somehow it's just not a real meeting without Jeanne!" Yes, Jeanne, you were deeply missed. The very best wishes of the bluebirders go with you and your husband, Walter, as you enjoy retirement in Hawaii.

Best wishes also go to Reid and Terry Caldwell of Lucas, OH. They took the song at its word and came to the Fifth Annual Meeting while on their honeymoon. "Somewhere there's a bluebird of happiness"—I'm sure they felt that the moving rendition of that bluebird classic by soprano, Barbara Inzana, which we heard after dinner on Saturday evening, was meant especially for them! It worked out that way for Jack and Ruby Finch who celebrated their forty-second wedding anniversary at the convention. Jack and bluebirds have been together nearly as long as Jack and Ruby have.

Gay Duncan was the local chairperson of the meeting and was responsible for the fine local publicity. She had assistance

from her sister, Lainie Grady and her niece, Stephanie diSibour. Through their efforts about 30 North Carolinians met members of the Society for the first time. Among local individuals attending were Gay's mother, Bunny Tate, and her mother's friend, Mrs. Pyemont, Carl Cranmer and Mary Stephenson. NABS' members from North Carolina who have attended previous meetings, such as Ethelene Allen, Christine and Marshall Helms, and Bill and Edith Miller were joined by Betty McIlwain, Brenda Clary, Jim Boozer, and Floyd and Olivia Rich. Field trip guides Terry Sharpe and Jay Carter remarked on the special conviviality among the bluebirders.

Veteran bird banders Roger and Dottie Fay along with Marilla and Bob Furcolow became interested in attending after hearing of the meeting from their friend Joe Ondrejko of Arlington, VA, who begins a term on the board. Other Virginians present were Van and Mary Evalyn Hollady, Helen Hudgins, Ron and Priscilla Kingston.

From Catawba, SC, came Ed and Marie Haws Carroll Belser and Frances Heard also represented that state.

There were a goodly number of Marylanders attending: Rod and Monika Botsai, Walton and Mae Bounds, Lois Carleton, Frances Ehlers, Ed and Sene McKnight, Stanley and Rosemary McMahon, Elizabeth Samson and her mother, Mrs. Verne L. Samson, Eleanor and Alex Kaufman, and Bob and Mary Keedy. Tom and Kathy Tait along with Joe and Pearl Tait kept us seeing double. The twin brothers along with their families form a great team for the bluebirds.

Present from New York were John Rogers of Brewerton, Paul and Sandra Wilson of Pulaski, and William and Lynn Peterson of Bemus Point. Lynn's uncle, Furl Walden, came all the way from Illinois. The New Yorkers were delighted to learn that the Sixth Annual Meeting is to be held at the Roberson Center for the Arts and Sciences, Binghamton, NY, on October 1 and 2, 1983.

Anna Casselberry of Montrose, Louise and Clyde Zehner of Sugarloaf, and Bob Bodine of Media all represented Pennsylvania along with Bob Schutsky of Lancaster County. Incidentally, Bob Bodine has accepted the chairmanship of the 1983 Nominating Committee and would welcome names of potential nominees to office in the Society.

The Ohio folks, in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Reid Caldwell, included Jim Coffman of Tiffin, Kathy Moreland of Columbus and Education Chairman, Dick Tuttle, of Delaware. Doug Levasseur of Senecaville con-

fided to me at one point that he was amazed to meet such a variety of people, all having in common only the love of the bluebird.

Each annual meeting has brought together people who love bluebirds. Even if they have never met before, they feel like fast friends after they've shared their bluebird stories. As Morris Flewwelling said, "It's such a relief not to have to justify your interest in bluebirds for a change." That's because everyone else is infected with "bluebird fever," too! ■

Footnote: I surely hope that I haven't forgotten anyone, nor misspelled any names, but if such is the case, please forgive me and tell me so that we can set matters straight.

Bluebird Slide Show

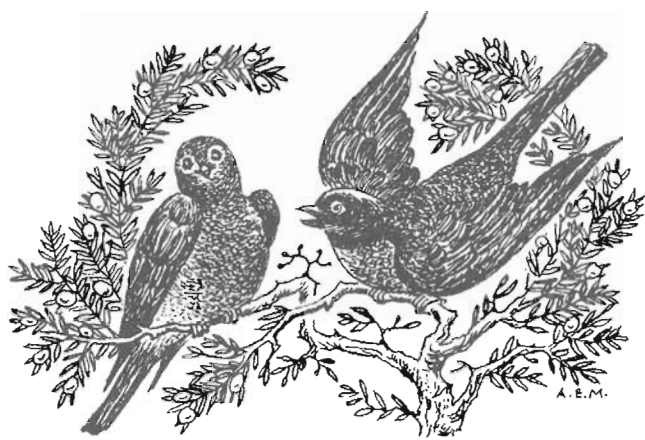
The NABS slide show is available for rental at \$5.00 or purchase at \$50.00. The show consists of 141 collated cardboard-framed 35 mm slides and a printed script (no slide tray). If a cassette narration is desired add \$5.00 to the purchase price.

The show has been revised recently. Nineteen slides have been substituted to improve the quality of the show, an audible sound now signals the speaker to advance the slide tray, an inaudible signal advances the tray when automatic equipment is used, the narration has been slowed, and script lettering has been enlarged for easier reading. There will be *no price increase* for this revised show. Revision kits are being prepared for past purchasers of the show and will be furnished to them at no charge.

To rent or purchase the bluebird slide show, write to Dick Tuttle, NABS Education Committee, 295 W. Central Ave., Delaware, OH 43015. ■

Clarification

In the article "Two Pairs of Bluebirds to Taiwan" 4:123-125, the statement is made that it is hoped those bluebirds will thrive and sometime "their offspring will be successfully released to the wild in Taiwan, establishing another beachhead in their fight for survival." This does not reflect the position of the North American Bluebird Society nor of those most directly involved in the transfer of the birds.



VANITY IN BLUE

CherWEE! CherWEE! CherWEE! CherWEE!
 LOOK CLOSE, MY LOVE, AND YOU WILL SEE
 I'M ANIMATED JEWELRY,
 CONTRIVED OF LA-PIS LA-ZU-LI
 AND OTHER GEMS OF PEDIGREE!

A TOPAZ OF THE ROSIEST
 WAS FASHIONED FOR MY LOVING BREAST,
 MY EYES ARE BEADS OF MOLTEN JET,
 WITH SILVER REEDS MY TONGUE IS SET!
 OF PLATINUM, MY LEGS AND TOES
 EXCITE THE ENVY OF MY FOES!

OH, LET US BUILD, FOR LOVE SERENE,
 A HOUSE OF PURPLE VELVETEEN,
 WHERE I CAN GLOW, WHERE I CAN PREEN
 THE SPLENDOR OF MY COBALT SHEEN!

YOU'RE SOMEWHAT LOVELY, TOO,
 MY QUEEN.

— ALLEN EUGENE METELMAN

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Founded in 1978, THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY is an incorporated non-profit organization determined to increase the populations of the three species of bluebirds on this continent. Inasmuch as the populations of these birds have diminished due to the maladroitness of human beings, as well as other natural disasters, the primary objective of the SOCIETY is to educate all who will listen about the importance of preserving these singular creatures in their native environment.

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

Membership: Students (under 21) and Senior (over 60), \$7.50; Regular, \$10; Sustaining, \$30; Supporting, \$50; Contributing, \$100; Corporate, \$100; Donor, \$250. Amounts over \$5 are tax deductible.

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