



By Peggy

# BLUEBIRDS FLY!

## California Bluebird Recovery Program Newsletter

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

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[www.cbrp.org](http://www.cbrp.org)

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

### BEGINNINGS

All good things have a beginning and an end. The WEBL nesting season began early for some of us, and will soon be coming to an end. However, thanks to all of you, our bluebird activities of building boxes, monitoring and record keeping over the years began, are in full swing, and there is no end in sight. We thought we would devote some of this issue to bluebird and bluebird recovery beginnings. **Bob Franz** has compiled information from several sources about bluebirds in the West. **Dick Blaine**, while working on the CBRP website, has gone back to some early issues of this newsletter to remind us of the early days of CBRP. **Sully Reallon** and **Mike Spohn** have produced some early correspondence that led to the Southern California Bluebird Club.

### CBRP BEGINS

On December 29, 1994, the late **Don Yoder** produced the first newsletter of the CBRP. He stated that the mission of the CBRP was “For the encouragement and preservation of cavity nesters, especially Bluebirds, anywhere in California.” much the same as our current mission statement. The CBRP was a non-profit project sponsored by the Audubon Society, Western Region and NABS. Don wrote, “In an earlier letter I suggested a plan to have coordinators for each county, to help spread the word about Bluebirds in immediate or surrounding areas. This approach is patterned on that used in other states where it has proven successful, e.g. MN, WI, OH. over a period of years of their existence they have organized very effective tools, if you will, to involve local members, keep up interest, and further the goals of the organization, whatever its form.” This and other history can be found in all past newsletters on the CBRP website.

### SCBC BEGINS

**Mike Spohn** contacted **Sully Reallon** in November 2006 after reading an article in the *San Clemente Sun Post* and suggested they form a club. They formed the *San Clemente Bluebird Club* in 2006.

**Sully** called **Dick Purvis** to discuss creating a county-wide club. **Dick Purvis** brought monitor, **Bob Franz** to the initial meeting with **Sully and Mike** at the It’s a Grind coffee shop in Laguna Hills. Dick argued that the club should be broader than San Clemente or South County, so, using the same SCBC initials they decided unanimously to call the newly formed club the *Southern California Bluebird Club*. In subsequent organizing meetings **Linda Violett** and **Susan Bulger** attended. For the complete history, click here:

<http://bluebirdssc.wordpress.com/about/scbc-history-2/>

### BLUEBIRDS APPEAR??

“The bird family to which the bluebirds belong - the thrush family - is traced to the Pliocene epoch, from two million to seven million years ago.” “Fossil remains attributed to the Western Bluebirds, dating from the Pleistocene period, (2 million to 10,000 years ago) have been found in Carpinteria, California, Other fossil remains identified only as belonging to a *sialia* species have been found in Rancho La Brea in the same state.” *Bluebird*, Summer 2004, Vol. 26, No. 3. (This is the beginning and not the end of our story)



## The Director's Chair

Cornell has indicated that they plan to make our 2006 – 2011 box-by-box data available on Nest Watch this year. I am still waiting!

The North American Bluebird Society's 2012 conference is rapidly approaching – October 4-7 in Newport. This event is of special interest as the Southern California

Bluebird Club (one of the major CBRP participants) will be the host. Additional information appears elsewhere in this issue. I am planning on attending and am especially looking forward to meeting many of you there. I will try to arrange for an informal place to meet and post the information on the Notices bulletin board.

By now CBRP trail monitors who reported in 2011 have received information on entering 2012 annual data into the 2012 Data Collection spreadsheet on Google Drive (Documents) which replaces the previous data collection method based on our home-grown database. Fill in the season data for every trail you monitored in 2012. If your trail or name is not in the drop-down list enter the information directly.

Special thanks to the 13 of you who made donations to CBRP in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2012 (amounting to \$465) - see the contributor list elsewhere in this issue. These contributions go toward paying the printing costs for our newsletter and for nestbox grants. Donations barely cover the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter.

**Dick Blaine** - [dick@theblaines.net](mailto:dick@theblaines.net)

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



**My very first worm**

## California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP) Board Members

**Dick Blaine**, Program Director — [dick@theblaines.net](mailto:dick@theblaines.net)

**Dave Cook**, Board Member — [justdave50@comcast.net](mailto:justdave50@comcast.net)

**Georgette Howington**, Asst. Program Director—  
[georgette@birdscape.net](mailto:georgette@birdscape.net)

**Jim Semelroth**, Editor,— [jimsemweed@cox.net](mailto:jimsemweed@cox.net)

**Dick Purvis**, Recruiting — [dickersly@aol.com](mailto:dickersly@aol.com)

## CALIFORNIA BLUEBIRD RECOVERY PROGRAM

### 2012 YTD CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions for the year: \$465

Contributor	County
Chuck Lowrie	Amador
Bill & Francie Singley	El Dorato
Evelyn & Kurt Davis	El Dorato
NABS	Indiana
Pasadena Audubon Society	Los Angeles
Amy Kernes	Orange
Gil Collins	Orange
Kate Bartholdmew	Orange
Sharon Kramer	Orange
Anita Marquis	San Mateo
Hans Arps	San Mateo
Lee & Janna Pauser	Santa Clara
Phil Persons	Sonoma

## 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 12. You can also contact **Dick Blaine** ([dick@theblaines.net](mailto:dick@theblaines.net)) or **Dick Purvis** ([dickersly@aol.com](mailto:dickersly@aol.com)).

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.

## NABS 2012 ANNUAL MEETING COMES TO CALIFORNIA

Please plan to attend the 35th Annual Bluebird Conference of the North American Bluebird Society October 4-7, 2012 in Newport Beach, CA. The conference is being organized and hosted by the Southern California Bluebird Club. The meeting will be held in the Radisson Hotel in Newport Beach about five minutes from the Orange County Airport. Rooms rates are a low \$99 per night and the rates are good three days before and three days after the conference. It's also a holiday weekend for some. Register now at <http://www.radisson.com/bluebirds35th>.

Already workshops on Western Bluebirds, Mountain Bluebirds, Woodpeckers, Owls of California and field trips to local wetlands and wildlife areas are scheduled. The Keynote speaker will be **Laura Ericson**, writer and editor for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Under the theme *A Better World for Bluebirds is a Better World for All*, the conference will also focus on conservation and environmental issues. A new program for children has been scheduled.

CBRP members are encouraged to mark their calendars and attend the conference. Complete information and links can be found on the SCBC website, <http://www.socalbluebirds.org/> and on the NABS website, <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/>. All CBRP members are encouraged to attend, so get your reservations in to ensure your place in the workshops and field trips.

## MAGNETIC BIRD BEAK THEORY DEBUNKED

In a recent article in the Los Angeles times, new studies have shown that previously believed theories that magnetic cells in birds' beaks allowed birds to migrate using the planet's magnetic field. Now, scientists say that animals do have magnetic cells, but they are not clustered in the beaks of birds. The cells must be scattered around so as not to interfere with each other. Read the article by clicking here:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/science/la-sci-magnetic-sensing-cells-20120714,0,3912716.story>



Follow me little birdie

## BIRDS AND FLOWERS

**Bob Franz** announced at the SCBC July meeting that master bluebirder and CBRP member, **Dick Purvis**, has created a new Oleander blossom which he named, "Ruby Lace," after his mother in law. This new blossom has a deeper pink than the original. Dick has a patent and the plant is now being marketed. A Google search of Ruby Lace yields 2.4 million pages.



On June 20 I counted three eggs of a second brood in one box in my Park Paseo neighborhood, with a complaining parent circling above me. When I returned on the 28<sup>th</sup> I expected, of course, to find a couple more eggs. When I opened the door, there on the front edge of the nest were the broken, empty shells of the three eggs. This puzzled me, as I couldn't figure out what had gotten to the eggs. Upon closer inspection, at the back rear of the box, half-buried in the nesting material, was one scared-looking mouse. We regarded each other for a few moments, each not knowing what to expect from the other. I came to the conclusion that I needed to clean out the box, so I got out my putty knife and prepared to lift the nest out of the box. Well, that mouse saw my tool approaching, bolted out of the box, and rocketed up the tree! The loss of the eggs was made easier by the sight of that cute little critter caught in the act! **Amy Kernes**

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On April 19, I found five eggs in the nest. The female had made the nest in a very deep cone, so her first eggs were on the floor of the box. Three hatched on May 3 and fledged on May 20.

On June 3, she had five eggs in her old nest. They hatched on June 18 and fledged on July 9. while the parents fed, the first three watched then flew off to play bird tag. **Joyce Donnelly**

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As most of us know, there can be are some unseen perils lurking in nesting material being used by nestbox residents. This was never more evident than recently at Yorba Regional Park when I took a nestbox down that I was sure would be empty of Tree Swallow nestlings and ready to be cleaned out. To my surprise there was a well-fed youngun in it that tried to fly out when I opened the nestbox. But its flight was prevented by something attached to one of its legs. While it was flapping its wings frantically to get free, I tried to disentangle the small cord that was ensnared to one of its feet. This was very difficult as I didn't want to injure its leg yet I had to exert some pressure to remove it. Failing at this, I decided that my nail clippers - on my key chain in my car - would suffice to cut away the cord that was somehow attached to its leg. Despite much flapping of its wings, I was able to cut the cord fairly close to the birds leg and it flew away, seemingly unharmed.

A review of the nest revealed that the cord was so similar-looking to the dead-grass nesting material that it had escaped my first inspection inside the nestbox. In the future, I will give each new nest a closer look. **Bob Franz**

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Does anyone know why my nests at Penmar golf course were full of palm nuts - I mean FULL, 50-100 of them - after the chicks fledged. **Ian Kembrey**

(Most likely they were carrotwood tree seeds. Ed.)

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM BLUEBIRD WEBCAM

Many of you may have checked in on former *Bluebirds Fly!* editor, Mike Spohn's bluebird webcam located in San Clemente this season. Mike built a solar-powered webcam with an infra-red sensor to record 24 hours of activity by a pair of WEBLs in his backyard. As we watched and captured the action of the complete nesting cycle, I learned some interesting things which changed my ideas about what the birds do in there. Here are a few.

1. The female does not lay one egg each day. We can say she lays no more than one per day.
2. The parents do not always take fecal sacs away from the nest. Mike captured the female eating two fecal sacs! Mmmm.
3. The female does not weave the nest material to make the cup. She hauls it in, piles it up, and uses her spread wings to push with her feet and plump up the pile of grass or needles.
4. The nestlings do not all hatch on the same day.
5. The nestlings do not all fledge on the same day.
6. The nestlings are not eager to fledge. In a nest of five, three fledged one day and the two remaining chicks "chickened" out after hopping to the hole while the one below practiced wing exercises, bumping the sibling peering out the hole. Both chicks gave up, went to sleep to fledge the next day.

Mike has captured the entire nesting process for our further use. At the NABS conference in October we plan to show video of the nestbuilding sequence at Mike's table where he will have a webcam box with building plans for those of you interested in adding this tool to your birding experience. **Jim Semelroth**

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## A BIRDIE ON THE GOLF COURSE

While checking my boxes on a golf course this week, I arrived at the first box. A Red Tailed Hawk was sitting on the ground directly beneath the box. The hawk was eating a large gopher snake. I got within ten feet of it and it wouldn't move. A Red Tailed Hawk is a magnificent sight at that close distance. It is very nearly the size of an eagle. A couple of the golf course workers saw the bird and came over to see it also. It would not give up the snake and glared at us with its glittering eyes. I decided I was going to check my box anyway so I walked right up to the bird. It reluctantly flew away a short distance with the snake still in its talons. I checked the box and went on my way along the trail. The hawk calmly continued with its meal as I left. **Dick Purvis**



Red Tailed Hawk



Are you a golfer who gets frustrated on the golf course when you shank a shot - or do you know someone who has been known to fling a golf club or two in frustration? Your worries are over - there is a solution that will not only bring you a calmness never before experienced on a golf course, but will beautify the golf course in a unique way as well

Instead of *playing golf* and enduring the many frustrations involved in the game, how about riding around the course in a cart and checking on bluebird nestboxes? Here are a few advantages and areas of enjoyment that bluebirding can provide::

- o You can get on the golf course almost any day and any time of the day - except when tournaments are scheduled.
- o *There is no fee.*
- o You can make as many rounds as you like.
- o You get the fun of driving a golf cart and not lugging a bunch of rattling golf clubs.
- o You get to record more birdies per round than you ever dreamed of before.
- o *There is no fee.*
- o You still have the fun of conversing with fellow golfers.
- o There will be no frustration during or after each round.
- o *There is no fee.*
- o You will help beautify the course and receive thanks from golfers who notice.
- o You can really enjoy a libation at the 19th hole.
- o You reach home relaxed and eager to return to the course.
- o And perhaps the best part - *there is no fee* - did I mention this before? **Bob Franz**

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### “Romeo and Juliet”

We have an unusual pair of bluebirds in the nest box at our home. From the first day, they showed very little fear of us. Within four days of their arrival, they were eating mealworms out of my hand. Now that their chicks are about to fledge the demand for mealworms has become insistent. The female will perch on the hummingbird feeder at the sliding glass doors, looking in at me accusingly. Sometimes the pair will perch on the patio furniture clearly waiting for me to come out. I hope this pair will double clutch this season as they have been an endless delight so far. **Elena Hery**



## Bluebirds Nesting in Cannons

**Dick Purvis, Bob Franz and I** attended the 34<sup>th</sup> NABS National Bluebird Conference in Jackson, Tennessee. We visited the Shiloh National Military Park where the Civil War was fought in April of 1862. The park is now filled with monuments and cannons. When Dick asked our guide about bluebirds, she told us the bluebirds were nesting in the cannons.

At our first break we spotted a row of cannons about 300 yards across a peach grove. Dick saw a small bird on one of the cannons with his binoculars. He headed across the field with me right behind him. Sure enough, it was an Eastern Bluebird. **Bob Franz** followed us over along with most of the tour group.

I found a nest in one of the cannons about an arm's length inside, just out of reach for a raccoon. I pulled it out in order to photograph it with one un-hatched egg. The bluebird flew to a nearby tree where his mate and three fledglings were perched. Everyone was delighted to have bluebirds to photograph. It became the highlight of the tour. **Jo-Ann Coller**



## HOW MANY BEES ARE IN BOX?

I monitored my nestboxes as usual on Monday morning about 7:30. One box near a coffee shop had four healthy nestlings. On Tuesday I got a call from **Sully Reallon** who said there were bees going in and out of the box. I immediately went over to check, took the box down and found bees and four dead birds in the nest. Hanging from the roof was honeycomb made in just one day. I replaced the nest box. **Free Clark**



**It seems the shortage of bees because of colony collapse is not diminishing the wild bees that invade our bluebird and owl boxes.**

**Answer to riddle: how many bees in box: One.**



I suspect many monitors, especially the ones who check nestboxes that are near lakes where fishing is permitted, have observed pieces of monofilament intertwined in a bluebird's nest. Over the years, I have monitored numerous nestboxes in north Orange County, California, and have observed this many times as well. Including a week ago when I took down a nestbox and found some thin and wavy monofilament at the front of the nest. But what made this time different was that a small hook was attached to the line - a real fish hook! Needless to say, I was astonished and quickly removed it and the line, being careful not to get hooked myself. This incident brings even more vividly, one peril in installing nestboxes in parks near fishing lakes, and it should remind all monitors to be ever more vigilant at these locations - and careful - when looking inside a nestbox. **Bob Franz**

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We had two hatchings of bluebirds last Summer. The birds returned this year, but a sparrow kept building a nest in the bluebird house. My husband removed the sparrow nest several times until the sparrow gave up. However, the bluebirds were not to be found. We were pleasantly surprised to have them return for their second hatching. Guess they like the daily mealworms and the birdbath that was updated with a new fountain this summer! I think some of their first hatchlings do, also!! **Pamela Greenhalgh**

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At last count, volunteers who belong to the Southern California Bluebird Club (SCBC) are monitoring 228 nestboxes in 13 of the total of 17 Regional Parks in Orange County, California. In order to install nestboxes in these parks, SCBC members have to obtain permission. And as the numbers show, we have been welcomed in these parks and have received help in numerous ways from County Park Rangers and maintenance personnel.

This was exhibited dramatically on Memorial Day - May 28 - at Yorba Regional Park where I monitor 55 nestboxes. In early afternoon, I was at home watching a baseball game on TV when I received a call from an on-duty Ranger there. He informed me that he was looking at two nestboxes that were on the ground that he suspected had been deliberately knocked down by some youngsters with a football.

One nestbox had only an empty nest in it but the other had been filled with six nestlings and I learned that only two had survived the fall. The Ranger asked for help and so I immediately went to the park and met him near the downed nestboxes. I installed the nestboxes and thanked the Ranger for his vigilance and caring about our birds. This event was reassuring in several ways - 1) he had kept my SCBC card with my TN on it, and 2) he took time to call me and ask for my help. Before I left he told me he would have replaced the nestboxes himself, but he had nothing with which to do it. I told him I had an extra lifter that he was welcome to have - I delivered it to the park the next day. **Bob Franz**

First I would like to thank the Southern California Bluebird Club for helping my son, Matthew, with his Eagle Scout Project. Matt is establishing a bluebird trail of 20 boxes. The boxes start where another trail ends. His trail runs through Santiago Park and then into our neighborhood in Santa Ana, California. We wanted to lure the fun bluebirds from the park closer to us so we could more easily enjoy them. Our neighbors have mixed feelings about our project. Some neighbors are oohing and aaahing about our pet bluebirds that come when we call them. We really blow their minds when the birds eat out of our hands. I loved the neighbor who skeptically said "You think you're going to hang a box up and birds are going to magically appear". I was happy to rub it in when we instantly got a pair of birds. Checking nest boxes always gathers many curious spectators. We have met many new neighbors when lifting boxes down out of trees. But there is the negative side of luring bluebirds into the neighborhood – they poop on everyone's car mirrors. To keep peace, my husband walks up and down the street with Windex cleaning cars. Does anyone know why these seem to be the only birds that like car mirrors? Another experience we had that we weren't expecting was the strange nest in one of the boxes. The odd shaped nest told us it wasn't of bluebird origin. Because the nest's twigs were so large we decided it wasn't a bird nest but maybe a rat's nest. I was really freaked, blindly exploring around inside especially when I felt something fluffy. Lucky for my son-who made me probe the nest- the fluff was just wren babies. Our first season with the Bluebird trail has been really fun even though we only got bluebirds in 4 nests. The absence of nesting bluebirds makes Matthew's Eagle Scout Project even more important. It proves our trail is in an area that needs more Western bluebirds. Matt's project added 16 new birds that hopefully will help fill more boxes next year. **Sue McDonald**

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This season I have had 2 broods fledge as I watched. Each brood was attended by three adults...two males and one female. Could this be reinforcement against possible predators? They all buzzed me before leaving to follow the chicks.

Seeds you see in a Bluebird nest box just before fledge time are from the Carrot Wood tree. Is it possible these give chicks an extra boost of adrenalin to leave the nest for the first time and fly off non stop out of sight? **Earl Garrison**

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I was out doing my rounds at Tustin Ranch Golf course, when I saw something very curious happening. Jo-Ann had told me that often times the babies from the first clutch will help in the feeding of the 2nd clutch. However, what I saw was two adult males feeding the babies in the same box! They would both fly down and pick up mealworms side by side. One would fly up and feed, while the other waited patiently on a nearby branch. Once, one male was inside the box, while the other one hung to the opening of the box. What a team. The female pretty much sat on a branch nearby and watched! What a smart girl! Does this mean that Bluebirds can remember their offspring after a year? **Janel Pahl**

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I monitor 10 nesting boxes at the Pelican Hill Golf Course, where I am an employee. 1 of the boxes never had a nest in it, the other 9 all had bluebird nests with varying success. Overall, I have had 28 successful fledglings this season. **Mike Ahmer, Water Quality Manager**

## California Bluebird Recovery Program County Coordinators January 2012

<b>County</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Home#</b>	<b>Email</b>
Alameda	<b>Georgette</b>	<b>Howington</b>	Pleasant Hill	925-686-4392	Georgette@birdscape.net
Amador	<b>Doris &amp; Bill</b>	<b>Allison</b>	Plymouth	209-245-3135	allison1932@att.net
Contra Costa	<b>Georgette</b>	<b>Howington</b>	Pleasant Hill	925-686-4392	Georgette@birdscape.net
Los Angeles	<b>Dick</b>	<b>Purvis</b>	Anaheim	714-776-8878	dickersly@aol.com
Marin	<b>Ruth</b>	<b>Beckner</b>	San Rafael	415 479-9542	jabeck1924@cs.com
Mendocino	<b>Michael &amp; Mary-beth</b>	<b>Arago</b>	Fort Bragg	707-962-0507	mmbarago@mcn.org
Merced	<b>Steve</b>	<b>Simmons</b>	Merced	209-722-3540	simwoodduk@aol.com
Orange	<b>Dick</b>	<b>Purvis</b>	Anaheim	714-776-8878	dickersly@aol.com
Placer	<b>Heath</b>	<b>Wakelee</b>	Granite Bay	916 797-4536	towa1@cs.com
Riverside	<b>Erin</b>	<b>Snyder</b>	Riverside	951-683-7691 x 207	snyder@rcrcd.com
Sacramento	<b>Vicki</b>	<b>Butler</b>	Sacramento	(916) 448-8030	butlerrowe@sbcglobal.net
San Bernardino	<b>Glen</b>	<b>Chappell</b>	Redlands	909-794-3470	NG glen.chap@adelphia.net
San Diego	<b>Martin</b>	<b>Marino</b>	Encinitas	626-826-4336	martin.marino@sbcglobal.net
San Louis Obispo	<b>Paul &amp; Judy</b>	<b>Burkhardt</b>	Creston	805 438-4491	tinhornranch@sbcglobal.net
San Mateo	<b>Margaret</b>	<b>Gabil</b>	San Mateo	650-572-9709	mgabil@me.com
Santa Barbara	<b>Richard</b>	<b>Willey</b>	Lompoc	805-733-5383	dick.willey@verizon.net
Santa Clara	<b>Mike</b>	<b>Azevedo</b>	Fremont	510-792-4632	levinbluebird@comcast.net
Shasta	<b>Larry</b>	<b>Jordan</b>	Oak Run	530-472-3131	larrytech@frontiernet.net
Solano/Yolo	<b>Melanie</b>	<b>Truan</b>	Davis	530-754-4975	mltruan@ucdavis.edu
Sonoma	<b>Mike</b>	<b>Crumly</b>	Sonoma	707-996-7256	mikec@freixenetusa.com



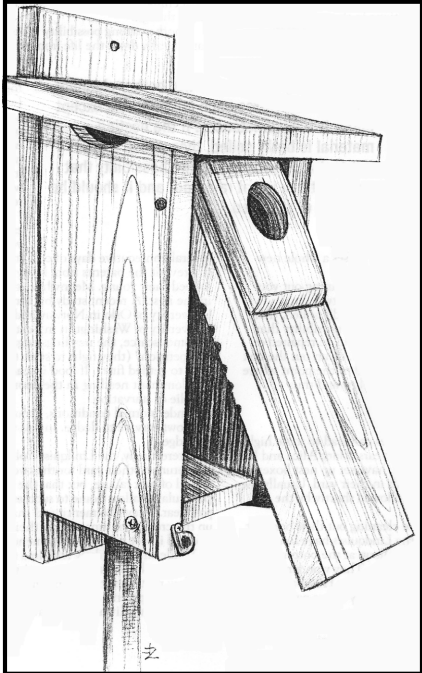
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California Bluebird Recovery Program's  
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**BLUEBIRDS FLY!**

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**Yes, I want to help encourage Bluebirds in California**  
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