



NCBS Logo with Carolina Blue by Dempsey Essick

Bluebird Notes



NCBS is an affiliate of NABS.

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North Carolina Bluebird Society Mission Statement

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

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Predators of Bluebirds

“I am so upset a snake ate my babies!!! It's got diamonds on it's back* and I can't stand it!!! “

Gloria Polakof, PhD

Gloria is a recent member of NCBS and had installed a camera in her nest box. She had been sharing Bluebird TV with her family including her grandchildren. Her snake was identified as a rat snake and her e-mail was close on the heels of another e-mail correspondence with a new member concerning baffles and snakes.

This came in reply to my request for information. “When I last was in contact with you, you asked me for my experiences and thoughts about using baffles, and indicated that some others thought baffles are a joke and a false hope. I can decidedly say that they are not and serve a very useful purpose. Over the years and in several different residences, two to three clutches a summer are successfully raised in my bluebird box. The pole has a common cylinder baffle on it, as do all of my birdfeeders. Our former property was home to several blacksnakes, which we welcomed in order to control the vole population. In all the years we lived there, while monitoring the bluebird box, I never experienced a blacksnake attempting to get at the box. The blacksnakes in

* Identified later as a Rat Snake.

our area served a very useful purpose in controlling rodents, and several of them lived beneath our storage shed which was less than 100 feet from the bluebird box. I was really upset to read that one of your members had trapped & found deceased snakes snagged in handmade netting baffles on a golf course. Although a few eggs may be lost to blacksnakes, I do not believe in harming these very beneficial, harmless creatures. A deterrent, rather than a lethal trap, should be used.

A number of years ago I saw a squirrel actually capture and eat a small bird (not a bluebird) at one of our feeders. Whether or not the bird was injured initially I don't know, but I observed the squirrel atop our fence next to the birdfeeder consuming it. It was then that I started using baffles and have observed squirrels trying to climb the nest box pole, possibly with interest of consuming the eggs. I have never observed any predator, other than wasps, gain access to my nestboxes using a common baffle. We also owned a cat who roamed our property, and we never lost any bluebirds to her because we positioned our boxes toward tall shrubs and the fledglings always made their way

(Continued on page 4)

Bluebird Notes

Issue 22 Vol. 3

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Bluebird Tales



More Bluebird Pictures

Hi Helen, These are the **pair of Bluebirds** that have a **babies** waiting to be fed . They **both have bugs in their mouth.** I must have been a little too close to the birdhouse. They waited until I moved further away before they continued to feed the babies. I put my chair out there yesterday to get them accustomed to it. I moved it further away, and I will give it more time. I want to be there when they fledge.

Frank Ripp, Whispering Pines, NC



Hi Helen, Finally got a chance to get a few photos of one of our **Baby Bluebirds.** They are showing up closer to the house now. Jean is making a batch of suet. We ran out, and she saw a **Tuffy** (that is feeding their babies) come and try "store" bought suet. It "**spit**" it out! I guess they like the homemade suet mix. We spoiled them!

Feel free to use the photos.

Frank Ripp, Whispering Pines, NC

No Melt Suet Recipe

1 cup creamy peanut butter, 1 cup lard.

Melt together and add 2 cups oatmeal, 2 to 3 cups cornmeal, 1 cup flour and a couple tablespoons. Cayenne pepper if you need to keep the squirrels away.

Variation: Add 1/2 cup white mullet or Sunflower hearts.

As modified by Jean Ripp



Bluebird Tales



Bluebirds at Winding River Plantation

We just moved to our new home in Brunswick County and on March 18th my husband gave me a blue bird house, and a book on birds.

Within a hour the first day we put it up, we had a male and female bluebird check it out. We were away for a month and when we returned on April 18th there were five baby bluebirds. I am enclosing a picture of the first day we set it up and a picture of one month later when we returned. I am enjoying watching the parents feed them and although there is a viewing door, I don't open it often. Yesterday, April 28th I looked in and saw they now have feathers.

I am enjoying my retirement and have become a bird lover.

*Regards,
Rhonda Kirchner
Winding River Plantation, NC*



These are additional pictures from Winding River Plantation. The bird house is from Back Yard Nature Products called Birds Choice. We purchased it at Backyard Wild , 105 East Brown Street, Southport, NC, www.backyardwild.com, 910-457-9453.

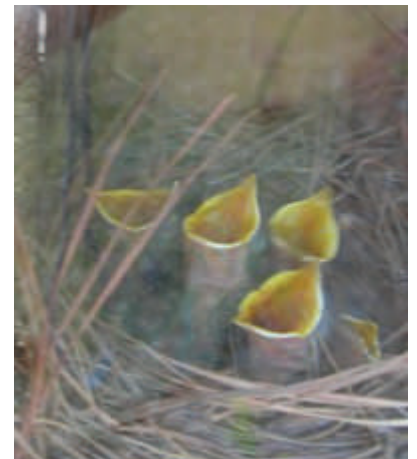
We have found the owners to be both helpful and very informed. As a beginner we have appreciated the guidance and answers to our questions. I contacted them to let them know I was going to provide their information to you along with the name of the birdhouse company.

I will log onto the web site where I found you and sign up so I can receive the newsletters.

Regards, Rhonda



This picture was taken April 18th, 2007. They are so hungry and the Mommy and Daddy are working non-stop feeding their four babies



Predators of Bluebirds (concluded)

to the top of the shrubs. Our property was full of several generations of bluebirds!

So, as you can see, with common cylinder baffles on all of my nestbox poles, I have spent many years successfully watching our bluebirds raise healthy broods, in spite of blacksnakes and even cats on our property. And if boxes are carefully monitored, the eggs of competing species of birds can be removed BEFORE their nestlings hatch. Once nestlings hatch, they should be left alone. I truly believe in helping our bluebirds as much as possible, but also in tampering as little as possible with nature's balance. "

Terry Korab, Apex, NC

Even in the Bluebird World there is not total agreement. Another bluebirder writes, "My experience with baffles (the stove pipe and the big bell shaped) has not been great. It does seem that a black snake can go over these with ease. Baffles most likely do great with raccoons. I have not tried the 4 inch PVC pipe with sand around the pole. I recall that Jack Finch said that snakes use their tail like a foot and just more or less stand up and go over the baffle. I can see the big ones doing this quite easily.

Christine Ammons, Union Mills, NC

I appreciate this information. The traps made of deer netting are called Kruger Traps and a description can be found at: <http://audubon-omaha.org/bbbox/>

nestbox/hksnake.htm. Gary Springer, former NABS Executive Director, warned that this trap should only be used if you could monitor it. When a snake is caught, it can be released and then relocated. Another baffle designed by Ron Kingston, who just retired as the Chairman of the Speakers Bureau for NABS, can be found at <http://www.sialis.org/baffle.htm>. It is reported to deter raccoons, cats, squirrels, chipmunks, mice, rats and snakes.

The Bluebird Monitor's Guide to Bluebirds and Other Small Cavity-Nesters by Cynthia Berger, Keith Kridler & Jack Griggs is available from the North American Bluebird Society, Amazon.com and BAMB.com. This book is a compilation of bluebird information from many seasoned bluebirders including Jack Finch.

My personal experience with predators is limited. I have a resident black snake that leaves me a snake skin in the garden. I have viewed him defending himself against the Mockingbird parents as he tries to raid their nests. Over the years he has left the two nest boxes alone. I did install a Kruger Trap, but never found a snake in it and I give the snake credit for the lack of voles.

Our view of nature is definitely slanted by bluebird experience. Each of us has to find our own comfort level with predators; our own level of interference; our peace with "all creatures, great & small."

Editor, Helen S. Munro

How Long Do Bluebirds Live?

The Nestbox, the newsletter of the Southern Interior Bluebird Trail Society of British Columbia, reports the capture of a banded Mountain Bluebird that was at least nine years old. According to Don Stiles of the Calgary Area Bluebird Trail Monitors, "This bird's eggs didn't hatch this year. Could this be an indication of old age?"

Statistics on Eastern Bluebirds can be found at <http://audubon-omaha.org/bbbox/nabs/dprs1.htm>.

Briefly summarized, banding records from 1920 to 1990 found the oldest Eastern Bluebird to be 7.76 years. Just over 50% of the fledglings die within a year and the mean age of death was 1.37 years. Causes of death include shooting, domestic cats, collision with automobiles and stationary objects, weather and simply found dead in a nest box or a building.

North Carolina Bluebird Society Survey 2007

Name: _____

Town & State: _____

Total Boxes monitored: _____

Boxes with Bluebirds: _____

Date of 1st BB egg laid: _____

Total BB eggs laid: _____

Total BB eggs hatched: _____

Total BB eggs fledged: _____

2 sets of BB eggs: _____

3 sets of BB eggs: _____

Failed nest attempts for Bluebirds (eggs that didn't hatch, babies that died, fledglings that didn't fledge): _____

Type and # of other eggs: _____

Predators: _____

How many years have you submitted a survey _____

Have you increased or decreased the number of boxes? _____ If so, by how many _____

**Please fill out this form and
Return by September 15, 2007 to:
Reah Kittelberger
441 Swans Mill Crossing
Raleigh, NC 27614**

The Bluebird Talk Circuit

Jim Jochum, NCBS Director, presented a program on bluebird conservation at the Raywood Landscape Center in Danville, VA, on February 24, 2007. His mission was to help attendees attract bluebirds to nest on their property. In providing this information he used photos, nest boxes and several props to teach the best techniques for attracting bluebirds. One hundred and forty-two enthusiastic people attended from various parts of Virginia.

On March 1, 2007, Jim gave a similar talk to forty-one members of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) in Greensboro, NC.



Bluebirds from side & back



This is the normal view of a fledgling bluebird. This is also a picture by *Frank Ripp, Whispering Pines, NC.*

Subject: Owl or Baby Bluebird?

Hi Helen,
What is it? I didn't know **Bluebirds** (Baby) could do this.

Frank



Protecting Our Nest Boxes from Rat Snakes

Question:

We have a typical wooden bluebird nesting box mounted on top of a six-foot metal pole in our front yard at the edge of our woods. The pole is approximately one inch in diameter.

We lost our first brood of bluebird chicks about ten days ago to a three-foot rat snake. He shimmied up the pole unseen by us and ate the chicks only a couple of days after they had hatched.

Now we have another pair of bluebirds inspecting our box. I would like to keep the metal pole greased with a substance that will make it impossible for the rat snakes to climb the pole, but the substance should also be something that will not attract ants or other insects and will do no harm to the adult bluebirds or their chicks. I am willing to apply the substance as often as it takes to protect the chicks until they fly. That may be every day or so for a couple of weeks.

What substance do you recommend?

Regards,

Jon Gibson, Raleigh, NC

Answer:

Subject: Re: Protecting Our Bluebird Box from Rat Snakes

Mr. Gibson,

I strongly recommend that you immediately install an 18" diameter predator guard/baffle on the mounting pole approximately 8" under the nest box. Ace Hardware sells one (picture below) that will fit the mounting pole for about \$20.00. You can install the guard without removing the nest box. You can also create a 3' diameter circular barrier several inches deep under the mounting pole using fine white play

sand. The sand adheres to the snake and makes it virtually impossible for it to scale the pole. The sand will also allow you to observe for signs of predators including snake tracks and paw prints. You will have to keep the sand loose by raking it after rains. Spraying the mounting pole with PAM Cooking Spray will deter ants from climbing the pole and invading the nest box. You will have to re-apply the PAM after rains. You should always check the ground around your nest box for ant hills especially fire ants. If you discover an ant hill, destroy the ants with an organic pesticide such as Pyrethrin and immediately cover up the ant hill with dirt to prevent ant-eating birds such as

Northern Flickers from ingesting the poisoned ants.

I also recommend that you rub unscented ivory soap on the **inside** of your nest box (roof, walls, and door) to deter paper wasp infestations. Check your nest box and under the predator



18" diameter predator guard/baffle.

guard/baffle from time to time for wasp infestations. If you find wasps, destroy them immediately by physical contact and remove the wasp nest and wasp nest stem. Do **not** spray the interior of your nest box with pesticides.

You should also use a molded wood fiber nest cup in your nest box to facilitate nest building, monitoring activities, and cleaning. Be sure to clean out old nests as soon as you are sure the birds have left the nest or other circumstances dictate that cleaning be performed. You can buy nest cups from most wild song bird supply stores.

Feel free to contact me if you need additional assistance.

Fred, Cary, NC

www.help-for-bluebirds.org

<http://helpforbluebirds.wordpress.com>

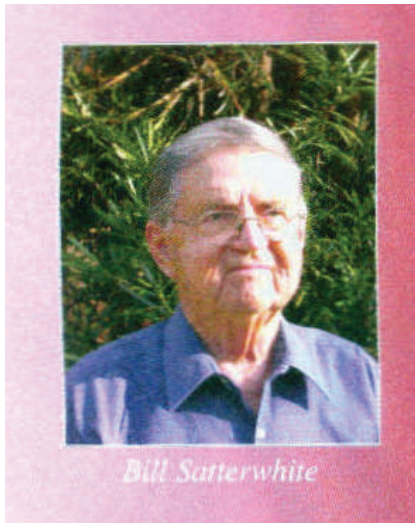
Bluebirders of Wake County, Bill Satterwhite, President Fred Fletcher Award for Outstanding Volunteer Group

Mordecai Historic Park is proud to nominate the Bluebirders of Wake County for an Outstanding Volunteer Groups Award for their sustained excellence in managing the Bluebird Resoration Project at Mordecai.

The Bluebirders of Wake Count were formed in St. Mark's Chapel at the park in 2006 to promote Bluebirding in Wake County. Their purpose is to offer a local voice in the ongoing work to restore Bluebird habitat and promote the species health and vigor in the capitol county.

In regard to Mordecai, the group began an ongoing Bluebird restoration project at the park. Project coordinators for the Mordecai effort are the organization's president, Bill Satterwhite, as well as volunteers Susan Wyatt and Bob Kellam. The scope of the Mordecai project includes fabricating

specialized boxes that are specific to the Bluebird, installing the boxes in strategic locations at the park, and continual monitoring and management of the boxes through the year.



They are a sustaining volunteer group which means they have agreed to continue to manage the Bluebird restoration project at Mordecai thereby exhibiting a continued commitment to the park. Due to their hard work the park has even experienced some early success as several Bluebird families fledged in their new homes this past season.

In a very short time the Bluebirders of Wake County have demonstrated that they have what it takes to make the Mordecai truly a success and the City of Raleigh is truly indebted to them for their service. Nominated by: Mordecai Historic Park Staff, Troy Burnton and Erin Callis

NCBS Board News

Fellow Board Members,

My resignation as President of NCBS is effective immediately. I plan to devote my spare time and energy conducting bluebird related research and in developing bluebird education material. I have registered a DOMAIN name (help-for-bluebird.org), started a web site (www.help-for-bluebirds.org), and set up a BLOG (<http://helpforbluebirds.wordpress.com>). I will publish my research and other materials focused on bluebird conservation on my web site and in articles posted to the BLOG. I've enjoyed working with you as a Board Member and most recently as President. I believe NCBS has been and will continue to be an effective bluebird conservation organization.

Happy Bluebirding!
Fred

Fred, I must resign as Vice President of the NC Bluebird Society. I have been given additional responsibilities at school and find it extremely difficult to meet the obligations to the society. I remain committed to Bluebirds and the Society. I am continuing to give presentations in our community and across the state. I do wish to stay active in the club and continue to help promote and conserve bluebirds and other cavity nesters in our state. I thank you for the opportunity to serve the club as VP and look forward to working with the club in the future in an educational capacity.

Sincerely,
Randy Senzig

Note: The NCBS Board reluctantly accepted both these resignations on Saturday, July 14, 2007 and thanked both Fred and Randy for all their contributions to NCBS.

New Additions: Jimmy Miller has been appointed Vice-President and Robin Eisenbeis has been appointed as a Director. Welcome to Jimmy and Robin!

An Update from Samarkand Bluebird Trail

Hi Ms. Munro,

As I wrote previously, a male bird died (froze during our cold snap?) setting in the nest as if he was brooding eggs, head up. I didn't clean our the nest box immediately as I didn't have the materials to carry a dead bird around campus at the time. It was Friday.

Three weeks later, I was finally ready to bury Mr. Cadaver. We went to clean out the nest with my girl's emotionally prepped.* We opened the box, and Mr. Cadaver had been squished into the side of the nest, head still up as if he were a sentry, but there were now eggs in the box!!!!

It took me awhile, but it was worth it. I have the pictures of the dead, male cadaver in the nest box. The bonus for my procrastination is that the eggs HATCHED! Well, all but one did. We approached the nest and knocked. The female flew out. The chicks appear to be 2 - 3 days old. They were still in their eggs last Thursday. This certainly has to be a bizarre situation, doesn't it?

Today (May 5, 2007), they are almost ready to fledge, and Mr. Cadaver is still on sentry duty!

God bless,

*DeDe Marshall
Samarkand, NC*

** This is the bluebird trail that Bob and Ruth Stolting put up with the girls at Samarkand, a juvenile girls' correction facility.*



Report of a County Coordinator Visit—Bill Abbey

A chance meeting with Bill Abbey as he checked a nest box near the fourth hole on Tanglewood's Reynolds Course in the fall of 2006 led to a recent opportunity to walk about a bluebird trail established by Bill Brewer, Water Treatment Supervisor for the City of Winston-Salem at the Northwest Water Treatment Plant in Lewisville, NC (near Winston Salem).

Bill Brewer, after a personal survey of the plant, had encouraged his sons, Noah and Lucas, to build Bluebird nestboxes as a Boy Scout Project. They placed the box (pictured) near the Plant Administration building. Other boxes were placed along the perimeter fence in 2004. In all Brewer has established twenty boxes on the sprawling water plant. He and several of the Operations staff build the boxes and installed them at likely locations.

"Brewer regularly monitors the nestboxes and is well pleased and proud of the nesting success achieved so far this year. Expansion of the trail is now planned!

"As an added benefit," said Brewer, "The monitoring satisfies a 'LifeSmart' guideline of the city of Winston-Salem that suggests up to an hour of exercise per week for each employee. Walking to monitor the boxes is the best of both worlds!"



Bluebird in New Bern

Date/Location: February 15, 2007/New Bern, NC

Caption: Bluebird Arriving At Feeder

Description: Preparing to eat some meal worms in feeder

Don Elsass, New Bern, NC



Bluebird News from Franklinton, NC

Just some information from Franklinton, NC. Hi, my name is Gloria J. Cunningham. I purchased a bird box from the State Employees Credit Union some time ago. I had my husband put the box up per the instructions. I kept an eye on it.

Approximately a month ago I looked in and saw a beautiful nest and in it were five little blue eggs. I was so excited. Again, I kept an eye on those eggs. About three days later when I looked, low and behold five little babies. I was overjoyed. I have been keeping an eye on them daily, watching them thrive. I see the mother watching me look in the box. I saw her one day with a worm in her mouth.

She waited until I went in the house, (I watched out the window) and then she took the food into the box for her offspring. This is the first time I have ever done something like this. I do feed the birds everyday with birdseed, suet, sunflower seeds and the like. They really go after it. My father was a great bird lover and watched them all the time. But to see the marvelous progression of the Eastern Bluebird is wonderful. I am so glad I purchased that bird box. Just wanted you to know that someone in Franklinton is doing their part. God Bless,

Gloria J. Cunningham, Franklinton, NC

More Bluebird Pictures



Bluebirds in Chuck Bliss's feeder, Winter, 2007.



I have been watching our new little bluebird friends and the attached photo turned out pretty well, so I thought I would share it. It was taken today, May 6, 2007. This is my first bluebird box, so I am thrilled they chose to use it for their nest only days after we put it up. There are 5 of them and they

hatched on April 22! They are incredibly beautiful!

Linda Schuppener



Bluebirds, Inside the Nest Box

Recorded by the Cornell Birdhouse Network

Summer 1999

Produced by the North Carolina Bluebird Society

Available for \$13.85 including shipping and handling.

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

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

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

North Carolina Bluebird Society Products

Description of Item	Cost Postage Included	No. Wanted	Total
New: Caps with NCBS Logo	\$ 13.00	X_____	=_____
New: Bluebird Note Cards (12)	\$ 12.00	X_____	=_____
New: <i>Carolina Blue</i> Tote Bags	\$ 15.00	X_____	=_____
 <i>Carolina Blue</i> T-Shirts			
by Dempsey Essick (S, M, L, XL)	\$20.00	X_____	=_____
Lands End knit shirt with collar (M, L, XL)	\$35.00	X_____	=_____
Cloisonné Bluebird Pins (1inch, 4 colors)	\$ 5.00	X_____	=_____
“On the Wings of a Song” - CD	\$ 8.00	X_____	=_____
Eastern Bluebird with Flowers Card	\$ 2.50	X_____	=_____
	or 5 for \$10.00	X_____	=_____
<i>Bluebirds, Inside the Nestbox</i> Video Tape	\$13.85	X_____	=_____
Also available in DVD format, same price	\$13.85	X_____	=_____
(2 for \$25; 3 for \$35; 6 for \$70)			=_____
		Total	=_____

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Date of your order is _____

This order form is also available at www.ncbluebird.org or www.ncbluebird.com

E-mail from Bea Mansfield

Bluebird Friendly Trees

Bea Mansfield, NCBS's First President, was driving into Danville, VA, when she noticed two areas of trees in the highway interchange. One was a holly with red berries and the other one was a deciduous tree with beautiful red berries.

She contacted the Danville, Virginia, Parks Department and April Dailey emailed Bea that "The hollies are 'Nellie R. Stevens' and the deciduous trees are 'Winter King' Hawthorns which are in their glory right now!! Latin name is *Crataegus viridis* 'Winter King'."

In the fall Bea now knows to ask her landscaper for a Winter King green hawthorn and she is sharing that information in that these red berries make for winter bluebird food.



Winter King' green hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis* 'Winter King'). A wonderful specimen tree that's underused in the landscape, the hawthorn grows slowly to 20 to 25 feet tall with a wide-spreading canopy. The bright red to orange-red berries persist well into winter, often till February. USDA Zone 4 to 7.

http://www.hgtv.com/hgtv/gl_trees_shrubs_fruit/article/0,1785,HGTV_3647_3366315,00.html

Photographs of hawthorn by Michael A. Dirr

Nellie R. Stevens' trees were planted by Jack Finch alternating these hollies with dogwood trees along the long driveway into Finch Nursery in Bailey, NC. The pyramid shape of the Stevens' hollies would fill in the cup shape of the dogwood to create a protective barrier. These hollies grow in USDA Zone 6 to 9. Nellie R. Stevens is a female hybrid and is complemented by Edward J. Stevens, the male counterpart.

See http://landscaping.about.com/od/evergreenshrubsbushes1/p/nellie_stevens.htm (David Beaulieu) for more information.



Nellie R Stevens Holly

www.lewisnursery.com

Used as a privacy fence.

**Nellie R. Stevens
Holly Berries**
www.lowes.com



Bluebird Family

Hello,

I thought you may like these. I am planning to join NCBS this weekend. but first, I wanted to submit these photos for fellow bluebird watchers to enjoy.

Ted Rushing, Indian Trail, NC

Editor's Note: The NCBS website has posted a request for pictures for our newsletters. The many pictures that are printed in the last few issues are a result of that request. I thank everyone that contributes and try to print as many as possible.

Helen Munro, Editor



North Carolina Bluebird Society

NORTH CAROLINA BLUEBIRD SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

North Carolina Bluebird Society Dues:

() 1 Year (\$10.00)

() 3 Years (\$25.00)

Name _____

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City, State & Zip _____

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E-mail address _____

I prefer to access the NCBS Bluebird Notes newsletter via the Internet rather than have it mailed to me.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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Access information will be sent to the E-mail address you furnished including advance notification of membership expiration.

If you elect to receive the Bluebird Notes newsletter by mail, your Membership Expiration appears on your Mailing Label.

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

North Carolina Bluebird Society
ATTN: David Hindsley
135 Lakeview Drive
Tarboro, NC 27886

I am interested in:

- Assisting with the annual meeting
- Serving as a NCBS Board Member
- Helping with the newsletter
- Conducting a bluebird workshop
- Contacting my local paper with news
- Volunteering to be a NCBS County Coordinator
- Other (please explain)

Contributions to the Newsletter

Sharing Bluebird information and stories make this an unique publication

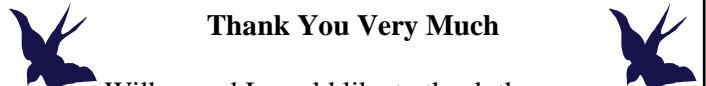
Please submit to: Helen Munro, Co-editor
22 Bobolink Road, Jackson Springs, NC 27281
Phone - (910) 673-6936 Fax - (910) 673-7345
e-mail - hsmunro@ac.net

Slide Programs, Videos and books can be borrowed,

Please Contact: Hank Moss, Jr.
525 Fairway Drive Southern Pines, NC 28387
(910) 692-2328 hmjr@pinehurst.net



Thank You Very Much



Wilbur and I would like to thank the North Carolina Bluebird Society for the lovely plaque given to us at the annual meeting. We appreciate it very much.



We want everyone to know that it was a team effort. Without David and Kay Hindsley and Richard and Flo McFayden, we could not have done what was done over the past years. The encouragement from Chuck Bliss and Helen Munro made it all worthwhile.

We remain dedicated to the Eastern Bluebird and will do what we can to keep encouraging folk to be a part of the North Carolina Bluebird Society and the North American Bluebird Society.

Sincerely,
Wilbur and Catherine Traylor
Fayetteville, NC



House Sparrow vs. House Wrens

Question:

I am very new to the blue bird community. I just bought a house out in the country last summer. There was a blue bird box already there for years which had birds and babies at the time,. They all grew up nicely. So this year I have taken more of an interest. I have been checking the box periodically for eggs. I didn't keep any records of when I checked so I can't really say how long ago that was. But today we found two eggs on the ground. they were very fresh, One was barely broken, looking as if something had sucked it dry. but keeping my hopes up as my seven year old daughter was standing by my side. I said they might have started to hatch. To our surprise no babies and there were two more eggs. I don't know enough to understand what could have happened. If the parents did this themselves or another bird. so I found your website and hope you can give me some answers. It was my daughter's idea to go online. She is very smart for her age and usually I'm honest about wild life and how things happen sometimes. I am a big bird admirer. wherever I go I always have lots of feeders of all types. So any information you can give me would be greatly appreciated.

Kay Harris, Godwin, NC

Answer:

The most probable explanation is that either a **house sparrow** or a **house wren** invaded the nest, pecked the eggs, and ejected them. If the eggs had a **single small hole** in them without additional damage, the odds are very high that a house wren did the damage. House sparrows have larger beaks and make a large hole in the eggs.

The bluebirds may continue to lay additional eggs in the nest box -- since two have been lost and two remain, there could be one or two more eggs.

If the eggs have been in the nest for longer than the normal incubation period, 12-14 days, it is possible but **unlikely** that the bluebirds ejected them with the intention of starting over with a new egg laying cycle. Bluebirds normally would not peck the suspect eggs but would carry them away from the nest and dump them instead of just ejecting them on the ground under the nest box.

If the bluebird nest box is located near shrubbery or low trees, I would move it to a more open area at least 15 feet away from any tree line. The bluebirds will find it quickly and relocating it may help to discourage the bird who did the damage. I would also put up a small songbird nest box (1 ^{1/4}" diameter entrance hole) in the spot where the bluebird nest box is now. The small songbird nest box will be an attractive alternative for house wrens if they are the culprits.

Check the nest box frequently (at least 3 times a day) and be sure to look for the presence of twigs which are a good indication that either a house sparrow or house wren has decided to take over the nest box. Be on the lookout for birds other than bluebirds entering the nest box or hanging around the nest box.



House Sparrow

Notice the short thick black beak which identifies it from the house wren which has a slimmer and longer beak. House Sparrows are deadly enemies of bluebirds and are very aggressive birds.

Picture from http://photogallery.canberrabirds.org.au/images/Sparrow_House_Dabb.jpg

Sincerely,

Fred, Cary, NC

www.help-for-bluebirds.org

<http://helpforbluebirds.wordpress.com>



House Wren.

Notice it has a longer and slimmer beak than a house sparrow. It also has a longer tail than a house sparrow.

Picture from www.photobirder.com

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