



Carolina Blue by Dempsey Essick

# Bluebird Notes

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NCBS hosts NABS  
May 19-22, 2005

May 19-22, 2005

Volume 19 Number 4

## 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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## Scott Shalaway and Connie Toops and to be featured speakers at NABS 2005

### SCOTT SHALAWAY



THE WILD SIDE

I have often chuckled at Dr. Scott Shalaway's humor in his weekly nature column and enjoyed his brand of expertise on different wild life subjects.

(www.shalaway.com) His book, Building a Backyard Bird Habitat became part of my winter reading one year and I used this information to increase the variety of bird species coming to my backyard.

Two items that I remember best from this book are the idea of a "snag" (a dead tree with cut off branches that provide multiple levels for different types of bird feeders) and the concept of growing "shade coffee" in South and Central America thus saving the habitat of birds that live in the canopy providing the shade. Neither are directly bluebird related, but part of his being a wildlife ecologist.

Dr. Shalaway earned his Ph.D. from Michigan State University and taught for nine years at Oklahoma State University. He writes a weekly nature column and hosts The Wild Side, a Saturday morning radio talk show.

His primary talk (Saturday, May 21, 2005) will be *The 'Hole Story': A Natural History of Cavity-nesting Birds*. After dinner, he will share *The Cost of Raising Bluebirds*, a light hearted, but practical view on bluebird

### Connie Toops



conservation.

Connie Toops' book Bluebirds Forever sits on my bluebird book shelf and her plans for bluebird nests boxes are in a pull-out supplement to this book.

Connie's book itself is spectacular with pictures of bluebirds from all over the country. It is filled with bluebird history including their decline and subsequent resurgence thanks to bluebird enthusiasts.

The personal stories of nine bluebird trails covering the country from east to west makes the book great reading as you meet different people putting up different bluebird trails in different parts of the country. Their boxes may be different. They may or may not band their bluebirds. They may even carry mealworms out to the boxes when a cold snap reduces the available insects. The common link in all of them is their love of bluebirds and their desire to see them flourish.

The title of Connie's talk is *The Joy of Bluebirds*. It will include the courtship, raising young, favorite foods, migration and the chance to ask and answer questions.

Connie was our speaker for NCBS 1998. It will be a pleasure to see and hear her again. (www.agpix.com/toops) *Helen S. Munro*

# Bluebird Notes

Issue 19 Vol. 3

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Photos by Ed Erkes

## Notes to The Editor



### A Note from Bill Abbey

3626 Tanglebrook Trail  
Clemmons, NC 27012  
16 June 2004

Editor

North Carolina's esteemed master bluebirder, Jack Finch, has offered a unique and imaginative thought about a "Valuable Late Winter Feed for Birds", in this case Mistletoe. (Bluebird Notes, Vol. 19, #2 p4).

I must admit that I have never thought about mistletoe as a source, of food for wildlife. It seems quite likely that the mistletoe berry is, indeed, attractive to wild birds, especially when other, more desirable foods are in scant supply.

As Jack correctly notes, "some may question the practice of planting a parasite on trees" and, "only in very rare cases has mistletoe killed a tree" as well.

My (largely academic) experience with mistletoes reveals that Eastern Mistletoe (*Phoradendron flavescens*) is the only mistletoe species occurring in the Eastern United States north of Florida. My partial research disclosed, "A common effect (of this plant) on hardwoods is atrophy and final death of that portion of the branch beyond the point of infection".<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, "If infection occurs when a tree is young and persists, the trunk and all the branches may be greatly deformed".<sup>2</sup>

Although Jack clearly points out that little advice on planting and growing mistletoe appears in print, his advice on where and how many seeds to plant is well taken.

In my estimation however, before a wild bird enthusiast should venture forth on a crusade to plant and foster a native parasite, of admittedly limited value, he or she should think carefully (as Jack suggests) about upon whose trees to inflict with colonies.

1. John Shaw Boyce, Forest Pathology (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948 pp. 305-310.

2. Ibid.



# Bluebird Tales



## Bluebird Trail At Green Elementary School

In what started as a small idea has turned into something to chirp about. The YMCA of The Triangle, specifically Green Year Round YMCA children, has established and are still working on what some will call the biggest bird trail in Raleigh.

David Botts, the Assistant Director for the YMCA After School program at Green Elementary brought together an idea to improve the school grounds while creating a natural learning environment at no cost to the Wake County school. With the help of Fred Benson, President of Blue Bird Haven, LLC. and NCBS board member, the bluebird trail now consists of fifteen "Credit Union bluebird houses", five Gilbertson bluebird houses, and four custom build enclosed feeders for the bluebirds.

However, they haven't stopped there. Four large woodpecker houses (red headed, red bellied), four downy woodpecker houses, two screech owl houses and two small song birdfeeders have been installed. Plans and construction are still going on to add a barred owl house and a bat house and six to eight small song bird houses (titmouse, wren, chickadee and nuthatch). The estimated cost of all these is just under \$1,000.

You might be curious as to how one YMCA employee, one bluebird expert, and a handful of children managed to pull this off. Back in late 2003, the

YMCA kids started fundraising to improve their school grounds. The kids have raised over \$1,000 between then and now through car washes, penny fundraisers, and donations.

Thanks to Fred Benson, the YMCA was able to afford the enormous undertaking. Fred has volunteered countless hours of his own time and money to build and modify the houses at no cost to the YMCA. He has even donated a couple of the houses and a bluebird bath at no cost to the YMCA. After all the blue bird houses and feeders finish construction, they are transported over to the school where David Botts and children from Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade dig the deep holes to put them in the ground.

The YMCA at Green emphasizes that they aren't done yet. Maintenance, continuing development of and expansion to this school grounds project are still going on. Plans have been and are still in the works for a butterfly garden, raised beds, and water garden for the school. All these projects will be a continuing effort by the YMCA to help give something more to the school at no cost. The *Outdoor Bird Co.* will supply the bird feed for this project at a discount and has agreed to donate feeders, houses, poles and accessories. This store is located in Raleigh on Creedmoor Rd.

David Botts can be contacted directly at 919-418- YMCA while Fred Benson with Blue Bird Haven, LLC. can be reached at 919-469-5897. Donations, contributions, and community help are always welcome.





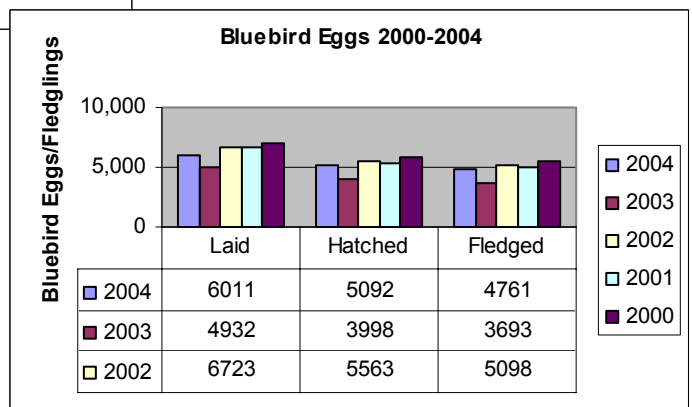
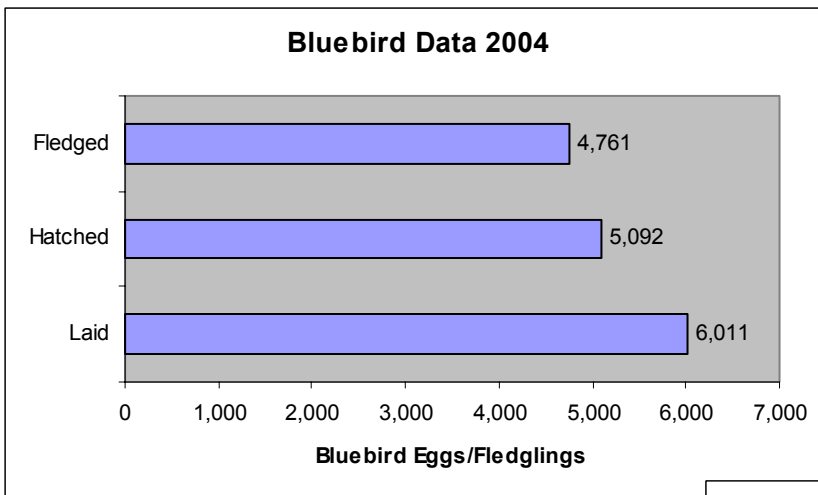
Name	State	Boxes	w/bb	eggs	hatched	fledged	2 sets	3 sets	1st date
<b>Hickory</b>									
Jennifer Warren	NC	1	1	9	4	4	1	0	8-May-04
Shannon Jolly	NC	25	21	186	152	148	8	6	20-Mar-04
<b>Hillsborough</b>									
Beverly Frassinelli	NC	20	11	77	76	76	7	0	6-Apr-04
<b>Jackson Springs</b>									
Claire Bryant	NC	6	6	43	31	31	3	0	18-Apr-04
Sandhills Comm. College*	NC	4	1	3	3	3	0	0	19-Apr-04
Taylorstown Headstart*	NC	1	1	5	0	0	0	0	25-Apr-04
Sandhills Christian Alliance*	NC	1	1	13	12	12	1	1	7-Apr-04
Edu-Care Montessori School*	NC	11	2	10	9	9	0	0	7-Apr-04
Foxfire Garden Club*	NC	80	71	474	449	410	35	4	31-Mar-04
* c/o Helen Munro									
<b>Kenly</b>									
Ann Weaver	NC	10	10	85	73	73	4	1	
<b>Lillington</b>									
Bill Dezso	NC	7	4	14	12	12	1	0	2-Apr-04
<b>Mebane</b>									
Deborah K.S. Kuepferle	NC	3	2	17	17	17	2	0	7-Apr-04
<b>Moorestown</b>									
Carol Radford	NC	1	1	5	4	4	0	0	1-May-04
<b>Morganton</b>									
Mimosa Garden Club c/o Linda Julien	NC	19	17	110	99	95	10	1	31-Mar-04
<b>New London</b>									
Wesley Eberspecker	NC	7	7	43	32	23	5	0	16-Apr-04
<b>North Wilkesboro</b>									
Lea W. Barnes	NC	1	1	8	2	2	1	0	
<b>Pinehurst</b>									
Robert & Ruth Stolting	NC	14	14	70	64	60	3	0	4-Apr-04
Len & Joyce Tufts	NC	22	10	72	65	60	3	1	29-Mar-04
<b>Purlear</b>									
Zane T. Walsh	NC	20	14	114	104	96	11	3	31-Mar-04
<b>Raleigh</b>									
Bill(C.J) Satterwhite	NC	57	38	208	191	189	24	3	27-Mar-04
Kaycee Browning	NC	1	1	14	13	13	1	1	1-Apr-04
Ravenscroft School c/o Reah Kittelberger	NC	4	4	25	15	15	3	2	26-Mar-04
Reah Kittelberger	NC	4	1	8	8	8	1	0	20-May-04
Randy & Iris Senzig	NC	5	2	20	20	20	1	1	20-Mar-04
Louise Dail	NC	2	2	14	10	10	2	0	14-Mar-04
Patrice Cooke	NC	3	2	8	8	8	0	0	21-Mar-04
Linda Sukoski	NC	5	4	20	17	17	1	3	18-Mar-04
Pat Dixon	NC	1	1	8	8	8	1	0	25-May-04
<b>Reidsville</b>									
Carl W. Bray	NC	9	4	35	29	24	2	1	14-Apr-04
<b>Rutherfordton</b>									
Wayne King	NC	2	2	8	7	7	0	0	1-Apr-04
<b>Southern Pines</b>									
Jean & Jim Walker	NC	72	51	279	176	146	15	3	20-Mar-04
<b>Statesville</b>									
Sue Ligon	NC	5	3	22	20	16	3	0	
<b>Thomasville</b>									
Chester W. Byerly	NC	2	2	9	9	9	0	0	20-Mar-04
<b>Tobaccoville</b>									
Belinda Hinshaw	NC	4	2	10	10	10	0	0	10-Apr-04
Phyllis B. Smith	NC	1	1	9	9	9	1	0	10-Apr-04

Name	State	Boxes	w/bb	eggs	hatched	fledged	2 sets	3 sets	1st date
<b>Union Mills</b>									
Jeannie Conner	NC	1	1	9	9	9	1	0	3-Apr-04
Jeff McCray	NC	1	1	10	9	9	1	0	4-Apr-04
Elaine Miller	NC	1	1	9	8	8	1	0	15-Apr-04
Christine B. Ammons	NC	55	42	342	289	264	25	8	31-Mar-04
<b>Wadesboro</b>									
Doug & Luke Edwards	NC	40	33	320	247	238	16	13	1-Apr-04
<b>Walnut Cove</b>									
Randy Agee	NC	1	1	14	10	6	1	1	
<b>West End</b>									
Iris & Richard Johnson	NC	12	7	41	41	41	0	1	
<b>Wilkesboro</b>									
Jim Felts	NC	35	28	183	161	157	6	3	15-Mar-04
<b>Yadkinville</b>									
Bob Southard	NC	63	60	546	444	405	26	18	19-Mar-04
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,255</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>6,011</b>	<b>5,092</b>	<b>4,761</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>107</b>	

**North Carolina Bluebird Society's Annual Survey Facts:  
Earliest Date of First Bluebird egg laid: March 12, 2004—Donald Wolfe from SC**

Number of bluebird boxes:  
 2004 : 1,255  
 2003 : 1,286  
 2002 : 1,318  
 2001 : 1,281  
 2000 : 1,377

Number of bluebird boxes used by bluebirds:  
 2004 : 855  
 2003 : 850  
 2002 : 968  
 2001 : 953  
 2000 : 1,013



# NABS 2005

The North American Bluebird Society's 28th Annual Convention

## *Carolina Blue*

Asheville, NC

Home of the Biltmore Estate

The richness of Asheville, North Carolina spreads out from Vance Square over the treetops and into the mountains that surround it. The presence of the Biltmore Estate, advertised as the largest private home in the United States, draws people from all over the world. Its use as a backdrop in the Peter Sellers' movie "Being There" makes you want to know more about how George Vanderbilt was able to create this stately home high in these North Carolina Mountains. His hiring of Richard Morris Hunt to design a 16th century chateaux and Frederick Law Olmsted to lay out the gardens and surrounding park is only part of the story.

Mr. Vanderbilt had the foresight to hire Gifford Pinchot and then Dr. Carl A. Schenck to oversee the reforestation of land that had been over farmed. This was the foundation of the 6,500 acre Pisgah National Forest and its history can be explored at the "Cradle of Forestry" facility. This is the birthplace of forestry conservation in the United States.

The North Carolina Arboretum covers 426 acres in the Pisgah National Forest and has five themed gardens reflecting Southern Appalachian heritage. The Folk Art Center up on the Blue Ridge Parkway exhibits and sells handcrafted items produced locally by descendants of the original settlers of this area including what is now the Great Smokey Mountains National Park. The 2004 Visitor Guide to Asheville says that "Thomas Wolfe's writing style was born in these mountains and his boyhood in Asheville formed the basis for his masterpiece, *Look Homeward Angels*. Others have found their muse here. Novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, short-story writer O. Henry and poet Carl Sandburg all have Asheville ties."

Contact the Visitors' Center : [www.exploreasheville.com](http://www.exploreasheville.com) or call 1-800-257-1300 for more information.



Biltmore House  
in the Spring!

May 19-22, 2005

Great Smokies

Holiday Inn

SunSpree Resort

Becomes the

Crowne Plaza in

April 2005



*Carolina Blue* by Dempsey Essick

### **SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- *Carolina Blue* is a painting by Dempsey Essick and the color of the sky in the Carolinas.
- *Springtime in the mountains of North Carolina* is a delight of weather, birds and flowers.
- The Biltmore Estate has its own bluebird trail which was originally maintained by a North Carolina Bluebird Society member. It is now maintained by the Biltmore staff.
- NABS 2005 is an incredible opportunity to visit this small city with a positive attitude and altitude.
- Fill your registration form out today and start anticipating the fun of *Carolina Blue* and NABS 2005

## NABS 2005 Schedule Asheville, North Carolina - May 19-22, 2005

Registration - Desk in Convention Entrance

Thursday - 10 am to 8 pm

Friday ~ 8 am to 9 pm

Saturday - 8 am to 9 am

Exhibit Area - Crowne Plaza Biltmore Foyer (between Registration and Pool)

Thursday - 10 am to 9 pm

Friday - 8 am to 9 pm

Saturday - 8 am to 5 pm



Silent Auction Items - Viewing and Bidding - Dogwood Room

Thursday - 10 am to 9 pm

Friday - 8 am to 9 pm

Saturday - 8 am to 5 pm

**Thursday -** 8 am to noon - NABS Board Meeting - Mitchell Room

1 pm to 1:45 pm - Photography Workshop, Gene Stafford, Photographer

2 pm to 2:45 pm - Keep America Beautiful - George Stilphen

3 pm to 3:45 pm - Ventures, Inc., Bird Watching Tours - Simon Thompson

4 pm to 4:45 pm - Bird Banding, Bill Hilton, Jr.

7 pm - Presentation: Welcome to the Biltmore - Speaker Bill Alexander - Mitchell Room

### Friday - Field Trips

A. Biltmore House & Folk Art Center - Leaves at 8:30 am. Return no later than 3 pm.

B. Biltmore House & NC Arboretum - Leaves at 8:30 am. Return no later than 3 pm.

C. North Carolina Mountain Tour - Leaves at 8 am. Return between 3 and 4 pm.

(Lunch may be purchased at the Biltmore House. Box lunch included in NC Tour)

**Friday - Dinner** - 6 pm Cash bar (Dinner and bar will be on the patio weather permitting)

7 - 9 pm - Old fashion pig pickin' complete with' Bluegrass music and cloggers

### Saturday - Mitchell & Mt. Roan Rooms

8:00 am Welcome by President of the North American Bluebird Society

Singing of Bluebird Medley - Kay Hindsley

8:15 am NABS General Meeting, Elections & Announcements of NABS Awards

09:00 - 09:45 am Scott Shalaway, Columnist and Author

09:45 - 10:00 am Break

10:00 - 10:45 am Douglas LeVasseur, Past President of NABS & Bluebird Expert

11 :00 - 11 :45 am Connie Toops, Photographer and Author

11:45 ~ Noon Information on NABS 2006, Texas Bluebird Society

Noon --1:00 pm Lunch in Pilot and Pisgah Rooms

1 :00 pm To be announced

2:00 - 4:00 pm Workshop - Make Bluebird Cards and/or a Bluebird Tote Bag, Claire Bryant, Author and Master Craftsman. Nominal charge for tote bag (\$3).

Asheville Historic Trolley Tour (\$13.00) Learn about Asheville's History.

4:00 - 5:00 pm Workshop - Press Release preparation for newsletters & newspapers

6 to 7 pm No Host Bar

7 pm Banquet in Mt. Roan and Mitchell Rooms

Speaker-Scott Shalaway

Awards, Silent Auction and Evening Entertainment

Golf is available during your stay. The cost is \$31.00 and you can sign up in the Pro Shop.

**Sunday -** Morning Birding Trip (to be organized)





NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING-NABS 2005

Airport Information- The **Asheville Airport** is about 30 minutes from the hotel. Please fill in the airport information on the registration form. The **Airport Ground Transportation** (828-681-0051) has quoted a cost of \$22 per person each way. However, if we have your registration at least a month in advance, they will give us a group rate. However, we will not know that group rate until we have given them the number of people and the flight times.

The **New Blue Bird Taxi Company** (828-258-8331) charges \$30 and will take up to 4 people for that \$30. They also have a van that will take 7 people and that is \$30 plus \$5 extra for every person over 4.

Please fill in the airport information on the registration form and we will work at finding you the best and least expensive transportation to the hotel.

Flying and renting a car can be done from the airports at **Greenville, SC**, (1 hour) and **Charlotte, NC**, (2 hours).

**Camping Information**-There are many R.V. Parks in the Asheville area. Bear Creek RV Park and Campground is the closest. Their number for registration is 800-833-0798. Their number for general information is 828-253-0798.

**Early Sunday Morning Birding**-A trip to view the local birds will be arranged for Sunday morning, May 22, 2005.

### Sponsorship

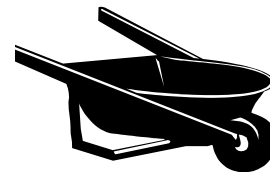
Just as bluebird monitors help the cavity nesters that inhabit their nest boxes, so do sponsors help the participants of NABS 2005. It is their contributions that pay for the speakers and entertainers that make each NABS meeting special. The dedication to the resurgence of the bluebird population and its role in the conservation of the natural world is supported by the bluebirders and they, in turn, by these generous sponsors.



Nancy & Bill Abbey     Asheville Wine Market  
 The Dempsey Essick Gallery  
 First Annapolis Consulting, Inc.  
 Grove Arcade  
 Homes for Bluebirds  
 Hunsucker Printing of Asheboro  
 HSM Trust Fund             C.B. Munro



Liz & Tom Schmid  
 Novant Health  
 The Garden Club of the Sandhills  
 Tanglewood Park             T.W. Garner Food Co.  
 Tweetsie Railroad  
 Ventures Birding, Inc.



North Carolina Bluebird Society host of  
NABS 2005



Carolina Blue

Questions? Call Co-Chairs  
Bill Abbey 336-766-5857  
Chuck Bliss 336-6255423  
Helen Munro 910-673-6936

Access [ncbluebird.com](http://ncbluebird.com) for information.



Dates of Conference  
May 19-22, 2005  
Thursday through  
Sunday  
Asheville, NC

Register by  
February 15, 2005  
To be entered in a  
drawing for a print by  
Dempsey Essick

*Y'all come!*

## From Mt. Mitchell to Manteo (Mountains to the Coast)

WELCOME! And please enjoy the meeting and your stay...

While you are here visiting our lovely State, we hope that you will consider the following SAMPLE itinerary as you depart Asheville after the meeting...

**Sunday. May 22.** Check out, drive Interstate 40 East to Winston-Salem (2.5 hrs). Overnight in Winston. Three hotels in the Winston-Salem area are offering special rates to NC BLUEBIRD.

Adams Mark Hotel. (Downtown). Rate is \$79 plus tax dbl.

Call 800-444-2326, ID is NC Bluebird Society

Microtel. (Hanes Mall Area). Rate is \$45 including tax dbl.

Call 336-774-0805, ID is NC Bluebird Society

Comfort Suites. (Hanes Mall Area). Rate is \$65 including tax dbl.

Call 336-774-0805, ID is NC Bluebird Society.

Winston Salem Visitor Center: 866-728-4200

**Monday. May 23.** Check out. Tour on your own. Depart mid-afternoon to Raleigh (State Capitol). Take 1-40 & 1-85 East. (2.5 hrs.). Overnight in Raleigh area. Tour Capitol complex and State museums on own.

Raleigh Visitor Center: 800-849-8499.

**Tuesday. May 24.** Check out. Continue tour of Research Triangle area on own. Depart early afternoon to Manteo, NC, on the Outer Banks. Take US 64 East. (3.5 hrs.). Visit Wright Brothers Center. Overnight in area.

Outer Banks Visitor Center: 800-446-6262.

**Wednesday. May 25.** Continue south along the North Carolina Outer Banks to Cape Hatteras, the world famous lighthouse and on to Morehead City. Consider quaint Beaufort, NC, (BO-FORT) as an alternative to Morehead City. NOTE: Ferry service is required. For schedule and reservations-call 800-BY-FERRY.

Beaufort Visitor Center: 252-728-5225.

Thursday and beyond. Continue along a variety of possible routing to Wilmington. (2 to 3 hrs.). Visit the Battleship North Carolina or other sights in this city. If desired, airline departures are available on US Airways and Delta or return to Raleigh-Durham for other air service.

Wilmington/Cape Fear Visitor Center: 800-222-4757

You may contact Bill Abbey (336-766-5857) before the conference or at the conference desk during the meeting for additional itinerary suggestions.

NOTE: Once you have experienced North Carolina, you may choose to cash-in your tickets and stay; if not we will miss you...

# Tours & Activities for NABS 2005

Asheville was selected for the NABS 2005 meeting because of the presence of the Biltmore House, mountain home of the Vanderbilts. People come from all over the world to tour the "largest private home in the United State." The gardens and park surrounding it are magnificent and the view from the back terrace makes you feel like you are on top of the world.

Thursday, May 19, 2005, four workshops are planned. There is no charge for these workshops.

1.) Photographer Gene Stafford from Colfax, NC will share pictures of the landscape in rural North Carolina. He has compiled many of his photos in a book, "Carolina Edition" and published several as covers of *Our State down home in North Carolina*, a magazine. His web site is [genestafford.com](http://genestafford.com). "It is Gene's desire that in viewing his photographs, we are challenged to become involved with the image. The creative journey does not end as long as we continue to see the extraordinary in the ordinary."

2.) "Keep America Beautiful is a national nonprofit public education organization dedicated since 1953 to engaging individuals to take great responsibility for improving their local community environments. For half a century, Keep America Beautiful has been the nation's leading community improvement organization successfully implementing an effective, systematic strategy for educating on recycling and reducing litter, and changing individual attitudes about solid waste." This is quoted from their web site, [kab.org](http://kab.org). George Stilphen of Winston-Salem will be the speaker.

3.) Bill Hilton, Jr., one of NCBS County Coordinators, will speak on Bird Banding. According to his web site is [hiltonpond.org](http://hiltonpond.org), "Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History has been in operation as a conservation, educational, and scientific research site for more than 22 years. It was established on an old Piedmont farmstead in 1982 and has been a field trip destination for school groups, college classes, environmental organizations, professional scientists, and others interested in conservation and nature. .... Because of this work, in 2003 the Center was designated an "Important Bird Area" by the National Audubon Society and Bird Life International."

4.) Simon Thompson of Ventures Birding, Inc. will present "Traveling the World." His website, [birdventures.com](http://birdventures.com), offers this information. "Originally from Suf-

folk, England, Simon has lived in North Carolina for over 10 years. He has lived in Lebanon, Kenya, Yemen, and Ghana, where his interest in birds and natural history began. In addition to traveling extensively in the United States, Simon spent six months in China studying the crane and bird of prey migration as a member of the British "China Crane Watch" expedition. As director and originator of Ventures Nature Travel program in Tryon, North Carolina, Simon has led many birding trips all over the world."

On Friday (May 20, 2005), one Biltmore Tour will be combined with a stop at the Folk Art Center. Here mountain craftsmen display and sell their creations. The other Biltmore tour will go to the North Carolina Arboretum which is itself located in a picture postcard setting.

The North Carolina Mountain Tour has been created to include scenery and education in a loop out from Asheville. Several stops will be made including the Cradle of Forestry. Mr. George Vanderbilt, along with the building of the Biltmore House, was responsible for the beginning of what became the U.S. Forestry Service.

Saturday's program will start with the NABS formal meeting and speakers Scott Shalaway, Connie Toops and Doug LeVasseur.

The program Saturday afternoon, May 21, 2005, will offer two hands on workshops. The first will be presented by Claire Bryant, an author and designer of cross stitch patterns. The cards will feature bluebirds produced by cut and paste or stamp and color. The tote bags (\$3 charge) will have pockets and involve painting a line drawing bluebird. To check her out, type "Claire Bryant" into the search on Amazon or Books-a-Million.

The second workshop will write a press release for NABS 2005. This will be of interest to newsletter editors. It is often hard to write down the essence of a three day meeting and make it informative, accurate and as exciting as NABS 2005 will be.

Plans for a birding walk are being made for Sunday, May 22, 2005 at 8 am. This is a wonderful way to end a NABS conference.

***Bluebirds, Inside the Nest Box***

Recorded by the Cornell Birdhouse Network  
Summer 1999

Produced by the North Carolina Bluebird Society  
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or 5 for \$10.00		X _____	= _____
<b><i>Bluebirds, Inside the Nestbox</i></b> Video Tape	\$13.85 *	X _____	= _____
(2 for \$25; 3 for \$35; 6 for \$70)			= _____
Total			= _____

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Video tapes and DVDs can be order on the nbluebird.com website.

## Singing by male Eastern Bluebirds More than meets the ear

By Gary Ritchison and Bret O. Huntsman

*Bluebird*, Journal of  
the North American  
Bluebird Society,  
Vol. 25, No. 3.

While long assumed to function primarily in mate attraction and territory defense, recent studies have revealed that the bird song can also serve other functions. For example, male House Wrens sing to inform females of the presence or absence of predators. Male Common Yellowthroats sing to distract potential predators from nests and mates.

Determining possible functions requires detailed observations of how and when males use song throughout an entire breeding cycle. This is because even subtle changes in singing behavior, such as changes in volume or singing rate, can potentially convey information. How you sing can be as important as what you sing.

Although many aspects of the behavior and ecology of Eastern Bluebirds have been well studied, little is known about their singing behavior. The objective of our study was to try and determine why male Eastern Bluebirds sing.

We would attempt to do this by examining singing rates throughout the breeding cycle and in different situations. We would attempt to determine if and how male bluebirds vary the characteristics of songs to convey different types of information.

We observed male Eastern Bluebirds during two breeding seasons in Madison County, Kentucky. Males and their mates were captured in mist nets and banded with unique combinations of colored plastic bands. We then attempted to follow each male for at least 45 minutes once every five days. Using a cassette recorder and microphone, we recorded on tape all songs uttered during each 90 period.

By closely monitoring these and their territories, we knew the status of each male. So, for each observation period, we noted the male being observed was paired or unpaired. And, if paired, we monitored mates and nests and categorized the various breeding stages as one of the following:

- Pre-laying (from the day a male obtained a mate through the day before the first egg was laid)
- Laying (days when eggs were laid).
- Incubation, nestling (from the day of hatching through the day before young fledged).
- Post-fledging (a 14-day period beginning on the day of fledging).
- Transition (from 14 days after fledging until construction of another nest began).

Understanding function requires knowing how male bluebirds might alter singing behavior in different situations. So, we did our best to determine the location of other bluebirds during each bout of songs. A bout is a series of songs with no more than a few seconds between each song. Bouts were also categorized as high volume (songs could be heard in adjacent territories), moderate volume (could be heard throughout most of the male's territory but not in adjacent territories), or low volume (could not be heard more than about 130 feet/40m) away).

All songs recorded during all observation periods were analyzed using a sonagraph, with some examples of bluebird songs generated by the sonagraph shown in Figure 1. Bluebird songs consist of a series of notes. For example, the top song in Figure 1 is made up of three notes. Each song that consisted of a unique combination of notes was called a song type (with three different song types shown in Figure 1). We found that almost all song types used by male bluebirds consisted of

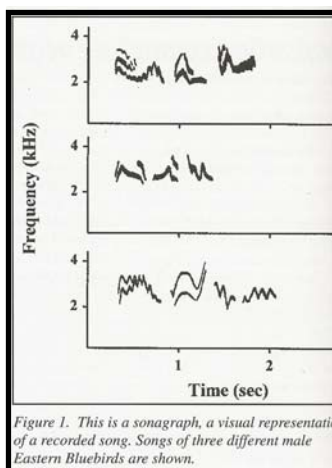


Figure 1. This is a sonagraph, a visual representation of a recorded song. Songs of three different male Eastern Bluebirds are shown.

(Continued on page 15)

## Keeping House

Article sent by Bill Abbey from  
NC Business, Aug. '04

Smoothing wrinkles from the lap of George Vanderbilt's luxury can be tedious. Whether it's cataloging tapestry tassels or applying eyeliner to animal trophies, the jobs required to maintain and operate the Biltmore Estate prove less is more.

Nobody lives in the 250-room, 175,000 square foot mansion now, but it takes up to 1,600 employees to keep it and the other operations on the 8,000-acre estate running. When George, Edith and baby Cornelia lived there at the heel of the Gilded Age, it took only 438.

These days, employees are occupied mainly with guarding America's largest privately owned home from change.

On a given day, a conservation technician cleans a white sphinx that sits on the entry gate to the Asheville landmark, checking for the blemishes of time that might alter the statue from its original state. On the lawns that surround the French Renaissance structure is another constant during the summer: mowing.

Biltmore's kitchen garden grows vegetables such as lettuce, pumpkins

and asparagus. Even in the winter — peak employment comes at Christmas — cabbage is grown for use in one of Biltmore's four restaurants. They call it the field-to-table program, says Ann Ashley, vice president of human resources. "The crew works very closely with our executive chefs, so they grow things chefs want in the restaurant."

Biltmore's restaurants employ about 300, including executive chefs from top culinary schools. On the authentically preserved grounds, guests have their cake and Edith, too: 120 horticulturists tend 250 acres of landscaped gardens, toiling to keep them looking as

Before guests arrive, chores begin: mowing pasture-size lawns, grooming carriage horses, weeding gardens and nursing wounds inflicted by more than a century of wear and weather. Tasks range from polishing thresholds and planning banquets to preserving tapestries and trophies and making wine. Where carriages once delivered wealthy guests, buses disgorge tourists.

good as when she strolled through. In the winery, the French wine master swirls a sample to test its bouquet. Many of the grapes are grown on the estate, which employs two labs to test its wine's quality.

In a former bedroom, a museum registrar measures and catalogs tassels and trim from the estate's collection of art and furnishings. Rooms are packed with expensive trappings: 16th century tapestries, thousands of antique books, dozens of bronze sculptures, original paintings by masters such as Renoir. The curatorial staff, including some recruited from inter-

national museums, don't merely preserve collections, they use old photographs and other sources to document where pieces hung or stood when the Vanderbilts lived here. In another room, an upholstery conservator paints a threadbare spot near the eye of a trophy ram's head.

Visitors have come to Biltmore House since George Vanderbilt welcomes friends and family on Christmas Eve upon completion

in 1895. But business was behind opening it to the public. The family did so in 1930 at the request of local leaders who wanted to attract tourists to the city which had been hit hard by the Depression. Long gone is the Gilded Age, when staff members tended to a family of three. Now they greet nearly a million guests a year.

- Nirav Vora

*Editor Note: This article was complemented by beautiful pictures of the Biltmore Estate which could not be reproduced here.*

### Need Some Ideas for Christmas Gifts

Give memberships in NCBS (\$10 a year or three years for \$25). New memberships will receive the revised *Bluebirds Forever* plus a recent newsletter. DVDs and videos of *Inside the Nest Box* can be ordered by mail or through [nbluebird.com](http://nbluebird.com) See page 12 of this newsletter.

NABS is offering a Special Family Membership—\$30 for one year plus a gift wrapped copy of Stokes "Bluebird Basics" Video (value \$10); and Bird Watcher's Digest "Enjoying Bluebirds More" (value \$4). Their website is [nbluebirdsociety.org](http://nbluebirdsociety.org).

## Singing by male Eastern Bluebirds

(Continued from page 13)

two to five notes, with three notes the most common. Because this was true during all nesting stages and in all situations, it appears that bluebirds do not vary song length to communicate different messages.

Some birds, like male Blue Grosbeaks, tend to add more notes to their songs during aggressive interactions. For example, a male Blue Grosbeak trying to defend a territory boundary against an intruder will typically use songs with several more notes than usual. This change in singing behavior informs any nearby male grosbeaks that the singer is more likely to respond aggressively. For bluebirds, song length remains rather consistent, regardless of the situation.

We found that the number of different song types used by male bluebirds ranged from 40 to 81.

While even these numbers are higher than reported for most other songbirds, the actual number of song types in each male bluebird's repertoire was undoubtedly much higher. This is because males used new song types every time we observed them (even at the end of the breeding season).

Also, most song types (64 percent) were only used during one observation period. This use of new song types throughout the study along with the infrequent reuse of song types indicate that male Eastern Bluebirds create new song types throughout a breeding season. Only a few other songbirds, like Northern Mocking birds and Brown Thrashers, continue to create and use different song types over extended periods.

*This article will be concluded in the February, 2005 newsletter.*

## NABS Past President, Doug LeVasseur, to Speak at NABS 2005

Look carefully at this picture. Can you see the bluebird that rides on Doug's shoulder? This bluebird is part of the charm and bluebird enthusiasm of Doug LeVasseur. Doug was an active member of NABS from 1982 through his retirement from the presidency in 2003. He greets participants of many NABS annual meetings with this bluebird on his shoulder and a smile on his face.

At the meeting in Penticton, BC, he carried a small cardboard box and invited everyone to take a look inside. Inside was a bluebird nest and he said that it was to keep everyone from feeling lonely because they were away from their bluebirds!

Doug comes prepared for his talk, *The Joys of Bluebirds*, with a basket filled with props. He has a video of a bluebird that comes through his window to enjoy a dinner of meal worms on the kitchen ta-



ble. He shares his early attempts with nest boxes and the mistakes that he made in their placement. In the past, he has even had a plastic blue bird that flies.

Doug lives in Ohio with his wife Ethel-Marie and has been the President of the Ohio Bluebird Society. He feels involving adults and children with bluebirds benefits the bluebirds and the people. Each person has a moment of "discovery" when they know that they are

hooked on bluebirds and wouldn't have it any other way.

For those of you who do not know Doug, come and listen for the first time; for those of you who do know him, come and enjoy his enthusiasm and expertise again. It will be worth the trip.

*Helen S. Munro  
NABS 2005 Co-Chair*

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