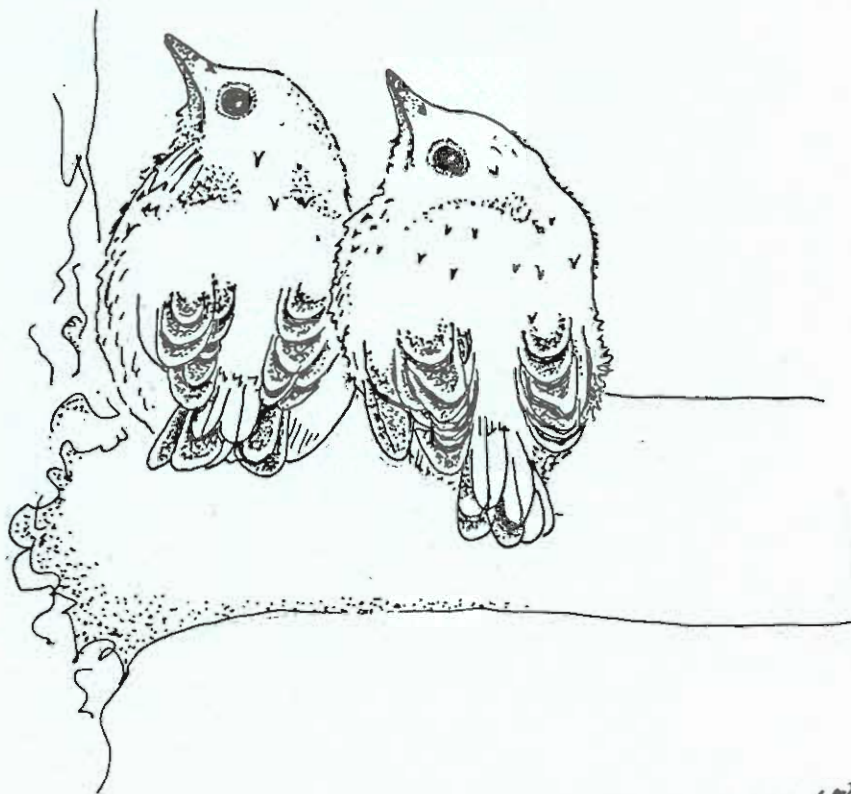


Sialia

Volume 9, Number 3
Summer 1987
Pages 81-120
Index

The Quarterly Journal
Of
The North American
Bluebird Society



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Sialia means bluebirds. Hence the title of this journal. Technically, *sialia* is the Latinized, neuter plural version of the Greek word *sialis*, a noun meaning a "kind of bird." Since the Eastern Bluebird was the first bluebird classified by Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), he gave it the species name *sialis*, though he placed it in the genus *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-ahl'-ee-ah see'-ahl-iss). Similarly, the Western Bluebird and Mountain Bluebird, the two other species within the genus, were named *Sialia mexicana* and *Sialia currucoides* (coo-roo-coy-dees) respectively. Their species names are descriptive of their locations. All three bluebird species are native only to the North American continent, although each inhabits different regions generally separated by the Rocky Mountains and by altitudinal preferences.

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

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Sialia

The Quarterly Journal
About Bluebirds

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EDITOR
Joanne K. Solem
**CONTRIBUTING
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COVER

The fledgling bluebirds on the cover are the work of Elizabeth Wingate.

Sialia welcomes original articles, art and photographs for publication. Although this journal is named for the bluebird, material relating to all native cavity nesting species will be considered. Manuscripts should be typed neatly and double-spaced. All material submitted is subject to editing or rewriting. Submit the original manuscript plus a duplicate copy if you wish to proof the material before publication. If the article has been submitted elsewhere (or previously published) that fact must be stated at the time of submission. All manuscripts will be acknowledged. Black and white glossy photographs are preferred. Print the subject, names of individuals pictured, photographer and return address on the back of each photograph. Art is welcome and should be in black pen-and-ink. We do not assume responsibility for manuscripts, photographs or art submitted. The editor's address is 10617 Graeloch Road, Laurel, Maryland 20707.

Presidential Points

Sadie Dorber

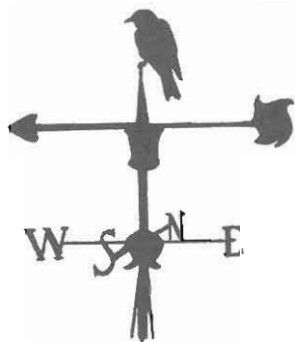
It was billed as the Third Annual Bluebird Festival, 7-8 March, at the Dahlem Environmental Education Center in Jackson, Michigan. Perhaps bluebird mania could also have been used to describe the event. I had been invited as a speaker and also would man the NABS booth.

Sheriff Hank Zavislak was to meet me upon my arrival at Detroit. Since we'd never met before, Tom Hodgson, Director of Dahlem, had arranged for each of us to wear the official pin of the festival, so that we could find each other. Tom had also mentioned in a couple of phone conversations, that he could arrange to have me handcuffed as I departed the plane, so I really wasn't sure exactly what to expect. The sheriff and his two sons were wearing their pins, so we had no trouble finding each other and no, I didn't get handcuffed.

We were also meeting Danny Olson, Professor Avian Guano, and another one of the speakers for the weekend. Fog had delayed his flight so the four of us spent the time strolling through the airport and visiting. Since the sheriff's family are birders, we didn't lack for anything to talk about.

I was to be the house guest of Dr. John and Terri McLaughlin for the weekend and my hosts were patiently awaiting my arrival to go to dinner. After a leisurely dinner we stopped at Jackson Community College where the events of the weekend would be held. The entire field house had been transformed by the many booths of educational, non-profit organizations and nature-oriented artists. The back corner of the field house was stacked with mountains of pieces of wood for bluebird boxes which would be assembled the next day by anyone interested in learning how to build boxes.

Saturday arrived as a beautiful, warm day which I'm sure helped bring out the 3,500 people in attendance. The crowd could take a leisurely stroll through the field house to observe the many displays or attend the many presentations being offered. These covered many topics: Kirtland's Warbler, Sandhill Crane, grebes, wolves, moose and, naturally, bluebirds. Dick Tuttle of Ohio showed the NABS slide show and after each show found himself surrounded by a crowd. Many of the questions came from new bluebirders and



others sought Dick's advice on problems.

The lovely, balmy day not only brought out many people, but also brought the return of the bluebirds. One of the nature walks sighted a bluebird perched near a box and the word quickly spread through the crowd.

The field house was a virtual beehive of activity as people viewed the exhibits, took guided walks, or constructed their first bluebird house. With the constant tap, tap all day long, I was happy to be located on the opposite end of the field house from the box builders. By Sunday afternoon, the supplies for boxes had been completely exhausted.

Sunday's activities weren't scheduled to start until noon which gave me the opportunity to spend the morning looking for a Sandhill Crane. Dr. McLaughlin had suggested we visit the sanctuary where a few returning cranes had been sighted. As we left the car and started down the trail, we could hear the cranes calling. The scope was soon in place and I was thrilled to see my first Sandhill. During the morning, I was able to see several more as they flew over or came in to feed.

With my return to New York, it was time to get down to the serious business of cleaning boxes and getting more trails started. In early February, I had accompanied Anna Troy and Connie Hart, both Broome County Park Naturalists, to Hawkins Pond Nature Area. Hawkins Pond is a remote county park that is being developed for wildlife. We had spent the day on snowshoes laying out the trail with stakes so that posts could be put in as soon as the snow cover was gone. While laying out the trail, we had the opportunity to brush up on our animal tracking knowledge.

In March, the three of us again returned to Hawkins Pond with 30 sixth grade students from Fred Plaumann's woodshop

(Continued on page 116)

Experimenting with Raccoon Guards

Joseph R. Sedlacek

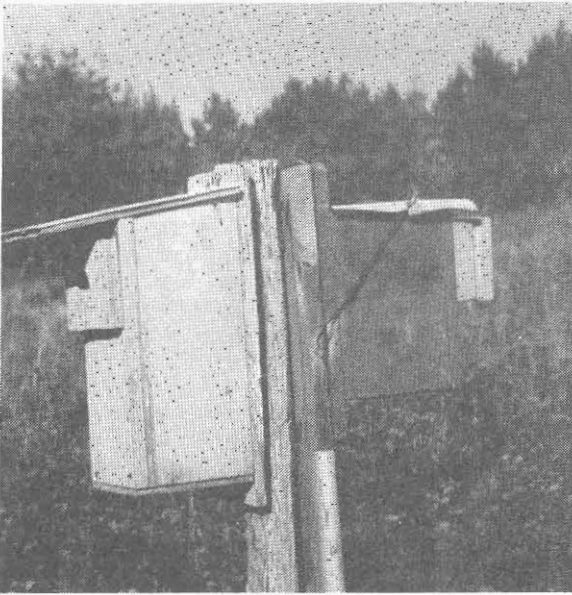
Learning experiences go on year after year on the bluebird trail. In years past I have had problems with raccoon predation. Metal conical guards attached under bluebird boxes reduce predation, but I find this expensive and time consuming when having to monitor more than 180 nest boxes. I make all my nesting boxes out of scrap lumber so they vary in width, length, and depth. I attach a raccoon guard to each which is a block of wood with a 1 1/2 inch [3.8 cm] hole cut to fit over the entrance hole of the nesting box. The thickness of these guards varies from 3/4 of an inch to 1 inch [1.9-2.54 cm]. This makes the depth of the entrance hole anywhere from 1 3/4 inches [4.45 cm] to no more than 2 1/4 inches [5.72 cm].

In 1985, I decided to try using two raccoon guards on all 20 boxes on one of my trails. Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows attempted to nest last year, but every box was vandalized by raccoons. Bluebirds came back to the area but would not nest in a box with a double guard. Shortly after the Tree Swallows returned, along with the House Wrens, they occupied the double-guard boxes without hesitation. House Sparrows will use them, too, but don't let them. I removed a guard from some choice boxes and a bluebird pair returned to nest only once, unsuccessfully. A predator such as a snake or weasel stole the young from the undisturbed nest. Nesting material disturbed in the box and sticking out the entrance hole usually means raccoon predation. Another idea I had was soon implemented on one of my other nest box trails. When bluebirds had eggs or young in a nest box with a single guard, I would carefully attach another guard. My main concern then was whether the pair would re-enter through the double guard. It sometimes took them 10 minutes to inspect the situation, but they would always enter the box.

Most satisfying was the fact that no raccoon predation took place in the double-guard boxes. If you should try this technique, please be sure that the bluebirds will re-enter the box because all pairs react in different ways.

In 1986, four pairs of bluebirds proved this by nesting or attempting to nest in boxes with double raccoon guards. Single guard boxes and pairs of nesting boxes (one with a single guard and the other with a double guard) were set up in the same area. Pairing of nesting boxes allows only one pair of Tree Swallows to nest in one of the paired boxes while leaving the other one open for bluebirds. I try to put the extra guard on the side that the Tree Swallows take and wait for the bluebirds to have eggs or young before deciding what to do. Single nest box number 13 with a double raccoon guard measuring just under 2 1/2 inches in depth produced four fledgling bluebirds. This pair went to a single guard paired nest box set for their second brood producing three fledglings. At the other end of this trail, I captured and banded a female bluebird brooding three eggs in single nest box number 6 with a double guard (depth measuring 2 7/8 inches) [7.3 cm] on 26 July. The return trip on 9 August showed no eggs or young in an empty, undisturbed nest.

On another nest box trail, the third pair of bluebirds made a complete nest with no eggs laid in double nest box no. 21 on 18 June. The depth of this entrance hole measured just under 2 3/4 inches [6.99 cm]. On 19 July, the nest was still empty with the pair of bluebirds staying around the nest site. On 9 August, I cleaned out this nest after not seeing the pair around. The fourth pair of bluebirds was trying to decide if they were going to nest in the single guard side (double box no. 55) or the double guard side (double box no. 56) of a pair of back to back nesting boxes.



Double nesting box number 55 (left) has a single raccoon guard while number 56 (right) has a double guard.



Photographs by Joseph R. Sedlacek

Double box number 56 with two guards which totaled $2 \frac{11}{16}$ inches [6.83 cm].

On 3 May, one egg was laid in double box no. 55. This nest was very tall so I removed some of the nesting material. Double box no. 56 had the double guard with a depth of 2 11/16 inches [6.83 cm] and contained a bluebird nest with no eggs. I returned on 26 May to capture and band the female brooding five eggs in double box no. 55. Closer inspection of the nest revealed that a new nest of five eggs had been built on top of five uncracked, spoiled eggs. I removed the five bad eggs and a little of the nesting material. I cleaned out the unused nest in double box no. 56 and carefully removed the extra guard and placed it on double box no. 55. The depth of this opening was changed from 1 1/2 inches [3.8 cm] to 2 1/4 inches [5.72 cm] but watching from a distance showed the pair entering without too much hesitation. Nearing this site on 14 June, I was amazed to see a female bluebird fly out of double box no. 56. I inspected this box finding a new nest with four eggs, thus making this her third brood. Examining double box no. 55 proved to be another misfortune with two whole eggs and some cracked ones remaining in the disturbed nest. I heard a House Wren in a nearby thicket, assumed it was the culprit, and cleaned out the messed-up

nest. Since there was no sign of raccoon predation on the entire trail, I decided to leave the single guard in place on double box no. 56. Returning on 28 June, the female popped out of double box no. 56 with the young begging for more food. I quickly banded the four healthy-looking offspring which were about 12-14 days old and returned them to their nest. Again, I felt the best decision was to leave the nest boxes without changing the guards. Double box no. 55 contained nothing on this visit. Almost a month went by before arriving in the nest area on 26 July. I spotted the pair and four fledgling bluebirds searching for food. Double box no. 56 was cleaned of the flat, used nest while double box no. 55 remained empty.

It was a good feeling to see this family of bluebirds and know that actions must sometimes be taken on the bluebird trail in hopes of having greater success. A lot of time and effort has been spent on this project producing good results. Better results should follow in the years to come when more experimenting will take place. ■

226 Myrtle Ave.
Johnson City, NY 13790

The Oblique Vent

Harold S. Pollock

For drier nest boxes try using oblique air vents. These are circular holes drilled at an upward angle of about 45° to the side surface instead of the usual 90°.

To drill an oblique hole in a side piece, clamp it to a bit of scrap wood and to the top of the work bench with the bottom of the side parallel to the front edge of the bench. With a suitable drill bit in the drill chuck (I use a 3/8 inch [9.5 cm] bit) start the drill perpendicular to the surface. As soon as it begins to bite into the wood, lower the drill so that it points toward the top and makes an angle of about 45° to the surface, then complete the hole. When the box is assembled and sitting on its base, the holes are inclined upward from outside to inside with sufficient slope to exclude moisture under all normal wet weather conditions.

To save time, stack several (up to six) right-hand side pieces on top of one another. Each top edge should be set back a distance equal to the side thickness. Clamp to the piece of scrap and to the bench top. Then drill

through the sides in one operation. Repeat for an equal number of left-hand side pieces.

Oblique vents may be used with any type of nest box and, because roof overhang is no longer required, they may be drilled in the back of the box as well as in the sides without fear of water ingress. The number of holes to use will depend on local average summer temperatures, but two or three 3/8 inch [.95 cm] holes per side should be sufficient. Note that air streams entering the box are directed toward the roof and so subject the nestlings to less draft than otherwise would be the case.

While oblique holes take a little longer to drill, the end result should be well worth the extra effort. ■

104-225 Belleville St.
Victoria, B.C. V8V 4T9

Adopt a Highway Program



In Texas we have a program called "Adopt a Highway." All organizations that are approved by the Texas State Highway Department are responsible for a twice yearly cleanup along a portion of a highway. Between the two signs which indicate the 2.4 miles adopted by the North American Bluebird Society, I have placed 15 bluebird nesting boxes along the fencerow adjacent to the road.

On 25 April 1987 all across the entire state people will participate in the annual Texas Trash-Off. On this day about 10 people from this area will be supplied with orange safety vests, trash bags, and trucks provided by the highway department to pick up the filled trash bags that volunteers have set along the road from their assigned areas. Statewide media coverage will record this activity; we hope the North American Bluebird Society will be included in the reporting. —Harry Krueger ■

Route 2, Box OR28
Ore City, TX 75683

Albinistic Eastern Bluebird

Rob Tucher

In the middle of the summer of 1986 I observed and photographed a phenomenon that has been recorded in scientific literature fewer than 30 times in the last 200 years. John Trott, an accomplished natural history photographer and resident naturalist at the Madeira School in Greenway, Virginia, suggested that I fly down to the area where he grew up to attempt to get some photographs of an unexpected quirk of nature. John gave me the names, places, times and other information that I would need which left nothing for me to do but to make flight reservations. I flew to Charlotte, North Carolina, and drove out to a place near the community of Red Cross to be shown a rare albinistic Eastern Bluebird by its discoverers, James and Anabel Speight.

I was thrilled to see such a rarity and to have the chance to make some pretty unusual photographs. The bird, at first sight, had the ever-so-typical stance of a bluebird. Everything in silhouette said "Eastern Bluebird" but two obvious characteristics kept my brain from routinely checking off one more bluebird. This bird, whose species comes by its name in a more obvious and appropriate manner than most, had startlingly white plumage and eyes like shimmering red marbles.

James and Anabel Speight and their two sons have spent a lot of time outdoors in the central part of southern North Carolina, but such a white bird was a first for them. Naturally, they were puzzled at first when they saw a white bird on 18 May 1986. Was it an escaped canary or something similar? Their confusion was eased when they saw this albino being fed by the local pair of Eastern Bluebirds. Consultation with Mrs. Elizabeth Clarkson of Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary in Charlotte revealed that it was, indeed, an Eastern Bluebird with a recessive characteristic known as albinism. Many species can display albinism including crows, deer and even people,



Photographs by Rob Tucher

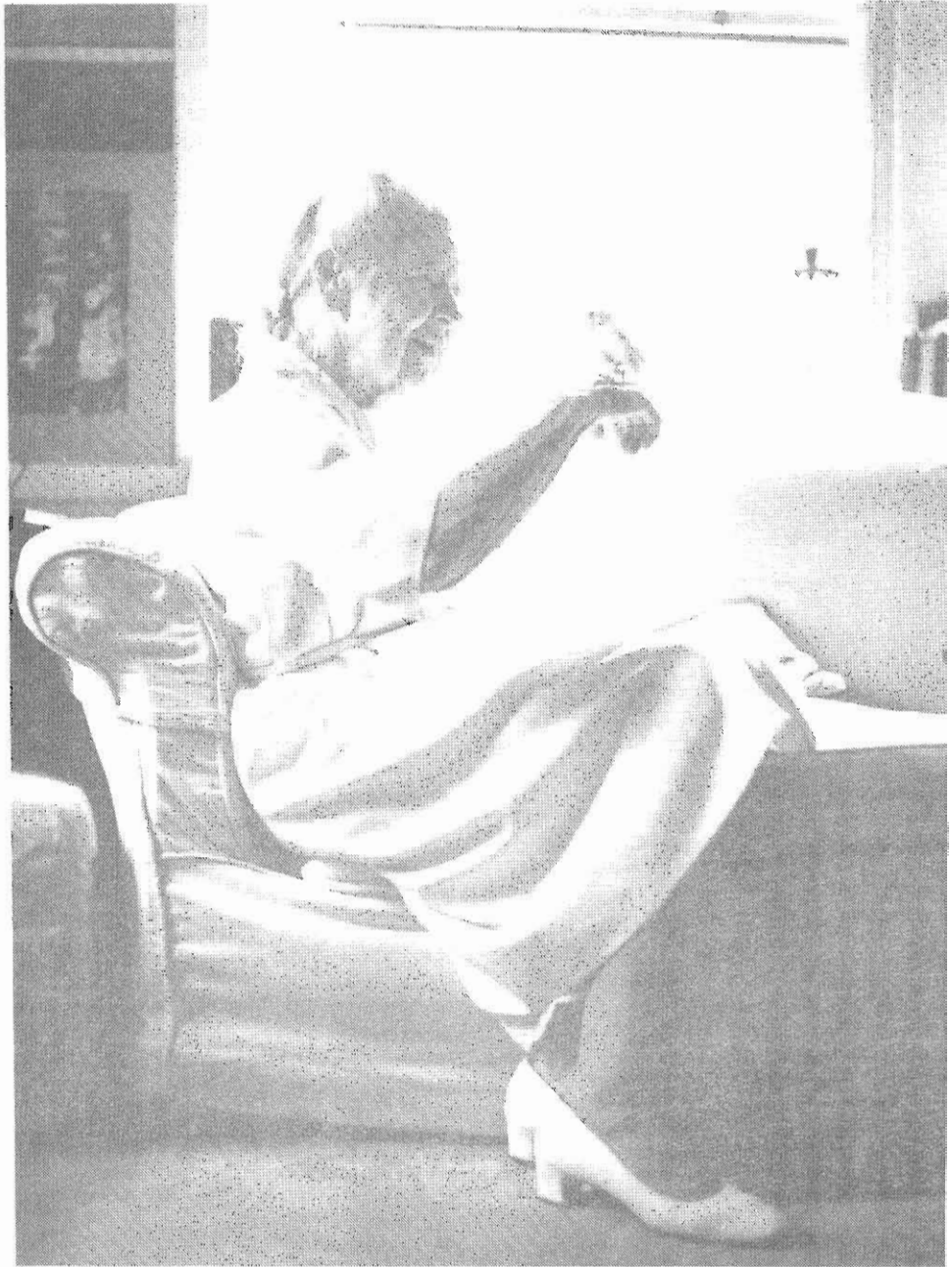
The albinistic bluebird which fledged from James and Anabel Speight's box, Oakboro, North Carolina.

yet the frequency of occurrence varies from species to species and it is considered rare in bluebirds.

Nobody knows what happened to this albino. It disappeared that very same day. Albinos seem to have less chance for survival because of other traits that seem to accompany the albino genes—poor eyesight is the most common. They are also much more visible to predators and can be regarded as "untouchables" by others of their kind. The albinistic bluebird disappeared largely unappreciated but miraculously, on 13 July, James Speight saw *another* albino in the bluebird nest box from which the first had fledged. It shared the box with its two normal siblings.

This second albino fledged on 18 July after its two nest mates had already left. A week later I was in North Carolina meeting the Speights for the first time, enjoying their generous hospitality, and photographing a rare phenomenon that will live in my mind for a long time. ■

Table Rock Farm
Eagle Valley Road
Sloatsburg, NY 10974



Mrs. Elizabeth Clarkson of Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary, Charlotte, North Carolina, holding the albinistic Eastern Bluebird recently fledged from the Speight's box.

SIALIA SAVORS SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Joyce Duncan

I have never heard or read anything about bluebirds eating sunflower seeds, but my bluebirds do. And they relish them! I use the shelled meats on my feeders.

In May 1985, I saw a male bluebird on one of the backyard feeders. He appeared to be eating the seeds, but I paid scant attention until I saw him a second time, again apparently eating. Curious, I checked the feeder to see if it was infested with bugs. There were no insects of any kind. At his next visit to the feeder I was ready with binoculars. I verified that he was, indeed, eating the sunflower seeds. But why? Insects are plentiful on our farm and we have hundreds of berry-producing shrubs, trees, vines, and weeds.

This bird was, at the time, caring for five fledglings from the first brood while his mate was busy with a second nesting. I could only surmise that he was tired from his family responsibilities and was looking for an easy meal.

I decided to put more appropriate food on the feeder to help him out. I placed measured amounts of raisins, cornbread, and chopped peanuts on the feeder. He ignored these and continued to eat the sunflower seeds.

In time, his fledglings descended from the treetops and joined their father at the feeder. He stuffed sunflower meats in their gaping mouths and they begged for more. When the youngsters eventually became independent, they continued to visit the feeder frequently and gulp a few seeds on their own.

The habit persisted; through fall and winter several bluebirds

were eating regularly at the feeders. In the summer of 1986, at least two of our four pairs of nesting bluebirds were regularly using the feeders.

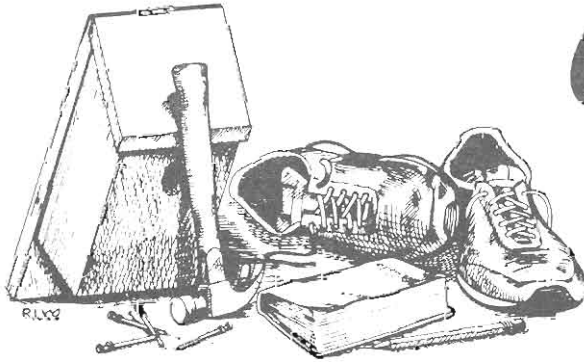
This past winter has shown a remarkable increase in feeder use by the bluebirds. Every bluebird on the place seems to be feeding on the sunflower seeds. They chase the cardinals and other birds off without hesitation.

I would like to hear from any other individuals that may have had a similar experience or that have witnessed bluebirds eating sunflower meats, so that I may tally the results and report it to this publication. This could open new doors for bluebirds struggling to survive a harsh winter in more northern climates. I would urge readers who feed bluebirds to mix sunflower meats with your berries, raisins, or whatever to get them to acquire a taste for them. ■

148 Hwy. 247 Spur
Kathleen, GA 31047

NABS to Mark Tenth Year

To mark the North American Bluebird Society's tenth year, we are considering reprinting, in one or several issues, some of the most helpful/significant articles from our first decade. We would appreciate suggestions from our readers. Send a postcard to Editor J.K. Solem, 10617 Grae Loch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707, listing no more than five articles from *Sialia* you would choose to have included. ■



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 Graefloch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707.

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA—The North Carolina Bluebird Society is now in its second year with 304 members statewide. The organization publishes a newsletter, they have prepared an informational brochure, and they co-sponsored a workshop with a state agency. The autumn newsletter listed the first statewide nesting results which were 1831 bluebirds fledged from 597 boxes. For more information, write to N.C.B.S., P.O. Box 4191, Greensboro, NC 27404.

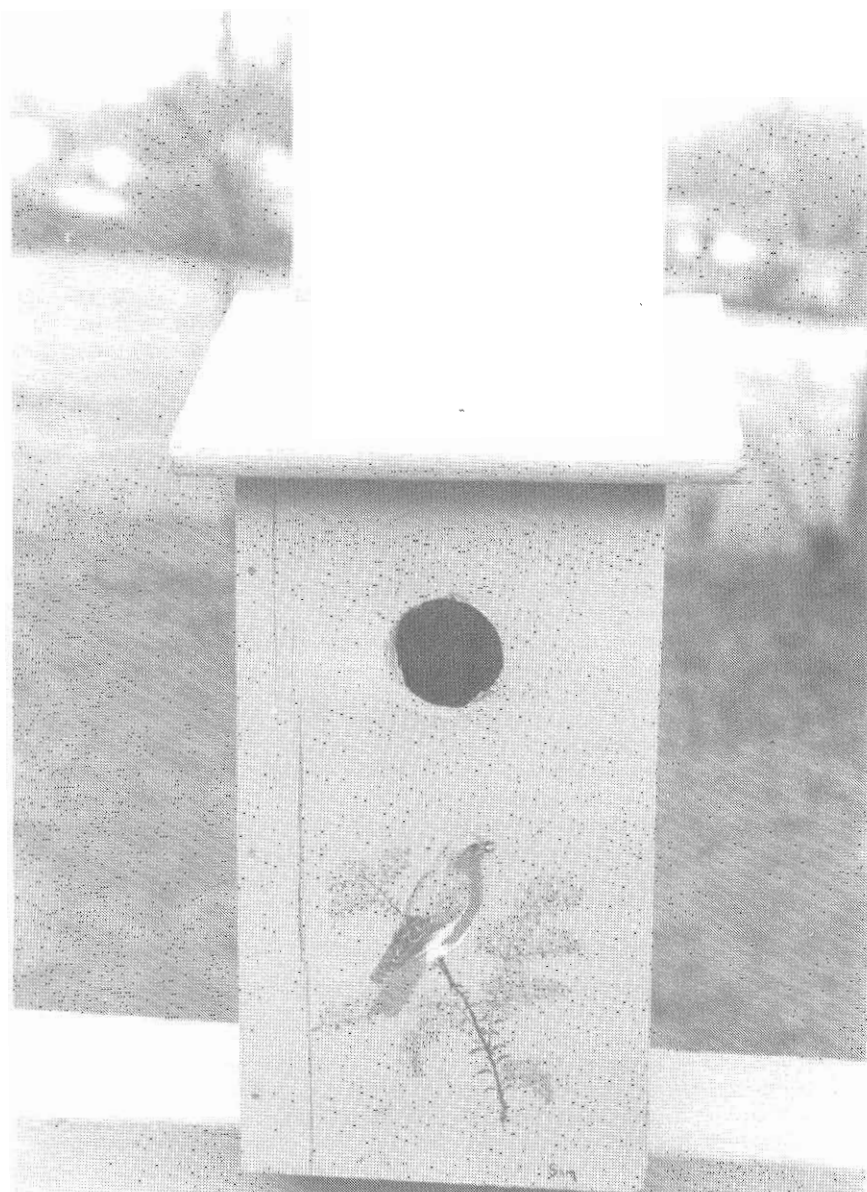
RED DEER, ALBERTA—The Kerry Wood Nature Centre staff at Waskasoo Park has coordinated an "Adopt-A-Nest Box Trail" program with several local Scout and Guide groups. Boxes for this urban nest box trail were constructed by a local Scout troop. They have all been "adopted" and are now being monitored regularly. Box occupants are Tree Swallows and House Wrens.

HOT SPRINGS VALLEY, ARKANSAS—A donation was made to NABS by the Hot Springs Valley Audubon Society to honor member Wayne Tice for the fine work he has done as Bluebird Committee Chairman for the group.

CARE, MICHIGAN—The 55 boxes on Harry Clark's trail in Tuscola County produced 67 bluebirds in 1986 which was comparable to his 1985 results. Sixteen boxes were used by House Wrens and 12 by Tree Swallows.

INVERMERE, BRITISH COLUMBIA—Jon Bjorgan, 16, has been aiding the bluebirds since the age of 9. His trail of boxes and the knowledge he has gained became the basis for a science fair project in which he won the overall Aggregate for East Kootenay over 437 other exhibits. This enabled him to compete in the Canadian National Science Fair in Calgary. NABS awarded him a Certificate of Appreciation for his work.

AUGUSTA COUNTY, VIRGINIA—Thanks to the unflagging efforts of Col. John Kiser and numerous cooperators, the Augusta Bird Club can document an increase in bluebirds in their area. The 1968 Christmas Bird Count tallied three bluebirds; 1936 hit an all-time high with 144. Recently, the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas Project confirmed bluebirds in 13 of the 15 quadrangles in the county (two are mountainous which would not be prime bluebird habitat). In 1986, 64 monitors reported 1,249 bluebirds fledged from 401 boxes. A local lumber mill donates lumber, Col. Kiser provides hardware and constructs the boxes. They are sold for a nominal \$5.00 with the proceeds enabling some youngsters to attend nature camp. Over 1000 boxes have been distributed, but a major problem is getting people to monitor them and report the results. Each autumn, Kiser contacts over 200 people for their nesting results. ■



Photograph by The Andrews Journal photographer

Sam Jones of Andrews, North Carolina, makes and decorates with oil paintings bluebird nesting boxes before giving them away. He has made and painted over a hundred boxes in the last few years using a variety of flowering plants along with the Eastern Bluebird although he finds the dogwood blossoms seem to be the most popular. Besides being a NABS member, Jones has been attending meetings in the local community for the "Bird Brains," a group formed to build and place nesting boxes and feeders in the town to call attention to Andrews being named a bird sanctuary. Of his decorated boxes he notes, "I don't imagine that it makes any difference to the birds, but the bird enthusiasts seem to like them."

Female Bluebird Competition For Nesting Boxes

Jewel and Frank Chaplin

We have bluebird nest boxes on the north and south sides of our house which are about 150 feet apart. The house is in the middle of a one and a half acre yard with scattered gum, pine and maple trees and is surrounded by dense mixed woods. Over the years we have observed that the bluebirds keep their young in the yard for a few hours after fledging and then they take them back into the woods for protection and feeding. The adults return to the yard in ten to fifteen days with the young following a few days later. The south box has been in place for about eight years and has consistently produced two to three broods of Eastern Bluebirds each nesting season. The north box was added a year later as an alternate choice or as a site for nesting by other birds such as Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees.

In late March of 1986 a Carolina Chickadee occupied the north box at the same time that an Eastern Bluebird occupied the south one. Both successfully fledged broods, the chickadee on 2 May and the bluebird on 9 May. Following the usual pattern, the bluebirds disappeared on 9 May.

Presumably a different pair of bluebirds (we do not band and cannot identify individual birds) started building a nest in the north box on 18 May. When the box had one egg on the 23rd, Jewel witnessed something we had not seen before. In mid-afternoon a female bluebird attacked the female occupying the north box. They flew at one another pecking and beating each other with their wings. This went on until they both became exhausted at which point they would flop down on the ground and rest for a few minutes before renewing their struggle. All the while a lone male watched the proceedings, but made no move to interfere. The contest went on with rest periods for about 15 minutes when the combatants flew up on our roof and

continued the struggle. The male followed but sat and watched from a distance. After another 10 or 15 minutes all three flew to a clump of trees and disappeared from view. Late the same day a bluebird appeared at the south box. The nest in the north box was deserted and no dead bird was ever found.

On the following day, 24 May, a pair of bluebirds started a nest in the south box. They fledged four young on 2 July. Then, right on schedule, another bluebird couple started a nest in the north box on the following day, the 3rd. Thus at no time were there simultaneous nests in the two boxes, but one nest followed the other in rapid succession. (See tabulation.)

Bluebird Nesting Schedule

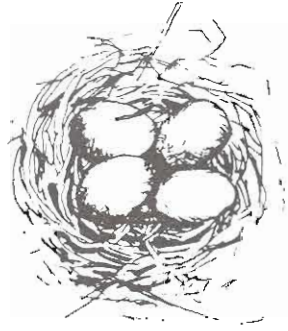
North Box	South Box
	Built 27 March Fledged 9 May
Built 18 May Evicted 23 May	
	Built 24 May Fledged 2 July
Built 3 July Fledged 8 August	

We are familiar with and have often witnessed territorial wars, sometimes preceding nesting by as much as a month, in which the female bluebird frequently plays an important part. We had never before witnessed an eviction from an established nest by another female. We surmise that the female, returning from tending her young in the woods, was enraged to find that her territory had been infringed upon by an interloper and proceeded to set the matter right. ■

Rt. 2, Box 290-A
Blounts Creek, NC

QUESTION CORNER

Lawrence Zeleny



All I get in my two boxes are House Wrens. If the wrens get in first, will the bluebirds just stay away? Do the houses have to be cleaned or do the birds take care of that?

Robert A. Lenox
Coloney, New Jersey

In your area bluebirds usually start to nest about the middle of April, while House Wrens start two or three weeks later. This gives the bluebirds some advantage in the competition for nesting sites. Even so, the wrens will often interfere seriously with the bluebirds by puncturing their eggs and causing them to desert their nests. Bluebirds are rarely able to evict wrens, once the wrens have taken possession of a nesting box.

The best solution to the wren problem is to mount bluebird boxes in open areas as far as possible from shrubbery and underbrush.

We recommend that all nests be removed from nesting boxes and the boxes cleaned as soon as possible after the young birds have left their nests.

One fellow in our area reported two nests of bluebirds lost to ants last season. He tried several things with little success. Any helpful suggestions would be appreciated.

Lorne Smith
Ontario, Canada

Ants in a nesting box are readily killed with a pyrethrin spray. This, of course, is a potentially hazardous procedure when there are eggs or nestlings in the box. If it should be necessary to spray under such circumstances, the eggs or nestlings should be carefully removed before the nest is sprayed and then replaced as soon as the fumes from the spray have dissipated.

Ants can usually be kept out of a nesting box by applying a narrow band of Tree Tanglefoot® or similar products to the post supporting the box. These are sticky substances intended for use in bands around the trunks of trees to keep down destructive crawling insects of various kinds.

The flying squirrels have taken over all my bird houses. What should I do?
Mrs. Harold C. Glass
Vienna, Virginia

Flying squirrels can usually be kept out of nesting boxes by mounting the boxes at least six feet above the ground on smooth metal poles and far enough from trees to prevent the squirrels from "flying" to them. If the poles are not quite smooth, it may be necessary to use predator guards on them.

SUMMER OF MY BLUEBIRDS

Mary Reeves

About five years ago we moved into a lake community outside of Eaton, Ohio, near the Indiana border. We had not seen bluebirds since we had been stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, some 13 years ago. We were pleasantly surprised to spot them in the cove where we were building our new home.

My husband put up an old bird house given to us by a neighbor and we were overjoyed when a pair of bluebirds moved right in and started a family. Only two birds fledged and after cleaning out their nest, the pair again started to build and laid three eggs. We were broken-hearted when House Sparrows moved in and destroyed the eggs.

Several springs were to pass before we had another pair looking over our neighborhood. My husband had built and distributed about 50 boxes and a bluebird trail was started here in Lakengren in conjunction with the local garden club.

Around 10 July we noticed a pair of bluebirds checking out our boxes and finally settling for the same location as the previous pair, just 10 feet outside our back deck. They started to bring in nesting materials and five days later we found two beautiful blue eggs nestled in the bottom. Two days later there were four eggs and the female was sitting on the nest. The weather grew very hot and humid with temperatures up around 100 degrees. We could see that the female's beak was open in an attempt to stay cool. It was very touching to see the male bird bringing her food and standing guard in the tree nearby. They were very protective of their nest and had to fight off the sparrows many times.

We checked the box around 30 July and found that the eggs had hatched; the adults were now busy feeding the nestlings and removing

fecal sacs. I kept a diary of the events that took place and really kept my eyes open for any predators.

We didn't want to bother the nestlings as they got older; around the middle of August we noticed their little heads poking out the entrance hole. The parents would land in the tree directly opposite the box with food in their beaks and we could actually hear them talking to the babies. They seemed to be coaxing them out of the box. We figured it was time to fledge and patiently waited for them to solo. The first fledgling finally put his head all the way through the hole and flew directly to the roof where the father was perched. Baby bluebird number two was finally coaxed out. He flew to the ground and then to the tree where the mother sat. Bluebird number three was the largest and he took off non-stop for the trees behind our house. We waited for some time for number four to come out but he was taking his time. He must have made it because when we checked the box it was empty. We had witnessed something unusual and wonderful. I will always call it the "Summer of My Bluebirds." ■

199 Plunder Cove
Eaton, Ohio 45320

WANTED: Back Issues of *Sialia*

Many new members and libraries desire complete sets of back issues which we are unable to supply. The following issues are needed: Volume 1:1,2; Volume 3:2 and Volume 4:2. Mail these back issues to headquarters and claim a \$2.50 tax deduction for each.

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

CANADIAN NESTING BOX REPORT 1986

Calgary Area Bluebird Trails

Calgary area bluebird trails passed the 1000 nest box mark in 1986 with more than 1043 boxes on 485 miles of line which fledged more than 1875 Mountain Bluebirds and at least 2215 Tree Swallows.

The highlight of 1986 was, undoubtedly, the major snowstorm of 14 May. The storm provided sufficient moisture for the remainder of the season, a contrast from the last two years which were dry. It did cause a decrease, however, in the number of bluebirds for the year, particularly second broods. All monitors reported a decrease in second broods and some had none at all. Ray Woods provided some hatching date statistics for 6 June to show that the storm delayed the season for the bluebirds on his trails. By 6 June, 1984, eggs in 89% of

nests had hatched; in 1985 eggs in 57% of nests had hatched and in 1986, 3% (one nest). Blake Stillings reported "about 8% second broods, rather than the 25% I had come to expect."

Often, in seasons when the number of bluebird nests is down, the number of Tree Swallow nests goes up. This was definitely not true for 1986 as Tree Swallow production was down even more than bluebirds (-5% for number of bluebird nests and -13% for number of Tree Swallow nests).

George Blundun reported three cases of squirrels getting into his boxes. Zoltan Gulyas suggested that putting tacks around the edge of the hole would prevent the squirrels from enlarging the hole and getting into the box.



Photograph by Kay Morck

Kay Morck's backyard after the Calgary area snowstorm of 14 May 1986.

Blake Stillings reported a case where deer mice had built a nest over the top of a bluebird nest. He removed the mouse nest; later, the bluebirds returned to fledge two young.

The first male bluebird reported in the area in 1986 was not only seen but photographed by Jean McCullough on 11 March on her Longview Trail.

Blake Stillings reported *nine* bluebird young in box number 42 of his Westbrook Loop. He found the pair very tame and no other adults in the vicinity so he is quite convinced that they were the pair that fledged the nine. His previous high was eight. When he first observed the nest with nine eggs, Tree Swallows were nearby so he set up a second box for them, but they did not use it.

Occasionally, one hears of female bluebirds fighting. Kay Morck observed two Mountain Bluebird females engaged in battle which she described as follows:

On the way home from my third check on 19 May, I parked opposite the "Wing Guard" box in which there were seven bluebird eggs—the same number that had been there on 12 May. Two pairs of bluebirds were flying about. While sitting in the car, I noticed that the two females had engaged in a furious duel, apparently over the nest in that box. It was the battle of the bluebirds: in the air above the shrubbery, between the branches and down onto the ground where one pinned the other down by the scruff of the neck. The fight went on for some time with much fluttering until the final episode in which the persistent and dominant female held the other one down on the ground in the grass for a considerable time. Finally, the fluttering ceased and one of them flew away.

The victorious female then flew back and forth to the box and claimed it by going in, but not before being intercepted by the male several times. He did not appear to accept her which

made me think that she was not the original female in that box. She continued flying back and forth to the box and entering it in no way giving up her efforts to possess it in spite of the male. She even followed him when he made several wide circles over the adjacent fields. He, too, went into the box and, when he did so, she went in after him—he came out in a hurry.

The next time I went out on 6 June there were not seven eggs but only five and on 16 June five young had hatched. By 23 June the five young were fully feathered and ready to fly. When I removed the nest 7 July, I found two added eggs beneath the nesting material.

Kay also had late Tree Swallows nesting. She found two fully feathered young in one of her boxes on 20 August.

Don Stiles reported a case on his East Didsbury Trail where one nest had five Tree Swallow eggs and three bluebird eggs. Tree Swallows raised all eight young.

The paired boxes that Blake Stillings and Don Stiles monitor continued to be used at a pace similar to the last two years. Stillings had 14 cases and Stiles 8 in which bluebirds nested in one box and Tree Swallows in the other; they each had a single box used by bluebirds while Stillings also had four used by Tree Swallows only, one with swallows in both and one in which swallows and wrens shared the pairing. Of the pairs where bluebirds and swallows were present, both monitors found all the bluebird nests to be successful.

Don Stiles and Ray Woods banded 434 Mountain Bluebirds and 289 Tree Swallows. George Loades' totals were 234 and 394. Twelve bluebirds and 14 swallows were recaptured. A highlight was the recapture of a Tree Swallow, banded as an adult by Woods in 1983, and recaptured each year since. This bird has always been within one mile of its banding site.

This report was compiled by Donald J. Stiles.

Seventh Annual Mountain Bluebird Trail Report Lethbridge, Alberta

Table 1. Occupancy of Nesting Boxes on the Mountain Bluebird Trail, Lethbridge, Alberta, 1986.

Nesting boxes available	1976
Boxes used by bluebirds	580
Bluebird eggs laid	3119
Bluebirds fledged	2649
Bluebird nestlings banded	1727
Bluebird adults banded	101
Sterile eggs	322
Tree Swallow nests	444*
Tree Swallow eggs	1791*
Tree Swallows fledged	758*
Wren nests	31
Mountain Chickadee nests	1
Mountain Chickadees fledged	10
Total number of boxes used	1093

* estimated

Forty-four monitors helped collect the 1986 data. A record high of 37 band recoveries dating back to 1982 clearly provided evidence of bluebird territoriality. Six monitors have their own permits to band and we hope more will qualify in the near future.

Bluebirds arrived in the Lethbridge area on the record early date of 27 February. For the second year in a row, second broods were exceptionally scarce. Broods of seven were few, but we did have five clutches of eight, four of which successfully fledged eight birds.

Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, along with Fish and Wildlife, for the sixth year contributed to our trail expenses. We are grateful for their support which enables us to cover a wider area than would otherwise be possible.

This report was compiled by Duncan Mackintosh.

Manitoba

J.B. Thomas of Hartney, Mani-

toba, reported that his 150 nesting boxes fledged 217 Eastern Bluebirds, 110 Mountain Bluebirds and more than 350 Tree Swallows. Hazel A. Bowie of Souris reported a total of 49 boxes from which 152 Mountain Bluebirds fledged along with some Tree Swallows and House Wrens. Mrs. T.H. Dillon of Hamiota listed three boxes of 22 occupied by Mountain Bluebirds for 16 fledged while 19 boxes were occupied by Tree Swallows.

Saskatchewan

The only report received from Saskatchewan was that of Mary I. Houston of Saskatoon whose 216 boxes fledged 397 of which most were Mountain Bluebirds; however, two nestings of Eastern Bluebirds produced nine birds. Thirty-nine boxes were used 49 times by Mountain Bluebirds with 18 double nestings. Five boxes were used by Tree Swallows and then by Mountain Bluebirds; the reverse was true in a single instance. Tree Swallows nested in 130 boxes.

Ontario

The only report from this province was incomplete, but L.A. Smith had 170 young bluebirds in his boxes in early June. A major problem he suffered was with cold, wet weather in May and June. By 3 June he had counted 69 dead nestlings. Some deaths might have been due to blowflies, but the majority he felt were weather related.

20 Lake Wapta Rise SE, Calgary, Alberta T2J 2M9 (Stiles); 1719 - 9th Ave. So., Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 1W4 (Mackintosh); Hartney, Manitoba R0M 0X0 (Thomas); 128 Daphne Ave., Souris, Manitoba (Bowie); Box 39, Hamiota, Manitoba R0M 0T0 (Dillon); 863

University Dr., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0J8 (Houston); 65 Sympatica Crescent, Apt. 408, Brantford, Ontario N3P 1M7 (Smith).

Attention Canadian Trail Monitors: Reports may be mailed to the Editor, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707 not later than 15 April 1988. Survey forms which are filed with the Bluebird Research Committee are included in this compilation. Outside the Prairie Provinces we receive few reports; the total for all provinces is minimal for this kind of tabulation. There is no way of indicating trends based on so few returns. Duncan J. Mackintosh and Donald J. Stiles (both of Alberta) are to be thanked for the major task they complete in compiling for their respective areas of Lethbridge and Calgary. ■

Note Concerning Mealworms

This is written in response to Frances Hanes' "Worms to the Rescue," *Sialia* 8(4):142. Here, near Corvallis, Oregon, several property owners have been feeding mealworms to Western Bluebirds for up to eight years—some year-round, others only during the nesting season or during prolonged cold, rainy weather.

To cut the cost, we find it much less expensive to order from a wholesale "bait" company in California. Early in 1986, I paid \$17.00 for 5000 worms; that comes to about three for a penny. Lesser amounts can also be purchased from wholesalers who supply schools or university science departments; they can be kept alive for several months and, if necessary, raised in the home.

Any type of movable feeder or tray will do in an emergency. In July, it took a male bluebird, which had never seen a mealworm or a feeder, about 30 seconds to find the worms in a pimento jar on the patio deck railing beneath his favorite perch. Where the birds are fed year-round, Dr. Angeline Cromack uses a feeder similar to the NABS feeder #600. After the nesting season it is not unusual for birds banded in her boxes to bring unbanded strangers to snack at her "table."

May I suggest that bluebirders NOT use pillbugs and sowbugs as a food for

bluebirds. Pillbugs can be the intermediate host of the intestinal parasite *Plagiorhynchus (Prosthorynchus) formosus*, and, at least in our area, the adult thorny-headed worm is presumed to cause injury to, and the death of, some of our bluebirds (see *Sialia* 2(2): 67-71). ■

Elsie Eitzroth

3595 NW Roosevelt Dr.
Corvallis, OR 97330

Bluebird Banders Wanted

We have received a few additional names of individuals willing to band bluebirds. They will be published prior to the next breeding season. If you are a licensed bird bander and are willing to make yourself available to trail operators and individuals in your immediate area who need nestling bluebirds banded, send your name, address, and telephone number to Editor J.K. Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707.

Trail Directory Additions

If you have monitored a trail of 50 or more boxes for three years or more and would be willing to offer advice, tours, or a site for research give us your name, telephone, address, time tours would be possible, and the county, city and state where your trail is located.

Mail above information to Bluebird Trail Directory, NABS, Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906-0295.

Jernigan Named 1986 Oklahoma Wildlife Conservationist of the Year



Photograph by an Outdoor News photographer.

Former NABS Board Member Charlotte Jernigan (left) receives the 1986 Wildlife Conservationist of the Year Award from Odie Haley of the Oklahoma Wildlife Federation. Her work in the conservation of bluebirds earned her this award. The awards serve to recognize and to show appreciation for significant contributions to the natural resources and people of Oklahoma. The program is co-sponsored by Sears, Roebuck and Company.

DISPLAY BOARD

The North American Bluebird Society now has a display board available upon request to anyone interested in promoting bluebird conservation at public events.

The board is basically self-explanatory and is easy to assemble. All pictures and headers easily adhere to the blue background with velcro.[®] The three species of bluebirds are featured along with other desirable and undesirable cavity nesters and suitable habitat. The board folds easily and fits into a traveling case that can be shipped via UPS.

This display has been made possible by permission of many

photographers located across North America. The Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, spent time helping in the picture selection and gave us permission to have their slides reproduced. The photographers that allowed us to use their work were Art Biale, James Sanford, D.P.H. Watson, Bill Dyer, Mike Hopiak, Ken Parks, O.S. Pettingill, H. Mayfield, Leroy Crane, John Findlay III, and Joe Sedlacek. Thanks to all of you and to President Sadie Dorber for producing this fine display.

The board may be reserved from headquarters for a fee of \$10.00 to cover shipping and handling charges. ■

PLANTINGS FOR BLUEBIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Native Rosés

Karen Blackburn

Throughout the nation, in meadows, alongside streams, at the woods' edge, or in roadside thickets, lives the lovely "wild rose." A number of roses are native to the United States, and all produce the fleshy fruits commonly known as rose hips. Because these fruits generally remain on the plant throughout the winter months and are strikingly colorful against a backdrop of snow, they attract hungry birds when other food supplies are scarce. With snow blanketing many of the northern states in late April of this year, we are once again reminded of the importance of plants, such as the rose, which offer life-saving food for bluebirds and other wildlife when little else is available. The Pasture Rose, one of dozens of native species, is described below.

Pasture Rose (*Rosa carolina*)

Native Range—Nova Scotia to Florida and west to Minnesota and Texas.

Hardiness—Zone 5.

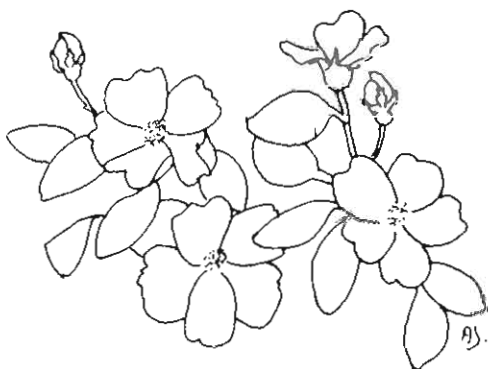
Habitat—Open woods, pastures, roadside thickets. Usually in dry soils.

Habit—A small deciduous shrub reaching a maximum height of seven feet. Compound leaves are usually composed of five leaflets.

Fruit and Flowers—Appearing in early summer, the pink blossoms consist of five petals and are approximately two inches in diameter. The one-half inch red fruits ripen in late summer and persist through the winter months.

Landscape Value—Fruits and flowers add color to the landscape. Excellent for naturalizing.

Culture—Will do well in ordinary garden soil in full sun. Tolerates dry soil in partial shade. Propagate by collecting fruits and separating seeds from the pulp. Seeds may be sown immediately or dried and stored for later use.



Wildlife Value—A few birds, such as the Northern Mockingbird, Swainson's Thrush and Cedar Waxwing, take the fruits as a preferred food, but the value of rose hips lies in their importance as a winter food for wildlife. Birds that make use of the fruits of native roses include the Wild Turkey, Ruffed, Blue and Sharp-Tailed Grouse, Northern Bobwhite, Ring-necked Pheasant, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, Wood Thrush, Eastern Bluebird, Philadelphia Vireo, Northern Cardinal, Evening Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, and Tree, Fox and Song Sparrows. If planted closely together, most wild roses will form dense thickets which provide excellent nest sites as well as protective cover

for gamebirds and songbirds. A number of mammals also consume the fruit, stems and foliage of native roses.

Related Species—Swamp Rose (*Rosa palustris*)—Shares similar range, but prefers damp to saturated soils. Virginia Rose (*R. virginiana*) is somewhat harderier—to Zone 4. Many other

species of rose are native to North America.

Special Uses—Rose hips are edible, possess an apple-like flavor, and are rich sources of Vitamin C. ■

Rt. 3, Box 213
Marianna, FL 32446

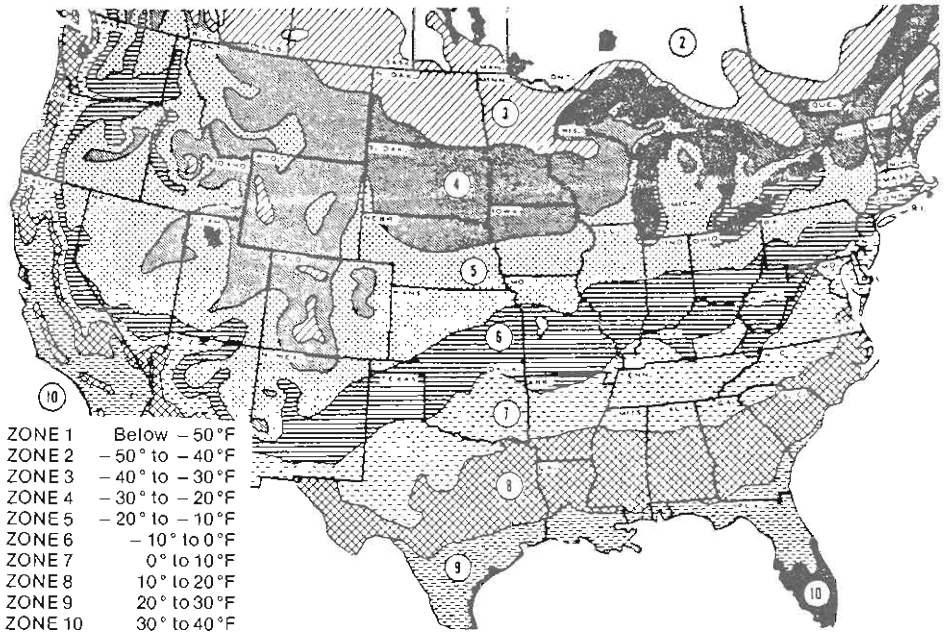


Figure 1. Hardiness Zones for the United States and southern Canada. Temperatures for each zone are the average annual minimum temperatures. When no zones are mentioned with the plant description, plants are hardy anywhere. If a zone is given, it indicates that plants are hardy within the zone and in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

A BIRD IN THE BUSH

Karen Blackburn

Coincidentally, a recent report from William D. Sample of Cromwell, Connecticut, concerns roses, which happen to be the subject of this issue's "Plantings" column. Mr. Sample tells us that during a period of heavy snow cover in late January of this year, a Northern Mockingbird was seen feeding on the fruits of a rose (species

unknown) in his yard. He noted that, even at that late date, a considerable number of fruits remained on the plant, and many were still available for wildlife when he wrote in April. It is the persistence of these fruits and their availability in times of crisis which make roses so valuable to wildlife. When, instead of "April showers," a

region is covered with April snow, wild fruits which have outlived winter can very well make the difference between life and death for many creatures. Such is the case with the Eastern Bluebird which, arriving as early as March throughout much of its northern breeding range, is particularly susceptible to the severe weather of a "late spring." It is clear that PRESERVING plants for wildlife is of as much importance as planting for wildlife.

We appreciate Mr. Sample's timely report and invite other readers to share their observations of plant use by bluebirds and other wildlife. Please be as specific as possible including such information as the name of the plant (botanical name when known) and the approximate time of year when the observation was made. Send your observations to Karen Blackburn, Rt. 3, Box 650, Marianna, FL 32446. ■

An Unsuccessful Success Story

William C. Harris

Several years ago, under the direction of Lil Files and Joyce Marinal, we started a bluebird trail. About seven surrounding towns were spotted with bluebird boxes. It was my luck to have about 80 boxes in my designated area of Chelmsford, Massachusetts. I did not personally monitor all these boxes. We had several smaller subsidiaries that were monitored by people in the area.

In all the ensuing years I never had a bluebird in my territory. Not even a sighting! However, during those years we waged a continuing war on House Sparrows. Because I was retired, I sometimes monitored my trail twice a week. The sparrows' eggs brought back in a bucket would make an Easter bunny sick with envy. I brought home

enough long-stemmed grasses to feed a horse. All this material went into my compost pile.

Recently we moved to New Hampshire and here we now have a modest bluebird trail. Our war against House Sparrows continues. Homemade traps in bird boxes have been highly successful while a Havahart trap catches its share of the culprits.

So, after all these years, I feel I have helped Sialia in my own small way. This past summer I received a phone call which made my spirits soar. A lady reported that out of three boxes I had given her years ago, a pair of bluebirds had fledged two broods. ■

15 Clovercrest Dr.
Nashua, NH 03062

James L. Williams Memorial Fund Established

The James L. Williams Memorial Fund has been established for the North American Bluebird Society by Mrs. Jane Williams to commemorate her late husband's love and devotion to the bluebird. Proceeds from the investment of the Fund will become part of the grants awarded each year by NABS for bluebird research.

When the Williamses moved to Ware Neck, Virginia, about twenty-two years ago, bluebirds were very scarce in that area. Mr. Williams first started his own bluebird trail and then built hundreds of nesting boxes which he gave to friends and neighbors. The fruits of his efforts can be appreciated by everyone visiting Gloucester County today where bluebirds now abound.

Recipients of NABS' Bluebird Research Grants will extend James and Jane Williams' involvement in bluebird conservation for years to come.

HUMPFREY

Charlee Lesnett

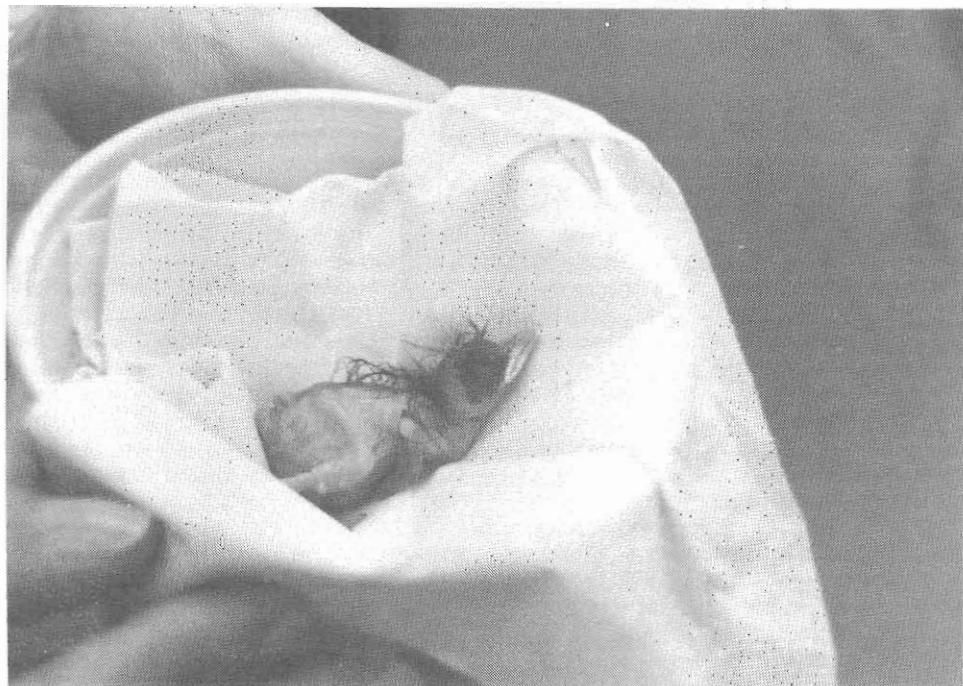
Our beautiful pair of Eastern Bluebirds had successfully fledged four and had laid four eggs for their second brood when disaster struck. Prince and Lady disappeared two days before their eggs began to hatch. They were not seen on either the 4th or 5th of July [1986] and I was watching for them constantly during the day. After dark when I checked the nest with a flashlight, there was no adult in the box. When I checked the nest on the 6th, three eggs had hatched. Since we still had not seen the adult bluebirds and realized that the nestlings would need help, I immediately got in touch with a licensed wildlife rehabilitator who gave me instructions and directions for feeding them. We stayed in telephone contact so she could advise me when to change the type of food as it became necessary.

We removed the nestlings from the nest and started feeding them liver

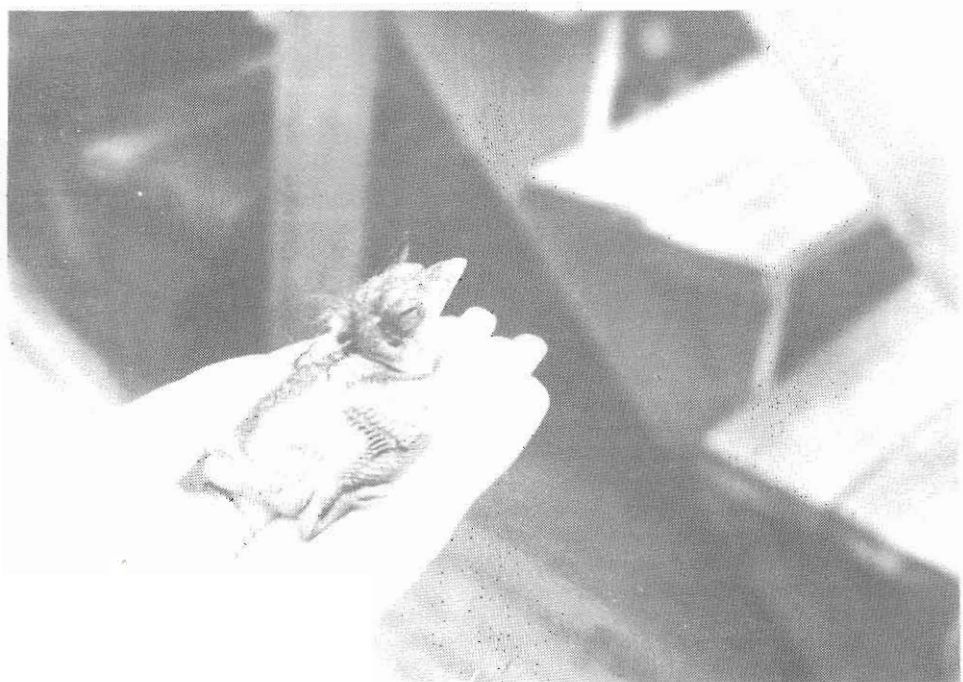
and egg baby food while keeping a close watch for either of the parents. Late in the evenings when the babies were two days old, we saw Lady struggling along the ground under the fence headed for her box. She finally made it to the flower bed in front of the box and hid under some flowers. She was dragging a wing and could not fly. We carefully turned a basket over her and gently caught her. She was very hungry and dehydrated so was willing to eat some raw ground beef and sugar water. We took her to a veterinarian who treats wildlife and he x-rayed her. The news was not good. The break was in the joint and he thought she would not be able to fly, but he taped her wings and we brought her home. She continued to eat and drink, but over the next four days, three of the babies, as well as Lady, died. We buried them together and then devoted all of our attention to the survivor.



Humphrey at one week receiving food on blunt end of a toothpick.



Humpfrey at one week, hatched 6 July 1986.



Humpfrey at 11 days.



Humpfrey on 22 July flapping her wings.



Humpfrey's favorite perch was on Stu Lesnett's head. Photographed 9 August.



Photographs by Charlee Lesnett

Humpfrey on 12 August, four days before she flew away.

My daughter, Leah, kept "bird hours," getting up at dawn to start feeding, keeping at this task until dark when we would put the nestling on the heating pad in a little margarine tub on a bed of blue tissue. Because this bird was the largest of the brood, we assumed it was a male and named him "Humpfrey." Humpfrey flourished, grew feathers, opened his eyes, traveled with us shopping because he had to eat so often, and started to turn into a real character—all feathers and personality. He graduated to mealworms and fruit cocktail and moved to the screened room to learn to fly. This came quickly and after several "controlled crashes" he learned to land also. We started leaving him out on the porch at night, roosting in a hanging potted plant. I would put him among the leaves at dusk and he would stay until morning. We soon started taking him outside for "fly-arounds" up to the roof and back to the tops of our heads. A favorite game was flying from one head to another; the more we laughed, the faster he flew.

Then came the first night outside the house. We were rewarded the next morning when my husband went for a walk and Humpfrey flew down and rode on his head. During all this time Humpfrey's brothers and sisters from the first brood would come regularly and sit on the fence where they chattered and called quietly. I realized that our time with Humpfrey was nearly over, so we took him to be banded. The naturalist who did the banding confirmed my suspicions. Humpfrey was a girl!

At about six weeks of age, Humpfrey stopped coming back to us for mealworms and joined her flock. The group comes frequently to sit on the fence and check the boxes. When I see them, I step outside and call, "Humpfrey, where are you?" She's there. She's the one jumping up and down "waving" her wings. ■

15032 Greymont Dr.
Centreville, VA 22020

I hear bluebirds...

Shirl Brunell

Part I of this excerpt from Dr. Brunell's presentation at the Ninth Annual Meeting of the North American Bluebird Society in Wagoner, Oklahoma, October 25-26, 1986, appeared in the spring issue of Sialia (9(2):69-71).

Like a true parent, I spent a restless night, worrying for their safety out there in the forest. In my mind, I could see them pressed tightly against each other as they always had in sleep.

At dawn, I waited breathlessly for 45 minutes for any sign of Samson and Baby Sister. At 6 a.m., Samson suddenly appeared and lit on his former home. He responded with light wing flutters but no sound and took little food. We stood and stared at each other. I moved to the lawn chair. Samson joined me, sitting on the low end by my feet, looking up at me, trying to tell me something I refused to know. His velvety orange fluffy feathers fluttered slightly in the soft morning breeze, reminding me in the midst of my worry of his beauty. Samson moved to a nearby branch, and occasionally dropped for a bite of food. I stood a moment to turn my chair a bit and immediately Samson came down to my shoulder as if to say, "Don't go." Again, I talked to him in whispers but he did not respond. I asked him if he would go find Baby Sister. I asked him if he could tell me where she was. I asked him if she had run off with another little boy. He looked so little. He looked so forlorn. That was the longest he had ever stayed on my shoulder. I tried not to read any meaning into it, but he knew and I knew that it always had been Baby Sister who came to me first and lingered the longest. Suddenly, I found myself pacing the grounds in search of Baby Sister. Samson followed me every step, hopping from branch to branch. We met back at their home. He sat on the ledge of the freedom window and looked into my face, then into their home, then back into my face, quiet and searching. How could I explain to him about loneliness. What could I say to a baby bluebird to make him understand his playmate was gone. I did not know how to endure the pain for that little bird sitting alone, for the first time, alone, his sweet, faithful companion gone forever. For the first time, he was not playful.

All day in my office, children asked me about my baby birds. While holding back tears, I repeatedly heard myself say, "Samson is hunting bugs in the trees and Baby Sister is free—she is forever free."

After work, Samson quickly came to me and hesitantly took food, still not uttering his sweet babyish delightful squeal just before each bite. Several times he came and sat on the top of the lounge chair and I could feel him against my hair. Occasionally, he dropped to the ground for a bug or insect. At the last light of day and with the moon's reflection growing brighter, little Samson hopped onto my hand over my lap, looked at me for a moment, then charged into the air and to the top of the antenna high over the roof top where he and Baby Sister had played and played. Suddenly, he broke forth into forlorn calls, crying out again and again and again at the world as if crushed in anguish for his Baby Sister. These were the first sounds he had made in all those hours. As quickly as he had risen onto the roof top, he dropped into the bed of a tree against a barren limb and remained quiet. I tucked him in as lovingly as I knew how, my voice quivering and withdrew to my home.

At 5 the next morning, I awakened, tears on my cheeks, determined to break his heartsick silence. At 5:15 a.m., Samson dropped onto my arms, again uttering no sounds. Continuously, I petted him with my voice, trying to nurse him back into response, but he remained listless and silent. Words poured out from my very soul as if driven with a need to fill baby Samson's every cell with enough nourishment somehow to bring him back to life. I begged him in every way I knew how to go forth and slay dragons and chase butterflies and ford rivers and mold castles in the clouds and

do whatever he had to to get to next spring where he could take with him all his understanding of Baby Sister's vulnerability and her depth of living to share with his own baby bluebirds. I told him if he could do that, he could make Baby Sister live forever through generations of bluebirds to come. Startling even to myself, suddenly in a whisper I began to sing, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." He leaned into the air and glided off my shoulder and into the protective oak tree. I tried to draw some humor from this but a tear came instead.

Another wind storm jolted me into consciousness the next morning. My first thought was of that tiny creature alone outside. He had been yanked by his frail baby neck to the door of his nesting box by nature gone wild and flung from his parent onto the cold ground seven feet below, and survived. He lay next to his dying siblings when he was five days old with blood speckling the corner of his broken mouth and he survived. He watched his Baby Sister's death and carried his burden of grief alone. And then, without explanation, he was expected to bend to the ground with trees tossed by violent winds. What more would he have to endure?

At dawn, the earth quieted and as I sauntered out across the sundeck, I gasped as I saw the damage to the old grandfather oak tree. Its most massive arm was broken, lying sadly over the baby bird graves. I, too, wanted to climb to the top of the antenna and screech out forlorn cries at the world. A little blue-winged boy stopped me. His eyes, very wide, looked as if they had seen hell. I asked him if he had seen poor grandfather oak. He seemed resigned to what nature could do to the most meek and magnificent of its beings.

My pledge for the day was to free him from the weight of his silence. By evening, my voice had grown gravelly. Was it wrong of me to believe that if the silence could be broken Samson would feel better? That is the human way. Occasionally Samson dropped to the bird bath for water. Repeatedly, he seemed to lose track of time and just sat on the edge of the tiny pool where he and Baby Sister played; around and around they had gone like toy boats. Each time he came to me, I talked and talked to him. I told him again and again of my images of him and his sweet mate and their playful brood in the springtime dotting the forest and country roads in soft blues and orange. I babbled into the evening air with Samson on my shoulder. His cheek touched mine; he pulled my hair and I paused in my ramblings. In the midst of the quiet, baby Samson whimpered. After all those hours, my grief-ridden tiny prince whimpered. Another whimper, a little stronger. He cooed. I tried to coo. He chirped. I think I chirped. He tweeted. I know I tweeted, and away we went, back and forth, each egging the other on. My need to ring bells, to squeal, to celebrate, to do something grand, lifted me from the chair, Samson on my shoulder. With an air of pomp and circumstance, I filled the bird bath. That incredible little creature on my shoulder spread his wings over the water then hopped into the cool liquid. Covering his beautiful body again and again, Samson washed away the risks of silence, finally accepting the baptism of life. He lifted to a branch to groom himself as I slumped back into the lounge chair. Samson, all fluffy and shiny from his bath, dropped down on my arm for inspection. He was at that gawky but gorgeous stage, appearing babyish one minute and maturing adolescent the next, a regular little teenager. No more had he settled on my arm than two parent bluebirds and five teenage-looking offspring drifted out of the air and onto the antenna. The adults took positions toward the back to guard their five young ones who gathered across the broader antenna ribs. Precisely on the point, most prim and proper, perched a dainty, cuddly little girl, peering out to the north in our direction. I felt Samson's body lift as his eyes caught hers. In a dart, he landed on the side rib not 18 inches from her. Samson and the little girl filled my binoculars with the story that began a million years ago—boy and girl. She ducked her head, then slowly turned her face in his direction, as coy as any blue-winged female since the beginning of time. Flirtatiously, she lifted her head toward Samson, setting him into spasms of chatter. My mind provided the dialogue, "My name's Samson, I'm seven weeks old. I live here. You want to play? What's your name? I had a baby sister but she died. You like mulberries?"

Want to see my bird house?" The little girl studied him, tilting her head impishly, then the family lifted toward the sunset, Samson, too. He fluttered by the baby girl's side to the edge of the grandfather oak, then returned to tell mama all about it. "Yes," I told him, I had seen the little girl. I smiled the smile only proud parents can smile and told him he was wonderful. He sat on my shoulder, gazing into the sunset, a new brightness in his eyes. This baby boy, thrown into life, nourished by an Easter egg, who had suffered death, and the despair from nature's crucifying blows, now was resurrected. A new blue feather colored his wing. God's promise to clothe this tiny son in His finest. It was there I willed Samson all my earth to build his home, his mate inseparable beside him. Samson had been correctly christened. Samson was a tough little bird. I told him I could see the sky blue eggs that would come in the springtime with tough little Samsons crawling out, king-born, squealing for food, ready to plunge into life, their father, Samson, with the wisdom of Job, there proudly to protect them and to share all the special things that evoked Baby Sister.

He leaned into me and touched my cheek. ■

Rt. 7, Box 451
Texarkana, AR 75502

THE WAR OF 1986

Carole Puryear Kammerud

How did I, the barefoot and pregnant wife of a Nashville, Tennessee, school teacher, end up a general in the bluebird army? How did I suddenly become embroiled in a life and death struggle with the sparrow soldiers?

It had all started innocently enough with a gift from my daddy. An innocuous looking gift, the bluebird box was to become the object of a territorial dispute involving my family and me in a battle and changing my yard into a battleground. The War of 1986 was about to begin.

It was the last of February, 1986, when the bluebirds returned to the fencepost where their nest box resided the year before. After sighting them several times perching on the post and fence, I went ahead and mounted the box in hopes they would defend the territory. They examined it and stayed close as the weather warmed.

Then the House Sparrows invaded! Those pesky nemeses of every bluebirder started carrying in twigs immediately. Would the bluebirds defend the box? The year before I had observed the bluebirds drive off sparrows, Blue Jays, and even starlings with unrelenting fortitude. But last year the nest was built. This year, they hadn't given any

sign of nesting. Would it make a difference? Most assuredly! Although the bluebirds did return again and again, even going inside the box, the slightest sound of fluttering sparrow wings sent the bluebirds into a hasty retreat.

"This requires intervention," I decided. So began the relentless task of emptying, emptying, emptying the box. Sparrows are hardy and stubborn as a mule. "Why couldn't you have the breeding habits of a mule?" I wondered. They were much too busy picking up and returning the nesting material that I had thrown out to answer.

"This is WAR!" I declared. I started throwing their nests in the trash can. That didn't phase them. There was plenty more good nesting material lying around. The bluebirds had long ago deserted the territory for my neighbor across the street. "I had to go and tell her about 'blue gold,'" I thought. "Oh, well, I still get to see them at mess hall."

Meanwhile, back in the war zone, I tried the tin foil strips I had read about in *Sialia*. I tried tacking them inside the box; the sparrows seemed to love the extra flair it gave their entrance. I tried tacking them on top of the box to blow in the breeze; they pulled them off bit

by bit and took them inside to decorate their nest. I retaliated by emptying the box more often.

On one reconnaissance mission, I found that a female sparrow soldier had actually dropped an egg on the bare floor of the box. My children, being rookie recruits, surrendered. Out of deference to them and to my desire that they respect all life, I did agree to call a temporary truce. I left the egg inside, but moved the box to No Man's Land beside the strip of asphalt which marks the boundary of my territory. This maneuver didn't phase the sparrow soldiers. They found it and continued, undaunted.

I, being a good patriotic general, did not surrender. I built more foxholes. I tried milk cartons since I had read sparrows wouldn't nest in them and bluebirds would. Nobody, but nobody, went near them. The other boxes were the standard design recommended for bluebirds. I kept a careful watch over all the boxes, but sighted no red, white, and blue reinforcements. Titmouse and chickadee help arrived, but they too were driven back by wave after wave of sparrow soldiers. Obviously, the enemy far outnumbered my army. But I continued the battle, filling trash can after trash can with sparrow nests.

The first bluebird nestlings had fledged. They ate insects from my garden. I was lucky. At least I could watch

them, I thought.

I started a propaganda war inside my home. I explained to my kids that the sparrows are many and the bluebirds few. "They are in danger of being completely wiped out." Sparrows can nest anywhere. Bluebirds only nest inside natural cavities and these are disappearing rapidly. "Allowing sparrows to use a red, white, and blue bird's box is a WAR CRIME!" I declared. I was winning the propaganda war! But a true patriot can't be too careful, so all eggs were tossed far afield after dark when surveillance is more difficult. It worked; the sparrows deserted.

The boxes sat empty. A month passed. Had I won the battle and lost the war? My neighbor's bluebirds had raised their second brood and were off on a well-deserved R & R.

Then I sighted something. It was a blue more brilliant and iridescent than any I had ever seen. "Is it an Indigo Bunting?" I asked. The blue shimmered in the morning sunlight as the pair headed toward a nesting box. They're going in. They're coming out. I see it! I see it! It's...it's red, white, and blue! Long live the red, white, and blue!"

Peace settled in. I joyfully watched as the two beautiful bluebirds raised three equally brilliant blue babies. "Victory is mine!" I said triumphantly. ■

Rt. 4, Keenan Lane
Mt. Juliet, TN 37122

The Macon County Tennessee Bluebird Report

Bill Wheeler

It has been an unusually busy year for bluebirders and the bluebird in the Macon County area of Tennessee, but it has also been one of disappointment. Despite all the new boxes and a new trail, the birds did not do as well as might have been expected.

In 1985, 78 bluebird boxes were monitored around the county.

Thirty-six of those boxes were used with about 200 bluebirds fledged. In 1986, 91 boxes were monitored with 221 birds fledged. Forty-one of the 91 boxes were used. Other boxes were used by chickadees, nuthatches, bees and wasps. Fewer nestings were counted than in previous years, fewer eggs were laid per clutch,

many eggs were not hatching, and some nests were abandoned. Some bad weather early in the Spring was also a consideration.

A new trail of boxes went up at the Macon County Country Club. Mrs. Evelyn Freeman was instrumental in providing posts for the boxes, not to mention the time she volunteered in setting the boxes up and helping to monitor the boxes through the year. More than 40 birds were fledged from that trail with some losses due to weather and abandonment of nests.

On 4 March 1986 a Homecoming '86 Bluebird Rally was held at the Cumberland Museum in Nashville, Tennessee. More than 100 people were present to hear the different speakers give their accounts and updates. We were also informed about the prison population building nest boxes which can presently be seen at the more than 30 different welcome stations and rest areas across Tennessee.

Again this year the bluebird program was introduced to a class of students who participated in the mini-courses at Central School in Lafayette. In April they saw a slide presentation and movie concerning this bird, built their own nest boxes, took field trips, talked about the use of birding field guides and attracting birds to backyard feeders. Mr. Carl Gregory, also a member of the North American Bluebird Society and teacher at Central, assisted with the class.

On 5 July the film, "Bluebirds-Bring Them Back" was shown to an audience of 150 campers at Bledsoe Creek State Park near Gallatin, TN. The same film was shown to the members of XI GAMMA PI of Lafayette on 24 November 1986. Mrs. Sally Wells was the winner of a drawing which was, of course, a nesting box.

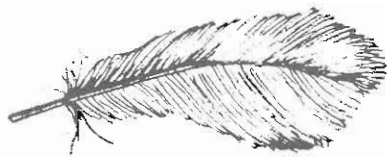
The 50th anniversary of bluebirding in the Warner Parks of Nashville, TN. was celebrated 13 July 1986. A slide program of bluebirding in the Warner Parks and a field trip highlighted this program. The bluebird program was begun in 1936 by Mrs. Amelia Lasky, a nationally known ornithologist, who kept records of bluebird activity within the parks for over 40 years until her death in 1973. In 1983 the North American Bluebird Society posthumously awarded her the Research Award for outstanding contributions to bluebird conservation. This award is on display at the Warner Parks Nature Center. A Bluebird Homecoming '86 program was held at the Tri-County Electric Building in Lafayette on 14 August. Slide and movie programs were shown, displays and recognition given to all local bluebirders who have supported the nest box activities. ■

655 Chitwood Dr.
Lafayette, IN 37083

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.



Bluebird Tales

Mary D. Janetatos

NABS' Founder Larry Zeleny became aware of tiny feet moving across his forehead as he enjoyed his midday siesta in April in his suburban Maryland backyard. Opening his eyes, he caught a glimpse of a Carolina Chickadee as it flew off. Next day, the same thing happened with a Tufted Titmouse. He realized with amusement that his hair must have seemed to be a good source of nesting material. He was much more amused on the third day when a ponderously curious Mourning Dove repeated the performance. As he told me of the event, I speculated whether the dove was curious to see if there were food on Larry's pate, for surely her casually made nest could not have needed Larry's hair!

The phone calls and letters received at headquarters reveal that there is always something new in the bird world. In Kennesaw, GA, the students and staff at Lewis Elementary School began a bluebird project in January 1987. Their principal, Mr. Bookhardt, introduced the idea to the faculty, telling them that he had obtained enough NABS brochures for each student in the school. All of the teachers seemed excited about the idea, so each one was happy to start bluebird activities in his classroom. To report the results, Mrs. Allen's fifth year Language Arts class founded the *Blue Review*, a newspaper which they published with Matt R. Brown as editor and Doug Ingram as cover artist. Their staff was composed of over 20 students, each grade from kindergarten through fifth had a contributing editor and an artist. The cleverly crafted newspaper was full of interesting interviews with students and staff members, and was attractively decorated with imaginative art. My favorite page was "Lewis Laughs," a sample of which appears below:

A kindergartner looking at fifth year's eagles commented, "Oh what pretty bluebirds."

When asked how long he'd been interested in bluebirds, Rus Piper answered, "Never!"

When asked why the girl bluebird had duller colors than the boy bluebird, a kindergartner responded, "The mama works and builds the nest and gets all dirty."

The entire fifth year Language Arts class sent individual letters to NABS de-



scribing their reactions to the project. The whole packet was a delight to this former teacher because I appreciate children's creative efforts and because I didn't have to correct the papers! Lewis Elementary School was given a framed Special Award Certificate in mid-May by NABS past board member and "Mr. Bluebird" of Roswell, GA, Col. W.R. Robertson, Jr.

Schools and libraries in other locations have written describing their projects and exhibits. William Thomas, a teacher at Romulus Junior High School in Romulus, MI, sent a clipping from the April 12 *Detroit Free Press* showing eighth graders receiving a few pointers from Mr. Thomas. He writes "Besides building and maintaining these boxes, I have printed plans for box construction and have distributed over 200 of them through local building supply centers." He credits NABS Board Member Tom Hodgson of the Dahlem Environmental Education Center in Jackson, MI, with providing the groundwork. (See President Sadie Dorber's report on the Third Annual Bluebird Festival).

Libraries also have played a role in publicizing the cause of bluebird conservation. In early March, Jerry Hunefeld, who has a bluebird trail in southwest Dubois County, NY, and is involved in a research project with Cornell University, was present to share his enthusiasm and answer questions about bluebirds. Pauline Kasserman, of Winesburg, OH, writes:

"I recently showed the bluebird slides to the seventh graders at Jackson Local School District. I spent two full days as it is quite a large school."

And from Yvonne Darnell, of Powder Springs, GA, we hear that the Rural Beauty Garden Club placed an exhibit entitled "The Beautiful Bluebird" in the Paulding County Public Library. The seldom-heard-from state

of New Mexico has acquired a bluebird activist, **Steve McDonald**. Steve is the local naturalist who is working with students at the College Street Community School who are building 22 bluebird boxes which they will put up near Pinos Altos.

The *New York Times*, Sunday, June 15, 1986, reported on **Art and Susan Gingert's** Northwest Connecticut Bluebird Trail, in the area of Cornwall, Sharon and Salisbury. "Opening each box is like opening a present," Mr. Gingert said. "The expectation is wonderful, and you are usually well rewarded by what you find."

In late winter, **Myra Swan** of Ava, MO, called with a brainstorm. She told me of a radio auction which would be held in her area of south-central Missouri and said she planned to auction off five bluebird feeders. I wondered why she didn't auction nesting boxes instead. "Because everyone has their own hand-built nest boxes here, so no one would want to buy any!" We were happy to cooperate with Myra and so we sent the feeders; they were auctioned off and raised a tidy sum for NABS. Myra even borrowed a tape of the authentic spring song of the male bluebird so that a wonderful "commercial" was devised and played on the air. Since the Eastern Bluebird is Missouri's State Bird, there was great positive response.

I certainly hope Myra and all of our friends can plan to come to the Tenth Annual Meeting right here in Maryland 18-20 September, 1987. It will be held at the National 4-H Center; details are enclosed separately with this issue of *Sialia*. You will have the opportunity to meet bluebirders from across the country. State bluebird societies will be there: Upstate New York which I believe was first on the scene, Mountain Bluebird Trails, Midwest Bluebird Recovery Committee, the North Carolina Bluebird Society, Bluebirds Across Vermont, and possibly others. The Ohio Bluebird Society joins the group of state societies as it forms this summer. Reid and Teresa Caldwell, Dick Tuttle, Bob Orthwein and Arlene Kunkel are organizing and any Ohio readers who are interested can contact the formation committee in care of Reid Caldwell, 152 Moffet, Lucas, OH 44843.

In Montana, **Deni Hershberger** of Plains (a past NABS board member), presented a Certificate of Appreciation to **Andy Harlan**, of Trout Creek, MT, for his outstanding contribution to bluebird conservation. The Trout Creek bird enthusiast has distributed over 340 individual boxes; the bluebirds that took up habitation in them produced 461 fledglings. Mr. Harlan said: "Obviously I was quite surprised and flat-

tered beyond responding in a very coherent manner. Even at this late date there is not much I could add, except to thank you, Deni, and the North American Bluebird Society."

With the new season upon us, we hope that weather conditions will be more moderate than they were in 1986, especially in the central and southern states. **John Trott**, nature photographer and naturalist at the Madiera School in Greenway, VA, had this comment, "I will be most interested to know if other Eastern Bluebird trails had a drop in the number of fledglings produced in 1986. I did, and attribute it to the drought. My capable young entomologist friend says that insects are fewer in the kind of drought we had here in late June and through July. The insect eggs just don't hatch, so there was less food for bluebirds. I did notice that when rains started in August, there was a definite increase in nesting activity in the bluebird population. The nest box program here has created much interest among students, faculty, administration, parents and alumnae."

Bluebird conservation received welcome coverage in several publications recently. *Audubon Workshop*, of Northbrook, IL, and *Duncraft*, of Pennacook, NH, both ran a full color picture of bluebirds and gave NABS' address. *National Gardener* magazine in February printed **Diana Wetherell's** article entitled "Bed and Breakfast for Bluebirds." *Southern Living* magazine printed a nice account by **Diane Young** entitled "A Bird in the Helping Hand" with photographs in color showing NABS' office staff at work and also **Larry Zeleny**. These articles have generated many requests for the free information NABS sends out to the general public.

Bill Warne, of Willard, NY, wrote in March that he thinks he may have set a new world record for nest box occupancy. "I had just finished setting out the last of eight new boxes on my trail and had returned to my truck about 10 yards away. I was just about to open the door when I heard a bluebird singing. I turned toward the sound, and there was a beautiful male happily perched on the box that I had just set out singing for all the world to hear." **Paula Taylor** of Magnolia, TX, wrote: "On February 14 'our' pair of bluebirds decided on one of the six houses on our six acres. We decided it was the nicest valentine ever!"

As the "season" waxes and wanes, I must share with you these lines which were sent by **Courtney R. Eakin**, a state park ranger of Butler, PA:

(Continued on page 119)

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:

Three years ago we purchased a bluebird feeder after unsuccessfully trying for many years to get bluebirds to come to other types of devices. For two years we tried everything imaginable to attract them: raisins, peanuts, peanuts mixed with meal, peanut butter, etc.—all without success.

Finally, a year ago, I put a handful of dogwood berries in the feeder and, much to our happy surprise, there were three bluebirds moving in and out within six hours. Since that time, each fall we carefully store up a supply of dogwood berries, and now each day have the immense pleasure of having from four to six bluebirds around the feeder. The feeder has become a "hang-out" for them throughout the year. I am now mixing raisins with the dogwood berries and they seem to be taking them as well. Thus, when we run out of dogwood berries before next fall, I can keep them coming with the raisins.

Richard J. Field, M.D.
Centreville, Mississippi

Dear Editor:

I started a bluebird trail with only seven boxes in the Leavenworth, Washington, area. That year I had one family of five bluebirds fledged, but have had no success since. I now have 27 boxes and have had lots of success with Tree Swallows and wrens. Origin-

ally, I painted all the boxes white to make them cooler, but now I use a type of camouflage-color paint because black bears were tearing the boxes down!

I discovered a couple of dead Tree Swallow adults in unused boxes. This year I'll install plastic screen on the inside wall below the entry hole. Apparently, the depth of the boxes and the smooth interior walls made it impossible for them to get out. This should eliminate the problem.

Frank E. Irvin
Yakima, Washington

Dear Editor:

I erected five insulated boxes on sturdy creosoted posts dug in last fall. Some professional biologists look with scorn upon my double boxes. They claim that losses in cold snaps are due to lack of insects hatching out, not the cold itself. However, the only boxes I am now making are insulated; a box within a box and everything sealed off to leave a mass of air that does not circulate.

L.A. Smith
Brantford, Ontario

Dear Editor:

I have had the good fortune to have nesting bluebirds from the first summer I put up nesting boxes. The first time was about seven years ago when I lived in the Adirondacks and I always had at least one nesting pair each sea-

son. The competition for nest boxes there as well as at my new home several hours south of the Adirondacks, has always been from Tree Swallows. My solution is to mount two boxes in fairly close proximity—say within 25 to 30 feet of each other. This way the Tree Swallows will take one and the bluebirds will still have one for their slightly later nesting time. This past summer I had just the two boxes up and sure enough, we had one family of swallows and one of bluebirds.

Judy S. Short
Buskirk, New York

Dear Editor:

My love affair with birds dates back to the 1920's when I was making school posters, one of which was displayed in the post office reminding people to feed the birds in the winter.

My recent project has been bluebirds and by monitoring them at least once a week I have noted some unique characteristics. As I open the boxes to determine the numbers of eggs or birds, I occasionally find a bird on the nest that is concentrating on incubating the eggs. When she does not leave the nest, I sometimes reach in and gently remove her. She seems to be in a trance and doesn't try to get away. I hold her in my hand and talk to her for a while, then put her back on the nest where she stays, and I walk away thrilled by her beauty and gentle nature, sort of like having my girl friend in my arms instead of dreaming of her from afar.

Wes Morse
Fall River, Kansas

Dear Editor:

I read in a recent issue of the journal that some readers would like to hear more from people in the South. Part of the year we live in west Texas and part of the year on Lake Texoma in Oklahoma. I had never seen a bluebird until four years ago when we started going to Oklahoma. We put out boxes the first year but did not have any nest until the second year. Needless to say, I fell in love with them at first sight. We

now have 13 boxes out in the surrounding area and have gotten six more families interested. In 1986 our boxes fledged 37 bluebirds.

We are very blessed with not being bothered with House Sparrows or starlings yet, but we have to watch the crows. Two of them got two of my baby bluebirds the day they fledged last year.

Clara Beedy
Kingston, Oklahoma

Dear Editor:

A "city gal," I married a farmer almost 45 years ago. In all that time, I never had bluebirds nest here although I put up boxes every spring. I believe it was a combination of too many sparrows, agricultural chemicals, and loss of natural nesting sites.

You can imagine my great delight last summer to have a pair nest in a box in our yard and raise five babies. I hope and pray they return this year. I think they are among the loveliest of God's winged creatures.

Mildred Brause
Sulphur Springs, Ohio

Dear Editor:

Years ago bluebirds used to build nests in the vent pipes of outdoor toilets. About the time we got rural water and were able to do away with outdoor toilets, natural gas furnaces and water heaters came into widespread use. They also had galvanized vents with covers, that looked to the birds just like what they had been using for years. When they started a nest they would die of asphyxiation and fall down inside to the top of the furnace or water heater. I have personally removed as many as six dead mature bluebirds from one furnace in one year and have talked with many plumbing, heating and air conditioning shops that have done the same. Please warn your readers of this problem. Perhaps then we would see an increase in the number of bluebirds.

James Dossett
Gilbertsville, Kentucky

(PRESIDENTIAL POINTS— Continued
from page 82)

class. For the past several years, Fred's students at Binghamton East School have built boxes in class and have spent a day erecting them. The area had undergone quite a transition since our visit in February. A week of very mild weather had melted the snow and the ice was going out of the pond. Salamanders were active around the edges of the pond and enough water was open to entice a pair of Mallards to stay. The children were enchanted with the salamanders and needed some prodding to move them along putting up boxes. At the end of the day, the students boarded the bus for the return trip to school and the three of us collapsed in front of the outdoor fireplace to roast marshmallows.

The Broome County Soil and Water Conservation District teamed together with the Broome County Sheriff's Department to provide boxes for the public. Inmates at the Broome County jail built the boxes to NABS' specifications, which were then sold by Soil and Water. NABS furnished brochures to give out as people picked up boxes. None of us was quite prepared for the response as 1,700 boxes were sold in a few weeks time. Bluebirds returning to this area certainly won't have trouble finding a home this year. With all those boxes, I think Mrs. Bluebird can really get selective in her choice.

I'm fortunate to live near an area that has a large salamander migration. The salamanders move from the woods to the swamp to lay their eggs, but during their trek it is necessary to cross a road that has curbs on both sides. The salamanders had great difficulty getting up the curbs and people would often go there during migration time to help them up the curbs. Several years ago ramps were installed along the curbs to help the salamanders journey to the swamp. About three days of very mild weather followed by a rain usually starts migration. Several of us thought the weather had been about right to trigger the start of migration, so one night we went to the swamp to observe. The temperature had dropped to about 50 degrees and a few salamanders were out, but the cool night left them quite sluggish. We were delighted, though, to be able to get a close look at the frogs as any other time they would jump away from us. During the evening we saw wood frogs, green frogs and spring peepers. For the past few years arrangements have been made to close the road during the migration time for the safety of the frogs and salamanders.

The Board of Directors would be happy

to consider invitations from any interested organizations or individuals that would like to host an annual meeting in their state after 1988. Anyone interested can write to me at headquarters. ■

Bluebird Boosters:

Appearing on the inside back cover is a list of those individuals who have made a financial commitment to bluebirds and native cavity nesters over and above their annual dues. Such support is essential in maintaining a stable dues structure. We thank the individuals, organizations, and businesses for their generosity.

You, too, can become a Bluebird Booster. For a donation of \$25.00 per issue or \$75.00 per four issues, you can be designated as an Eastern, Western or Mountain Bluebird Booster (your choice); for \$15.00 per issue or \$50.00 per four issues, be a Fledgling Booster; while \$10.00 per issue or \$25.00 per four issues makes you a Nestling Booster. Bonus decals will be sent for each category. All contributions are tax deductible. Mail your check to NABS Boosters, P.O. Box 6295, Silver Spring, MD 20906-0295.



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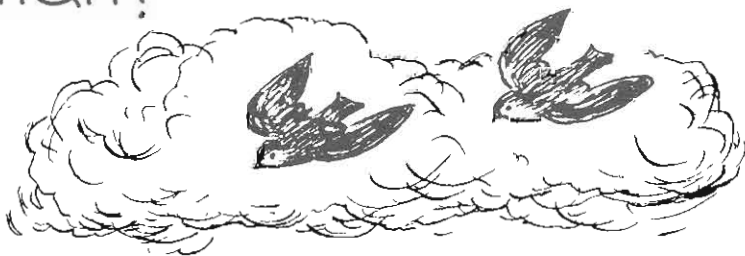
(BLUEBIRD TALES—Continued from
page 113)

Cold and Blue

At times Mother Nature can seem so mean,
She took away early fields of green.
What was springlike and warm two days ago,
Is now buried 'neath four inches of snow.
You flew up early from climates warm,
To face these temperatures below the norm.
You must be cold and what will you eat?
Lots of seeds in the feeder, but you prefer meat.
You sit on your limb searching the ground,
But it's cold and white, no insects around.
I wish you luck; I pray for you.
My bold little friend, little friend of blue.

May all of *your* bluebirds be warm and
PLENTIFUL! ■

FLY
HIGH!



FLY HIGH AND SING,
AND HAVE YOUR FLING!
A BLUEBIRD PAIR -
A LOVE AFFAIR.



ON POST, TO LET,
SOMEBODY SET
AN OCHRE-TINTED
MAISONETTE,
CONTRIVED OF WOOD,
IT'S UNDERSTOOD,
WAS CARVED FOR
BLUEBIRD
PARENTHOOD.

FLY HIGH AND SING
AND HAVE YOUR FLING
FOR LOVE'S A LOVELY
EVERYTHING!

A.E. METELMAN

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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.

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