

## ***2003 reports lag behind previous years***

### ***Lower numbers discouraging — box usage down***


After hitting a high point in 2001 when 17,399 birds were reported fledged, only 12,720 were reported in 2003. The number of nestboxes reported was also down but only slightly. The percentage of birds attempting to nest was 91% in 2000, rose to 96% in 2001, and 98% in 2002, and then dropped to 87% last year. (See chart on page 2)

Monitors seem perplexed at these

results but most believe it was the wet, cold spring. Results from “feeder watches” lead Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientists to speculate the West Nile Virus may be reducing bird populations more than we know.

Distribution of the reports is similar to previous years although there are some notable omissions. We failed to receive a report from our

perennial Barn Owl and Wood Duck monitor, **Steve Simmons**, of Merced, and **Kevin Putman** has a new job and his substantial Wood Duck and bluebird reports from Yuba/Sutter are not here this year. We miss you guys. Happily, **Barbara Moore** reported through **Walt Carnahan** in Nevada County after missing in 2002 and the Mountain Bluebird totals are back up.



*\$2.50 per issue  
suggested donation*

## **BLUEBIRDS FLY!**

**California Bluebird Recovery Program's newsletter**

—assisted by Mt 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*

## **West Nile Virus arrived in Southern California this Spring**

On March 2, this year, Orange County Vector Control District trapped 2 House Finches that tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) in Fullerton.

On April 21, an American Crow with WNV was reported by Ventura County VCD in Ojai.

WNV has spread rapidly across the US, being found in most of the coastal states from New York to California as well as in central states along the Mississippi.

Since birds are a reservoir for the virus which is spread to man by mosquitoes, it probably will hit most of the State this year or next.

Only 1 in 150 people bitten come down with the virus but for those that do, it can be deadly; and many birds die. Report any birds dead from mysterious causes to your county Agriculture Extension Service.

Change the water in birdbaths and fishponds twice a week and eliminate other standing water near dwellings.

Around larger ponds, place nestboxes for Tree Swallows as **Jan Wasserman** does to reduce the mosquito population. Swallows, and bats as well, consume huge quantities of mosquitoes. Mosquito Fish which feed on the larvae in ponds can be introduced and are often available from County Vector Control Districts.

If mosquitoes are prevalent in your area, wear long pants and shirt sleeves especially in the early evening when they feed. Insect repellants with a high percentage of DEET are the most effective.

Indiscriminate spraying is not necessarily effective and can be detrimental to the mosquito's natural predators like our swallows and bats.

## **UPDATE ON SUDDEN OAK DEATH (SOD)**

Bluebirders in the coastal counties should be aware of this potentially devastating disease which kills our native oaks — the natural habitat of most of our cavity-nesting birds in California.

Discovered in 1995, it's caused by a fungus-like spore of a pathogen called *Phytophthora ramorum*. It's believed the disease was introduced from SE China/Nepal which has a large illicit trade in rhododendrons.

Currently, there is no cure. The main prevention is to avoid planting rhododendrons and camellias unless the nursery has specifically tested for SOD. Also avoid bringing home greenery or firewood collected in any of the 13 north coast counties where SOD has been found. They are Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake, Napa, Sonoma, Marin, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Monterey.

# Western Bluebird still our leading bird—60% of total

Although total numbers were down in 2003, Western Bluebirds actually increased slightly from 7233 in 2002 to 7611 last year. And they accounted for only 49% in 2002.

Tree Swallows are our second most common species. The 2143 reported amount to 17% of our birds. Tree Swallows seem to be replaced somewhat by Violet-Green Swallows in the Bay Area of Santa Clara, San Mateo, and Contra Costa Counties. Adding their 579 total with the Trees indicate 21% of our birds are

cavity-nesting swallows. Violet-greens are our 4th most common species.

The Oak Titmouse, our 3rd most common species, is found throughout the State, though very few are reported from Southern California. We presume this is because the parks, golf courses, and cemeteries are seldom planted with our native oaks and none of our species is so closely allied to a single type of tree as this little gray bird.

A listing of all the species is shown on page 3D of the Annual Report.

## CHART SHOWS CHANGING SITUATION SINCE 1996

CBRP PROGRAM EIGHT-YEAR TOTAL								
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Counties	21	31	33	37	33	26	28	30
Reporters	169	293	326	264	178	175	193	163
Species	16	17	16	20	20	18	18	18
Boxes (N)	2400	3642	4142	4596	4167	4209	4027	4055
Tries (T)	1526	2442	3214	3527	3783	4023	3937	3514
T/N	64%	67%	78%	77%	91%	96%	98%	87%
Eggs (E)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	20315	23470	23981	17816
E/N	-	-	-	-	5.5	5.6	5.9	4.4
E/T	-	-	-	-	6.1	5.8	6.1	5.1
Chicks (H)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	17204	18501	19250	14429
H/N	-	-	-	-	4.1	4.4	4.8	3.6
H/T	-	-	-	-	4.5	4.6	4.9	4.1
H/E	-	-	-	-	75%	79%	80%	81%
Fledged (F)	5077	8393	11326	13122	15703	17399	16201	12720
F/N	2.1	2.3	2.7	2.9	3.8	4.1	4.0	3.1
F/T	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.7	4.2	4.3	4.1	3.6
F/E	-	-	-	-	68%	72%	68%	71%
F/H	-	-	-	-	91%	92%	84%	88%

### And the Winner is...

Dick Purvis, of course. Since before CBRP was organized, Dick was putting up nestboxes all over Orange Co. As he's gotten more help, he's expanded into Los Angeles and Riverside Counties. Reporting on 403 nestboxes, Dick fledged 1571 Western Bluebirds in 2003. He was fol-

lowed by 3 other Orange-folk: Bob Franz, Linda Violette, & Susan Bulger with 956, 465, and 313, respectively.

Irv Tiessen, Alameda, had 312; Jean Beaton, LA, had 190; Hatch & Judy Graham, Amador, produced 173; and Ray DiBasilio, El Dorado, had 163.

## California Bluebird Recovery Program

Founded in 1994, supported by Mt. Diablo Audubon Society 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 more than 4,000 nestboxes by the end of 2001, with more than 17,000 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 sometimes 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, CA 94595  
(925) 937-5974 vox  
(925) 935-4480 fax  
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

## Who helped swallows?

Surely you know the Swallow Lady of Ventura, **Jan Wasserman** with her 203 nestboxes surrounding the Ventura sewer ponds and the diversion ponds along the Santa Clara River, would fledge the most— 528 mosquito-eaters. Others fighting WNV by fledging Tree Swallows were **Christine Tischer**, Orange, with 393; **Barry Baba & Becky Masters**, Placer, with 303; **Melanie Allen Truan**, Yolo/Solano, with 144; and **Hatch & Judy Graham**, Amador, with 116.

**Irv Tiessen**, Alameda, had a whopping 128 Violet-green Swallows fledged.

Of course, there were many others helping the cause. Not everyone can care for more than one or two boxes but every cavity provided helps overcome the obvious shortage of nesting places for these important insectivorous birds.

*Thanks to Bob Franz who performed several analyses of the 2003 Annual Report and suggested many of these articles.*

## The story of the other bluebird...

A casual look at totals over the years would suggest a real change in the status of the Mountain Bluebird, but the fact is, we have sometimes failed to seek out monitors that specialize in one species or another.

This year we hadn't heard from our perennial Wood Duck and Barn Owl people, so we have little to report. Happily, we got our major MOBL landlord whom we missed last year.

**Barbara Moore** lives in Kings Beach on the north end of Lake Tahoe. For a number of years she has monitored 100 or more nestboxes in the Prosser Lake area

north of Truckee.

She has large numbers of Mountain Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and Mountain Chickadees. Her record of MOBL since 1995:

1995	134	2000	136
1996	125	2001	102
1997	n/a	2002	105
1998	147	2003	118
1999	93	2004	---

## 2003 total fledges by counties

Not too surprisingly, the 3 counties reporting the most fledges are those with the most reporters.

We've also shown fledges per box. This is a function of total cavities available in the area as well as the demand by all cavity-nesters. In other words, if you have more boxes than there are birds to use them, your F/B will be low. If all you have are bluebirds and your boxes are too close together, territoriality will dictate that some boxes won't be used. The number of broods per year also has an effect on this number.

In a sense this is a measure of efficiency. If birds were our product we want to produce the most birds with the fewest boxes. However, in the case of research, we might saturate an area with boxes so no bird would go homeless (Yolo).

COUNTY	FLDG	BOX	F/BOX	REPT	F/R
ORANGE	4906	1111	4.4	35	140
STA.CLARA	1125	425	2.6	26	43
SAN MATEO	999	454	2.2	36	28
ALAMEDA	729	222	3.3	3	243
PLACER	665	252	2.6	7	95
AMADOR	660	144	4.6	7	94
LOS ANGELES	563	98	5.7	3	188
VENTURA	543	208	2.6	2	272
EL DORADO	429	129	3.3	11	39
RIVERSIDE	359	87	4.1	2	180
STA BARBARA	319	84	3.8	3	106
CONTRA COSTA	306	120	2.6	7	44
YOLO	285	164	1.7	1	285
NEVADA	172	269	0.6	2	86
GLENN	160	28	5.7	1	160
TUOLUMNE	136	63	2.2	3	45
SAN BERDO.	74	15	4.9	4	19
CALAVERAS	68	25	2.7	2	34
SUTTER	59	19	3.1	1	59
STA CRUZ	39	22	1.8	1	39
PLUMAS	20	13	1.5	1	20
MENDOCINO	18	9	2.0	2	9
LASSEN	16	14	1.1	1	16
S LUIS OBISPO	16	20	0.8	1	16
ALPINE	14	10	1.4	1	14
KERN	11	16	0.7	1	11
SIERRA	11	9	1.2	1	11
TEHAMA	8	10	0.8	1	8
SAN DIEGO	6	4	1.5	2	3
YUBA	4	11	0.4	1	4

## Support our associates



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 maladroitness 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 The Wilderness Center, PO Box 244, Wilmot, OH 44689-0244.



There are local chapters of the **Audubon Society** 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. The **Mt Diablo Audubon Society** actively assists **CBRP** with its business administration and with mailing.

To join NAS, mail new member 1-year dues of \$20, or \$30 for 2-years, to NAS, PO Box 51003, Boulder, CO 80323-1003, and receive their quarterly magazine.

Contact your local Audubon Chapter to determine whether fees to NAS also entitle you to privileges in the local Audubon chapter.

## SWALLOWS TAKING OVER?

From Orange County, **Tom Crooms** writes: "I had four more boxes (+9%) than last year and six less WEBL fledglings (-3%).

"The TRES population continues to increase and was up by ten fledglings this year (+16%).

"Their presence decreases the nesting opportunity for bluebirds. I fear this trend will continue as I have gone from no nesting swallows to the takeover of 15 of my 46 boxes over the last six years. I had two boxes with three successful WEBL broods.

"Perhaps that's how the bluebirds are competing with the swallows. Nestling deaths were down, which I attribute to very consistent weather. Hazards were minimal with a few mite infestations to contend with and a family of seven bluebirds diving at me to protect their box (plus a couple other species that joined the commotion). No bees, ants, rats or falling boxes this year. Overall, it was another good year in Yorba Regional Park in Orange County."

**Hatch Graham** responds: Never fear, Tom, the swallows will not take over all your boxes if you will follow the practice that has proven successful in many other places—it's call pairing.

Your boxes are spread out through the park, separated to account for territorial competition between bluebirds. But it won't stop competition from swallows. However, the swallows also have interspecific territoriality. As long as they have a nest, they don't mind a bluebird next door but they seldom will live within 15' of another swallow.

So you need more boxes. Pair them on the same trees where the swallows moved in. Now you can have bluebirds and swallows. The best of both worlds.

DON YODER'S

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD...

Another nesting season ended and Individual Annual Reports are included in the 2003 State Annual Summary of nestbox activities. A general scanning of reports received often includes mention of cold wet weather early in the season, with delayed nestings and above average losses of nestlings.



**Michael & Linda Cropper**, Tuolumne, experienced weather-related loss of 16 WEBLs in April. Further, a snake preyed on one box causing a further total loss of occupants.



**Alexis St. John**, member of the Tehachapi High School Environmental Club, completed a monitoring project for several neighbors' boxes and received a Gold Award in Girl Scouting for her diligence. A number of boxes will be added to the project next year.



An example of the advisability of monitoring!: **Ed & Dian Gower**, Amador, sent a detailed record of developments in their 3 boxes, descriptions of nasty weather, progress of the nest-building and hatching and then fledging. But one youngster stayed behind after four siblings departed, cheeping and being fed by parents. After more than a week of such noise, Dian lifted the bird from the box and found a piece of string wrapped around one leg, keeping him confined to quarters. She removed the string and he fledged within an hour.



And there are other examples: **Chuck & Karin Lowrie**, Amador, used a plastic shopping bag to cover all but the entrance of a nestbox

holding a titmouse nest. The box had become soaked by a cold April rain. Four youngsters were thus saved and fledged successfully.



**Robert Yohr**, Calaveras, also recorded bird losses due to cold wet weather in April-May which was sure to have been responsible for reduced numbers of hatchlings and fledglings. Bird populations on and around the local golf course were markedly lower than in previous years.



In Placer, **Michael & Ann Van Hook** used a nestbox modified with the NABS 5" roof overhang and plan to increase the box numbers next year.



Almost a full time project of monitoring—198 nestboxes on 9 trails—proved highly productive for **Irvin Tiessen**, Alameda. Seven varieties included 312 WEBLs. Cold wet conditions had ill effects on early nesting tries, with bluebirds faring just slightly better than the other varieties faced with the same conditions. Numbers of some predation losses in the previous year were markedly reduced by use of 8' elevator poles. Losses resulting from 100° heat were demonstrably reduced by attachment of sunshades: those with shades fledged their youngsters, while those without such modifications produced cooked eggs and chicks.



**Peter Wetzer** found that fewer of his boxes were used this year but those that were occupied lost substantially fewer chicks than in the previous year. Box use by ATFLs doubled from last year's population but a trial WODU box failed to at-

tract any attention.



**Lillian Fujii & Steve Hayashi**, Contra Costa, cared for 6 nestboxes on East Bay MUD property; 38 TRES fledged and apparently ruled the roost so far as any WEBL were concerned—but we're glad for all cavity nesters who find the boxes useful.



**Sully Reallon**, Orange, experienced an abnormally large number of lost hatchlings in nestboxes on a couple of golf courses. Ordinarily, golf courses can be excellent areas & habitat for producing birds, assuming chemical applications are limited or avoided entirely. This would seem a problem to be discussed with the courses' superintendents and greens keepers to determine the nature of any materials applied and the untimeliness of their use. Fish and Game may well be interested in conducting some autopsies as well, when the dead birds are found.



**Kathy & Andy Aldrich**, Tuolumne, had a nest of interest to ATFL but it also attracted WEBLs who destroyed the flycatcher eggs and took over the nest. (*That seems not too neighborly—P.D.*). But in what could have been a cooperative effort, a Western Screech Owl used a kestrel box for daytime roosting.

(*At least, there are no known eggs reported as being destroyed in this exchange. P.D.*)



We were delighted to receive six reports from **Erin Snyder**, Resource Educator for Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District.

A total of 70 nestboxes, located in the Santa Ana River Valley, were monitored by several youth groups including Girl Scouts and students from the CA School for the Deaf. Erin oversees an active program with

young people becoming involved in habitat and natural resource preservation. Such exposures could well carry over to a life vocation in several fields.



**Helen Goforth**, Yuba, had unfortunate personal problems which kept her off of her trail nearly all year. One WEBL nest fledged 4 from 5 eggs, but the rest is unrecorded history. As things returned to some semblance of normal, she took down the boxes for repair of woodpecker damage and cleaning, and was concerned about the expiration date on her *BLUEBIRDS FLY* label. Now, that is real dedication to the entire Program. Thanks, Helen, and do have a better year in '04.



A summary statement from **Bob Franz**, Ventura, elicited reports from a number of North Orange monitors and probably will be displayed fully elsewhere in these pages. He notes, however, that Tries increased but the resulting production of birds dropped. So many factors can alter our successes, good or bad, but give us incentives to “wait till next year.”



**Philip Persons**, Santa Barbara, read an article of concern in *Western Birds, Journal of Western Field Ornithologists*. He forwarded the article and it piqued our interest for several reasons. A study being conducted along Putah Creek in Yolo and Solano counties reported parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds in three “standard North American Bluebird Society side-opening boxes”, (in part ) “retrofitted to hang from a tree branch via a wire hook (Purvis 2000).” Such intrusions are quite uncommon for cavity-nesters; open-air nests are more commonly victimized, with Prothonotary Warblers being most frequently visited. The plot thickens as soon as we read the author's name who is making the study: **Melanie Allen Truan**, working under a grant from the Department of

Wildlife, Fish & Conservation Biology, University of California, Davis.

Melanie started this study project in 2000 and secured 100 nestboxes from our prolific box builder, **Warren Button**. His boxes are hung in a good many places in the central state area. Philip also has 10 of Warren's boxes.

(*Even with our shoes off, we probably can't count the number of blues that have been fledged from Warren's boxes; one builder can make a difference. And we know there are several other box builders who only build but do not monitor Their help is most valuable and appreciated. P.D.*)



Statewide bluebird organizations from across the country, most of which are affiliates of **NABS**, are more than glad to share news of their organization's activities; they freely share items from their Newsletters and quite often ideas passed along are of great help to readers. We have found one of such interest in the *NEWSLETTER* published by **Bluebirds Across Nebraska**, Winter 2002-2003, pp. 6,9. It is titled *Predator Problems Addressed* and is a collection of perhaps a dozen or so devices and methods of deterring various predators. Request a hard copy here if you'd like to study their suggestions.



A number of subscribers—we'll leave them unnamed but they know who they are—have noted our reporting the loss of Audubon financial support and added appreciable amounts to their renewal checks to help bridge the gap. We do appreciate their help and thank them for their thoughtfulness.



It would seem we all have those days—**Sabine Axt**, Santa Clara, had a nestbox repeatedly inspected by a House Wren who never made use of the nest that was built. A White-

—next page

## MORE NOTES FROM THE FIELD...

breasted Nuthatch did lay 7 eggs but during an inspection the box was dropped accidentally: "Major bummer." Omelet!



With an eye to protecting the youngsters **Janna & Lee Pauser**, San Jose, placed tree branches to shade nestboxes, and moved several boxes to better locations also for better protection. While not totally effective, only one brood was lost due to the heat. And they can point to ones that were saved by effective measures.



Other varieties of occupants also make use of nestboxes, if not for nesting, then for roosting. **Bonnie Bedford-White**, Gilroy, found an inch of dried grass in a box—placed by a Nuttall's Woodpecker who adapted the box hole to his own dimensions.



**Bob Franz**, Orange, had a great nest going with three bluebird youngsters beginning to keep the parents busy with demands for food. Expecting to be greeted by six sparkling eyes at the next visit, he found only two beady little eyes framing the pointed nose of a homesteading mouse. The mouse gave up the property rights and scurried up the tree. Moving the box to another tree only led to some box examinations by the blue parents but no new nesting activity. Subtract three bluebirds from the prospective bottom line for '03.

Visiting the figures as reported so far, Bob finds that more boxes were monitored this year than last, but the production ratios are all down from '02. Why'zat, Bob?

We'll let him expound on the complicated relationships if he so chooses. Causes for missing eggs and lost birds are always subject to speculation and conjecture.



A bad year was also reported by **Joan Jernegan**, Placer. Particular blame goes to woodrats who ate the first and only bluebird eggs and then took over the nestbox for their own convenience & comfort—but not before they are believed to have also destroyed 12 House Wren eggs in two other nestboxes. And in what could be a first: WEBL parents who were feeding youngsters, ignored meal worms which dried up and died, but the youngsters fledged nevertheless.



It is a real pleasure to get good news and growing figures. **Ron & Kari Keyawa**, Glenn, have reasons to celebrate and they should. Ron believes his bluebird populations are growing, perhaps due to returning birds from previous years. In the same number of boxes at the same locations production has increased steadily from 1999, 81 eggs and 49 fledged, to 2003, 231 eggs and 160 fledged. That can become a challenge to continue.



How fortunes can change: **Toni Link**, Contra Costa, watched box visits and inspections by bluebird adults at two boxes but neither box seemed to meet housing demands or expectations. Neither box was used.



**Christine Tischer**, Orange, observed some noteworthy developments in nestboxes in which nests are built using grass cuttings or eucalyptus leaves. Chicks in such nests appear less healthy than those in other nests "possibly due to the high moisture content in the box that results as this type of vegetation deteriorates and/or molds." A nest of 6 15-day old chicks succumbed to such damp conditions. She also experienced both egg and nestling losses due to rat predation. Parasite

losses of '02 were avoided in '03 by application of Diatomaceous Earth (see Editor's article page 6 of prior issue of *BLUEBIRDS FLY!*). (*Tell the birds that dry pine needles work very well—P.D.*)

Christine is also a bander and enjoys recovering birds that have bands already attached. Two WEBL banded in '02 were found in '03, one of them in the same box as originally tagged. Well and good, and she also encountered 31 TRES wearing bracelets attached 100 miles north in Ventura County by that busy bandlady **Jan Wasserman** (the oldest of which had been banded on 5/15/95).

[<bandlady@treeswallows.org>](mailto:bandlady@treeswallows.org)



When **Susan Bulger**, Orange, lost some WEBL parents, she called on a rehabilitator to care for 24 youngsters; two didn't make the grade but 22 survived and fledged to the wild new world. (*It's a good idea to keep the name of a good rehabber by your telephone. "Licensed, Experienced, Qualified, Caring." They can step in to respond in such emergencies—P.D.*)



Just as monitors experience the loss of hatchlings and older birds, so do we also encounter losses among our monitors and box builders. We do not hear of them all. But almost as we were writing the above, word reached us of the passing of **Warren Button**, a dedicated nestbox builder who directed his sales entirely to CBRP. We are grateful for those contributions and shall miss his many efforts to benefit the Program.

And last fall we learned that **Donald L. Dahlsten**, pioneer in biological control at UC Berkeley, had

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## MORE NOTES...

died after a long illness. For over 25 years, Don had as many as 400 nestboxes located in forest settings to determine the effects of cavity-nesting birds on tree-killing insects. Dr. Dahlsten and his students have probably monitored and banded more chickadees, nuthatches and other forest dwelling cavity-nesters than anyone in the country. He will be missed.



Some of the problems of maintaining a program of monitoring at major public areas is exemplified by Lafayette Reservoir in Contra Costa County.

We had a short term monitor who worked on the boxes/trail early in 2003, made some repairs, and discontinued the effort at the end of May when he gained his Eagle Scout badge and departed for a new school project.

For 2004 we have been fortunate to gain the help of a new, energetic & dedicated monitor—and member of CBRP. We have a record from prior monitors of about 35 standard nestboxes. However, we have not yet located quite all of them. Park staff's records may prove helpful both with respect to numbers and locations.

What records we do have come from **Nicholas Chan**, Contra Costa. He has accounted for 28 completed nests—used, primarily by Tree Swallows. Unknown number of eggs, hatches or fledges, all accounted for by 'Gone'. "We have found no cadavers."

*(28 TRES nests averaging 5/box would have yielded 140 fledglings —Ed.)*

Unfortunately, this information could not be included in the totals due to incomplete records.



## Disaster strikes Rossmoor's bluebird nesting boxes

*Reprinted from Rossmoor News, June 9, 2004 by Jim Jardine*

Perhaps it was the strong winds in the week of May 2 through 8. Maybe the sprinklers did it. But the net effect was decimation of the 2004 western bluebird "crop."

**Don Yoder**, program director of the California Bluebird Recovery Program, installs and maintains some 70 deep-cavity nest boxes up and down the Rossmoor golf courses. He makes checks every Monday to see the type of birds nesting (the boxes attract several other bird types as well), he does egg and nestling counts and repairs any damaged boxes.

On Monday, May 10, he found nest after nest of the bluebird-occupied boxes with wet and very dead hatchlings. In 20 boxes there was a total loss of 37 young. Western bluebirds at times raise two clutches and Yoder is now waiting to see if any of the parents will try again.

As an endangered and migratory bird species, the western bluebird is protected. The golf course and Mutual Operations crews cooperate with Yoder to assure that the nests

are not disturbed. He receives calls from people about to work on a tree that has a nest box on it. Together they have eliminated the possibility of any spraying of weed killers or pesticides as a possible cause.

So the current theory has two aspects: the winds were strong enough to keep the parents away from the nests, and the wind caused water from the sprinklers to enter the nests, neither of which is a full explanation.

On the subject of bird nests in general, Rossmoor residents should be aware that people tampering with the nests of migratory birds can be fined a serious amount by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under 16 U.S.C.703-712.

Residents who are fortunate to have a bug-devouring swallow attach its mud house to their manors and are thinking about removing it, call Mutual Operations at 988-7600 and staff will give procedure, which entails waiting until the young fledge. A simple phone call can save you the \$500 fine for destruction of nest, eggs or birds.

## PROMOTE OUR CAUSE

Planning a program? We have available for your use without charge a set of NABS' 35mm colored slides, showing bluebirds, other cavity nesters and useful information about setting up a bluebird trail. The slides can be secured from CBRP for the event. You furnish the projector and pay return postage & insurance to us; the slides are in a flat Kodak tray.

Send your reservation for use to us well ahead of the date desired, allowing for mailing/transit time. The Program Director's address is at the bottom of Page 2, column 3.

Similarly, if you're setting up a table at a fair or community event, we also have a bright yellow vinyl grommetted banner approximately 2' x 4' with our CBRP name in blue to brighten up your display table. (Same reservation/delivery terms as for the slides above).

We can supply plenty of our blue CBRP brochures, describing the Program and including a membership application. Every visitor to your display ought to leave with some reminder of your concern for bluebirds. Tell us how many copies you would like.

### Brown-headed Cowbirds?

Melanie Allen Truan reports finding parasitism in 3 nestboxes in her trails along Putah Creek. Putah Creek is the boundary between Yolo and Solano Counties and adjacent to UC Davis. Melanie's study aims to find out how cavity-nesters in a remnant riparian environment disperse, how faithful they are to their home areas or as the scientist's call it "philopatry," or "site fidelity."

To do this she traps adults and color bands them; then records movements of all birds in the area through diligent observations. All young are also banded with the year and location indicated by color codes.

Having discovered Brown-headed Cowbirds have parasitized Western Bluebird nests, she wants to know if anyone else has encountered cowbirds in their nests. Contact her at [mltruan@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mltruan@ucdavis.edu)

### PROGRAM DIRECTOR ASKS WHY? EDITOR'S ANSWER:

The North American Breeding Bird Survey annually checks thousands of randomly placed routes. The Eastern Bluebirds over the period 1966-2002 show an increase of 2.73% over the entire U.S. The Mountain Bluebird's increase is 0.44%. 'Our very own' Western Bluebirds show a 1.44% decrease. Don Yoder asks "Why?" and points out that "each of the three species is obliged to compete with imported pests, namely European Starlings and House Sparrows" and that "Human populations have removed trees with natural cavities, many of which are substituted for by artificial cavities placed by dedicated birders."

Your editor went to the Home page for the BBS to see if there is an ob-

vious answer. The website is jointly operated by the Canadian Wildlife Service and the US Patuxent Wildlife Research Center at:

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/>

The 25-mi survey routes can be grouped a number of ways, by states, regions, and various ecologic landscapes. The figures just mentioned are for the entire US. But check the WEBL in Montana—it has increased 29.54%! (This may be because the local surveyors have only recently begun to notice the Westerns are there.) But think of the impact of human populations on Montana versus the rest of the Western's habitat.

We've all heard of the out-migration of people from the US heartland—check the Eastern's increase in Nebraska (7.47%) while the US increase is more modest (2.73%).

In California, check the Sierra Nevada (+4.48%), the Pitt-Klamath area (+5.57%) vs places where people live, CA foothills (-1.45%), and the South Pacific Rainforest (-2.85%).

While Dick Purvis, Bob Franz and that wonderful Orange County gang are making a difference in parts of their County, look at all the human population growth in other parts of the southland. Check out along the 405 freeway. If the Western Bluebird holds its own in California, or only just "hangs on" as Don says, it'll be because we do have dedicated nestbox caregivers that give the cavity-nesters a fighting chance. ~Ed.

### ANNUAL NABS CONVENTION ITHACA NY, JULY 7-11 2004

BROCHURE:  
<http://www.nysbs.com/NABSRegBroch.pdf>

MEETING SCHEDULE:  
<http://www.nysbs.com/?nabs2004.htm>

### DO BLUEBIRDS DUMP EGGS LIKE WOOD DUCKS?

When are there too many eggs in a bluebird nest? That's the question Norm and Bob Franz of Orange County are asking after they checked their trails this year on May 22. For Norm the number of eggs is NINE! For Bob, the number of eggs is EIGHT!

First Norm's 9. For weeks Norm has observed that the nest was owned by one male and two females — an oddity of its own. Then three weeks ago the nest had 4 eggs in it, a week later only 3 eggs and a week later down to 2 eggs! There was no evidence of how the two eggs disappeared.

Then on 5/22 there was a completely new nest over the first and it contained 9 eggs but one was partially embedded in the front of the nest. So this threesome (?) has created 13 eggs in 4 weeks?

Bob's measly 8 has a story as well. Three weeks ago the nest had 3 eggs, a week later only 2 eggs, a week later it was up to 5 and on 5/22 it contained 8 eggs. So counting the one egg that was missing, this pair has created 9 eggs in 4 weeks!

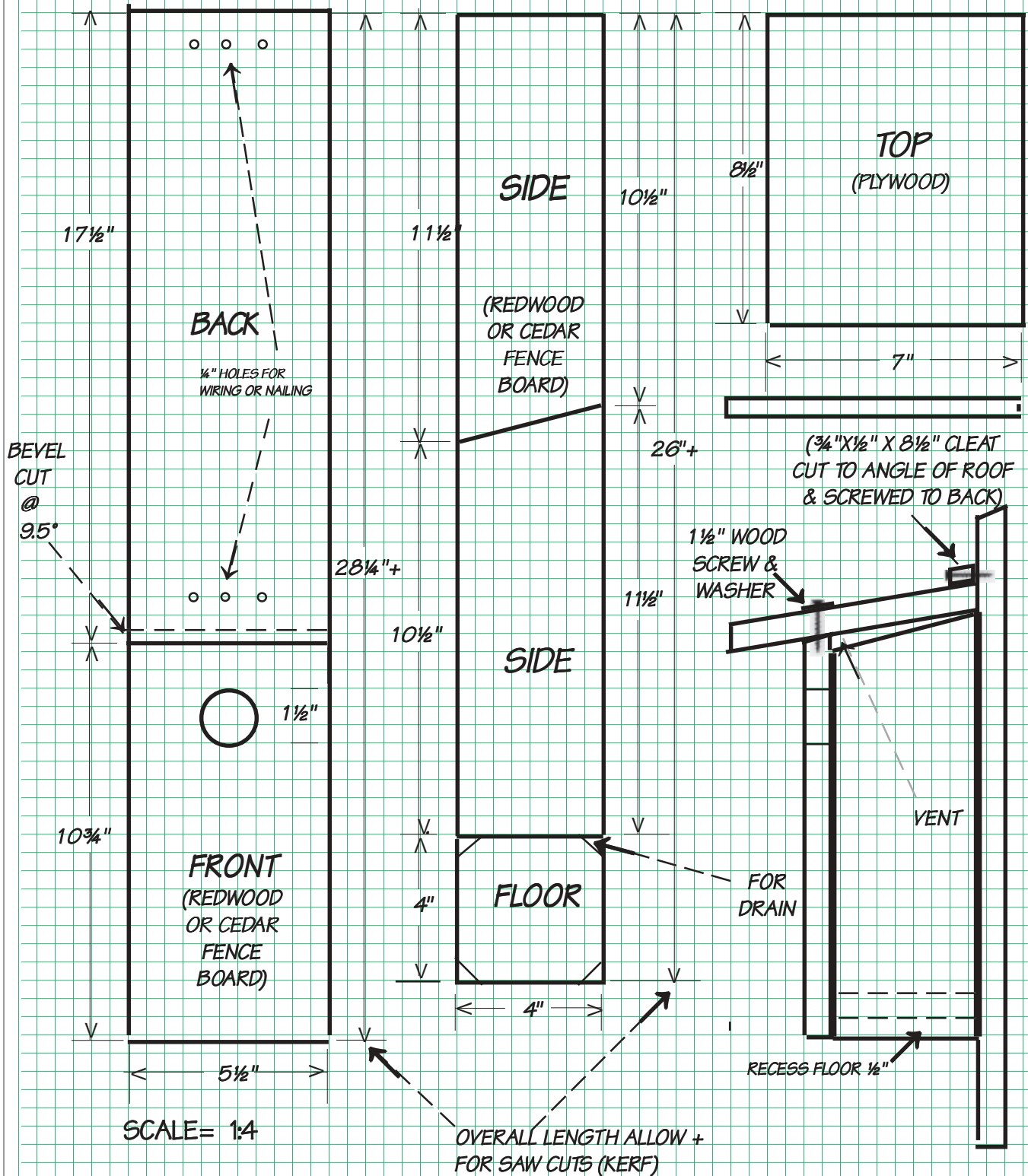
It is unlikely all of these eggs will hatch and that will be a good thing as five nestlings in a nestbox is about the maximum to have any hope of them all fledging. Norm and Bob are eager to see how many of these eggs hatch and how many nestlings survive what may be very crowded housing.

Has anyone else had WEBL clutches of more than 8?

**SEVERAL READERS HAVE ASKED FOR A REPEAT OF OUR NESTBOX PLANS. HERE THEY ARE** →

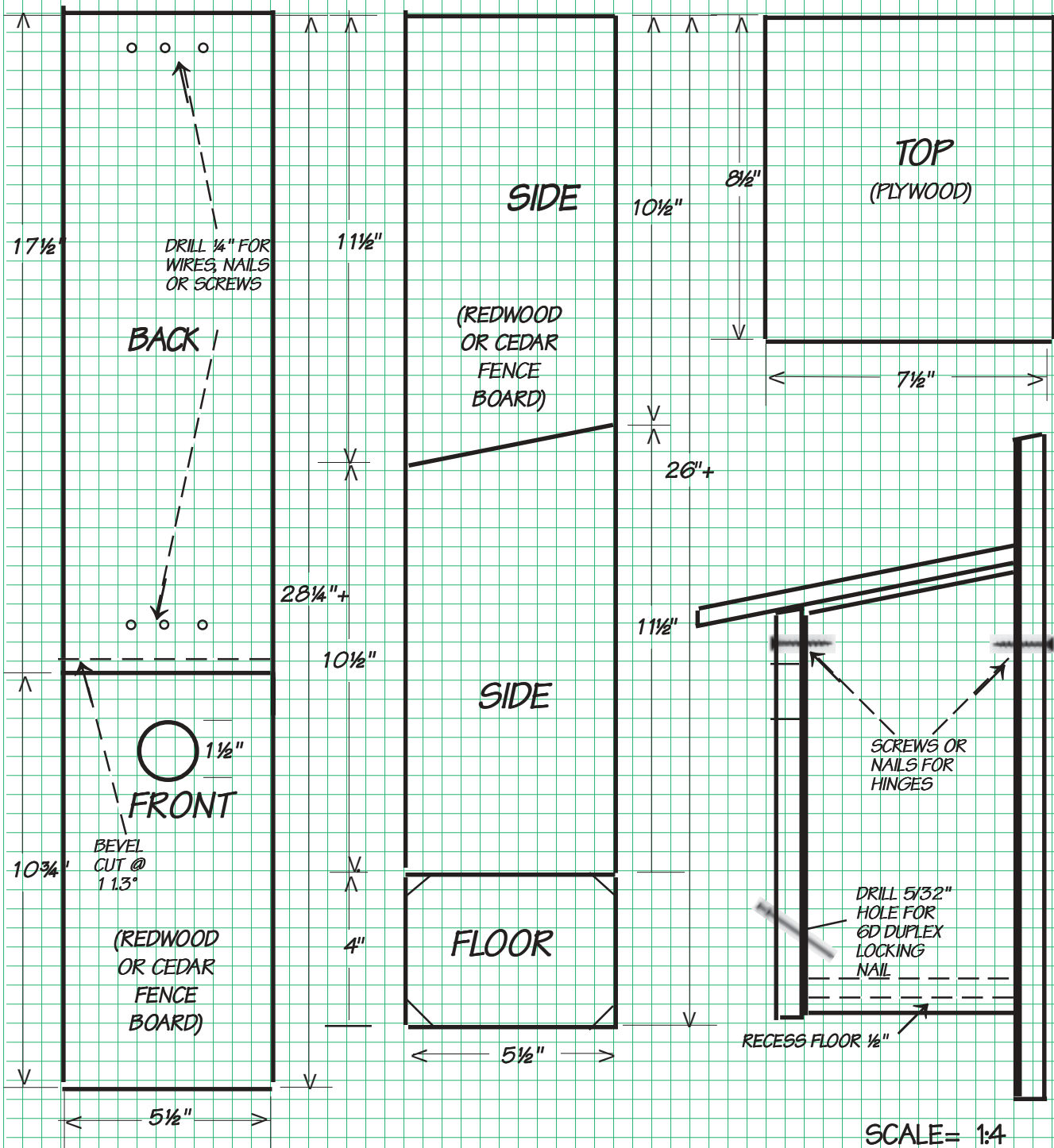


# TOP OPENING NESTBOX DESIGN



USE 1 1/4" DRYWALL SCREWS; PREDRILL HOLES WITH 3/32" DRILL BIT.  
FOR MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRDS EXPAND HOLE TO 1 9/16"

# SIDE-OPENING NESTBOX DESIGN



1 1/4" DRYWALL SCREWS; PREDRILL HOLES WITH 3/32" DRILL BIT; ALLOW AT LEAST 1/4" SPACE AT TOP OF BOTH SIDES TO VENT; CUT OFF CORNERS OF FLOOR FOR DRAINAGE; LOCKING NAIL GOES THROUGH FRONT AND INTO SIDE; EITHER SIDE CAN OPEN.

*Need advice? Where should I put my nestbox? What kind of bird builds this nest? What do I do about wasps-ants-earwigs-mites? Mama bird is missing- what do I do now? How do I know they fledged?*

## CALL YOUR COORDINATOR—KEEP IN TOUCH!

COUNTY	COORDINATOR	STREET	CITY/STATE/ZIP	PHONE	FAX	EMAIL
Alameda	Ann Kositsky	1090 Miller Ave	Berkeley, CA 94708	510-527-5091		ajpa@pacbell.net
	Raymond A Fontaine	PO Box 92	Livermore, CA 94551	510-447-0213		rayfontaine@msn.com
Amador	Hatch Graham	PO Box 39	Somerset, CA 95684	530-621-1833	621-3939	birdsfly@innercite.com
Contra Costa	Shirley&WarrenEngstrom	232 Tharp Dr	Moraga, CA 94556	925-376-4695		wiese@juno.com
	Oscar Enstrom	1932 Golden Rain Rd	Walnut Creek, CA 94595	925-952-9261		bigo@lanset.com
El Dorado	Hatch Graham	PO Box 39	Somerset, CA 95684	530-621-1833	621-3939	birdsfly@innercite.com
Lake	Jeannette Knight	PO Box 152	Cobb, CA 95426	707-928-5250		
Lassen	Edward Bertotti	470 413 Wingfield	Susanville, CA 96130	530-257-3774		
	Tom Rickman	USFS-Almanor R.S.	Almanor, CA 96130	530-257-4188		trickman@fs.fed.us
Los Angeles	Doug Martin	13066 Shenley St	Sylmar, CA 91342	818-367-8967		
Madera	William Rihn	PO Box 1648	Coarsegold, CA 93614	209-683-3052		
Marin	Ruth Beckner	15 Portola Ave	San Rafael, CA 94903	415-479-9542		jbeck1924@cs.com
	Meryl Sundove	37 Greenwood Beach Rd	Tiburon, CA 94920	415-388-2524	388-0717	msundove@audubon.org
Mariposa	Lawrence Punte	9443 Banderillo Dr	La Grange, CA 95329	209-852-2559		
Napa	David Graves	1500 Los Carneros Ave	Napa, CA 94559	707-257-0843		wavey@saintsbury.com
Nevada	Walt Carnahan	12821 Bradford Dr	Grass Valley, CA 95945	530-273-4599		wcarnaham@sbcglobal.net
Orange	Dick Purvis	936 S Siet Pl	Anaheim, CA 92806	714-776-8878		dickersly@aol.com
Placer	Heath Wakelee	6019 Princeton ReachWy	Granite Bay, CA 95746	916-797-4538		towa1@cs.com
Plumas	Mark Williams or	PO Box 767	Chester, CA 96020	530-258-5166		mwilliams@fs.fed.us
	Melissa Nelson	PO Box 767	Chester, CA 96020	530-258-5166		mnelson@fs.fed.us
San Bernardino	Glen Chappell	1923 Abbie Way	Upland, CA 91784	909-845-9266		glen.chappell@worldnet.att.net
San Joaquin	Thomas Hoffman	10122 E Woodbridge Rd	Acampo, CA 95220	209-369-8578		thoffman@lodinet.com
San Luis Obispo	Judith Burkhardt	PO Box 296	Creston, CA 93432	805-438-4491		burkhardt@onemain.com
San Mateo	Howard Rathlesberger	196 Sand Hill Cir	Menlo Park, CA 92065	650-561-9545		HJRath@aol.com
Santa Barbara	Richard Willey	4172 Vanguard Dr	Lompoc, CA 93436	805-733-5383		dick.willey@verizon.net
Santa Clara	David 'Tex' Houston	1099 Fife Ave	Palo Alto, CA 94301	650-326-3402		davidh@acterra.org
Sonoma	Mike Crumly	23555 Hwy 21	Sonoma, CA 95475	707-996-7256		mikec@freixenetusa.com
	David Graves	1500 Los Carneros Ave	Napa, CA 94559	707-257-0843		wavey@saintsbury.com
Sutter	Kevin Putman	2884 Coy Dr	Yuba City, CA 95993	530-755-1480		dputman@syix.com
Tehama	Pete Flower	331 Oak St	Red Bluff, CA 96080	530-527-0392		
Tulare	Peter C Morrison	325 S Willis	Visalia, CA 93291	209-733-1154		
Ventura	Jan Wasserman	1158 Beechwood St	Camarillo, CA 93010	805-987-3928		bandlady@treeswallows.org
Yuba	Kevin Putman	2884 Coy Dr	Yuba City, CA 95993	530-755-1480		dputman@syix.com
All Others	Don Yoder, Program Dir	2021 Ptarmigan Dr #1	Walnut Creek, CA 94595	925-937-5974	935-4480	cbrp@value.net

*How will I know if it's the same bird with the 2nd brood? Is that the same pair I had last year? I've had a titmouse in that box for 3 years but how do I know it's the same one?*

## CONTACT YOUR NEAREST BIRD BANDER. GIVE YOUR BANDER & YOUR BIRDS A RING.

BANDING AREA	BANDER	PHONE	EMAIL
Amador & El Dorado South County	Hatch Graham	530-621-1833	birdsfly@innercite.com
El Dorado - Georgetown Divide	Dave Delongchamp	530-333-2304	selkaijen@jps.net
El Dorado - Placerville	Ray DiBasilio	530-626-5318	raydib@internet49.com
El Dorado - Eldorado NF	Susan Yasuda	530-644-2324	syasuda@fs.fed.us
Los Angeles	Walter Sakai	310-434-4702	sakai_walter@smc.edu
Mendocino & Lake Counties	Janet King	707-462-3277	kingfarm@sonic.net
Orange County - Eastern	Christine Tischner	714-532-9713	cmukai@chambersgroupinc.com
Orange County - Western	Lena Yee Hayashi	714-863-3771	lyh2@aol.com
Placer & Northern Sacramento	Dee Warenycia	916-786-5056	warbler5@aol.com
Placer & Northern Sacramento	Barry Baba	916-484-3234	bbaba07@earthlink.net
San Francisco Peninsula	Howard Rathlesberg	650-367-1296	HJRath@aol.com
Solano & Yolo Counties	Melanie Truan	530-750-3825	mltruan@ucdavis.edu
Ventura County	Jan Wasserman	805-987-3928	bandlady@treeswallows.com

### Monitor reports declining numbers

Joe Lapoint, Orange, reports 11 of the 14 boxes on his Bluebird Trail were active at some point during the 2003 nesting season, and 10 produced young which fledged. Only 6 of these boxes had second nests. The run actually started out with 15 boxes and ended with 13; one box was stolen and another box damaged beyond repair—both around mid-season—so an average of 14 boxes was used for his report.

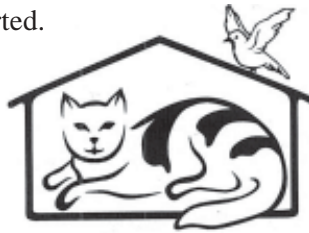
Two of 3 boxes reported as 'inactive' were occupied by House Sparrows. The third had bluebird young, but all were killed prior to fledging (probably by sparrows).

The total fledgling count of 57 young for the 14 boxes was a significant reduction of 27% from last season, and a drastic drop of 55% from the 2000 season.

### FIRE SEASON WREAKS HAVOC

The 2003 Crestfire near El Cajon swept through her neighborhood, barely missing her home, but Jean DiSylva Caggiano, San Diego, fledged one brood of WEBL and 2 of ATFL in her 3 nestboxes. Her neighbors lost their homes along with their nestboxes. A box beside a swimming pool was still on a tree but the back was scorched black. No birds were back for 2nd or 3rd broods.

We heard from Jean this Spring, "The bluebirds are back!" she reported.



CATS INDOORS!  
THE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFER BIRDS & CATS

### The Poet's Corner Glimpsing the Bird House

Through the bushes I see a birdhouse hung on an oak: small black hole in weathered wood: dark passage

for baby blues that rustle and peep, then fall silent, curled up together in sleep or in fear. . . Day by day

I move closer: spy on the ins and outs of parents: auburn-blue couriers bringing insect messages from

a larger world outside the box. Then in just a month they are gone—first teetering on the edge of the sky,

then disappearing into it as auburn-blue melts into the broader canvas of late August days. . .

~Kathy Kieth, Fair Oaks, CA  
first appeared in  
Red Owl, Spring 2004

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 co-operators but we must have paid members to keep printing. You may have received this issue because you sent us an Annual Report for 2003 for which we thank you. Won't you please support us with a membership as well?

BLUEBIRDS FLY!  
California Bluebird Recovery Program's  
Newsletter  
Vol 9, No. 4; Vol 10, No. 1 & 2,  
Winter-Spring, 2003-2004

Please send correspondence to CBRP,  
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