



NCBS Logo with Carolina Blue by Dempsey Essick

Bluebird Notes

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North Carolina Bluebird Society Mission Statement

Our goal is to support activities that foster the resurgence of bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds in our home areas.

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Waterfowl & Bluebird Conservation & Education Theme of NCBS 2006



The message at the 2006 North Carolina Bluebird Society's Annual Meeting was Education and Conservation. Mike Lubbock, Director of Sylvan Heights, shared his pictures of some of the 160 species of waterfowl that make Sylvan Heights

(Scotland Neck, NC) their home. These species are from all over the world and some represent endangered birds that no longer have a safe habitat in their native lands. The ducks, geese and swans are housed in appropriate aviaries. Up until this year, the emphasis at Sylvan Heights has been conservation with a few arranged educational tours with school children. Currently the Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Park and Eco-Center is being constructed to extend this educational opportunity to school children, their parents and the public at large. This facility will include walk-through exhibits and the chance to come "face to beak" with some of the residents. Sylvan Heights is supported through the North Carolina Zoological Society. Mike and his son, Brent, shared their enthusiasm for their work to conserve these magnificent birds and to educate their audience about this wonderful preserve.

Randy Sensig, Kenan Fellow, says that his students inspire him. It was in response to a student who found pollution to be so overwhelming that Randy sought out a Kenan Fellowship along with other financial support to develop the curriculum for "Bluebirds in the Schoolyard." The initial trail of ten boxes has been expanded to thirty-seven with additional trails at two elementary schools. The rewards of setting up a bluebird trail on the Fuquay-Varina High



(Continued on page 10)

Bluebird Notes

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Bluebird Tales



Memberships for Nest Boxes *Submitted by Fred Benson, Cary*

Bill Satterwhite did his usual excellent job of talking about bluebirds for the Two Green Thumbs Garden Club meeting this morning in Knightdale. The garden club is in the process of establishing a bluebird trail. Bill's presentation is sure to be a big help to them on this project.

The meeting was held at the Knightdale Baptist Church and attended by 16 members of the garden club. Ms. Sandra Dutton, First Vice President, of the garden club organized the event.

By taking advantage of the bluebird nestbox for membership program, (22) garden club members became new NCBS members at the meeting. Several garden club members were not able to attend the meeting but had previously filled out the membership form and left the membership fee with Ms. Dutton.

Picture of Bill Satterwhite presenting at the garden club meeting.





Bluebird Tales



Wildlife: State reports record number of bluebirds

<http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060105/GPG0204/601050466/1233/GPGsports>

Submitted by Fred Benson, Cary, NC

The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin reports a state record of more than 18,000 bluebirds fledged in Wisconsin last summer, an increase of more than 3,000 from 2004. A decade ago, the group reported only about 5,000 fledglings. Proper box placement and design, pole mounting (metal) and monitoring (house sparrow removal) likely has boosted the success, according to Wisconsin Bluebird newsletter editor Patrick Ready of Stoughton. Meanwhile, fellow Wisconsin Birding Network mem-

ber Bob Domagalski of Menomonee Falls reported that the number of eastern bluebirds seen in Christmas bird counts is a state record. It appears the number of northern flickers also will be a record, Domagalski said.

Editor's Note: The North Carolina Bluebird Society reported 4,236 bluebird fledglings. I am confident that we have many more bluebird fledged than are reported. How can we increase the number of members reporting? Perhaps by increasing the number of members?

Lowe's Hero Grant

email from Carol Reid, County Coordinator of Clay County

----- Original Message -----

From: [carol reid](#)

Subject: Received Grant for Bluebirds!!!

Great news!

Emily's high school club, INTERACT, with my help, too, received the LOWE'S HERO GRANT for 100 new bluebird houses!!!

We are thrilled. The world will be a whole lot better with more beautiful bluebirds. They will provide wood. The club will make the houses. Lowes will help erect the houses. We team together. GREAT GREAT GREAT



Lisa Rockwell will monitor nest boxes at Jordan Oaks Retirement Community.

Jordan Oaks Retirement Community

Submitted by Fred, Benson, Cary

Fred Benson gave a talk at the Jordan Oaks Retirement Community in Cary, NC. This is what he writes about his experience.

"I decided to visit Jordan Oaks ahead of the meeting to see what the room and projection equipment looked like. While I was there, I took a tour around the property and noticed some bluebirds in the trees behind the main building. I asked the manager if I could donate a couple of bluebird houses for the pleasure of the residents. He agreed and the Sunday before the meeting I put up a standard wood bluebird house, a Gilbertson bluebird house, and a crook with a birdbath and suet feeder. The houses

and crook are located where the residents can easily see them through the large glass windows of the dining room which is located on the first floor.

During the seminar on February 7, one of the 20 ladies attending said she had seen a bluebird couple checking out the wood bluebird house. Lisa Rockwell, Activities Director, agreed to monitor the nest boxes, change the birdbath water, and reload the suet feeders as needed.

One of the seminar attendees signed up for a 1 year NCBS membership."

<http://www.jordan-oaks.com/>

The Lesson of the Bluebird

Reprinted from *Bluebird* Winter 2006, Vol. 28, No. 1. newsletter of the North American Bluebird Society.

Bluebird Enthusiasts

What do you get when you put bluebird enthusiasts in the same room??? You get one bluebird story after another from one person after another all helping one nest box at a time. You get stories of compassion; stories of rescue; stories of hope.

I find that watching bluebirds is addictive. I put up special bluebird feeders filled with mealworms, homemade Winter Pudding or any of the many products available at bird stores. This enables me to see the bluebirds more often. It helps them to survive.

Monitoring bluebirds is also addictive. Checking on a bluebird trail is like opening one Christmas present after another. Each box has a surprise inside. It may be a bluebird nest, eggs, chicks or fledglings or finally a bluebird nest that is ready to be cleaned for the next batch of bluebirds. These Christmas presents may also come wrapped as the different stages of any of the other cavity nesters.

I am still working on listening for bluebirds. It takes some training. My first job is to learn the song by hearing it over and over. I do that by pinching the tail of a plush bluebird produced by Audubon! When I am outdoors, I think I hear the song. My eyes scour the tree limbs, the top of the nest box and the bird bath. I know they are there or it may be another bird singing. Sometimes I am rewarded with the streak of blue that is a bluebird coming in for a landing. I smile and enjoy the moment.

Bluebird Education

Education comes in three stages. The first is to know that something exists. I was introduced to bluebirds in 1995 through a meeting of the North Carolina Bluebird Society. In 1998 a friend gave me a bluebird nest box in exchange for joining the North American Bluebird Society. The concept that people can help bluebirds and other cavity nesters is awesome. It is a long way from "Don't touch the baby birds. The mothers won't come back."

The second stage of learning is to learn about the subject by mimicking what other people know. It may be the directions for making a bird house. It may be the recipe for Winter Pudding. It may be learning that the "jizz of a bird" means "to see a bird badly and still know what it is". This stage of my bluebird education has covered the past ten years. It is the result of reading the NABS newsletters plus as many as ten other newsletters from regional bluebird societies. Being the editor of the North Carolina Bluebird Society newsletter has made me shift

through many bluebird articles. Speakers at different bluebird meetings have enriched my knowledge. Bluebirds have enriched my life.

The final stage of learning is to take all that has been learned and do something original with it. Perhaps it is creating a new nest box design. It may be substituting grits in the basic Winter Pudding of peanut butter, lard, corn meal, etc. It may be writing an article like this commenting on one aspect of bluebirding.

Bluebird Societies

My intent in writing this is to point out the many similarities between bluebirds and the bluebird societies including the North American Bluebird Society. First, without the bluebirds, there wouldn't be NABS or any other bluebird society. On the flip side of that, without the bluebird societies including NABS, there would be fewer bluebirds.

The bluebirds are the poster children of the cavity nesters. Their beauty (brilliant blue with rust and white), their behavior (nest box inspection and role of siblings in helping to feed subsequent young) and their ferocity (dive-bombing monitors and competing against other birds for the use of a cavity) makes us identify with these amazing birds.

It is this ferocity that bluebird societies need to emulate. We need to continue to grow as organizations. We need to expand our goals from bluebird conservation to include all the other cavity nesters (including Ivory Billed Woodpeckers), all the other birds and the rest of the natural world that seems to be disappearing under the expansion of mankind.

My husband was asking about the results of different bluebird surveys and I was sharing with him numbers from Montana and Nebraska where a total of more than 45,000 bluebirds were reported to have fledged last year. His comment was that "with that great a number fledging, why are bluebird societies still necessary?"

Without the continued efforts of all bluebird societies to educate the public (or husbands) we would be back to the point where the bluebirds are once more just another endangered species. It is a fight that is harder after the initial successes because the need does not appear to be critical. NABS was a big part of that initial success. It is our job to see that it continues to be.

Helen S. Munro (hsmunro@ac.net)
President and Editor of the North Carolina Bluebird Society
Secretary of the North American Bluebird Society

E-mail Response to *Lesson of the Bluebird*

Hello Helen,

I'm Jay Brindo a fellow NABS member. I live in Northeastern Ohio and have a trail of 53 boxes on what I call the Mountain Glen Farm Trail. I want to thank you for the wonderful article you wrote called *The Lesson of the Bluebird*. So many things you said pulled my heart strings.

I have had very much the same experience with the Bluebird enriching my life. I started by getting permission to put up six boxes in a field at the top of our road on Mountain Glen Farm back in 2004. My wife said that since I like the idea so much, volunteering would help me learn more. So I enlisted in the Holden Arboretum's volunteer Bluebird monitoring program where I've received my training under Edith Conzet the program director and wonderful lady. It is there that I monitor 22 boxes each Sunday with my side kick Dick Kennely. He has also taught me so much. This 2006 season will be my third year with Dick on the trail.

That experience has lead me to making my own boxes and getting permission to put up more throughout on the farm. Last year in 2005, I had 53 banded and fledged Bluebirds. It worked out to be a 1 to 1 ratio. Not bad for a beginner!

The owners of the farm and the surrounding neighbors all call me the Bluebird guy and are always asking me how they (the Bluebirds) are doing. The whole experience seems to allow folks to put down some of the social guards people use, and offers a bridge to making new friends. It has enabled me to share nature in a way that also offers much wisdom in life.

This last year a lady was telling me some of the troubles she was having getting her oldest son to move out of the house and go on his own. I told her she should do what the Bluebirds do, stop feeding them

until hunger encourages them to come out of the box where Mom and Dad are waiting with the food for them, but where they can then learn to fly and take care of themselves. She was blown away by this lesson from nature.

I found myself feeling a certain sadness this past year as the last babies fledged. I talk to them as they are growing and tell them a few days before they leave to make sure and come back and see me next year. Sounds silly, but I think all animals can feel when they are loved.

They don't experience love in the same way we higher thinking animals do, but then again, as hard as we try with all our modern aircraft, we don't experience the wind and air like they do. The Bluebird has most importantly taught me about humility.



Peace and love to you Helen.

Jay

P.S. One of my pictures to enjoy!!

Fruit, not mild weather, keeps bluebirds around

River Valley Outdoors

Published - Thursday, February 09, 2006

By JERRY DAVIS / Freelance outdoors writer

Telephone lines and e-mails continue to carry conversations about bluebirds spending this winter in the Coulee Region. (Wisconsin)

Why are these migrants wintering here? We are just getting accustomed to seeing robins, another thrush family bird, all year.

One guess is obvious. Temperatures during January set records in many parts of Wisconsin for continuous days with highs above 30 degrees. So why shouldn't bluebirds, robins, Northern flickers and a host of other uncommon birds over-winter here?

However, Jean Ruhser, a retired UW-La Crosse ornithology professor, says wait just a minute with those guesses.

"If there is water and feed available, the birds are more likely to be here," Ruhser said. "Last year we didn't have any wild grapes, and I never saw a bluebird all winter. This year lots of people are seeing them."

Early figures from Christmas bird counts reported 495 bluebirds sighted compared to the previous record of 197 in 2003. The 2005 counts include about 60 percent of the reports, so look for that number to sail above 500 by the final report.

Ruhser has watched wintering bluebirds take fruits from bittersweet, grape and hackberry plants, as well as fleshy red cedar seed cones.

So, if someone wants to see bluebirds occasionally during winter, make sure there are fruits and water available. Some people provide chopped raisins and various worms, including mealworms and other fish bait. Usually the worms are not picked up, so it seems some worm-eating birds get accustomed to a winter fruit diet and don't switch to bugs and worms until the weather really warms up.

Leif Marking, La Crosse area's bluebird nest box guru, recalls reading a report of fruit seeds eaten by wintering bluebirds in New York.

"Ninety-five percent of the seeds were staghorn sumac and five percent were poison ivy," Marking said.

Another factor that is contributing to bluebirds spending time here is the sheer number that is fledged in the La Crosse area. Marking reported that

the Brice Prairie Conservation Club recorded 4,233 bluebirds fledging in 2005, up about 1,000 from 2004.

The more bluebirds, the more are likely to over-winter, Marking and Ruhser believe.

"I often think these flocks of 5-6 birds might be family groups that represent a late fledging," Ruhser said.

Dick Roth, who lives above Grandad Bluff, has had bluebirds nest in an old tree cavity, and this winter a flock has been coming to his water bath, as well as to daughter Judy Blank's feeding and watering station across the road.

"Jeff and Judy have bluebird nest boxes, but mine seem to prefer the tree cavity," Roth said. "This winter I see the bluebirds using the tree cavity, too. A few weeks ago, one came out of the tree with what looked like a dried fruit. Maybe it was one of the grapes I cut up and put on the stone in the water bath."

Marking said some birders put up bluebird roost boxes, which are larger than nest boxes and have perches inside for the birds to sit on.

"I've read that bluebirds actually prefer nest boxes in winter," Marking said. "Six or seven will go into a box and their body heat will keep them warmer than if they perched some distance from one another."

Marking also received a call from a woman in Minneapolis who reported seeing bluebirds near her home this winter.

"If I can get the bluebirds to begin eating some type of worm, I'm going to start a worm bed. I cut plans out of a sporting magazine on how to do it and it doesn't sound that difficult," Roth said.

Jerry Davis can be reached at (608) 924-1112 or at sivadjam@mhtc.net

Editor's Note: See the website www.sialis.org/suet.htm for some great recipes.

It is time to plant this spring for bluebird benefits next fall (or the following fall). See www.ncbluebird.com for a list of native plants to use.

Birdhouse Quiz

<http://www.hometown-pages.com/main.asp?SectionID=14&SubSectionID=59&ArticleID=10731&TM=75116.52>

1. What is the Christmas carol that includes the lyrics, "Gone away is the bluebird?"
2. Which states have one of the bluebird species as their state bird?
3. Who sings about bluebirds in the classic movie, "The Wizard of Oz."
4. If "I can hide 'neath the wings of the bluebird as she sings" what will not happen?
5. What famous naturalist and writer said, "The bluebird carries the sky on his back?"
6. If the dove symbolizes peace, the owl wisdom and the egg bravery and valor, what does the bluebird symbolize?
7. In "The Song of the South," what kind of a feeling do you get if Mister Bluebird is on your shoulder?

- Answers:
1. "Walking in a Winter Wonderland"
 2. New York, Missouri, Idaho and Nevada.
 3. Judy Garland sings about them flying in "Over the Rainbow" and wonders why she can't too.
 4. "The six o'clock alarm will never ring."
 5. Henry David Thoreau
 6. Happiness
 7. Zippity-do-da, zippity-aye.

Wireless monitoring of birdhouse temperatures

The prices of wireless remote thermometers has dropped to the point where they are an affordable tool to measure the temperatures inside birdhouses. I am using the Acurite Model 00782 (\$9.88 + tax at Wal-Mart) to monitor the inside temperatures of several bluebird houses in my yard. The compact sensing unit can be attached to the underside of the birdhouse roof with double stick tape. The Model 00782 has an effective range of 100'. You can place the display unit(s) inside your house and remotely monitor birdhouse temperatures. I used a labeling machine to assign a unique ID to each sensor/display unit so I can keep track of them. If you want to use them on a trail. A small enclosed ventilated weatherproof enclosure with a plexiglas observation window can be attached to the mounting pole above the predator guard to house the display unit. The trail monitor can easily see the display unit through the observation window and record temperatures. For trail usage, the "in" temperature reading will approximate the outside ambient temperature and the "out" reading will reflect the temperature inside the box.

Fred Benson, Cary, NC

Tip – woodpecker proofing bluebird house entrance holes.

Utilizing a metal guard over the entrance hole of a bluebird house is normally an effective deterrent from woodpecker damage. However, small woodpeckers such as the downy will occasionally select a bluebird house either for nesting or winter roosting purposes. Even though a downy can easily enter a bluebird house, they often peck the wood behind the metal guard. This pecking activity can occur from the front or from inside the nest box resulting in considerable damage to the area around the hole.

My solution to this problem for Eastern bluebird houses is to use inside and outside metal hole covers with a short length of 1 1/2" ID thick wall schedule 40 PVC pipe between them. I prefer the PVC pipe to metal pipe because it does not conduct heat between the hole covers the way metal does. I use a 1 7/8" hole saw to make the entrance hole. This provides a snug fit for the PVC pipe. When the covers and pipe are in place, the entrance hole is effectively 1 1/2" in diameter.

Fred Benson, Cary, NC



Parts for woodpecker proofing an eastern bluebird house.

Caretaker: Birds have

By Lisa O'Donnell
JOURNAL COLUMNIST
Friday, February 10, 2006

Bill Abbey served two tours of duty in Vietnam with the Army. Later, he taught ROTC, civics and math at Reynolds High School for 18 years. So it's little wonder that Abbey devotes much of his retirement to more leisurely pursuits. Abbey is a bluebird enthusiast. He installed and maintains a bluebird trail of 68 boxes at Tanglewood Park, where he is known as "The Bluebird Man." Abbey, who lives next to the park in Clemmons, is also a member of the N.C. Bluebird Society and talks regularly to community groups about his love for the birds. Abbey has always enjoyed the outdoors. He likes to fish, camp and hike, and he studied forestry and environmental public administration in college. But before he got hit with the bird bug, Abbey said: "I didn't know a crow from a sparrow." In 1982, he took a summer job at Tanglewood. He asked someone on the staff about the 25 or so wooden boxes scattered throughout the park, most of



Tending the Flock: Bill Abbey cleans out a bluebird house at Tanglewood Park. (Journal file photo)

which were decaying. Told they were boxes for Eastern bluebirds, Abbey volunteered to take over management of the trail. He talked to bird enthusiasts, read books and studied the birds.

He discovered that the birds needed his help. "Pretty soon, I was one of the experts," Abbey said. Years ago, bluebirds made their nests in old woodpecker holes in dead trees and wooden fence posts. But that habitat is disappearing. Dead trees are given the ax more often than they

once were, and most fence posts today are made of treated lumber or metal. Non-native birds, most notably English sparrows and starlings, have bullied their way onto the bluebirds' nesting sites. These notoriously feisty birds have been known to build nests on top of bluebird nests and kill adult and nestling bluebirds. Abbey said that if you see a bloody bluebird nest, it's quite likely that a sparrow is to blame. Insecticides and herbicides also contributed to the shrinking bluebird population. Abbey was drawn to the bluebird's plight.

become man's passion

"A lot of it is personal," he said. "They please me. They are gentle birds and I appreciate gentle. And they're somewhat of an underdog, and I appreciate underdogs."

It doesn't hurt that the birds are so beautiful. Bluebirds, not to be confused with the larger and more aggressive blue jay, are about 7 inches tall. The males are bright blue with an orange throat and chest. The females are a paler blue with a gray head. Naturalist Henry David Thoreau was so taken with the color of the bluebird that he wrote in his journal: "The bluebird carries the sky on his back."

In our area of the country, bluebirds do not migrate. They feast on insects and berries.

Abbey and others who put up and maintain nest boxes have helped revitalize the bluebird population, said Gary Springer, the executive director of the North American Bluebird Society.

"Since we've been able to create that artificial cavity - boom. The bluebird came back," Springer said. "It's a key factor in the whole process."

At Tanglewood, Abbey tore down the old boxes and installed 68 more, many of which were donated by church and service groups. He also has a box in his backyard and a heated birdbath.

The nesting season consists of three sessions, each lasting about five weeks. The season runs from about March to mid-summer. Abbey tries to check the boxes once a week to see how the nests are faring. (Not all the boxes will be occupied.) He reports the number of fledglings to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in New York, which keeps track of the country's bird

population.

Bluebirds are looking for nesting spots, so if you are interested in installing a bluebird box, now is the time to do it. But the boxes must meet certain specifications. For instance, the diameter of the hole should be 1 1/2 inches and the bottom of the hole should be 9 inches from the base of the box. Boxes should be perched atop a pole that sits 5 feet from the ground and placed in an open area.

Boxes should be monitored regularly. Sparrows may try to claim the spot, and hornets and wasps may nest there as well. Be sure to discard old nests. And if you're no longer interested in maintaining the box, take it down or plug it up.

Abbey's interest in birds has extended to other cavity nesters such as chickadees and nuthatches. But bluebirds are his primary passion. He believes that they were made such a beautiful shade of blue to bring us pleasure.

"These birds could have easily been brown," he said. "It's not just accidental."

• Lisa O'Donnell can be reached at 727-7420 or at

lo'donell@wsjournal.com

This story can be found at: http://www.journalnow.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=WSJ%2FMSGArticle%2FWSJ_ColumnistArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1137833990344&path=!living&s=1037645509005

NCBS 2006

(Continued from page 1)

School campus and having his students became the teachers choosing setting up bluebird houses at the elementary schools over hanging out with their friends on a Friday afternoon.

Through his teaching Randy has found that students that grow up in urban areas with "keep off the grass" warnings often fear the natural world. His program is designed to not only teach conservation, but also to reconnect his students with the earth and the natural world.

Randy let his students speak for themselves with the following quotes:

1. "When I first found out about this project, I just thought to myself Oh, gosh just another project, but this has truly made me a better person."
2. " I grew incredibly excited when I was able to identify a bird by its appearance and by its song especially."

3. "My life is now on a course that will strive to protect the earth and the precious delicate ecosystems."

4. "I will always remember the morning bird walks, trucking through nature to discover earth's beauty in small ways."

5. " The most important thing that I feel I have learned is that there is only one earth and it is up to us and my generation to change the way things are being wasted."

More information can be found on the website, <http://www.ncsu.edu/denan/fellows/2003/rsenzig/about/index.htm> or put *Bluebirds in the Schoolyard* in your browser.

Both Mike Lubbock and Randy Senzig brought the message of conservation and education to the NCBS 2006 meeting. It made people start planning a trip to Sylvan-Heights and to renew their energy for their current bluebird trail or to start building one.



Len and Joyce Tufts have been supporters of the North Carolina Zoo for many years. They had visited Sylvan Heights including once on Duckling Day and were the impetus behind having Mike Lubbock as our speaker. Through them, NCBS was able to use the meeting room at the Stedman Education Center for the 2006 meeting. Thank you, Len and Joyce.

Jack Finch, who is 87 years young, donated one of his *Homes for Bluebird* nest boxes. This was one of the thirty-seven door prizes that were awarded with the raffle tickets either given to or purchased by the seventy-three attendees. A special thank you goes to all who donated items that continues this door prize tradition.



Annual Meeting

Brent Lubbock shows off an ostrich egg along with a basket of eggs and feathers. He is a graduate of East Carolina University and according to the web-site is active "in promoting the Center to the communities of North Carolina and developing the education program.

Growing up in the Lubbock household, Brent has always lived a life style centered on waterfowl and wildlife conservation."

Brent has had positions all over the world including Holland, England, Zimbabwe and, of course, the United States in Oregon, Georgia, and North Carolina.

Check out <http://www.sylvan-heights.org> for more on this waterfowl preserve and the Lubbocks—Mike, Ali and Brent.



Part of this annual meeting was to elect officers and directors for the next two years. From left to right: Retiring President Helen Munro, Recording Secretary Bruce Fensley, President Fred Benson, Vice-President and County Coordinator Chair Randy Sensig, Corresponding Secretary Kay Hindsley, Director Virginia Pickles and Director Ray Welch. Treasurer Diane Scales was absent due to illness. Three directors, Hank Moss, Bill Satterwhite and Jim Jochum, each have one year left in their terms. Appointed positions included Records Chair David Hindsley, Webmistress Liz Schmid, Editor Helen Munro, Store Manger Christine Ammons and General Consultant Bill Abbey.



Photos by Fred Benson and Catherine Traylor

New NCBS President Fred Benson has plans for a Speaker's Bureau, a membership drive, a youth component of NCBS, an educational kit for teachers to name a few. Congratulations to him and the new Board.



Chuck Bliss, retiring vice-president, served as president from 1994 to 1996, treasurer from 1996-2000, County Coordinator Chair from 1996 to 2006 and vice-president and co-chair of NABS 2005 from 2004-2006.

Helen Munro, retiring president, served as president from 1998-2000, 2001-2002 and 2004-2006 as well as co-chair of NABS 2005. She started as editor of the newsletter in 1996 and will continue in this position. Both Chuck and Helen were presented bluebird cards and a Bluebird Welcome sign from Wild Birds Unlimited for their homes by Virginia Pickles representing the NCBS Board.



Bluebirds, Inside the Nest Box

Recorded by the Cornell Birdhouse Network

Summer 1999

Produced by the North Carolina Bluebird Society

Available for \$13.85 including shipping and handling.

Two tapes for \$25; Three for \$35; Six for \$70

E-mail towhee@blueridge.net to price larger quantities.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: NCBS. SEND ORDER & CHECK TO:
Ms. Christine Ammons, 670 Nanneytown Rd., Union Mills, NC 28167-8762

North Carolina Bluebird Society Products

Description of Item	Cost Postage Included	No. Wanted	Total
New: Caps with NCBS Logo	\$ 13.00	X_____	=_____
New: Bluebird Note Cards (12)	\$ 12.00	X_____	=_____
New: <i>Carolina Blue</i> Tote Bags	\$ 15.00	X_____	=_____
<i>Carolina Blue</i> T-Shirts			
by Dempsey Essick (S, M, L, XL)	\$20.00	X_____	=_____
Lands End knit shirt with collar (M, L, XL)	\$35.00	X_____	=_____
Cloisonné Bluebird Pins (1inch, 4 colors)	\$ 5.00	X_____	=_____
“On the Wings of a Song” - Audio Tape	\$ 5.00	X_____	=_____
- CD	\$ 8.00	X_____	=_____
Eastern Bluebird with Flowers Card	\$ 2.50	X_____	=_____
or 5 for \$10.00		X_____	=_____
<i>Bluebirds, Inside the Nestbox</i> Video Tape	\$13.85	X_____	=_____
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Video tapes and DVDs are available on the ncbluebird.com website.

Bird House Video

From the Raleigh News and Observer, Saturday, April 8, 2006

Newly elected NCBS President Fred Benson designed this bird house complete with its video camera. This is a wireless system that will show the inside of the nest box on either a television or computer.

He purchased the **NightWatch Low-Light Camera** which is the perfect surveillance solution in places where the lighting conditions are less than ideal. Fred found that this company was easy to deal with and included extra equipment in the base price of \$95.

http://www.x10.com/products/xx20a_ed_knv_1129.html



Third place | Fredrick Benson, Cary

"Eastern Bluebird Nestbox with Wireless Color Nestcam"

This very functional birdhouse takes bird-watching to a new level. "The video would be wonderful for families to watch the birds!" the judges said.

Tidbits from the Literature

What you always wanted to know: Bluebirds Do have Belly Buttons!

A reader questioned author Mary Batten ("Who Has Belly Buttons?") about bird belly buttons. She has written a children's book explaining why mammals have belly buttons. Having found no such references, Batten wrote the Cornell Law of Ornithology (BirdScope, Autumn 2005).

Answer: "In the egg there is a cord that attaches the developing embryo to the yolk sac. When the bird hatches, there is a residual scar where the cord used to be. While the bird is a nestling, you can still see what would be the avian equivalent of a belly button. However, as the bird develops, that area becomes more compact and in an adult bird there is virtually nothing to be seen of what once was the scar. So technically birds have belly buttons, but unlike the belly buttons of humans, these go away as they grow up."

(How sad— no belly-button rings for the teenagers!)

Reprinted from *Bluebird News* (The Bluebird Re-

covery Program, Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, Editors: Dorene Scriven & Jan Ahlgren)

A Word of Caution—Snakes

Submitted by *Fred Benson, Cary, NC* from <http://www.texasbluebirdsociety.org/nl/v3i3>

Keith Kridler, Mount Pleasant, Texas

Keith found two snakes when he monitored nestboxes (he has hundreds of nestboxes on his trail) on June 5th (2005). He explains that snakes are out in force in the South and that the rains and floods drive creatures to search for dry places to hide. He said he doesn't want to scare people. Rather, "Use a little caution when you go to open a nestbox or when you use your bare hand to cover the entrance hole.....Your fingers will look like they are edible to a snake waiting patiently inside for a bird to inspect your nestbox and become its next meal!"

Editor's Note: During ten years of monitoring bluebird houses, I have never seen a snake in a nest box, but I use caution anyway.

North Carolina Bluebird Society

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525 Fairway Drive Southern Pines, NC 28387
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Bluebird in Summer
By Gillian Munro (Age 8)
Seven Lakes, NC

The Joys of Monitoring Bluebirds

Many of you reading this newsletter have been checking bluebird houses from March to August for years. Some of you have never had the joy of opening a bluebird nest box and finding the miracle that is the bluebird family. This article is for you!!

If you have put up a nest box (preferably on a pole) in an area somewhat free of trees and you live in North Carolina, you have a good chance of having a bluebird family move in. If one of the other cavity nesters takes up residents, make them welcome. The exception to this is the imported English House Sparrow that likes to peck baby bluebirds to death. You will need to ask a seasoned bluebirder how to deal with him.

If you open the nest box and you find a neat nest of pine straw or grasses., you have a bluebird nest. Once a day the mother will lay the eggs until there is a total of three to five before she starts to incubate them. Two weeks of incubation and the babies



crack their egg and wait to be feed. These babies really grow fast with the parents, both male and the female, making one trip

after another to the nest box. The parents respond to the yellow-orange of the open months putting the food in and removing the fecal sack of the one that has just been feed. In just eight days, the babies have started to fill up the nest.

By the fourteenth day, the babies have



speckled feathers and are getting ready to fledge. It is not safe to open the nest box after the fourteenth day in that the baby birds need another four days in



the nest box before they are ready to fledge. Some time between the eighteenth and the twenty first day, the parents will starting calling them to come on out and fly to the next tree or bush. The fathers teach them to hunt for insects and the mother



starts building a nest for their next family. You can help provide them with housing. By monitoring their progress, they will share their family and the miracle of the bluebird family.

Pictures are by Joye Stephenson and Phil Egan of Garner, NC. Text by Helen Munro.

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