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V. 13 No. 2 Fall 2007



BLUEBIRDS FLY!

California Bluebird Recovery Program Newsletter

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—Assisted by Mount Diablo Audubon Society —
 — An affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society —

“For the encouragement and conservation of cavity-nesters — especially bluebirds — anywhere in the West”

Special Tribute Edition In Honor of Don Yoder

This issue of *Bluebirds Fly!* is dedicated as a tribute to the founder of the California Bluebird Recovery Program — Don Yoder.

Don founded the CBRP in 1974 and has since dedicated countless hours to the preservation of bluebirds in California.

From all members of the CBRP and the many bluebirders you helped over the years, we say,:

“Thank you Don for a job well done!”



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Longtime Bluebird Caretaker Turns Over Reigns

By Nancy Kay (Reprinted with permission of Rossmoor News)

Each Saturday in early 1971, Don Yoder and his wife trekked from San Francisco to Rossmoor to check on the construction of their new home. As he watched the bulldozer clear the trees from the property, Yoder noticed some bluebirds in a state of frenzy. Their nests had been wiped out.

“Here we were, going to enjoy our new home while their homes had been taken away,” recalled Yoder.

The couple moved in the following November but Yoder was unable to erase from his mind the inequity of the bluebird situation. He decided to make a difference. Reaching back to his Illinois farm upbringing, he recalled that bluebirds need cavities to survive, so he built some

boxes and placed them in nearby trees.

“I didn’t have time to monitor them nor did I know how,” Yoder said, “but by the fall of ’72, five out of the six boxes had nests.”

Now, 35 years later, after running a giant one-man bluebird recovery program at Rossmoor and becoming nationally renowned as a bluebird expert, Yoder, because of family reasons, is retiring from his bluebird work.

That doesn’t mean, however, that the birds’ survival will be jeopardized. Yoder has arranged for the Santa Clara County Bluebird Recovery program to take on the general management of the program with the day-to-day work to be done by the Rossmoor Nature Association.

That’s no easy job. In 1984 when Yoder retired from work, he built about a dozen boxes and placed them on the Rossmoor golf course. When asked if he got permission, he simply smiled and said, “I’ve been asked that question be fore.”

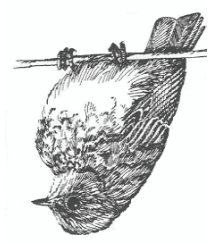
At present, 19 boxes hang on trees on the north (Creekside) course and 39 on the south (Dollar Ranch). Last year, Yoder counted 79 bluebird fledglings as well as 43 other types of birds. (Cont. Pg. 3)

All these years, Yoder has run a one person operation. During early spring into late fall, he has serviced the

(Cont. Page—3)

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ *Tribute to Don Yoder*
- ◆ *Year-end Reporting*
- ◆ *A Blind Nestbox Builder*
- ◆ *Bluebird Rescue*
- ◆ *30 Years of Bluebirds*
- ◆ *New Subscription Policy*



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The Director's Chair

After 9 months trying to fill the gap that Don Yoder left when he retired, I realize how important his contribution really is. In addition to the time commitment each year, his legacy is that he conceived and managed a low cost, strong environmental organization with little or no outside funding. With donations from people who hold similar view and are willing to spend their own time helping our feathered friends, Don built an organization which in 2006 included 150 trails in 25 counties and is responsible for helping more than 16,000 new fledglings of 15 species.

This organization has helped produce well over 100,000 fledglings since its founding 1994. Hats off to Don Yoder and to all of you who make the organization work.

Donations reached a new low in 2007. So far this year, we have not received enough to pay for the printing and mailing of even one newsletter. In order to keep the organization solvent, we are instituting a new subscription policy which is described elsewhere in this issue. The fall back plan is to discontinue printing and mailing the newsletter. Instead, we will make it available on our web site, <http://cbrp.org>.

Please enter end-of-season nestbox statistics as soon as you can. The database will generate most of the reports, saving you the trouble of doing so (see the Results screen). It will also provide the information for us to prepare the state-wide annual report. Most of this information will be sent to Cornell University for inclusion in their nation-wide database. We would like your results within a few months so that we can include the annual report in the next *Bluebirds Fly!* newsletter early in 2008.

Don't hesitate to contact me or the county coordinators if you have any questions about the data-entry web site. Please note that trail information (#boxes, zip code, etc) can only be entered/changed in the TRAILS screen. Your personal (contact) information is changed in the PERSONAL INFORMATION screen. End-of-season results are entered into the NESTBOX DATA screen.

Contact information must be current if we are to communicate with you. If you received a letter from

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California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP) Board Members

Don Yoder, Founder

Hatch Graham, Emeritus

Dick Blaine, Program Director

Georgette Howington, Assistant Program Director

The Editor's Journal



I cannot express how honored I am to be the editor of this newsletter. Last fall, Dick Blaine contacted me and asked if I would be interested. He told me that Patsy Kahl was retiring and it was time she handed the publishing duties to someone else.

All I could promise Dick was, "I will do my best to continue the tradition of publishing such a fine newsletter."

For the first issue, I decided not to stray too far from the traditional layout. Be warned however, future issues *will* be different. I hope to improve the newsletter in three key areas.

First, I would like to add more color and graphics. In order to keep printing costs reasonable, the newsletter has been published in black & white. We will still publish a uni-color issue for mailing, but I hope to provide a color format for e-mailing.

Second, I would like to extend the content to include more "How-To's" and experiences from bluebirders all over the state of California. Yes, this means you are invited to write articles.

Finally, I hope all of you will consider receiving future issues of the newsletter via e-mail. This will save a lot of money and a lot of trees.

Traditionalists—do not be concerned! We will continue to send a printed version of the newsletter to any CBRP member who prefers it.

As Dick describes to my left, this issue is dedicated to the vision, dedication, and plain old hard work of Don Yoder. Stop and think for a minute how many cavity nesters this humble man has fledged through his efforts.

Don Yoder is living proof that one man can make a difference. Don, from every corner of California, a big thumbs-up!

MGS

Michael G. Spohn

Editor—*Bluebirds Fly!*

mspohn@socalbluebirds.org

Dick Purvis, Recruiting

Dave Cook, Board Member

Michael Spohn, Editor—Bluebirds Fly!

California Bluebird Recovery Program—Contributors Through July 2007

Glenn L Allen, Jr	Contra Costa	Nedda Katzburg	Contra Costa
Michael & Marybeth Arago	Mendocino	Carol Killebrew	San Diego
Nancy Arbuckle	San Mateo	Cynthia Konwinski	El Dorado
Sequoia Audubon Society	San Mateo	Pamela Lorenz	Contra Costa
F. Nora Bain	Contra Costa	Chuck & Karin Lowrie	Amador
Larry & Christina Bain	Santa Clara	Shirley & Warren McDonald	Alameda
Dick Blaine	Santa Clara	Richard Moore	Los Angeles
North American Bluebird Society	99 OH	Ken & Lucille Morrison	Amador
Katie Bolger	El Dorado	Eartha Newsong	Contra Costa
Jim & Virginia & Martha Brake	San Bernardino	John & Robin Owens	Orange
Richard Brewster	Orange	Phillip Persons	Santa Barbara
Bob Brittain	Contra Costa	Karen Pestana	Kern
Susan Bulger	Orange	Sully Reallon	Orange
Jean Caggiano	San Diego	Enid & Doug Reeves	El Dorado
Ann Cantrell	Los Angeles	Pamela A. Rogers	Contra Costa
James Cassani	Alameda	Merle & Patricia Ruggles	Placer
Wyatt Cerles	Sonoma	Mildred Salmon	Contra Costa
Charles W Christiansen	Contra Costa	Leslie & Bruce Silvey	Humboldt
Contra Costa County	Contra Costa	Bill & Francie Singley	El Dorado
Oscar Enstrom	Contra Costa	Mike Spohn	Orange
Ruth Foster	Contra Costa	Sandra D. Sprowl	Contra Costa
Helen Goforth	Yuba	Roger & Virginia Thompson	99 OR
George & Verma Goodwin	El Dorado	Peter D. Triem	Ventura
Raylene L Gordin	99 OR	Orinda Senior Village	Contra Costa
Nancy H Hanna	Contra Costa	Erica Walden	San Mateo
Catherine & Paul Heater	Sonoma	Michelle & Ronald Wallach	Contra Costa
Nancy Hobert	Contra Costa	John Waterbury	Alameda
Kappy & Fred Hurst	Orange	David C Weber	Orange
Joan Jernegan	Placer	Richard Willey	Santa Barbara
Melvin C Johnson	Riverside	Don Yoder	Contra Costa
Suzanne Jones	Contra Costa	Bob Yohr	Calvaras

Policy on Subscriptions to Bluebirds Fly!

The cost of printing and mailing one issue of the newsletter exceeded the amount of donations this year. We are going to enforce the following policy to save money.

We sent out over 700 copies of Bluebirds Fly! earlier this year. This policy will reduce the number of copies to 350. Hopefully these are the people who are still participating in the program. In order to receive the printed Bluebirds Fly! in a

given year you must be:

1. An Audubon chapter, bluebird or other environmental organization, contractual partner or other organization exchanging newsletters with us.
2. County Coordinator or trail monitor submitting a report within the past two years.
3. Subscriber donating a minimum of \$5 for 1 year (1 additional year

per \$10 donated)

This issue is being mailed to the full list of 700; if the word "LAST" appears in the address field, this will be your last issue unless you meet one of the listed condition prior to the next issue. However, we will continue to make the newsletter available on our web site, <http://cbrp.org> for all to read.

California Bluebird Recovery Program County Coordinators

<u>Name</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Emily Harbison	Butte	Oroville	
Jack Lynch	Calaveras	Angels Camp	jackplynch@sbcglobal.net
Oscar Enstrom	Contra Costa	Walnut Creek	bigo@lanset.com
Hatch Graham	El Dorado	Somerset	birdsfly@innercite.com
Richard Burdine	Kern	Tehachapi	rtburdine@mac.com
Tom Rickman	Lassen	Susanville	trickman@fs.fed.us
Doug Martin	Los Angeles	Sylmar	818-367-8967
William Rihn	Madera	Coarse	
Ruth Beckner	Marin	San Rafael	jabeck1924@cs.com
Michael & Marybeth Arago	Mendocino	Fort Bragg	mmbarago@mcn.org
Steve Simmons	Merced	Merced	simwoodduk@aol.com
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Dick Purvis	Orange	Anaheim	dickersly@aol.com
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Glen Chappell	San Bernardino	Redlands	glen.chap@adelphia.net
Carol Killebrew	San Diego	Ramona	bluebirds@ix.netcom.com
Thomas Hoffman	San Joaquin	Acampo	209 369-8578
Paul & Judy Burkhardt	San Louis Obispo	Creston	tinhornranch@sbcglobal.net
Susan Kritzik	San Mateo	Portola Valley	sgkritzik@sbcglobal.net
Richard Willey	Santa Barbara	Lompoc	dick.willey@verizon.net
Tex Houston	Santa Clara	Palo Alto	tex009@sbcglobal.net
Tonya Haff	Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz	831-459-4763
Melanie Truan	Solano/Yolo	Davis	mltruan@ucdavis.edu
Mike Crumly	Sonoma	Sonoma	mikec@freixenetusa.com
Pete Flower	Tehama	Red Bluff	530-527-0392
Peter Morrison	Tulare	Visalia	209-733-1154
Kathleen & Andrew Aldrich	Tuolumne	Soulsbyville	209-536-1515
Jan Wasserman	Ventura	Camarillo	jan@treeswallows.org
Helen Goforth	Yuba	Wheatland	rhgobirding@comcast.net

Longtime Bluebird Caretaker Turns Over Reigns

(Cont. Page—1)

boxes every Monday, the day the golf courses are closed. Servicing includes cleaning, repairing, and when necessary, replacing the boxes.

Yoder also has carefully monitored the boxes and kept meticulous records as to how

many occupants the boxes have had and the resulting fledgling count.

With his dedication to the bluebirds, how does Yoder feel about turning over the job to others? His feelings

are mixed. "I'm going to miss the chance to be in contact with many people by phone and correspondence," he said.

As director of the California Bluebird Recovery Program and his association with the North American Bluebird Society, he gets calls from people all over the country who have found his name on the Web.

"Not long ago," he said, laughing, "I got a call at 6:45 a.m. from a woman in Florida. She must have been nervous and didn't think about the time difference. She wanted to know

if she should take two eggs out of a nest."

On the other hand, Yoder feels that his retirement is only fair to others. "All these years it's been a one-man program. I think the program will improve by having more people involved."

Editor's Note: Special thanks to the Rossmoor News for providing this article. It was the best historical piece I could find on Don's service to the CBRP.

The Director's Chair

(Cont. Page—2)

me (via USPS) in June or did NOT receive several messages by email, I do not have your email address. Please check your personal data in the database (PERSONAL INFORMATION screen) and make corrections if necessary.

Finally, I want to remind you that CBRP is an NABS affiliate and as

such, our members are entitled to a half price membership. This offer applies not only to affiliate members who are joining NABS for the first time but also to renewals and extensions. It runs from 1/1/2007 to 12/31/08, and reduces NABS membership to \$15.00 per year for both single and household mem-

berships. This is a reduction from \$20.00 for single and \$30.00 for household. See the NABS web site, or contact Pauline Tom, NABS Membership Chairperson, (512) 268.5678 or email him at ptom5678@gmail.com.

About the California Bluebird Recovery Program

Our Mission

- ◆ Enlist current bluebirders and recruit others who will help reestablish bluebirds to their normal habitat
- ◆ Locate preferred habitat for the placement of nestboxes suitable for bluebirds
- ◆ Secure monitors to care for the boxes and keep systematic records of the development of young birds during the nesting season
- ◆ Record and analyze all annual summaries of nestbox records
- ◆ Provide a forum (newsletter) through which fellow trail monitors can exchange information and secure help in solving problems encountered in the field.

Learn More

To learn more about the California Bluebird Recovery Program and other cavity nester conservation programs, visit the below web sites:

<http://www.cbrp.org>

<http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org>

<http://www.socalbluebirds.org>

<http://www.sialis.org>

If you are looking for a mentor, start by contacting the county coordinator in your county listed on page 10. You can also contact Dick Blaine (dick@theblaines.net) or Mike Spohn (mspohn@socalbluebirds.org).

Please consider supporting our efforts. There is a donation form on the back page of this newsletter. Your contribution is tax-deductible and goes a long way in helping us conserve the bluebird population in California.

Editor's Note

Every once in a while, I come across someone who is so special, I am stunned into total awe. The below

story about Jimmy Sparrer in York County, VA is one such person. Blind since 1953, Jimmy uses

power tools to build nestboxes! I am sure you will agree, his story is incredible.

You can find the video of Jimmy here: <http://www.dailypress.com/birdhouse>

Saving the Bluebirds—A blind man in York County builds a bounty of birdhouses

By Kathy Van Mullekom (Reprinted with permission of *The Daily Press, Newport News, VA*)

YORK COUNTY -- Jimmy Sparrer is a bluebird's best friend. During the past 35 years, he's built about 3,000 nesting boxes for the brilliant bluebirds he never sees.

Blind since a hunting accident in 1953, Sparrer, now 84, crafts bluebird nesting boxes in a lean-to style woodworking shop near his home in Seaford. He uses power equipment - table saw and drill press - and a hammer to assemble the boxes. His hands guide his every move.

"Ya'll look but don't talk to me," he says while visitors watch him put together boxes. "I like to concentrate when I'm messing around these tools." Sparrer, who "reads" publications such as National Geographic magazine on tape, says his motivation to build the nesting boxes started when he learned bluebirds were in trouble. "At one time, bluebirds were almost extinct because they didn't have a place to nest," he says.

When Sparrer isn't in his wood shop, he listens to books and magazines and lunches on his favorite barbecue or chicken salad sandwich at the nearby Seaford Country Market. "Since I've been blind, I don't know the thousands of books I've read by tape or disc," he says. "I can read Braille but I've never read enough of it to read fast."

Sparrer retired in 1989 from the photography lab at NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, he says. Before he lost his sight, he was a model maker at the center. He and wife Kay have been married

54 years; their son, Preston, is a pathologist living in Williamsburg.

The woodworker says he would be lost without his bluebird boxes, which he gives away free or in return for a few dollars to buy nails to build more. "It gives me something to do," says Sparrer, who also occasionally makes picnic tables and small furniture pieces for family and friends.

His shop, which measures about 8 feet wide and 30 feet long, is cluttered with boards of pressure-treated lumber he uses for the bird boxes. It looks unorganized, but he knows where every nail is kept and each handsaw is hung.

"Where did my block go?" he says. Because he can't see increments on a measuring tape, he uses pre-cut blocks of wood to measure spacings on the boxes.

Sparrer works at a long wooden table while Beethoven plays over a public radio station. He admires Beethoven more than any other composer, even Mozart, whom he also likes.

"The greatest achievement by man was Beethoven when he wrote Symphony No. 9 while he was deaf," says Sparrer, smiling and looking toward the radio that keeps him company.

Buckets under his worktable are filled with parts for boxes. He cuts out dozens of A-shaped roofs, box bottoms and hangers at a time. "As muddled as it is, I know where everything is," he says. "See I've got

a pocket full of nails. When I put this nail in my mouth, I know where it is." Holding a couple of nails in his mouth, Sparrer begins to assemble a box.

His hands locate two pre-cut boards and a drill that he uses to start each of 23 nail holes needed to hold the boxes together. Drilling the holes makes it easy for him to know where to start and hammer the nail. But, first he runs his fingers along the edges of the boards to make sure they are aligned right. Satisfied, he drills the first nail hole.

"You probably never seen anyone working in the dark," he says chuckling. Sparrer hammers confidently, needing only six to seven strikes to drive the first 2-inch-long nail into the adjoining boards. He then clamps the boards to even up the sides before drilling more holes.

"I missed it," he says, reaching inside the box to feel where the nail came out.

Still not satisfied the box is aligned properly, he uses a wooden wedge to force the sides out so they meet



(Cont. Page—5)

The Diary of Four Orphaned Bluebird Chicks

By Earl Garrison

This is a story about four orphaned bluebird chicks that survived despite some unusual circumstances. It involves many people who are dedicated to protecting these beautiful birds.

It started on July 2, 2007, when Robert McNab of Laguna Niguel placed a request on the Internet site "Rob's List" for some help on saving four— 2-day-old bluebird chicks and an unhatched egg. This plea was seen by Beverly Gandall who forwarded it to Sully Reallon who forwarded it to Dick Purvis who called me.

Since I monitor nestboxes in nearby Laguna Niguel Regional Park, I checked my boxes looking for prospective 'adoptive' parents. I found a box with 3 eggs about to hatch.

We decided to transfer Robert's four 2-day-old chicks and unhatched egg to my nestbox. In addition we spread mealworms under the tree hoping that the adoptive parents were watching.

On July 4th and 6th, I checked the adoptive box and all of the new chicks appeared to be thriving. They were being taken care of by the adoptive parents. I spread more mealworms and watched an adult feed one to a chick.

Huell Howser Show

(Cont. Page—8)

lows in a nearby tree. Since I hadn't checked the nestbox for a week or so, I wasn't sure if the eggs had hatched until I took it down. And to my elation, and Huell's amazement, the nest held 5 five beautiful white eggs nestled in a bower of soft downy feathers. He filmed these as several swallows noisily flew overhead.

From there we walked a hundred feet or so to a tree that had a WEBL nest in it. I was not too surprised when it contained five blue eggs. As he filmed, I could see the

I returned on July 7th, and saw all 8 chicks were alive. As I spread more mealworms, I wondered how the parents could feed all 8 chicks and how they all could survive in a single nestbox.

On July 8th, I noticed that there were two full nests in the adoptive nestbox - one on top of the other. I separated the nests, put one nest in a second nestbox, added the 4 orphans and hung the nestbox right beside the original nestbox. I was encouraged that both parents watched these proceedings.

I spread more mealworms and watched as the parents fed chicks in both nestboxes. So now, each nestbox had 4 chicks in it, the 4 younger chicks are in nestbox #1 and the 4 orphaned chicks are in nestbox #2.

I checked both nestboxes again on July 9th and found one dead chick in nestbox #1. The remaining chicks were alive and the 4 chicks in nestbox #2 appeared to be OK.

On July 10th, all chicks appeared to be lethargic but it could have been because it was a hot day. On subsequent days I found both parents attending to the chicks in both nestboxes and they were growing rapidly.

I checked both nestboxes on July

12th and all chicks seemed to be thriving.

On July 16th, Robert McNab and I checked both nestboxes and all chicks have feathers and Robert was quite pleased with their progress.

On July 25th, Sully Reallon checked the boxes and reported that all 4 of the orphaned chicks have fledged. Sully advised that 2 of the chicks from the nestbox #1 fledged yesterday with one sorta' fat chick remaining who was begging for more food.

On July 28th, Sully checked on the last chick and noticed it was covered with some kind of lice and was not very active, nor were there any adults around. He took the chick out of the nestbox and went to the Animal & Bird Clinic in Mission Viejo to try to save it. Unfortunately, the chick was DOA - very sad.

Throughout this care-taking I was helped immensely by fellow Southern California Bluebird Club member Dick Purvis and others who provided sage advise. Linda Violet also helped by providing mealworms that we used to help feed the nestlings.

All things considered, I think our combined efforts in saving the 4 orphaned chicks was successful, even if 2 other chicks didn't survive.

two adults hopping nearer to the nestbox site and so he got some good footage of both the male and female.

After I replaced the nestbox, the adults edged even closer to it and I suggested that if we moved back a bit, one of them might fly to the entry hole. Almost on cue, the male did just that and disappeared into the nestbox - all caught on film. I was elated. It was almost as if I had written a script and was able to get the bluebirds to perform on cue.

The filming ended on that note and

it was only 11:00 AM! Huell thought the filming went well and I told him if he was happy, I was happy. We shook hands and went our separate ways.

That afternoon as I was thinking about the day's events, it seemed almost surreal. I helped create a future on a very popular Huell Howser television program about our bluebirds.

Now I can relax!

Order a DVD of the show (#128) <http://www.calgold.com/green>

Year-End Nestbox Reporting

By Dick Blaine

For most of us and our feathered friends, the nesting season is over. We can continue to help the environment by reporting our results. This data will be used to guide environmental decisions, especially in the hands of Cornell University. In addition to compiling our own results, we provide them to Cornell University for incorporation into their nationwide database. The more information you can provide, the better.

The on-line database is working very well. So far this year, 83 trails in 14 counties have reported 53300 fledglings. Impressive!

These results are from about half of the counties and trails, but represent only one-third of the number of fledglings reported in 2006. Several

trails which typically produce the largest number of fledglings have not yet reported.

The Winter 2006-7 *Bluebirds Fly!* (v13, number 1) contains an article providing the background and reasons for the automated approach to end-of-season reporting. For more information, see the section about End-of-Season reporting on the CBRP web site, <http://www.cbrp.org>.

Four ways to send in your results are discussed; but we hope you will select to use the on-line data base. If you do, we do not have to enter data manually. To access the on-line database go to the following link <http://cbrp.theblaines.net>. This page provides instructions and help for using the actual data-entry site as

well as a link to the latter. Your contact and trail information were pre-entered based on the most recent Annual Reports. For most of you, your User-ID (logon ID) and password are your first initial and last name. Please change your password the first time you login to secure your personal information.

Don't hesitate to contact me or the county coordinators who are database administrators for assistance.

Dick Blaine - dick@theblaines.net

<http://www.cbrp.org>

(CBRP Web site)

<http://cbrp.theblaines.net>

(CBRP On-line database)

Southern CA Bluebird Club Featured on Huell Howser Show

By Bob Franz

Huell Howser comes to Placentia. That's right, I'm talking about the Huell Howser, who can be seen on KCET every week with his programs called "California's Gold" and "California's Green," among others. This visit was arranged to film a story on bluebirds.

I am a regular viewer of the various programs that Huell Howser produces on KCET. Most of them deal with historical and geographical features in California that many of us have never seen. A few years back it occurred to me that our beautiful bluebirds were a stunning feature in California and that very few people have seen them, or even knew they existed.

I contacted Huell Howser Productions and started a dialogue that resulted in his agreeing to film a story about bluebirds during this nesting season.

Now the hard part; when to schedule it. Huell preferred to film at different sites and look at a few nest-

boxes instead of going to just one site. My task was to schedule a date for several sites that would maximize the numbers of nests with eggs and nestlings. That time frame is really up to the bluebirds.

In early-April, I selected a trio of dates toward the end of the month that I thought would suffice. But a call from his producer on Tuesday, April 17, revealed that they had a cancellation and Huell wanted to film on Thursday, April 19th. Only two days notice!

I was a little panicky at first, but I said OK, and the pressure was on. Do I have to change the order in which we visit sites? Do I have time to make a quick check of all the most promising sites? Where do we meet?

Huell and his cameraman arrived at my house in Placentia at about 9 AM. First, he filmed the introduction of me and Dick Purvis in my front yard. I was glad that the roses and geraniums were in full bloom. He

mentioned that he thought this story was better suited for the series California's Green than California's Gold, and I agreed.

Huell's team finished the introduction quickly, stowed the camera, and followed us to Loma Vista Memorial Park in Fullerton. I introduced Huell and his team to Susan Bulger, who monitors 13 nestboxes in the park. I chose this cemetery for two reasons: 1) it was close to a golf course where I wanted Huell to film, and 2) Susan employs a unique 2-hole nestboxes.

The filming went well, especially when Huell saw four, 12-day old nestlings inside. When he saw them Huell kinda' shrieked and made sure the cameraman got good footage of them nestled all snugly in their nest.

We moved on to Coyote Hills Golf Course at the putting green area. I chose this site because it has a beautiful waterfall, lake and stream.

There is a nestbox with Tree Swal-

(Cont. Page—9)

Saving the Bluebirds

(Cont. Page—1)

up perfectly.

"Feel that, it's not even," he says, guiding a visitor's hand inside the box.

"I don't think the bluebirds would mind if it weren't exactly close," he says. "But, you mind, right?" says a visitor.

"Yep," he answers, still working to get the sides where they should be. "You've just got to be smarter than the wood, that's all."

Sparrer's unique pattern for making bluebird boxes means he crafts two at a time.

The pair is pieced together at the bottom. When everything is finished, except adding the hangers, he

makes a table saw cut down the middle to separate them.

He's only cut himself once, slightly on the thumb last May. A heavy fishing weight hangs on the saw's flip switch to ensure it doesn't accidentally come on, which it did once. He uses a pre-cut block of wood to make sure the saw's blade is angled the way it should be.

"I use it to do a lot of measuring when I'm by myself," he says about the wood block.

His arms and hands are steady as he makes the cut, going only partially through the wood. Then, he puts the still-joined boxes in a vise and uses a handsaw to finish the cut.

"Now I'm going to see how close I am to getting them even," he says. "Oh, it's about a sixteenth off. That should do. I don't think the bluebirds will notice that."

Now that spring and bird nesting season is here, Sparrer has partial and completed boxes stacked on his work bench.

It's his favorite time of the year - birds are hunting for homes and the weather is warm enough for him to hang out daily in the workshop. During winter, he pretty much stays put at home.

"When my hands get cold, I can't see anything," he says.

Beavis The Bluebird

By Mike & Launa Gould

Our first encounter with Bluebirds was while we were living in a suburb of Dallas Texas. We were intrigued by their beautiful color and with our woodworking abilities we were able to construct an appropriate nesting box.

Our back yard was full of oak trees and we were fairly close to a lake so all of the elements were set-up for the arrival of a nesting pair.

It didn't take long until a pair of eastern Bluebirds had set-up their home in our backyard. The house we lived in had very high vaulted ceilings and arched windows above the family room. As some of you might know Bluebirds love (or hate) reflected images in mirrors or glass.

Well, we were sitting in our family room and suddenly heard this loud thumping against the tallest window. It persisted, so we went out to see what was causing all the racket. It was a young male Bluebird butting his head against the reflective glass. We thought that his behavior would pass, but he continued for quite some time.

During this period a very popular cartoon show was appealing to young adults and teenagers. It was called '*Beavis and Butthead*.' Since, he already had the butthead part down pat we decided to name him Beavis. We enjoyed watching him and others for quite some time.

One day he was gone! We were

worried—but knew there were many boxes on the new Bluebird trail we had established. A few months later we were talking with a neighbor and the conversation went to bluebirds.

She said, "You won't believe it, but we have a male bluebird that continually butts his head against our dining room window!" We laughed and said, "Oh, don't worry that's just Beavis". We loved Beavis and continued to monitor bluebirds for many years.

We are thrilled to be part of the effort to bring bluebirds back to the Southern California area. We are hoping we might find a long lost relative of Beavis here in San Clemente.

30 Years of Bluebird Conservation

By Michael G. Spohn

Summer 2007 marks the 30th year of bluebird conservation efforts in the United States. It is generally agreed, the spark that started it all was an article in the June 1977 issue of *National Geographic Magazine*. Written by Dr. Lawrence

Zeleny, the article called for the creation of nestbox trails to save the plummeting bluebird population. His leadership resulted in the creation of the *North American Bluebird Society*.

<http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/nabs%20history.htm>



Using Google Earth To Track Nestboxes

By Dick Blaine

Many of us have looked for an easy and inexpensive way to map nest box locations. This can be done manually and approximately, but better methods are available. The advent of inexpensive Global Positioning System (GPS) units can locate the boxes within 20' which is sufficient in most cases. Software is available to map the locations.

Mapping of equipment such as power poles, transformers, sensors and many other items is done by Cities, Utility Companies and corporations using Graphic Information Systems (GIS). These programs are far too expensive and complex for most of us. Some of us have tried to use programs such as DeLorme's Street Atlas, Google Maps (My Maps), Microsoft's Streets and Trips and even Photoshop. However, the "trails" (parks, forests, cemeteries or other areas) in which we place nest boxes are not generally shown with much internal structure (buildings, trees, paths) to allow placement of the nest boxes with any accuracy.

In recent years, Google Earth has become available. It is a free, downloadable, relatively fast, easy to navigate, and provides extensive coverage of the US and many other parts of the world. This program differs from Street Atlas, Google Maps, and Street and Trips in that it displays 3D color satellite images as well as street type. It displays to a fairly high degree of resolution.

Since images are displayed, the details of the "trail" - trees, walking paths, fences, etc. are easily discernable. Also, the program has the ability to overlay geographic features such as city boundaries, roads, points of interest such as coffee shops, and much more.

In addition to the basic navigation (location, tilting, and zoom) and 3D display ability, the free version of Google Earth has several features directly applicable to mapping nest boxes.

1. Placemarks

A Placemark displays as an icon

(pin, point, circle, diamond, etc) of various size, shape and color which can be located on the image:

- By dragging the icon with the cursor and/or
- By specifying GPS coordinates in any of several formats (degrees, minutes & seconds or degrees as decimals)

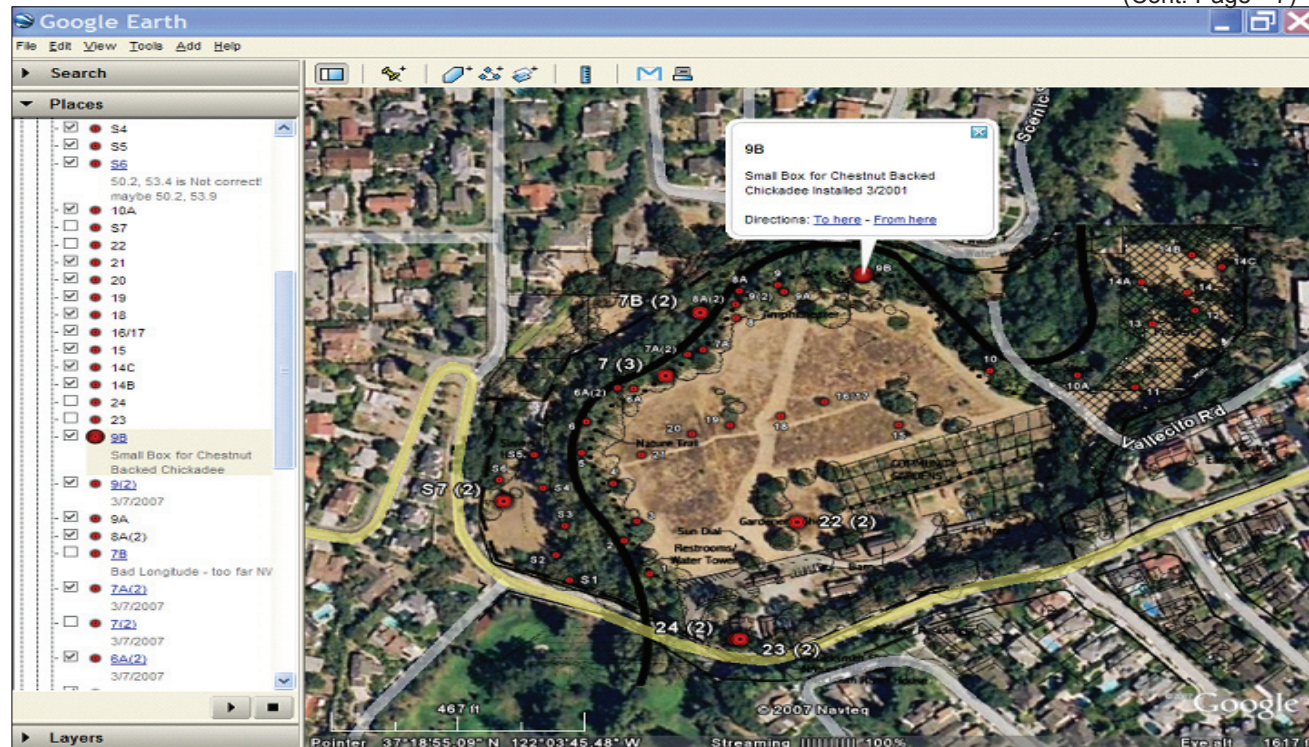
Each icon has its own color, size and shape. In addition titles and descriptions can be specified when the Placemark is defined. This information can be displayed by clicking on the icon.

2. Overlays

If you are so fortunate (as I am) to have a detailed map of the "trail", Google Earth allows it to be overlaid on top of the satellite image and adjusted to fit to the same size. If not, you still have a nice map showing the locations of the nest boxes.

As an example, the trail I monitor, McClellan Ranch Park in Cupertino, CA, is approximately 1000' x 1500'

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Using Google Earth To Track Nestboxes

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and contains 30 nest boxes. The Google Earth map can be sized to fill a 19" display screen and print on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. It clearly shows all the nest box icons, buildings, trails, trees, etc.

Opposite is a screen shot showing the list of Placemarks on the left and the composite map on the right. One of the Placemarks is open illustrating the title and descriptive comments. The overlay image is in black and comprises Stevens Creek, the community gardens, several buildings and may annotations. The printed map contains the image portion only.

This article is not intended to be a tutorial or step-by-step guide to creating the maps, but rather an overview. The user site and help on Google Earth provides adequate user information. Following is an overview as to how I created the "trail" map.

- Open Google Earth and zoom to the "trail" using the basic navigation tools or by specifying the address or zip code of the "trail" so that it nearly fills the screen.

- Insert a Placemark by dragging its icon to the location of the nest box or by entering the latitude and longitude into the dialog box which opens for the Placemark. Enter a title and description if desired. Also configure the size, shape and color of the Placemark.

Different configurations could be used to signify the nest box size (small, standard or large); the species currently occupying the box, number of eggs, hatchlings or fledglings; type of box; or any other prop-

erty of the box.

The title should be brief as it always displays - the box 'number' makes a good title. Finally, enter a description to document box type, size or other. Repeat this step for each nest box. Be sure to save the Placemarks when saving your file.

3. Overlay

An overlay map can be created by scanning a park brochure, trail map, or other handout available at the "trail" or from a web site and creating an image file (jpg, bmp, tiff, etc). This map can be cleaned up in Photoshop or other image processing program so that only significant features remain; e.g., a stream, large trees, paths, important buildings, etc. Annotations can be added if desired.

The next step is to make the background of the map transparent so that the white background does not obscure the color satellite image and Placemarks created by Google Earth. This is easily done in Photoshop (or other program with similar capability). Use the paint tool to change the background from white to transparent. The resultant file must be saved as a "png" file as that is the only image format Google Earth can read which preserves the transparency property.

4. The Final Map

Now we create the final "trail" map by combining the satellite image already containing the Placemarks and the overlay created in the previous step. To do so, open the Google Earth "trail" map which was previously saved and overlay the "png"

file (add/overlay image). Using the "resize" handles, move the overlay around to fit on the "trail" map.

Finally save the result as a "kmz" file which can be easily updated in the future if a next box is moved or changed. This file contains all of the Placemark and overlay information and can be emailed or posted on a web site for anyone to view and modify (don't forget to include the "png" file). Alternately, save the file as a "jpg" image file; this type of file can also be printed, emailed and/or posted on the web but is not easily changed.

I have not detailed the process, but am willing to provide assistance by email to anyone who would like to follow this procedure. Please become familiar with the basic navigation features and the use of Placemarks in Google Earth prior to contacting me. The free version of Google Earth can be downloaded from:

1) <http://earth.google.com>

The official Google site

2) earth.download.googlepages.com/google-earth

A user oriented site which also contains download, install and usage information.

Other versions are:

Google Earth Plus (\$20) provides GPS device support including downloading way points, faster performance, the ability to import spreadsheets, and higher resolution printing.

Google Earth Pro (\$400) includes many professional features.

A Call For Action

By Michael G. Spohn

The devastation to the bluebird habitat caused by the wildfires in Southern CA is hard to comprehend. Altogether, more than a

dozen fires wiped clean more than 503,000 acres -- the equivalent of 786 square miles. At least three people have been killed by flames. About 1,700 homes have been de-

stroyed and damage estimates have surpassed \$1 billion.

We *must* provide nesting cavities in these areas in 2008.