



BLUEBIRDS FLY!

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California Bluebird Recovery Program Newsletter

—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”

AN EARLY BLUEBIRDER

The following article appeared in Condor, Volume 17, Number 6, November/December 1915.

WESTERN BLUEBIRD NESTING IN LOS ANGELES

Dr. Miller's notes on the Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana occidentalis*) in a recent *Condor* recalls some old notes of my own. In 1892 a pair of this species persisted in trying to nest in a mail

box on the corner of Solano Avenue and Buena Vista Street (Now called North Broadway), in Los Angeles. The birds considered the mail box a wholly suitable place, (Cont. on p. 3)

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NEW CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY BOOK

THE NEW 2009 CHILDREN'S BLUEBIRD ACTIVITY BOOK IS READY

The NEW/REVISED *Children's Bluebird Activity Book* has been increased in size from 40 to 52 pages and contains more information on all three species of bluebirds. The book contains fascinating facts, stories, quizzes, puzzles, pictures, pictures to color and more. The book is written at the 4th grade level so parents, grandparents, teachers and other youth leaders should find it to be a valuable tool when working with grade school age children.

A printed version of the book has also been produced. It is 8 1/2"x 11" in size. A printed copy is easier for the child or adult to read and individual quizzes, puzzles and coloring pages can be printed from the MBT website so several children can enjoy.

MBT wants to thank **Myrna Pearman** and **Pauline Mousseau**, for writing and designing the book. A special thanks also goes to the California Bluebird Recovery Program and the New York State Bluebird Society for their help and cooperation by providing information and pictures of eastern and western bluebirds and to **Julie Zickefoose** for writing the Forward. The California Bluebird Recovery Program also made a very generous contribution towards producing the book. The book has been dedicated to **Art Aylesworth**, founder of Mountain Bluebird Trails and **Don Yoder**, founder of the California Bluebird Recovery Program. Both men were great believers in educating adults and children about the conservation of bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds. This book was created for that purpose.



Brrrr

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- *NABS Meeting*
- *Egg production*
- *High School Bluebird project*
- *Dr. Bluebird*



The Director's Chair

The nesting season is well underway and I hope all of you are having the success that I am. This is turning out to be the best season for my trails in Santa Clara County in over eight years. Almost two-thirds of my nest-boxes at home and on my trail are occupied. I am really looking forward to monitoring my trail on this beautiful day to see the progress since last week.

Several of my goals as director have been or are being accomplished. First, the addition to the CBRP web site of presentations that you can use in making your own; Next, the addition of references to K-12 educational material. Any additional contributions would be appreciated.

Most recently we contributed to the funding of the newly available *2009 New Children's Bluebird Activity Book*. This is a significant addition to the availability of children's educational material; it can be used with our own children/grandchildren as well the basis for a nature element in the classroom.

Audubon chapters take note: discounts are available for quantity orders and an early-order discount; this book would be perfect to stock and sell in your nature shops. See the details elsewhere in this edition of *Bluebirds Fly!* Finally this excellent book will serve as a long-term memorial to **Don Yoder**.

(Continued on page 9)

The Editor's Journal



Breakfast with Bluebirders

In an area where there are plenty of avid bluebirders, it is easy to gather for breakfast or coffee. Orange County birders gather frequently in local coffee houses. The conversations are interesting, no politics, no religion, just bluebirds. Here are some typical topics:

Have you had a lot of six egg nests? Any bees in your boxes? Ants? Dead birds? Wrens? I had my first white eggs in twenty years. I had an abandoned nest with six eggs. I had a nest box of fledglings while down the street a pair is just building a nest! Any third nests? Did you ever drop a nest box?

What kind of wood do you prefer for your nest boxes? Pine, cedar, redwood? Do you prefer nails or screws? Do you glue? How long do you make the hanging wire? Do you caulk and also drill holes for air circulation? Why? What color do you prefer for the nest box? Paint or stain? Sparrow spookers? One hole or two? Hanging boxes or attached? Front door, side or back opening? What kind of latch do you prefer? Size and length of hanging wire?

And then my wife asks, "What do you people talk about all that time?"

Jim Semelroth, Editor—*Bluebirds Fly!*

California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP) Board Members

Dick Blaine, Program Director — dick@theblaines.net

Georgette Howington, Asst Program Director— georgette@birdscape.net

Dick Purvis, Recruiting — dickersly@aol.com

Dave Cook, Board Member — justdave50@earthlink.net

Michael Spohn, — mspohn@socalbluebirds.org

Jim Semelroth, Editor,— jimsemweed@cox.net

31st ANNUAL NABS CONFERENCE

The North American bluebird Society (NABS) will be holding its 31st annual conference September 9-13 this year in Grantville, PA; The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania is the host.

Registration material was printed in the Winter 2008 edition of their newsletter, *Bluebird, Journal of the North American Bluebird Society*. The material and a complete description of the conference are to be found on the NABS website, www.nabluebirdsociety.org.

A sampling of educational offerings at the conference includes presentations and field trips showcasing important birding and wildlife conservations areas in Pennsylvania, such as Gettysburg National Military Park and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. Several speakers will discuss their books and/or discuss several topics of interest.

The Deadline for registration, tour and hotel reservations is July 18, 2009.

Early Bluebirders

(Continued from page 1)

but the mailman and the owner objected. In spite of the resulting discouragements several eggs were laid before the Bluebirds gave up the site. I have forgotten the number laid, but I had one in my collection for several years and I am under the impression that they laid a complete set before abandoning the site. W. Lee Chambers, *Eagle Rock, California*.

The article was found by Robert Roy VandeHoek of the

ballonainstitute@yahoo.com and brought to the attention of the Southern California Bluebird Club in winter of 2008.



About the California Bluebird Recovery Program Founder - Don Yoder; Emeritus - Hatch Graham

Our Mission

Enlist current bluebirders and recruit others who will help reestablish bluebirds to their normal habitat

- ◆ Locate preferred habitat for the placement of nest-boxes 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 nest-box 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** (mospohn@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.

BLUEBIRD EGG PRODUCTION CYCLE

By Bob Franz

I'm sure most of you have heard the old question - which comes first, the chicken or the egg? I don't intend to answer that question, but as we bluebirders become witness to a marvelous cycle of avian life, some questions have arisen about their egg-production cycle, such as:

1. Are all eggs fertilized at virtually the same time?
2. If not, does she produce one egg after another that is fertilized one-at-a-time each day?
3. What factors determine how many eggs are fertilized - since clutch sizes vary from 3 to as many as 8 on rare occasions with 5 being nominal?

To try to answer these questions and better understand other aspects of egg development, I found some pertinent information from Mississippi State University (MSU) and from the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. First, some excerpts from an excellent article titled "*Avian Embryo*" from MSU.

“Formation and Egg Parts
- The hen (female) can produce an egg without mating,

such an egg is not fertile and will not hatch. When a male mates with and fertilizes the female, the male productive cell (sperm) unites with the female productive cell (ovum) to form a single cell that can develop into an embryo. This egg is fertile and can hatch.

The egg is formed in the female by a reproductive system of an ovary and oviduct. A mature ovary looks like a cluster of grapes. It may contain up to 4,000 small ova, which can develop into yolks.

The oviduct is a large, coiled tube in which all parts of the egg, except the yolk, are formed. The male produces sperm cells that are complementary to the egg cells of the female. The germinal disc of a developing yolk contains the single ovum cell that, after fertilization, develops into the hatchling.

Sperm cells from the male are stored in glands or nests and are released when the yolk passes by. A sperm cell must reach the female cell to complete fertilization.

Egg Laying - Then egg passes thru the oviduct small end first, but is laid large end first. If the hen is disturbed on the nest, the egg may be prematurely laid small end first. When an egg is

laid, it fills the shell. As it cools, the inner portion of the egg contracts and forms an air cell between the inner and outer shell membranes. The air cell is usually located on the large end where the shell is most porous and air can enter easily. The chick punctures and breathes through his air cell just before hatching.

Egg Development - Cell division begins soon after fertilization, even while the egg is being formed. When the egg has laid, it cools, and embryonic development usually stops until proper environmental conditions are established for incubation. After incubation begins, cellular growth resumes.

Hatching - After 21 days or so of incubation, the chick finally begins its escape from the shell. The chick begins by pushing its beak through the air cell. The sharp horny structure on the upper beak (egg tooth) and the muscle on the back of the neck help cut the shell. The horny cap will fall off the beak within days after the chick hatches “

You can read the MSU article in its entirety at <http://www.msstate.edu/dept/poultry/avianemb.htm>

HIGH SCHOOLERS JOIN BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROGRAM

Tom Williams, a teacher at Laguna Hills High School, asked his woodworking class to construct 100 bluebird nest boxes. The class made them from donated wood and mounted boxes in the Irvine Ranch Conservancy in Orange County and in parks near the school. **Scott Wales**, a math teacher, got his senior statistics classes involved in a project to keep statistics of 62 paired nest boxes, testing various designs and placement of the boxes. At the end the students will write up their findings in a final statistical report before graduation. Also involved are biology students and photographers, making the project interdisciplinary. The students were rewarded in late April with their first hatchlings. “This has been a very exciting project for the teachers and students alike,” said Tom. “It has allowed students to put into use lessons learned in the classroom, to be innovative and to involve different disciplines to work together on a project.” Results of their project will be covered in our next issue of *Bluebirds Fly!*



Students with their nest boxes



Ready to monitor nest boxes

The Director’s Chair

(Cont. from Page—2)

Lastly I want to mention that I am working out the details of a plan to promote construction of nest boxes. I will be working with California Audubon Chapters and CBRP county coordinators to develop a program in which we will assist in funding the cost of construction materials; possibly a matching grant program. More later.

Thanks for participating in our program and happy birding.

Dick Blaine -
dick@theblaines.net

<http://cbrp.org> - CBRP Web site

<http://www.eichlerrealtor.com/birds/> - CBRP On-line database.



Hunter gatherer



GRANDFATHER BLUEBIRD?

There has been a banded male Bluebird using a nestbox at San Antonio Park, Yorba Linda, every year since 2002 (the year following banding chicks on my trail during 2001). I went there yesterday, and yes, he is there again this year. This is the last banded bird using the trail since that one year of banding during 2001 and I'm 99% sure it is the same banded adult male WEBL using the box consecutively during all those years.

I started looking around for longevity records for Westerns and there doesn't seem to be much information. Here is a site from Prescott saying their longevity record was less than six years old.

http://www.prescottbluebird.com/newsletter/bluebird_SPRING2001.PDF

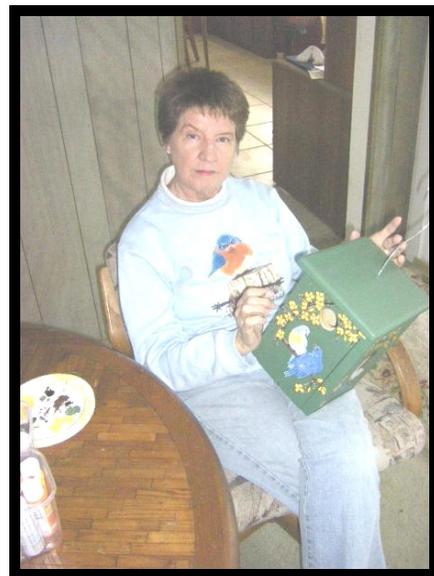
If my guess is right that this is the same

banded bird nesting since 2002 (born in 2001), he will be eight years old this summer. I wish I could find someone capable of photographing the band number with a telephoto lens for confirmation.

In past years, I've dropped off weekly mealworms and the male WEBL is quick to perch on a particular volleyball pole and then land at the base of the pole to pick up mealworms. Often he stays at the base of the pole guarding his mate while she loads up on mealworms. Therefore, it would be fairly easy to sit within 30 feet of the feeding spot and get a zoomed photo, which can later be zoomed in further by computer to read the band number. And, I've still got the binder used to log the band numbers used during 2001. **Linda Violet**

Jo-Ann Coller is a member of the Southern California Bluebird Club. She monitors 37 Bluebird nest boxes in Orange County. Her husband, Buzz builds these sturdy boxes to meet Bluebird requirements. Jo-Ann paints the designs with acrylic outdoor paint and applies a final urethane protective coating. Each design is unique. The designer nest boxes are for hanging in private yards away from tampering or theft. Contact Jo-Ann by phone: (714) 538-4224 or e-mail joann1@socal.rr.com.

Annual reports and Newsletters going back to 1997 are available on the CBRP website, <http://cbrp.org>.



Jo-Anne Coller

FIELD NOTES 2008 and 2009

I monitored this morning and one of my boxes has 5 white bluebird eggs, after doing this for 20 years, this is a first for me.

Sully Reallon

About halfway through the chicks growth, I didn't see the male feeding them any more. Either he left or died. Maybe the female was worn out and just gave up. All told, I only added 3 Western Bluebirds to the population. Not very impressive. I wonder if the deaths of "my" chicks toward the end is more common than we think, and we get fooled into thinking that all the chicks fledge from our boxes at McClellan. The dead ones seem to just sort sink down into the nest material and disappeared. **Pete Letchworth** (2008)

I saw two pair on the ground within twenty feet of the other. The first pair mated on the ground (blush) while the second pair watched (voyeurs?). Then the female of the second pair hopped over to the first pair! Eventually, the first pair flew off and the female went back to her mate. I'm not even going to speculate about this. **Jim Semelroth**

Keep your eyes on those odd boxes in odd places. I followed an errant Bluebird pair that snubbed their beaks at my nearby trail box in favor of a post-mounted "welcome" decorator box standing on a front stoop amongst the clutter of shoes. Whenever they heard my pool pole at "their" box in the greenbelt, they'd come flying over to me. That's how I was able to follow them to the doorstep box with ants starting to find the chicks. I put some Tanglefoot (with

owner permission) and most fledged before the house (up for sale) changed owners and the doorstep box carted off. You never know what to expect!! **Linda Violett**

I always talk to the mom on the nest. This week I opened a box and asked if I could pick her up and check on her eggs, she raised up on her legs and I counted eggs. Then the same thing happened at another box! **Earl Garrison**

Nest boxes at Mission Trails Regional Park are located in dry chaparral and attract flycatchers and wrens. Bluebirds are commonly found in our montane coniferous and oak woodland habitats but most of the park is too dry for bluebird habitat. **Richard Griebe** (2008)

Nest made from Redwood mulch ground cover. Backyard is in 300 year old blue Oak trees. "After viewing the Huell Howser TV bluebird program, I contacted the Southern California Bluebird Club in Orange County. **Mr. Reallon** sent me 3 nesting boxes and a Purvis lifter. Right after I hung the 1st box, two adult bluebirds were checking it out, then right away they built their nest. We enjoyed feeding and watching them drink and taking a bath from our water bowl. It's been a great experience, can't wait until next season. **Tina Pavusko**

I installed a small camera in the nest wired to my TV. Incredible pics of 5 eggs, hatchlings and grown birds. Must build a taller box. Need to have camera 5 or 6 inches higher to see grown birds. **Stan Graham**

RESEARCH REVIEW

DOES HANDLING NESTLINGS AFFECT THEIR HEALTH?

Handling very young mammals is stressful and can harm their health. But the effect of handling nestling birds has rarely been studied. The authors of this study handled American Kestral and European Starlings for 15 minutes per day. They compared the birds' growth and their immune systems with those of birds that were not handled. The researchers also brought nestlings into the lab for 24 hours, and while not harmful, was more stressful than simply handling the animals.

Handling the birds had no effect on their immune systems; the birds that were handled were just as healthy as the birds that were not handled. The handling had no effect on the birds' growth, either. However, bringing birds into the lab for 24 hours did temporarily weaken their immune systems. The good news for folks monitoring the nestboxes of bluebirds and other cavity nesters is that the activity does not appear to cause harm to the nestlings.

M.W Butler and A.M. Duffy, Nestling Immunocompetence is Affected by Captivity, but not Investigator Handling. *Condor*, 2007

Reviewed by Scott Gillihan in *Bluebird*, Spring 2009

CAN BLUEBIRDS SMELL?

Researchers wanted to tell if Eastern Bluebirds could detect odors of two common predators, rat snakes and deer mice. They placed the predators in a cage with paper, then cut the paper into small pieces and placed the pieces in 21 nest boxes, then placed unscented pieces in 21 other boxes.

The bluebirds showed no preference for boxes with unscented paper over those with paper scented with the two predators.

Their conclusion was that;

1. Either bluebirds have an undeveloped sense of smell for predators, or
2. The bluebirds can smell the predators, but have not learned the dangers the predators pose. One way to answer these questions would be to identify boxes where the predators invaded and see if the bluebirds would avoid boxes with the scent of the invading predator.

R.D. Godard, B.B. Bowers, and C.M. Wilson. 2007. Eastern bluebirds, *Sialia Sialis* do not avoid Nest Boxes with Chemical Cues from Two Common Nest Predators. *Journal of Avian biology* 38:128-131.

Reviewed by Scott Gillihan in *Bluebird*, Spring 2009

ARTICLES WANTED FOR

Bluebirds Fly!

Have you had some unusual experiences you would like to share with other bluebirders? *Bluebirds Fly* can always use interesting experiences with our beloved avians. Send them along to me with any photos you might have at

jimsemweed@cox.net. Also, if you have any comments regarding this newsletter, good or bad, let me know. **Jim Semelroth**

BLUEBIRDS FLY! ON EMAIL ONLY?

Because of reduced contributions to CBRP we are considering newsletter by email only to save costs and direct funds to programs which support the goals of the organization. Of course we would make the newsletter available to those who do not use email.

Let us know your thoughts on this idea.

Jim Semelroth, Editor

jimsemweed@cox.net



Wow, *Bluebirds Fly* really looks great in color on my screen.

THE MAGIC OF BLUEBIRDS by Bob Franz

As I make the rounds on my bluebird trail, I marvel at many aspects of this beautiful bird. Not only does its iridescent blue color flash in the bright sunlight as it flies, it has many other traits that I think are almost magical.

o It is magical how I found a photo in a 1997 issue of Sunset magazine that introduced me to **Dick Purvis** and the wonderful world of bluebirding. Am I lucky or what?

o It is magical to see a pair of bluebirds nest in a nestbox in my front yard. Do they know I am enthralled?

o It is magical to hear a pair of bluebirds waken me in the morning by serenading in the front yard. I wonder what this means since I don't hear them singing at any other time of the day?

o It is magical to find a completed nest in a nestbox where there was none the previous week. Where do they find so much building material?

o It is magical to watch two adults perched side-by-side on a nearby branch peer at me as I take their nestbox down to check inside. I wonder what they are thinking?

o It is magical (almost) to watch two adults dive-bomb me as I take their nestbox down to check inside. Why is their behavior so different from the more docile ones?

o It is magical to see bluebirds discover a

nestbox in an area that has never had one. How did they find it so quickly?

o It is magical to watch a bluebird sitting on a perch and eyeing the ground below to find a morsel to eat. What marvelous eyesight they must have.

o It is magical to have a bluebird suddenly appear as I talk to a passerby. Did it read my mind?

o It is magical to find a normal clutch of 5 blue eggs in a nest one week after seeing none the week before. What internal apparatus determines that 5 is an optimum number?

o It is magical to find 6, 7 and even 8 eggs in a nest. Why was their apparatus different?

o It is magical to see how people react as I explain about bluebirds and what I am doing to help them thrive. It really helps my spirits on some long days on the trail.

o It is magical to note how fast a second nest is built after the first nest has been removed. Their urge to procreate and continue the species is amazing!

o It is magical to watch nestlings take wing on their first flight and see how far they fly. It is hard to understand how they can fly so far after being cooped up in a nestbox for 3 weeks.

o It is magical to be a part of the wondrous world of bluebirds - what a lucky guy am I.

California Bluebird Recovery Program County Coordinators

County	City	Name	LAST	HOME #	EMAIL
Amador	Plymouth	Doris & Bill	Allison	209-245-3135	allison@gotsky.com
Calvaras	Angles Camp	Jack	Lynch	209-736-2349	jackplynch@sbcglobal.net
Contra Costa	Pleasant Hill	Georgette	Howington	925-686-4392	georgette@birdscape.net
Lassen	Susanville	Tom	Rickman	530-251-4949	trickman@fs.fed.us
Los Angeles	Sylmar	Doug	Martin	818-367-8967	
Madera	Coarsegold	William	Righ		
Marin	San Rafael	Ruth	Beckner	415 479-9542	jabeck1924@cs.com
Mendocino	Fort Bragg	Michael & Marybeth	Arago	707-962-0507	mmbarago@mcn.org
Merced	Merced	Steve	Simmons	209-722-3540	simwoodduk@aol.com
Napa	Napa	David	Graves	530-755-1480	wavey@saintsbury.com
Orange	Anaheim	Dick	Purvis	714-776-8878	dickersly@aol.com
Placer	Granite Bay	Heath	Wakelee	916 797-4536	towal@cs.com
Riverside	Cherry Valley	Melissa	Browing		
Sacramento	Sacramento	Vicki	Butler	916-448-8030	butlerrowe@sbcglobal.net
San Bernardino	Redlands	Glen	Chappell	909-794-3470	glen.chap@adelphia.net
San Joaquin	Acmpo	Thomas	Hoffman	209 369-8578	
San Louis Obispo	Creston	Paul & Judy	Burkhardt	805 438-4491	tinhornranch@sbcglobal.net
San Mateo	Portola Valley	Susan	Kritzik	650-851-4529	sgkritzik@sbcglobal.net
Santa Barbara	Lompoc	Richard	Willey	805-733-5383	dick.willey@verizon.net
Santa Clara	Fremont	Mike	Azevedo	510-792-4632	levinbluebird@comcast.net
Shasta	Oak Run	Larry	Jordan	530-472-3131	larrytech@frontiernet.net
Solano/Yolo	Davis	Melanie	Truan	530-754-4975	mltruan@ucdavis.edu
Sonoma	Sonoma	Mike	Crumly	707 996-7256	mikec@freixenetusa.com
Tehama	Red Bluff	Pete	Flower	530-527-0392	
Tulare	Visalia	Peter	Morrison	209-733-1154	
Tuolumne	Soulsbyville	Kathleen & Andrew	Aldrich	209-536-1515	
Ventura	Camarillo	Jan	Wasserman	805-987-3928	jan@treeswallows.org
Yuba	Wheatland	Helen	Goforth	530-633-4094	rhgobirding@comcast.net

Contributors January - May 2009

\$415 was donated in this time period.

Contributor	County	CONTRIBUTIONS REQUESTED
Charles Lowrie	Amador	<p>With the many programs CBRP provides, such as the grants, support for the Children’s Bluebird Activity Book and other ongoing programs, CBRP can use more contributions. There is a form on the final page of this newsletter to make a tax-deductible donation. Please consider a contribution so we may continue to support programs that help in the recovery of our beloved birds.</p> 
Ken & Lucille Morrison	Amador	
Deb Conway	Butte	
Meg Bogue	Butte	
Sam Sperry	Contra Costa	
Laurie Morrison	Contra Costa	
Bill & Francie Singley	El Dorado	
Kurt & Evie Davix	El Dorado	
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Carol Killebrew	San Diego	
Cynthia Lockhart	San Mateo	
Don & Nancy Lorenzen	Santa Clara	
David Cook	Santa Clara	
Patricia & Michael Hickey	Sonoma	

CORNELL WORKING ON NEW BIRD DATABASE



Dr. Janis Dickinson

We remain very interested in historic data and in increasing our sample sizes with contemporary data. We have been working on an Excel Spreadsheet upload tool for flat data files that will then populate our relational database. This is a large priority for us. Tina Phillips, the Nest-Watch project leader, is coordinating these efforts and is the best contact for your inquiry. Certainly any new project can enter data into Nest-Watch and download the data afterwards as an excel file. Tina will provide additional thoughts and information as well as a projection for our data uploading capability.

Dr. Dickinson is currently Director of Citizen Science at Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Associate Professor in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University. . She formerly was a professor at UC Berkeley and has published over 14 refereed journal articles on the Western Bluebird. CBRP trail monitors enter their data directly into our own state database.



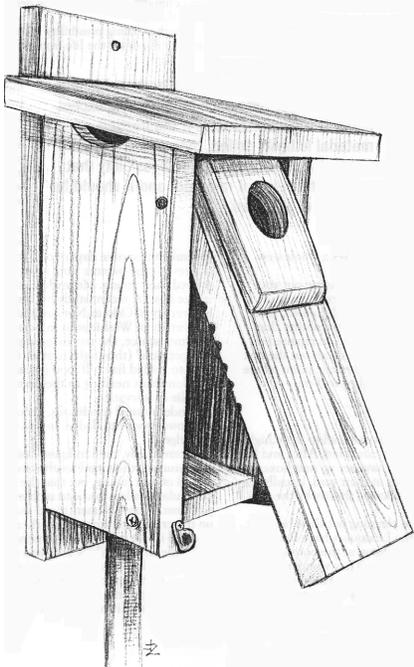
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BLUEBIRDS FLY!

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