



NCBS Logo with Carolina Blue by Dempsey Essick

Bluebird Notes

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Volume 29 Issue 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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Bluebirds Are Back at the North Carolina Arboretum

The North Carolina Arboretum is located within the Bent Creek Experimental Forest in the Pisgah National Forest. Located just a few miles from Asheville adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Arboretum is a 434-acre public garden that is surrounded by lush folds of the botanically diverse Southern Appalachian Mountains. Even though it is nestled in one of the most beautiful natural settings in America, for many years the Eastern Bluebird was completely absent. Thanks to a private grant, nest boxes from the Homes For Bluebirds non-profit organization, and some classes by Joe Sanders, Coordinator for Henderson County, the Bluebirds are back.

In 2012 a survey of the property revealed that all of the existing nest boxes had fallen in to a state of disrepair with no chance of Bluebirds nesting within. Working with Mac Franklin, the Arboretum Landscape Supervisor, and his crew, in February 2013 Joe was able to place eight nest boxes around the campus. "The staff at the Arboretum have been wonderful to work with, and some of the open spaces make it an ideal Bluebird habitat."

But as most Bluebird lovers know, placing the nest boxes is not enough. The nest boxes have to be monitored



Daddy Bluebird keeping watch as mom prepares the nest in a student's nest box.

Photo courtesy of Stephen Tody

during the nesting season, cleaned-out after each brood, and cleaned and repaired at the end of the season. The best way to ensure success is to educate enthusiasts and let them adopt a nest box.

Also in February 2013, Joe taught the first "Build Your Own Nest Box" class. We build the nest box, discuss locating it, and even do a demonstration on how to put it up. The students love the idea that they could build a nest box, take it

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Bluebird Tales



home, and with the pole and instructions, put their nest box up in 5 minutes.”

Most of the students from that first class returned in April 2013 for the “All About Bluebirds” class when the first brood was recently hatched. This class taught them how and why it is so important to monitor the nest box, how to calculate the approximate fledge date, how to deal with common pests, and even how to do a nest change-out if ants invaded the nest. It also gave them the confidence to know that mama Bluebird wasn’t going to abandon the nest. “It is so rewarding to receive emails from students telling of the joy they get from watching the process from courting to fledging. Many returned in 2014 to build another nest box.”

Joe will be teaching the “Build Your Own Bluebird Nest Box” class in February 2015 and the “All About Bluebirds” class in April 2015. For more information on these and other classes at the North Carolina Arboretum check:

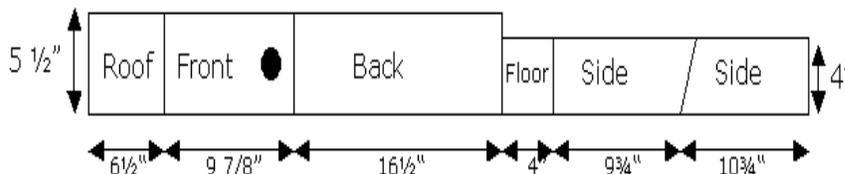
<http://www.ncarboretumregistration.org>.

By Joe Sanders, Coordinator for Henderson County

Joe demonstrating how to mount one the Homes for Bluebirds, Inc. nest boxes on a pole.



Photos courtesy of
Jeff Boyea





Bluebird Tales



Garner Lake Benson Bluebirders doing their end of season monitoring and cleaning. Pictured are Diane Woerner, Anne Runyon, Karen Williams and Ellen Cook

Picture Submitted by Joye Stephenson

A Question about Mealworm

Feeders from Armida Avery

Thanks for contacting the North Carolina Bluebird Society (NCBS) with your question regarding the type(s) of Bluebird mealworm feeders. Sounds like you already have the dome feeder when you mention that the mealworms are crawling out of it. If one Googles "mealworm feeder" you will come up with several different types of feeders specifically for the blues. But let's go back to the dome feeder for a minute.

The local Dollar Tree store here have small glass saucers that are about three inches in diameter. The glass keeps the worms from crawling up the side of that container. These little saucers are the type that one sees on a lot of the cooking shows on TV.

I think that the dome feeder is the easiest to use because the blues can see into the feeder and you can lower the

top down to where the larger birds can't help themselves to the worms. If I were you, I would take the feeder with me and shop for a glass container that fits your feeder. You may need to counter-balance the feeder with two saucers, but the ones I speak of come three or four to a pack. Hope this works for you.

Again thanks for contacting the NCBS!

***Ray Welch,
President of NCBS***



I might not be great at bird identification, but I'm thinking that there are four females and one male.

*Sent in by Ted Harvey,
Fuquay Varina, NC
(From the Internet-source unknown ...
but I think it was Ray Welch) Risa*

Bluebird Conservation Seminar by NC Bluebird Society President



Ray Welch, NC Bluebird Society President from Winston Salem shares bluebird monitoring techniques with a seminar group at Hill Gallery & Working Studios in Brasstown, NC.

Ray Welch, President of the North Carolina Bluebird Society and his wife, Betsy, from Winston-Salem presented a very informative session of Bluebird Conservation techniques on September 10th at the Hill Gallery and Working Studios in Brasstown, NC.

By 1979 the Bluebird population had dwindled due to lost nest sites, chemicals and non-native bird competition. Bluebirds were declared rare and uncommon.

President Welch shared simple monitoring techniques that have brought back the population of our beloved Bluebirds. By checking on the nest box each week, keeping wasps out the boxes, and by placing the boxes in effective locations the bluebirds are able to survive. Since Bluebirds make up to three nests each season it is an educational experience to carefully watch the life cycle of these gentle birds.

*Article by Carol Reid
Clay County coordinator*



Bill Satterwhite and Joye Stephenson doing what they love to do “talking bluebirds” at the Southern Ideal Home Show at the NC State Fairgrounds in Raleigh August 27-28, 2014. The Triangle Gardener newspaper invites them each year.



**A HAPPY TRIO OF
“NEW BLUBIRDS,” BILTMORE LAKE**



*Photos
by Russ
Bauman*

News from Bill Abbey

Bill Abbey, Tanglewood's Bluebird Trail Monitor, reports that the Park's Bluebird nesting season has concluded on another high note in 2014.

Adjustments to the total number of nesting box sites to forty-two as well as the addition of certain predator guards on the trail have helped yield a count of one hundred eighty-six bluebirds fledged this year.

Despite the cold winter and the late spring, the bluebirds posted their fifth best production at Forsyth County's Tanglewood Park for the last ten years!

Note to Backyard Bluebird Lovers:

As autumn cools our weather, nesting boxes should be scraped clean and brushed of debris before winter sets in. Do not be surprised if you observe several visits to your nest box by two or three blues. It is believed that they are examining nesting sites for the next season...just looking as nest building normally begins in March in these parts. Don't forget to provide water for your birds this winter!

By Bill Abbey



*Bluebird
Babies from
Jim
Kunkle*



*Photo above submitted by Lewis Moore
Winston-Salem, NC*



Here is a follow up note on the "Bluebird Tales," winter 2014 article titled "Food for Thought" by Bill Abbey. His hypothesis was that Bluebirds may tend to build low profile nests in low profile cups. The low profile cup would possibly offer greater refuge from some predators, if proved.

His observations during the 2014 nesting season in Forsyth County NC did not support the Low/High concept. However, other monitors may have results adding to the depth of the study. Please send any of your findings if you experimented with this to Bill Abbey, 336-766-5857.

Results at Tanglewood Park, Forsyth County in six nest boxes equipped with the low profile cup, over three nesting cycles provided the following data:

Nesting Opportunities/all low profile nest cups

Six nest boxes with three nesting cycle opportunities, each offered eighteen possible nests.

Actual Nesting Results

- *Four opportunities yielded nests generally fitting the cup with up to 1/4 inch over-build.
- *Two opportunities yielded colossal nests with up to a seven inch over-build.
- *Six opportunities held nests of varying over build of one to three inches and seem not affected by cup height.
- *Six opportunities had no nesting attempts.

Bill Abbey



Pictures from Russ Bauman



LINDLEY PARK BLUES

*Some blues are sad, but some are glad
dark, sad, or bright, glad, they're all blues
all shades, all hues, all blues*

Miles Davis – All Blues

Miles Davis' number *All Blues* is a great song. I'm sure there is not a jazz song titled *Lindley Park Blues*, however I am sure that one needs to be written. Not about blues in a dark, sad sense, but in a bright, glad sense. I'm talking the kind of "blues" that most of us welcome – **Bluebirds**.

Blues can also mean love and my husband and I are in love. We've been together for over 25 years and have shared various adventures: cycle-touring, boating, paragliding and camping to mention a few. However, early this summer we discovered a new "Blue" love and a new adventure. We had **Bluebirds** in our backyard. As they would swoosh into our yard from our neighbor's huge oak tree next door with a dash of deep blue color, it was marvelous!



Seeing these delightful birds in our neighborhood led us to this adventure and it all began with the purchase of a bluebird house at the Sandy Ridge Farmer's Market in April. With only limited aviary knowledge, we put up the house in the large open space in our backyard and crossed our fingers in hopes that a pair would like our brand-spanking newly purchased real estate and move in.

To our delight, in mid-May we had an interested pair who began the serious week-long process of preparing a nest and a comfy home for their brood. Patience was the name of the game, as we sat at our kitchen table; staring out the window, waiting for something to happen. The nesting activity gave us the best chance for photos, as they flew back and forth collecting pine straw. We were able to get some great action shots as they approached the bird house or descended on the roof. Frequently, the brilliantly blue male was seen darting about chasing away any threat in the form of another bird. The beauty of this particular bird house is that one side has a clear plexiglass pane with a hinged door. When the nest was complete we were able to "peek" inside and see if there were any eggs.

Lo and behold, upon inspection in the early morning of June 1st, after ensuring Mom or Dad were not in the box, we discovered one egg, on day-two another, and another on the third day a final beautiful blue egg. We were ecstatic! We had Bluebirds in very our own back yard and we had real eggs! How cool is that?

(Continued on Page 8)



(Continued from page 7)

And then we had to wait some more. Incubation took a while and on June 21st the most wonderful part of the process – we had three tiny bald pink chicks. Each morning before heading to work, we carefully opened the box and would take a quick photo of the chicks. By day 14 we stopped the photos so we wouldn't disturb the chicks close to the time that they fledge. They might take wings and leave the box early.

Little did we know that this Fourth of July would not only be a day when the United States celebrated their independence, but that our Blue-



birds would experience their freedom and the courage to fly out of their safe place into the big wide world. Luck was with us on a day

home from work. My husband settled into his camp chair in the driveway, I sat at the kitchen window and we waited for the first flight event to happen. With binoculars and camera in hand, we sat for a good hour and a half. We observed Mom and Dad flitting back and forth from the Oak tree to the bird house coaxing their brood from the nest, giving us hints they were close to fledging.

The first indication for us was when their tiny heads began peeking out from the small inch and a half opening, the time had come. Within a three minute period, at 10:35 am in the blink of an eye they were gone. That was it – they were out, flying off to another chapter in the life of a Bluebird.



By Anne Sparks-Baumgartner

Photos and captions below submitted by George Kemp, Salisbury, NC



Mad baby from Jim Kunkle





Photo by Russ Bauman

**CATS!
I'M GETTING THE
HECK OUT OF HERE!**

**Hey Buddy.....I'm
having a little trouble here.
Can you help me out?**



Picture from Internet,
Freaking News.com

Bluebird Conservation Lesson by NC Bluebird Society President

Community Service with “Pay it Forward” the theme at The Learning Center Charter School in Murphy, NC on September 11th. Students learned “Bluebird Conservation Lessons” as a means to honor the victims of terror attacks from that fateful day thirteen years ago. The return of the Bluebird



of Happiness would touch the hearts of those hurt from that tragic day. When we help these gentle creatures by providing a safe, clean environment we create a ripple effect known as The Bluebird Effect. The good we create in this small nest box is repeated with our acts of kindness in

our other human interactions.

Ray Welch, President, of the North Carolina Bluebird Society, from Winston-Salem and local Bluebird Coordinator, Carol Reid, of Brasstown taught the Bluebird Monitoring lessons. By 1979 bluebirds were declared rare and uncommon due to lost nest sites, chemicals, and non-native bird competition. By using simple (continued on page 10)





A FEW WORDS FROM RAY WELCH



monitoring techniques the bluebirds have made a comeback. Bluebirds make three nests each season. It is an educational experience to carefully watch the life cycle of these gentle, beautiful birds. Additional information on bluebirds can be found at www.ncbluebird.org or at Hill Gallery and Working Studios, 139 Emily Lane, Brass-town, NC at the local coordinator's office, Carol Reid 828 -361-6580.

*Article by Carol Reid
Clay County Coordinator*

**OH DON'T GET
IN A WAD,
WE'LL GET
YOUR
NESTBOX SUR-
VEY DATA TO
STELLA
SHORTLY!**



Mine too!!



REPORT YOUR NESTING DATA

From the nesting reports that I am hearing, 2014 appears to have been a great season for the North Carolina Bluebirds. I have received multiple reports of successful third nestings from across the state. Mother Nature has been a great partner this year in allowing cooler temperatures, particularly in the eastern portion of the state, which enabled the third nestings. There are a number of universities, research organizations, publications, etc. that rely on the data reported by the North Carolina Bluebird Society. This data is very important in order to follow the progress or lack thereof of the Eastern Bluebird. I personally believe that we can report some great Bluebirds numbers, as well as other cavity dwellers, to these organizations for our 2014 nesting season. Board member, Stella Rideout, has agreed to collect, compile and report the NCBS numbers for 2014. You can find Stella's addresses on the website, as well as the reporting form. If you do not have Internet access, Stella's contact information is contained in your newsletter. If this doesn't work, please feel free to contact your County Coordinator or a NCBS Board member.

**I'M GONNA BE
MAD IF YOU
FORGET TO
REPORT MY
DATA!**



Thanks for all your help with this request!

Ray

RUSS BAUMAN'S THIRD BROOD SHOPPING FOR WINTER QUARTERS IN TREE SNAGS



SPOTLIGHT ON COUNTY COORDINATOR B J Taylor, Iredell County

BJ has been an active County Coordinator for several years. He provided the Lindley Park Blues article from first time Bluebird stewards he met at the Triad Farmers Market and his products are shown in the photo.

A NOTE FROM BJ

This year I set up several Bluebird nest box building work shops and Bluebird information sessions for the Iredell County Senior Center and conducted an In depth Bluebird information and nest box building work shop for the visitors of the Davidson Farmers market. I have continued to provide superior next boxes for customers attending the various craft shows and festivals my wife and I do each year. I also received a wonderful article from first time Bluebird stewards we met at the Triad Farmers Market, which was sent in for publication in our newsletter. I have provided timely answers to several phone and email requests for help with Bluebirds from people calling in from Iredell and other counties all over North Carolina. As always, I continuously urge the people I meet and talk with, to join our Bluebird Society to be sure they get the best possible information available to help them enjoy providing homes for and caring for all Bluebirds in North Carolina.

*B J Taylor
Iredell County Coordinator*

Thank you and keep up the good work, B J! He can be contacted at 704-872-7682 or email: cwoodcrafters@bellsouth.net

Submitted by Joye Stephenson
County Coordinator Administrator

Bluebird

**Light as crumbs on a plate,
a bluebird perched on the porch**

**railing, cocking its head this way
and that, feathers**

**the indigo blue of a king's hand-
dyed robe, or the sky**

**on its bluest day, drained of clouds
and concentrated in the bottom**

**of God's drinking glass, which He
swirled and swallowed,**

**then breathed out this little bird,
now flying.**

By Terri Kirby Erickson

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Terri Kirby Erickson is the award-winning author of four collections of poetry, including In the Palms of Angels and A Lake of Light and Clouds. For more information about her work, please visit www.terrikirbyerickson.com



Pictured is BJ explaining our Bluebird Tips to a couple of his customers. By the way, BJ is the one in the hat. I bet he is a hit at Halloween parties!

Joye Stephenson



A Fall Beauty
by Russ Bauman

North Carolina Bluebird Society

North Carolina Bluebird Society Membership Form

NCBS memberships are for one or three years. New members will receive the current issue of our newsletter, *Bluebird Notes*, *Bluebird Tips*, and will receive quarterly newsletters each year which include informative and interesting articles.

Dues: \$10 per year or \$25.00 for three years

Gift membership from _____ to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____ County: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

A member's email address can be used only for NCBS official business and is considered private and confidential.

Check box if you prefer to access the NCBS *Bluebird Notes* newsletter via the Internet.

Please complete this form and send it with your check made payable to **NCBS** to:

North Carolina Bluebird Society
135 Lakeview Dr.
Tarboro, NC 27886

Additional tax-deductible donation \$ _____

New Membership

Renewal

Check amount: \$ _____

Please indicate if you also have an interest in:

_____ Establishing a bluebird trail in your area

_____ Contacting your local newspaper

_____ Volunteering to be a County Coordinator

_____ Helping with the newsletter

_____ Assisting with the annual meeting

_____ Other: Please explain: _____

How did you hear about the North Carolina Bluebird Society?

GIVE A FRIEND THE GIFT OF THE NC BLUEBIRD SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP!

Just fill out the form on the left and indicate it is a gift membership and we will put a note in their membership packet that they are the recipient of your wonderful gift of bluebird events, stories and pictures.



MEMBERS: Please look at our County Coordinators list and if your county does not have a Coordinator, consider volunteering. The responsibilities and application are on our website. We'd like to see every county represented.

Contact Joye Stephenson

Please submit your wonderful stories and pictures to:

Editor@ncbluebird.org

or Risa Jarman

Risatj2@triad.rr.com

336-775-4083

or write to

Risa Jarman

141 Williams Meadow Lane

Winston-Salem, NC 27127

Let us know if there are any particular topics you would like to hear about!

A New Bluebird Predator?

I should start by saying I'm not a serious birder. I guess you could call me a Bluebird enthusiast. I've always enjoyed watching Bluebirds, even as a kid growing up in southern Missouri. Eight years ago, when my wife and I moved to McLeansville, I set up several Bluebird boxes around our backyard. Our family has enjoyed watching baby Bluebirds hatch and fledge and the increased Bluebird activity around our house. In addition, I set up numerous feeders that attracted a variety of other birds including finches, chickadees, and woodpeckers.

About three years ago, I witnessed a rather strange occurrence. After fledgling Bluebirds left one of the boxes, I forgot to remove the old nest. One day I noticed a red-bellied woodpecker that was perched on the outside of the Bluebird house. He was sticking his head into the house and quickly removing it and shaking from side to side. Upon further examination with my binoculars I noticed there were numerous bumblebees that were attacking the woodpecker. Undeterred, he continued sticking his long beak into the Bluebird house, until he eventually emerged with his prize, a bumblebee larvae. He flew off, but quickly returned to rob more larvae from the box despite the swarm of bumblebees around his head. This was my first experience with predator woodpeckers. The following year would prove even more interesting.



The next year, my daughter had become interested in Bluebirds, and so I decided to mount a new Bluebird box in a prominent location toward the back of our yard and installed a bluebird camera to monitor activity within the box. Over time we got our first Bluebird "family" to settle in and my children observed the nest building, egg laying, egg hatching, and feeding. This became so enjoyable that we often would leave the Bluebird camera

on all day on our television. My children would play games and occasionally run into the living room to check up on their Bluebird family. One afternoon, I returned home from work and checked up on the Bluebirds. I noticed what I first thought to be momma Bluebird feeding her babies. But it seemed a bit odd, because "momma" appeared to be pecking rather vigorously on one of the baby Bluebirds. It was only when this bird raised her head that I noticed a long stout beak. This was no Bluebird! I quickly ran to the sunroom and looked at the birdhouse where I noticed a large red-bellied woodpecker sticking his head into the box as far as it would go. I ran out of the house and chased the bird away. I carefully opened the Bluebird box and noticed one hatchling that had been killed by the aggressive behavior of the woodpecker. To rectify the problem, I lined up a small board with a drilled hole over the existing hole to create an extension. I watched that evening as the Bluebirds attempted to enter the house. After ten minutes they soon learned how to get in. Relieved, I was able to watch the remaining Bluebirds fledge in the following weeks. But I learned that woodpeckers were a potential problem for baby Bluebirds.

In the spring of this year, we were fortunate to have a Bluebird family settle in and quickly build a nest. With three hatchlings, my family and I kept the camera on to observe the progress. I returned home one evening and turned on the camera. To my dismay I noticed only two hatchlings in the nest. I thought perhaps one had fallen behind the nest but after careful observation, could not account for it. I then realized I had been recording from the previous night onto a video recorder, so I began reviewing the footage. (Continued on page 15)



(Continued from page 14) I was stunned to observe an unknown bird quickly place its head into the Bluebird box and snatch a baby Bluebird from the nest! Even after careful analysis of the video by experts in the field, it has been difficult to identify the culprit. This is probably due to the quickness with which the predator acts. Following this incident, I attached an extension tube onto the front of the Bluebird box and am happy to report that the remaining two Bluebirds fledged.

This last year has been an eye opener for me when it comes to increasing the Bluebird population. I am writing this to provide a few recommendations to improve the bluebird population. First, I would recommend attaching an extension tube to the Bluebird box following egg laying. Make sure to observe the box after attaching the tube, to ensure that the Bluebirds learn how to get back into the box. Second, remove all non-Bluebird feeders in the vicinity. I have found that having suet cakes in the vicinity encourages woodpeckers, and this could create a potential problem. I hope these suggestions will help if you run into similar problems. Happy Bluebirding!

Submitted by James McCann

Jameson McCann is a Biology Instructor at Guilford Technical Community College and lives with his wife Monica and two children, Amelia (6) and Augustine (3) in McLeansville, NC.



Photos by Russ Bauman



County Coordinators

Please check your contact information for accuracy. It is important that you can be reached in a timely manner. Please notify Joye Stephenson if corrections are needed.

Let us know how your season went. Please send Joye a short statement of your activities, e.g. trails you've started or monitored, your personal nest boxes, presentations made, telephone calls and email questions, etc.. We would love to see your photos and hear about your encounters.

Joye Stephenson
County Coordinator Administrator
[jazinnias@yahoo.com](mailto:jzinnias@yahoo.com)

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