

Sialia

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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 *Motacilla* which is now reserved for the wagtails. It was William Swainson (1789-1855), who, in 1827, decided that the bluebirds needed a genus of their own within the thrush family (*Turdidae*). He selected the generic name *Sialia* which he simply adapted from the species name *sialis* which Linnaeus had used. Therefore, the scientific name for the Eastern Bluebird is *Sialia sialis* (pronounced see-ah-lee-see-ah-lee-see). Similarly, the Western Bluebird and Mountain Bluebird, the two other species within the genus, were named *Sialia mexicana* and *Sialia currucoides* (coo-roo-coy-dees) respectively. Their species names are descriptive of their locations. All three bluebird species are native only to the North American continent, although each inhabits different regions generally separated by the Rocky Mountains and by altitudinal preferences.

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

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The Quarterly Journal
About Bluebirds

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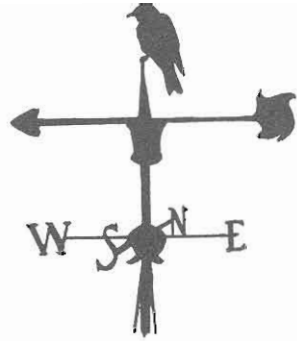
COVER

Wintering bluebirds are dependent for survival on the fruits of a variety of tree, shrubs, and vines. On page 7 Lawrence Zeleny describes how bluebirds can be aided during this season. Cover 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 Graeoch Road, Laurel, Maryland 20707.

Presidential Points

Sadie Dorber



Fall is normally a period of slacking off now that the bluebirds have left, but two items relating to outdoor education have kept me busy.

The first, Conservation Field Days are an annual event for the sixth graders of Tiroga County Schools. This year, nearly 1,000 students enjoyed two exquisite autumn days while learning more about their environment.

The preparations for Field Days starts in the early spring when all the presenters are contacted, a difficult job in itself, since a total of 18 different teaching stations are required to cover the various subjects related to the outdoors.

The teaching stations are spread out over the fields and woods, but are located close enough together to allow each group of students to move from one station to the next within five minutes. The topics range widely: woodlot management, compass orienteering, conservation law, energy conservation and ground water are but a few of the many presented.

A new station added this year was animal rehabilitation. The course was presented by a licensed rehabilitator who was accompanied by a Red-tailed Hawk with a wing injury that prevents its return to the wild. Rehabilitators are extremely devoted individuals that take abandoned, injured or sick wildlife, nurse them back to health, and return them to the wild if at all possible. Daily, a rehabilitator has cages to clean and food to find for each patient that matches their normal diet as nearly as possible. The Red-tail is fed mice and road kills which can be difficult to find on a daily basis. I was easily recruited to help with the food supply; we now have a mouse "trap line" that seems to be quite productive.

Naturally, my own station covered bluebirds. I first ask the students if they know their state bird. Sometimes they respond with the correct answer, but often I hear Blue Jay. After going over the differences of the two species, I present the actual facts on how to help bluebirds.

Since the majority of the students attending Field Days live in rural areas, I'm optimistic that some of them will start bluebird trails. After 20 minutes of learning

about bluebirds, the horn sounds and the students (supplied with the NABS brochures which include box plans) pass to the next station and I start all over again with the next group

The New York State Outdoor Education Association holds its annual meeting each Columbus Day Weekend. Teachers, nature center staffs, or people wanting to learn a little more about nature make up the majority of the large group attending.

This year's location was in Warrensburg, NY, along the scenic Schroon River. With three of us packing warm clothes, rain slickers, boots, etc., my Honda was nearly overflowing.

The day was warm and sunny and we were soon to learn as we traveled north, that the brilliant autumn leaf color was at its peak. Each rolling mountain seemed lovelier than the previous one.

I presented a workshop on bluebirds and other cavity nesters, but the remaining time was free for me to attend the workshops of my choice. This decision was a difficult one, since the variety and number of topics offered were numerous. One of special interest to me was the workshop on bird behavior presented by Don and Lillian Stokes. The Stokes' are known for their field guides and books pertaining to bird behavior. They are now studying bluebird behavior for a future book and spent time during the summer observing Past President Lil Files' bluebirds.

The activities of fall seemed to have slowed a little, but, as I write this, my feeders are full of Evening Grosbeaks. I wonder to myself if this means we'll have many of the northern birds in our area for the winter? If so, all of us who are licensed bird banders will, no doubt, be very busy and find that winter passes quickly. ■

Scent Tube Leads Snakes Astray

Richard L. Hoffmann

In 1960 I began a career as a chemist whose research dealt with flavors and odors of edible oilseed products at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Peoria, Illinois. It was my good fortune to have had the late Dr. Cyril D. Evans as my supervisor. Besides imparting his scientific wisdom and professionalism, he inspired me to become much interested in the plight of the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*); in fact, it was he who gave me the first nesting box I ever put into the field.

Since that time, my wife and I acquired stewardship of the agriculturally useless 40-acre piece of hedgerow and scrub timber on which we live. Having dubbed it "Malfunction Junction," we have endeavored these past 20 years to make it into a wildlife haven. Special attention, due in no small part to the influence of Dr. Evans, has been given to providing suitable habitat for the bluebird. Their nesting boxes are sited in a five acre open area near a long, impenetrable Multiflora Rose hedge that provides a safe flight path for the fledglings; the boxes are "made to specifications" and are regularly maintained.

In spite of those good intentions, we had a very serious problem with predation by snakes. Our area is well populated by an aggressive and bird-hungry species of large blacksnake. Until I hit upon the effective barrier described herein, I had even found them in our Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) houses atop smooth 15 foot poles! They were able to climb any post or pole I put out. It became clear that the only effective line of attack would have to involve some kind of barrier.

About five years ago I began my attempts to snake-proof my nesting boxes. At first I tried barriers made of inverted plastic wastecans fastened to the top of the post with the nesting box

resting above. Because the plastic became brittle upon exposure to sunlight, that approach was abandoned. Discarded five gallon metal paint buckets proved to be more durable, but they were unsightly and they destabilized the support-post by offering too much wind resistance. Greased posts were no help at all.

Resolution of this vexing situation occurred to me while reading a *National Wildlife Magazine* article on snakes. It made good chemical "scents," so I carried the idea a step further to the result shown in Figure 1. The secret to its success lies in the small hose that leads from the nest box down inside the outer guard tube. Because the snake detects its prey by scent, it occurred to me that I might capitalize on that fact and use the scent to lead the predator into a dead-end. After all, if it were going to climb the nest box pole anyway, I may as well divert it to a place where it could do no harm.

The scent tube, shown in the diagram, makes the bird's aroma available, but the barrier tube frustrates the snake's access to the birds themselves. As the snake climbs the post, it follows the stronger scent drifting down from *inside* the large pipe and it ends up at the top where it is blocked by the hardware cloth.

A considerable amount of time was devoted to determining the proper placement of the scent tube within the nest box. My "laboratory" was a nest box identical to the bluebird box, except for the size of the entry hole; it was 2.5 inches in diameter to encourage occupancy by European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) from a nearby grove of old locust trees. They served as snake bait during the trials. I realize that the approach sounds brutal, but

the reptilian threat to our bluebirds was an overriding consideration. Happily, the barrier proved effective; not even a starling was lost.

The experiment revealed that the scent tube was effective when it was located along a front corner of the nesting box so that its open end was about the same height as the bottom of the entry hole. Apparently, the birds' activities within the box kept a well-fanned supply of scent drifting down the tube and into the barrier. In addition, it is important that the tube protrude at least 6 to 8 inches into the barrier pipe. This ensures that the scent will not be blown away by the wind. The scent tube was "snaked" through a hole drilled into a corner of the nest box bottom. The other end was forced through a convenient opening in the hardware cloth. Friction at both points holds the tube in place. Long staples hold the tube along the interior corner of the box.

Even the kind of scent tubing was important. Ordinary black rubber tubing frightened the birds and none would enter the box. I suppose they mistook it for a snake. This problem was solved when I switched to clear plastic aquarium tubing; the birds ignored it. Because the "essence" of this approach to the problem of snake predation involves scent, it is worthwhile to "de-gas" the plastic tubing to drive off volatile odorless components used in its manufacture. This is easily accomplished by allowing the tubing to age for a few days in full sunlight, occasionally blowing through it to sweep out the vapors.

Finally, if the posts are to be painted to render them less of an eyesore, this operation should be carried out in the winter so they have a chance to "de-odorize" before they are placed in the field. The open, screened top of the guard tube lets in the rain and makes it an unsuitable nest site for pesky wasps—they tend to take the joy out of nesting box maintenance. The hardware cloth must be cut for a snug fit around the box's support post and securely fastened to the guard tube with a good band clamp; some snakes can push pretty hard when they're

hungry. Also, it's important to keep the scent tube clear of debris so that it can serve its function.

Similar guards adorn the posts on our Purple Martin houses and I'm delighted to report that we have lost neither bluebird nor martin to a snake since we implemented the devices. Luckily, snakes that inhabit our turf are not smart enough to climb the outer pipe. I suspect that the more powerful scent drifting down the inside of the guard tube proves irresistible and they are lured *into it* rather than *around it* every time. An additional benefit of an ail-plastic post system is that it prevents predation by raccoons; they can't climb the slick plastic. Such posts work well for bird feeders too. It's great fun to watch a squirrel trying to get a grip on the smooth pipe surface.

Another useful feature of the nesting box (though unrelated to the predation situation) is the small inexpensive mirror mounted to a 45° block of wood glued to the back of the interior directly opposite the entry hole. Sufficient light enters through the entry and vent holes to allow non-intrusive observation of the interior with binoculars. The mirror seems not to disturb the birds. Perhaps it's because their view, upon entering, is just the darker bottom of the box. Even though getting a good view is sometimes a little tricky, it provides a delightful means to watch bluebird home life.

A final note: One morning, while inspecting the contraptions during the experimental stage of this project, I discovered a large snake that had jammed itself into the dead-end of the barrier. I left it undisturbed and noticed that as the sun warmed the black plastic outer tube, the snake beat a "heated" retreat.

Admittedly, this approach to the problem of snake predation takes a little more time and material than simply building a nesting box and nailing it to a suitable post or tree. Though a bit more complicated than simply using greased posts, it has the advantage of eliminating the messiness of grease and the hydrocarbon pollution which

Figure 1. A Predator-Proofed Nesting Box Support.

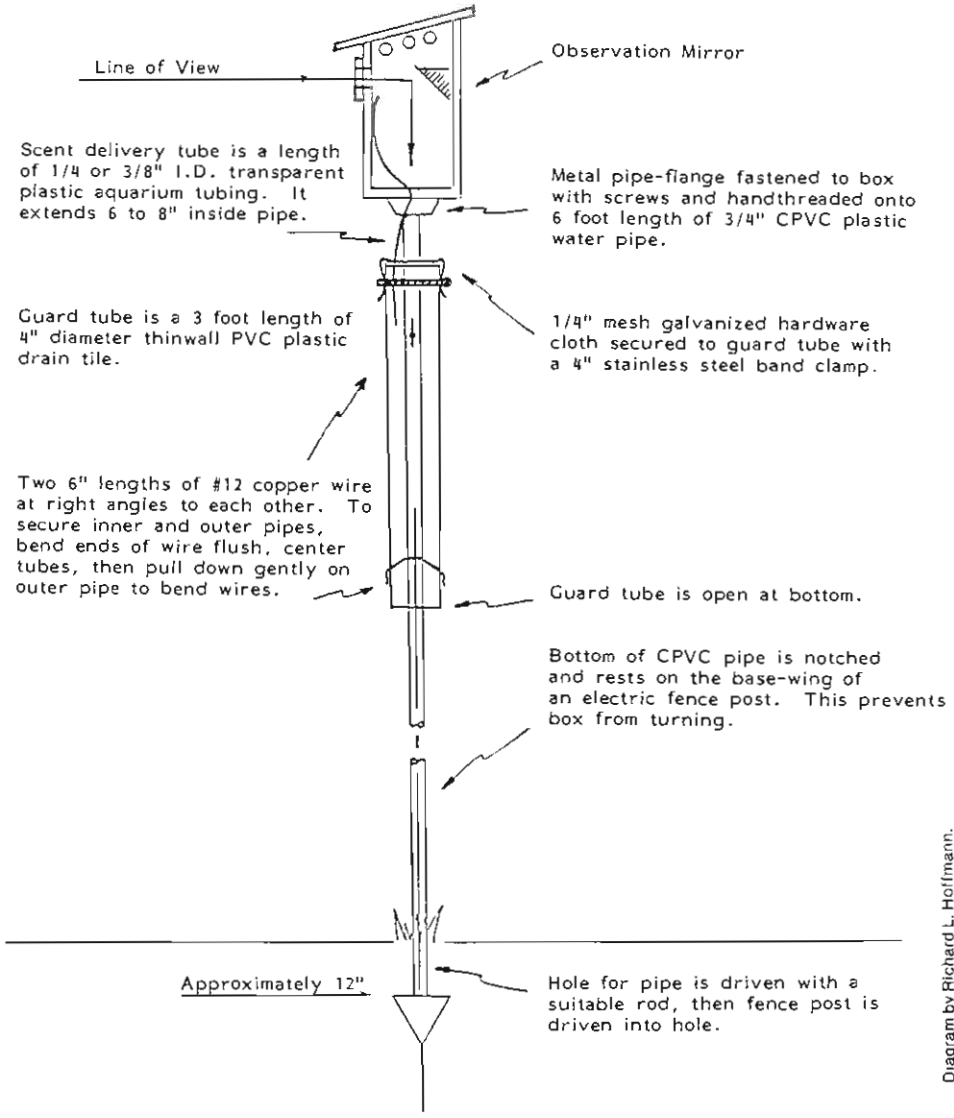


Diagram by Richard L. Hoffmann.

accompanies its use. Prior to my use of this kind of nesting box, I lost almost all of my nestlings to snake predation; however, the two nesting boxes I have fitted with the snake arrestors have fledged two broods each season since I devised this approach to protecting them. ■

Sialia continues to publish interesting, but still experimental, solutions to nesting box problems. The Society would appreciate hearing from individuals using the above method of snake protection during the 1986 breeding season. Be sure to provide comparative statistics for some previous years. Write to Richard Dolesh, Special Projects Committee Chairman, c/o NABS, Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906-0295.

6618 WS. Tuscarora Road, Mapleton, IL 61547 or Illinois Central College, East Peoria, IL 61635.

QUESTION CORNER

Lawrence Zeleny



Do earwigs cause bluebirds any harm?

**Elsie Eltzroth
Corvallis, Oregon**

Earwigs are vegetarians and hence should pose no direct threat to bluebirds or their eggs, although they could be a nuisance. Since they are winged insects, treatment of the nesting box posts would not necessarily keep them out of the boxes. Spraying the interior of the boxes with a pyrethrin spray when no birds or eggs are present should provide temporary control, if this should be necessary. Perhaps application of 1% rotenone powder directly to the nest would provide more long-lasting control. Any eggs or nestlings, of course, should be temporarily removed from the nest while the rotenone is being applied.

When we checked our bluebird box, we found two nests of unhatched eggs (one nest on top of the other). All the eggs were cracked and there were ants in both nests. Could the ants have cracked the eggs; if so, what can be done to prevent that? If not, what could have happened?

**Barbara Driscoll
Roswell, Georgia**

To the best of our knowledge, ants have never been known to break intact bluebird eggs. In your case the eggs were probably broken by some predator and the contents then eaten or carried away by ants. House Sparrows and House Wrens will often enter nesting boxes occupied by bluebirds or other birds and break their eggs or kill their nestlings. Both the wrens and the sparrows will then usually build their own nests on top of the despoiled bluebird or other nests, but sometimes they simply leave after doing their damage.

Another possibility is that the ants entered the eggs just as they were hatching. They then would have killed the young birds and eaten them before the hatching process was completed. This has been known to happen.

When ants persist in entering a nesting box, they can usually be controlled by applying a narrow band of "Tree Tanglefoot" (or a similar product) to the post supporting the box. This is a sticky substance commonly used in bands around the trunks of trees to control destructive crawling insects. Ants and other insects become embedded in the material when they attempt to cross it. ■

Wintering Bluebirds May Need Help

Lawrence Zeleny

Bluebirds sometimes run into serious trouble during the winter months and in occasional winters when the weather is exceptionally unfavorable they may perish by the thousands. A little help from their human friends at these times may be all that is needed to save many of them.

In summer Eastern Bluebirds, although scarce in most places, may still be found scattered throughout almost all parts of the United States and southern Canada that lie east of the Rocky Mountains. They do not have any well-established migration routes or patterns, but in late fall most of those in the northern part of their summer range gradually move southward into roughly the southern half or two-thirds of the country.

Food supply is the all-important factor governing the bluebirds' wintering range. Bluebirds will often remain in areas far north of their normal winter range if there appears to be a sufficient abundance of wild berries to carry them through the winter. Those of us within the winter range of the bluebird can do a great deal to help the bluebirds and other berry-eating birds by encouraging the extensive planting of trees, shrubs, and vines which bear berries that persist throughout the winter. Such plantings as American holly, multiflora rose, mountain ash, hawthorn, pyracantha, sumac, chokeberry (Aronia), and bittersweet are particularly valuable.

Bluebirds are quite capable of taking care of their own needs under all normal conditions, but when their winter food supply is suddenly cut off they may perish within a day or two without our help. Heavy snows sometimes cover all available wild berries. Freezing rains that form heavy coatings of ice over all available food are even more deadly.

In recent years a new threat to our native berry-eating winter birds has been added. Since the great population explosion of the European Starling in this country, large flocks of these alien birds roam widely over the countryside in winter in search of food. Great hordes of starlings will often descend on an area where there is an abundance of berries to their liking and completely strip the trees and shrubs of their berries within a few days or even a few hours. This may happen in fall or early winter so that the native berry-eating winter birds are left without their natural food supply during the coldest months to come. Starlings have a particular liking for the berries of the flowering dogwood. Thus in the East this very important and often abundant natural source of winter bird food is now less dependable than in earlier years.

Bluebirds are not common visitors to winter bird feeding stations, but when their natural food supply is cut off for any of the above reasons they will gladly accept our hospitality. Bluebirds are not seed eaters since they do not have the hard bills nor the skill necessary to remove the hulls from seeds to render them digestible. Thus the usual mixed wild bird feeds offer little that the bluebirds can eat. However, they will gladly accept raisins or other dried fruits, wild berries, chopped unsalted nuts, peanut hearts, and suet.

Joe Huber of Heath, Ohio, has taken a great interest in the welfare of bluebirds near his home, both in summer and winter. Since he is close to the northern limit of the bluebirds' normal winter range he has made a special effort to provide for their winter needs. Mr. Huber found that the fruited stems of the multiflora rose and certain wild

roses could be cut in quantity early in the season and kept fresh and free of snow and ice in a cold shed. He used these on a platform feeder close to his house by pushing the stems into small holes drilled in a board attached to the feeder. Neither starlings nor mockingbirds paid much attention to the rose fruits (called "rose hips") but bluebirds ate them regularly every day.

On cold winter nights bluebirds wisely seek a protected place to roost. Since they are cavity-nesting birds they often roost in natural cavities or nesting boxes for added protection from the cold winter winds. For this reason it is usually better to leave nesting boxes out all winter so that the birds can sleep in them. Frequently, several birds will use a single box on cold nights, taking advantage of the additional warmth produced by their numbers.

Special winter roosting boxes may be made large enough to accommodate a considerable number of birds and equipped with interior perches. This kind of box should have the entrance hole near the floor and no additional ventilation about that level should be provided. This design permits the heat from the birds' bodies to rise and accumulate in the box rather than escape from openings near the top as in a conventional bird box. This

is a considerable advantage on very cold nights.

For bluebirds and other small birds, a box with inside floor dimensions of 10 x 10 inches and a depth of from 18 to 24 inches is satisfactory. An entrance hole 1½ inches in diameter will exclude starlings but will admit bluebirds, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and Downy Woodpeckers. Larger openings may be used for larger cavity nesting birds. Woodpeckers are much more likely to use these roosting boxes if one or more of the inside surfaces are roughened, since these birds prefer to sleep while clinging to a perpendicular surface like the trunk of a tree.

Winter roosting boxes should be placed in sheltered locations where they are protected as much as possible from strong winds. Precautions should also be taken to protect the boxes from predators. Mounting them on smooth metal posts that are kept heavily coated with soft grease is recommended.

It should be pointed out that although these roosting boxes have some important advantages over ordinary nesting boxes for winter nighttime protection, birds will often choose nesting boxes when both are available. This is perhaps because the nesting boxes seem more familiar to them. ■

How Many Years Have You Helped Bluebirds?

In 1986, Founder Lawrence Zeleny will mark his seventieth continuous year working to aid bluebirds. To mark this event we'd like to create an honor roll of individuals who have a record of at least fifty continuous years in the cause of bluebird or native cavity nester conservation.

Write to Editor Joanne Solem, 10617 Grae Loch Road, Laurel, MD 20707, by June 1, 1986. Provide the following information either about yourself or about someone else: when and where involvement began, what sparked an interest, anything memorable during those decades, what is being done at the present time (if anything). Black and white photographs are welcome though we ask that you not send your negatives or your only print as we do not assume responsibility for them.

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PURPLE MARTIN, PACIFIC COAST POPULATION

Brian Sharp

The following U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service management guidelines were issued in January 1985. Those readers living in the area covered by this report should give particular attention to the Management Strategies described as means by which they may be able to aid the West Coast population of this species.

INTRODUCTION

Status: The western population of Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) was once fairly common throughout its historical range in southern British Columbia, western Washington, western Oregon (including high elevations east of the Cascades), and California. Thriving colonies were formerly found in northwest towns and cities, e.g., Vancouver, B.C., Seattle and Port Townsend, WA, and Klamath Falls, OR. However, since World War II, a drastic population decline has occurred, and colonies are reduced to a few pairs or have been extirpated. In Seattle only 32 martins were seen in the fall of 1980 compared to 12,500 in the fall of 1945. In California, a dramatic decrease has occurred in the southern coast range, where only 32 martins were found at 3 breeding locations in 1980. In Oregon, 300 breeding pairs were known in 1984 (nesting for the most part in pilings and nest boxes along the coast and the Columbia River and in snags in the Coast Range and Cascade Mountains), up from 168 pairs in 1977.

Purple Martins appear in low numbers on the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) with 11-year averages (1968-78) of .032 birds per route in Oregon (having occurred on 5 routes over the 11 years), .025 birds per route in Washington (2 routes), and .234 birds per route in California (27 routes). In Oregon, 4 of the 5 routes were along the southern

coast, and 1 was near Wickiup Reservoir. In California, the species is now rare and local; most of the routes getting martins are located along the coast and adjacent coast ranges north of Point Reyes. A lesser number of routes with martins were in the vicinity of the Diablo Mountains between Monterey and San Luis Obispo, and a small number of routes were located in interior California. Many of the California routes getting martins at higher elevations of the Coast Range seem to be in the vicinity of reservoirs.

Problems: Purple Martins are cavity nesters and under natural conditions often nest in snags in forest openings, e.g., large burns. The two major problems confronting the species appear to be a serious lack of nesting sites (snags) in mountainous areas, and competition for nesting sites with the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Forest management practices, such as the suppression of fires and clearcutting without snag retention, have significantly reduced natural nesting cavities and nesting opportunities. Of those natural and artificial cavities that are available, most are appropriated by starlings, especially in lowland areas. Starlings are aggressive competitors, and, being only partially migratory, have often begun nesting before martins return from tropical wintering grounds in mid-April.

Other problems include weather and nest parasites. Unseasonable cold or lengthy periods of rain after the third week in June can cause mass starvation of nestlings (due to the unavailability of insect prey), and sometimes the depletion or abandonment of colonies. Heat prostration of nestlings in warm climates, e.g., California and east of the Cascades, may be a consequence of providing man-made boxes that are too small, especially in light of larger brood size in western states. It has been thought that external parasites, e.g., *Protocalliphora*, might have a debilitating effect on nestlings, but secondary parasitism by chalcid wasps apparently alleviates that problem. Other parasites—fleas, bedbugs, and ticks—may pose problems particularly in marginal food-producing areas. House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) have so far not proved much of a problem in western states.

There is no information readily available to indicate whether there are any problems, e.g., pesticides or habitat loss, affecting Purple Martins in South American (Brazilian) wintering areas. More detailed information needs to be gathered on the distribution of wintering birds.

Objective: In the absence of overall population estimates for the Purple Martin, a measurable population objective would be to increase the number of BBS routes on which Purple Martins are found or to increase the number of birds found per route, or both. Due to currently low population levels, an appropriate objective might be 3-5 times current numbers. Numerical objectives would thus be an overall average of martins per route in California.

Because the population is currently at such a low level, it may be necessary, or more effective, to try to 1) increase existing colonies with a nest box program, and 2) to establish new colonies in the vicinity of existing colonies. Existing colonies would serve as nuclei from which surplus birds produced could colonize unoccu-

ried suitable habitat nearby. Another advantage of this approach is that martins would become accustomed to accepting nest boxes of unusual design (to exclude starlings) in existing colonies before being expected to do so at new localities. How close to existing colonies new colonies need to be to maximize chances of becoming established will need to be determined empirically.

Within the above context, efforts to extend distribution should be concentrated on state and federal wildlife areas in western Washington, western Oregon, and central and coastal California, and on national forests. However, some colonies are on private land, and there is a great potential for utilizing the enthusiasm and interest of cooperating private landowners where habitat conditions are favorable, especially with a publicized program.

Nesting boxes of the apartment type have been used extensively on the East Coast, and have been accepted by martins. The lack of nesting boxes on the West Coast would seem to indicate that a significant population increase might be achievable with a reasonable amount of effort. However, apartment-type nesting boxes have not been effective in the West, though single boxes and single boxes erected in clusters are accepted by martins. Starling competition, however, has proved to be a major obstacle, and nest box design needs to be considered when proposing a nest box program, especially in lowland areas where starling competition is the fiercest.

Locational criteria: Purple Martins are usually colonial, insectivorous, and cavity nesters. Nesting cavities may be natural or man-made, are usually 15-20 feet above the ground (range 3 to 130 feet) and include hollows in trees, woodpecker holes, holes in pilings over water, hollows among large boulders (rarely), cracks in the eaves of houses, and nest boxes and gourds. An open area around nest sites is a requirement as martins spend considerable time circling in the

air around the site. Foraging often occurs over a woodland canopy of alder and ash species, but apparently also occurs in open terrain, perhaps in clearings in forest land, urban areas and towns, or in open country in the vicinity of salt or fresh water. Whether the habitat in question produces adequate and available food is probably the determining factor. Prey consists predominantly of flying insects, including Hymenoptera, Odonata, Diptera (including mosquitoes), Lepidoptera, and Coleoptera, especially larger insects. Some non-flying insects and other arthropods are taken, however, e.g., ants, spiders. Where martins are numerous, as in the eastern United States, and even in Pacific Coast states, they roost communally preceding and during migration.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Increase breeding Purple Martin populations to objective levels.

A. Provide artificial nesting sites, if natural sites are lacking and cannot be provided by manipulating habitat, according to the following specifications:

1. In lowland areas west of the Cascades, where starling competition for nesting cavities is a problem, construct nest boxes according to the design in Figure 1. It is important to make the entrance exactly 1¼ inches high without a threshold (continuous with the porch floor). The top of the opening should be sanded smooth. The porch is a necessary feature, and the floor board should be rough to provide traction. Starlings, though of approximately the same body size as martins, are shaped differently, with longer legs, and will not be able to gain access to the nesting cavity without excessive inconvenience.

2. "Woodpecker" type nest boxes can be used in situations where starling competition is not a problem, e.g., in mountainous areas (Fig. 2).

3. Protect boxes from wet weather. For durability paint them or use cedar for construction; protect the roof with galvanized tin. Provide drainage holes. Interiors may be painted white to discourage starlings. Dimensions of boxes should be larger (10 x 7 x 7 inches) and ventilation should be provided in hotter areas (central California and east of the Cascades). Explore whether state prisons can help manufacture boxes.

4. Locate boxes in existing colonies at first. Locate additional boxes within 16 km (9.9 miles) of existing colonies.

5. Locate near productive bodies of water (e.g., marshy areas) or in woodland clearings, to provide foraging opportunities.

6. Locate houses away from obstacles to flight (the greater the distance the better, minimum 100 feet) to allow for circling behavior.

7. Erect houses 10-20 feet or more above the ground or water (minimum 8 feet). It is not necessary to remove martin nests from previous years; in fact, martins tend to reoccupy old nest boxes first.

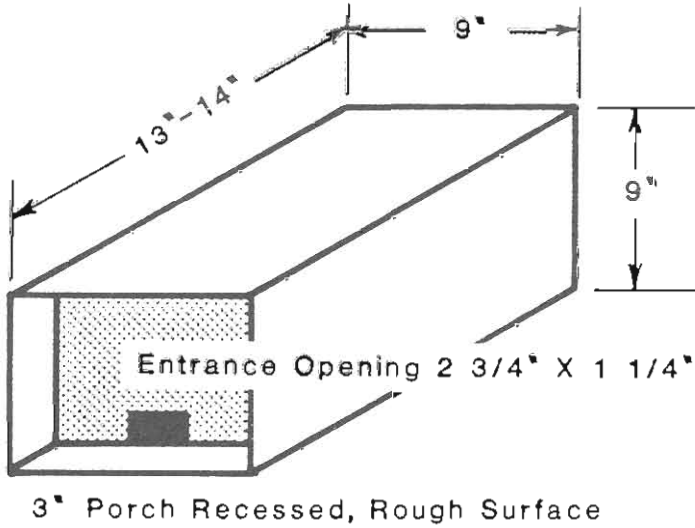
8. Control of parasites should not be necessary. If nesting material from the previous year is cleaned out, cleaning should occur in the spring and the contents kept dry somewhere in the vicinity, to allow for the emergence of chalcid wasps (secondary parasites of *Protocalliphora*). Powdered sulfur or rotenone might be used for particularly severe infestations of parasites.

9. Publicize martin population status and encourage conservation groups, interested private landowners, civic clubs, local communities, etc., to provide and maintain martin colonies in suitable unoccupied habitat.

B. Where European Starling and House Sparrow competition for nest sites is a problem, reduce starling and House Sparrow numbers.

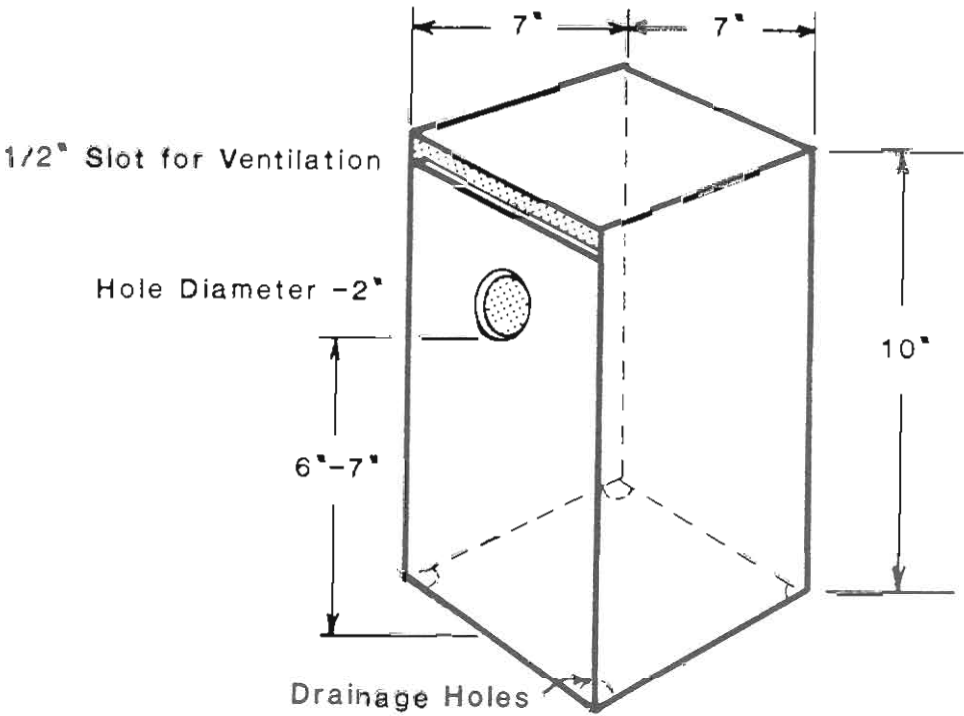
1. Two to four houses may be clustered on the same supporting structure. Starling territoriality will tend to limit their population density. Cluster boxes for maximum visibility of common air space, i.e., orient box en-

Figure 1. "Starling dissuader" Purple Martin nest box design.



Diagrams courtesy Tom Lund

Figure 2. "Woodpecker" nest box design.



trances in the same direction to prevent starlings from entering boxes without being seen by each other. In addition, large numbers of colonial martins tend to intimidate competitors.

2. Compartment entrance holes can be closed in winter, until April (perhaps earlier in California, later at higher elevations), or houses may be erected in spring, as the martins return, to reduce opportunity for starling nest establishment.

3. Reduce European Starling and, if a problem, House Sparrow populations (neither species is legally protected) in the vicinity of existing and newly established martin colonies in winter and spring. Starlings and sparrows may be removed by shooting (where permitted) or by trapping. Sparrows may be transported three miles and released. Shooting starlings allegedly does not bother martins in established colonies, but new or small colonies should probably not be disturbed in this manner.

4. Where nest sites are accessible, remove starling nests continually and House Sparrow nests early in the nesting season. (Removal of sparrow nests later in the cycle causes the sparrows to become confused and wander into martin nests with adverse effects on martin eggs and small young. Sparrow eggs can be removed, however.) Burn or otherwise destroy nesting material as House Sparrows will readily re-use the material.

5. If and where practical and publicly acceptable, reduce starling numbers at winter roosts and feeding concentrations.

C. Continue to gather biological information on the breeding distribution and ecology of Purple Martins.

1. Locate and maintain a list of existing breeding sites.

2. Monitor population levels via the BBS.

3. Sample pesticide levels in birds arriving in spring compared to levels in summering individuals.

D. Manage habitat to provide nesting

opportunities in existing and in favorable potential nesting and foraging areas.

1. Inventory Purple Martins in national forests.

2. Manage forests to provide nesting cavities in open situations.

a. Retain snags during timber harvesting operations, including salvage operations after burns, blow-downs, and insect infestations.

b. Refrain from fire suppression in favorable martin foraging habitat.

c. Create snags in forest openings, or at forest edges, e.g., by girdling, where nesting cavities are lacking, especially within 16 km (9.9 miles) of existing martin nesting colonies. (Such snags will need to be attacked by woodpeckers before they are suitable for martin occupation.)

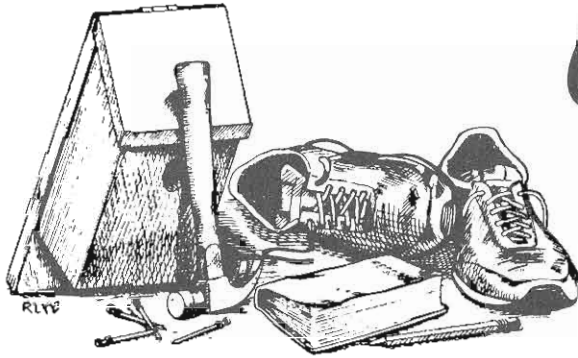
3. Include funding for Purple Martin population enhancement when requiring mitigation for federal projects having adverse impacts on wildlife habitat. During the construction of reservoirs, leave some standing timber at margins to be partially inundated.

4. Refrain from using insecticides within foraging distance of martin nesting colonies (at least 2 km, 1.2 miles) in order to maintain a food base and avoid chemical contamination. ■

Sources of Further Information

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- _____. 1981a. Reproductive success of Purple Martins in aluminum versus wooden birdhouses. *J. Field Orn.* 52: 148-9.
- _____. 1981b. The impact of starlings on Purple Martin populations in unmanaged colonies. *Am Birds* 35:266-68.
- Gabrielson, I.N. and S.G. Jewett. 1940. *Birds of the Pacific Northwest*. (Dover edition.)

(Continued on page 30)



ON THE TRAIL

"On the Trail" is intended to provide succinct information about bluebird and cavity nester trails. Let us know what is happening on your trail. Send trail reports, unusual observations, publicity efforts, etc., to the editor, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707.

SEWICKLEY, PENNSYLVANIA—George P. O'Neil noted that four Eastern Bluebirds fledged from one of his boxes on 31 August which is more than a month later than previous fledging dates he has recorded. Of his 44 boxes, 20 were used by bluebirds; 77 fledged from 127 eggs.

CINCINNATI, OHIO—Land Manager John Klein reported that the Hamilton County Park District now has over 300 bluebird boxes installed. Park volunteers check these boxes every two weeks and submit their findings on special cards. The number of bluebirds fledged in 1984 numbered 113, an increase of 43% over the previous nesting season. Other cavity nesters using the boxes successfully included Tree Swallows, House Wrens, chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and House Sparrows. (*Ed. note:* Figures of fledged young House Sparrows between 1983 and 1984 showed an increase from 23 to 44 which is a type of competition native cavity nesters do not need.)

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA—John Grivich, known as the "Bluebird Man of Walker County," observed bluebirds in a box at his home raise four broods during the 1985 nesting season. Mr. Grivich has made 1,800 bluebird boxes in the past two years and sold them to local residents at cost. In many cases he has assisted with mounting the boxes if individuals were unable to do so themselves. (*Ed. note:* Occasionally we receive notice that a nesting box has housed four broods of bluebirds in one nesting season. Although this is an unusual occurrence, as yet, we have no proof [such as banded birds would provide] that the *same* pair has raised all four broods.)

PLAINS, MONTANA—The Mountain Bluebird Trail Conference was held June 8-9, 1985, with 59 people attending. Deni Hershberger chaired the conference. A number of presentations and awards were made. Art Aylesworth included in his brief history of the pioneering efforts of bluebirding in western Montana the work of attendee Wendall Stevens who has been maintaining a bluebird trail since 1925. Other individuals were cited whose records or involvement dates to as early as 1908. The area in which the meeting was held was an example of the value of recent bluebird conservation. The last reported sighting of a Western Bluebird in the Plains area was 1931. Now, through the efforts of bluebird enthusiasts, over 1000 Western Bluebirds fledged in the Plains-St. Regis area in 1984.

BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA—James Boozer reported sighting a single male Mountain Bluebird on his trail at the Biltmore Estate, Asheville, NC, in June 1985. If others in the region might have also observed an individual of that species during the early summer, please communicate with him at 1006 Asheville Hwy., Box 627, Brevard, NC 28712. ■

Starling Nest Box Trap

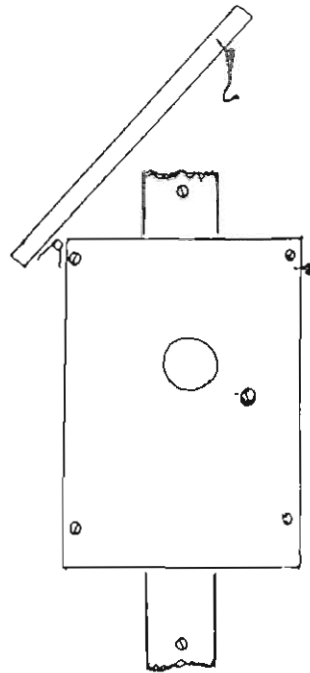
European Starlings are rather easily trapped beginning with the first warm days in February and March and continuing into late May or early June. Male starlings investigate nest holes and cavities at this time before picking a specific site in which to nest. It is possible to catch and remove starlings from the same trap on successive days and occasionally several in one day. I have caught as many as 71 in a four-unit trap in one season at my home in Baltimore County (Maryland).

Figure 1. Front view of box (note mounting board at rear).

Materials

1-inch lumber-

- 1 8 3/4" x 12", front
 - 3 7 1/4" x 12", sides, back
 - 1 9" x 13", top
 - 1 6 1/2" x 7 1/4", bottom
 - 1 3" x 18", mounting board
- 1 1 1/2" hinge with screws
1 2" hook-and-eye
5 1 1/4" wood screws
1 1" brass machine screw and nut
2 3/4" staples
3 1/2" double-pointed tacks
2 6" x 7" pcs. weldwire, 1" mesh
1 2 1/2" x 5" pc. sheet metal
3 1 1/2" x 4" pcs. 1/4" exterior plywood
2 feet of galvanized wire, 12 gauge



Construction

1. Cut a hole 4 inches square in one screen lid (Figure 3B). Weldwire or turkey-wire is better than hardware cloth which tends to separate. Smooth the cut edges thoroughly or cover them with tape.
2. Staple the 2 screen lids (with lid A above lid B) to the inner side of the back section about 1/2 inch below the top edge, so the staples will act as hinges and permit the screen lids to move together readily (Figure 2).
3. Fasten a 1 1/2 inch x 4 inch plywood cleat on the inner surface of each side piece so the screen lids will rest on them in a level position.
4. Nail the side and back pieces together. The back fits between the sides, so the trap is 8 3/4 inches wide.
5. Nail the bottom piece in place.
6. Cut a 2 inch diameter entrance hole in the front piece with the center of the hole 4 inches below the top edge.

Figure 2. Side view of box showing trigger mechanism and placement of screen lids.

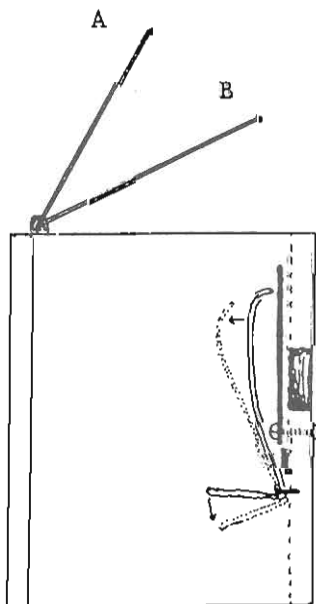


Figure 3. Screen lids.

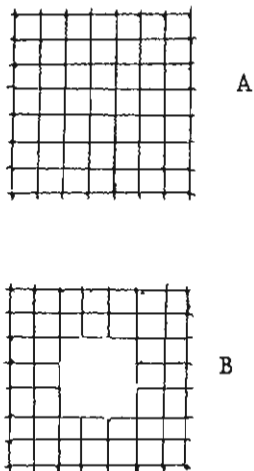


Figure 4. Rear view of front section showing set trap.

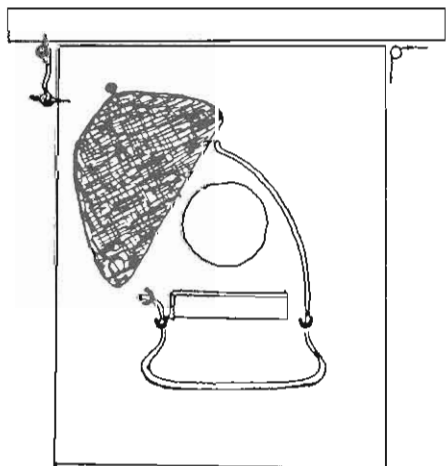
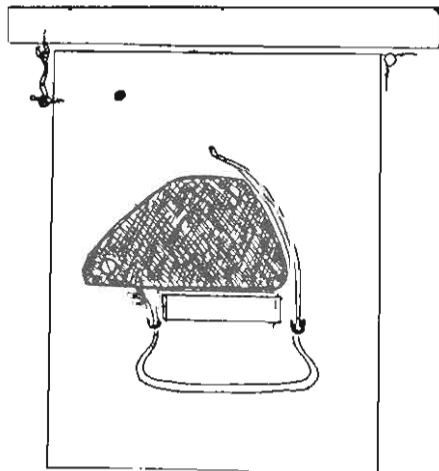


Figure 5. Rear view of front section showing sprung trap.



This trap is courtesy of Robert Wood, Nuisance Bird Control Program, Maryland Department of Agriculture, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401.

7. Cut the sheet metal into shape and attach it to the front piece with a 1 inch machine screw as in Figure 4. Adjust the nut so the door will move easily, then wrap fine wire or tape around the screw's threads to prevent the nut from turning. Be sure this mechanism will clear the sides of the trap when assembled.
8. Bevel one long edge of a 1½ inch x 4 inch plywood cleat and attach it directly below the entrance hole with the beveled edge inward, forming a slot to hold the door more securely when the trap is sprung (Figure 5).
9. Bend the galvanized wire to form the perch and trigger mechanism as shown in Figures 2 and 4. The perch should extend at least one-third of the distance from front to back of the trap's interior so that a starling is certain to hop onto it when entering the trap. You probably will not need all 2 feet of wire. Fasten the wire to the front section of the trap at the 3 points shown in Figure 4 with ½ inch double-pointed tacks. Tack A is in a vertical position, tacks B and C are horizontal. Set the tacks so there is slight movement when the perch is pressed gently downward which in turn will pull the upper end of the trigger mechanism outward and release the sliding door.
10. With the trap set, place a tack or small nail at the upper edge of the door to limit its upward movement (Figure 4).
11. When satisfied that the mechanism works smoothly, attach the front section to the sides preferably with screws so that it can be removed for adjustment.
12. Put the top piece in place, flush with the rear of the trap with an overhang on the front and sides. Put hinge on left side and hook on right side.
13. If the trap is to be mounted on a post, utility pole, etc., fasten a 3 inch x 18 inch cleat (Figure 1) to the back of the trap. No cleat is necessary if the trap can be set on a small platform or shelf from which it can be moved for servicing (and stolen more readily, also) but a brick or similar weight should be used to counteract the wind.
14. Paint or stain the interior and exterior a dark color.

Trap location

1. Six to ten feet above ground level on utility pole, tree trunk, side of building, etc.
2. Visible from a wide area to attract starlings.
3. Away from areas of constant human activity.
4. Visible from home or office window so it can be checked easily. A spot of white paint on the sliding door is helpful.
5. Accessible with ladder.

Operation

Starlings are very quick and will escape if not handled carefully. You need two hands and a stable ladder; position the ladder so that the trap is not higher than chest level.

To remove a starling open the top of the trap and slide the other hand over the wire mesh. Then open the top layer of wire and slide the other hand over the exposed opening in the lower layer. Reach into the trap through the opening in the lower layer, using the other hand to help block the opening. Be careful not to bend the mechanism. Starlings do not bite or peck, but they certainly will try to avoid your hand.

Be absolutely certain that your bird is a starling. All other birds except House Sparrows are protected by federal and state law. You may occasionally catch other hole-nesting birds: chickadee, titmouse, House Wren, bluebird. If the trapped bird has a one inch long yellow bill, it's a starling. If it does not, release it. Some smaller birds will not survive a warm day in the trap, so it is important to position the trap where you can readily observe and service it. Close the trap during any period when it cannot be checked at least once a day. ■

PLANTINGS FOR BLUEBIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Virginia Creeper

Karen Blackburn

The Virginia Creeper, or Woodbine, is a native vine capable of climbing 30 to 50 feet, clinging to its support by means of tendrils. Each tendril is branched and bears five to twelve small adhesive discs which allow the vine to cling to virtually any surface. This characteristic is often useful in the landscape, and Virginia Creepers, with their eye-catching scarlet fall foliage, have long been cultivated as ornamentals. The vines grow rapidly and will quickly cover trellises, stone or brick walls and buildings, or eyesores such as stumps and piles of brush.

In the East, Virginia Creeper has established itself as one of the most common vines of the countryside. Because it is so common and because it bears compound leaves, Virginia Creeper is sometimes confused with Poison Ivy which often occurs as a climbing vine. Adding to the confusion is the fact that both species share the same habitat preferences and may frequently be found growing side by side. It is not difficult, however, to distinguish between the two species since Virginia Creeper bears leaflets in groups of five while Poison Ivy's leaflets are borne in groups of three. In any case, both species provide winter food for wildlife and should be preserved whenever possible.

Virginia Creeper produces grape-like clusters of fruit which ripen in autumn. If not immediately consumed by wildlife, the fruit remains on the vine throughout the winter months. The small blue berries are an important source of fall and winter food for wildlife, and dozens of species of birds, including both the Eastern and Mountain Bluebirds, are known to feed on them.



Virginia Creeper
(*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

Native Range—From southwestern Quebec to Minnesota south to Florida and Mexico.

Hardiness—To Zone 4.

Habitat—Moist woods, thickets and clearings on many types of soil.

Habitat—A climbing or trailing deciduous vine bearing tendrils opposite the compound leaves. Each leaf contains five coarsely-toothed leaflets which radiate from the tip of a long leafstalk. Autumn leaf color is vivid scarlet.

Fruit and Flowers—Small greenish flowers bloom in clusters from June to August. Clusters of dark blue, $\frac{1}{4}$ " berries ripen in fall and often remain on the vine through the winter.

Landscape Value—Highly attractive ornamental vine with brilliant fall color. Useful as a wall cover or for trellises, fences, and other supports. The Soil Conservation Service recommends Virginia Creeper for stabilizing coastal dunes as well as for use on sandy inland areas. The vines may be allowed to ramble as a groundcover, but this reduces wildlife value in the North where snow will make the fruit unavailable. Growth rate is rapid once plants are established.

Culture—Adapted to many soil types including low-fertility sandy soils. Excellent drought tolerance. Plant in sun or light shade. The trailing vines often reproduce naturally by layering (rooting wherever the stem comes in contact with the soil), and this is perhaps the easiest and most reliable method of propagating Virginia Creeper. Hardwood cuttings may also be used, or seeds may be collected and sown in autumn.

Sources—Virginia Creepers often spring up around bird feeders, fence rows, gardens and other areas frequented by birds. These young vines may be moved to a more desirable location. Nurseries which specialize in native plants usually offer Virginia Creeper.

Wildlife Value—Nearly 40 species of birds feed on the berries of Virginia Creeper. The fruits are a preferred food of the Pileated and Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, Wood Thrush, Eastern and Mountain Bluebird, Red-eyed Vireo, Fox Sparrow, and the Yellow-rumped and Bay-breasted Warbler. Several birds with mainly insectivorous diets, such as the Eastern Kingbird, Great Crested Flycatcher and Tree Swallow, also use the berries.

Similar Species—Poison Ivy often
(Continued on page 24)

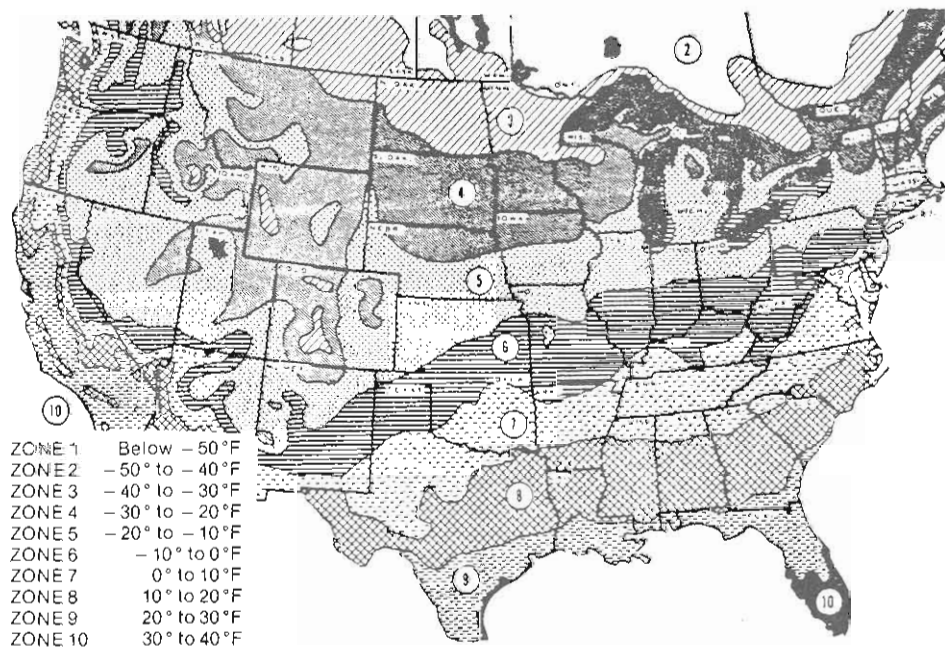


Figure 1. Hardiness Zones for the United States and southern Canada. Temperatures for each zone are the average annual minimum temperatures. When no zones are mentioned with the plant description, plants are hardy anywhere. If a zone is given, it indicates that plants are hardy within the zone and in 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.

They're Bringing Back the Bluebirds in Michigan

The Dahlem Environmental Education Center is spreading the bluebird word in Michigan. The Center's "Bring Back the Bluebirds" project stresses community involvement. Over 600 youth and adults in Jackson County have responded to the call.

In the past two years over 600 nesting boxes have been constructed and installed throughout the county. In 1984 their efforts resulted in 43 nestings from which 154 young bluebirds were raised. In 1985 that figure increased almost 60% to 244.

The Dahlem Center has recruited support for the project from a broad segment of the community. Funds and materials have come from private individuals, local businesses, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Non-game Species Fund. To add their official support, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners de-

clared the Eastern Bluebird the official county songbird.

Volunteers represent a cross section of the population as well. Senior citizens volunteered to cut out nesting box components and package them into easily assembled kits. Youth groups, including Boy and Girl Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts, and 4-H members assembled, painted, and installed them.

Each participating youth group was visited by a Dahlem Center staff member or volunteer who presented an audio-visual program explaining the project and supervised the assembly process.

Private individuals with suitable habitat gave permission for the groups to install and monitor nesting boxes on their land. Monitoring efforts were shared by Dahlem staff, adult volunteers and the participating youth



Cub Scouts along with an adult leader assembling a nesting box kit

groups. This year 130 of the young bluebirds were banded thanks to Harold Wing, a master bird bander from the Jackson Chapter of the Michigan Audubon Society.

Word of the project spread, and requests for bluebird information began coming into the Dahlem Center from all over the state. As a result an additional 1,500 individuals from out-



Brownie Scouts and adult leaders putting up a nesting box.



A young bluebird which has been banded and is ready to be returned to the nest.

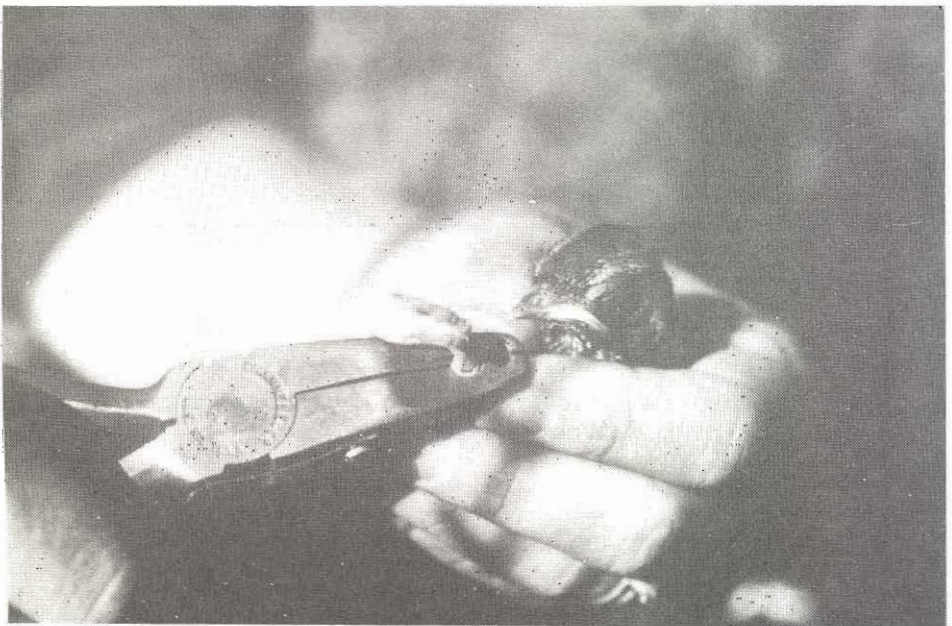
side the county participated this year and succeeded in raising an additional 360 young bluebirds.

The value of the project, according to Dahlem Center Director, Tom Hodgson, goes beyond the benefit to the Eastern Bluebird. "Nothing develops awareness and concern for wildlife more than personal involvement. The Eastern Bluebird, unlike most threatened species, can be helped by the direct involvement of thousands of people throughout Michigan and the nation. For many it is the first time they participated in an effort to help a wildlife species."

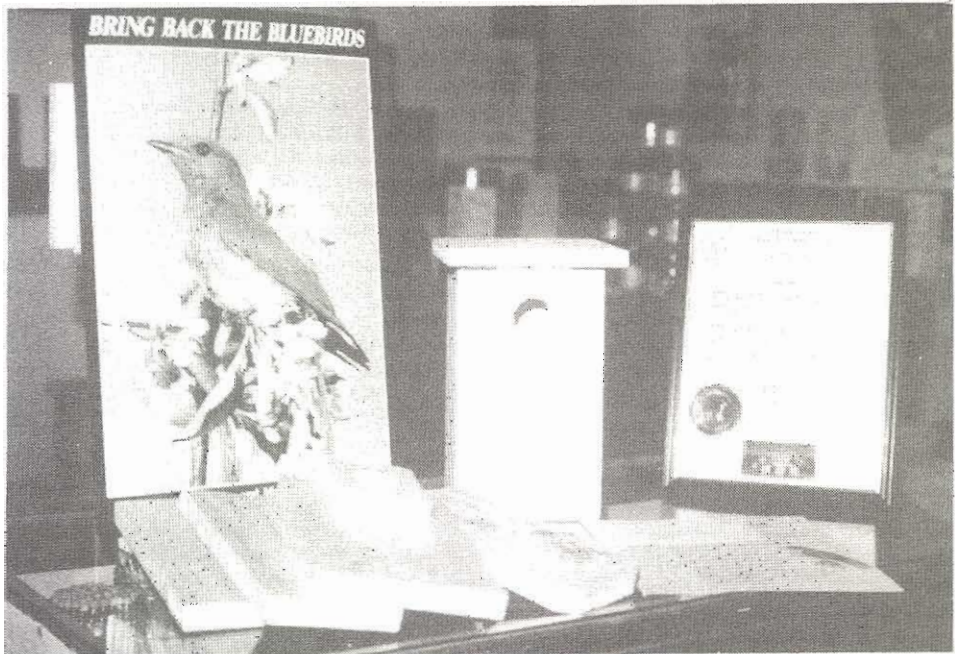
Today a child watches in awe as a flash of blue enters the nesting box he or she built, or holds with delight a warm, soft nestling waiting to be banded. Tomorrow that youngster may write the laws, donate the funds, or conduct the research that will save countless other endangered species or threatened ecosystems. Thus, the bluebird of happiness may return far more than it receives. ■

Second Annual Bluebird Festival, Jackson, Michigan, March 8-9, 1986

The John and Mary Dahlem Environmental Education Center is sponsoring the Second Annual Bluebird Festival and Wildlife Art Show. The event will be held March 8 and 9 in the Field House and adjacent lecture halls on the Jackson Community Campus in Jackson, Michigan. The festival will run from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Saturday and 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Guest speakers from a four state area will discuss the Eastern Bluebird, Common Loon, Peregrine Falcon, Trumpeter Swan, the Michigan dune ecosystem, rehabilitation of injured wildlife, and the Michigan Breeding Bird Atlas. Some of Michigan's best known wildlife artists will be displaying and selling their work. Admission fee. Proceeds support the "Bring Back the Bluebirds" program at the Dahlem Environmental Education Center. For more information, write the Dahlem Environmental Education Center, 7117 S. Jackson Rd., Jackson, MI 49201 or call 1-517-787-0806, Ext. 197.



One of the 130 young bluebirds banded as part of the "Bring Back the Bluebirds" project in Jackson County, Michigan.



Some of the items that are for sale at the bluebird festival are shown including a poster, nesting box kit, and completed nesting box. Also pictured on the counter is a copy of the free bluebird management information and field record card. On the far right is a framed copy of the Jackson County Board of Commissioner's declaration designating the Eastern Bluebird as the official county songbird.

(PLANTINGS—Continued from page 19)

occurs as a vine and may then be confused with Virginia Creeper. Virginia Creeper can be readily identified by its compound leaves composed of five leaflets as opposed to the leaves of

Poison Ivy which have only three leaflets. The fruits of Poison Ivy are white. ■

Rt. 3, Box 213
Marianna, FL 32446

North American Bluebird Society Ninth Annual Meeting

October 24-26, 1986

**Western Hills Guest Ranch, Sequoyah State Park
Wagoner, Oklahoma**

Informative Sessions, Annual Meeting, Field Trips

For information write:

Charlotte Jernigan
Route 2, Box 404A
Wagoner, OK 74467

In early February 1985, Lillian Files, a past president of the North American Bluebird Society, sent a letter to former president Jimmy Carter. She had read that he was interested in bluebirds and had put up nesting boxes on his farm, so she wrote to inquire if he had had any success in attracting bluebirds.



JIMMY CARTER

February 18, 1985

To Lil Files

Thank you for your very nice letter. Rosalynn and I have put up bluebird nesting boxes in our yard and have had some success with them. We share your appreciation for this beautiful bird.

I am glad to know of our mutual respect for the work of Henry Thoreau. Your closing quote is also one of my favorites, and I appreciate your thoughtfulness in sharing it with me.

With thanks and best wishes,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmy Carter".

Lillian Lund Files
Scribner Hill
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts 01879

“They Aren’t Little People With Feathers”

Mary Zoller

July 21st brought the first nest building pair to the bark covered bird house we hung by the breakfast room window. The opening faced south, and the asphalt shingle roof overhang was punched with venting slots to the inside. It was a good six and a half feet from the ground in a pine tree at the edge of our wooded lot. It looked like a wise choice to me. The Eastern Bluebirds who claimed it seemed very pleased.

I shared my house purchase enthusiasm with my birding teacher. He was patient with us novices who were ecstatic over being able to tell a bluebird from a Blue Jay. He reminded me, however, that the house choice should have been made for the birds’ preferences, not mine. He grimaced at the bark exterior being referred to as “cute.” Ornithologists are like that; all expertise and no sentiment.

Two days passed with little building activity, but by the 25th the efforts were feverish. No wonder; by the 27th, Harriet was incubating. Ozzie was good to her bringing an occasional grasshopper and other yard delicacies.

Ozzie brought a juvenile over to see the arrangement on the 4th of August. I presumed it was a female. The young visitor sat on the roof and peered in the hole to see the nest and eggs. Ozzie sat on the perch outside and vocalized. Although these are human interpretations of what went on, it appeared to be a father/daughter chat on the facts of life. Dr. Mc-

Camey was quick to remind me that they aren’t little people with feathers, but I’m not at all sure. They appear to think, have feelings, and to conduct their lives with something more than instinct.

Harriet had the appearance of a young female herself; she still had a spotted breast and a few fluffy feathers. She took good care of her nest through the August heat and terrible thunderstorms.

Several days elapsed without a sign of Ozzie during my usual dinner hour viewing. August 10th arrived and, behold, both Ozzie and Harriet were making trips into and out of the house. Both were bringing insects on the 11th.

Dr. McCamey played along and inquired how David and Rickie were doing. Those serious birders can have a sense of humor if they put their minds to it.

Other juveniles, presumably from another brood, were visible in the trees around the yard. We witnessed one really tricky landing maneuver on the lot marker—only one foot took hold, and the new flyer spun around.

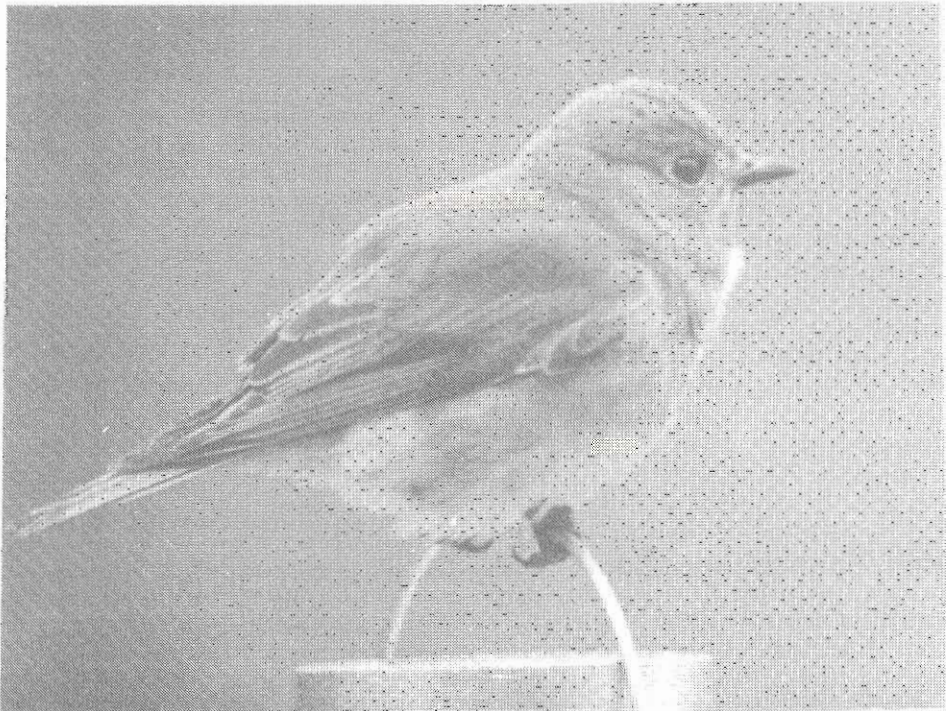
August 18th two pairs of beaks were visible. Both parents busied themselves providing food, and taking out debris. August 19th two tiny faces peered out the hole. Their gaping mouths were plainly visible. August 21st three nestlings were evident. David and Rickie had a sibling. Late afternoon feedings were running four to thirteen minutes apart.

The southeast was having a record heat wave: temperatures in the high 90's reaching into the 100's in the Atlanta area with high humidity as well. August 22nd was another record hot day. The nestlings sat with their mouths open for long periods. Sometimes they just rested their beaks on the hole edge with their eyes closed. Definite stripes on their tiny throats were now visible as well as a fluffy feather here and there. Most visible was a huge two-tone orange mouth with a yellow outline around the beak.

By August 23rd they were gaining strength and growing rapidly. Each nestling's head was about half the height of the hole. Their eyes were bright and moved around a lot. They seemed very curious about the outside sur-

roundings. They thrust their heads out of the hole. There was a lot of thrashing around in the nest and vying for position at the hole. Harriet made probably eight of every ten food trips and did virtually all of the debris removal. The heat wave continued with afternoon temperatures over 100°. Even at 4:00 a.m. it was 75°.

At 9:33 a.m., August 24th, David, largest of the nestlings, maneuvered his entire body into the hole, and with toes tightly gripping the edge, looked like he was about to become a fledgling. By 11 a.m. he had practiced this feat three times. Both Ozzie and Harriet appeared to be coaxing him out. Ozzie sat on the roof of the house and leaned toward the hole with an insect in his beak. Harriet sat on the perch in front of the house with



Photographs by Mary F. Zoller

Female Eastern Bluebird perched atop feeder.

an insect. This phenomenon took place four times as I watched. When this coaxing didn't fledge the nestling, the food delivery continued at its normal rate.

Two speckle-chested juveniles arrived and sat on either side of the house roof and peered in the hole. I thought they might aid in coaxing out the three nestlings, but when Harriet returned, she chased them away. Perhaps they were looking for an easy meal. One stayed on an overhead branch for a good 15 minutes. The other explored the nearby fence. Later, both moved down to the pokeberry bush. These two looked slender, not chunky and awkward like last year's juveniles.

At 7:25 p.m. on August 24th, David sat in the hole for a half hour or so, toes gripping and fluffy body halfway out. Then he either got slightly braver or was shoved by a nestmate, at any rate, he ventured too far and got his wing stuck outside the hole when he tried to retreat back inside. Harriet was there in no time and actually hovered by the hole. The two speckled juveniles re-appeared and sat on each side of the roof (to lend moral support?). It wasn't long before Ozzie arrived with much vocalization. Little David looked scared to death. His right wing was stuck so that the joint was outside the hole above his head. After six minutes of panic, he fluttered and squirmed and got himself back into the nest. The farthest he ventured out after that was to rest his chin on the lower edge of the hole. Ozzie tried one more time to feed the young from the roof following the near tragedy, and gave up.

At 9:30 a.m. on the 25th no activity was visible for a very long

time. I thought maybe they'd flown, but they must have been napping. By 11:00 a.m. feverish feeding resumed, often from the roof position.

Not much observing time was available on the 26th, but at 5:00 p.m. feeding was in progress at a quick pace. By 7:55 a.m. on August 27th the nestlings had flown. We could hear them though in the woods behind our house, and wondered if they'd stay close to their home.

It was pouring rain at 10:00 p.m. on September 1st when my husband, Al, found one of the newly-fledged young bluebirds tucked safely under the left side of our front porch roof on a little ledge. Two days later, two of the fledglings were nestled together on the corner of the porch roof. They returned each night during the spell of heavy rain. We lovingly referred to them as a "bird ball" as it was difficult to tell if there were one, two or three small bodies huddled together.

Al put a piece of board across the ledges at the corner on September 6th to see if they might like a wider bunk area. They approved highly, and used it regularly. They slept soundly; the dog running on the porch didn't phase them, nor did the porch light or a flashlight. They used the porch for night safety off and on through October.

October 29th three juvenile Eastern Bluebirds, two female and one male, with speckled chests explored the bird house. Could they be the same three who nested there? One came out with debris. Was she housecleaning before migration? Several times today a young female ate seed as she sat on top of the Yankee Droll feeder. That was a deviation in diet.



Male Eastern Bluebird at Zolier's nesting box.

Even as late as the end of December that brilliant blue of the male Eastern Bluebird could be seen streaking across the yard. A squirrel landed on top of the bird house and a startled male bluebird came out of the hole and vehemently scolded him. The bird hovered in front of the house and further vocalized his protest of the intrusion. He then retreated to the top of the feeder. I would have thought that he would have headed farther south for the winter. Temperatures had been in the teens for a week

with 36 mph winds on December 29th. We'd had snow the 27th.

February 16th two male Eastern Bluebirds and one female squabbled in front of, over, and around the bird house. An interested pair scouted the house on the 19th, too. With all this interest in home-making, I went out and got two more houses. For the moment, everyone's happy and spring isn't far off. ■

545 Woodline Court
Roswell, GA 30076

(MARTINS—Continued from page 13)

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- U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service,
Lloyd 500 Building, Suite 1692
500 N.E. Multnomah St.
Portland, OR 97232

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.

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.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Although we attempt to adhere to announced publication dates for *Sialia*, occasional variation is inevitable. Volunteers may not always be available in sufficient numbers to complete mailing on the 15th of the month, while bulk mail delivery is unpredictable. Please do not notify headquarters of failure to receive an issue until at least one month after the scheduled publication date.

Bluebird Boosters

Bluebird Boosters is a special fund-raising effort to help defray the increasing costs of printing and mailing *Sialia*. Membership dues have not increased since the founding of NABS in 1978 while costs have risen steadily.

Every member of NABS is a bluebird booster; however, a complete issue would be required to print 5,000 names, so the inside back cover of each issue of *Sialia* will be reserved to print the names of those who make a special financial commitment over and above their annual dues.

Here is the way you may have your name entered in *Sialia* as a special *Bluebird Booster*. For a donation of \$25.00 per issue or \$75.00 per four issues, your name will be listed as an *Eastern, Western, or Mountain Bluebird Booster*. Please designate your choice. For a donation of \$15.00 per issue or \$50.00 for four issues, your name will be listed as a *Fledgling Booster*. For a donation of \$10.00 per issue or \$25.00 per four issues, your name will be listed as a *Nestling Booster*.

All donations are tax-deductible, of course. As a bonus, you will receive five (5) free decals for a \$25.00 gift, three (3) for a \$15.00 gift, and two (2) free decals for \$10.00. The *Booster* list for the Spring issue will be prepared by 25 February 1986. Subsequent lists will be prepared by the 15th of the month in which *Sialia* is published (January, April, July, October).

Make checks payable to NABS and mail today to NABS Boosters, P.O. Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906-0295.

Foiling House Sparrows

The following ideas have been suggested as methods to discourage House Sparrows from using bluebird nest boxes. It must be kept in mind that sparrows are considered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be an imported alien bird species. Their population has increased in such numbers throughout the North American continent that they have had a negative impact upon many native bird species, not just bluebirds. They are not protected by law, so may be dealt with as each person sees fit. It is more universally acceptable to repel or discourage sparrows, than to trap them and do them in. NABS has publicized many ways of dealing with them and has offered for sale the paperback book by Don Grussing, *How to Control House Sparrows*, published by Roseville [MN] Publishing House. NABS welcomes all ideas which seem to work in repelling House Sparrows, and wants reports on how these have worked for other bluebirders.

The following have recently been proposed:

1. Attach a windsock, 4 feet long, to nest box top.
2. Attach streamers to nest box top; this idea is reported to have a 50 percent success rate.
3. Attach aluminum foil streamers measuring approximately 5 inches by ½ inch with thumbtacks to the *inside* of the top of the box.
4. Paint the *inside* of the box white using exterior grade latex paint. *Never* put a perch on a nest box or roosting box as sparrows LOVE it!

If you devise a sparrow control method, please share it by sending it to *Sialia*—Sparrow Control, Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906-0295.

Let's keep the bluebirds flying!

Mary D. Janetatos
Executive Director

Thank You, Volunteers!

As the North American Bluebird Society marks the closing of its eighth year, signs abound that the bluebirds are on the increase almost everywhere in North America. Bluebirders all can breathe a prayer of thanksgiving. When NABS came on the scene in 1978, there were isolated individuals and some small groups actively engaged in bluebird conservation. Now, in the mid-eighties, it can be said that millions have read or heard of the plight of the bluebird, tens of thousands have put up nesting boxes, and thousands have supported NABS by joining the ranks of its members.

Speakers' Bureau volunteers give freely of their time showing the NABS slide program to audiences many times throughout the year. We hope all of these speakers will tell us of their efforts so that proper recognition can be given them. There are numerous trail operators who have taken these messages to heart. Where nesting boxes have been put out and monitored, bluebirds have flourished. In general, when the bluebird population is numerous, these lovely creatures have stimulated even more interest by those who see them, perhaps for the first time. When people see bluebirds, they are usually inspired to act in favor of preserving them. Very often, these people find NABS and are welcomed. So, THANK YOU, speakers and trail operators! Don't forget to keep in touch.

The Society serves the public, and is, in turn, served by a dedicated group of individuals who make up its past and present group of officers, board members, committee chairmen, and committee members. These individuals (whose names are listed on the inside front cover of each volume of *Sialia*) search for funding for research and education, guide the internal workings of the Society, and cope with attending far-flung meetings, all at little or no compensation to themselves. They also serve as focal eyes and ears of this international organization. Especially remarkable this past year has

been immediate past president Lillian Files, of Tyngsboro, MA, who promoted NABS by getting mention in the national newspaper *GRIT*, and recommended Founder Larry Zeleny for an award from the Sol Feinstein Foundation (results will be announced in Spring of '86). President Sadie Dorber, from Vestal, NY, uses her good offices to obtain much recognition for the Society in New York State, where the official state bird is the Eastern Bluebird. Sadie was also able to obtain some much-needed funding for the popular brochure, "Where Have All The Bluebirds Gone?" from the state's "Return a Gift to Wildlife" Fund. Recording Secretary Mark Raabe and his wife, Jean, devised and installed a beautiful display at Antietam National Battlefield in central Maryland. The display outlined their bluebird trail and showed the public why it is commonplace to see the beautiful bluebirds flying around the now-peaceful countryside where an historic battle took place many years ago. John Judy, environmental educator with the Tennessee Valley Authority, recently attended a convention of North American Environmental Educators and plans to educate its members regarding bluebird and other native cavity nester



Executive Director Mary Janetatos and Founder Larry Zeleny.



Treasurer "Chuck" Dupree.



Office Assistant Sarah Funkhouser.

needs. Deni Hershberger generates much Mountain Bluebird interest in Montana. Ron Kingston maintains several bluebird trails and gives many talks both at his Springfield, VA, home and wherever he visits. Dave Pardoe provides a valuable link with National Wildlife Federation and chairs the Fund Development Committee. Fran Hanes of Utica, NY, has so stimulated the interest of the Upstate New York Bluebird Society in the Society's research program that the UNYBS made a \$1,000 donation to the NABS' Research Committee. This prestigious committee is chaired by a former board member, Tedd Gutzke, who is currently refuge manager of Deslacs National Wildlife Refuge in Kenmare, ND. Tedd has assembled a stellar group consisting of the following volunteer committee members: George Hurst, professor of environmental science at Mississippi State University and past NABS board member; T. David Pitts, professor of biology at the University of Tennessee at Martin; Bryan Shantz, biologist with Union Carbide in Red Deer, Alta., who is also Chairman of NABS' Education Committee, and David Wingate, Chief Conservation Officer in Bermuda, who is frequently featured nationally in environmental programs.

The Annual Meeting is always the work of volunteers, and this past year's smash hit was arranged by the following devoted members from Red Deer, Alberta: Myrna Pearman, Bryan and Hazel Shantz, Morris and Hazel Flewell-

ing, Michael and Jennifer O'Brien, Fred Schutz, Walter Lindley, Dr. Roger Smith, Ken Larson, Linda Gathercole, Jim Potter, Jim Robertson, Helen Harris, Marian Goldstrom, Dorothy and Sandy Murray, Glen Pearson, Joan Cummings, and Sheridale Pearman. The Red Deer River Naturalists and many others collaborated to make the July meeting a bluebird stampede!

NABS members who take the time to keep records of their nesting successes and problems and then turn them in by the requested deadline are also helping the Society. Besides using the data, we can use these records as a reference when inquiries come regarding bluebirds in certain areas.

Sialia Editor Jo Solem appreciates the continued outstanding assistance of special volunteers Art Editor Richard L. Woodward and "Plantings" author Karen Blackburn.

The day to day operations of the Society consist of sending out direct mail, answering a large number of requests for bluebird information, and filling orders for the books, nesting boxes and collectibles which are largely unavailable elsewhere. Four times a year, the weekly volunteers are joined by others who stuff the current *Sialia* and its inserts into envelopes for mailing.

Wally and Katie Knapp are the veteran volunteers of the weekly group. With unflinching good humor, these gentle folks assist in collecting and answering mountains of mail. Other



Volunteers, left to right starting at top of page. Row 1: Laurae Haye, Lessie Garrison, Florence Porter; Row 2: Harriet Shapiro, Wally Knapp, Mary Janetatos, Katie Knapp; Row 3: Larry Zeleny, Christina Connelly, Martha Chestem.



Volunteers Frances Ehlers and Marjorie Mountjoy.

long-time volunteers are Frances Ehlers and Marjorie Mountjoy who fill the orders. Marty Chestem, past vice president and board member, assists with orders when she is not on one of her cherished birding trips. Irene McCabe has been very helpful by coming in twice a week and by taking home and labelling thousands of brochures for bulk mailing. Also at home, Marie Battle has done many chores associated with advancing NABS membership. Vice President Tom and Corresponding Secretary Joe Tait handle much correspondence involving questions from the public. Charles and Alta Cook have helped out by preparing mail in the office and in their home.

Sarah and Edith Haviland work on list maintenance. Wilma Kress and Carol Sykora have pitched in periodically, and Carol's mother, Irene Stiebling also came in several times recently while visiting from Garden Grove, CA. Larry Zeleny has brought his next-door neighbor, 11 year old Christina Connolly, to stuff *Sialia*. Christina also accompanies Larry around his bluebird trail, and claims to be the organization's youngest office volunteer.

The "Stuffin' *Sialia*" group is made up of leader Florence Porter and her assistants from Leisure World: Harriet Shapiro, Lessie Garrison, Laurae Haye, Helen Tunstall, Lib Nelson, Mabel Whitney, Marian Livingston, May Bradford, Elizabeth Nelson, Mildred Benton, and Anna Kathryn Crook. Harold and Mildred Norwood and Elwood and Evelyn Fisher represent the Laurel (MD) area.

Larry Zeleny continues to maintain a voluminous correspondence as well as to monitor his bluebird trail of 65 nesting boxes every week. He and Olive know how to enjoy life in their golden years. Olive's beloved poodles are still being precision trained by her in obedience. In her own volunteering efforts, Olive takes her youngest poodle, "Flame," to nearby nursing homes and cheers up the patients there each week. Larry and Olive form inspiring models for the rest of us, who can, as Christina is learning, teach us how to help our fellow creatures, human and animal, on this beautiful Planet Earth. ■

Mary D. Janetatos
Executive Director

BLUEBIRD EXPRESS

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



Dear Editor:

In response to John Findlay's request for a source of aluminum numbers, I would suggest that, if he is unable to get the numbers, he stencil numbers on his boxes. I find it quite satisfactory and I'm sure much less expensive.

Charlene Collum reports difficulty with ants during the nesting season. I solved the ant problem around hummingbird and oriole feeders by spraying the feeder and limbs or tree trunks with the vegetable cooking spray "Pam." I should think it would work just as well for nesting boxes; it is easily available in grocery stores.

Ron Brown
Auburn, California

Dear Ron Brown:

Thanks for practical and novel solutions to some problems that plague our readers.

Dear Editor:

Sialia is full of letters from the East and Midwest, Montana and Canada. You may be interested in the news of a small beginning in southern California.

My husband and I have a cabin on an old homestead at 4,000 feet in a canyon in the San Gabriel Mountains north of Pasadena. The canyon is covered with dry chaparral along the sides, but a small stream flows in the bottom. For the past 20 years we have had a few pairs of Western Bluebirds nesting there in the old apple orchard.

This spring our birdwatching neighbor, Charles Foster, built six bluebird boxes and set them up on the high ground above the stream. Although there are many nearby trees with cavities, six pairs of bluebirds immediately moved into his boxes and raised families. After the bluebirds left, pairs of Ash-throated Flycatchers moved in and also raised broods.

Miriam Arozena
Arcadia, California

Dear Miriam Arozena:

Thanks for the report from southern California. We'd be delighted to print more letters from your part of the country. Are there more bluebirders in that area who would like to share their experiences?

Dear Editor:

Readers who were unable to persuade bluebirds to enter their starling-proof feeders (*Sialia* 7(3):91-95) during the autumn or early winter of 1985 should not despair. In February and March 1986, when the breeding season starts, bluebirds searching for nesting boxes will almost certainly enter your feeder. They will return again and again if it is well-stocked with "Miracle Meal."

(You might consider including a summary of Mrs. Harmon's recipe for the "Meal" again.)

Morris M. Green, Jr.
Walkersville, Maryland

Dear Morris M. Green, Jr:

Thanks for the clarification of the feeder's use by bluebirds. Mrs. Harmon's recipe for "Miracle Meal" in *Sialia* 6(4):135 consisted of one part flour to three parts yellow corn meal mixed in a large bowl with spoonfuls of lard (not shortening) until it forms firm balls. Peanut butter can be added or peanut hearts. Do NOT add bird seed.

The Winter 1985 issue of *Sialia* reported the accident suffered by Bermuda Bluebird Society President Tommy Outerbridge. His fall from a cliff while excavating nesting cavities for White-tailed Tropicbirds resulted in extensive paralysis. He has been hospitalized in England for well over a year. Executive Director Mary Janetos recently received the following letter from him.

Dear Mary:

Hi there! Hope things are OK with you.

I've only just managed to secure some money to send NABS and renew my membership. My memory is still abysmal, thus the delay.

However, feelings are starting to come back in my legs. My morale is good, and I've been given some encouraging reports about the growing numbers of bluebirds in Bermuda. The government has even featured the bluebird on the new issue of the one dollar stamp! This is unique and unheard of because the "bluey" was already on the five cent stamp. David Wingate must take a lot of credit for engineering this.

I wonder if you'll be able to send me the back-dated issues that I've missed out on? And convey my thanks to the NABS members who have written to me in the past. I'd love to hear from anybody in the future! I collect post-cards.

The weather has been terribly cold over here. I can't believe it's almost Christmas. I can't remember ever seeing summer. I will be here for the indefinite future: the time goes slowly....

I sit around wracking my brains trying to devise new methods of helping the "blueys," and trying to figure out new ways of exterminating sparrows. I've been thinking about how on earth I will be able to build boxes in the future, and I reckon it's gonna be school kids.

With Christmas coming, it's good to know

That when spring comes, the snow will go.

And with warmer weather soon will appear

The bright blue heralds of the bright new year.

Merry Christmas to you and everyone.

And happy go slappy, nip nap and flappy New Year!!!

All the very bestest, warmest wishes,
Tommy Outerbridge

The Chiltern Hospital, Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, England HP16 OEN

Dear Editor:

Is it possible that within the membership no one knows how to defeat snakes who want to predate nestling bluebirds? Can we poll them for suggestions? I've just had a failure with heavy crankcase grease on the support pole of the bluebird house.

J. William Oberman, M.D.
Washington, DC

Dear J. William Oberman:

To my knowledge the Society has not found an absolutely foolproof system to protect nesting boxes from snake predation. The method described in this issue by Richard Hoffmann looks promising; perhaps you'd care to try it and report your results.

Dear Executive Director:

Please include a note of thanks in *Sialia* to the kind bluebirding friends who recently sent me cards. I appreciate their thoughts. It was a pleasure to hear from them.

Meade Flinn
Alberta, Virginia

Bluebird Tales

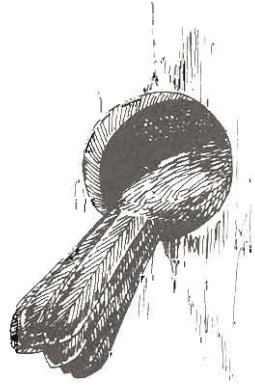
Mary D. Janetatos

Are you ready for spring? Are your nesting boxes clean and in place? As *Sialia* greets winter, are you seeing or longing to see bluebirds? That probably will depend on where you live in North America. **Gay Duncan**, NABS past board member of Southern Pines, NC, reports seeing dozens of bluebirds at her feeder, where they feast on dogwood berries and "Miracle Meal." Here, in the Washington, DC suburbs, bluebirds are scarce; however, I take great joy in the bluebird mail.

Mrs. Beatrice B. Thuma, Woodstock, VA, wrote last year, "Happiness to me is having bluebirds nesting on your property. We returned from our winter in Florida to the delight of seeing bluebirds in our box we had built." From **Jayne M. Rogers** we hear, "I would not believe the coincidence of this day. I was walking about our property today, checking on our apple and pear trees, and, as I approached the apples, I saw a flash of bright blue fly by. I had only seen a bluebird once before in my life, so you can imagine my delight when he flew to the nest box we had put in a wide open space beyond the apple trees. Then his mate flew to perch on top. I smiled all the way back to the house and announced to the family we had bluebirds. Then the mail came, with your letter. So here is my membership dues for the year."

Richard Avery of Ft. Covington, NY, says, "This spring I have discovered the beautiful bluebird. My father has built a couple of nesting boxes in his back yard and the birds have moved right in." From the same source, **Mrs. K.R. Tels** writes, "I had a pair [of bluebirds] nest on my patio in a coffee can I nailed up on the house sheltered from heavy winds and rains." Charter member **Siebert D. Meade** of Talbott, TN, reports both bluebirds and Purple Martins nesting on his property. **Terry Maddox** writes from Metairie, LA, in late spring of 1985, "Last week I successfully fledged my first hatch of young bluebirds, and I think it would be appropriate for me to join the NABS at this time. The Eastern Bluebird, endangered or extinct in many places, is actually quite common around here. I live in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, which is a semi-rural suburban area about 40 miles north of New Orleans."

If you've ever had a "problem" getting bluebird boxes built and erected, this note from **Mrs. Pat Hull**, of Fort Recovery, OH,



will strike a sympathetic chord, "Several years ago I sent for directions for building a bluebird nesting box. Also, for several years I've pointed these plans out to my husband....Recently I made the effort again and he mentioned, 'Why not order some already assembled?' Sounded like a very practical solution to my problem but realize the order form is several years old and prices have most likely changed. Would you please send me a new price list and my husband and I will be very happy!" **William Bryan Barton**, of Memphis, TN, explains how he got his grandchildren involved in providing nest boxes: "Not long ago my son and family visited us in Memphis from Statesboro, GA. The grandson and granddaughter helped build and design a bluebird nesting box. We followed the basic dimensions in *Terres' The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*. My daughter-in-law called a few nights ago and reported that before they could get the box in a tree bluebirds already claimed it while it sat on a deck post near the back door. What joy this has brought to all of us." The reverse happened in the case of **Betsy Rebeck**, of Sunbury, PA, who writes: "I am enclosing \$7.50 for membership for my young nephew **Shawn Ross** [of Paxino, PA]. Would it be possible for this to be a birthday gift, with your sending notice of this to him by December 9, 1985? This summer he gave me two houses he built and I had families in each one."

Charlie Craig, of Elkmont, AL, describes his decision to put up a nesting box after building three of them from NABS specifications. "...On Memorial Day, 1984, up it went, at four o'clock in the afternoon. To my very pleasant surprise (I was nearly in ecstasy) at 8 o'clock the next morning the bluebirds had already taken up residency, and I had to be the happiest guy in

Alabama." From Rockvale, TN, Scooter Longwell writes, "We enjoyed the piece in *Southern Living* about the Blue Robin. We have these birds on our farm and also name our farm the Blue Robin Farm." Lt. Col. Don Packard, assigned to HQ 4th U.S. Army on special assignment at Ft. McCoy, WI, would like to personally thank Carol Shirk, Pinckney, MI, for carrying on the demanding responsibilities of monitoring his bluebird trail named "Haycreek Bluebird Trail." And thanks to his wife Jan for monitoring his boxes and again tolerating his absence in the cause of keeping America free. One Thomas (Tait, NABS current vice president and past corresponding secretary) reports that another Thomas (White, of Gordon, GA) has become a super member. Mr. White has been educating many about bluebirds, including teachers all over Georgia.

There was much news from Ohio. Many students in Tom Barber's class in Kimbolton wrote including the following: Chris Warden, who reports that "the streamers (to repel House Sparrows) have been working"; Larry Durben, who says that he and his brothers got bluebirds in 4 out of 6 boxes; Dennis Calvert, who wants to join the Society because he wants the bluebird not to be "extinct" (sic); Donny Mosley, who also wants to join NABS; Eric McNutt, who recounts a familiar tale, "They [the nest boxes] have been broken into by English [House] Sparrows six times", and Ellie Metz, who writes that she has a lot of open area so she can help bluebirds. "Well done!" to Tom Barber for introducing his class to the adventure of helping bluebirds.

By phone I heard from Jim Gerle, of Newfield, NJ, who said that he had four nest boxes set out when he saw a bluebird. "I had never seen a bluebird. I almost flipped." John Morrison, of Red Lion, PA, described a similar reaction when he saw his first bluebird. Rod Botsal, of Columbia, MD, really flipped when rescuing the backyard bluebirds he and his wife Monika had tenderly fostered. Rod sprained his Achilles tendon when a cat or sparrows or something threatened the bluebirds.

Many bluebirders give slide programs, like the indefatigable Emil Klanchar and Al Goga of North Huntingdon, PA, and Phyllis Fegreus of Blairsville, GA. Others also give trail tours, as we did here last June ('85). After the tour Margaret Swartz of Fairfax, VA, wrote to Larry Zeleny: "Dear 'Bluebird' of Bluebirds: My Saturday tour of your bluebird trail was just what the doctor ordered for me and I enjoyed every minute....I could have looked at them a couple

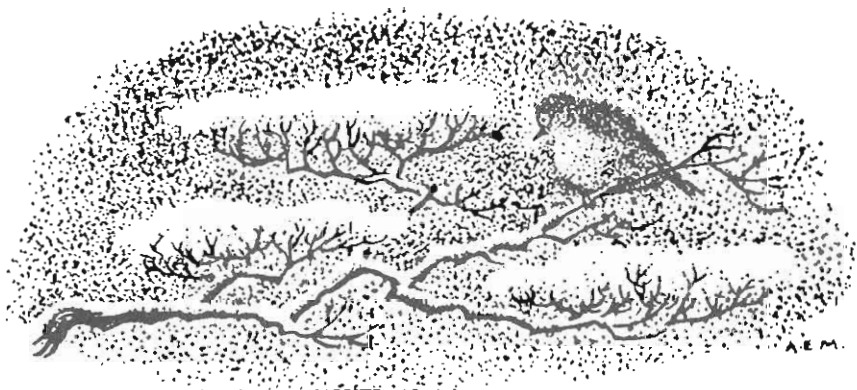
days longer if I had had the opportunity. After reading half your book the first evening, you and your group can add me to a hopeful fan of the beautiful birds...if I can spot the right spot for a nesting, I surely want to do so. Your expertise and enthusiasm on this lovely subject is overwhelming and I feel that a bluebird has actually landed on my shoulder. Thank you, for the wonderful Saturday."

In conclusion, we have a bit of comedy, a bit of mystery, and a touching story. Marlon Marlowe of Chatham, VA, tells us: "I have had up one little house for several years and they [bluebirds] were building every year. What everybody likes to see is the way they stay on my school bus mirrors. Just as soon as I park the bus they head for the mirrors. I took some pictures from the inside of the bus."

Now, all of you Ohioans, solve the mystery of the "Secret Mr. Bluebird," as described by Eleanor Brackinan, of Jackson, OH. She writes, "I have bluebirds in my yard, and so far have had three nests. I became interested last year and want to do all I can to save them. I work at Goodyear Atomic, Piketon, OH. One man here raised approximately 1,000 from the 1970's through this year on the plant site. They are beautiful here. He recently retired. Do you know about his work here?" (Really, we don't!)

And, finally, one of Ron Kingston's bluebird proteges, George Lumsden of Fairfax, VA, writes us: "I am an avid bluebird fan and have built...and distributed them [bluebird boxes] among my neighbors and relatives. It's a great joy to have these beautiful creatures around. I am disabled and occasionally spend right much time in bed....One day in February I filled the bedroom window [bird] feeder and forgot to close the window. The next day I was very sick and feeling sorry for myself when this little Carolina Chickadee with a deformed leg flew into the room. She (I believe it was a female) flew in through the window, investigated every shoe, nook and cranny, then sat on the foot of my bed. I whistled her song three times, each time she'd cock her head and look at me. After the third time, she went into her full song for at least a minute, then flew out the window....I hope to someday have the bluebird visit me. It is indeed an honor to be a member of NABS and I thoroughly enjoy *Sialia*...."

And to you, dear reader, I wish the same: May the bluebird visit you, and may you enjoy *Sialia*! ■



A BLUEBIRD SINGS HIS WINTER SONG

1

I KEEP ON THE GO
WHEN THE SLEET AND SNOW
ENCRUST MY ESTATE
AND ITS TEN BELOW.
I CAN'T FLY AWAY
TO A SUMMER DAY
FOR HERE I AM KING,
AND A KING MUST STAY
TO GUARD AND MAINTAIN
HIS INVIOLEATE REIGN,
AND FIGHT FOR HIS RIGHT
TO A BLEAK DOMAIN!

2

THE PANTRY IS BARE
IN MY KINGDOM WHERE
I REGALLY DINE
ON A PAUPER'S FARE
OF BERRIES I FIND
IN A PLACE ENVINED
RED MORSELS TO PRY
FROM A CRYSTAL BIND.
OLD SEED LEFT TO FEED
MY EXCUSABLE GREED
ARE MEAGERLY STRUNG
ON A SHRIVELED WEED

3

HOW COLD IS THE LIGHT
ON MY DAY'S-END FLIGHT!
AND HOW, NOT TO FREEZE
SHALL I STAY THE NIGHT!

4

I KEEP ON THE GO
WHEN THE SLEET AND SNOW
ENCRUST MY ESTATE
AND ITS TEN BELOW.

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ART CREDITS

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Suzanne Pennell Turner: 6, 24, 38
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Founded in 1978, THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY is an incorporated non-profit organization determined to increase the populations of the three species of bluebirds on this continent. Inasmuch as the populations of these birds have diminished due to the 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.

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