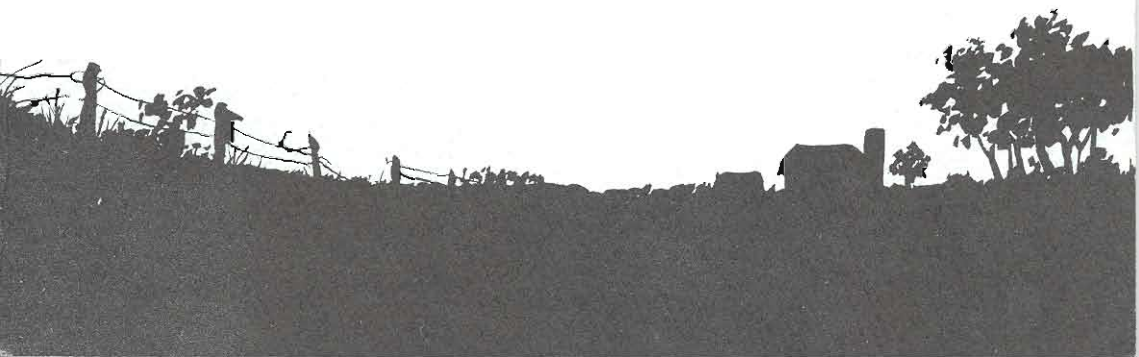
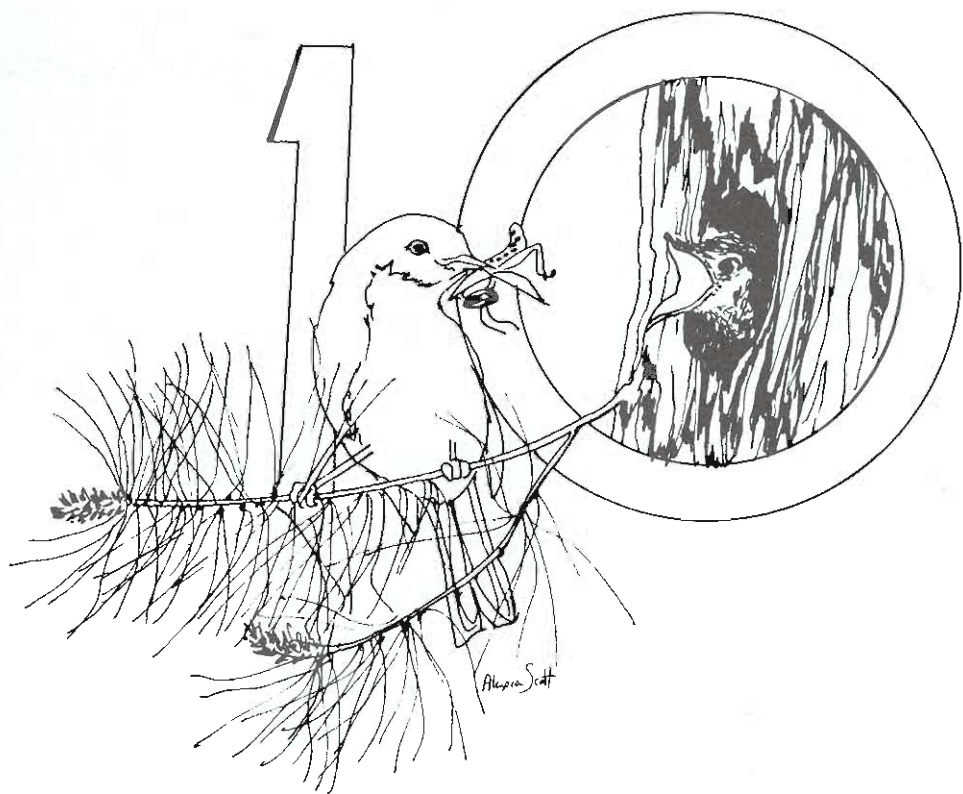


Sialia

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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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Cover

Art Editor Alexia J. Scott features bluebirds on the cover of this issue which marks the tenth anniversary of the founding of the North American Bluebird Society.

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

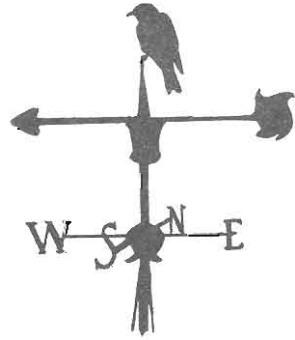
Presidential Points

Sadie Dorber

During the past years, many bluebirders have experimented with various methods to assist the bluebird in its struggle for nest sites and the ever present problem of blowfly parasitism. Headquarters often receives both favorable and unfavorable comments from the general public when different methods are tried out. We welcome and encourage you to give us your input, so that we can pass it along to others.

Many of us were eager to try pairing boxes when we first read of the experiments done on this by Allen Prigge and Hubert Prescott. Competition for nesting sites between the Tree Swallow and the bluebird has long been a problem for all of us in the northern areas. I'm fond of the little swallow. I like to watch them skim over the pond for insects and when it's time to mow the hay fields, the swallows follow the tractor as the insects are stirred up by the mower. The population of swallows seems to increase on the days the fields are being mowed. The chatter among them surely attracts others from nearby fields.

I started by pairing boxes about 18-20 feet [5.48-6.1 m] apart and was disappointed to find that many times I had Tree Swallows nesting in both boxes. One day in early spring I was checking my trail as the swallows were returning and searching for nesting sites. One single box had a brooding female bluebird and a male who was trying desperately to defend the box. I felt that by the next day the swallows would have taken over. I decided to place a second box on the same metal post, since something had to be done immediately. I couldn't wait for another post to be placed in the ground. I ran wire through the nail holes of the second box and hung it back to back with the first box. I then returned to my car to watch for a while. The swallows immediately started entering the box I'd just hung on the post and the male



bluebird calmed down. That bluebird and the swallow both had successful nestings; the bluebird even used the same box for its second nesting. It was this experience that gave me my first clue that boxes needed to be moved closer together.

Over the past few years, I've tried pairing boxes at different distances. For me, I find that 5 ft. [1.52 m] apart seems to be the distance that works best. Telephone poles work exceptionally well for pairing back to back as the pole does offer a small buffer zone between boxes. Permission for using the poles must be obtained from the utility company and you must remember that a telephone pole would be easy for a predator to climb.

I know both John Rogers of New York and Lillian Files of Massachusetts use paired boxes so I asked for their input on this subject. Both John and Lil prefer pairing at 8 ft. [2.44 m] apart; we all agree that anything over 10 ft. [3.05 m] apart probably will result in having swallows use both boxes. Even this pairing isn't always 100% successful, but it has been a tremendous help to the three of us.

Last year I had two instances of swallows using both boxes of a pair which were 5 ft. [1.52 m] apart; however, in both cases one box of nestlings was very near the fledgling stage when the second swallow started nesting. On occasion, you will have a late nesting swallow. Perhaps her first nest was unsuccessful or possibly the female is a young bird. At any rate, when

(Continued on page 58)

1987 Nesting Box Report

Delos C. Dupree and Michele Wright

Favorable weather throughout most of the bluebird's breeding range helped to produce a sizeable increase in fledglings. The 1242 reports received in 1987 were a 9% increase over the previous year's 1140, but the number of fledglings swelled at a 30% rate from 46,559 to 60,431. An early spring followed by a late autumn in several areas encouraged three nestings and helped increase the average number of fledglings per box used from 4.48 in 1986 to 4.7 in 1987. Totals would have been higher if cold weather hadn't interrupted early nestings in some sections of the country.

Although the number of nesting boxes monitored expanded from 27,420 to 28,848, the percentage of boxes used did not decline, but accelerated. Cavity nesting birds used the boxes at a 61% rate compared with 52% in the last report. Bluebird occupancy increased from 38% to 48%, while all others rose from 14% to 16%. Swallows showed the most dramatic increase using 2961 boxes compared to only 1860 last year. Notice that 5 in. x 5 in. [12.7 cm x 12.7 cm] boxes appear to be preferred by swallows in the West where 1181 boxes were used by them. Perhaps preference is a matter of availability. Your comments would be appreciated.

A successful year like 1987 depends on many factors besides the natural elements. In many cases adverse conditions can be overcome through experience and the ensuing knowledge obtained. Success is no accident.

John Trott, naturalist at the Madeira School in McLean, VA, has learned that monitoring nesting boxes every five to seven days helps in many ways. John has observed that male House Sparrows are in the nesting boxes at dawn and remain there until an hour or so after sunrise. This is the best time to trap them. Without the males, the females soon leave.

Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice nest very early and, if successful, produce only one clutch. By removing the nest as soon as possible after fledging, John encourages bluebirds to nest earlier. This is also true for bluebirds. John has found that removing the nests as soon as possible after the young have fledged encourages re-nesting by the same pair. Removing old nests has other advantages. Any insects which may remain in the old nest can be eliminated along with the danger of the nest being raised too close to the entrance hole.

House Wrens have not nested successfully on the bluebird trail at Madeira in five years. Although wrens have built nests and laid eggs in the boxes, John claims that the open bluebird habitat selected for the placement of boxes is not to the liking of the wrens.

Bluebirds began nesting 5 to 10 days early at Madeira, feasting on emerging 17 year locusts which were exceptionally plentiful last year. John also observed adults feeding the insects to their young. Availability of food is always a major factor in survival of a species whether the food is provided naturally or by humans. Winter feeding of non-migratory bluebirds has helped many to survive. Spring feeding during bad weather can also help the young to survive. Since the young require insects for food, the easiest method to provide this necessity is to raise or purchase mealworms in case adverse weather limits the ability of the adults to find food for themselves and their young. Don't forget that the supply of berries has been exhausted by springtime so adults need help, too.

An adequate supply of water, especially in the winter, is a necessity frequently overlooked. Bird baths and electric heaters are fairly inexpensive. The pleasure derived from watching the birds bathe more than compensates for the small investment involved.

Reports received dropped from 419 to 386; however, due largely to better weather conditions during the nesting season, the number of fledglings rose from 14,458 to 15,497.

Conservation, education and fun was the way Deb Weddle described her small trail in Buena Vista, VA. Deb said that her two children, ages 6 and 11, learned more last season about birds and nesting than they could ever have learned at school out of a book. Besides the bluebirds, they especially enjoyed watching the Tree Swallows nesting and comparing the nesting habits of the two species. Friends and visitors also enjoyed a lesson in conservation.

Linda Phillips, who collects data for the North Carolina Bluebird Society, could not give a final figure because of the increased number of reports. Christine Ammons of Union Mills, for example, collected 40 reports from folks in Rutherford County. Judging from the reports already received, new records are sure to be set. Charles Abbey, Pat Ober and Bill Heath from Clemmons, NC, monitor the Tanglewood Park Trail. Besides increasing the number of boxes monitored from 57 to 80, they moved boxes previously occupied by sparrows to more suitable habitat. Results were amazing. Last year 177 bluebirds fledged compared to 46 the previous year and not one sparrow attempted to nest. Charles says that he, Pat and Bill may be getting older, but they are also getting better at maintaining a bluebird trail.

That 1987 was a good bluebird year was evidenced by Willar Cash of Goldsboro, NC, who had 332 fledglings from 57 boxes used by bluebirds. That averages out to be 5.82 fledglings per box compared with the overall average of 4.7.

For those who live in urban areas deploring the lack of bluebirds, take heart. George Haynes of New Canaan, CT, put up his first nesting box 20 years ago on his two acre farm which had an apple orchard. George had instant success, bluebirds loved the hab-

itat. Recently, George moved to an urban area where his home is one unit in a four unit condominium on a half acre lot backing up to a 165 unit condo with a density of 11 units per acre. Two years ago, remembering his success with raising bluebirds on his farm, George made several nesting boxes for friends and relatives who also had small farms. On a whim, with little hope for success, he also made one for his backyard. To his surprise, bluebirds nested, but the young died. Last year the aggressive male successfully defended the nest against starlings and squirrels. Four young fledged—success in suburbia.

When bluebird trails are expanded into cavity nesting trails, the results can be gratifying. Besides enjoying successful bluebird, chickadee and titmouse nestings in standard nest boxes, Andy and Lorna Beasley of Live Oak, FL, were delighted with the three Eastern Screech-Owls and 11 Great Crested Flycatchers from other types of nesting boxes. American Kestrels laid five eggs in a kestrel box but, unfortunately, they did not hatch—maybe next year.

An interesting observation was made by Arthur Kennell of Gettysburg, PA, at the Evergreen Cemetery. While 21 of 25 boxes were successfully used by bluebirds producing 131 fledglings, the highest concentration occurred in only 12 boxes which produced 101 fledglings. Of the 12, one was used four times with fledglings as late as 21 August. Another five boxes were used three times and the others twice. A study of the reasons why some habitats are more productive than others would help determine the placement of future boxes.

Building a bluebird fortress was the object of Lance Wood of Alexandria, VA. Each nesting box was mounted on a steel pipe which was placed inside a PVC pipe sunk into the ground. Both pipes were greased with wheel bearing grease and a piece of hardware cloth inserted between the pipe and box with sharp edges pointing

down. Entrance holes were made double thick to discourage starlings. House Sparrows were trapped. Judge for yourself whether or not the results were worth the effort. Bluebirds nested in 24 of 28 boxes producing 164 fledglings for a 6.6 average per box used.

Freezing weather the first week of April, when many females were laying eggs and not yet incubating, may have been the reason many eggs did not hatch on Cathy Reno's trail in Gainesville, FL. In spite of the initial setbacks, by the end of the season bluebirds had fledged 630 using 79 of 114 boxes for a 7.97 average fledglings per box used. Boxes located in areas worst hit by predators were protected by metal cone guards which proved to be 100% effective. Cathy uses tree tanglefoot to ward off ants, but has to reapply often in order to maintain the sticky surface. Some members claim that an oily rag tied around the post is effective against ants.

Third nestings are not common in New York, but Florence Germond reported at least ten occurred on her trail of 184 boxes at Clinton Corners, NY, even though severe cold and snow in late April curtailed early nestings. Florence banded 471 young of the 582

fledged from 114 boxes used by bluebirds.

Pairing boxes has provided many interesting variations on Joseph Sedlacek's 240 box trail in Johnson City, NY. Although Tree Swallow-Eastern Bluebird competition remained as strong as ever, Joseph observed that male bluebirds vigorously defended territory until incubation began. Then both species nested compatibly. Tree Swallow fledglings outnumbered bluebird fledglings by 392 to 80, but the bluebirds are doing well. For the first time since the trail was started, House Wrens and Tree Swallows nested successfully in back-to-back boxes. Seven Black-capped Chickadees, 12 Wood Ducks and 5 American Kestrels also fledged on Joseph's trail.

When the late Dr. Carl Buckheiser (a charter member) was hospitalized in 1983 at Florence, SC, he encouraged members of the Pee Dee Natural History Society to start a bluebird trail. Local garden clubs provided funds to purchase 36 nesting boxes. According to Mary Lou McLean, one of four trail monitors, the initial 83 fledglings with a 68% success rate (eggs vs. fledglings) increased to 217 fledglings with a 75% success rate in a five year period.

Midwest

An early warm spring in most areas helped to increase the number of fledglings reported by 31.7% (31,135 vs. 23,627) while the number of reports received increased by only 12% (715 vs. 638). Reporting for the "Bluebird Recovery Program" of the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, Mary Ellen Vetter writes that some of the old problems which reduced brood size per box are being resolved. Mary Ellen stated "The biggest difference this year is that pairing of houses, with few exceptions, really worked!" Tree Swallows and bluebirds both consume large numbers of insects during the breeding season, but the swallow's diet consists mostly of flying insects caught on the wing while bluebirds feed mostly on the ground. Competition, therefore, exists mainly for a nesting site and pairing boxes reduces this type of competition.

Placing nesting boxes one hundred feet [30.46 m] or more away from fencerows was encouraged to reduce competition from House Wrens and reduce losses from such predators as raccoons.

Carrol Henderson, nongame supervisor of the wildlife section in Minnesota's DNR, has set a goal of raising 15,000 bluebird fledglings in 1988. That is a real challenge. In order to attain that goal, Carrol urges trail operators to keep the bluebird trail small enough so that boxes can be checked at least every 7 to 10 days. Enlarging a trail may require extra help.

Excellent weather during the nesting season was an important factor in establishing a record high number of bluebird fledglings (212 vs. 168 in 1982) on the Holden Arboretum Trail in Men-

tor, OH. A similar increase was shown in Tree Swallow fledglings (204 vs. 171 in 1986). Jean Eakin stated that, "There is evidence that our relocation of boxes in pairs permitting bluebirds and Tree Swallows to nest side by side is partly responsible for our increased population. The two species nested successfully in 18 pairs of boxes!" At the Holden Arboretum, nests infested with blowfly larvae are removed and replaced with clean nests. This practice has reduced losses due to parasitism to a minimum according to Jean.

When House Wrens look over a nesting site after the bluebirds fledged five young, Ira Workman of Danville, OH, decided to try an experiment. He removed the top from the bluebird box and mounted a wren box with a 1 in. [2.54 cm] entrance hole on the side of the same post. After the wrens started nesting, the top was replaced on the bluebird box. Ira said, "This might not work again, but it did this time with bluebirds and wrens using separate boxes on the same post." Four bluebirds and seven wrens were fledged.

Two factors are attributed by Francis Schweickert for an almost 300% increase (300 vs. 107) of fledglings on her 78 box trail in Peru, IL. Painting fake 2 1/4 in. [5.71 cm] holes on the sides and back of nesting boxes appears to attract more bluebirds according to Francis. She also protects her boxes from predators by using stalks of Pasture Rose (10 to 12 per box) wired to a metal mounting post. Cattle do not bother the boxes for scratching purposes like they did before the rose stalks were used. Since many of the boxes are mounted in pastures, this is a bonus.

One of the most interesting reports submitted came from Ed Ray of the Tennessee Valley Authority. In 1981, a management guide for Eastern Bluebirds was implemented at Land Between the Lakes, Golden Pond, KY, by Aurelia M. Ecton. The guide established criteria for building, repairing, placement, and monitoring of the nesting boxes. The guide was revised in 1983 by Lynn Vandenhoj. George and Della Zimmerman, Rebecca McDonald,

and Paul Farley volunteered to maintain the trail and keep accurate records. Problem areas were noted and boxes moved to a more suitable habitat. Additional boxes were mounted in more productive areas.

Educational aspects of the project are promoted at the Woodlands Nature Center where three or four programs are held each year. Bluebird house kits are sometimes provided and the public is involved in box inspection during the nesting season. John Judy, Chairman of the NABS Educational Committee, who was instrumental in organizing the project for TVA, reports that more than 3,000 brochures and nesting box plans have been distributed to individuals since the beginning of the project.

While bluebird conservation was the main objective in their volunteer role, George and Della Zimmerman couldn't help but cite the many bonuses such as "seeing the beautiful wildflowers in the spring, the other beautiful birds, the flying squirrels we uncovered in the nesting boxes, the many deer and wild turkey. We enjoyed every trip."

The first bluebird egg was laid on 27 March 1987, on Tom Barber's trail in Cambridge, OH. Tom claims this to be an Ohio record. On 1 April about 18 in. [45.72 cm] of snow fell, but fortunately the female had started incubating. Cold weather followed, depleting the major food supply: insects. A nearby plowed field yielded enough earthworms to keep the young from starving. The five young fledged and subsequent nestings produced an additional ten for a total of 15 from that box. No wonder 118 bluebirds were fledged from 14 boxes for an 8.43 average per box used.

Sometimes a clutch is laid, then another nest is built on top of the clutch and more eggs are laid. Roland Dagwell of Indian River, MI, found one such box with 14 eggs in three layers of abandoned nests. Generally, this indicates infertile eggs, but Roland's wife felt that the female loved to lay eggs, but couldn't stand children.

The same day Nancy McFarland

left her home in Hartsville, OH, her record brood of bluebirds fledged. When she arrived at her new home in Pardeeville, WI, bluebirds were already nesting in a box mounted earlier by her husband Dennis. There are those who would say that some people have all the luck.

Maintaining bluebird trails for educational purposes is the forte of Lee Denewith and Mary Karshner of Royal Oak, MI. Their trails are located at the Charles Bowers School Farm, Lloyd Stage Outdoor Education Center and Independence Oaks County Park.

Another albinistic bluebird has been reported fledging from a nesting box. This one by Edwin Edlund of Muskegon, MI. The bird fledged on 29 July 1987.

The "Tom and Jeanne McCutchin Memorial Bluebird Trail" has been in-

augurated by the Hyde Chapel Association in Ridgeway, WI. After experiencing a successful first year, plans for expanding it are underway by trail monitors Tom McCutchin, Dyllis and Bill Braithwaite, Bob McCabe, Ed Wohl, and Bob Ellarson.

Normally, bluebirds in Arkansas have fledged the last of their young by the end of July with a few rare fledgings in early August. At least a dozen successful nestings with a number of nestlings fledged the last week of August were documented in 1987 by Karen Cole Yaich, urban wildlife biologist with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. In Arkansas, 4366 bluebirds were fledged from 720 boxes used by bluebirds for a 6.06 average. The Hot Springs Village Audubon Society had a good year when 534 bluebirds were fledged from 97 boxes according to Wayne Tice.

West

Large areas of the West experienced good weather, but most of the 62.8% increase (13,799 vs. 8,474 in bluebirds fledged) was a result of 69.8% more reports being received (141 vs. 83). When new trails are started, nesting box occupancy is generally quite low. After a few years, the results should improve.

Placing a trail of nesting boxes across the entire state of Montana on Highway 200 from Noxon to Glendive is an authorized Montana Centennial project already started by "Montana Bluebird Trails." Art Aylesworth of Ronan, MT, and Deni Hershberger of Plains, MT, are thrilled to report that Eastern Bluebirds have been seen in Miles City, MT, so Montana could be the first state trail to be occupied by all three species of bluebirds. So far, 52 members are set to monitor the 900 mile trail, but additional help will be needed.

Western Bluebirds nested on Tom Matsko's trail on the Dearborn above Wolf Creek for the first time since the early 1930s. Their range seems to be expanding into the Eureka area where 60 fledged. Two pair fledged three broods on Clarence Hagerman's trail in

Pinehurst, ID. In the Philipsburg area, nearly 1,000 Mountain Bluebirds were fledged on Petra de Groot's trail. Western Bluebirds were also noted in the area, but none nested in the boxes. The 2,318 Western Bluebirds fledged in western Montana, Nevada and Idaho during 1987 nearly doubled the previous year's total.

Bluebirds arrived on 30 February 1987, and nesting started 10 to 14 days earlier than usual on the Canadian portion of the "Mountain Bluebird Trails" according to compiler Duncan Mackintosh of Lethbridge, Alberta. What would have been a banner year turned out to be only slightly better than the previous year. Even though second broods were more common than usual, the large number of sterile eggs and cold rains early in the nesting season dashed hopes of a large increase. Even with the adversities suffered, 3044 Mountain Bluebirds were fledged.

Disappointments were also experienced by Alfred Perry of Boise, ID. Monitoring his 343 boxes from 16-18 May, Al found most boxes full of about one-third grown young. On 19 May, a severe hail storm hit, followed by a week of very cold weather and exten-

sive snow and rain. Only 350 fledglings survived.

"The Friends of the Bluebirds" nest box project in southwestern Manitoba, which was monitored by 54 volunteers on the 2,000 box trail, had over a thousand nestings of mostly Mountain Bluebirds. Coordinator Mamie McGowan did not have a final total to report, but one nesting produced hybrids from a male Mountain Bluebird and female Eastern Bluebird.

When Corinne Grim of Ft. Collins, CO, found two Mountain Bluebird eggs in a deserted nest, she placed the eggs in a Mountain Chickadee nest with five eggs. To her surprise and delight, all the bluebird and chickadee eggs hatched and the young fledged. What a chore for the chickadees!

The presence of 3.0 ppm of DDE was discovered in a female Western Bluebird which was found dead along with the male and an entire brood in a nesting box near Salem, OR. Elsie Eltzroth of Corvallis, OR, received the information from a report by the state toxicologist. When poisoning is believed to be the cause of losses, the only way to prove your suspicion is to have the bird examined by a toxicologist. The next step is to find the source of contamination and have the situation corrected.

If the Olympics had been held at Calgary, Alberta, during the spring, visitors would have had little trouble finding Mountain Bluebirds. Donald Stiles reports 1984 fledglings were raised in the Calgary area last year. Donald felt that House Sparrows benefited from the warm weather preceding the breeding season because they got a good head start on the other cavity nesters and that Tree Swallows were more adversely affected than bluebirds by rain during the breeding season.

No major bad weather at the Fort Lewis, WA, trail of George Walter helped bluebirds to raise 644 fledglings last year compared to 471 the previous year. George was disappointed by the 53 pairs that did not fledge any young, feeling the failure rate was due to the breeding population getting so large that pairs were be-

ing pushed into marginal production areas. This may be so, but the addition of 52 boxes to the trail may also have attracted less productive pairs or other conditions may have been present which had not occurred before, like the use of pesticides. This would be a good study area.

Nesting began the second week of April at the Waubay, NWR due to the mild spring weather. The largest number of fledglings since 1983 was the result according to Dennis Skadson of Grenville, SD, who plans to add another 50 boxes to the trail in 1988.

Members of the Yakima Valley Audubon Society monitor four trails with a great variety of habitat changes and several sharp changes in elevation. Most of the 283 Mountain Bluebirds were fledged at the higher elevations while most of the 852 Western Bluebirds were fledged on irrigated agricultural, private and Washington State Game Department land. Nesting boxes mounted in logged-over U.S. National Forest land are bringing the Western Bluebirds back to those areas, but so far not much success has been attained with the Mountain Bluebirds. For the first time, boxes were mounted close to the city of Yakima. While nesting attempts were made in most of the eight boxes installed, only two nestings were successful, producing eight young.

Swallows

Drawing conclusions from data with as many variables as are present in these reports is risky, but the sharp increase in the number of nesting boxes used by swallows is worth noting. Most of the increase from 1,860 to 2,961 as related earlier came from the West where 5 in. x 5 in. boxes used by swallows rose from 264 to 1,181. The additional reports received from the West, where both the Tree Swallow and the Violet-green Swallow nest, may have accounted for some of the increase. More and more trail operators, in areas where swallows are present, mount boxes back to back or within 10 ft. [3.04 m] of each other to pro-

Table 1: 1987 Bluebird Nesting Box Data According to Geographic Region.

Region	4" x 4"			5" x 5"			Open-Top			Jug			Other			Total
	E	C	W	E	C	W	E	C	W	E	C	W	E	C	W	
Total Number of Boxes	5,070	12,474	846	1,684	1,634	5,878	11	32	7	14	71	0	352	742	32	28,848
Boxes Used by Bluebirds	2,471	5,597	260	803	733	2,488	4	5	0	4	3	0	129	333	18	12,848
No. of Bluebirds Fledged	10,480	26,125	788	4,253	3,421	12,924	12	22	0	14	12	0	738	1,555	87	60,431
Boxes Used: Chickadees	204	157	2	29	64	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	16	2	543
Boxes Used: Thrushes	106	63	7	27	65	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	1	279
Boxes Used: Nuthatches	9	18	1	0	6	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	44
Boxes Used: Swallows	627	275	137	279	241	1,181	1	1	6	0	14	0	61	128	10	2,961
Boxes Used: Wrens	262	219	80	111	125	137	1	2	0	3	1	0	55	33	1	1,030
Boxes Used: Flycatchers	2	4	2	1	0	13	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	26
Total No. Boxes Used	3,681	6,333	489	1,250	1,234	3,866	6	9	6	8	18	0	286	513	32	17,731
% of Boxes Used by All Species	73	51	58	74	76	66	55	28	86	57	25	0	81	69	100	61
% of Boxes Used by Bluebirds	49	45	31	48	45	42	36	16	0	29	4	0	37	45	56	45
% of Boxes Used by Others	24	6	27	26	31	24	19	12	86	28	21	0	44	24	44	16

Geographic Regions According to States and Provinces

E—East (386 reports)
 C—Central (715 reports)
 W—West (141 reports)
 Total (1,242 reports)

East: Bermuda, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Brunswick, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Nova Scotia, Pennsylvania, Quebec, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, D.C.

Central: Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Ontario, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, Wisconsin.

West: Alaska, Alberta, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Idaho, Manitoba, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

vide nesting sites for both the bluebird and the swallow. So far, reports indicate that pairing boxes *does* reduce nest box competition.

6002 Hunt Club Rd., Elkridge, MD 21227 (Dupree); 2926 Woodwick Ct., Ellicott City, MD 21043 (Wright).

New Bluebird Nesting Survey Forms

Due to the ever-increasing number of forms returned each year, the 1988 report has been changed to simplify the form and help in tabulating the results. Basically the form will look something like the results printed in *Sialia*.

The 1988 nesting season has already started by now, so please use the enclosed format for tabulating your results. It is hoped that the Siberian Express did not bother the bluebirds. Enjoy a successful season and share your good fortune with the rest of us by sending in the report no later than 1 November 1988. ■

Eastern Shore of Virginia Bird Club Has Successful Trail

William J. Rue

In the spring of 1986, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Bird Club purchased lumber and the Manual Arts Department of Arcadia High School built 20 bluebird nesting boxes.

The boxes were placed on 1 June 1986, on the north side of the fairways of the Eastern Shore Yacht and Country Club. They were installed approximately five feet above the ground on trees and facing the fairways. The boxes were monitored three times during 1986; 25 birds were fledged.

On 4 February 1987, all boxes were cleaned and some moved to better locations. Monitoring of boxes began on an almost weekly basis from 7 May 1987, until 7 August 1987. Fifteen inspections were made and records of the findings kept. The 7 May check showed 16 eggs and 21 young birds.

A total of 123 bluebird eggs were counted from which 114 bluebirds were fledged, a yield of 92.7%. Five eggs were lost to predation, two birds died when a flying squirrel built a nest over a nest occupied by young, and two

birds died of unknown causes, probably abandonment.

Seven boxes yielded one brood, eight boxes yielded two broods, and one box yielded three broods. Nests usually contained three, four, or five eggs; one nest contained six eggs, but only four were fledged; the other two were found dead in the nest.

Box 18-1 fledged one brood, then the nest was occupied by a flying squirrel. No more bluebird activity was seen at that nest box during the year. Box 7-1 was occupied by a flying squirrel, but after the box was cleaned a brood of bluebirds was fledged. Three nesting boxes had the holes enlarged by squirrels, while two boxes were occupied by House Sparrows. After their nests were destroyed several times, they gave up the effort.

Sixteen boxes were used by bluebirds during 1987. Comparison of bluebird trail reports suggest our results compare favorably with trails in Alberta, Canada, and Macon County, TN, in 1986 in both egg production and birds fledged. ■

New Ideas to Test

Wayne H. Davis

In 1987, in addition to my experiments with bluebirds on the surface mines, I put up an assortment of about 60 milk cartons, milk jugs, soda bottles, windshield washer jugs, etc. Success was poor, with only four being used. For over 20 years I have had heavy usage of half-gallon paper milk cartons in northwestern Minnesota, but I have not yet had a bluebird nest in one in Kentucky. It looks as if we might have geographical variation in nesting behavior.

In postulating reasons for my poor record last summer, I am guessing that perhaps bluebirds don't like a site where a person can readily look in and see the eggs. Although many of us have seen them nesting in the top of a fencepost in plain sight, our experiments have shown that, when given a choice, they reject a box with a roof entrance in favor of a side entrance (*Wildlife Soc. Bull* 15:204-207, 1987). Therefore, I began thinking about ways to give the birds a little more privacy in a plastic container. I put a 1 1/2 inch [3.8 cm] circular saw into my power drill and made a hole in the center of the bottom of a two liter soda bottle, painted it, and mounted it horizontally on a fence. Even though it was late June, bluebirds moved in and raised two young.

I next thought about modifications to the one gallon plastic milk jug. Enlarge the pouring hole to 1 1/2 in., turn it on its side with the handle downward and attach it to a steel fencepost with wire. The bird would go in over the bulge formed by the recess for the handle and drop down into a more private nesting chamber. Another idea I have is to invert the jug so that the lid is at the bottom and cut the entrance just above the handle. This way the birds would also go in over the bulge where the handle is and drop into a more private chamber. I am planning experiments to test these ideas as compared to wooden boxes in 1988. I would be glad to hear from anyone who

is interested in this.

With paper cartons heat is not a problem but with plastic it is. White paint might solve the problem, but I prefer a less conspicuous brown, gray or green. I make attractive houses that do not look like trash in the trees. For ventilation I remove the lid, drill one-half in. [1.27 cm] holes in the floor and cut several slits a couple of inches wide and a one-quarter in. [.64 cm] high in the sides.

Another idea I have is bluebird use of the right-of-ways of interstate highways. There is plenty of good habitat and the steel fenceposts are adequate sites for placing nest containers. One can apply for a permit to stop along an interstate, but the prospects of getting it do not look bright. However, the district highway people to whom I talked were favorable to placing nest containers on the posts if it did not involve stopping along the interstate. This leaves lots of possibilities: rest areas and weigh stations, frontage roads and the exits. Although pedestrian traffic is illegal along the interstates, they might not object to your walking along the fence with a bag full of nest cartons. Contact the supervisor for the highway district where you plan to work.

School of Biological Sciences
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40506-0225

Lawrence Zeleny comments: Perhaps some of our readers might be interested in cooperating with Dr. Davis in trying some of his box designs on an experimental basis. It is quite possible that one of the reasons that bluebirds in Kentucky are not nesting in the paper cartons is that they would get considerably hotter in that state than they do in Minnesota unless they are well-insulated.

I agree that the right-of-ways on interstate highways often have good bluebird habitat *except* for the danger

(Continued on page 58)

Literature Review

T. David Pitts

Hensley, R. Craig, and Kimberly G. Smith. Eastern Bluebird response to nocturnal black rat snake predation. *Wilson Bulletin* 98:602-603.—Movie cameras with flash units were attached to the backs of nest boxes to record parental feeding of nestlings. The time and date of each visit were also recorded by positioning a digital watch near the entrance and including the watch in each photograph. At one nest box a rat snake was photographed entering the box at 8:49 PM; at another nest box a rat snake was photographed as it entered at 1:44 AM. Four large nestlings were taken from each nest. Many people have speculated or assumed that rat snakes destroyed bluebird nests at night as well as during daylight hours. This study conclusively documents nocturnal rat snake predation. The authors suggest that it is advantageous for adult bluebirds to roost separately from their large nestlings because of the possibility of nocturnal predation.

Pierson, T.A., and P.F. Scanlon. 1986. Use of fencepost cavities by nesting Eastern Bluebirds in southwestern Virginia. *Wilson Bulletin* 98:479-482.—This report is based on a Master of Science thesis at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Va. During two years of study (1976 and 1977) 35 nests of Eastern Bluebirds were found in fencepost cavities. Ninety-one percent of the cavities had been excavated by woodpeckers, and 8% were produced by natural decay. Six nests of European Starlings were found in posts. Starlings generally preferred cavities that had larger entrance diameters and interior dimensions, and were closer to the ground than cavities used by bluebirds. One bluebird nest cavity had an entrance diameter of 1.34 in. [3.4 cm] which must be close to the minimum

diameter an Eastern Bluebird can squeeze through. Thirty of the fencepost cavities were inspected 6 years later (1983); only 6 to 10 cavities were still usable. The authors suggest that rotting fenceposts be allowed to remain and that new posts be used to support the old posts and the fence.

Fiedler, David A. 1974. The ecology of the Eastern Bluebird in central Minnesota. M.A. thesis, St. Cloud State College, St. Cloud, Minnesota. 46 pages.—This thesis summarizes an 8 year (1965-1972) study of Eastern Bluebirds in Morrison County, Minnesota. Data were gathered on 745 nests, all in nest boxes. Over 2,400 bluebirds (adults and nestlings) were banded. Fifty-five percent of the eggs laid produced fledglings; 2.4% of the eggs were white. Four females laid both blue and white eggs. Mortality of fledglings was highest during the first year; a few survived 5 years. Blowfly larvae or pupae were found in 88.3% of the nests; fleas were found in 16% of the nests inspected. Parasites were thought to have little effect on nesting success. Most nest failures occurred during the egg stage. House Sparrows, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, and small mammals (such as chipmunks, white-footed mice, and flying squirrels) competed with bluebirds for the nest boxes. House cats were thought to be the major mammalian predator. A mid-May snowstorm resulted in the loss of 34% of the active nests one year. To my knowledge, none of these data have been published. ■

Dr. Pitts welcomes reviews from members. Readers should submit material to Dr. David T. Pitts, The University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, TN 38238-5014.

Northwestern Report for Annual Meeting 1987

Elsie Kollin Eltzroth

This report and the two immediately following were scheduled for presentation at the Tenth Annual Meeting, 19 September 1987. Circumstances prevented their being given; therefore, Elsie Eltzroth's and Norah Lane's reports are printed in their entirety as they would have been presented.

This report will cover fourteen areas and a variety of habitats—fertile valleys, rolling hills, high desert plateaus, and forested mountains. This year, from British Columbia, we heard from Harold Pollock who has boxes north of Victoria on Vancouver Island. He reported that they have gone from 2 nesting pairs of bluebirds in 1985 to 14 pairs in 1987! This may be the precursor of a significant change in the Pacific Coast Range for breeding bluebirds. It should be of interest to wildlife managers in Washington and Oregon.

At Grand Forks to the east, Emerson Reid compiled records sent in by 11 volunteers who monitor 125 boxes. They have also experienced an exciting increase from 81 bluebirds fledged in 1986 to 150 in 1987. They have a predator that damaged some boxes, one I'm very glad we don't run into near Corvallis: BEARS!!

Crossing the Canadian border along the eastern slope of the Cascade Mountains, George Brady monitors 300 boxes on private property near Pateros and on Washington State Game Lands. This year he banded 507 Western and Mountain Bluebirds, averaging 4.3 birds banded per nest.

South of the Okanogan Valley where the Cascade foothills provide ideal habitat for both bluebird species, Bill and Edith Ryan compiled impressive figures for three trails near Yakima, Washington. They topped last year's number of 907 Mountain and Western Bluebirds by tallying 1,127 fledged this season from their 78 boxes, the Jones trail of 81, and the 124 boxes on the Audubon Trail monitored by Virginia Vredenburg and 11 volunteers. The Ryan's trail was deliberately set up to take them through fields of wildflowers where Bill could

pursue his favorite hobby of photography. Bluebirds now follow it, too, but only Bill and Edith get to chat with the pair of Spotted Owls through whose territory they must pass.

Nothing unusual happened on the Brinkerhoff Trail according to Jess. The boxes around Bickleton only produced 3,200 (three thousand two hundred) bluebirds this summer!!!! He did make an offhand comment in his letter about finding one nest with 9 eggs and that all the young fledged. The coordinator of this trail, Ada Ruth Whitmore, lives at the *Whoop-N-Holler Ranch*, something they all must do well when they brag about their bluebirds. The trail near Bickleton was featured on a TV "short" recently, but somebody forgot to mention that Jess and Elva began that baby bluebird boom near the Tri-Cities of south-central Washington. Bickleton rolls out the *blue carpet* each year for people from nearby towns who enjoy a "Bluebird Run" which includes relay races, a picnic, and a variety of programs.

Heading west back over the 11 to 14,000 foot peaks of the volcanic Cascade Mountains, we must stop for a moment to look at the lifeless trees lying like toothpicks in the still dusty ash of Mt. St. Helens. It is mid-June late on a sunny afternoon. We hear the mellow call of the Mountain Bluebird there on Windy Ridge and turn to see the familiar silhouette on a large snag. The bluebird of happiness is just one example of life returning to the area devastated by the eruption in the spring of 1980.

The news about nesting bluebirds on Vancouver Island should please Jim Atkinson, biologist at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge on the southwest coast of Washington, who put up 15 boxes

this year. Historical records show that bluebirds had been seen there in very small numbers. If post-breeding birds from Vancouver Island migrate south through the Coast Range, they may pioneer along their route and find Jim's boxes and habitat inviting.

The most encouraging report received from Oregonians was that Hubert Prescott's trail near Portland is coming back to life thanks to Earl Gillis and three new gung-ho monitors. At last count, 216 young fledged from boxes on Chehalem and Parrett Mountains.

When Earl returned my questionnaire with brief comments, he proceeded to answer my last, and most important question, with a six page letter! In a nutshell, his wife spent the summer recovering from a fractured hip and broken femur, and Earl spent the summer playing nurse, cook, physical therapist, entertainer and house-husband. He complained of dishpan hands and threatened to go back to breaking handles off the coffee cups hoping that Edna would send him out bluebirding again. Wish them both lots of luck!

Both Earl's and our trail near Corvallis suffered heavy losses of eggs and young early in the spring but recovered when second broods were successful. I banded 220 nestlings which fledged. This was better than our previous high of 198 in 1983 and represents more than a 100% increase from a disastrous low in 1985. Using our governor's slogan for the state, it was a great "OREGON COMEBACK."

During the summer we found both blackberry and cascara seeds in some of the 100 nests we checked when we selected 33 to send to Dr. John Werren at the Univ. of Rochester. Dr. Werren is conducting research using *Nasonia vitripennis*, the wasp which parasitizes the blowfly pupae that many of us find in our bluebird boxes. Perhaps this increased use of summer berries indicates that fewer insects were available during the height of an unusually hot, dry summer or it may merely be a factor of the habitat.

Each year Corvallis' losses are

overshadowed by so many other satisfying events. Probably the nicest "love" story on the Corvallis circuit concerns the rehabilitation of an injured four year old territorial male. When he recovered and could fly well, one of our zealous monitors introduced him to a female who was incubating six eggs when her one-legged mate disappeared. Kay Bisbee watched over the pair through that brood by taking mealworms to supplement their short rations during bad weather and by setting up a nearby water supply during our unusual dry and hot spells (90 + ° F.) later in the breeding season. She played cupid and not only saved the first brood but saw this exceptional match produce a second successful fledging of four.

As we go down the Willamette Valley between the Coast Range and the Cascades to Al Prigge's trail near Eugene, we find that 5 boxes are being monitored. Bluebirds attempted 2 broods but successfully fledged only 4 young of one brood. Al saw two adult females caring for the 8-day olds after the male disappeared. A recent article in *Sialia* (9(2)) describes this "mutual assistance" which we had seen on the Corvallis Trail in 1986. Again this spring, an adult male joined a breeding pair 100 yards away when his mate disappeared and 4 eggs were abandoned.

From the Bend Audubon Society newsletter, the *Eagle Eye*, I learned that Black-billed Magpies had been depredating swallow nests and were harassing Mountain Bluebirds with eggs in the box at the Charles Lewis residence. In desperation Mr. Lewis built an experimental "cage" of 2 in. x 2 in. [5.08 cm x 5.08 cm] wire mesh and placed it over the box entrance. Although it took the male bluebird much longer than the female to learn how to get into the box, he continued to feed the two 16-day olds after the female disappeared.

I am pleased to note that some federal and state agencies in the West are taking an active interest in bluebird populations and asking amateur ornithologists for information and assistance. A most welcome new trail

was started by Dennis Vroman in the Siskiyou National Forest, Galice Ranger District. Last February when I was in Grants Pass and toured a small part of the district in pouring rain, I was able to make a few suggestions for suitable box placement. During the summer 8 of 22 new boxes were used by bluebirds, 54 eggs were laid, and approximately 21 young fledged. Dennis found a nest box "stained purple on the inside with dried blackberries in the nest itself." I have not checked with Dennis since the forest fires destroyed over 96,500 acres in southwest Oregon. I can just see his boxes going up in smoke! (10/25/87—they didn't.)

Not far from Grants Pass, on the Applegate River, John Keller has 53 boxes on his 15 acres, but bluebirds have not had much success warding off aggressive Tree Swallows which often team up with Violet-green Swallows to double the competition the Western Bluebird faces. Of the boxes used, 90% were occupied by Tree Swallows. They fledged 112 young while the bluebirds in one box only fledged two broods of 4 each. He tried "pairing" boxes and in one case it worked, in another it didn't. In fact, he noticed that the bluebirds and the swallows were competing with their

own kind despite his having more than enough boxes to go around. An excessive number of boxes will, in most cases, turn the area into a swallow heaven instead of a bluebird haven.

Continuing south we go to Walnut Creek, California, where Don Yoder has maintained a few boxes since 1971 but is now maintaining 57 on a weekly basis since retiring in 1984. Last year 35 young fledged from his trail which is on a retirement community golf course. This year only 27 young "teed" off to continue playing the game. He wrote to say that he watched from a distance as a bluebird attacked a small snake while a half dozen robins stood around in a ragged circle and cheered for the winner—but he forgot to tell me who won. The losses on his trail were similar to those on other trails: competition from swallows and wrens, depredation from raccoons and snakes, weather related losses, and death or disappearance of parent birds.

From where I sit, pounding out reports and letters, the outlook for bluebird population growth in the northwest grows brighter by the year. It's such a pleasure to look inside the world of bird behavior. Whether it is some unusual event or just the normal pattern which we observe, those of us who walk the trail are the privileged few. ■

Canadian Mountain Bluebird Report

Norah Lane

It seems to me the Mountain Bluebird *must* be the playwright Maeterlinck's legendary bluebird, the one that the children Mytyl and Tytyl searched for and when found brought great joy and beauty to their home. I grew up hearing of Maeterlinck and his bluebird classic, but I had never seen a bluebird with the radiant all-blue plumage. Perhaps you can share my awesome delight upon seeing my first male Mountain Bluebird on the Manitoba prairie. Having just returned from the warmer southern regions, he had found a cavity and was standing on

guard.

Every spring season since then, out on the bluebird trail in Manitoba, my spirits soar at the sight of the Mountain male. He is the embodiment of hope, courage and countless happy memories.

Quoting Norman Criddle in Bent's *Life Histories* he states, "The male Mountain Bluebirds always arrive a few days in advance of the females, but it is not long before the latter appear upon the scene and in an astonishingly short time pairs have taken possession of a nesting site and the

females are taking nesting material into boxes." Yes, she builds the nest—this lovely gentle calm bird with the soft gray and blue plumage.

The nest is of grass and sometimes a few feathers, whatever material is handy. Once Barbara found a nest with a *cassette tape* incorporated into it and another lined with deer hair. The female lays 4 to 7 eggs for her clutch—rarely 8 eggs. Incubation is 13 to 14 days. The entire nesting cycle takes about 7 weeks—1 for egg laying, 2 weeks for incubation and 3 weeks until fledging. All this information was the result of monitoring and servicing thousands of nest boxes.

Years ago, prior to the settlement of the prairies, Mountain Bluebirds were rarely seen. Because of prairie fires and lack of trees or bluffs they had no nesting cavities.

After settlement, prairie fires were controlled by the "breaking up" of the sod so bluffs of aspen soon dotted the landscape and shelter belts were developed. Cavities in fenceposts and telephone poles, binder twine boxes and mail boxes provided nesting sites for the Mountain Bluebird.

The first recorded sighting was near Brandon in 1896 and in 1899 Stuart Criddle found them nesting in hollow oak stumps in the Carberry Sandhills, Manitoba. It took many years for the Mountain Bluebird population to increase. Unfortunately European Starlings and House Sparrows usurped many of the cavities. With the advent of big machinery many trees were cleared to provide more areas for crops. Old trees with cavities were destroyed. Service poles and fenceposts were treated with preservatives and so there was very little decay. Available nesting sites became limited so the bluebirds in spring migration passed on farther north or did not come at all.

Then how is it that we now have many bluebirds in Manitoba? It all started with a nature study group and their leader John Lane. In 1960, the boys named themselves "The Brandon Junior Birders" and started their project to bring back the bluebirds. John had not seen a *nesting* pair of blue-

birds in 30 years. The boys had never seen a bluebird. How eager they were to get started building bird boxes and to put them out. It was 1962 when the boys saw their first bluebirds. Fifteen boxes were occupied by Mountain Bluebirds and four by Eastern Bluebirds. In 1963 there were 36 boxes occupied by Mountain Bluebirds and 34 by Eastern Bluebirds.

In 1970, John Lane started banding young bluebirds and adults when possible. By 1974, there were 4,500 nest boxes on 1,500 miles of bluebird trails. John's final bluebird banding records for 1970-74 inclusive were 10,433 Mountain Bluebirds banded and 1,975 Eastern Bluebirds banded.

Following my husband's death in 1975, a meeting was held to consider the care of these extensive bluebird trails. As well as the Junior Birders, over 60 people volunteered to maintain and monitor the nest boxes. This group is known as "The Friends of the Bluebirds," a dedicated group who build boxes and keep extensive records all for their love of these beautiful species.

Through the experience of volunteers in recent years some changes in box sizes have been made. Nest box size can be variable but ideally a base 5 in. x 5 in. [12.7 cm x 12.7 cm], front 10 in. [25.4 cm] long and back 11½ in. [29.2 cm] long and entrance hole 1-9/16 in. [3.97 cm] in diameter. Mountain Bluebirds are slightly larger, their clutches are often 6-7 eggs and the young Mountains are larger at fledging than Eastern Bluebird young. With a 1-9/16 in. hole starlings are excluded.

Across the Canadian prairies Mountain Bluebird populations are thriving. Results for 1987 from Alberta's "Mountain Bluebird Trails" reported by Duncan Mackintosh will appear in *Sialia*. Lorne Scott for Saskatchewan reports that many people have Mountain Bluebird trails in his province and "generally speaking, population numbers are good." The Manitoba report for 1987 is being forwarded to *Sialia* by "The Friends of the Bluebirds."

I have mentioned the dedication

of this volunteer group—their love and devotion to the preservation of the bluebird. They meet twice a year, handing in reports and sharing experiences.

Two valuable members are here: Hazel Patmore and Barbara Robinson. They have helped with the preparation of this brief history and they will answer your questions.

The spirit of the Friends of the Bluebirds shines through Barbara's poem, in which she expresses her own feelings as she reads, "The Return of the Bluebirds." Barbara,—Your poem please!

Return of the Bluebirds

Early April; All around patches of snow
still on the ground
Creeping juniper, darkest green
Shows through the snow and in between.

But Hark! my dear
What's this I hear
A warble familiar, first of the year
A flash of pure azure from up in the sky
And a bevy of Bluebirds comes down from on high.

A sight to behold, brilliant blue on snow white
Makes me exclaim in exceeding delight.

"My first Bluebirds of spring, you're here!
You're back!
Your boxes are waiting, all ready to pack
With grasses and rootlets
And things like that."

"I've been patiently waiting since last September
To greet you again, and if I remember
We'll count Mammias and Poppas and
Babes and all
And I'll love everyone of you through to the fall."

Barbara Robinson

Mountain Bluebird Trails Report, United States

Art Aylesworth and Deni Hershberger

The 1987 fledging report covers western Montana, northern Idaho and Nevada members of Mountain Bluebird Trails. It represents 20-25% of the boxes that are out in that area.

This has been another exciting year for the propagation of Western Bluebirds in this region. Clarence Hagerman reports two pair fledging three

broods in the Pinehurst, Idaho area. Total Western Bluebirds fledged nearly doubled over 1986. Most important, their range has expanded with 60 fledging in the Eureka area. The report of nesting Western Bluebirds on Tom Matsko's trail on the Dearborn above Wolf Creek were the first reports since the early 1930s in that area.

Mountain Bluebirds in the Philipsburg area fledged nearly 1,000 young birds for Petra de Groot. Westerns were also noted in the area but none used nesting boxes.

Perhaps the most exciting development this year has been a commitment by Mountain Bluebird Trails to place a trail of nest boxes across the entire state of Montana on Highway 200 from Noxon to Glendive as an authorized Montana Centennial project. The trail must be completed by the spring of 1989. Our plans call for finishing it in the spring of 1988. Materials are on hand to build the necessary boxes this winter. It had been our hope that in four or five years this trail of boxes would be occupied by West-

ern, Mountain and Eastern Bluebirds. I'm thrilled to report that this has already happened with Eastern Bluebirds being found in boxes in the Miles City area. We believe that this may be the first time that all three species of bluebirds have been found on one continuous trail of nest boxes. It is hoped that the spinoff from this trail of boxes across the central part of our state will assure the future of these three species in Montana.

For the 1987 breeding year of figures compiled at this writing, a total of 2,960 boxes were reported on of which 1,471 were used. These boxes fledged 2,318 Western Bluebirds and 5,877 Mountain Bluebirds for a total of 8,195. ■

(PRESIDENTIAL POINTS-continued from page 42)

the swallows have completed their nesting the bluebirds have the choice of all the boxes as the Tree Swallow does not usually nest twice in a breeding season.

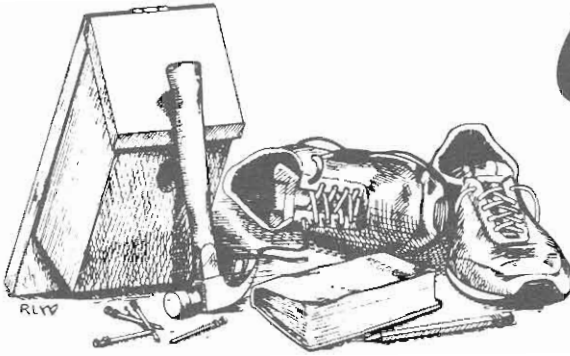
We've also received comments about using the hardware cloth platform to reduce blowfly parasitism (*Sialia* 6(2):70). Placing the hardware cloth in the bottom of the box does appear to be a tremendous help in heavily infested areas. Some people have told us that sometimes the bird stuffs grass down through the holes which then allows the parasite to crawl up the grass to reach the nest. After the nest is complete, if monitors clean the grass out below the hardware cloth it will prevent the blowfly larvae from reaching the nest. This is especially easy to accomplish with front-opening boxes.

Last year nearby neighbors erected a large feeder at the edge of their patio deck. This brought the birds in much closer to the house for everyone to enjoy. However, it was soon obvious that the birds were not able to detect the large plate glass window. They were leaving the feeder and flying directly into the glass. They tried the falcon silhouette which didn't help. They then covered the window with paper

snowflake cut-outs and this also was of no help. They finally covered the window with paper, but this, of course, ended watching the birds.

In *Sialia* 9(1):19, Adelaide Barnard discussed using Saran Wrap® to prevent a bluebird from pecking at his image on a window. My neighbor realized that the feeder couldn't be used another year if the window problem wasn't solved so I suggested we try the Saran Wrap® as a last resort. I'm happy to relate to you that a bird hasn't flown into the window since. Thanks, Adelaide, for your tip! ■

(NEW IDEAS—continued from page 51) from automobile traffic. Bluebirds are slow fliers and are easily killed by high speed traffic. Nesting boxes, if placed at all in such situations, should be located as far as possible from the highway and should be faced away from the highway so there is no danger of nestlings fledging or adults flying directly onto the highway. Nesting boxes should not be mounted in these areas at all if they cannot be consistently and conveniently monitored to prevent House Sparrow usage. Sparrow nesting not only deprives bluebirds of nest sites, but is, in actuality, counterproductive to the health of the bluebird population. ■



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 Graeloch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707.

CARO, MICHIGAN—Harry Clark's trail of 60 boxes in Tuscola County produced 92 Eastern Bluebirds, 79 Tree Swallows, and 86 House Wrens in 1987.

BENTONVILLE, ARKANSAS—The Bella Vista Bluebird Society continues to gain members. The club has 229 boxes along 30 miles of golf courses monitored by 50 very dedicated monitors. Mrs. V. Rodeberg reports that they are in the enviable position of always having a waiting list for the monitoring program. The club was founded in 1980 and now has over 100 members. The residents are all retired.

BRANTFORD, ONTARIO—L.A. Smith says that five insulated boxes were in position by April 19th and these broods fared well early in the season. Removable panels allowed the circulation of air when the weather turned hot in early June. One double box in Mono Township raised two broods of five young each. In 1987, he had 100 pairs of Eastern Bluebirds in his 500 nesting boxes. Though this is a low occupancy rate, it is in an area which had almost no bluebirds 20 years ago.

NEW YORK—The Upstate New York Bluebird Society reported that again in 1987 Genevieve Harrington, Bob Bradley and Fran Hanes participated in the 4-H Conservation Days of Oneida and Herkimer counties. Sixth grade students are bused to a park or campground where instructors of various nature/environmental subjects address groups in 12 minute segments. An instructor may repeat a program 10-15 times in the course of a day. In 1987, students in Herkimer County heard Bob at the Herkimer Diamond Campgrounds. Genevieve and Fran presented their bluebird material to 1200 students from schools in Oneida County at Lake Delta Park over a two day period.

NORTH CAROLINA—"Bluebird Notes" (Nov. 1987) published by the North Carolina Bluebird Society reported that Kasey Crawford sent in a clipping about a Pennsylvania man who for eight years had been unable to attract bluebirds to his boxes. In February of 1985, he cut life-sized wooden silhouettes from quarter-inch plywood, painted them accurately and placed them atop his boxes. The very next month bluebirds started nesting in his boxes and have returned every year since. The same issue also reported that Jim Boozer who monitors 250 boxes each week gives bluebird programs all year long. Fred Bayley, director of general adult education at Western Piedmont Community College, was so impressed with Jim's presentation to the Morgantown Kiwanis Club that he has asked Jim's help in developing a workshop or course for the general public.

FAYETTEVILLE, GEORGIA—The Fayette Chapter #2936 of AARP last year sold nesting boxes to help the bluebirds. The proceeds from the sale assisted one of their charitable projects.

PLANTINGS FOR BLUEBIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

Black Huckleberry: A Good Choice for Poor Soils

Karen Blackburn

Several species of huckleberry occur in the United States though their ranges are restricted to the eastern third of the nation. All are small shrubs, with the largest species, Dangleberry, reaching only six feet (1.83 meters) at maturity. Ranging from Newfoundland and Saskatchewan to Georgia and Louisiana, Black Huckleberry is the most widespread and common species. It is often found growing in association with closely-related wild blueberries on sites characterized by dry, acidic soils. Huckleberry-blueberry stands may occur in open areas or may form the dominant understory vegetation of open woodlands. Established colonies of Black Huckleberry generally spread through the growth of the root system, and the use of fire as a management tool will encourage further sprouting from the roots. Because Black Huckleberry thrives on low-fertility acidic soils where few other plants will prosper, it is useful for erosion control on such sites.

Black Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*)

Native Range—Newfoundland to Saskatchewan, south to Georgia and Louisiana.

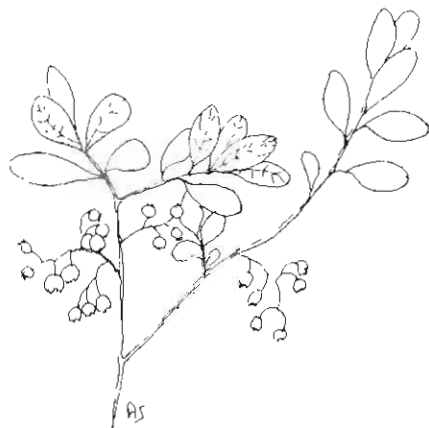
Hardiness—To Zone 2.

Habitat—Occurs in dry, sandy, acidic soils on open sites or in open woodlands. Frequently grows in colonies with blueberries, with which huckleberries are often confused.

Habit—A small deciduous shrub to three ft. (.91 m) in height. Untoothed leaves are spaced alternately along the stems. Autumn foliage is red.

Fruit and Flowers—Greenish-white or greenish-red flowers appear in clusters. Shiny black or blue fruits, one-quarter of an inch (.64 cm) in diameter, are sweet and edible, though seedy. Fruits ripen during summer months.

Landscape Value—Good for naturalizing under trees. Useful for erosion control on sandy or rocky acidic soils.



Culture—Acidic soil (with a pH of 4.0 to 5.0 preferred) is necessary for proper growth. Plant in full sun or light shade. Encourage dense growth of natural stands by light burning in spring at five year intervals or by cutting stems back to encourage sprouting from roots. Easily propagated by division of plants in fall and spring or by tip layering in spring and summer.

Wildlife Value—Provides low cover for many birds, such as the Wild Turkey, Ruffed Grouse, Northern Bobwhite, Mourning Dove, Hermit Thrush and

Rufous-sided Towhee, as well as cover for small mammals. All of the birds mentioned above also feed on the fruits of Black Huckleberry as do the Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Robin, Eastern Bluebird and Pine Grosbeak. The fruits are a favorite of the Gray Catbird. The Black Bear, Gray Fox and Fox Squirrel are among the mammals that consume the fruits. As a group, the fruits of native huckleberries are eaten by at least 24 species of birds.

Related Species—Box Huckleberry (*G. brachycera*)—An evergreen shrub growing six to eighteen inches (.15 to .46 m) in height and ranging from Mary-

land to West Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky. Hardy to Zone 6. Dwarf Huckleberry (*G. dumosa*)—A deciduous shrub which reaches a maximum height of two ft. (.61 m) and ranges from Newfoundland to Florida and west to Mississippi and Tennessee. Found in peaty or sandy acidic soils in lowlands. Hardy to Zone 5. Dangleberry (*G. frondosa*)—Also called Tall Huckleberry, this species may reach six ft. (1.83 m) and ranges from southern New Hampshire to Florida and west to Ohio and Louisiana. Hardy to Zone 5.

Rt. 3, Box 213
Marianna, FL 32446

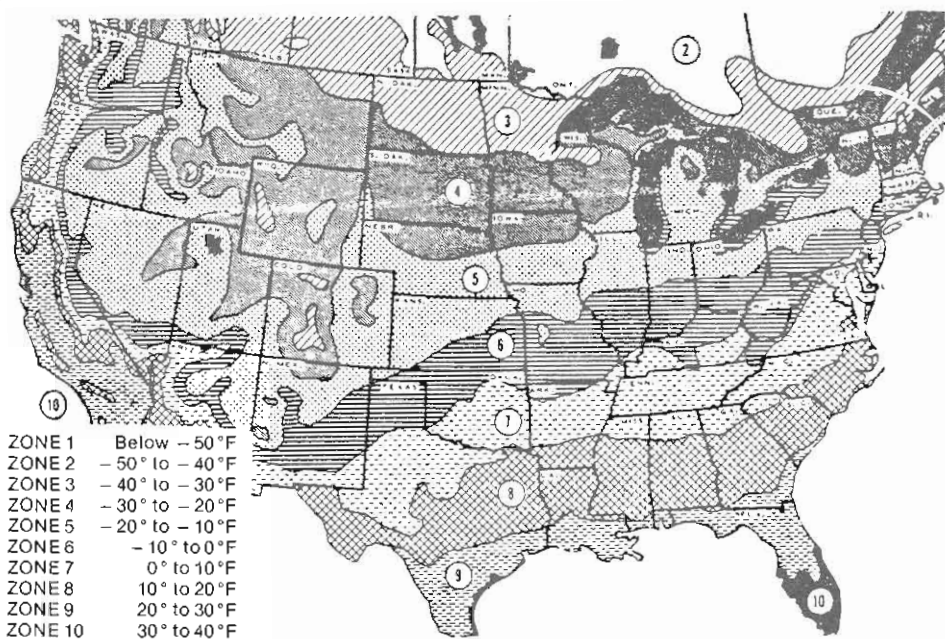


Figure 1. Hardiness Zones for the United States and southern Canada. Temperatures for each zone are the average annual minimum temperatures. When no zones are mentioned with the plant description, plants are hardy anywhere. Factors within zones such as altitude, exposure, soil type, moisture, etc. can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

We invite our readers to report 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.

QUESTION CORNER

Lawrence Zeleny



Will bluebirds eat chopped nut meats or hamburger during the winter?

Jarleen Manuel
Bull Shoals, Arkansas

Both chopped nut meats and raw hamburger as well as suet are good winter foods for bluebirds, but are likely to be ignored by them when their natural foods are readily available. Raisins and other dried fruits are also relished by bluebirds in times of stress.

possible effects of chemical wood preservatives on birds. Until we learn more about this subject, we believe that it is prudent not to use these substances on or very close to nesting boxes.

We have some boxes which are quite old and dilapidated that are used annually by swallows. This year my husband mounted a new bluebird box on a tall maple stump that had been cut recently and creosoted. The bluebirds chose one of the older boxes. Was the box on the maple too new or did the creosote turn them off?

Eileen Dennehy
New Durham, New Hampshire

Bluebirds and most other birds that use nesting boxes seem not to care whether a nesting box is new or old and dilapidated as long as it meets their basic requirements. The location of the box is much more important to them.

The fumes from fresh creosote are toxic and may have caused your bluebirds to reject the box attached to the treated stump. There is much yet to be learned about the

Do you know if this idea works to discourage House Sparrows? I read it in *Songbirds in Your Garden* by John K. Terres. That book suggested a rectangular nest box entrance hole $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches high and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide.

Cathy Remo
Gainesville, Florida

I know of no extensive tests made with this size entrance hole. However, I tried this once several years ago on one nesting box and found that both a male and female House Sparrow could enter and exit through the hole with perfect ease. I presume that bluebirds could also use such a box, although I have not observed this.

Various suggestions have been made over the years concerning entrance holes that would permit bluebirds to enter and, at the same time, would exclude sparrows. To the best of my knowledge, none of these suggestions has proven to be useful. ■

1987 SPEAKERS BUREAU REPORT

Jerry Newman

Sixty speakers responded to the first annual Speakers Bureau Report form that was mailed in Nov/Dec 1987. The term "SPEAKER" is used here to describe anyone who puts on any type of program depicting the plight of the bluebird or other native cavity nesting species. You don't have to be an experienced speaker to be part of the Society's Speakers Bureau (more on this subject later).

Although most of the speakers use the NABS slide program, nine use their own or someone else's and five use a combination of their slides and NABS'. A few also use the video and movie called "Bluebirds, Bring them Back" by Berlet.

Thirteen speakers do not build nest boxes but the remainder (47) build nest boxes for sale or to give away. Some of the speakers provide "kits," and, after showing the slide program, the group assembles the kits into nest boxes.

A total of 142 forms were mailed, but only 60 (42.3%) were returned. It is hoped that for 1988 more of you will respond to this survey. If you did not receive a form for 1987 and you present the plight of the bluebird to the public in any fashion, please send me your name and address. This year's survey does not include totals from those that rented the slide program, but those figures will be included for 1988.

Looking at the total speakers by state (Table 1) you will notice that we are in dire need of speakers in the mountain states and along the west coast. I hope bluebirders in these areas will respond to this need. New York has 14 very active speakers while Pennsylvania and Virginia have 7 each.

The report form asked for comments/suggestions which many of you provided. Many of your suggestions will be discussed at the next Board meeting.

COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY SOME OF THE SPEAKERS

Genevieve Harrington of Munnsville, New York—"Don't think that the programs are to be used for large audiences only. There are potential bluebirders everywhere. All we have to do is find them."—This is certainly a true statement, Genevieve.

Ranger Larry Rohrbaugh of Codorus State Park in Hanover, Pennsylvania—"We have a good following of people who take their daily walks in our area just to see the bluebirds."—What better way to get some exercise and enjoy our beautiful bluebirds at the same time?

Dorothy Norman from Litchfield, Maine—"When the Girl Scouts of Turner, Maine, read the question Where Have All the Bluebirds Gone? they answer the question with 'TURNER, MAINE.'"—I hope all bluebirders can answer that question with the name of their town.

Madaline Browne of Grayslake, Illinois, shows the NABS slides at various campgrounds in Illinois—"If you set up a screen and projector, invariably people will gather around to watch. Generally wind up running the program two and sometimes three times."—Now that's a novel idea that I never thought of.

Fran Hanes of Utica, New York—"I believe showing a nesting box and explaining why it has a specific design, is made of heavy wood, etc.—avoids possible use of milk cartons and plastic bottles in our cold spring weather."—This suggestion is worth thinking about because the Waterman Conservation Center in Apalachia, New York, writes that they make houses from milk cartons using directions supplied by Ranger Rick.—Maybe this is something we should avoid doing, especially in the northern states.

Lloyd Wilson of Godfrey, Illinois—"I include a slide of an Indigo Bunting in my program because so many people in this area were seeing the male bunting and thought they were seeing a bluebird."—Not a bad idea, Lloyd.

Delores and Ernie Wendt of Rice Lake, Wisconsin—"We own our own display board which has pictures, the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin

(BRAW) newsletter, BRAW informational booklet and newspaper articles."—As you might guess, Delores and Ernie are very active in BRAW. Their display board sounds like a good idea for all you handymen to work on.

William Warne of Willard, New York—"I've saved nests of Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens and House Sparrows with infertile eggs and display them in old boxes. They show how each species nests and the color/size of their eggs.—I also use an abandoned bluebird nest with infertile eggs (even a white one) in a Plexiglas display case and it always gets a lot of attention."

Tom Davis of Middletown, New York, works with the Orange County 4-H Clubs, —"Through Kiwanis Club donations and local 4-H Club participation, we build and put up about 150-200 bluebird houses each year, 8-10 clubs participate."—Glad to hear that Tom. I hope more speakers will try to get 4-H members involved. Remember, that includes monitoring faithfully, not just putting up boxes.

Wilbur Peachy of Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania, has a local railroad doing his promoting—"Brochures get distributed at the Westshore Railroad Line Restaurant. The company promotes my bluebird trail set up along their 10 miles of track as a part of the tourist ride."—Good going Wilbur—now start working on AMTRAK, they have miles and miles of track.

Lorne Smith, Owen Sound, Ontario—"In this area over the past five years the newspapers and radio have really kept the plight of the bluebird in the public eye with the result that 111 people so far have requested that they be supplied with bluebird nest boxes for the 1988 season."

Dr. Lawrence Zeleny, Founder of NABS:—"Since September 1971 have given approximately 140 bluebird talks with a total estimated audience of about 6,000."—Now that's a goal for all of us to strive for.

A comment from yours truly. I have a picture of two Passenger Pigeons which I show to the audience and point out that without effective conservation the bluebirds could join the ranks of formerly numerous species—Heath Hen, Carolina Parakeet, and Passenger Pigeon—which have not survived the inroads of what we call progress. All have become extinct in this century. Flocks of Passenger Pigeons used to be counted in the billions. That's "b" for billions.

There were other comments submitted and I want to thank each of you for taking the time to share. In future issues of *Sialia* look for a new column which will feature the "Speaker of the Quarter."

The total attendance reported (Table 2) is impressive and in actuality is much greater than shown, but we must not become complacent with these large numbers. If all the people who heard presentations were to join NABS and/or put up nest boxes and monitor them, we could take a day off, but since only a fraction of them

Table 1. 1987 Total Speakers by State.

AL - 2	CN - 1	CT - 1	IA - 1	IL - 4	IN - 1	MA - 1	MD - 2
ME - 1	MI - 1	MN - 4	MO - 1	NC - 3	NY - 14	OH - 1	OK - 1
OR - 1	PA - 7	SD - 1	TN - 1	VA - 7	WA - 1	WI - 2	WV - 1
Total Speakers - (60)				Total States Reporting (Including Canada) (24)			
CN = Canada (Ontario)							

Table 2. Total Attendance.*

Pre-teens	Teens	Adults	Total
2409	2217	9629	14,255

*Some of these total are estimates because the speakers were not aware of the breakdown desired until they received the initial form. Other presentations were of a nature that the attendance could only be estimated.

follow up, we cannot relax our efforts. I broke the "Types of Organizations" reached into forty-three groups (Table 3). Such a variety shows that the speakers are hustling to get engagements and doing much traveling in the process. Also, these 43 groups represent 322 programs put on by 60 speakers. An average of 5.4 per speaker.

Part of the wording on the back page of *Sialia* reads "The primary objective of the society is to *educate* all who will listen." As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, you don't have to be an experienced "speaker" to belong to the Speakers Bureau. All you need is a willingness to get engagements to show the slide program; the cassette will do the talking for you. Many clubs/organizations/societies are always looking for programs. You can get as few or as many as you feel you have time for.

If we are to educate the uninformed and get others involved in the bluebird recovery program, WE NEED AN ARMY OF SPEAKERS available on a continent-wide scale. Do we dare set a goal for the number of "speakers" in the Society? Why not, it will give us something to strive for. Let's start with 5% of the Society's membership. Therefore we need 250+ speakers spreading the word about the "BLUEBIRD OF HAPPINESS" and other native cavity nesting birds. Won't you join us in this endeavor in 1988?

Table 3. Types of Organizations.*

4-H Clubs	Agricultural Society	Audubon Societies
Bird Clubs	Boy/Girl Scouts	Campfire Girls
Campgrounds	Church Groups	College Classes
Community Parks	Conservation Clubs	Cub Scouts/Brownies
Day Campers	DAR	Explorers
Family Gatherings	Farm Bureau	Garden & Home Show
Garden Clubs	General Public	Grange
Grade/High Schools	Homemakers' Clubs	Horticulture
Humane Society	Izaak Walton League	Kiwanis Clubs
LION/LIONESS Clubs	Literary Club	Mens' Clubs
Nature Centers	Nursing Homes	Optimist Clubs
Ornithological Societies	Retirement Homes	Rotary Clubs
Senior Citizens	State Parks	Thoreau Society
TOPS	Wildlife Clubs	Womens' Clubs
Zoo		

*Speakers put on 322 programs which are represented by the above groups. ■

PO Box 53
Rising Sun, MD 21911

Olive Zeleny

Larry Zeleny, NABS founder and bluebird author, lost his beloved wife Olive on Wednesday, January 20, 1988. Olive had been vigorously involved with life right up to the time she experienced her final heart attacks days before her death. Olive and Larry had enjoyed nearly sixty years of a beautiful marriage and family life, and each was an enthusiastic supporter of the other's interests: Larry of Olive's interest in training dogs, and Olive of Larry's much-loved bluebirds.

They were an inspiration to all who knew them, in their concern for God's smaller creatures and in their evident *joie-de-vivre*.

Expressions of sympathy can be sent to Larry Zeleny, 4312 Van Buren Street, University Park, Hyattsville, MD 20782. Donations in honor of Mrs. Olive Zeleny can be made to: The Humane Society of Washington, DC, 7319 Georgia Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20012.

—Mary D. Janetatos

NABS RESEARCH GRANT AWARDS

The North American Bluebird Society is proud to announce the presentation of the fifth annual research grant awards. The 1988 recipients are as follows:

BLUEBIRD GRANT

Dale L. Droge—*The Betty H. McIlwain Award*

Topic: The Effect of Parent-Offspring Interactions on Parental Care in the Eastern Bluebird.

Philip K. Gaddis—*The James L. Williams Memorial Award*

Topic: Reproductive Success of Western and Mountain Bluebirds in Areas Sprayed for Control of Grasshoppers in Eastern Oregon.

GENERAL GRANT

Timothy Brush

Topic: Nesting Ecology of Prothonotary Warblers in Riparian Vegetation.

Daniel E. Varland

Topic: Behavior and Ecology of Post-Fledging American Kestrels.

STUDENT GRANT

Leo Beukeboom &

Hans Breeuwer—*The Upstate New York Bluebird Society Award*

Topic: Controlling Blowflies in Bluebird Nests: Rotenone vs Parasitoid Wasps.

The North American Bluebird Society annually provides research grants-in-aid for ornithological research directed toward cavity nesting species of North America with an emphasis on the genus *Sialia*. Information and application materials are available from Theodore W. Gutzke, Research Committee Chairman, P.O. Box 121, Kenmare, North Dakota 58746.

Research Committee Chairman Needed

NEEDED: Research Committee Chairman. This committee oversees the granting of cash awards for research relating to native North American cavity nesters. The committee is also moving into the field of publishing longer technical papers not suitable for use in *Sialia*. Expenses are reimbursable. Send resume to President Sadie Dorber, Underwood Rd., R.R. #4, Vestal, NY 13850.

The North American Bluebird Society thanks Theodore W. Gutzke for his outstanding leadership as chairman of the Research Committee. Under his direction the research grants program be-

came an important aspect of the Society. Each year thousands of dollars are awarded for projects relating to native cavity nesting species. Tedd also compiled a bluebird bibliography published by the Society which is a valuable research tool. His energy and organizational ability have been vital to the committee's recent success. We are deeply appreciative of his dedication to cavity nesters, their needs and their conservation, and we look forward to working with him in the future.



A Bluebird Baby Shower

Norman B. Wilcox

This year has been a frustrating one since we chose to build a new house. Although the move was merely five blocks, I still have difficulty accepting the fact of leaving the bluebirds and their box. Since the move was in February and nesting had begun, I had no choice but to leave them.

To fill the void, I quickly set up four boxes at the new location. Things went well and soon we had nestlings at both places.

While watering my yard last week in an attempt to grow grass, I noticed something unusual to me. As I watered, black crickets jumped from the grass into the street. The bluebirds would fly down and pick them up which was not surprising. I got involved and began catching crickets and throwing them into the street. The blue-

birds would grab them while I stood three to four feet away which was a very pleasant experience to say the least.

Yesterday while watering the yard with a soaker hose, two bluebird fledglings flew down to check things out. Before long blue-winged, speckle-breasted bluebird babies were coming and going from every direction until the flock totaled thirteen! They reacted like kids at a swimming hole. First they's get wet, then quickly fly to a nearby oak tree, then back into the sprinkler. This went on for more than half an hour. I could hardly believe my eyes. The Lord and the bluebirds gave me a very special moment to enjoy. ■

2163 Graystone Parkway
Grayson, GA 30221

Tribute to Blue Boy and His Lady

Laurette Bentrewicz

For three years now we have enjoyed two lovable creatures that have inhabited our backyard. I had originally set out my little wren box, hung precariously on a wire in the dogwood tree right next to the deck, never anticipating that two bluebirds would adopt it! I had never even seen a bluebird before and was quite excited at the prospect of having them in our yard. They became tame enough so that we were able to sit on our deck day after day within about ten feet of that little dogwood tree and watch them as they built their nest, incu-

bated eggs, and brooded and fed their young. They became part of our family.

At least two or three broods fledged each spring and early summer. No one can know or understand the feeling that watching these birds can give unless it is experienced. It is special to watch these two devoted little birds and marvel at the companionship and love they display toward each other and their young; to watch them tirelessly drive away competitors and harassers, sometimes twice their size; to hear their gentle

and soft twitters of affection; to see them come back in November with the whole family in tow, to visit and inspect their home again with promise to return in the spring.

Many times I would be fortunate enough to watch the young fledge. Each one in turn would poke his little head out of the box to survey his new world, while his parents would beckon him to come out and fly, which he shortly did with amazing aptitude.

Upon awakening one morning last year, I witnessed the last brood of the year leaving the nest. As I stood behind the slider of my deck, the last nestling to leave flew into the glass of the sliding door and stunned himself for a moment. As I went out to check on his condition, he quickly flew into the underbrush bordering our property. I walked out to see if everything was all right while the female squawked threats above my head. The youngster was fine and promptly took wing with his mother's guidance.

So far, I have seen four of these fledgings, and each time I marvel more at the tenacity, strength, and beauty of these endearing creatures. A couple of times I was even lucky enough to capture the event on film, each bird in turn wide-eyed and cautious as they were about to experience their new world.

This week we were eagerly anticipating the fledging of the first brood of the year. According to my calculations they would have been ready to leave the nest in about four or five days. For two days prior to that date, I noticed some pesky starlings bothering the nest. Blue Boy and his lady successfully drove them off with the determination of two World War II dive bomb-

ers in a winning battle.

It was unusually cold this middle of May evening with frost in certain areas. When I rose at 6:00 a.m. the following day, I found the bird house askew in the tree with half of the nesting material pulled through the hole. I ran outside immediately, tears blinding my eyes, only to open the box and find two cold, lifeless little bodies thrown under what was left of the nest. The rest of the babies, if there were any, were gone. Where were the parent birds? I prayed that they did not meet the fate of their nestlings. Quickly, I gathered those lifeless little bodies in my hands trying to bring them back to life with my warmth, cursing through tears of sorrow and anger at whatever had committed this barbaric deed. The little ones were surely dead though. I gathered up what was left of the nest and carefully placed them inside and buried them under the large hemlock at the north end of our yard while Blue Boy and his lady looked on frantically, flying from the bird house to a nearby tree and back again. All day they returned with food probably hoping their little ones had miraculously returned somehow.

That afternoon I took down the wren house and put up a standard bluebird box on a pole with a predator guard. Blue Boy and his lady were back the next day inspecting it. Blessings are few in this world, and my one consolation is knowing that these brave and loving creatures will soon be building another nest attempting to populate our world with more of the same. I will be watching and waiting and hoping. ■

161 Cow Hill Rd.
Clinton, CT 06413

The Snake's Tale

Linda B. Wellman

The Fourth of July is usually remembered for picnics and fireworks, but our family will remember one Fourth of July for the snake's tale.

The second brood of bluebirds had hatched and were being fed regularly by both parents when our family gathered to celebrate July 4th. The bluebirds had been a source of great enjoyment to us since their arrival in our yard in late March. We had followed their activities through binoculars as much as possible.

About mid-afternoon our visiting son, passing through the backyard on a trip from the garden, heard a racket of fussing birds and noticed that a long black tail was hanging from the hole in the bluebird house. Alarmed, he ran at the snake swinging the only weapon at hand, a sledge hammer. The cumbersome tool was adequate only to scare the snake into the woods, but the rest of us gathered at a distance to guard against its return.

As we watched, the parent birds kept vigil in the branches of the tree that held the bird house, but our concern grew when they made no attempt to enter the box to check on the nestlings. Our concern grew to alarm as the minutes ticked by because we knew that the nestlings needed to be fed every 20 minutes.

After perhaps 30 minutes the parent birds began to fly near the hole of the box, fluttering like hummingbirds, but not landing in the hole nor entering the box. They flew to their favorite tall tree and seemed to discuss their plight. When they began to catch bugs, our hopes lifted, but, alas, they still did not enter the house.

At the end of the hour we decided to open the box and survey the situation, believing that the nestlings were going to die anyway if the parents weren't feeding them. We opened the box to find four baby birds filling the nest and one unhatched egg, which we removed. There was only slight movement among the babies, and we weren't sure how many were actually alive.

My mother-in-law made a mixture of a little raw hamburger meat, a few flakes of oatmeal, and a little saliva. While one of us pried each little beak open with the end of a screwdriver, another one would poke a bit of food down each throat with a toothpick. All were alive but very weak, especially one. After the first feeding we resumed our positions with the binoculars and watched the parents, who still refused to enter the house.

We repeated the feeding after 20 minutes, turning the nest around to better reach the weaker ones in the rear. Again, the parent birds kept vigil nearby but did not enter the box. Twenty minutes later we fed the babies for the third time. By then they were reviving and opening their little mouths by themselves. We were hopeful that they would survive but beginning to wonder how long we could maintain the feeding schedule.

At last one parent and then the other entered and left the house and, fortunately, resumed caring for their offspring before our fourth scheduled feeding time had arrived. Our relief and elation were great; we felt like heroes. The four baby bluebirds survived and, in due time, all four flew from the nest.

We still have questions about the incident. Why did the parents not enter the box? Did they smell the snake? Did the babies not respond when the parent came near the box? Why? Were they too scared? Were they anesthetized? Were the parents simply inexperienced?

The parents did not raise a third family in the box, but perhaps they did not raise a third family at all. Will they return to the nesting box next year? ■

7440 Falkland Drive
Galnesville, VA 22065

Dr. Zeleny replies:

Your account of the close encounter between your bluebirds and a snake has been read with interest. The efforts that you and your family made to help the birds in this emergency were surely commendable, but in part were probably not really necessary.

It is almost certain that your son saved the lives of the entire brood of nestlings by driving off the snake just in time. The snake would have swallowed all of the nestlings whole and quietly left the scene without leaving a trace. The empty nest would have remained almost undisturbed.

The parent bluebirds' reluctance to enter the box soon after the snake had been routed was probably because they were quite upset by the incident they had witnessed, and they may have feared that they would still encounter a snake in the box. It is also possible that, in addition, they were somewhat uneasy about you and your family watching from too close a distance.

It is true that each bluebird nestling is normally fed about once every 20 minutes during daylight hours; however, a well fed brood will sometimes be left without food for as long as an hour or two without harm—and will live for 20 hours or more without food, if necessary. Obviously your help in feeding the brood did no harm, but the parent birds would almost surely have taken over the job in plenty of time.

Bluebird nestlings more than two or three days old normally react to a human opening their nesting box by remaining motionless and appearing to be weak or even dead. Their reaction to a parent bird entering the box with food, however, is the exact opposite!

It is quite possible that your bluebirds or others will return to nest in your box next year.

Since snakes may be common predators in your area, it would be safer to mount your nesting boxes on posts with predator guards rather than on trees.



IN MEMORIAM

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

In memory of Daryl Crouch. *By Dr. Shiri Brunell.*

In memory of Whitney L. Turley. *By the Chase Dennis Systems Management Group.*

In memory of Dale McCoillum. *By Mrs. Dale (Myrene) McCoillum.*

In memory of Sarah A. Haviland. *By the following individuals.*

Eleanor H. Lipa
Violet LauI
Barbara Johnson
Grace Ruberestein
Fern Stowe
Mrs. George F. Nesbitt
Joanne K. Solem
Lois C. Carleton
Francis J. Ehlers
Martha Chestem
Edward H. Elliott
Caroline S. Elliott
Elise Seay
Ruth Bennett
E. V. Haviland

We Love Our Mountain Bluebirds

Mary and Al Perry

Our Mountain Bluebirds continually do little things that endear them to us and continually strengthen our resolve to try to increase their numbers with all the help we can possibly give, for as long as we can.

We always stay as near a box as possible when we go out on our distant trail to spend a week or two, and we have never been disappointed for the lack of that most magnificent, plaintive, late evening or early morning song. With boxes one-quarter mile apart, we have even been the beneficiary of two songs at a time.

Perhaps most memorable to us is the attachment these birds show for our midnight-blue painted houses. Box no. 2 was one-quarter mile off the road in a fence line on its own post. We were hauling wood for ten days in the early spring and assumed a bluebird pair was building and laying eggs as they were there every day but didn't seem to be too active. After the wood hauling, we immediately started box monitoring. Box no. 2 had been completely destroyed by a flicker. It had managed to remove the plastic 5 in. x 7 in. hole protector, then had enlarged the hole and, in an attempt to deepen the box, had pecked the whole bottom out of it. But it was still the bluebirds'.

Needless to say, those two birds offered more than the usual plaintive cries when I approached the worthless box and offered more than the usual fluttering and skittering from tree to tree which is their usual protest. When I took the battered box down and carried it back to the car, they followed me all the way, fluttering and crying directly over my head. On the return trip with the new box, they never stopped fluttering and crying until it was up. Then I backed off a mere six feet, the female entered for an inspection; it was very quick and I remained very still. She found a piece of grass and entered with it. From then on, I was ignored and soon silently left. Coming back by at dusk, I found her still working very diligently; she had a very successful hatch.

I drove up to a juniper tree contemplating its use as a box site and was reaching in the back of the four-wheel for the chain saw when a pair of bluebirds flew over my head quite high. One was loudly complaining and I felt I knew why. I reached in the car, grabbed a box and waved it in the air. There was an immediate deceleration and about-face; I soon had two bluebirds sitting twenty feet from me waiting for the box mount. They were not the least frightened by the chain saw and were in the box before I got back to the car.

I returned from monitoring a box quite some distance from the road and found a female fluttering against the car windows while the male was sitting on top. There was an exposed box in the car with the hole plainly visible. I carried it about 150 feet with the pair following me, and as soon as it was mounted on a tree, it immediately had two tenants.

The most memorable incident involved the pair that stayed with just a piece of tin. Upon monitoring the boxes this spring, we came to a box site but the box was gone. The crushed and bent nails indicated it had been beaten off the tree. It was gone completely, only the tin predator guard was lying there. When I picked it up, a pair of very agitated bluebirds appeared and started protesting as if I were appropriating their box. All nearby bluebirds had young that were beginning to feather out so I assumed that those birds had been guarding that piece of tin for at least three weeks. I replaced the house with a new box, their cries stopped, and they were in it in a minute.

In September, our usual time to clean and renovate the boxes, we again approached this same area and again this box and seven others had been completely beaten to pieces with big stones. The boxes and tins had been thrown as far as fifty feet. This malicious destruction was caused, I assume, because I had written on the original replacement box that the theft and destruction of bluebird boxes was

(Continued on page 79)

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!



Response by readers regarding the use of addresses in "Bluebird Express" has been positive. Beginning with the summer issue, complete addresses will be published if they are furnished to us. You may, of course, request that your address be withheld.

Dear Editor:

I have read a number of articles about bluebirds and Tree Swallows nesting in close proximity. From our personal experience we have found this to be true with squirrels as well as Tree Swallows. Our bluebird trail consists of about ten miles of secondary roads. Also we have 1100 acres of hunting and farmland. Whenever we check our trail, we always carry spare boxes and parts. We have found that removing squirrels does not help since they return immediately. Being animal lovers we never remove a nest with baby squirrels. We put another box near and within days it will be occupied by bluebirds. So squirrels, swallows and bluebirds do not object to close proximity.

John and Sara Wilson
Jackson, South Carolina

Dear Editor:

Last breeding season [1986] was a partial success on my trail of 65 boxes,

but I experienced great losses to snakes and other climbing predators. So I came up with an idea that does work and is of no expense (except time). During the winter I cut lengths of Multiflora Rose shoots about four feet in length. The diameter measured about 5/8 inch at the cut or butt end. They, of course, narrowed toward the tip. Using short lengths of fine wire, I attached five or six shoots to the steel fenceposts I use for mounting my boxes. I place the butt end up, reversing the way it grows. This places the thorns in a slightly upward facing position. Predators will face quite an obstacle in reaching the nesting box and, so far, I have not lost one egg or young to climbing predators on any of the boxes I have so protected. Wooden fenceposts would need more shoots, but this plant grows so profusely around here that there is no problem. Perhaps staples of an appropriate size would work out well on wooden posts. Another bonus is that livestock give the boxes a wide berth. Be sure to wear a good pair of leather work gloves. The thorn tips break off and can be very annoying if they penetrate the skin.

I also use a tip I read about in *Sialia*. It concerns fake holes on the sides and back of the nesting box. I paint black holes two inches in diameter and, in my opinion, it does seem to work.

Fran Schweickert
Peru, Illinois

Ralph M.J. Shook of Godfrey, IL, sent a

Sialia, Spring 1988

page from the Missouri Conservationist entitled "Missouri's Outdoor Almanac" with the following paragraph by Mac Johnson: "From Earl E. Dolisi of St. James comes a suggestion to protect bluebird nests from black rat snakes. His local snakes got around a combination of stovepipe and an inverted funnel mounted just below the birdhouse so he went to the carpet shop and got tack strips. He put a strip on the front and back of the cedar post from ground to nest box and said the needle-sharp tacks proved to be an effective deterrent. Ralph Shook wonders if this technique might ward off four-legged predators, too."

Dear Editor:

Ten years ago we put up our first bluebird house and immediately it was occupied by a beautiful pair that nested twice and returned the following year. Then, through ignorance, we let House Sparrows get a foothold. We were devastated by the disappearance of our bluebirds, but upon joining NABS we became aware of what we had done wrong. It became all-out war when we discovered a mother bluebird pecked to death on top of her four babies. We, and the bluebirds, are now winning mainly because we are ruthless sparrow exterminators.

It is understandably difficult for many bluebirders to go beyond the measures needed to merely discourage sparrows. With a sizable trail, most measures beyond discouragement are extremely difficult. But, for those with the opportunity, eradication is the only thing that really works. Every bluebirder should have in his or her library the booklet, *How to Control House Sparrows* by Don Grussing.

Doris M. Burney
Applegate, California

Dear Editor:

I had heard about bluebirds for years, but until last June (1986) I had never seen one. We were building a new home and I would come out to

check the progress and a bluebird flew across the road in front of my car. It was love at first sight. This year my husband built and put out two boxes. We had wrens, Tree Swallows and bluebirds nesting. The bluebirds have made themselves at home in our new home. They are truly bluebirds of happiness.

Polly Roussey
Pottstown, Pennsylvania

Dear Editor:

I would like to tell you I have 45 bluebird boxes in my area. It's a pleasure for me to check my boxes every Sunday. I can't wait till my work week is finished to make my rounds.

Guy P. Casmor

Dear Editor:

Two years ago my husband and I discovered the joy of sharing our farm with bluebirds. We had not seen bluebirds since our childhood. We set up a bluebird trail consisting of four houses and some jug houses that we made.


The summer of 1986 we were "foster" parents to five little baby bluebirds whose mother had been killed by a Blue Jay. We named them Eenie, Meeny, Minny, Moe and Jake. Their antics supplied me with enough laughs and material that I am in the process of writing a book, appropriately called *Jake and Co.*

Besides those five, we had five more fledge from our trail, and four more fledge from my neighbor's house which I had encouraged her to put up.

Janita F. Moore
Fayetteville, Arkansas

Dear Janita Moore:

Glad to hear you were successful with your trail and foster parenting though such an act is always considered a last resort.



Bluebird Tales

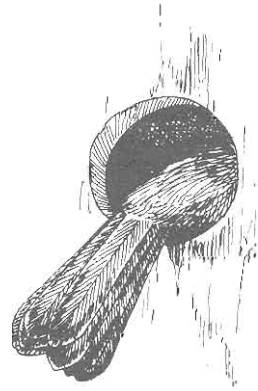
Mary D. Janetatos

Spring once again beckons from winter's depth, with lengthening days and song from junco, whitethroat and Carolina Wren. Will spring bring a new influx of bluebirds? Rumor has it that bluebirds are turning up in ever greater numbers, and reports of first sightings abound. This must be the logical result of many thousands of bluebird enthusiasts who have become involved in their "effective conservation" as promoted by NABS.

This plan has been working, as reported by many correspondents. On his return from the NABS Tenth Annual Meeting, Robert Rager, of Rockford, OH, wrote "I feel certain my six bluebirds left early in October as they were missed for several days. Then each day we would see 4, 5, 6 or 7 and think there could have been more. We could not be certain about the number because they moved around so much. On two occasions I'm sure the male birds were banded. During the month of October we had sightings nearly every day which made me wonder if we could be on a migration route. We live south of Jackson, MI, about 114 miles. I have placed 11 houses at friends' homes nearby. In the spring, I am planning to start a bluebird trail right down the Van Wert-Mercer County line in northwestern Ohio."

Yes, Bob, you are on a flyway—I'm sure you met and spoke with NABS past board member Tom Hodgson, director of the Dahlem Environmental Education Center in Jackson, MI. Tom's bluebird efforts are legendary and monumental. [Do you recall the flier describing the March "Bluebird Festival and Wildlife Art Show" which was a *Sialia* insert in the winter 1987 issue?] Another spinoff of Tom's bluebirding surfaced in a recent telephone conversation with Jeff Mead, of Valparaiso, IN, who described his beginning the "Smoke Road" bluebird trail in the rural agricultural area. Jeff's group had about 50 boxes out this year and hopes to expand next year to 250 boxes along a 10 mile stretch. Jeff said that his area is not far from the Michigan bluebird area worked on by Tom Hodgson.

From Pullman, WA, Mrs. Etta Wegner wrote, "We live on farms—my sons are replanting wildlife areas and are farming without spraying and trying to give the birds and animals a chance for a comeback. Probably, for now, the income is less because of it but we are being rewarded in



what we're seeing happen on our ranch—especially if we can get the bluebirds back!"

Mrs. Mary C. Raftery of Ashland, VA, wrote plaintively, "I am 95 years old and keep saying that I could die happy if I could just see a real live bluebird. When we lived in Lexington, VA, we always saw some on the way to Goshen Pass." In the same vein, Sandy Pyatt of St. Clair, MO, describes her father's lifelong commitment to birds: "I would like to enroll my father [in NABS]. In the past two years one pair of bluebirds has raised 26 young on his balcony. I am sure he would love any and all information available. He is 84 now, but years ago he raised and raced homing pigeons in Connecticut. He has always been a true bird lover and caretaker."

Hal Schaeffer, bluebird instructor at Tyler Arboretum in southeastern Pennsylvania said, "I give more people a copy of your bluebird book [presumably *The Bluebird*, by Larry Zeleny] than any other type of present. Been tending the blues here at Tyler Arboretum with Bob Bodine—and now have my own trail of 41 nest boxes—plus 35 nest boxes as a volunteer at White Clay Creek Preserve where we had 73 fledged this our second year with the Pennsylvania State Park Commission." This is especially good news since Tyler Arboretum is located in a thickly settled area of Pennsylvania. Other "thickly settled" areas can now aspire to attracting bluebirds! Ruth Strand, of Bethesda, MD, reported just this eventuality when she wrote recently of her son seeing his first bluebird as the bird "checked out his garage." Since he lives in an area just outside the Capital Beltway near the Bethesda Fire Station and a huge shopping mall, I accept this as evidence of the birds moving into more heavily settled

areas. This may give hope to veteran bluebird box builder **Beresford Proctor**, of Mamaroneck, NY. Beresford, now 88, has completed 3,000 bird houses. These are scattered throughout Westchester County on wildlife sanctuaries, lake areas, and golf courses. In 1979, he was instrumental in inspiring free lance author **Joan Rattner Hellman** to write her famous *Parade* magazine article "How You Can Hear the Bluebird's Song Again." Even so, Proctor hasn't lured the russet-breasted bird to his own back yard. They don't usually travel far into southern Westchester County because it is too noisy and congested, he says. But maybe, someday....

As spring advances, the bluebirds will head north all the way to Canada, where **Andre and France Dion** are preparing for the NABS Eleventh Annual Meeting. Their eastern Canada "Societe des Amis du Merle Bleu de l'est de l'Amerique" (SAMBEA) will host NABS the weekend of July 9, 1988, in Quebec province. Watch *Sialia* for more details. **Daphne Hamilton** of Grand Forks, British Columbia wrote, "My husband and I have 40 boxes spread over hills west of Grand Forks adjacent to U.S. border and note the increase in number of Western Bluebirds here in past few years." **Bill Read**, of Kitchener, Ontario, described his efforts at foster parenting—placing bluebird nestlings in House Sparrow nests. This worked in one instance where the bluebird nestling was placed in the House Sparrow nest just prior to the hatching of the sparrow eggs. Bill wrote, "The House Sparrows accepted the youngster. The other three eggs hatched but the young did not survive probably because of the large food requirements of the young bluebird. The bluebird was taken from the House Sparrow nest after 10 days and transferred to another bluebird nest containing young of approximately the same size. The young bluebird did not seem to have suffered too much from the ordeal. He did appear somewhat underdeveloped and there were obvious fault bars on the wings. This was probably due to the poorer diet provided by House Sparrows. (They feed a combination of seeds and insects—while bluebirds feed their young principally insects). The young bluebird remained with the bluebird family for about six days when it fledged on its own. The other young bluebirds fledged the following day. All were banded."

Barbara Robinson of Brandon, Manitoba received the John and Norah Lane Award at the NABS 10th Annual Meeting in September of 1987, because of her extensive work with bluebird trails and research.

When she returned home to the "farm" near Riding Mountain National Park, she catalogued the visitors to her yard as follows: "3 moose, 5 deer, a bear, snowshoe rabbits, red squirrels (no black squirrels here) and also a Bald Eagle, Great Blue Herons, ravens and a raft of about 100 goldeneyes on the lake. I heard Tundra Swans this morning but couldn't see them on account of the low clouds and snow. I have some Blue Jays coming to the feeder, also a few Evening Grosbeaks, Black-capped Chickadees and a lone junco." Barbara's long-time friend and NABS founding board member **Norah Lane** also wrote in praise of **Dr. Shirl Brunell**. "Her book, *I Hear Bluebirds* is so worthwhile. The memories that book evoked! We also had baby bluebirds in our kitchen once. They became part of our family for awhile. Of course we had permits [to keep them]."

Betty Yarbenet, of Girard, PA, described the up-down-up syndrome she and husband John went through with their nest box. After fledging two broods, the local bluebird pair seemed to be preparing to nest again so down came the house. Then the NABS brochure arrived and recommended leaving the nest boxes up for wintering bluebirds. So back up went the house and on December 12, 1987, the bluebirds were checking it out again. Their landlords, John and Betty, were thrilled to be able to watch them so closely (about 25 feet from their home).

Patty A. Wells of South Boston, VA, seems to be getting the "hang" of bluebirding. She wrote, "I'm a birdwatcher. I've put up four bluebird nest boxes in my yard. I didn't have many bluebirds, hardly ever saw one in my yard. But since I've put up the nest boxes in my yard, they have raised young in them and I see a lot of bluebirds now, in my yard and also elsewhere."

Bluebirding continues to attract the novice as well as the veteran. **Gary Edrette**, age 14, of Onalaska, WI, joined NABS last fall and told how, for his Eagle project, he constructed 30 nest boxes and will place them along a bike trail. A clipping arrived in the mail detailing "Project Save the Bluebirds" in the Camp Fire organization, where in Groton, MA, the local group had a library display last fall. I feel especially nostalgic upon reading this because my own entrance to the world of bluebirds began when I was a Camp Fire leader of my two daughters' groups. Now, they have made me a grandmother! **Kathi and Leroy's Caitlin** arrived February 2, 1987, in Los Angeles, CA; **Ann and Hedi** are doubling that event with their expected twins due February, 1988! These new generation arrivals have prompted me

to don my schoolteacher's hat once again. Therefore, I began teaching full time once again (after a hiatus of 20 years!) in third grade at St. Mark's School in Hyattsville, MD. Of course I will still wear my bluebird hat after school and on Saturdays. The bluebird phone will still be answered by Sarah Funkhouser, Michele Wright and Chuck Dupree. We expect full-time coverage of the NABS office to continue.

Our heartstrings were plucked recently when Junko and Norihisa Katoh of Tokyo, Japan, returned there after a two year sojourn in the United States. They joined the Howard County (MD) Chapter of the Mary-

land Ornithological Society and became enthusiastic bird watchers. Junko's camera was well utilized, and she captured on film many birds and delightful birding experiences. One of these was a bluebird tour led by yours truly and Martha Chestem. A number of children and adults assisted me in banding young bluebirds. When Norihisa and Junko left, the bluebirds lost two friends and benefactors. They wrote, "We envy this spacious land and the splendid system of the National Wildlife Refuges in the United States." And we, for our part, gratefully thank God for our land, our birds, and our friends, Norihisa and Junko Katoh.



Photograph by Junko Katoh

Executive Director Mary D. Janetatos banding Eastern Bluebirds at Schooley Mill Park, Howard County, MD.

Technical Papers Sought by the North American Bluebird Society

The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is soliciting manuscripts for their Research Series. The NABS Research Series is intended to serve as an outlet for technical papers on any aspect of the biology and conservation of North American cavity nesting birds. Manuscripts will be peer reviewed and are not constrained by length. Accepted manuscripts will be published at no cost to the authors. Inquiries and manuscripts should be sent to: Jeffrey D. Brawn, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, APO, Miami, 34002-0011 USA.

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Prepared for *Sialia* by Nancy E. MacClintock-Indexes

(LOVE MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS---continued from page 71)

a state and federal offense. And, who do you suppose was sitting in that tree? I am sure it was that same pair of bluebirds for, as soon as the replacement box was up, they made an immediate inspection. They made no attempt to leave, perhaps to insure its being there next spring. Who couldn't love tenants like that? ■

139 Willoway Dr.
Boise, ID 83705

JUNIUS BIRCHARD

Junius Birchard of Hackettstown, NJ, a staunch, enthusiastic and innovative supporter of bluebird conservation and of NABS passed away suddenly on February 26, 1988, while on a skiing trip in New Jersey. With this sad event bluebirds lost a mighty champion. Following his retirement as a public school teacher, Junius devoted his time to restoring bluebirds in the upper middle section of New Jersey. It is edifying to realize that Junius lived to see the New Jersey State Department of Environmental Conservation adopt his plan for bluebird conservation on a statewide basis.

Junius was a genius at publicizing the plight of bluebirds and at enlisting recruits in establishing and monitoring bluebird trails. His achievements were highlighted in the *National Wildlife Magazine* and in the *New York Times* daily and Sunday newspapers.

I personally treasure the visit to Junius and Bea Birchard's cozy home where I was able to watch Junius in action while he conducted a bluebird workshop for fourth grade students at a nearby elementary school. His humor and his ability to inspire his audiences are legendary.

Thank you, Junius, for your legacy—and Godspeed!

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Junius Birchard, 207 East Valley View St., Hackettstown, NJ, 07840. Memorial contributions may be made to the North American Bluebird Society.

—Mary D. Janetatos

Wanted: Art Editor

If you are interested in applying for the position of Art Editor, please correspond with Editor Joanne K. Solem, 10617 Graeoch Rd., Laurel, MD 20707. This position pays expenses only but can be a valuable display for talent. The ability to execute original line drawings of birds and other nature subjects in pen-and-ink for four deadlines a year is essential. With a brief description of your background and experience, please include a minimum of three line drawings of varying sizes (at least one of a bluebird and one of a plant or portion thereof); maximum size 8 x 10 inches. Please reply by 15 June 1988.

Submissions of art for use in the journal are always welcome even if you are not interested in applying for the vacancy.

Alexia J. Scott has been our art editor since the spring of 1987. We are sorry that her many commitments and the press of a growing business make it impossible for her to continue in this position. Her art has appeared on four covers including that for the tenth anniversary and she has provided drawings for the "plantings" column. We are grateful for her generosity and enthusiasm in taking on this position despite a demanding schedule and appreciate her willingness to use her talents for the cause of bluebird and cavity nester conservation. The Society thanks her and wishes her success in her business ventures.

Mountain Bluebird Trails Conference

Mountain Bluebird Trails Fifth Annual Conference will be held at Pincher Creek, Alberta, Canada, on June 11-12, 1988. Registration forms will be available after April 1, 1988.

For program details, write to Duncan Macintosh, 1831-20th Ave., S., Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada T1K 1G3.

Art Credits

Jon E. Boone: 42, 72.
Suzanne Pennell: 62, 66, 70, 74, 156.
Alexia J. Scott: 60
Richard L. Woodward: 59
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Founded in 1978, THE NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY is an incorporated non-profit organization determined to increase the populations of the three species of bluebirds on this continent. Inasmuch as the populations of these birds have diminished due to the maladroitness of human beings, as well as other natural disasters, the primary objective of the SOCIETY is to educate all who will listen about the importance of preserving these singular creatures in their native environment.

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

Membership: Student (under 21) and Senior (over 60), \$7.50; Regular, \$15; Sustaining, \$30; Supporting, \$50; Contributing, \$100; Corporate, \$100; Donor, \$250. Add \$2 per year for Canada and Mexico and \$3 per year for other countries (surface mail). U.S. funds only, please. Amounts over \$6 are tax deductible.

Address:
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