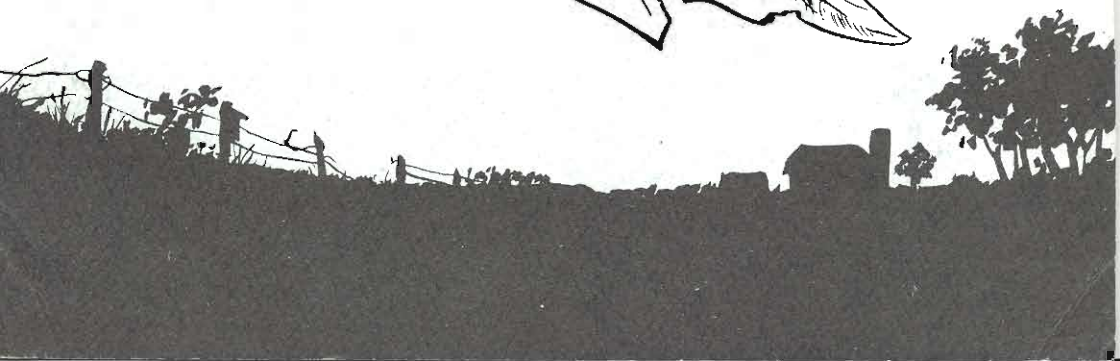


# *Sialia*

Volume 7, Number 2  
Spring 1985  
Pages 41-80

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-ahl'-ee-ah see'-ahl-iss). Similarly, the Western Bluebird and Mountain Bluebird, the two other species within the genus, were named *Sialia mexicana* and *Sialia currucoides* (coo-roo-coy-dees) respectively. Their species names are descriptive of their locations. All three bluebird species are native only to the North American continent, although each inhabits different regions generally separated by the Rocky Mountains and by altitudinal preferences.

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

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# Sialia

The Quarterly Journal  
About Bluebirds

Volume 7, Number 2  
Spring 1985  
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## EDITOR

Joanne K. Solem

## CONTRIBUTING

## EDITOR

Lawrence Zeleny

## ART EDITOR

Richard L. Woodward

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## COVER

House Wrens are a mixed blessing on bluebird trails. Dr. Zeleny examines the problems created by this species on pp. 57-58. Drawing by Art Editor Richard L. Woodward.

*Sialia* welcomes original articles, art and photographs for publication. Although this journal is named for the bluebird, material relating to all native cavity nesting species will be considered. Manuscripts should be typed neatly and double-spaced. All material submitted is subject to editing or rewriting. Submit the original manuscript plus a duplicate copy if you wish to proof the material before publication. If the article has been submitted elsewhere (or previously published) that fact must be stated at the time of submission. All manuscripts will be acknowledged. Black and white glossy photographs are preferred. Print the subject, names of individuals pictured, photographer and return address on the back of each photograph. 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 Graeloch Road, Laurel, Maryland 20707.

# Presidential Points

Sadie Dorber

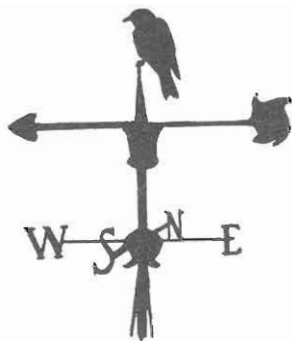
The beginning of a bluebird trail always carries with it the optimism that each box erected will house a pair of bluebirds. Individuals who are new to the bluebird movement sometimes think that only a bluebird uses a "bluebird" box. Some people are not aware that there are many different native cavity nesting bird species and are disappointed when their boxes are used by something other than bluebirds. During the many years in which I have maintained nesting boxes, there have been many joys as well as a few sorrows which I've experienced with a variety of cavity nesters.

The Black-capped Chickadee makes a soft, delicate nest of moss, leaves, plant fibers and hair. It took a little experience before I learned that this bird covers its eggs when it leaves the nest. I still remember my excitement when I first found a nesting chickadee as well as the disappointment when a wren broke the eggs. The box had been placed in habitat suitable for chickadees, so it was natural for the box to attract wrens, also.

The Tree Swallow annoys many trail monitors as they watch swallows usurping boxes intended for bluebirds. Paired boxes seem to be one solution to this problem, but it is a situation that still needs more research in order to provide adequate homes for both of these valuable species. The past two spring seasons in my area of New York State have produced late, heavy snowstorms that have resulted in a noticeable decline in the swallow population.

The Tufted Titmouse is not seen in large numbers here at any time of the year so I was thrilled to monitor my first nesting pair during the past breeding season.

Even though the emphasis on my trail is on bluebirds, I have always placed additional boxes in suitable habitat to assist other native cavity nesting species. The Great Crested Flycatcher needs a larger box and entrance hole than does the bluebird. Be-



cause this species has declined in recent years it, too, merits our assistance.

Our woodland has always been managed with cavity nesters in mind. We've felt fortunate in having the Pileated Woodpecker nest in our woods. This woodpecker feeds on insects and must be quite fond of carpenter ants. He chisels a hole into a tree to find the ant colony often making several holes along a single tree trunk. It's rather amazing that the bird seems to know that the tree is full of ants when it looks perfectly healthy to us. He appears to be rather curious by nature as he often appears seemingly to check out the noise of the chain saw when we are cutting wood.

The excavated nest hole of this large cavity nester will provide a home for a wide variety of birds and mammals in years following its initial use by the woodpecker. Over a period of time, especially as decay enlarges the cavity, owls or raccoons may make use of it.

Though not normally a cavity nester, the Brown Creeper, which is commonly sighted in our woods, benefits from standing dead trees. These birds travel up, down and around the trunk eating insects. Their nest is built behind a piece of loose bark which offers concealment and protection.

Whether you help our native cavity nesting birds by woodlot management, placement of nesting boxes in suitable habitat or both, it's important that all of us help them now before their numbers decline further. ■

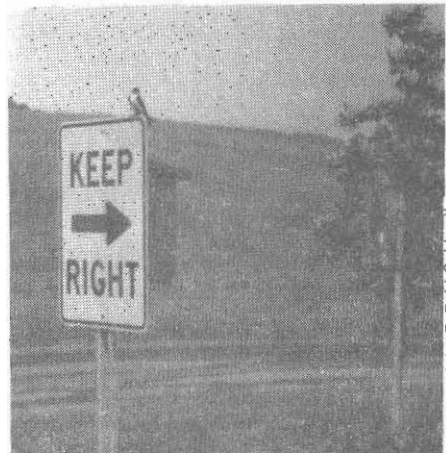
# SIGN-MOUNTED NESTING BOXES WORK

Richard M. Tuttle and F. Reid Caldwell

**T**ight budgets and the scarcity of surplus pipes suitable for mounting-poles are sometimes limiting factors when bluebird trails are planned for public parks. Fortunately, most parks already have an abundance of mounts for nesting boxes in the traffic signs along public roads. Boxes mounted on the backs of traffic signs raise birds and they are splendid additions to any public land which has proper habitat.

During the nesting seasons of 1982-1984, nesting boxes mounted on traffic signs have been used successfully in two state parks in Ohio. Nine sign-mounted boxes are part of a 117 box trail in Delaware State Park (DSP), four miles north of Delaware, Ohio, monitored by Dick Tuttle. Reid Caldwell, a ranger in Malabar Farm State Park (MFSP), former home of farmer-conservationist and author, Louis Bromfield, near Mansfield, Ohio, maintains 61 boxes, three of which are mounted on signs. There has been enough success since the initial experiment in 1982 to prove that sign-mounted boxes are productive, practical and esthetically pleasing as well as being a valuable public relations tool for the parks.

Sign-mounted boxes have been productive despite initial doubts. When nesting boxes were attached to signs during the winter of 1982, gusty surface winds caused the signs to twist back and forth. Taller signs twisted more easily and more frequently than shorter ones. The possibility of birds selecting such oscillating mounts seemed highly unlikely; however, as leaves sprouted on the trees they dampened the surface winds. During the nesting season, winds twisted the mounts only during the most severe storms. Follow-up inspections found neither shattered eggs nor injured young, even after the windiest storms. No nest has ever been abandoned following a storm. Since 1982, the nine sign-mounted boxes in DSP have fledged 13 Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia*



Photograph by F. Reid Caldwell

A Tree Swallow perches on a sign with nesting box attached in Malabar Farm State Park.

*sialis*) and 59 Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*). Malabar's three sign-mounted boxes have produced 28 Eastern Bluebirds and 11 Tree Swallows.

The mounting of bluebird boxes on the backs of traffic signs has not deterred bluebirds from using these boxes for winter roosts. In spite of the wind-caused oscillation of sign-mounted boxes, the large surface area afforded by the signs tends to block blowing rain and snow and keeps boxes drier than pipe-mounted boxes during storms.

During the winter of 1983, bluebirds at MFSP were observed seeking nightly shelter in one sign-mounted box and three pipe-mounted boxes which had been "winterized," i.e., all vents and drain holes were plugged for





Photograph by Richard M. Tuttle

Richard M. Tuttle uses a bicycle to monitor a bluebird nesting box attached to the back of a "Yield" sign.

the season. The winter of 1984 saw roosting bluebirds packed into two sign boxes and three regular winterized boxes on frigid January nights.

To avoid conflicts with park maintenance practices such as painting, the signposts were not greased to deter climbing predators. In anticipation of attempted predation, side-opening boxes with 1-½ inch thick predator guards were used in DSP. The extra-thick guards made an entrance tunnel of 2-¼ inches to make it almost impossible for a raccoon to reach downward to birds or nest. Swallows and bluebirds have accepted the boxes with no noticeable disadvantage posed by the thicker guards.

It has been surprising that there has been no evidence of any animal at-

tempting to climb the signposts. Several theories have been discussed. Are predatory animals traffic-shy? Do sheet metal signs act as baffles, especially if the box is mounted high on the back of a sign? The most amusing theory is that the raccoons are concentrated in the campgrounds where there is an abundance of food to scavenge.

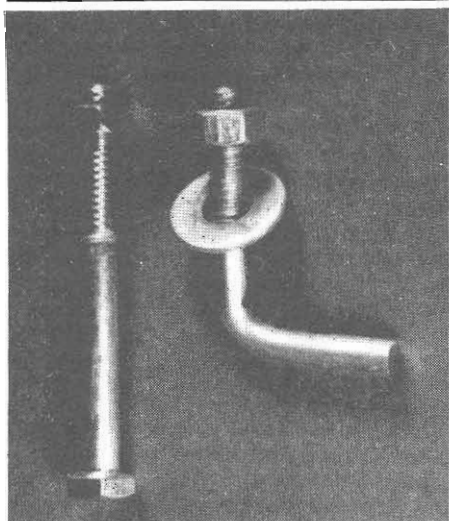
Two-legged predators have not been a problem either. Sign-mounted boxes are the most visible nesting sites in either park. Visibility, in this case, may favor the birds because visible boxes are protected by the public: If you hide the nesting box, you hide the vandal. Traffic signs are constantly seen and are usually considered to be legally "taboo" to the overly curious. An additional advantage is that many signs are taller than the common five-foot mount and are not easily reached by most children and some adults.

Sign-mounted boxes are additionally practical when they can be mounted without disengaging the sign in the process. All boxes were bolted to corrugated iron signposts using ¼ inch x 2-½ inch machine bolts which were custom-shaped for the job. After hacksawing the heads off, nuts were turned onto the threads, bolts were pinched into the vise allowing 1-¼ inch to stand above the jaws, and a hammer was used to bend each bolt to a 90 degree angle by hitting the nut repeatedly. Usually, the machine bolts bent to form "hook-bolts" without damage to the threads.

The backboards of the boxes were extended to accommodate a 9/32 inch x 1 inch long open-ended vertical slot above the roof and a 9/32 inch x 2 inch open-ended slot below the floor. During mounting, a washer was placed over the threads and the nut was started. The hook-bolt was placed into one of the factory made holes of the signpost. The bolt was held in position with one hand as the box was pushed up the post until the slot "found" the bolt. If a "third hand" was needed, a screwdriver was wedged between the bolt and the side of the slot. The bolt

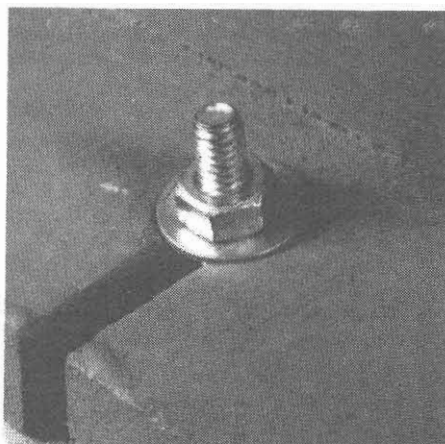
was tightened with a wrench until the washer started to compress the wood. The box was then adjusted until the bottom slot was aligned with another bolt hole in the post. The remaining hook-bolt was then placed in position (wedged with a screwdriver), a washer and a nut were tightened, and the top nut was double-checked. Another sign, with nesting box attached, awaited the return of the nesting season.

Caldwell monitored his sign boxes with both feet on the ground or from the back of a horse. Because the boxes were farther from the ground in DSP (Table 1), Tuttle had to stand on a heavy-duty five-speed bicycle to reach the sign-mounted boxes. The kickstand was lowered and the bike was pushed backward until the pedal engaged the kickstand locking the back wheel. The bike was leaned against the signpost with the back wheel pointing downhill. The crossbar was then used as a stand during monitoring. Although it may sound precarious, the bike "ladder" has worked for three seasons without a fall. Perhaps, a small ladder would be safer.



Photograph by Richard M. Tuttle

A hook-bolt is made by sawing the head from a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch x  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inch machine bolt before it is bent to a 90 degree angle. By using these bolts, boxes can be attached without removing traffic signs.

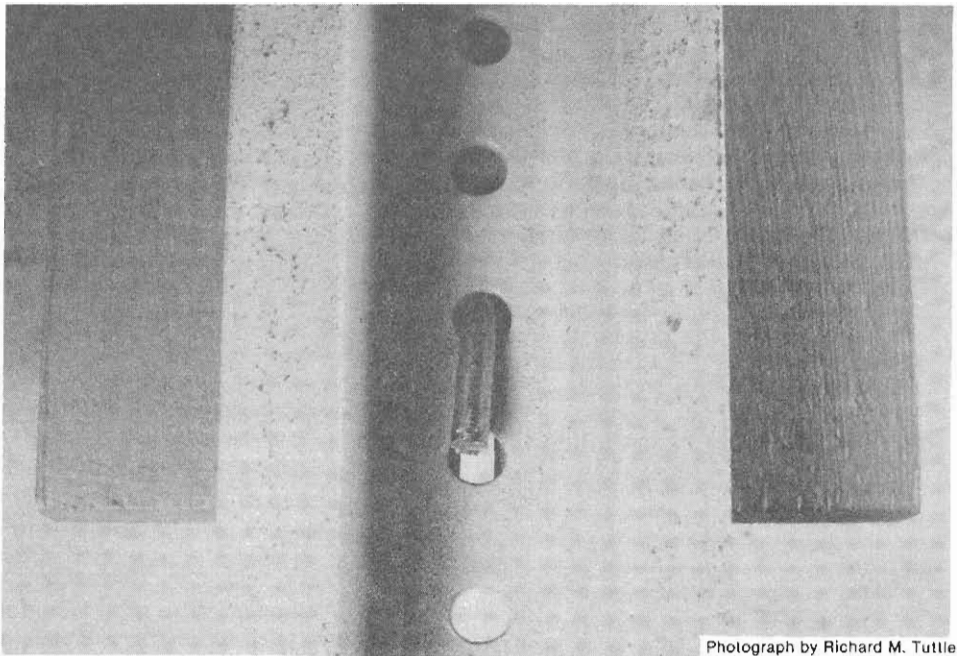


Photograph by Richard M. Tuttle

Slots in extended backboards make it possible to use hook-bolts to attach nesting boxes without removing traffic signs.

In conclusion, sign-mounted boxes have been extremely successful in introducing the concept of bluebird trails to the public. Trail birds are easily seen as they frequently perch on the signs. Although sign boxes are in close proximity to traffic, park speed limits are 25 mph or lower; no birds associated with these boxes have ever been hit by vehicles. The sign boxes have been popular with the public. Many park visitors as they motor, pedal, or walk through the parks are now seeing their first bluebirds or swallows perched on signs. Even in winter, the sign-mounted boxes remind the public that the parks are making maximum use of available resources to benefit cavity nesting birds. The public also benefits by enjoying the beautiful Eastern Bluebird in a relatively mosquito-free park, thanks to the acrobatic Tree Swallows. DSP used to be mosquito-ridden until Tree Swallows started to nest heavily in 1979. Swallows help visitors AND farm livestock at MFSP.

The authors have received more positive comments from the public about the sign-mounted boxes than about any other wildlife project within the two parks. This fact alone should be enough to convince park managers that sign-mounted bluebird trails will



Photograph by Richard M. Tuttle

A hook-bolt as seen from the sign side of a signpost.

Table 1. Eastern Bluebird and Tree Swallow Production from Sign-Mounted Nesting Boxes in Malabar Farm and Delaware State Parks, Ohio, 1982-1984.

Box Number	Distance from Ground to Entrance	Sign Text	1982		1983		1984	
			BB	TS	BB	TS	BB	TS
D-100	104"	Speed Limit 20		1				
D-101	94"	Speed Limit 20		5				5
D-102	105"	Yield				5	3	
D-103	95"	Speed Limit 20				5		2
D-104	96½"	Speed Limit 20		5		5		5
D-105	93"	Yield			4		2	
D-106	81"	Do Not Enter		5		5	4	
D-107	88½"	Yield				4		
D-108	85"	Yield		1		2		4
M-15	68"	Keep Right			6	5		4
M-32	67"	Keep Right	9		6			
M-37	65"	Keep Right	4					5
Total			13	23	15	26	13	21

D - Delaware State Park  
M - Malabar Farm State Park  
BB - Eastern Bluebird  
TS - Tree Swallow



be positive additions to all parks with accommodating habitats. Of course, permission must be granted from the proper authorities before nesting boxes are legally attached to traffic signs. Sign-mounted boxes as well as other bluebird boxes possess great potential for generating public awareness where they are located in parks and on other public lands. These boxes

have had immeasurable success in Ohio whose park system is the most heavily used in the nation logging over 58 million visitors occasions in 1983 alone. In Ohio, traffic signs are promoting bluebird conservation. ■

61 South Washington St., Delaware, OH 43015 (Tuttle); 152 Moffet Rd., Lucas, OH 44843 (Caldwell).

---

## Success in Eliminating Pest Species Using a Large Starling Trap

Jerry Zimmerman

I use a starling trap (Fig. 4) which has proved to be successful in capturing both European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). With the exception of a single eight month period, this trap has been in almost continuous operation since 1 February 1976. During that period I have captured 4,096 House Sparrows and 2,022 starlings. It has kept my nesting boxes relatively free of interference from those species.

Despite its obvious success, this trap has two possible drawbacks for some individuals: 1) size (8 ft. x 6 ft. x 6 ft.) and 2) daily attention. Live decoy sparrows and starlings with clipped wings are kept in the trap to attract additional target species. These decoys need to be fed and watered on a daily basis. One also needs to dispose of the newly-captured birds, if there are any; for optimum results, the trap should be checked two or three times a day. My experience indicates that if captured birds are left in the trap for a day or two, they can learn to escape by trial and error.

In order to use a trap of this type, it is necessary that the operator be able to identify bird species accurately so that non-target species can be released. I have had several native sparrow species as well as various black-birds enter the trap.

I built the trap (based on the "Australian Crow Trap" design) from plans in leaflet No. 210 entitled "Trapping Starlings" which originated with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Branch of Predator and Rodent Control. The trap was developed for starling control in orchards. Success in trap use lies in correct placement and daily service. Traps should be set in open areas so that they will be visible to starlings in flight.

Traps may be baited with cull apples, fine-cracked corn, or whatever is acceptable to starlings and sparrows in your area. Be sure to provide fresh water for decoys. The leaflet suggests that an old tire, split down the middle, will make two water containers.

### Trap Construction

The trap is of relatively simple construction. The side and end panels are covered on the outside with 1-inch chicken wire. The top panels are wire-lined on the inside. The entrance slits on the top of the trap were perfected after careful study. They allow the birds to enter but prevent easy exit so the measurements are critical. Slits must be exactly 1-3/4 inches wide and 9 inches from the end of the trap. ■

6532 County Highway OK  
Sheboygan, WI 53081

# European Starling Trap

## Materials Needed for Trap

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 15 pieces 1 x 4s 8 ft. long                 | 1 piece 1/2 x 16 in. exterior plywood |
| 25 pieces 1 x 4s 6 ft. long                 | 8 ft. long                            |
| 4 pieces 1 x 1s 8 ft. long                  | 2 hinges; 2 lbs. staples              |
| 40 ft. length 6 ft. chicken wire 1 in. mesh |                                       |

Figure 1. Top panel (Make two).

Entrance panel (plywood)  
Entrance slots must be exactly 1-1/4 inches wide.

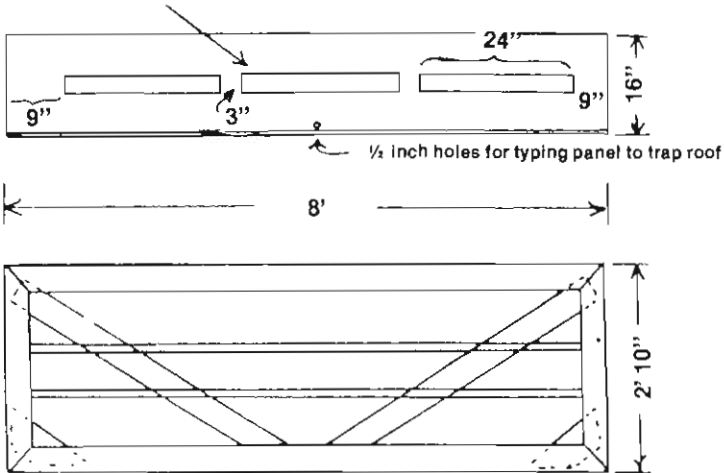


Figure 2. Side panel (make two).

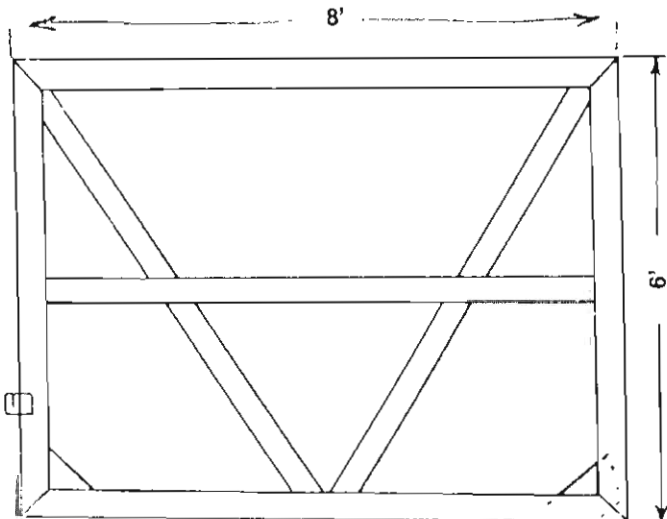


Figure 3. Front panel; rear panel (omit door).

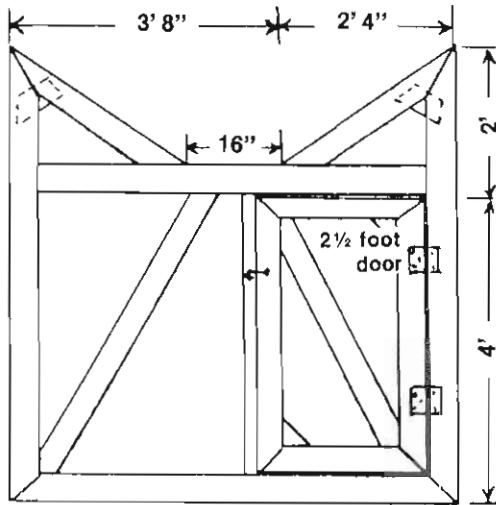
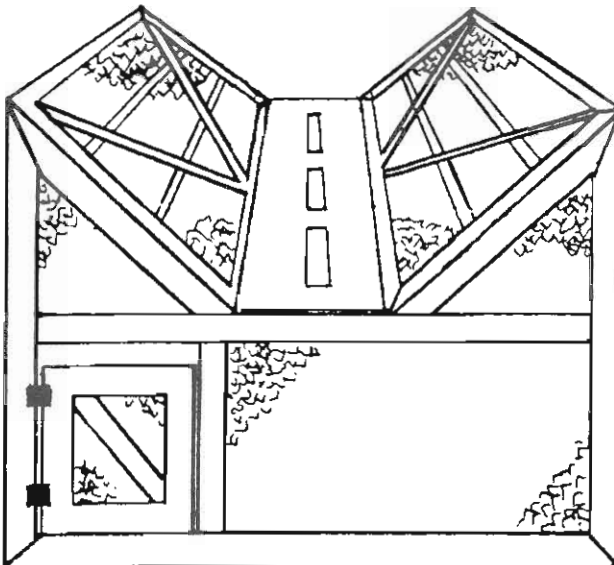


Figure 4. Assembled starling trap.



# QUESTION CORNER

Lawrence Zeleny



*Editor's Note:* During the last five years NABS has received countless inquiries from individuals who plan to erect nesting boxes but first wish to be assured that there are bluebirds in their area. Dr. Zeleny addresses the following sample.

I have never seen bluebirds near my home. Do they exist in Portola Valley, CA; Danville, KY; Palm Springs, FL; Hamden, CT; Darien, CT; Centralia, WA; Boston, MA; Salt Lake City, UT; Dallas, TX; Eugene, OR; Freeport, IL; Denver, CO; Beaumont, TX; Hannibal, MO; San Diego, CA; Baliston Lake, NY; Baraboo, WI; Great Bend, KS; White's City, NM; Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL; Olympic Peninsula, WA; Ft. Wayne, IN; Windsor, ONT; western MD; Dixon, IL; Martinsville, NJ; Two Harbors, MN; Manchester, NH; Charleston, SC; Erie County, PA; Wichita, KS; Orange City, IA; Allentown, PA; St. Clair Shores, MI; White Bear Lake, MN; Opportunity, WA; Rockford, MS; Lebanon, TN; Albany, NY; Aline, OK; Swartz Creek, MI; Bettendorf, IA; Hazardville, CT?

Bluebirds of one or more of the three species are known to breed in most parts of all of the lower 48 states and even in the extreme southeastern corner of Alaska. They also breed in large parts of all the Canadian provinces except Newfoundland. However, they will nest only in those areas where suitable habitats exist. In marginal areas bluebirds have become extremely scarce or have disappeared completely. Persons considering setting out bluebird nesting boxes can often obtain helpful

information on the status of bluebirds in their local areas from the nearest chapter of the National Audubon Society or other bird club. If the habitat is suitable it is often possible to bring bluebirds back into areas where they have not been seen for years by setting out nesting boxes and caring for them properly. In early spring bluebirds will scour wide areas, if necessary, in search of suitable nesting sites.

---

How do we attract bluebirds to a box when none has been seen in the area in years?

Eleanor S. Harvey  
Englewood, New Jersey

Assuming that the nesting box is in suitable bluebird habitat there is nothing much that you can do other than to keep House Sparrows out of the box. It is surprising, however, how often bluebirds will show up at a properly located nesting box even in an area where bluebirds have not been seen for years. In the early spring these birds may search far and wide for suitable nesting places. Plantings that provide winter food for bluebirds are often effective in attracting these birds. ■

# 1984 Nesting Box Report

Delos C. Dupree

Each year more members want to share their experiences with others along the bluebird trail. Among the 901 reports received (an increase of 206 over last year) some contained good news, some bad, and some a combination of the two.

## Central

Good news came from the Central States where 10,217 nesting boxes were monitored and 10,248 bluebirds fledged. As usual, Dorene H. Scrivens' report from the Bluebird Recovery Committee of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis showed the most dramatic increase. Some members expressed disappointment when bluebirds shunned their nesting boxes, but this sometimes happens when new trails are started. Moving the nesting boxes to a more desirable habitat, placing the boxes at proper intervals to minimize territorial disputes, and reducing competition from sparrows and predators will all enhance the possibilities for success.

Harry Krueger and Keith Kridler provided some good news from Texas. Together they are going to expand their already successful bluebird trails and promote bluebird conservation in surrounding areas. Talk shows, newspaper articles, and workshops are scheduled. Working with Scout troops not only has provided the young people with a learning experience, but it has enlisted enthusiastic trail monitors. This has allowed for greater trail expansion than individual effort would.

## East

In the East, Linda Phillips' report for 36 individuals in Guilford County, North Carolina, indicated that 642 Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) were fledged from 118 nesting boxes on trails totaling 337 boxes. Another 48 boxes were used by other cavity nesting species. North Carolina has 100 counties while there are over 2800 in

the United States. If all counties were as well organized as Guilford County, NC, consider the potential for the entire state and for the nation. In most cases county agents are more than willing to assist in such a worthwhile conservation program.

## West

Good news from the West came through Bill Ryan in his report on the Yakima Valley Audubon Society's 1984 bluebird project. Trails totaling 248 nesting boxes fledged 178 Mountain Bluebirds (*Sialia currucoides*) and 329 Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*). Washington State Game Department land and United States Forest Service land was used for several of the trails. Cutover timber land provides excellent bluebird habitat. Of course, permission must first be secured before installing nesting boxes on public land, but generally such conservation projects are welcomed. In fact, some state fish and game agencies that have set aside large tracts of land to preserve game birds are now turning their attention to non-game species as well. Cavity nesting species are bound to benefit from this mutually rewarding conservation effort. For example, much had to be learned about such game birds as the cavity nesting Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) whose population had declined seriously. Expertise in nesting box design, predator control, and the study of habitat which successfully restored the Wood Duck population will now also be directed toward non-game species. Working together, the game and non-game teams will ensure future generations the glorious opportunity of ob-



servicing native birds in the wild instead of in a zoo.

Space does not permit recounting all of the good things that happened during the 1984 nesting season, but probably the happiest members were those who reported nesting bluebirds for the first time. If bluebirds were as common as robins, most people would be happy, but in most areas, bluebirds are still uncommon. That is the reason members must persevere in their conservation efforts even though, at times, results seem hopeless. More than 25,000 bluebirds were fledged in 1984 from over 19,000 nesting boxes. Imagine, almost 5,000 more bluebirds than last year!

### **Adverse Weather**

Adverse weather was the bad news in 1984. A cold, wet spring caused first brood nesting failures in most areas north of the wintering range. Fortunately, the bluebirds re-nested quickly when good weather set in and most were able to fledge two broods, although this was not always the case. Third broods were scarce.

### **Sparrow Competition**

House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) continue to be a menace, although success in reducing predation has been reported in areas where a concerted effort has been made to trap the invaders starting early in the fall. Success has also been attained by moving the nesting boxes away from buildings where sparrows are prevalent.

### **Cavity Nester Competition**

Competition from other cavity nesting species is becoming accepted as a natural occurrence when nesting boxes are placed in a habitat more suitable to species other than bluebirds. In such cases, trail operators merely move the boxes to a better bluebird habitat or expand their cavity nesting trail. To illustrate this, note that the number of boxes used by swallows increased from 1,648 in 1983 to 2,099 in 1984, while the number of boxes used by wrens in 1984 decreased from 674 in 1983 to 642.

Snakes, rodents, and other climbing predators are becoming less of a problem than reported in the past. Mounting the boxes on pipes has helped immensely. This is not always easy to do, but it is worth the effort and small additional expense. Wasps have been reported as a reason for birds not using a nesting box. This problem can be prevented by removing the wasp nests early in the spring when the temperature is still below freezing. Monitoring the boxes on a regular basis should prevent a recurrence. Any new wasp nests can easily be removed early in the morning when the wasps are still quite sluggish.

### **European Starling**

A few members reported starling predation. European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) find difficulty in entering a hole 1-9/16 inches in diameter or smaller. Be sure to check the entrance hole size of your boxes to make certain that the measurement is correct. Sometimes when bluebirds build a nest over another nest, the added height will place the incubating female or nestlings too close to the entrance hole and allow the starling to reach inside far enough to do damage. Removing old nests not only prevents this, but encourages bluebirds to use the same box sooner.

### **Brown Creeper Uses Box**

Once in a while bad news is tempered with good news. For six years Clyde Gurney has tried unsuccessfully to entice bluebirds to nest in one of his 23 boxes on a golf course in Rockland, Massachusetts. Five years ago he set up martin boxes on the same course and gradually built the Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) population up to 22 nesting pairs in 1984. Gurney feels that bluebirds are exceedingly rare in southeastern Massachusetts, but feels good about the martins. Now he has something else to share with us. He is the first member to report a Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) nesting in one of his boxes.

Brown Creepers are usually found in mature forests and swampy wood-

lands building their nests underneath a strip of bark on a dead tree. They will, however, sometimes build a nest in an old woodpecker hole or other tree cavity. Nests of forest dwelling birds are sometimes difficult to find and much can be learned about their habits when they can be observed in a nesting box.

### Elf Owls Use Boxes

Another first was recorded by Jane P. Church of Sonorita, Arizona. Church had two pairs of Elf Owls (*Micrathene whitneyi*) nest in two of her 35 nesting boxes. Unfortunately, neither clutch hatched. Elf Owls like to nest in woodpecker holes found in saguaro cactus, but they are also known to nest in cavities in mesquite, streamside sycamore, and dead pine trees. According to an article in the *Smithsonian* magazine (15(9):122-130) the owls are doing well in the saguaro cactus country. Use of nesting boxes may indicate a need for observation in areas where this vegetation is not as prevalent.

According to John R. McAllister of Duluth, Minnesota, bluebirds are showing up within the city at golf courses, cemeteries, and in other similar habitats. If you live in a large city, this should give you an idea of where to

start placing nesting boxes. Large expanses of mowed lawns with a nesting site available are almost certain to attract bluebirds if there are any in the area.

In 1983, 60% of all boxes were used with bluebirds occupying 38%. Only 49% of all boxes were used in 1984 with bluebirds occupying 33% of them. This is understandable because there were so many more reports and there was such a large increase in the number of boxes on the trails. Statistically, the successful usage rate for bluebirds increased from 63% in 1983 to 66% in 1984 when considering only those boxes which were actually used by all species. In spite of bad weather, bluebirds fared better than what would have been expected.

Enclosed with this issue of *Sialia* is your 1985 Bluebird Nesting Survey. Keeping accurate records of nesting success during the breeding season and reporting the results before 1 October 1985, will aid in compiling data which will reflect the extent of the effort made to aid the return of the bluebird. We hope all members will respond so the results will be even better than 1984. ■

(Table 1 on following page)

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### Television Commercial Available for Loan

A 30 second public service announcement (PSA) TV commercial promoting bluebird conservation has been produced by NABS. Copies of the tape are available for loan to members.

Six copies of the 3/4-inch video tape cassette are available for a small charge to cover postage, mailer, and handling. In order to obtain a copy of the commercial, write to Richard J. Dolesh, 17800 Croom Road, Brandywine, MD 20613. Enclose a check to NABS for \$2.50. The tape should be returned in the enclosed self-addressed mailer within 10 days. Loan is on a first-come, first-served basis.

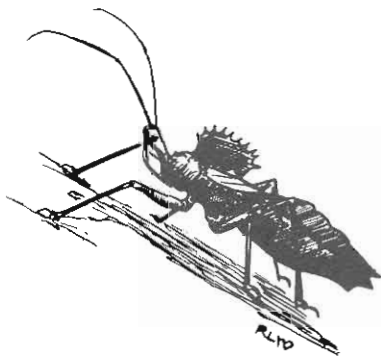


Table 1. 1984 Bluebird Nesting Box Data According to Geographic Region.

Type of Boxes Used Region	4" x 4"			5" x 5"			Open-Top			Jug			Other			Total	
	E	C	W	E	C	W	E	C	W	E	C	W	E	C	W		
Total No. of Boxes	3,075	8,766	300	552	1,275	1,100	16	10	7	10	28	7	133	138	3,851	19,268	
Boxes Used by Bluebirds	1,401	2,056	182	318	623	287	5	3	0	3	0	0	42	35	1,322	6,277	
No. of Bluebirds Fledged	5,065	7,395	926	913	2,680	1,465	30	12	0	9	0	0	177	161	6,278	25,106	
Boxes Used: Chickadees	122	92	3	17	30	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	293
Boxes Used: Titmice	25	23	3	2	24	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	79
Boxes Used: Nuthatches	8	11	3	2	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	36
Boxes Used: Swallows	495	162	48	31	239	434	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	43	633	2,099	
Boxes Used: Wrens	207	127	32	49	21	80	0	2	1	0	2	1	12	17	91	642	
Boxes Used: Flycatchers	6	4	3	10	1	11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36
Total No. Boxes Used	2,264	2,475	274	429	941	840	7	5	1	3	2	1	68	101	2,051	9,462	
% of Boxes Used by All Species	73	28	91	77	73	76	43	50	14	30	7	14	51	73	53	49	
% of Boxes Used by Bluebirds	45	23	60	57	48	26	31	30	0	30	0	0	31	25	34	33	
% of Boxes Used by Others	28	5	31	20	25	50	12	20	14	0	7	14	20	48	19	16	

E - East (352 reports)  
 C - Central (508 reports)  
 W - West (41 reports)  
 Total - (901 reports)

#### Geographic Regions According to States and Provinces

East: Bermuda, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Brunswick, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Nova Scotia, Pennsylvania, Quebec, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, D.C.  
 Central: Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Ontario, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, Wisconsin, West Alaska, Alberta, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Idaho, Manitoba, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

# Success with Paired Boxes in Alberta

Ken Gardiner and Donald J. Stiles

## Ken Gardiner

In April 1984 I read several articles in *Sialia* (4:2) on nesting box pairing and decided that we might get some interesting results if the boxes on our Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) trail were paired.

Our problem was how to obtain 31 new boxes in a few days. After explaining my plans to Mountain Bluebird enthusiast, Zoltan Gulyas, he said that he would construct them for us. By Friday, 13 April 1984, all 31 new boxes were constructed, painted, and numbered.

On Saturday, 14 April my wife, Jennifer, son, Mark, and I paired the existing 31 boxes along the busy paved highway through mainly farming and ranching country. All boxes were mounted on wooden fence posts about

one meter above the ground with three to five meters between boxes.

This trail begins at Turner Valley and goes north for about 25 kilometers to Priddis which is about 25 kilometers southwest of Calgary, Alberta.

Imagine our thrill when we made our first check of the boxes a few weeks later to see a pair of Mountain Bluebirds on the wire fence beside the old box number 1 and a pair of Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) on the wire fence beside the new box number 1. This box had held only Tree Swallows previously. Optimism took over and I visualized similar success with the other 30 paired boxes.

But it was not to be.

On the rest of the trail we found eight paired boxes in which one box was used successfully by Mountain



One pair of Ken Gardiner's nesting boxes showing the old flat-topped box and the new slant-roofed side-opening box. These boxes are located in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta, Canada.

Bluebirds and the adjacent box fledged Tree Swallows. Bluebirds used seven old boxes and two new ones of the various paired boxes. Seemingly, not very impressive figures, but the biggest surprise was still to come.

In 1982 there had been seven Mountain Bluebird fledglings while in 1983 that number had dropped to five, but with the paired boxes in 1984 the total rose to 50! I don't know if the paired boxes were responsible for this dramatic increase, but certainly our experiment had done little harm. The 1985 season should provide a clearer picture of the effects of paired boxes along this particular trail.

I hope to convince Zoltan to make 31 additional boxes to replace the old ones. For 1986 perhaps we will try one or two groups of three boxes just to see what happens.

Success? In my opinion, 1984, with a ten-fold increase in bluebird fledglings, was definitely a successful season for the Mountain Bluebirds on our trail.

### **Zoltan Gulyas**

Zoltan Gulyas uses a different approach to Tree Swallow competition. He carries extra nest boxes around with him when he monitors. When he notices Tree Swallows competing for a box being used by bluebirds, he sets up a second box five fence posts away (60 to 75 feet) and labels it "T" for temporary. He found that in two situations where he tried this the Tree Swallows took over the box immediately and both species fledged young successfully.

### **Kay Morck**

Kay Morck had one pair of boxes one fence post apart, one was used by Tree Swallows and the other was vacant.

### **Mari Anne de Groot**

Mari Anne de Groot and her family had four pairs of boxes; two pairs were successful in fledging both species.

In one case, one box had Tree Swallows and the second was empty; in another instance both boxes contained Tree Swallows. (These latter boxes were in an area of aspen trees where bluebirds would not normally be expected.)

### **Don Stiles**

Don Stiles tried two pairs of paired boxes, both three fence posts apart. In both cases, Mountain Bluebirds used one box and Tree Swallows the other. All fledged successfully, although he noted that in one instance the two species "switched" boxes between the monitoring on 26 May and that of 16 June. On 26 May one nest had bluebird eggs, but the swallow later built over this which forced the bluebirds to move to the other box.

### **Mike Stanfield**

On his acreage near Priddis, Mike managed to attract bluebirds, Tree Swallows and House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*) to three boxes in his backyard. The one used by bluebirds is mounted on a pole in the center of the yard, whereas the ones used by the other two species are nearer the house and shrubbery.

### **Blake Stillings**

Blake Stillings is the largest trail operator in the Calgary area with 341 boxes. He, like Gulyas, added boxes when he noticed Tree Swallows competing for bluebird nests. In five cases where he paired boxes, four of them had Mountain Bluebirds in one nest and Tree Swallows in the other. In the remaining case, bluebirds nested but the second box stayed empty. In one of the successful cases, the Tree Swallow built over the bluebird eggs in the original box, and the bluebirds had to settle for nesting in the second box. In another case, the bluebirds were successful in raising two broods, but the Tree Swallow eggs did not hatch. ■

5027 Norquay Drive, N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2K 2L4 (Gardiner); 20 Lake Wapta Rise, S.E., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2J 2M9 (Stiles).



# Bluebirds and the House Wren Problem

Lawrence Zeleny

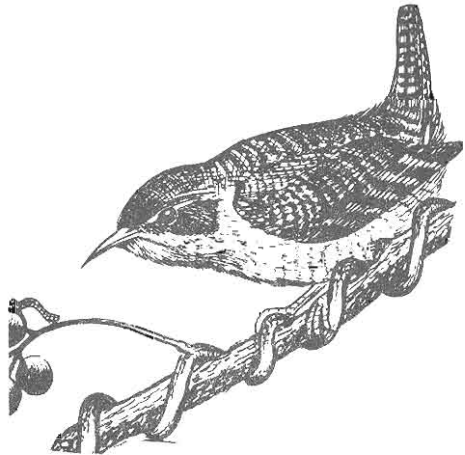
Like nearly all living creatures bluebirds are faced with numerous natural enemies, particularly during the nesting season. This is one of nature's ways of controlling populations and preventing a species from becoming so numerous that it becomes a nuisance and a threat to other species.

Until recent times the bluebird has been able to cope successfully with its natural enemies. But since man thoughtlessly introduced the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) into North America from Europe and these foreign species then overran the country, the bluebird has been fighting a losing battle for survival.

In addition to the foreign birds a considerable number of native birds also compete with bluebirds for natural cavities and nesting boxes. All of these native species with the possible exception of the House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) are highly desirable and deserve all the encouragement and protection that we can give them. If they use our nesting boxes we should welcome them and supply additional boxes for the bluebirds.

But what about the House Wren? Why should we have any reservations about this smallest and most cheerful of all our cavity nesting birds? Surely it is a useful insectivorous bird that delights everyone with its loud bubbling song and its willingness to raise its family within arm's reach of our back door or window.

Unfortunately the House Wren, in spite of its many virtues,



has some habits that are quite detrimental to bluebirds and other cavity nesters. The male wren seems to have no limit to its enthusiasm both as a singer and a nest builder. He will often build a nest, or at least fill with twigs, every vacant cavity or nesting box in his chosen territory. Although he and his mate seem to have no intention of using more than one of these nests, he will often defend each of them furiously against any other birds that may wish to use these nesting sites.

The House Wren's worst habit, however, is in slipping surreptitiously into the nests of bluebirds or other cavity-nesting birds during moments when the rightful tenants are off guard and destroying their eggs or sometimes even killing their newly hatched nestlings. The wrens may then leave the punctured eggs or dead nestlings in the nest or brazenly throw them out onto the

ground. Although bluebirds and chickadees seem to be the most frequent victims of this outrageous behavior, the eggs and young of entire martin colonies are known to have been destroyed by single House Wrens.

It would be most unfair to accuse all House Wrens of this kind of behavior. Many times I have had wrens nesting within 25 or 50 feet of active bluebird nests and martin colonies without trouble of any kind. Yet many careful observers have seen these things happen repeatedly and there seems to be no question that House Wrens were the culprits. On some bluebird trails wrens have been the most serious problem encountered.

Bluebirds are relatively safe from wren attack in raising their first broods of the season since in most parts of the country these broods are often well along before the wrens have returned and are ready to nest. Later broods are more vulnerable.

House Wrens prefer to nest close to shrubbery or underbrush of any kind, while bluebirds prefer a more open location. It makes good sense, therefore, to keep bluebird nesting boxes out in the open and as far as possible from the kind of areas preferred by the wrens. Special boxes for wrens, if desired, may then be placed in brushy areas, close to shrubbery, or hung among the branches of trees. These wren boxes may have openings as small as 15/16 of an inch in diameter.

We would never recommend that House Wrens or their eggs or young be destroyed. Furthermore, these wrens are protected by federal law and international treaty. To encourage House Wrens unduly, however, where efforts are being made to help the bluebirds

is likely to be detrimental to these efforts. In many cases the wrens simply fill nesting boxes with twigs without forming them into any semblance of nests. Such accumulations of twigs appear simply to be efforts on the part of the wrens to monopolize all available nesting sites and thus to discourage other cavity nesting birds from nesting in the vicinity. These "dummy" nests should be removed repeatedly. This will tend to encourage the wrens to confine their activities to the boxes that may have been provided especially for them and thus take some of the pressure off the bluebirds.

House Wrens can often bring great pleasure to people who live in or too close to heavily populated areas to attract any other native cavity nesting birds. Nesting boxes with entrance holes 15/16 of an inch in diameter will readily admit wrens and exclude House Sparrows. The boxes may be placed as close as desired to one's house, keeping in mind that the wrens like to nest close to shrubbery. The wrens will provide cheerful music all summer since they raise two and often three broods during the season. ■

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*A substantial portion of this article was first published in the April 29, 1970, edition of Purple Martin Capital News (now Nature Society News) and is reprinted with permission.*

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## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Because members of the North American Bluebird Society headquarters staff will be attending the Eighth Annual Meeting in Red Deer, Alberta, from July 11-14, 1985, the Summer issue of *Sialia* will be mailed during the latter part of July.

# Removing Trapped House Sparrows from Top-Opening Nesting Boxes Using a Net

Harry A. Krueger

After four years of sparrow-free bluebird trail operation, I started having House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) problems. Part of the reason for this trouble was that the trail was extended in 1984 into areas where there were sparrows. One nesting box was located on the lot of a neighbor who had erected a martin house and allowed sparrows to use it with no effort to evict them. Box number 4 located near the martin house began experiencing problems with House Sparrows. For the three years prior to this, box number 4 had never had a sparrow problem. I removed three sparrow nests and trapped two male sparrows before the bluebirds finally were able to nest in the box. Bluebirds nested successfully twice in this box after the sparrows gave up.

Although I have tried mouse-traps in several boxes, they were not a permanent solution to the problem. Once the traps were sprung and removed, the sparrows came right back and started nest building again. I decided to order a Huber sparrow trap. While I was waiting for it to arrive, I read everything I had regarding House Sparrows and came to the conclusion that removing a trapped sparrow from a box was going to be difficult.

Huber, in his directive accompanying the trap states, "To remove a trapped sparrow first loosen the roof screw and carefully slide the roof to one side as you keep all cracks covered with your

hand and allow one hand to reach down into the box while the other hand keeps all other openings covered. You must be very careful that it does not escape up past your hand or wrist as you reach inside after the sparrow. *An escaped sparrow may be difficult to catch again.*" [Italics mine.]

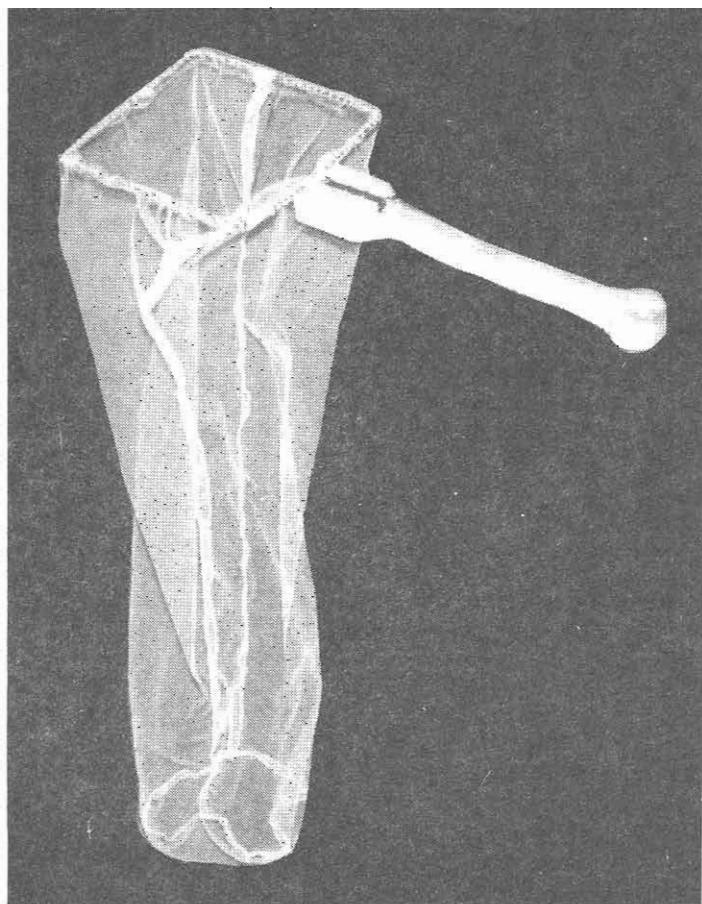
Green (1984:8) describes a rather cumbersome (though effective) method of dealing with a trapped sparrow. "I then unscrewed the nesting box from its 4" x 4" post, dropped it in a large trash can full of water, put a brick on the lid and that was the end of the sparrow."

Trickey, Jr. (1984:85) declares, "The most difficult thing about this trapping method is the *removal of the trapped bird.* [Italics mine.] Once the bird is trapped, I fill the box with glass clippings or rags to restrict the movement of the bird and then cautiously feel around until I locate a warm body. Care must be taken not to damage a protected species, such as a wren [or bluebird] that might have been trapped instead of a sparrow."

All of these methods seemed to me to be too difficult and time consuming plus there was always a chance of the trapped sparrow escaping or of harming a protected species.

I, therefore, devised the net shown in Figure 1 and used it to remove 15 male House Sparrows and one female without problems. Dur-

Figure 1.

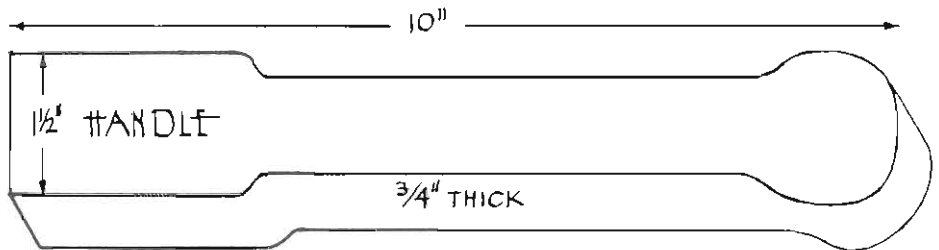
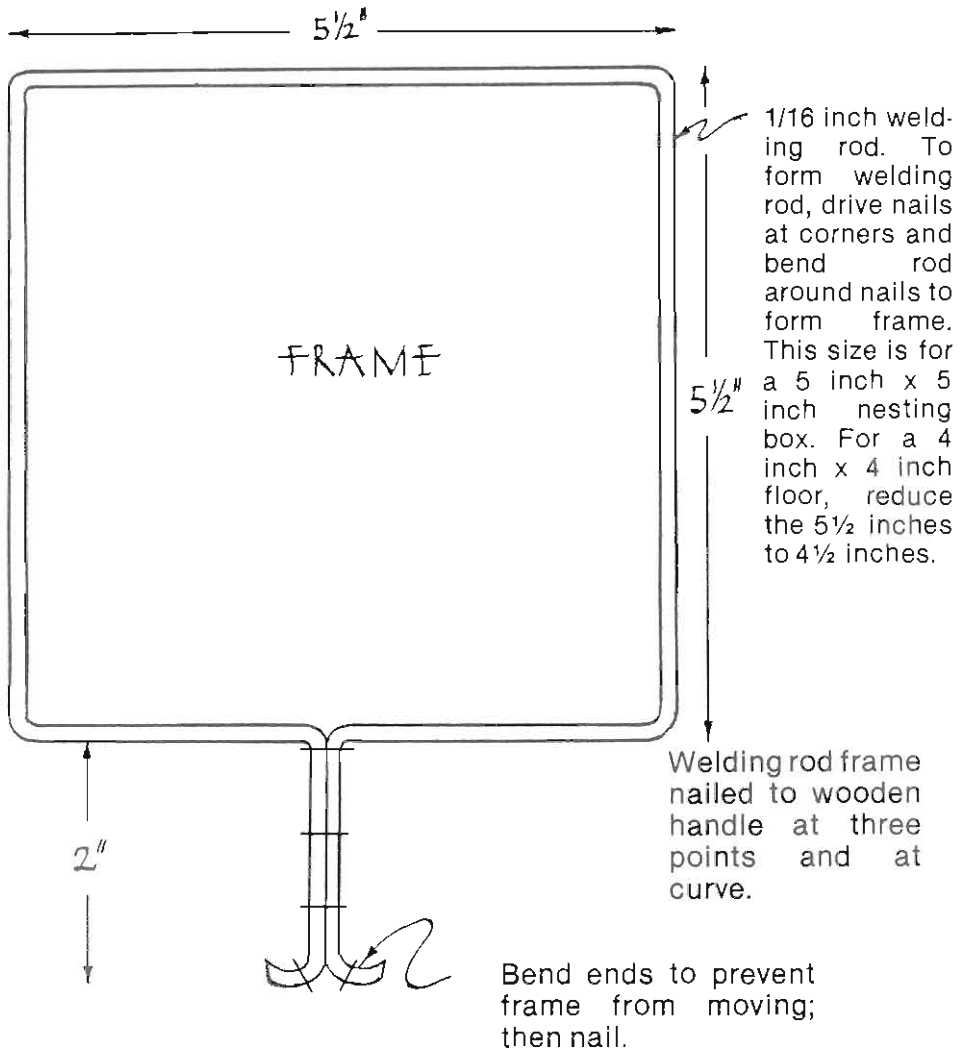


**NET:** made with white nylon tulle sewed on a sewing machine with white polyester thread for strength. Net is hand sewn on-to frame with buttonhole twist thread with overcast stitch like nets are sewn on minnow dip nets. Edges of seams are straight-stitched on machine and then zigzag stitched for strength. Net is 16 inches long and is 4 inches x 4 inches at the small end.

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$\frac{1}{2}$  yard of white nylon tulle, 72 inches wide costs approximately \$1.00. This will make 2 to 3 nets. 1 inch finishing nails, bent over to form staples, secure the frame to the handle.

Figure 2.



Diagrams by Harry A. Krueger



ing the trapping process, three bluebirds were trapped (two males, one female); all were able to exit the box without harm. I inserted the Huber traps mounted on 1/4 inch plywood only in boxes where there was evidence of a sparrow nest building. The boxes with the traps were checked every hour from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. At 3:00 p.m. the traps were closed so birds could not enter the boxes. They were reset the following day.

The procedure for using the net is as follows: When approaching the box if it appears that the trap has been sprung, loosen the roof screw, then slide the open end of the net along the top edge of the nesting box. Lift the top just enough to slide the net frame over the top opening. When the frame covers the top opening completely, lift off the top, and the sparrow will fly into the net. Thus, it is securely captured without there being any chance of it escaping.

If a bluebird has been trapped, it will not fly up into the net but will, instead, remain on the floor of the nesting box. In that event I prop the hinged top open and leave the area so that the bluebird exits, unharmed. That has been my experience with three different trapped bluebirds so I am assuming that most other trapped bluebirds will react in the same manner. On the other hand, a House Sparrow will fly up into the net as soon as the top is fully opened; his constant fluttering will entangle him in the far end of the net.

Musselman (1979:103) states, "The mother [blue]birds become so used to entering and leaving the entrance-hole that when I opened

the top they seemed to be unaware that an escape could be made through the upper area."

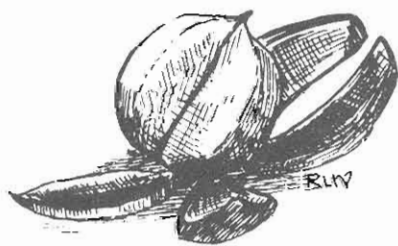
When a bluebird is trapped, I prop open the top and leave the area. Maybe the bluebird exits through the entrance-hole and not through the top opening, but, in any event, they do leave the box unharmed.

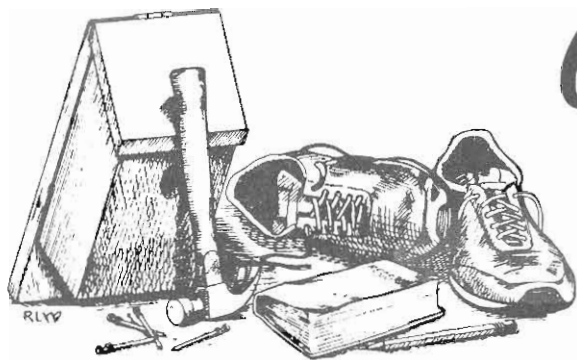
This net and the removal procedure have been 100% successful for me. It is simple to use and there are no worries about losing a trapped sparrow or harming a protected species. Not having had any experience with a trapped wren or any birds other than bluebirds, I cannot state how they might react. Any bird that does fly into the net can be released easily without harm. ■

#### Literature Cited:

- Green, M.M., Jr. 1984. A simple manual trap for House Sparrows. *Sialia* 6(1):8-11.
- Musselman, T.E. 1979. Help the bluebirds. *Sialia* 1(3):101-104.
- Trickey, H.M., Jr. 1984. Variation on a sparrow trap for a standard bluebird box and small box House Sparrow usage report. *Sialia* 6(3):85-89.

Route 2, Box OR 28  
Ore City, TX 75683





# ON THE TRAIL

**NORTH SALEM, NEW YORK**—Raymond Bassi, his fifth grade class, PTO members, and a BOCES outdoor education specialist are cooperating in helping to provide homes for bluebirds. The class monitors 25 boxes erected on Pequenakenck Elementary School property. In addition, 50 boxes were placed last year on the 114 acre Open Land Foundation site which is available to town residents for outdoor activities such as hiking and cross-country skiing. The boxes were constructed from donated lumber by volunteers.

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**HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND**—Outdoor Recreation Coordinator Bill Eckert reported that the 52 boxes on 11 county-owned sites on the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks Cavity Nester Trail fledged 57 Eastern Bluebirds, 138 House Wrens and 3 Carolina Chickadees. Although no snake or raccoon predation was recorded, vandals were a major problem.

**MEAFORD, ONTARIO**—During the autumn of 1984, Jack Clarke entered a bluebird exhibit in the local Agricultural Fall Fair. The exhibit consisted of nest boxes (one with an open front contained a nest and four deserted eggs), pictures of bluebirds, nesting box plans, and the address of the Society.

**KNOX COUNTY, ILLINOIS**—Marie Olinger continues her efforts to protect bluebirds and publicize the Society. She has a network of coordinators for monitoring boxes and promotes bird hikes as part of a newly-formed nature study group in the Knox County Homemakers Extension Association.

**PEMBROKE, VIRGINIA**—The Atkins' 23 box trail fledged 85 bluebirds in 1984. In addition 17 nestlings were lost and 22 eggs destroyed by predators. One male, whose mate disappeared, fed his nestlings for nearly 10 days until they fledged.

**CORVALLIS, OREGON**—Elsie Eltzroth reported that the 150 boxes on the Audubon Society Corvallis trail fledged 156 Western Bluebirds. Cold, windy weather and heavier than normal rainfall adversely affected the survival of first broods. By the time bluebirds attempted to renest, they met stiff competition from Violet-green and Tree Swallows as well as House Wrens. Some two dozen individuals aided the trail coordinator by monitoring boxes, turning in reports, and caring for orphans. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service again provided boxes and, of course, the Audubon Society of Corvallis continues to support the project. ■

# PLANTINGS FOR BLUEBIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Karen Blackburn

## Common Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)

**Native Range**—New England to North Carolina west to Idaho and Kansas.

**Hardiness**—Zone 5

**Habitat**—Grows on open sites or in mixed hardwood forests, preferring moist, alkaline soils.

**Habit**—A long-lived deciduous tree of moderate size having a narrow, round-topped crown. The coarsely-toothed leaves are spaced alternately along the branches. The warty, grayish-brown bark of mature trees is a distinctive feature.

**Fruits and Flowers**—Greenish flowers appear about the same time as the leaves. The  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch fruits are dark red

or purple drupes borne on slender stalks in autumn. Fruits are one-seeded with a thin, dry flesh; sweet and edible.

**Landscape Value**—Suitable as a shade tree. Useful planted in rows as a windbreak. Slow-growing. Fall foliage is yellow.

**Culture**—Prefers moist soils but can be grown on drier sites. Optimum growth is achieved on alkaline soils. Propagate by hardwood cuttings taken in winter. Seed collected in autumn and sown immediately will usually germinate the following spring.

**Undesirable Traits**—Hackberry is susceptible to witches-broom, a condition characterized by an abnormal broom-



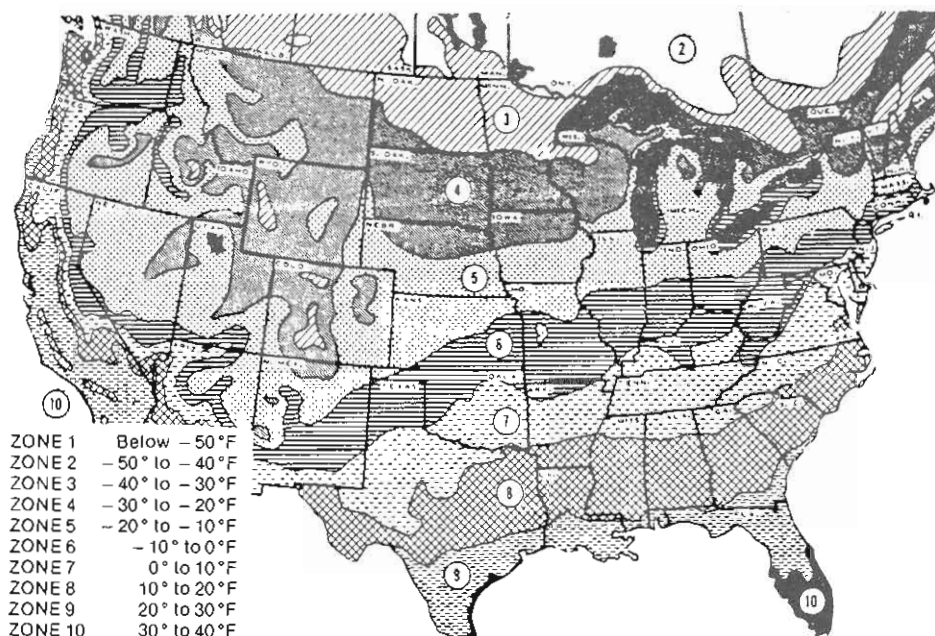


Figure 1. Hardiness Zones for the United States and southern Canada. Temperatures for each zone are the average annual minimum temperatures. When no zones are mentioned with the plant description, plants are hardy anywhere. If a zone is given, it indicates that plants are hardy within the zone and in all areas south of it. Factors within zones such as altitude, exposure, soil type, moisture, etc. can create variations. This map was developed by the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

like growth of twigs at the ends of branches. Though it may detract from the tree's appearance, the presence of witches-broom does not affect the wildlife value of hackberry.

**Wildlife Value**—Birds that feed on the fruits of native hackberries include Wild Turkeys, *Eastern and Mountain Bluebirds*, Northern Cardinals, Common Flickers, Evening Grosbeaks, Black-billed Magpies, Northern Mockingbirds, European Starlings, Brown Thrashers, Cedar Waxwings, Fox Sparrows, and Pileated and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers. Deer feed on the twigs and foliage, and many other mammals, such as the raccoon, opossum and flying squirrel eat the fruit.

**Related Species**—Several species of *Celtis* may be found in the United States. One of them, Sugarberry (*C. laevigata*), grows throughout the

Southeast. Fruit color is orange or yellow. ■

P.O. Box 5017  
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32433

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## Request from Historian

Please forward items concerning the North American Bluebird Society, trail work, publicity, etc., especially magazine or newspaper articles about members' work with bluebirds to

Bob Bodine  
61 Gordons Drive  
Media, PA 19063

If possible send the original, but a copy is also welcome. Be sure the date, name of publication, and the area are all noted on the material or are attached to same.

## New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Eastern Bluebird Display

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation display was developed and constructed by Fish and Wildlife Technician Greg Guerst working out of the Bath office. It is presently on display at the Region 8 office in Avon, New York. Many people see it each day and much interest in the bluebird is stimulated by it. (*Photograph on facing page.*)



### Bluebird Slide Show

The NABS slide show is available for rental at \$10.00 or purchase at \$55.00. 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.

To rent or purchase the bluebird slide show, write to the following address: NABS Slides, Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906-0295. Please allow a month for delivery and, if possible, specify several dates.

### IN MEMORIUM

Each year the Spring issue of *Sialia* carries a list of memorial gifts which have been received by the North American Bluebird Society during the preceding year. Contributions in memory of family members or friends can be made as general donations to the Society or can be specified for research, education, or gift memberships.

In memory of *Alice MacIntyre*. By Mrs. William A. (Florence) Porter.

In memory of *Elva Brinkerhoff*. By the Lower Columbia Audubon Society.

## Elva Brinkerhoff

The Brinkerhoff family and bluebirds in eastern Washington recently lost a valuable loved one and friend. Elva Brinkerhoff died in late December 1984 after a long period of ill health.

Mrs. Brinkerhoff and her husband, Jess, placed hundreds of blue and white nesting boxes of their own distinctive design in the area of Bickleton since they first sighted a bluebird in that area in 1968. They claimed 100% occupancy of their boxes by local bluebirds.

Mr. and Mrs. Brinkerhoff were the recipients in 1982 of the John and Norah Lane Award given by the North American Bluebird Society to honor individuals making an outstanding contribution to bluebird conservation. Their work on behalf of Mountain and Western Bluebirds was also recognized formally by the Lower Columbia Audubon Society.

—M. Janetatos

# THE EASTERN BLUEBIRD NEW YORK'S STATE BIRD



Bureau of Wildlife

**Eastern Bluebird**  
 State Department of Environmental Conservation  
 Division of Wildlife Conservation  
 625 State Street, Albany, New York 12242  
 Telephone: 518/474-3300



Officially listed as a species of "Special Concern", Eastern Bluebird populations are being increased through the use of nesting boxes. Nesting boxes are easy to make, and a "trail" of boxes can provide outdoor fun for the whole family.

Open habitat is a must for bluebird nesting!



Day 0

4-6 eggs are laid by the female. 14 days of incubation yields.....

Young bluebirds are fed 20-50 times daily!



Day 3

.....is once nestlings. Naked, blind and hungry, nestlings grow.



Day 7

.....very fast on a diet of insects. Feathers start to grow.



Day 13

Nestlings are banded to study life history and migration.



Day 15

Almost ready to go, fledging takes place at 17-20 days of age.

**Where to put your nest box now!**

Pastures	Trees
Hay fields	Fence posts
Orchards	Metal post
Golf courses	Pipes
Air fields	Utility poles
Bluebirds hunt insects for food	Solid brushy areas

In early May, a nest is built in 5-6 days.

## Bluebird Trail Directory

This is a continuation of listings of trail operators who have volunteered their help by providing tours or information.

Please be considerate of the time of day when you place calls. No collect calls will be accepted.

If you have monitored a trail of at least 50 boxes for a minimum of three years, let us know so that your trail can be listed in a future update. You need not offer tours or information; however, the location of the trail may make it ideal for research. Mail necessary information as shown in the listings to the following address:

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

Entries are listed alphabetically by state and province, then alphabetically by trail operator's last name. The initial listing was published in *Sialia* 5(2):69-71 and an update in 5(4):143-144.

TRAIL LOCATION	TRAIL OPERATOR PHONE	ADDRESS	INFO AND TOURS
MASSACHUSETTS Essex County	Johnson, Peter M. 617-468-4304	36 Topsfield Rd. Nickerson Estate Wenham, MA 01984	W:D-E; SS: D-E; Tours*
NEW YORK Oswego County	Rogers, John 315-668-2207	9641 Bauer Rd. Brewerton, NY 13029	SS:E; Tours*
NORTH CAROLINA Guilford County Browns Summit (Bryan Park)	Phillips, Linda 919-274-8208	208 Macy St. Greensboro, NC 27408	W:D-E; SS:D-E; Tours*
TEXAS Titus & Camp Counties	Kridler, Keith 214-572-7529	RR 3, Box 291 Mt. Pleasant, TX 75455	W:E; SS:D-E; Tours*
Marion, Upshur & Harrison Counties	Krueger, Harry 214-968-8538	RR 1, Box 632 Ore City, TX 75683	W:D-E; SS:D-E; Tours*
ALBERTA, CANADA Calgary	Stillings, Blake 403-282-3354	4928 Brisebois Dr., NW Calgary, Alberta T2L 2G5	Tours*

\* — telephone or write to arrange tour

W — weekdays (Monday-Friday)

SS — Saturday, Sunday

D — days (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

E — evenings (6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.)





# Trouble in Texas

Frances M. Tidwell

Our bluebirds just outdid themselves this year. With so many enemies their survival amazes me. Somehow they do survive and with our continued help they prevail.

## House Sparrows and European Starlings

This year has convinced me more than ever that the House Sparrow is a serious problem. Starlings are a menace, too. When young starlings fledge they roam from house to house exploring and pecking eggs and young of both bluebirds and martins. One starling can wipe out an entire colony of martins. The double-front bluebird box is a deterrent for a starling. We have four older boxes without the doubled front which allow the starlings to reach the young. They can't get through the entrance hole but sparrows can.

We had a pair of Brown-headed Nuthatches (*Sitta pusilla*) that had their first nest completed and six eggs laid by 28 February. I didn't know any bird would nest that early. Sparrows pecked the eggs; I saw it happen. Sparrows are so fast. The nuthatches moved over to the next box and built a new nest, laid six more eggs and all six fledged.

## Fire Ants

Fire ants were bad this year. They destroyed a total of six nestlings from three separate nests. Late in July, fire ants chewed holes in the shells and carried out the contents of five eggs from a fourth nest which was the third nesting attempt of one poor pair of bluebirds.

There were 101 bluebirds eggs laid this year in our 16 nesting boxes: 49 hatched and 30 fledged. One pair made four nests in three different boxes before they were successful with a brood.

Fire ants got to the third brood of five young that were four days from fledging. I saw all the excitement and noticed three young ones only four feet from my house. The nest box is 50 yards from my front porch. The nest was covered with angry, hungry fire ants. Two young nestlings were dead and covered with ants. We removed the nest box from the post, cleaned it well, sprayed the post and ground to destroy the ants, then put the box back on the post with clean soft nesting material and the three survivors were put back inside the box. The parents flew near the box, sat nearby on the fence or hovered near the entrance. After 45 minutes the male bluebird perched in the entrance and inspected the new arrangement. The female would not enter until the male entered first. After the male entered three times with grasshoppers, the female started helping. By dusk the young were satisfied. I observed the box for three days and on the morning of the fourth day they fledged safely. I still see them often in low pine limbs and in the birdbath late in the afternoon.

## Stripper Oil Wells

Another problem I'm concerned about is the collection of oil and salt water that is allowed to remain inside the fire walls of old stripper wells. These oil wells belong to independent operators. Birds that dip into water in flight to drink or bathe get saturated with oil and cannot fly. The oil gets into their mouths and nostrils and they die. Some of the birds manage to make it to my yard. I have found two bluebirds this year that got into the oil. I've seen oil-soaked roadrunners and mockingbirds; one year I found three Purple Martins dead in their nests. They, also, were soaked in oil.

(Continued on page 71)



# Ohio Teacher Aids Bluebirds

Sue Bell

My bluebirds returned last spring! What a joy to look out that sunny day in March and catch a flash of blue. The binoculars confirmed it: three bluebirds, one female and two males. They arrived earlier than usual in 1984. That day was the beginning of my frustrating spring ritual.

The nest boxes had been cleaned, repaired, and set out. Which one would they choose? Picky female keeps changing her mind. Those rotten sparrows add to their problem. I toss out their nests day after day to find they have again run the bluebirds off and claimed all three boxes. "Gentle bluebirds, please fight for your home."

Sadness! Only the male bluebird has come to the deck to rest in the sun. I have a half-finished nest in a box and a lonely male. "What happened?" I ask. "O.K., she died. Go find another mate and get over here to start a new nest!"

Saturday, 19 May 1984, I see three bluebirds in the yard. A new couple has arrived to inspect the housing guided by my lonely male. "Come on. Choose a box!" The mating ritual so humorously written about is going on in my backyard. This is the first time I have observed it. After three frustrating days the female has selected her home. Naturally, she chose the one farthest from my vantage point. "Please hurry, I want to bring my class out to meet you and see your eggs."

It is the eighth of June—the last day of school. "Why haven't you laid an egg? I want to tell my students you have at least started your family. No such luck," I mutter, as I trudge back to the house. Naturally, the female laid her first egg the following day and added two more before she began to brood.

"Good morning, Mr. Bluebird! Have your eggs hatched? Today is the day," I chatter, as I gently open the box to check on the babies. Only two eggs have hatched. The nestlings seem

weak and I am filled with anxiety as I leave. Four days later another box check finds three very weak babies. "Feed those babies," I shout, as I shake an admonishing fist at the watching parents. A final box check is done when the babies are ten days old. Three blue heads turn to stare at me as I peek under the nest material in search of the deadly blowfly larvae. Oh, no! The box is alive with them. "Sorry, guys, you are not going to like this. Those blowflies can cause real harm. They have to go."

Removing the blowfly larvae means a whole new nest. Carefully I remove the nest and three babies to a waiting shoebox while I clean the nesting box, place the larvae in a bag, and fashion a new nest from dry grass. Now, for the joyous part. Each baby must be checked. Gently I take a tiny blue-speckled nestling in my hands. I check for larvae attached to its body. Beady eyes watch as I separate tiny toes and look under wing feathers. Anxious parents make alarmed cries as they watch each nestling being handled. Finally, the last young bluebird is placed in the box and I beat a hasty retreat. This is the last time I will check them. They must be left alone to continue growing and gaining strength for their first flight.

On Friday, the 13th of July, three baby bluebirds fledged. They were "herded" into a tree where their parents would keep them together and teach them how to survive. I removed the abandoned nest, cleaned the box, and crossed my fingers in hopes of a second nesting. Because it is late, I may have to settle for one family this year; however, I am delirious with the success. Three more bluebirds on earth, and I helped!

Each year I work hard to add to the bluebird population. I provide housing and needed human intervention to increase their survival rate. I have estab-

lished a small trail of three boxes on my property and have enjoyed bluebirds for the last four years. Two years ago my third grade class joined me in my efforts by helping to establish an 11 box trail on our 44 acre campus in North Ridgeville, Ohio. The Black River Audubon Society assures us that our campus is perfect bluebird habitat. So far, we have not been successful in attracting a nesting pair. We have sighted bluebirds on campus so we keep hoping. The third graders keep busy managing our trail. Meanwhile, I share my bluebird tales with my class. It is hoped that Lake Ridge Academy third graders will meet and help bluebirds in their struggle for survival. ■

Lake Ridge Academy  
37501 Center Ridge Rd.  
N. Ridgeville, OH 44089

(TEXAS—Continued from page 69)

There are hundreds of these old wells all over East Texas. If the state wildlife and EPA folks knew how serious a problem this is, maybe something could be done to prevent a needless tragedy.

Every year we have one female bluebird that lays white eggs. Most of them hatch. This year two hatched out of five in the first nesting, one out of five in the second nesting. The third nesting contained four irregularly-shaped eggs that did not hatch. The female sat on those eggs almost three weeks. ■

Rt. 1, Box 451  
Gilman, TX 75644

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## International Fund for Animal Welfare Makes Grant to NABS



Ms. A. Wilcox, Project Coordinator for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (left) presents a \$700.00 check to Mr. Robert O. Braley for the North American Bluebird Society. Braley, a NABS member from Omeme, Ontario, Canada, was instrumental in helping the Society to obtain this grant. He, his wife, and his uncle (also Bob Braley) maintain the Pike Lake Bluebird Trails in Ontario.

# *A Lady at the Window*

Thomas Passamonte

Lady arrived early one April morning with her mate. Within a few moments they drove the resident pair of bluebirds away from their house and out of the yard forever. After a few days of inspecting the available nesting sites, they chose a box within 20 feet of our back door. Nest building began a few days later and subsequently four eggs were added to the nest. After eight days of incubation, Lady discovered a strange female bluebird in our picture window. She was soon spending all of her time at the window trying to rid herself of the imposter. Needless to say, her clutch of eggs was doomed for she never returned to the nest again. I tried to discourage her daily battles at the window, but was unsuccessful. I even set a rubber snake on the window sill to frighten her away, but it only served as a better perch for her. After two weeks of constant banging at the glass, I noticed that Lady was showing interest in a box again. A few days later I observed her entering one with some nesting material. Eventually, she completed a nest and laid a clutch of four eggs. Incubation went well for a few days and then she was back at the window again. Her time was being spent fighting the phantom bluebird rather than on incubating the eggs. I was getting the feeling that another clutch of eggs was going to be sacrificed for a lost cause. Lady spent the night on the nest but seemed to be off during most of the day.

One day while walking to the

mailbox I noticed a form lying in the road. Investigation indicated that Lady's mate had been hit and killed by a car. At this point I felt that Lady had been through enough and deserved to experience motherhood so I contemplated introducing a baby bluebird from a brood of six into her box thus giving her a baby to rear. Two days later I opened the top of her box in preparation for the transfer of the nestling bluebird. Imagine my surprise when I saw two newly hatched baby bluebirds and two eggs which were in the process of hatching. Nothing short of a miracle, I thought.

Everything went well for a week and as the baby bluebirds grew, so did their demands. Although Lady started the morning with a daily bout at the window, the remainder of the day was spent trying to fill four hungry mouths. This became increasingly difficult as the days became hotter and drier. I could tell by the cries that were emitted from the box when she arrived with food that the nestlings were not getting all the food they wanted. I now felt that their survival was in jeopardy and was planning a course of action to help the situation; however, I need not have worried. One day a solution arrived in the form of a singing male bluebird. The meeting between Lady and the new arrival resulted in several chases around our house which ended at the box containing the young bluebirds. The new male showed little interest in the box or the inhabitants.

He followed Lady around for a few days and tried to interest her in some unoccupied boxes, to no avail. A few days later, however, I noticed that he was carrying a token insect to the box to feed the nestlings. It didn't take long before he was as adept in caring for the young as any natural father. With or without a mate Lady never missed a day at the window.

Eventually, all of the young bluebirds fledged without any mishaps and flew to the safety of the woods. What a relief that was.

About two months later, I awoke one morning to an all too familiar sound—a lady at the window. I tiptoed to the living room to look out and there, perched on the clematis vine, was Lady along with her four babies and Mr. Wonderful.

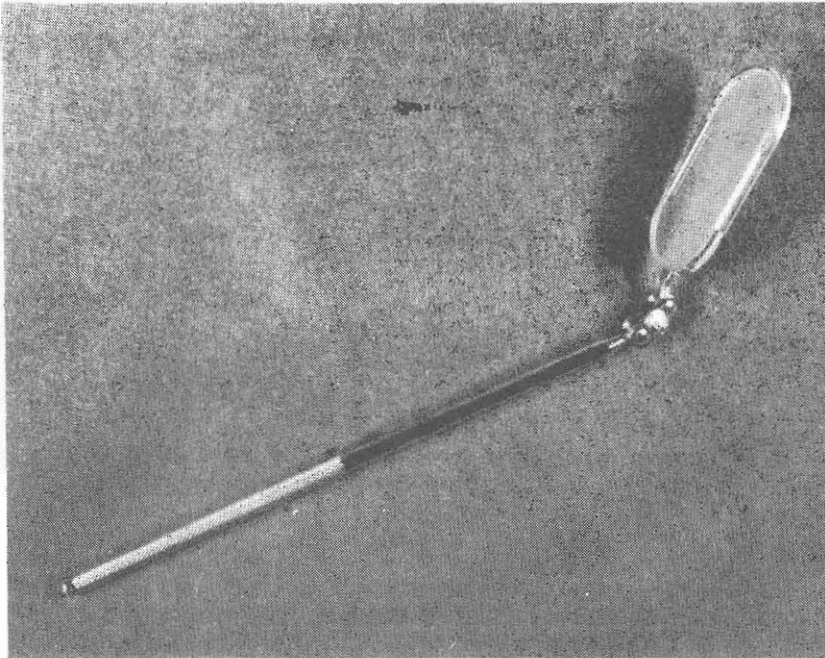
Today on January 13th eight inches of snow cover is on the ground. Tonight Lady and her family will return to spend the night in the martin house. They are a tough bunch! ■

2270 Perry Rd.  
Mt. Morris, NY 14510

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## Small Mirror Used to Monitor Bluebird Nesting Boxes



Photograph by Carl L. Haehner

Carl Haehner of Dayton, Maryland, has a bluebird trail of 12 boxes which fledged at least 17 bluebirds in 1984. Besides using sparrow traps as necessary, he monitors his boxes using a small mirror on a handle (of a type used by dentists and mechanics). These mirrors, which can be inserted through the entrance hole, are quick and easy to use and disturb the birds much less than opening the box. They can be obtained from mail order tool catalogs or from local tool or auto stores.

## Bluebird, Chickadee, 1983

Bluebird— “Hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm; Oh, Pure, Pure, Pure;  
A *lovely* day it is, for sure!  
I’m almost there; well, whataya know!  
Someone *is here*, it looks as though  
You beat me to it, you chickadee, you!  
How *dare* you steal my house? Skidoo! Flee, you!  
I’m late this year, account of the weather;  
Get goin’, you! Scat! Vamoose! Together,  
My bride and I will move in quickly;  
She’ll build the nest, pack needles thickly,  
To cushion our little ones warm’n snugly;  
So, just get goin’, now, or I’ll get ugly!”

Chickadee— “Fiddle-de-dee-dee-dee-dee!  
You’re not botherin’ ’lil ole’ me!  
We got here first, and we’re not budgin’;  
I’m not kiddin’, and I’m not *fudgin’!*  
Our little ones are almost ’poppin’;  
With the likes of you, we’re not swoppin’!  
So stop your noise—your wings a-cl i ckin’—  
Just ’truck on down,’ ’cause we ain’t chicken!”

Bluebird— (moving off, grudgingly, in another direction)  
“Oh, all right, if you must, you must!  
Hmm, hmm, *hmm*, Oh, don’t get so fussed!  
Hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm; Oh! *What* do I see?  
A lovely house for my family!  
It’s on the fence, and right by the orchard!  
Oh, that chickadee; will *he* be tortured!  
Bugs are *thick* on the trees and the ground;  
(Well, *maybe* I’ll let him come around!)  
After all, our little ones will need it;  
There’s *lots* of food—so we all will feed it.”

Much later—*Score*: Bluebirds, five; and chickadees, eight;  
But love can’t *count*; now, isn’t that *great*?  
Mamas and Papas are busy as can be:  
Nature is SO bountiful, and it’s all *free*!

Bluebird— “Oh, yes, all’s well, ‘My little chickadee!’”

## Bluebird, Chickadee, 1984

"Hello, little chickadee, how're ya doin'?  
You're already here—I just flew in.  
Remember, last year, we raised quite a fuss?  
We thought all outdoors belong to just *us*!

But if you won't mind (and I can get her to)  
We'll take the log nest right next to you!  
It'll be so nice to be your neighbor,  
We'll both feed our babes, no matter the labor.

The orchard's deserted and we'll have a ball;  
Bob's moved to town, so we'll have it all!  
The juicy bugs and big grasshoppers  
Will fatten our babes and make them whoppers.

So, whataya say, now, we'll run a race,  
Though you have a head start, you'll set the pace;  
Sometimes you have many babes and are prolific,  
But we nest *twice, thrice*—and can't be specific."

So harmony prevailed—they nested in peace;  
Four bluebirds were fledged; the chickadees' increase  
To nine was noted; they won the race *here*, 'tis true,  
But did the bluebirds have nesting number two,  
Or three—they sometimes do, in another place.  
We'll never know—but peace reigned supreme in their  
very first race.

Katharine M. Braun

# 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!*

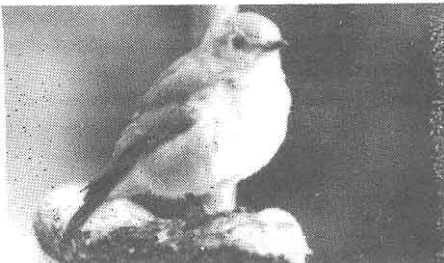
Dear Dr. Zeleny:

This is just a short note to say thanks for writing such an excellent book. Without it my uncle and I could not have raised this bluebird from a starving nestling to a healthy adult. She and three siblings were orphaned when the property owners found the female dead and the male not feeding the nestlings. I took them and raised them using your book as a guide. The photograph [below] shows the only survivor of the four, but we feel very grateful and proud to be part of the cause to help the bluebird. This bird has moved on now, (after I denied her food) and we like to think she's safe in the warm South, but we'll be looking forward to "Bluebell" returning in the spring.

Stephen Pelesky  
Sewickley, Pennsylvania

*Dear Stephen Pelesky:*

*How proud you must be to have had a part in saving a bluebird. We continue to urge our readers when faced with this type of situation to make every effort to contact rehabilitators who have the experience and licenses to care for abandoned or injured birds.*



Dear Editor:

I am trying to locate a source for 1-1/2-2 inch aluminum numerals 1 through 200 to number the boxes on my bluebird trail. Any ideas?

John Findlay III  
Birmingham, Alabama

*Dear John Findlay:*

*Not at the moment, but maybe some of our readers know a source for the numbers. Since other readers may have an interest in such information, I will be glad to pass suggestions on through these pages.*

Dear Editor:

I am a helper of bluebirds. I went into a new area where there were no bluebird boxes and now have 12 boxes of my own and have given all my neighbors nesting boxes already mounted on cedar posts ready to be put into the ground. I feed bluebirds suet, peanut butter, raisins, and seed balls in winter. My bluebirds stay with me year 'round. The ants gave me fits this past nesting season.

Charlene Collum  
Houston, Texas

Dear Editor:

Have enjoyed your quarterly publication and the bluebirds so much this past season that I have decided to renew my subscription for another year.

The bluebirds seem to remain here in this section of Guernsey County during the winter as food seems to be abundant for them.

Robert Wright  
Lore City, Ohio

Dear Editor:

For a couple of years I have been active in bluebird conservation and have been a member of NABS. This year instead of renewing I thought I'd forego it for more than one reason. First of all, I am frequently disappointed with *Sialia*. *Sialia* is a scientific journal and should contain scientific information. Instead, I find it full of useless articles about "cuddly" bluebirds, etc. I found the Great Gray Owl article and the Clorox-jug article very interesting, but I firmly believe that 90% of the articles are junk conveying no useful information.

My second reason for not renewing right away is that for years many people, including myself, have been using Dick Tuttle's system of bluebirding which means a 5 x 5 or 4 x 4 inch Tuttle-type nesting box on a greased pipe. Why do you practically advocate the use of these old, leaky, drafty bird-killing boxes? You must make it clear that there is no excuse for sloppy trail management. People should know that boxes on fence posts are safe only if equipped with an extra-thick predator guard and a trail monitor smart enough to know not to leave one minute trace of a scent trail. I believe NABS is an excellent idea and an excellent way to educate people. Now that you have an audience, you have the responsibility to show the people the best known technique. So do it.

John Bargar  
Delaware, Ohio

Dear John Bargar:

*Because of the length of your letter, I have had to cut some of it, but believe I have retained your most salient points.*

*Your concern for the quality of Sialia is laudable. I regret that a large number of articles are not "scientific" enough for your taste, but the content of the journal is at least partly dictated by our membership. Since the overwhelming majority of our members are not scientists or schooled in technical language we could not publish an entire issue devoted entirely to scientific articles except on a highly sporadic basis. Normally, we attempt to provide a balance to help satisfy both types of*

*readers.*

*We applaud your emulation of trail operator Dick Tuttle. Dick is certainly one of our outstanding members and he is always coming up with some original ideas (see the article in this issue). As former head of our Education Committee and a professional educator, I suspect that he would be the first to admit that there is no easy way to lay down immutable rules which are good for every bluebird in every part of the country under all circumstances. We hope you continue to follow Dick's methods and participate actively in bluebird conservation—and if you have ideas which will help others to improve their techniques, let us know. Your criticism of the type of boxes we advocate was referred to Dr. Zeleny who responded as follows: "Dick Tuttle's boxes are well-made and excellent in every respect, but I do not believe that they have any significant advantage over the boxes we sell or those made from the plans on our construction sheet.*

*"You refer to our advocacy of 'old, leaky, drafty, bird-killing boxes.' We do not advocate any such boxes. Even so, old boxes are often preferred to new ones by the bluebirds. Also, they are less likely to be stolen. Leaky boxes are often advantageous, especially if they leak through the bottom. My only experience with a bird-killing box was one so tightly built that water could not leak out through the bottom. It filled with water during a severe storm and the nestlings drowned. All of our boxes are provided with adequate drainage and are, therefore, "leaky." Our boxes do not leak through the top, except for the experimental "open-top" box. Even those have not caused any serious problems due to moisture. Our boxes are no more drafty than Tuttle's, although drafty boxes are sometimes desirable in very hot, sunny weather.*

*"I believe that Dick Tuttle mounts most of his boxes on metal poles that are greased or otherwise protected against climbing predators. This is a highly desirable practice and is recommended in our instruction sheet, but it is often impractical especially in the case of extensive trails." ■*



# Bluebird Tales

Mary D. Janetatos

Have you ever wished you were a tiny bird able to dart in and out of the topmost branches of the tallest trees? I have so wished, until realizing that bugs would be my dinner! But if I were a bluebird, then the mystery of where they go in winter would be solved. We would know what signal it is which calls them forth in spring—the season when bluebirders watch anxiously for the first flash of blue, the first faint warble of the bluebird male as he emerges from his winter haunts and begins his hunt for a nesting place. That is when I'm content not to be a bird, but to be able to study and appreciate many species, not only bluebirds.

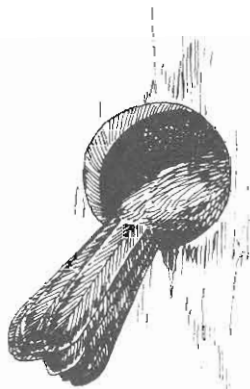
Here at NABS headquarters we have access to reports from bluebirders across the continent. **Marie Ofinger** of Galesburg, IL, calls herself the "Knox and Warren County Bluebird Promoter." She tells a frantic tale of a prematurely fledged clutch of bluebirds which seemed to sprawl all over the yard as many bluebird observers watched.

The NABS Annual Meeting at Jackson, MS, elicited comments from several attendees. **Dr. Richard Field** of Centreville, MS, writes, "The meeting...was great! A real pleasure to really 'see' and meet all of you!" **Bill Wheeler**, of Lafayette, TN, says, "It was another great meeting in Jackson, MS. The people of Jackson went all out to make their visitors welcome.

"Tennessee will be hosting a program statewide in 1986 called 'Homecoming '86.' There will be historical and physical renovation of communities. Also, one or more community projects will be destined to be of interest to the community and visitors to the state. I shall try to have bluebird trails and programs incorporated. We have a year to work on this."

Perhaps others share the thoughts and feelings of **Doug LeVasseur** of Senecaville, OH. "With extreme disappointment I found myself unable to attend the annual meeting....Please give my best to all my fellow bluebirders there in Jackson. Now that **Andre Dion's** book *The Return of the Bluebird* is published in English, it may be difficult to get close enough to him to say hello. Isn't he a delightful man to have in the ranks of bluebird conservationists?"

Listeners to National Public Radio may have pricked up their ears on hearing an item aired in November. **Bob McMasters** of



the Thorton Burgess Nature Center, in East Sandwich, MA, reported on a survey which the Nature Center conducted during the 1984 season. The respondents were asked which of four birds the Center should concentrate on helping: the Least Tern, Wood Duck, Osprey, or Eastern Bluebird. As you might guess, the bluebird won handsily. **Lillian Files** gave her bluebird presentation to them in February, and they plan a bluebird trail on their grounds in 1985.

Youth groups continue their involvement with bluebirds. Last spring **Patricia Auld's** third grade class from South School in Plymouth, MA, wrote individual letters to request information on bluebirds. **Brett McGinnis** of White Hall, MD, says, "I am chairman of our 4-H club's conservation project this year. In addition to working with a nature trail and working with the handicapped, fishing, etc., I would like our 4-H club (65 members) to make bluebird houses for our community and particularly our elder adopted 4-H families."

From Irwin, PA, we hear of yet another program in what seems to be a bluebird marathon conducted by **Emil Klanchar** and **Al Goga**. This time **Rosemary Slivensky** reports, "Girl Scout Troop #97 of Herminie, PA, enjoyed the bluebird program that was presented to them....[the two men] made us all see how much the bluebird means to our natural habitat."

Camp Fire continues to be involved in bluebird conservation. One new effort may have nationally known results. **Kathleen Allan's** Alexandria, VA, Camp Fire group wants to start a bluebird trail on the grounds of Mt. Vernon. The beautiful setting of the home of George Washington could be host to a colonial bluebird trail in the tradition of the one in existence for many years at near-by Gunston Hall. There, NABS Past Presi-

dent, **Jeanne Price** had installed and watched over a very productive bluebird trail while her husband, Walter, was director of the colonial plantation museum.

Many different states' non-game departments are using their newly identified tax check-off resources to benefit bluebirds and other native cavity nesting birds. Minnesota is a veteran in the field under **Carroll L. Henderson's** guidance. He has been the Nongame Wildlife Supervisor and spearheaded the publication of a fine manual entitled *Woodworking for Wildlife*. The state of Pennsylvania through its Game Commission continued a series begun in 1984. **Bob Mitchell** ran a "cavity nester" workshop at Middle Creek near Harrisburg. In the Reading area, **Lou Rittrivato** and **Matthew Azeles** sponsored a conference for bluebird trail monitors. In the western part of the state, **Richard Foote** planned a bluebird nest box workshop in late winter. Ohio's accomplishments in this endeavor are legendary, thanks to **Dick Tuttle** and **Reid Caldwell**. New York State has begun to attend more closely to its State bird. An effort to list all the cavity nester trails is being undertaken by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the National Audubon Society. There is much that can be done in an official capacity, but individuals can also have great organizational success. Witness the efforts of **Mrs. Catherine Ballich** in Stevenson, MD, who was reported in the Baltimore *Evening Sun* to have an extensive trail system near her home. Talks with her revealed that she also has a vast network of people working under her direction and inspiration. **Linde McNanamara** in Hanover, NH, now reports that she wants to spread the bluebird word in her corner of New England.

We experience a steady flow, out and in, of *Sialia* issues here. As you may have read, NABS can use back issues when readers are finished with them not only for new members and libraries which request back copies, but also in order to send a complimentary copy to any person who requests one in order to publicize our fine journal. Recently, **Lois M. Roberts** of Santa Rosa, CA, sent back several copies saying, "Having been entertained and informed by same, I am delighted to pass them on to others." **Adrian Cammelot** of Evanston, IL, writes, "I've just finished reading issue 6:3 of *Sialia* ...very informative publication so I am returning it so that you can use it as a back issue sale. I have installed six bluebird houses in Illinois so far along Route 55 between Chicago and Springfield and will con-

tinue as well as recruit others to join "My Bluebird Club" by properly installing the house that I give them and having them follow the instructions about cleaning out sparrows. The instructions are covered with epoxy on the side of the house as a regular reminder. The brief instructions are enclosed."

And from **Emily C. Triebe**, who received a trial copy, we hear "I recently received a copy of *Sialia* and was overjoyed with all the information therein....I have been a bluebird buff for many years; and when I hear that soft burbling sound the first time each spring my heart leaps for joy! I feel young again....Enclosed find check for two membership subscriptions." So it's obvious that spreading our journal around helps to spread memberships—and that's our lifeblood.

Writing in the *Montreal Gazette* in the autumn of 1984, **David Bird** says in his "Bird's Eye View": "If you see a bluebird in Quebec these days, you owe some thanks to members of the Province of Quebec Society for the Protection of Birds, Inc. The PQSPB has operated a nesting box trail for years and in spite of House Sparrows, starlings, raccoons, cows (which knock boxes off the posts), and humans, 25 young fledged in 1984.

"**Birgit Schultz**, a graduate student at Macdonald College, is presently studying the effects of brood size and lateness of season on the growth rates of baby bluebirds. So far, she concludes that larger nestlings are more likely to reach fledgling age than smaller ones.

"An English edition of *The Return of the Bluebird*, by **Andre Dion** (translation by **Jane Brierly**) is now available. This book is somewhat unusual in that Dion has created a fanciful epic of a returning bluebird's encounters with other feathered cousins, all based on scientific fact. Adding to its appeal are numerous excellent color pencil sketches by artist **Richard Lemire**. I think bird-lovers will enjoy this delightful treasure and I quote, "...you, you will know why the bluebird has returned'."

Our fondest hope, dear reader, is that for you this spring the bluebird has returned! ■



NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY, INC.  
STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS  
NOVEMBER 1, 1983 THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 1984

Cash Balance - November 1, 1983 \$ 5,551.69

Add:

Cash Received

Sale of <i>Sialia</i> Magazine	\$20,422.11	
Sales of boxes, books, stationery, etc.	48,416.10	
Contributions	6,816.51	
Membership dues	22,565.76	
Interest	144.55	
Sales tax collected	347.18	
Checks voided	147.10	98,859.31
		<b>\$104,411.00</b>

Less:

Cash Disbursements

Boxes, books, stationery, etc.	\$33,841.85	
<i>Sialia</i> Magazine	18,604.89	
Educational material	8,492.14	
Membership fulfillment	14,081.87	
Research	4,245.00	
Salaries	750.00	
Expense Accounts	10,724.90	
Postage	8,208.35	
Office Supplies	958.47	
Bank charges	318.79	
Maryland sales tax remitted	317.11	
Loans repaid	1,500.00	
Office furniture	427.00	\$102,470.37

Cash Balance - October 31, 1984 \$ 1,940.63

Assets

Checking account	888.99	
Savings account	1,051.64	
Value of inventory	15,243.16	
Value of furniture	901.00	<b>\$ 18,084.79</b>

Liabilities

Outstanding loans	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
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Net Worth \$ 14,084.79

Respectfully submitted,

*Delos C. Dupree*

Delos C. Dupree, Treasurer NABS

**ART CREDITS**

Jon E. Boone: 42, 76  
Shirley Eley Nachtrieb: 68  
Suzanne Pennell Turner: 50, 66, 78

Richard L. Woodward: 53 wheel-  
bug, 57, 62 hickory nut, 63, 64,  
79 American Beechnut



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

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

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.

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

