



# BLUEBIRDS FLY!

## California Bluebird Recovery Program's newsletter

—supported by National Audubon Society—California  
—an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

*for the encouragement and conservation of cavity-nesters—especially bluebirds—anywhere in the West*

### Call your neighbors

## Seeking the best report ever

Another bluebird season has come and gone. It seems like we were just eagerly awaiting the first nesting of the season and, in a flash, our time with the bluebirds was over. Many had a successful season, fledging more bluebirds than ever before on their trails. Some had problems with raccoons, wrens and the ever abundant House Sparrow. Others may have put up bluebird boxes that were not used by the birds. All of this is important information that needs to be recorded, compiled and studied. Enclosed, again, with this newsletter is CBRP's Annual Report Form, which is the vehicle for you to present your statistics. The **information** gleaned from the report forms is vital to the success of this organization and, more importantly, the continued growth of our bluebird population. Once compiled, the statistics will be printed and a copy of the Summary will be mailed to all that have submitted reports.

Before your records are put away for the year, get out your notes and complete the form. We thank those of you who already have. Remember, everybody's information is important. It doesn't matter if you fledged 500 bluebirds or none; we need your statistics. It is just as important to know the areas where more work needs to be done, as it is to know where we have been successful. ***If you know someone who has a trail and is not a CBRP member, we would like to hear about their cavity-nesters too.***

Please give them a copy of your form to fill out, or take a minute, give them a call, and fill out the form for them. They will also be sent a copy of the Summary.

All of the questions on the form are important. Please complete the entire form as accurately as possible. Many of you have trails that are in two counties. A separate form should be completed for each county. One last request, PLEASE write legibly.

This year **Robert L Franz**, bluebirder from Orange County, has volunteered to help analyze the statistics from your reports. If your information is incomplete, it will be necessary to separate it from the completed totals. This is why information regarding egg, nestling, and fledging numbers are important. Elsewhere in this edition of *BLUEBIRDS FLY!* is a report on the new monograph on Western Bluebirds put out by *The Birds of North America*. In it, the authors point out the need for more information on bluebird populations. We can make a real contribution through accurate and complete recording.

Having bluebirds take up housekeeping in boxes we provide makes us feel good about ourselves. It is wonderful to know that we are helping them in a world that has become very tough for them to survive. Send in your report and let it be recorded that you have been involved in one of California's greatest conservation success stories of all times.

*(Our thanks to Sandy Siebert of Bluebirds Across Nebraska from which this article was paraphrased.—Ed)*

### WILDLIFE RESCUE NURSES BLUEBIRD FLEDGLING BACK TO HEALTH

Sierra Wildlife Rescue received a fledging bluebird in a weakened condition, unable to fly in August. The bird was diagnosed with Coccidiosis, a disease of the digestive system caused by a protozoa, *Coccidium*.

Given antibiotics, the female was kept for over two months before she recovered.

Of interest, the fledgling was banded. SWR reported the band to the Bird Banding Laboratory in Laurel, MD by calling 1-800-327-BAND (2263). In due time, a report was sent to the bander, **Hatch Graham**. From his records, he determined the bird was banded on May 20 from a nest-box on **Wendy Guglieri's** Chariot Circle Trail in Rescue, El Dorado Co. It had been found on Cerveza Way, also in Rescue on August 4, so was about 2½ months old when found.

The Sierra Wildlife Rescue volunteers reported that they had received several bluebirds in October which had been trapped in tar. They were cleaned up and the small flock released with the now recovered fledgling on October 16 near where it had been captured.

We could have entitled this story: **RESCUED IN RESCUE! A HAPPY ENDING.**

## ***Fat Cats Kill!***

Many people mistakenly believe that a well-fed cat won't kill wildlife. Not so. In one study, a regularly fed cat killed nearly 1700 animals over an 18-month period.

Visit: [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org) to learn about the **Cats Indoors** program.

DON YODER'S

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Surely, it pays to advertise. In our latest (double) issue we noted that box builder **Warren Button** had on hand a goodly supply of completed nestboxes that he wanted to move. Our message reached **Melanie Truan**—she of the doctoral candidacy for the study of the effect of vineyard development displacing natural oak forestation along Putah Creek near Davis. On September 21 Melanie picked up 84 boxes in order to get a good start on placements well ahead of the new season. We look forward to reports of progress on Melanie's three year study. Warren incorporated a modified-Purvis suspension for these boxes. It relies on a wire hanger of the type used by nurserymen for hanging potted plants. A small hole on each side of the roof overhang allows clamping under the roof edges. (*Available at hardware and garden shops for about 75¢*).

✱

There is another substantial offer of potential help to bluebirds. This one is centered up in that good bluebird country around Quartz Mountain in Amador County. **Sharon Long**, P.O. Box 162, Fiddletown, CA 95629, 209-768-3529, email: [tgirls@amafrog.com](mailto:tgirls@amafrog.com) has offered access to 40 acres of wildland in the foothills. Surely, this land should offer some wonderful habitat for cavity seekers. County Coordinator **Hatch Graham** will help her set up a trail and train her in the mechanics of monitoring. Anyone wishing to assist, let him know.

✱

Many trail managers have utilized the Peterson design nestbox—that big tapered front opening box with overhanging roof and oval entrance hole. The box was designed by Minnesotan **Dick Peterson** who has contributed so much to the knowledge

we share about bluebirds and was one of the founders of the **Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota**. Dick passed away on May 4, 2000, at the age of 81. He will be missed by all who knew him, but the box he designed will continue to be widely used.

✱

We were happy to see the most recent edition of *BLUEBIRDS FLY!* which even at that early time was able to report on some of the season's nesting results. As we continue to receive additional Annual Reports, those results are again being reflected in our monitors' comments—high spirited summaries following successful nesting activity and dour comments about poor or no results but with hopes for higher counts next year. There are always hopes for a better year ahead.

✱

Occasionally we have received a monitor's Form 2 Annual Report form accompanied by Form 1 Individual Nestbox forms for the entire trail. We sure don't mind, but including the Individual (Form 1) copies adds unnecessarily to your postal charges. Retained Individual Nestbox records can be a reference for your own next year's comparison. All we need is the Annual Report.

✱

One of the pleasures of occupying our roost up here in the crow's nest is the chance to review Annual Reports and correspondence from monitors up and down the state. It can be an eye-opener when we receive an outstanding professional presentation covering the ordinary activities and figures with which we deal. Such was the case with the first-time (to us) Annual Report submitted by **Barry Baba**, Habitat Restora-

—continued next page

## California Bluebird Recovery Program

Founded in 1994, supported by National Audubon Society-California and affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society, CBRP is "for the encouragement and conservation of cavity-nesters—especially bluebirds—anywhere in the West."

CBRP is non-profit, has no paid staff, and is supported entirely by the efforts of volunteers and donations accepted by the Mt.Diablo Audubon Society on CBRP's behalf.

CBRP members had located and reported on 4,600 nestboxes by the end of 1999, with more than 13,000 cavity-nesters fledged—nearly half of them western and mountain bluebirds.

CBRP welcomes membership from the public who wish to support its program, and especially seeks those who will place appropriate nestboxes in the proper habitat, faithfully monitor the birds' progress through the nesting season, and report yearly on the results.

CBRP can furnish nestbox plans, a monitoring guide, forms for monitoring and reports, technical advice through a network of county coordinators, and sometimes the nestboxes themselves.

Membership, which includes this quarterly newsletter is available for a donation of \$5 or more made payable to "MDAS—Bluebirds" and mailed to CBRP, 2021 Ptarmigan Dr #1, Walnut Creek, CA 94595. Donations are tax-deductible.

### California Bluebird Recovery Program

**Don Yoder,**

Program Director  
2021 Ptarmigan Dr. #1  
Walnut Creek, 94595  
(925) 937-5974 vox  
(925) 935-4480 fax  
[cbrp@value.net](mailto:cbrp@value.net)

**BLUEBIRDS FLY!**

**Hatch & Judy Graham,**

Editors  
PO Box 39  
Somerset, CA 95684  
(530) 621-1833 vox  
(530) 621-3939 fax  
[birdsfly@innercite.com](mailto:birdsfly@innercite.com)

## MORE NOTES FROM THE FIELD

—continued from page 2

tion Biologist with **Teichert Aggregates**, Sacramento. The report covers their 4th year of nestbox monitoring by the **BEST** (Business, Education, and Science Team) students from **Glen Edwards Middle School** in Lincoln, Placer County. The report not only covers the statistical results of the year's activities but a description of the trail layout and digital pictures of hatchling developments and habitat of several of the nestboxes. The program seeks to inform the public and educate participants about cavity-nesters. Surely, preparation of the report also gave valued experience in computer usage to several members of the **BEST** students. And we at **CBRP** we are always most anxious to learn of additional nestbox trails established by anyone who is providing support to bluebirds and other cavity-nesters.

✱

Surely you are aware of the practice of pairing boxes, considered advantageous to bluebirds by giving them a second chance to nest if a single-box site is occupied by another species. An opposing view holds that pairing tends to increase tree swallow fledges faster than bluebird populations. A corollary then follows: Don't pair. (**Joseph P. O'Halloran**, Chair, Data Analysis Committee, **Bluebird Recovery Association of Wisconsin**, in *Wisconsin Bluebird, Summer 2000*, v.15, No 1.) Our editor points out that O'Halloran's definition of a pair does not jibe with normal usage which is 15 to 20 ft apart. O'Halloran considers a 'pair' up to 100 ft apart.

✱

Now comes a contrary opinion on another often-confirmed principle—also from the Midwest: Several members of **BAN** (Bluebirds Across Nebraska) find that bluebirds

seem to always prefer a new box over an old one, regardless of the style of box. *Bluebirds Across Nebraska*, v 7, no. 2, pg 10, Summer 2000. These positions suggest possible experimentation on your own trails, to either agree with or refute them. Do Westerns follow different rules for their housing than those of the Eastern cousins?

✱

We don't know the age of the boxes that **Irv Tiessen**, Sunol, had in place but Western Bluebirds and VGSW\* each laid 229 eggs in 136 boxes available. The Blues won the Hatched race by 3 and the Fledged count by 61.

✱

**Pat Butterfield**, Placerville, was beset by earwigs inside boxes and horses outside and drew blanks for any activity in 5 nestboxes. She is wisely moving them to a more accommodating location for next season.

✱

In Livermore, **Ray Fontaine's** 11 boxes suffered about the maximum exposure to hazards: The usually quiet park where the boxes are hung had a major construction project within 15 ft of one box. A fire and road grading approached 2 others. Wasps and wooly caterpillars made themselves at home elsewhere. Favored species inspected but failed to move in or settle.

✱

In Yuba County, **Helen Goforth** acquired a new resident, fledging 3 Ash-throated Flycatchers from a nest lined with squirrel hair. Tree Swallows maintained control of their 5 eggs even though the box was being surveyed by bluebirds.

✱

**Ken Hashagen**, Placer, helped the

—continued page 4

## Support our sponsors



Founded in 1978, the **North American Bluebird Society** (NABS) is a non-profit organization determined to increase the populations of the three species of bluebirds on this continent. Inasmuch as the populations of these birds have diminished due to the maladroit actions of human beings, as well as natural disasters, the society strives to explain the importance of preserving native cavity-nesters.

The society works within the bounds of effective conservation to study obstacles impeding bluebird recovery and to promote ideas and actions which might reduce their effect.

Membership is \$15. NABS's mailing address is PO Box 74, Darlington, WI 53530.

## National Audubon Society



There are local chapters of the **National Audubon Society** (NAS) in all fifty states, Guam, and Latin America. In California there are over fifty local chapters. Chapters have newsletters, monthly programs, and field trips to local areas of interest.

To join NAS, contact your local Audubon Chapter, or call NAS-California at (916) 481-5332. National dues are \$20 for new members, and include a bimonthly magazine as well as membership privileges in your local Audubon chapter.

\*Abbreviations (alpha codes) on page 11

## MORE NOTES

—from page 3

future population of 4 different species in 4 of his 8 boxes, ATFLs among them. Confirmation is on record since **Dee Warenycia** gave them all birthday rings to wear.

✱

In Amador, **Marion Kunkel** wasn't quite so lucky, having six WEBL eggs abandoned while 7 Oak Titmouse fledged successfully.

✱

In what might be called a cooperative housing effort in Orange, **Betty Lovejoy** had assistance from **Linda Violet**. The ladies found 7 WEBL almost double-decked in too small a box so moved birds, nest and all to a larger box. Fortified with meal worms for the parents' use, all survived, grew and fledged, leaving an unusually neat nest behind.

✱

**Monty Loyd**, one of too few monitors in Fresno, missed reporting last year due to unfortunate health developments. But he is back on the trail this year with some help from a grandson who is working on his Eagle Scout citation—and who may establish his own trail in 2001. He will undoubtedly gain good experience working with Grandad this year.

✱

Perhaps the heat in June was responsible for non-hatching of 16 out of 17 WEBL eggs in 3 nests on **Dianne McCleery's** trail up in Amador. The temperature in nearby Plymouth reached 111° F.

✱

In Amador, **Ken Morrison** kept discovering eggs disappearing from one of his boxes with one found broken on the ground under the box. Believing the nest abandoned, he removed the 4 eggs remaining but left the nest in place. Within 2 weeks new material had been added with 3 eggs which then became 5, and all fledged successfully. Mystery: who ab-

sconded with the earlier eggs?

✱

Near Sonoma where the temperature hit 116° in the vineyards, **Karen Nagel** nevertheless succeeded in fledging 12 WEBL plus VGSW and OATI, but is surprised that any survived. (Such conditions might be ameliorated by addition of cardboard 'sunhats' protecting the boxes from peak heat when the direct sun is highest. See *BLUEBIRDS FLY!* Vol.6, nos.1 & 2 Spring & Summer. Most adults seem to accept them.)

✱

Talk about dedication and hard work by some 'Girls in Blue': **Sully Reallon**, Orange County, had seven clutches of 6 eggs apiece. On a total of 4 trails, 130 new bug-eaters are now at work in 2 counties.

✱

Guess 'nobody' found the box provided by **Helen Slaughter**, El Dorado. She comments: "No nest. No eggs found." (Wonder if a For Rent sign might help, Helen?)

✱

In the foothills of Fresno County, **Tony & Donna Stieber** are trying to figure out why boxes in an ideal location are ignored for 2 years, while the most productive box is on a post 15 feet from a road. (Maybe they just like to watch the world go by—?)

✱

Some new residents appeared in Orange County boxes monitored by **Cecilia G. Perez** at Tustin Ranch Golf Club. She is delighted with the bluebird production for 2000 and even more with the first-time use since 1994 of two boxes by Tree Swallows. She hopes new species will utilize some other boxes next season.

✱

**Pamela Harris**, El Dorado, found two banded bluebirds killed by a cat. She thought one was the hen caring for a second brood in one of her 3 boxes. Turned out, however, one had

been banded next door in one of **Jane & Tom Sartoris's** boxes and the other had come from **Candy Perisho's** place about 2/10ths of a mile away. Both birds had been banded in May and were recovered in mid-June.

✱

Scattered reports of disappointments infiltrate the generally good picture for this start of the millennium. **Cliff Myers**, El Dorado, reports that one-half of his nestboxes were unsuccessful. In Placer, **Joan Jernegan** escaped any predator losses but out of 8 boxes ready and waiting, only 3 attracted tenants. Mid-Staters **Doug & Ardeth Greenquist**, Santa Clara, had 5 bluebirds fledge from their 1 box which was immediately taken over by VG Swallows who laid 4 eggs and then seemed to leave the country. Mixed results befell **Richard Kempton**, Ventura. The Oak Titmouse was a new tenant for him; bluebirds were a month earlier than previous years but with average results; however, it was the first year for failures by nesting flycatchers. And in El Dorado, **Fred Pilot, Vaughn & Terri Hintze** carefully cared for 4 boxes but not one was chosen for occupancy even after spring inspections by the blue prospects. In Contra Costa, **Adrian Bosworth** started with one box but, sadly, no results—Ants.

✱

But there are many bright sides—yes, exuberance—coming from our efforts as well. New subscriber **John O'Hara**, Orange, was able to feed mealworms from the palm of his hand to his pair of bluebirds. "What a thrill." (That's a close encounter with the beady black eye.) To the other extreme **Marlin & Gail Dickey**, San Bernardino, found that mealworms can become an addictive attraction not only for a local pair but for surrounding families as well. From feeding 100 worms a week to one pair and their brood, to

—continued next page

**Book Review****Birds of North America issues  
Western Bluebird monograph**

*The Birds of North America* is in the process of producing accounts of all the species of birds in North America. The series is sponsored by the American Ornithologists' Union, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the National Academy of Sciences. Western Bluebird is No. 510 in the series.

Written by **Judith A Guinan**, **Patricia A Gowaty**, and **Elsie K Eltzroth**, the 32-page booklet provides considerable information on this species. Guinan's research has focused on banded populations on the Coconino Nat'l Forest near Flagstaff, Arizona; Gowaty is a behavioral ecologist at U of Georgia, Athens; and Eltzroth is a rehabilitator, trail monitor and coordinator, and founder of the Audubon Society of Corvallis's Bluebird Trail in Oregon.

As with many species, the authors state that "Knowledge is sparse on many aspects of Western Bluebird demography, physiology, ecology and behavior." Of immediate priority is the need to determine trends in local abundance throughout its range.

Regarding its conservation status, the Western blue is listed as "sensitive" in Oregon and Utah, "of high concern" in New Mexico, "in jeopardy" in California, and of "special concern" in British Columbia.

This monograph will doubtless stand as the last word on the Western Bluebird for some time. Its

pages are filled with valuable statistics and information.

Inevitably, in a publication of this nature, there are old references used with little confirmation and large omissions of more recent information simply because the findings have not been published in scientific journals.

For example, there is no mention of the extraordinary expansion of the bluebird population in the Greater Los Angeles basin through the establishment of nestbox trails in parks, golf courses, cemeteries and industrial parks. These populations are now thriving in an area that was never bluebird habitat prior to its urban development.

Grazing is listed as a habitat degradation according to a reference from 1975. In Central California foothills the best natural habitat for bluebirds is on currently grazed cattle range in the Oak Woodland-Savannah habitat. Where grazing has ceased and the land lies fallow, the encroaching brush and high grass make the area ill-suited to bluebirds.

Despite certain shortcomings, this account of the Western Bluebird will be an important reference for anyone seriously interested in knowing all they can about this fascinating species.

*For more information write:*

*The Birds of North America*  
1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1195  
<http://www.birdsofna.org>

HG

**FLAMMULATED OWL POPULAR RESEARCH SUBJECT**

Two new theses have been reported:

Arsenault, D. P. 1999. *The ecology of Flammulated Owls: Nest-site preferences, spatial structure and mating system*. M.S. Thesis. University of Nevada, Reno. 89pp.

Author contact:

**David P. Arsenault**, PO Box 15131, Reno, NV 89507; 775-747-2868  
email: [dpa73@hotmail.com](mailto:dpa73@hotmail.com)

Oleyar, M.D. 2000. *Flammulated Owl breeding ecology in Aspen Forests of Northern Utah*: Including responses to ski area development. MS Thesis, Boise State University, Boise, ID 58pp.

Author contact:

**Dave Oleyar**, 1404 Central St #107, Evanston, IL 60201; 847-866-6820  
e-mail: [flammulated\\_owl@yahoo.com](mailto:flammulated_owl@yahoo.com)

**SPRING INTERNSHIPS AT  
HASTINGS RESERVATION  
TO STUDY BLUEBIRDS**

Field assistants are needed for ongoing long-term study of the behavioral ecology of the cooperatively breeding Acorn Woodpeckers and Western Bluebirds at Hastings Reservation in upper Carmel Valley, California. Although the field work is demanding, there is also the possibility of training in our molecular genetics laboratory towards the end of the season. Most of our positions start 1 Apr (or earlier) and run through mid-Jul 2001. Duties include censusing color-banded birds, banding nestlings, capturing adults, measuring morphological characters, performing nest watches, and conducting other behavioral observations. Prior experience with birds desirable but not required. Positions include a stipend (\$500/month) and housing.

Send or email a resume along with the names, phone numbers, and email addresses of at least two references to Drs. **Janis Dickinson** or **Walt Koenig**, Hastings Reservation, 38601 E. Carmel Valley Road, Carmel Valley, CA 93924. Email: [sialia@uclink4.berkeley.edu](mailto:sialia@uclink4.berkeley.edu).

**MORE NOTES**

—from page 4

1000 a week to free-loading families who got the word, customers for the free handouts increased exponentially. The birds learned the signals telling them that meal times had arrived and responded with predictable interest.

✱

And as the season winds down, **Bob Franz**, Orange, continues to see small flocks of bluebirds moving about in local parks. (With the numbers of birds that Bob has fledged, there must be a blue haze in most of Orange County.)

✱

Also in Orange, **Linda Violett**  
—continued last page

# Wildlife 'rehabber' speaks out

—by Janet Bruening

## IF IT GAPES, FEED IT

"If it gapes, feed it" often characterizes the philosophy of wildlife rehabilitation groups. It's an emotional response to "This animal needs my help."

This article seeks to address the wisdom of this philosophy and in particular, whether our wildlife rescue group is actually doing a disservice to our native bird populations by rehabilitating, raising and releasing two non-native, non-protected bird species: the European Starling, and the House Sparrow.

Historically, thousands of 'alien' or non-native species of plants and animals have been introduced into North America. Many of these introductions were intentional, others came accidentally or as 'hitchhikers' in our world of globalization and rapid transportation. Some of these 'imports' have had benign or even beneficial effects on the ecosystem in which they were established.

An example is the mosquito fish planted in California's rice fields and urban areas to help control mosquitoes and gnats, which has provided an effective and inexpensive alternative to pesticides.

Unfortunately, many introduced species have had disastrous and unforeseen consequences. Carp, Mediterranean fruit flies, black and Norway rats, yellow star-thistle, mitten crabs, feral pigs and goats are some of the more familiar examples of 'imports' into California that are causing many problems both ecologically and economically.

The European Starling and House Sparrow easily fit into this latter group. Introduced into North America in the late 1800's, both species took a mere 50 years to spread across the continent. From an original release of 60 starlings in New

York's Central Park, they now number over 200 million birds!

Periodic efforts to control or eradicate them have been made by cities and states where they routinely cause agricultural damage, transfer diseases, consume and contaminate feed and water with their droppings at livestock facilities. In urban areas, starlings flock in such huge numbers that they cause health, filth, noise, and odor problems.

In the 1960's, California started an eradication program to control starlings. It is estimated the program killed 9 million birds, but left 5000 survivors who have been able to rebuild the population back up to enormous numbers.

The House Sparrow (actually not a sparrow at all, but a weaver finch) was originally introduced in the mistaken belief it would help reduce crop insect pests although it is primarily a seed eater. Like the European Starling, its numbers have increased at an explosive rate and may be the most abundant bird in North America. It too, is recognized as an agricultural pest.

Ornithologists list several attributes that may account for the tremendous success of both these species. 1) The ability to tolerate a wide range of physical conditions and to subsist on a wide variety of foods; 2) A high dispersal rate, i.e., they can reproduce and spread their offspring rapidly; 3) The aggressive pursuit of food and nesting sites; and finally, and most importantly, 4) The ability to live in close proximity with humans and the altered environment man creates.

These attributes well describe the life and habits of Starlings and House Sparrows. Both are aggressive and deadly competitors for nest sites, not only evicting adults but also destroy-

ing eggs and killing nestlings and brooding adults. Neither species is migratory, they stay year round, so they can claim nesting sites long before migratory native species return in the spring. The starling's habit of flocking in large numbers is thought to offer better protection against predators and also increases feeding efficiency by overwhelming individual birds' territorial defenses and feeding sites.

The particular quirk of the male House Sparrow is bonding more to his chosen nest site than to a mate. This means he may lose his mate or their eggs, but he won't give up his nest site thereby effectively discouraging other cavity-nesters from using the site.

The **California Bluebird Recovery Program** and the **Purple Martin Society** have come to the conclusion that House Sparrows pose a greater risk to the continued success of their program than do starlings. The House Sparrow, because of its smaller size, can enter nestboxes that exclude starlings.

**Susan Yasuda**, a wildlife biologist for the Eldorado National Forest and Cavity Dependent Species Program Coordinator for all the national forests in California writes: "...the House Sparrows were really bad this year (at the Placerville Forest Service Tree Nursery). Normally we have two or three nesting attempts and that's all they do. This year (Spring 2000) they were on all parts of the trail, weaving bluebird feathers into their nest attempts, building on top of bluebird nests with eggs and I'm not sure [but probably] were responsible for some of the dead adults we found. One nest finally gave us some white bluebird eggs.... When we came to check a few days later, a House Sparrow had built on

## BLUEBIRDS WITH REVERSED FEET

For several years **John Hickerson**, of the **Northern New Jersey Bluebird Society**, has been sending his studies on Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds to the **Bluebird Recovery Program** newsletter. This spring he sent a copy of a research report on the “slipped tendon” congenital defect in bluebirds. It may well explain some of the reason for nestling mor-

tality at the time of fledging.

After finding several 19- and 20-day old nestlings which apparently had been unable to fledge, he consulted **Douglas Roscoe**, a pathologist with the NJ Division of Fish and Game, who noted that the dead birds had reversed feet, a deformity he referred to as “slipped tendon.”

Researching the literature, John found that leg deformities can be influenced by diet, genetic and congenital defects, shallow nests,

trauma, malposition of the egg and inadequate exercise. While “slipped tendon” is considered a congenital deformity, hatching on an improper surface (insufficient padding in the nestbox) can induce it and it can also occur as a result of improper diet, which includes a too-high protein diet, causing too rapid growth.

Congenital defects could also involve infectious agents, toxic agents, delayed egg laying, delayed egg fertilization, improper incubation, and poor nutrition of the female.

On John’s 1998 trail, 8% of the bluebird nestling deaths were confirmed by the pathologists to be due to the defect.

John also checked with wildlife rehabilitators, and found that treatment could be considered, as is done simply and commonly with chickens, pheasants, and long-legged birds such as emus.

While some older nestling deaths may have been due to other factors, as well as multiple congenital defects, it is possible that manipulation, splinting, and even surgery is possible. If the bluebird trail monitor is fortunate enough to be present at, or immediately after, fledging, the nestbox should be checked for possible remedial action if a nestling appears healthy but unable to fledge. It is always a good idea to know of a [wildlife rescue group or a] veterinarian willing to treat small birds, and, of course, your local conservation officer.

*This article is reprinted from the “Bluebird News” issued by the Bluebird Recovery Program, Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis.*

## Speaking Out

—from previous page

top of it. We eliminate the House Sparrow nests as we find them, but if this happens next year, we may have to start trapping House Sparrows.”

Starlings and House Sparrows have a detrimental effect on nearly all native cavity-nesting birds. In studies where active trapping and destruction of these species has been undertaken, there is a dramatic increase in the number of successful fledgings of native birds.

Although grudging respect can be given to the adaptability of these birds, I think we must also understand our culpability for their continued success. The continuing encroachment of humans into remote areas, the wholesale clearing and altering of land to suit human purposes with the resulting loss of suitable habitat for wildlife is, in general, alarming. The declining numbers of many of our most beautiful and interesting native species should be a wake-up call to all of us who love wildlife.

As a ‘rehabber,’ I believe the goal and ultimate success of wildlife rehabilitation groups is the release of an individual animal who can live and reproduce, thus propagating its species for the future. Will the day come when it will be irresponsible to raise

and release native cavity-nesting birds because we know they will have little chance of successfully competing with Starlings and House Sparrows? Species can and do become endangered and even extinct with frightening speed and regularity. The sheer beauty of a bluebird’s flashing wings in the sunlight, the ratta-tat-tat song of an industrious woodpecker in the pine trees are things wildlife lovers cherish and we **NEED TO PROTECT!!**

In conclusion, we, as members of a wildlife rescue organization, need to give serious thought to what we want to accomplish. The “feed it if it gapes” philosophy wastes valuable resources, such as volunteer time, veterinarian services, and much needed space at the Intake Center by helping Starlings and House Sparrows succeed. I believe we all need to better educate ourselves, work in partnership with other rehab groups with non-native policies, extend the message to those without a policy, and aid species recovery and conservation groups rather than working against them.

*This article was written by a member of a wildlife rescue group which currently is in the practice of saving House Sparrows and European Starlings. If the situation exists in your area, you may want to share Janet’s article with your local group.* —Ed.



**CATS INDOORS!**

THE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFER BIRDS & CATS

# Nestbox Monitoring Made Easy

by Terry Glanzman, Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, Inc.

Those of us dedicated to assisting in bluebird recovery know that monitoring nestboxes is an important activity. Gathering data and analyzing it in meaningful ways can help answer many questions regarding preferred box design, effective predator controls, and optimal habitat selection. Answering these and other questions will result in increased bluebird populations with the most efficient outlay of time and materials.

In our busy lifestyles, it's not always easy to find the time to regularly monitor our nest boxes or accurately record the data. In addition, we may be unsure of what data is really essential or in what format to record it.

The method I've devised over the last 18 years allows me to monitor and keep accurate records on 350 bluebird nestboxes from May to September; and I have time left over to hold down a full-time job, pursue 16 other hobbies and spend time with my wife!

One of the most important time-saving strategies I employ is to select a specific day of the week on which to check certain boxes, and then to stick with it.

You may vary a day here and there, but always return to the regular schedule. This makes monitoring large numbers of houses much less confusing, as you follow these frequency guidelines:

- Box with eggs, check again in two weeks
- Box with young, check again in one week
- Anything else, check again in three weeks

Even though this schedule is infre-

quent, it will still enable you to gather the most important information; namely, number of bluebirds fledged. Bluebird and most small cavity-nester eggs take 12-14 days to hatch and 16-20 days to fledge. No matter how old the eggs are when you first find them, checking the box again in 14 days will ensure that you catch the young before they fledge, so you can count them. Monitoring young birds on the more frequent, weekly schedule allows you to keep track of their progress and verify outcomes. You will be able to estimate ages and be reasonably certain of the number of live fledges. Unhappily, but importantly; you will also find the remains of deceased birds and/or evidence of predation. By checking a nestbox with any other scenario in three weeks, you will not waste time monitoring unproductive boxes but will catch any bluebirds that decide to move in.

Below is a sample of the format I use for recording data and the key

for filling it out. Using red ink for recording bluebird data allows me to see at a glance which boxes need weekly checks.

If you prefer, you could certainly use other letters for your key, or a different configuration. Although I generate the forms and compile the data by hand, I'm sure you "techies" out there could computerize this process. The most sophisticated may want to take your laptop and enter the data while you're on the trail!

Monitoring bluebird nestboxes and accurately recording the data need not be a daunting or particularly time-consuming task. The method I've outlined here allows me to collect the maximum amount of data in the minimum amount of time.

Feel free to use any of my ideas, and give monitoring a try. Collecting more data on nesting practices increases the body of knowledge we can use to improve bluebird nesting outcomes.

Date	5/10	5/17	5/24	5/31	6/7	6/14	6/21	6/28	7/5
Box									
1A	bb 5e	-	5y (2)	5y (9)	5y (16)	5	-	-	bb 4e
2A	E	-	-	ts 6e	-	-	6y (12)	6	-
3A	E	-	-	bb 5e	-	5y (9)	5y (16)	5	-
4A	bb 5e	-	pd	-	-	bb 2e	-	4e	
5A	E	-	-	sp 4e	-	bb 3e	-	5e	

- bb = bluebird
- ts = Tree Swallow
- sp = House Sparrow
- y = young
- (2) = age in days
- 5 = number fledged
- pd = predation
- E = empty
- 2e = number of eggs

*Most experienced monitors in CBRP recommend monitoring each box weekly, however, we encourage large trails as well. Perhaps this method will allow some to expand their trails, protect the nestlings, and still provide all the needed data for future management. We present it for your consideration.*

-Ed.



# California Bluebird Recovery Program

**ANNUAL REPORT**

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Location of Trail (or Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

No. Boxes: 1-Standard: \_\_\_\_\_ ; 2-Larger than Std: \_\_\_\_\_ ; 3-Smaller than Std: \_\_\_\_\_ ; Total: \_\_\_\_\_

No. Box pairs (2 boxes within 15 feet of each other): \_\_\_\_\_.

			1st Brood	2nd Brood	3d Brood	Total
Species:		No. Nests with 1 or more eggs:				
		No. Nests hatching 1 or more:				
Box Type No.:		No. Nests fledging 1 or more:				
Banding		No. Eggs laid:				
Adults:	Chicks:	No. Chicks hatched:				
		No. Chicks fledged:				
Species:		No. Nests with 1 or more eggs:				
		No. Nests hatching 1 or more:				
Box Type No.:		No. Nests fledging 1 or more:				
Banding		No. Eggs laid:				
Adults:	Chicks:	No. Chicks hatched:				
		No. Chicks fledged:				
Species:		No. Nests with 1 or more eggs:				
		No. Nests hatching 1 or more:				
Box Type No.:		No. Nests fledging 1 or more:				
Banding		No. Eggs laid:				
Adults:	Chicks:	No. Chicks hatched:				
		No. Chicks fledged:				
Species:		No. Nests with 1 or more eggs:				
		No. Nests hatching 1 or more:				
Box Type No.:		No. Nests fledging 1 or more:				
Banding		No. Eggs laid:				
Adults:	Chicks:	No. Chicks hatched:				
		No. Chicks fledged:				
Species:		No. Nests with 1 or more eggs:				
		No. Nests hatching 1 or more:				
Box Type No.:		No. Nests fledging 1 or more:				
Banding		No. Eggs laid:				
Adults:	Chicks:	No. Chicks hatched:				
		No. Chicks fledged:				
Species:		No. Nests with 1 or more eggs:				
		No. Nests hatching 1 or more:				
Box Type No.:		No. Nests fledging 1 or more:				
Banding		No. Eggs laid:				
Adults:	Chicks:	No. Chicks hatched:				
		No. Chicks fledged:				
Species:		No. Nests with 1 or more eggs:				
		No. Nests hatching 1 or more:				
Box Type No.:		No. Nests fledging 1 or more:				
Banding		No. Eggs laid:				
Adults:	Chicks:	No. Chicks hatched:				
		No. Chicks fledged:				
Species:		No. Nests with 1 or more eggs:				
		No. Nests hatching 1 or more:				
Box Type No.:		No. Nests fledging 1 or more:				
Banding		No. Eggs laid:				
Adults:	Chicks:	No. Chicks hatched:				
		No. Chicks fledged:				



# Call your coordinator if you need help—

Are you having problems identifying your birds? Are you having problems with wasps, blowflies, mites? Have your nestlings been abandoned? Are your nestboxes being invaded by House Sparrows? Your County Coordinators can give you advice and assistance, or have resources they can call on to help. Keep in touch.

COUNTY	COORDINATOR	STREET	CITY/STATE/ZIP	PHONE VOX	PHONE FAX	EMAIL
<b>Alameda</b>	Ann Kositsky	1090 Miller Ave	Berkeley, CA 94708	(510) 527-5091		ajpa@pacbell.net
	Raymond A. Fontaine	P.O. Box 92	Livermore, CA 94551	(510) 447-0213		
<b>Amador</b>	Penny Brown	20624 Parkside Dr	Pine Grove, CA 95665	(209) 296-3849		penny@cdepot.net
<b>Butte</b>	Emily Harbison	3536 Butte Campus Dr	Oroville, CA 95965	(530) 895-2449		deb@cin.butte.cc.ca
<b>Calaveras</b>	La Verne Hagel	466 Thompson Lane	Copperopolis, CA 95228	(209) 785-2363		
<b>Contra Costa</b>	Shirley & Warren Engstrom	232 Tharp Drive	Moraga, CA 94556	(925) 376-4695		wese@juno.com
	Oscar Enstrom	1932 Golden Rain Rd	Walnut Creek, CA 94595	(925) 952-9261		big@lanset.com
<b>El Dorado &amp; Amador</b>	Hatch Graham	P.O. Box 39	Somerset, CA 95684	(530) 621-1833	(530) 621-3939	birdsfly@innercite.com
	Georgetown Divide	Viola Sampert	Greenwood, CA 95635	(530) 333-0318		
<b>Lake</b>	Jeannette Knight	PO Box 152	Cobb, CA 95426-0152	(707) 928-5250		
<b>Lassen</b>	Edward Bertotti	470 413 Wingfield	Susanville, CA 96130	(530) 257-3774		
	Mike Magnuson	PO Box 767	Chester, CA 96020	(530) 258-2141		
<b>Los Angeles</b>	Tom Rickman	PO Box 2017	Susanville, CA 96130	(530) 257-2151		
	Doug Martin	13066 Shenley Street	Sylmar, CA 91342	(818) 367-8967		
<b>Madera</b>	William Rihn	PO Box 1648	Coarsegold, CA 93614	(209) 683-3052		walt@oro.net
<b>Marin</b>	Ruth Beckner	15 Portola Avenue	San Rafael, CA 94903	(415) 479-9542		Dickersty@aol.com
<b>Mariposa</b>	Meryl Sundove	37 Greenwood Bch Rd	Tiburon, CA 94920	(415) 388-2524	(415) 388-0717	habitat@jps.net
	Lawrence Punte	9443 Banderilla Dr	LaGrange, CA 95329	(209) 852-2559		
<b>Modoc</b>	Charles Welch	PO Box 825	Alturas, CA 96101	(530) 233-4534		
<b>Napa &amp; Sonoma</b>	David Graves	1500 Los Carneros Ave	Napa, CA 94559	(707) 257-0843		
<b>Nevada</b>	Walt Carnahan	12821 Bradford Dr	Grass Valley, CA 95945	(530) 273-4599		
<b>Orange</b>	Dick Purvis	936 S Siet Place	Anaheim, CA 92806	(714) 776-8878		
<b>Placer</b>	Lesia Chan	9720 Oak Leaf Way	Granite Bay, CA 95746	(916) 791-4529		
<b>Plumas</b>	Patricia Johnson	PO Box 767	Chester, CA 96020	(530) 258-2141		
<b>Riverside</b>	Melissa Browning	10154 Beaumont Ave	Cherry Valley, CA 92223	(909) 845-9266		
<b>San Bernardino</b>	Glen Chappell	1923 Abbie Way	Upland, CA 91784	(909) 981-1996		Chappell@CHS.Chaffey.K12.CA.US
<b>San Diego</b>	Rosemary Fey	PO Box 1245	Borrego Spgs, CA 92004	(619) 767-5810		
<b>San Joaquin</b>	Thomas Hoffman	10122 E Woodbridge Rd	Acampo, CA 95220	(209) 369-8578		thoffman@lodinet.com
<b>San Luis Obispo</b>	Judith Burkhardt	8560 El Corte	Atascadero, CA 93422	(805) 466-3272		burkhardt@paul.thegrid.net.3
<b>San Mateo</b>	Howard Rathlesberger	230 Ridgeway	Woodside, CA 94062	(650) 367-1296	(650) 369-4788	Rathlesberger@email.msn.com
<b>Santa Barbara</b>	Richard Willey	4172 Vanguard Dr	Lompoc CA 93436	(805) 733-5383		willey@utech.net
<b>Santa Clara</b>	Garth Harwood & SCVAS	5901 Pescadero Crk Rd	Pescadero CA 94060	(650) 879-0724		GarthHar@aol.com
<b>Santa Cruz</b>	Nanda Currant	530 Amigo Road	Soquel, CA 95073	(408) 462-3703		hearth@cruzio.com
<b>Sonoma</b> (see Napa)						
<b>Sutter &amp; Yuba</b>	Kevin A. Putman	2884 Coy Dr	Yuba City, CA 95993	(530) 755-1480		dputman@syix.com
<b>Tehama</b>	Pete Flower	331 Oak Street	Red Bluff, CA 96080	(530) 527-0392		
<b>Tulare</b>	Peter C. Morrison, MD.	325 So. Willis	Visalia, CA 93291	(209) 733-1154		
<b>Ventura</b>	Jan Wasserman	1158 Beechwood St	Camarillo, CA 93010	(805) 987-3928		bandlady@west.net
<b>Yuba</b> (see Sutter)						
<b>All Other Counties</b>	Don Yoder	2021 Ptarmigan #1	Walnut Creek, CA 94595	(925) 937-5974	(925) 935-4480	cbpr@value.net



## Find out more about your birds—have them banded

When you have determined your estimated hatching date, call a bander if one is near. Schedule permitting, the bander may be able to band the adult incubating the eggs and/or the nestlings a week or so after they pip from the eggs. Banding helps us learn about the site fidelity of the adults, the dispersal of the chicks, longevity, and other elements of population dynamics.

Amador & southern El Dorado	Hatch Graham	(530) 621-1833	birdsfly@innercite.com
El Dorado	Susan Yasuda	(530) 644-2324	syasuda@fs.fed.us
Northern El Dorado	Dave Delongchamp	(530) 333-2304	selkaijen@jps.net
Los Angeles	Walter Sakai	(310) 434-4702	sakai_walter@smc.edu
Mendocino & Lake	Janet King	(707) 462-3277	kingfarm@sonic.net
Placer & northern Sacramento	Dee Warenycia	(916) 786-5056	warbler5@aol.com
San Francisco Peninsula	Lee Franks	(650) 592-7733	funseekers2@juno.com
San Francisco Peninsula	Howard Rathlesberger	(650) 367-1296	Rathlesberger@email.msn.com
Solano & Yolo	Melanie Truan	(530) 750-3825	mltruan@ucdavis.edu
Sutter & Yuba	Kevin Putman	(530) 755-1480	dputman@syix.com
Ventura	Jan Wasserman	(805) 987-3928	bandlady@west.net

*ALPHA CODES FOR COMMON CAVITY-NESTERS
ATFL=Ash-throated Flycatcher
BNOW=Barn Owl
CBCH=Chesnut-backed Chickadee
HOSP=House Sparrow
EUST=European Starling
MOBL=Mountain Bluebird
MOCH=Mountain Chickadee
TRES=Tree Swallow
VGSW=Violet-green Swallow
WEBL=Western Bluebird
WBNW=White-breasted Nuthatch
WODU=Wood Duck

Anyone desiring to band who can commit 2 or 3 days per week is encouraged to contact Hatch Graham.

# MORE NOTES

—from page 5

placed some additional boxes on an existing trail, hoping to attract other species. Unfortunately, the newer boxes attracted numbers of House Sparrows. After Linda's thoughtful treatment, most of the eggs proved infertile. Only 2 out of 17 fledged. On another trail Linda used two-holed 'mansion' boxes which proved quite attractive to bluebirds and produced a good number of birds in first and second broods.



Tom Croom, Orange, had a 65% increase in birds with but a 4% increase in boxes. Moving boxes that were unproductive last year— even by only a few feet—paid off in better use. Tom also found some live fur in one box—belonging to a large, sleepy rat. Tom says “look in before you reach in.”



In a case of helping with the hous-

ing crunch, Betty Lovejoy, Orange, found seven hatchlings in a standard box. She moved youngsters, nest and all to a 2-hole larger floor area box and all 7 fledged, in spite of unreasonable heat.



What you see when you don't have a camera! Paula Bundy, Orange, observed four bluebird fledglings huddled side by side on a branch, heads alternating north and south, north and south. Parents were feeding, with many trips to meet all of the demands of hungry youngsters.



**—A Bluebird Odyssey—  
NABS 2001 Convention set  
for June 21-24 in  
Columbus, Ohio @ Radisson  
Inn. Contact Dean Sheldon  
419-752-1451 or email:  
dsheldonjr@hotmail.com**

# NABS CLARIFIES REPORTING

In our last issue we wrote that when reporting to North American Bluebird Society, if you have fewer than 5 nestboxes, you will not be registered.

Actually, we're corrected, every box from NABS members can be registered. However, only bluebird trails (5 or more nestboxes) will be registered on the Transcontinental Bluebird Trail (TBT).

All the data, however, can be used by the research community. Each NABS member, regardless of the number of boxes monitored, will be able to use the website to help manage their trail/boxes. There are features that are being added to create more than just a data collection website. NABS has been adding features for members to use to manage their trails/boxes. Check out [www.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org)

Your subscription is a benefit of membership. Membership is available for as little as \$5 per year but more is greatly appreciated. We send the newsletter to many cooperators but we need paid members to keep printing. The year and month of your membership expiration is shown in the upper right side of your label, e.g., 200106=June 2001.

**BLUEBIRDS FLY!**  
California Bluebird Recovery Program's  
Newsletter  
Vol 6 No 3 Autumn 2000

Please send correspondence to address on page 2

a service of  
National Audubon Society-California  
555 Audubon Place  
Sacramento, CA 95825

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Sacramento, CA  
Permit 910