



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.

Inside this issue:

<i>Bluebird Tales</i>	2-3
<i>Basic Bluebird Monitoring</i>	4
<i>Bickleton's bluebirds Get home makeovers</i>	5
<i>NCBS 2011 Bluebird Survey</i>	7
<i>NCBS 2011 Bluebird Survey Analysis</i>	8-9
<i>Mountain Bluebirds vs. Western Bluebirds</i>	10
<i>Washington's Western</i>	11
<i>Mealworm Feeder for bluebirds</i>	12
<i>Supplemental Winter Feeding for bluebirds</i>	13
<i>Spotlight on CC</i>	15

NCBS 2012 Annual Meeting

By the time you read this newsletter, we should have the 2012 Annual meeting close to "put together."

If you like good, really good ice cream, ya' got to be at the Maple View Agricultural Center (MVAC) on April 21, 2012 in Hillsborough, NC. Who doesn't like ice cream, particularly, Bluebird ice cream which we understand may be the flavor of the day!

MVAC is an Agritourism facility which strives to encourage both children and adults to learn about agricultural life through hands on experiences. The facility was designed by educators to teach about agriculture in relation to the North



Carolina Standard Course of Study in Science and opened its doors in April of 2009.

During your visit at MVAC, which is a non-profit facility, one can visit the barnyard, enjoy the hayride, relax in the picnic area and explore the working garden. The MVAC barnyard is chock full of animal friends to meet. Of course, all of this is after the meeting!



Future newsletters and the Web site will contain additional information on the 2012 Annual meeting as the plans develop.

Ken Kernodle assisted by Steve McDaniels is the NCBS 2012 Planning Chairman. Joye Stephenson is the NCBS Board representative and general advisor. Dr. Lynn Siefferman, NCBS Director, is working on program speakers. There is promise of an update from Sylvan Heights and the ice storm last winter.

Ray Welch, NCBS President



Bluebird Notes

Issue 26 Vol. 3

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Bluebird Tales



Baffles for Feeders

I am Zellie Earnest from Kingsport, TN, and a member of the NC society and NABS.

The questions I have arise from two incidents of raccoons destroying sunflower feeders. It also has to do with the diameter of the stove pipes used on the predator guards on BB nests.

Last winter a friend had a feeder destroyed after I put a 6” pipe on his feeder to prevent raccoons from getting to the seeds. That night the raccoon defeated the pipe and destroyed the feeder. I replaced the guard with an 8” pipe and had no further problems.

I have had a feeder in my yard (for some 10 years) that is mounted on a 3 inch pole and was protected by a 6” pipe. Recently a raccoon defeated the protector and destroyed two feeders.

I replaced the guard with an 8” pipe. The next morning I could see muddy prints where he had made a failed attempt to climb the pole. All of the BB houses on our trails are protected with 6” pipes, as is the one in my front yard. Do I need to use larger pipes to better protect the nests on the BB trail? Does anyone have any experience with the 6” pipes being defeated?

These experiences with the bird feeders have made me wonder if we are losing nests to raccoons and just do not know it. (I have started trapping raccoons here at home but have not caught the monster that I feel is the culprit.

Where do I take them? Out to Wal-Mart, of course, because everyone goes there!!!! Right????)

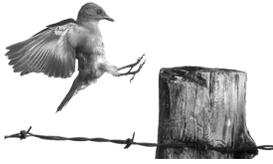
I will be interested in others thoughts .

Thanks

Zellie Earnest, Kingsport, TN

Zellie@chartertn.net





Bluebird Tales



W.A.I.T. (Wildlife and Industry Together)

My name is Beth Cunningham. I am a wastewater treatment plant operator at Crowders Creek Water Reclamation Resources Facility. I am heavily involved in the W.A.I.T. (Wildlife And Industry Together) Program. We currently have 6 bluebird houses that I monitor and we also have 6 wood duck boxes that the bluebirds also use when the wood ducks are not. I just wanted to share a couple of my photos from this season.

The photo with the eggs that didn't all hatch were in a bluebird house, the others were in a wood duck box.

When the bluebirds use the wood duck boxes for nesting, they only use one corner or just a small spot so they don't make a bigger nest than they normally would. When the babies get bigger they just stretch out more, as you could see in the photo! They seem to like it. They use wood duck boxes more than the



bluebird houses.

The WAIT program is great! It is a program by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation.

WAIT is a reg-

istered trademark for an environmental program that encourages the protection and enhancement of wildlife on industry lands.

So - being a wastewater treatment plant, we have a lot of water that



is used by many animals, we just provide a little more for them, such as the birdhouses to keep them happy and make sure they can repopulate safely! We also have wildflower meadows, a salt block for our deer, the six bluebird houses and wood duck boxes. We are trying to come up with an idea for our next project! We love birds, so we might do a purple martin condo or something for owls. I have to research it. I am getting scouts involved in it so they can help with the next project, which is part of being in the WAIT program.

I am going to send in for a membership for your newsletter and add your information to our little library at the plant as part of our educational requirements for the program. It will be helpful in educating people visiting the plant and for the employees. We do school tours so we are going to include the WAIT program this year.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to ask! I love talking about animals and WAIT!

Thanks,
Beth Cunningham
 Crowders Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant
 Gastonia, NC

Basic Bluebird Monitoring

Importance of Monitoring

On a regular basis, it's important to peek inside the nest box, and watch the activity around the box, to see how its residents are doing. If there's a problem, you can try to solve it. Monitoring is interesting, and it also increases the likelihood of a successful clutch.

Monitoring the Nest box

Bluebirds are tolerant of humans. Opening the box will not hurt the birds, and some brooding mothers will even remain on the nest when you look inside. Songbirds do not have a good sense of smell, so leaving your scent will not deter them.

Bluebirds lay their eggs in the morning, so the best time to do a quick check is in the afternoon. You can wait until you see the birds leave the nest, and then monitor the box quickly. If the box opens from the front or side, you can use a small mirror to see inside the nest better. You can monitor every day, or at least once a week. The eggs take about two weeks to hatch, and the hatchlings take about three weeks to fledge. To keep the nestlings from fledging prematurely, it may be best not to monitor after the 14th day of hatching. After the bluebird chicks have fledged and left the box, remove the old nest. Western bluebirds usually have up to two broods during each breeding season from late March to August.

What to Monitor

Whenever you monitor a box you should determine what species is using it by examining the nesting material and eggs. You should record the date, and the number of eggs or young that you have observed. Knowing when the eggs were laid will help you determine if they are infertile, or when they should hatch and when the young would be expected to leave the nest. In the case of bluebirds, the eggs are laid one each day until the entire clutch is complete. Incubation will then begin and will last approximately 13-14 days. After hatching the chicks will remain in the nest for 17-18 days. Your monitoring should be limited to viewing from a distance after the 13th day or the chicks might fly from the box prematurely.

How to Monitor

Nest box monitoring should only be done during calm, mild, and dry weather conditions to reduce the chance of chilling the chicks or eggs. Open the nest box being careful not to allow the eggs to fall out or chicks to jump out.

Songbirds have a very poor sense of smell and will not abandon the nest due to your handling the nest, eggs, or chicks. If chicks are in the nest, look under the nest for signs of blowfly larvae. The chicks themselves should be examined for small scars, particularly under the wings which indicate blowfly parasitism. Sometimes you may observe the larvae attached to the chick. These are easily removed by hand. Complete the monitoring as quickly as possible to minimize disturbance. When handling the chicks or removing them from the nest they should be placed in something that will protect them from the sun or wind while preventing their escape. Avoid disposing used nest material near the nest site or predators may be attracted to the site. Always be certain to close the box door securely before leaving. Record what you observed.

How to Identify Nests and Eggs by Species

Bluebird: The 1-4 in. tall nest is built with fine grasses or pine needles with a fairly deep nest cup. Eggs (4-6) are powder blue or occasionally white.

Tree swallow: Their nest is also made of grasses but they may use somewhat coarser fibers than a bluebird. The nest generally has a flatter cup than the bluebirds and is usually lined with feathers or occasionally scraps of paper. Eggs (5-7) are white and smaller than those of a bluebird.

House wren: Wrens fill a nest box with sticks and line the deep nest cup with fine plant fibers or feathers. "Dummy nests" without the nest cup are often built in all other cavities within the male wren's territory to reduce competition for resources. The eggs (6-8) are tan, speckled with brown and quite small.

Black-capped chickadee: Chickadees build a nest of moss and plant down with the nest cup lined with hair. They lay 5-8 white eggs covered with brown speckles. Eggs are often covered with moss when the female leaves the box.

House sparrow: House sparrows build a tall nest of coarse grasses, often with pieces of scrap paper, cellophane, or other garbage. The nest forms a canopy with a tunnel-like entrance to the 5-7 cream-colored eggs with brown markings.

Tony Nicosia

Bickleton's bluebirds get home makeovers

Bickleton, Klickitat County, bills itself as the "Bluebird Capital of the World." Every fall, about a dozen volunteers clean and spruce up birdhouses to prepare them for the birds' return in the spring.



Bickleton Bluebird Committee co-chairs Nancy Yoesle, left, and Margaret Collins check, clean and paint one of 2,000 birdhouses that dot the roads around their town in Klickitat County. Bickleton, population 113, bills itself as "Bluebird Capital of the World."

By Alan Berner—Seattle Times Staff Photographer

BICKLETON, Klickitat County (Washington State) — It's always good to knock on a bluebird house before checking inside, advises Margaret Collins, co-chair of the Bickleton Bluebird Committee.

"You never know who's in there. Might be a rattlesnake or a chipmunk."

Bickleton, population 113, bills itself as "Bluebird Capital of the World." Thousands of birds flock there each spring.

The unincorporated town between Mabton and Goldendale is home to a café, a church, a hardware store, a school, the oldest operating bar in the state, a century-old carousel and "a gas station with no gas," longtimer Don Naught says.

At least 2,000 bluebird houses dot the roads, paved and not, around the town center.

Every fall, Collins, committee co-chair Nancy Yoesle and a dozen volunteers clean and paint the birdhouses, preparing them for the birds' return in

the spring.

Collins grabs the supplies from the back of her Suburban. She always paints the blue parts, and Yoesle paints the white.

The ideal house has a 1-3/8-inch opening, a flap for easy cleaning, a roof with an overhang and no landing perch for predators to use. The houses are usually a quarter-mile apart because the birds are territorial.

Last year, Collins and Yoesle logged 350 miles — a quarter-mile at a time — driving around for the fall cleaning ritual.

All work is volunteer, says Collins: It's "definitely unpaid."

"We just like doing something good for the birds."

For Collins, who used to live in rural Alaska, Bickleton "is the most populated place I've lived in years. I just really like getting out of town."

Alan Berner: aberner@seattletimes.com or 206-464-8133



Bluebirds, Inside the Nest Box

Recorded by the Cornell Birdhouse Network
 Summer 1999

Produced by the North Carolina Bluebird Society
 DVD available for \$12.00 including shipping and handling.

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
Magnets with Bluebird & Dogwood	\$ 4.00	X _____	= _____
Magnets with State Outline/Bluebird	\$ 4.00	X _____	= _____
Bluebird Earrings (pierced)	\$ 7.00	X _____	= _____
Caps with NCBS Logo	\$ 13.00	X _____	= _____
Bluebird Note Cards (12)	\$ 12.00	X _____	= _____
Carolina Blue Tote Bags	\$ 15.00	X _____	= _____
Carolina Blue T-Shirts by Dempsey Essick (S, M, L, XL)	\$ 20.00	X _____	= _____
Lands End blue knitted shirts with NCBS Logo (S, M, L, XL)	\$ 35.00	X _____	= _____
Cloisonné Bluebird Pins (1inch, 4 colors)	\$ 5.00	X _____	= _____
Bluebirds Forever (12 page booklet)	\$ 3.00	X _____	= _____
2 copies	\$ 4.50	X _____	= _____
3 copies	\$ 6.00	X _____	= _____
On the Wings of a Song—CD	\$ 8.00	X _____	= _____
Bluebirds, Inside the Nestbox DVD	\$ 12.00	X _____	= _____
(DVD special 2 for \$20; 3 for \$30; 6 for \$60)			
Metal Nest Box Tags (10 tags)	\$ 6.00	X _____	= _____
New Item: 550 piece puzzle of Dempsey Essick's "The Fledgling".	\$ 20.00	X _____	= _____



Total = _____

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: NCBS.
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 Prices good through 12/2011 Date of your order is _____

NCBS 2011 Bluebird Survey

It has been almost fifteen years since I became editor of this, the North Carolina Bluebird Society newsletter. Each year I put a survey form in the August newsletter and ask to have them submitted a month a half later which is at least a month after all self respecting bluebirds have stopped reproducing for the year.

So, it should be easy to take that data, tally up the number of eggs, hatchlings and fledglings and get it in the mail, But I know from personal experience it is not easy. Our Foxfire Bluebird Trail has eighty boxes and ten monitors. Some of our bluebirds feel the need to keep reproducing through the heat of August. When I finally get the cards all back, I then procrastinate. Somehow, it is just not the right time to set down with the cards, figure out the eggs, hatchlings and fledglings numbers and get it in the mail.

For many years Chuck Bliss and Reah Kittelberger collected the surveys and emailed me the Excel spreadsheets. I then figured out how to reduce them to the space available, print out their graphs and charts. I always appreciated their efforts, but never more than this year when I became the compiler of the survey data.

Therefore, I thought I would be smart. I would just take Reah's spreadsheet from last year and substitute this year's data. Occasionally, there would be a survey from someone new, but mostly, it was the bluebird faithful that sent in their numbers. Frankly, it was interesting to see the number of boxes increase or decrease by a few and the number of bluebirds involved fluctuate.

Now, it is a month before this newsletter needs to be ready for publication. I have this spreadsheet with 2011 data mixed with 2010 data. So I did a sort on using the date and there are 50 people reporting and 20 that reported last year that haven't sent their surveys in.

So the question becomes, "Do I wait until 2012 February's newsletter to print the 2011 survey?" Or "do I print what I have and ignore late submissions?" I checked the number of surveys for the last three years. There were 62 in 2008, 54 in 2009 and 57 in 2010.

As I am writing this, I still haven't decided. Every year questions arise as whether or not to ask the members to submit a survey of their bluebird trails. Someone will ask, "What is the purpose? What do you do with data? What does it mean?" Let's look at a little history. I have seen the quote that, at one time (mid-twentieth century), the bluebird population was reduced by 90% due to DDT and habitat reduction. Someone must have been counting bluebirds somewhere, but I have never found the source of that statistic. However, with at least fifteen years of North Carolina surveys, one could take individual trails that report every year and actually see a decrease or increase in the numbers.

Another quote is that "bluebirds are increasing in number at the second fastest rate among the songbirds." Again, I don't know the source of this comment, but someone must have been analyzing bird counts from somewhere.

The second part of the NCBS survey, that includes the observations that people make, is fascinating. I always learn something from them and often choose the ones that are "teaching moments." When you have had a problem on a bluebird trail, it is nice to know that someone else had the same problem and that they may have thought of solution.

The Cornell Ornithological Lab has been communicating with NCBS President Ray Welch on how to use our bluebird survey data. Ray has also thought of contacting the North American Bluebird Society. Both of these organizations collect bluebird information and perhaps NCBS will become part of a larger data base.

For now, I have decided to give anyone wishing to submit a survey another two months to do so. As I have been reviewing the data from the past twelve years, I see that the surveys used to take two pages in the newsletter and in recent years, there has been only one page. Our membership has stayed about the same. Please send in a survey if you can. In the meanwhile, let's see what I can do on the next two pages.

Helen S. Munro, Editor

NCBS 2011

Analyzed by Helen S. Munro

The first problem that I confronted was how to deal with a different number of boxes being reported in the different years. It is the old problem of “comparing apples to oranges.” Chuck Bliss’s solution to this is to divide the total number of bluebirds fledged with the total number of nest boxes used by bluebirds.

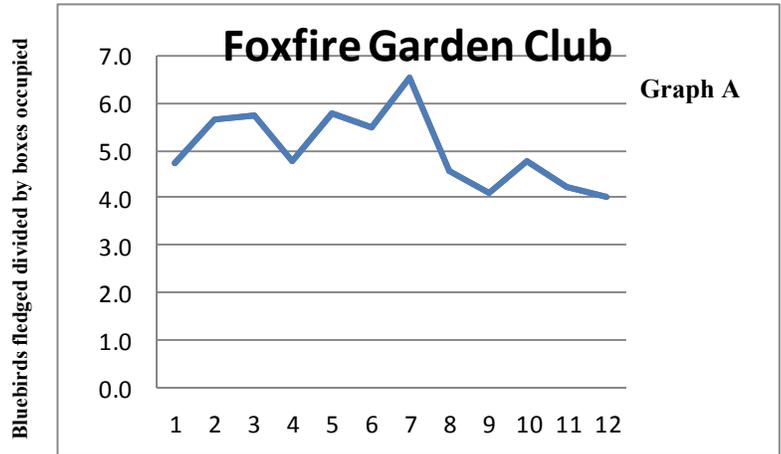
Graph A shows this for the trail monitored by the Foxfire Garden Club. “The bluebirds fledged divided by boxes occupied” varies from a low of 4.0 to a high of 6.5.

Out of curiosity, Graph B is the total number of bluebirds fledged. Graphs A & B are very similar. What both of them say is that although the number of bluebird houses has remained close to the same number from 2000 to 2010, the total number of bluebirds fledged has decreased.

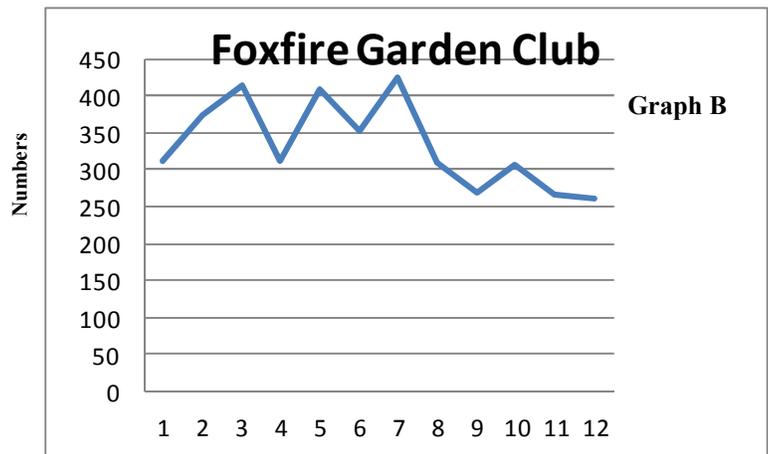
The question becomes, “Are there fewer eggs laid or just fewer bluebirds hatched from a similar number of eggs?” Graph C shows that the number of eggs is somewhat constant, but the number of eggs hatching and, therefore, the number of bluebirds fledging have decreased in the last few years.

This decrease in the number of eggs resulting in successful fledglings could be explained by infertile eggs or predation. In 2010 and 2011, eggs disappeared at an alarming rate from the same boxes. It is like some raccoons have found a restaurant that is opened every couple of weeks.

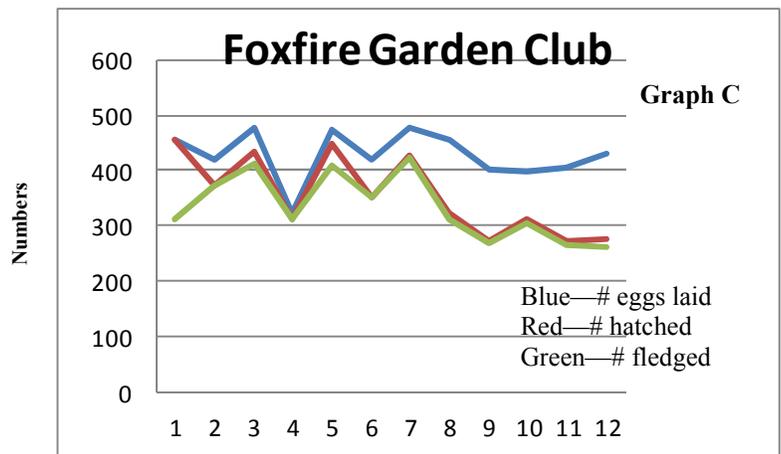
This spring we tried “bird guardians.” These are tubes that are placed over the hole that the birds are supposed to be able to use, but the raccoons can’t reach through to the hole. The roofs had to be modified so that the fronts could be opened for monitoring. The bluebirds were not all that crazy about them. Hence, this fall baffles have been added to several of these houses from which eggs have disappeared.



Year 2000 to 2010

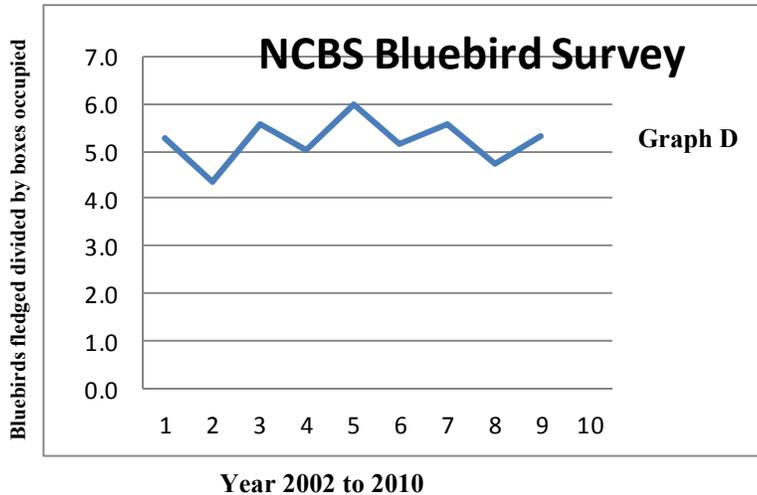


Year 2000 to 2010



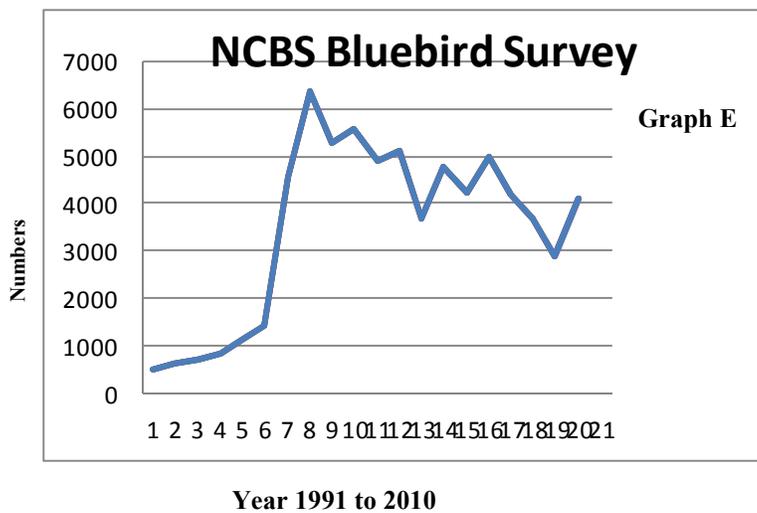
Year 2000 to 2010

Bluebird Survey

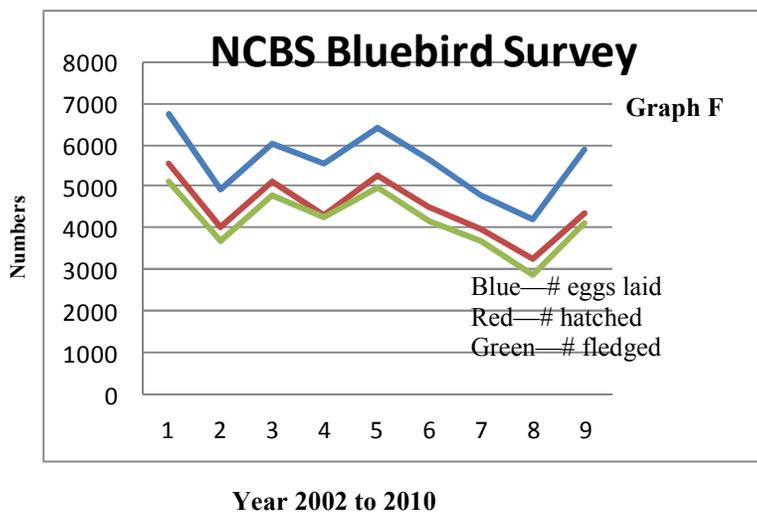


Graph D is again the “The bluebirds fledged divided by boxes occupied” except this is for the total NCBS survey. There are two fewer years because the number of boxes occupied was not reported in 2000 and 2001. However, it is evident that although the ratio fluctuated, there was not the down turn found in the Foxfire Garden Club data.

Graph E starts with the total number reported in the newsletter as fledging. Since the number of boxes occupied was not always reported, one can only say that the number reported has really increased since 1991 and has decreased since the high in 1998. Based on Graph D, it is not the number of bluebirds fledged that is decreasing, but rather the number of monitors reporting.



Graph F compares the number of eggs laid, hatched and bluebirds fledged. Comparing the total NCBS Bluebird Survey with the Foxfire Garden Club data, it is easy to see that Foxfire is losing more eggs than reflected in the total reporting of the NCBS membership.



What then is the value of monitoring bluebird trails and reporting the results?

1. If you compare your bluebird trail with the totals reported for the NCBS membership and you find that you are having a steep reduction in the number of fledglings, then it is time to figure out why.
2. As you look at your individual boxes and find some that have never had bluebirds (or any cavity nester) using them, then consider moving the boxes to different locations.

Monitoring shows us nest boxes that need to be repaired, wet nests that can be replaced, single bluebird parents that can be helped by extra mealworms, plus the best part, that “Christmas Morning Feeling” of opening a nest box to find all is well with the eggs, babies and chicks! The survey just sums it up.

Mountain Bluebirds vs. Western Bluebirds

Some people have questioned the placement of nesting boxes as an interference with the nature of birds. Perhaps thinking it was favoring one species, even if both are cavity nesters, over another.

Alex Badyaev reports in the June/July 2011 National Wildlife, the magazine of the National Wildlife Federation, that he and his colleagues have “tracked the displacement of mountain bluebird populations by more aggressive western bluebirds, a species that once was nearly extinct in the West. The western bluebird’s comeback is a direct result of people putting out nest boxes by the thousands across valley floors, beginning in the 1970s, to create more breeding habitat. Moun-

tain bluebirds have since retreated to higher elevations where summer snowstorms have kept western bluebirds from usurping habitat. But now, researchers have discovered a warming climate is enabling lower elevations species such as the western bluebird to extend their ranges to formerly inhospitable mountain sides, posing a new threat to mountain bluebirds.”

As can be seen from the article below, the placement of nest boxes has also aided the Western Bluebirds in Oregon.



Left: Male and female Western Bluebird, . Photo by Jane Brockway.

Right: Male Mountain Bluebird. Photo by Bob Neihbur.



Washington Western Bluebird Reintroduction Effort a Success! Birds Now Thriving on San Juan Island Following Completion of Five-Year Project

A five-year cooperative effort involving several organizations has succeeded in returning the Western Bluebird to Washington’s San Juan Islands. The bird had historically inhabited the islands, but changing land use practices and a paucity of nesting sites meant the species had not nested there for over 40 years.

Over the course of the five-year project, biologists with the Western Bluebird Reintroduction Project captured and translocated 45 breeding pairs of Western Bluebirds from an expanding population at Fort Lewis Military installation, Washington, and another four pairs from the Willamette Valley in Oregon. The birds were kept in aviaries on San Juan Island prior to release to acclimate them to their new sur-

roundings.

One pair of translocated birds nested in the first year, and in each succeeding year the nesting population size has increased. Over the five years, 212 fledglings were produced. Most encouragingly, some of those fledged birds have returned each year and are now part of the breeding population, giving hope that the population will be able to sustain itself into the future.

“It is gratifying to have the hard work of so many people bear fruit with the result that we now see these birds coming back to an area they had once called home. This year, the islands are home to 15 breeding pairs of Western Bluebirds that fledged 74

(Continued on page 11)

Washington Western Bluebird Reintroduction Effort a Success! (Continued)

(Continued from page 10)

birds,” said Bob Altman, project leader with American Bird Conservancy. “We are very optimistic about the future of this population,” he said.

The project collaborators included American Bird Conservancy, Fort Lewis Military Installation, Ecosystems Institute, San Juan Preservation Trust, San Juan Islands Audubon Society, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and The Nature Conservancy of Washington.

Thirty birds returned to the San Juan Islands this year. Ten were translocated birds from previous years, 18 were fledged from previous years, and two were of undetermined origin. The 15 pairs of birds built 25 nests, of which 14 were successful.

“This year saw record breaking cool, wet weather through June, meaning everything, including bluebird nesting, was about three to four weeks behind. This resulted in reduced productivity from the previous year. House Sparrows also caused three or four nesting failures, which is something we may need to address in coming years,” Altman said.

The project is now moving into a two-year monitoring phase to determine the stability and growth of the population, and the need for future population management.

“We are very pleased to have achieved our goal of establishing a breeding population, however, 15 pairs is by no means a large enough population to be considered secure, so we are exploring ways to enhance it beyond the initial five-year period,” he said.

One potential enhancement is Western Bluebird translocations in nearby British Columbia that may be starting next year. The San Juan Islands are only 20-25 miles as the bluebird flies from the proposed release site on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, and it is likely that the continuation of translocations in British Columbia will help to sustain the San Juan Islands population in the future.

In tandem with the translocations, project partners also are working to conserve the oak-prairie ecosystem that the birds depend on. Toward that end, the San Juan Preservation Trust made a key prairie-oak land acquisition – 120 acres in the center of the San Juan Valley- which hosts two nesting pairs of bluebirds and is a primary location at which flocks of



Western Bluebird chicks by Lauren Ross

This picture may be used with credit given to Lauren Ross.

(Washington, D.C. , August 11, 2011)

bluebirds congregate during the post-breeding season. In addition, approximately 600 nest boxes have been put up on the islands to provide additional nesting opportunities for the returning birds.

Altman said that “the project would not have been possible without the help of numerous people on the San Juan Islands, who hosted aviaries and nest boxes on their properties, helped construct nest boxes and move aviaries, provided materials and project equipment, and helped monitor nest boxes and look for released birds. Further, he added “I don’t know of any other bird reintroduction project that relied completely on so many private landowners”.

ABC would like to thank the following supporters: Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, The Norcliffe Foundation, Friends of Zoo Boise, The San Juan Preservation Trust, Warren and Cathy Cooke, Frances V.R. Seebe Trust, Horizons Foundation and numerous private donors.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization which conserves native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas by safeguarding the rarest species, conserving and restoring habitats, and reducing threats while building capacity in the bird conservation movement.

So, You Want to Raise Mealworms?

Are you tired of mail ordering mealworms? Do you want to raise your own? Well, the first thing you'll need to do is buy a supply of live, loose mealworms from a reputable seller like Grubco or Nature's Way or Bassett's Cricket Ranch, Inc. You can find them online - just Google the name. Or call me at [703-978-6609](tel:703-978-6609) and I will give you the phone number or address.

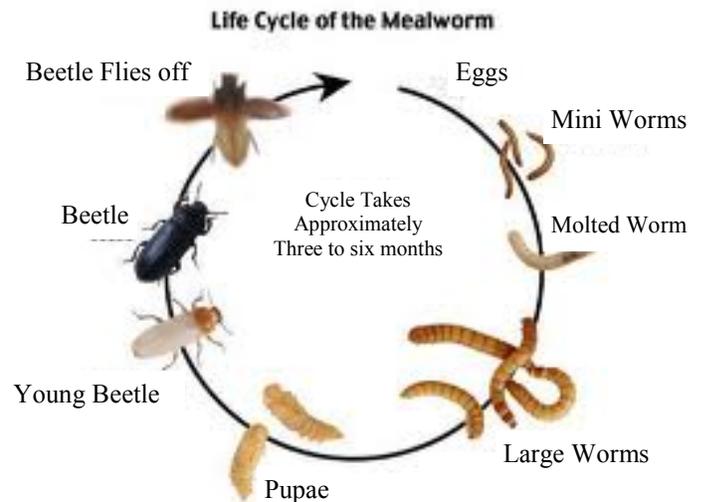
While you are waiting for the mealworms to arrive you will need to gather some equipment and locate a place **INSIDE YOUR HOUSE**, where you can have your little mealworm farm. These insects, their eggs and beetle form will die of the temperature extremes outside, in your garage or a shed. These are living creatures and will go through a metamorphosis just as the butterflies do. If you have a cool basement that would work well too, but under a bed or sofa would be just right.

Get ready by getting a plastic sweater box from a store. It is a flat, long, rectangular box that could easily be stored under a bed. With a sharp tool (like an ice pick), make many holes in the top of this plastic sweater box. Fill the box with Wheat Bran, or Oatmeal or any grain about three inches deep. This will feed them as they grow and change to other forms. Then cut a small apple in half and put both pieces, skin down, in the mixture, being careful not to let the moist flesh of the apple touch the mixture. This helps to prevent mold. Remember to replace the apple halves weekly.

The mealworms are the larval form of the Darkling Beetle. This beetle will lay eggs that then hatch into more mealworms and there you have your mealworm farm. When the mealworms you ordered arrive, place them into this wonderful habitat you have just prepared — 30 to 50 of them on top of the mixture and cover them with four layers of cut-up strips of brown paper bags, which the mealworms will use to cocoon in. Date this box because it will take up to three months before you see new mealworms.

If you keep adding the bran or oatmeal and a slice of apple or a damp paper towel for moisture on a weekly basis, you will

have a never ending supply of these yummy worms to feed your bluebirds and all the other hangers on, in your backyard. I have a friend in Massachusetts who takes them out to his trail and puts some of them on top of each box in a little container that he has secured up there. He has a very healthy trail of cavity nesters, you can be sure!



These worms have a soft smooth feel to them and are easy to handle. Unlike angleworms, for instance, these "worms" (actually larva), have a dry feeling. I once raised them in a classroom for a science project about metamorphosis. The students all named their mealworms and drew pictures of them and the stages they went through. You may not do all that, but you will definitely get hooked on your mealworm farm and it will begin to pay for itself very soon. With a little effort you will have a never-ending supply of mealworms for your bluebirds.

*Barbara Chambers,
Virginia Bluebird Society
Printed with permission*



This unique bluebird feeder/nest box was created and photographed by Fred Benson of Cary, NC. In the top is a stainless steel cup to hold the mealworms with open sides for access. Below is a nest box made out of PVC pipe. The male Eastern Bluebird is on the top of the feeder and the female Eastern Bluebird is preparing to feed the babies inside the nest box.

Often people are so used to seeing birds at bird feeders containing seeds that it is hard for them to understand that bluebirds do not have a beak strong enough to crack open seeds. Hence, it important to offer them items as shown on the next page.

Supplemental Winter Feeding for Bluebirds

Winter Pudding Recipe

(Chuck Bliss, Asheboro, NC)

Bring one quart of water and a 1/2 stick of margarine to a boil.

Stir in two cups of grits.

Add 1/2 cup crunch peanut butter. Lower heat until mixture begins to thicken.

Add 1/2 cup of raisins and other fruit or nut hearts as you wish.

Combine well and spoon into small plastic containers. Set out in yard or place in feeder.

Freeze balance for later use. Remove mix from container when placing in feeder.

No Melt Suet

(Susan Campbell, Whispering Pines, NC & many others)

1 cup Lard

1 cup Peanut Butter (plain or crunchy)

2 to 3 cups Cornmeal

2 cups Oats ("Quaker" cereal type)

1 cup flour (optional—1 cup Sugar)

Melt lard and peanut butter together. Stir until blended. Add all the other ingredients one at a time for smoother stirring. Pour the mixture into a greased pan, cool in refrigerator and cut or spoon into the proper shape for your feeder (some small plastic containers are already the shape and size for most suet feeders). Chopped peanuts, chopped raisins, sunflower hearts, and powdered sterilized eggshells can also be added to this mixture.

Mealworm Sources—Identify yourself as a NCBS member for a 15% discount



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Sharing Bluebird information and stories make this an unique publication

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Dr. David Pitt spoke at NCBS 2009. He has written a book, "Studying Eastern Bluebirds." It can be purchased for \$24 (\$20 for the book, \$4 for shipping) from him (David Pitts, 286 Winstead Rd., Martin, TN 38237) or from Amazon.com. David will gladly take personal checks.

Infertile Eggs

Mrs. Chattie Parker said the female bluebird kept on laying eggs. Same thing happened to her last year.

If the female bluebird keeps laying eggs, but never broods them, does that mean that she knows they were not fertile?

Winston-Salem, NC



Spotlight on County Coordinators

New County Coordinators, Steve McDaniel and Ken Kernoodle, will serve as a team for Durham and Orange Counties.

Steve was born and raised in East Tennessee and moved to Durham in 1974 to attend Duke University. He has been a Durham resident for 36 years and is President of Gardner & McDaniel, a structural engineering firm. Steve can be reached at 919-489-1852. His email is

skmddm@frontier.com

Ken, a native of Brown Summit, NC, a graduate of NCSU, recently retired from Duke Energy. He held positions in customer relations, marketing, economic development and process improvement. He also resides in Durham. He is involved in many community and civic organizations. Ken can be reached at 919-489-0095 and [kenker-](mailto:kenker-noodle@gmail.com)

[noodle@gmail.com](mailto:kenker-noodle@gmail.com)

Ken got the Bluebird "bug" from Vivian Hewitt, NCBS member from Alamance County while working at Duke Energy. Steve caught the bluebird "bug" in 2005 after meeting Ken. Steve and Ken started building and locating birdhouses in 2006 at area churches and private school sites. Currently they have made and placed (individuals and trails) approximately 75 nestboxes in ten locations in

Durham and Orange Counties, including the Durham Academy and the Museum of Life and Sciences. Welcome aboard, Ken (right) and Steve (left).

Submitted by Joye Stephenson, Garner, NC



Photo by John Boone

NCBS Members working together



Bill Satterwhite (left center) and Joye Stephenson (right center) have a NCBS exhibit every spring at the News and Observer Birdhouse Contest at the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh. This photo was taken April, 2011.

Bob Wolk (far left) came by to visit. Ken Kernoodle (far right) dropped by with his nestbox for Bill Satterwhite to critique. Bill Satterwhite and Joye Stephenson are joint county coordinators for Wake County. Bob Wolk is the NCBS recording secretary and Ken Kernoodle serves both Durham and Orange Counties with Steve McNeill.

Photo & article submitted by Joye Stephenson, Garner, NC

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