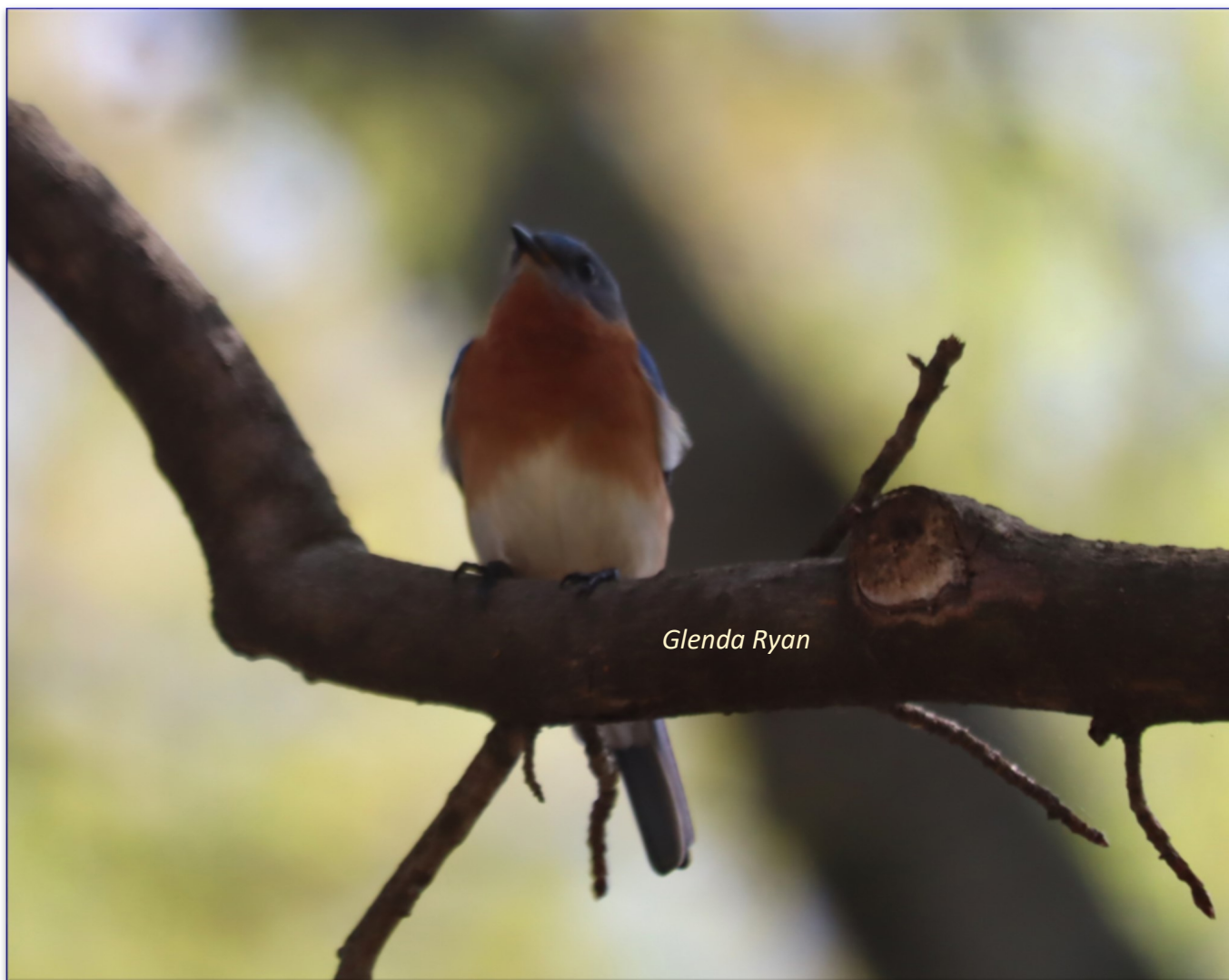


Spring 2021

BLUEBIRD NOTES



BLUEBIRDS GREETINGS & WELCOME TO SPRING 2021



- How nice to leave the cold weather behind us and know that many months of warm weather and sunshine are on the horizon. And the sweet bluebirds will be out and about more in the upcoming days. Our nest boxes and preparation for their arrival is about to pay off big time!
- As the bluebirds begin a new round of parenting, we will help them by monitoring the nest boxes, their shelter to offer their babies the best chance for survival. They will help us by bringing magnificent sights to our eyes, music to our ears, and inspiration to our spirits.
- We have so much hope and exceptional beauty arriving. Nature will help strengthen our positive outlook. We hope the photos, stories, and tips in this newsletter set a wonderful tone to start your Spring off on a good note. Stay Safe, Stay Positive, and Happy Bluebirding in 2021!

**North Carolina Bluebird Society
(NCBS)**

Mission Statement

Our goal is to support activities that foster the resurgence of bluebirds and other cavity nesting birds in our home areas. NCBS is an affiliate member of the North American Bluebird Society. www.ncbluebird.org

Report from NCBS Immediate Past President

I realize so many of us were looking forward to getting together at our 2021 Annual Conference in May. However, due to the continuing safety concerns surrounding COVID-19, your Board of Directors has voted to cancel our Annual Conference this year and focus its efforts toward 2022.

One positive coming from this pandemic is our needed growth in using technology! Your Board is now using Zoom to conduct its quarterly meetings! This eliminates all travel and all COVID-19 safety concerns. We will continue to explore using this virtual technology as it has the capability to bring us all together in new, exciting ways. Stay tuned!

Based on our by-laws, each year the nominating committee shall nominate eligible persons for officers and directors and report its nominees at our annual meeting, at which time additional nominations may be made from the floor before being voted on. Since we will not be holding our Annual Conference again this year, your current Board will fill the expiring / vacant positions by appointment as specified in our by-laws. Look for detailed information on your leaders coming in the Summer addition of *Bluebird Notes*!

Sending wishes for a prosperous year for the Bluebirds in 2021!

Ken

Bluebird Notes

Vol. 36 Issue I

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Your bluebird stories and photos are welcome for newsletter/online content.

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ANTICIPATION OF ARRIVAL OF 2021 BABY BLUES

2021 Conference Cancelled — But Bluebirds Arrival Is Still On

With safety regarding the Coronavirus as a top concern, the Board decided not to hold an annual meeting in 2021. Hopefully by 2022 we can try again for this get-together that brings so much joy to Bluebirders. Any plans next year are, of course, dependent on the pandemic situation and government guidelines at that time.

We are putting our focus on positive news! The bluebirds are scouting home locations, building nests, and planning for the appearance of the next generation of Baby Blues. There is so much we can do to help bluebirds from the safety of own yards. Nest boxes are critical for the survival of bluebirds. Some helpful monitoring tips are shared below from our Immediate Past President, Ken Kernodle

What's in your monitoring bag?

As we enter the 2021 bluebird nesting season, are you ready to monitor your nesting boxes on a regular weekly schedule? Do you have the right resources in your monitoring kit? Check out the tools and equipment in Ken Kernodle's monitoring bag.

1. Scrap, wire brush, old paint brush
2. Regular and Phillips screwdrivers (large and small)
3. Hammer, limb/brush/weed cutter, knife and level
4. Sandpaper, marker, recording book and pencil
5. Needle nose, slip joint, and regular pliers
6. Safety glasses/goggles, protective gloves, first aid bag
7. Miscellaneous - spare parts bag, Ivory soap bar and a rag
8. 13" zippered bag to hold it all!



Ken reports these items are extremely helpful as he monitors and maintains trails totaling 25 boxes!

Are there other items that are helpful to you in your monitoring efforts? Let us know at editor@ncbluebird.org



NEST BOXES ARE KEY TO BLUEBIRDS' SURVIVAL

Status of SECU Nest Boxes built by Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group (EBRG)

The EBRG has over 7,000 bluebird nesting boxes ready to ship to the State Employees Credit Unions across the state as soon as the SECU management allows them to do so. Anthony Sneed (EBRG) reports the SECU management has been in contact with him but wants more people to get the COVID-19 vaccine before they will consider re-stocking in their offices again.



If you need boxes, please consider a road trip to Warrenton and pick them up at the EBRG Warehouse! Just schedule your pick-up (532 West Ridgeway Street, Warrenton, NC 27589) with Anthony (in photo surrounded by nesting boxes) by phone (252-820-2275).

Bluebirds of Macon County Get New Nest Box Roofs

It's that time of year to be getting your nestboxes ready for the birds. I've seen pairs of bluebirds going in and around my nestboxes. In a month or so, some will be starting to lay eggs. If you have a nestbox, clean it out. If you don't have any, put up a couple. The birds will thank you.

My winter project has been nestbox repair. I found 25 nestboxes that needed new roofs. Fortunately, I have a new neighbor, Ken, who has a wood shop and a love of birds. He has cut wood and replaced roofs. The refurbished boxes are already back up on the Greenway and Mainspring properties. Also, our fellow volunteer, David Hinson, has refurbished 8 boxes donated to Mainspring by Jason Love.



I will be working with Dennis Desmond of Mainspring to put them up on some Mainspring properties, including the new Wautauga Mound and Tessentee extension. I'm looking forward to this Spring, as I'm sure you all are.

George Kaye, Macon County Coordinator

North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Nest Box Roof Options

To deter elements of nature harmful to nest boxes and bluebirds (rain, snow, predators, extreme temperatures), consider suggestions below from NABS (nabluebirdsociety.org) for roof choices.

- Weather resistant materials such as plastic, Hardie Board, or roofing shingles can be used for the roof, if there is sufficient insulation underneath .
- Roof overhang should be at least 2 inches on each side, but more is better (3 to 5 inches).
- Roof should cover back edge of nestbox, unless other features prevent rain from entering the joint between back and roof.
- Roof should extend beyond the box entrance hole in the front, and also beyond any ventilation holes on the sides.

CHICKADEE, NUTHATCH, TITMICE, & CAROLINA WREN



I am continually learning more about birds. Taking pictures, identifying images, watching them — it is so interesting. I became involved with NCBS due to website work in 2007. I appreciated our feathered friends, but knew very little details about the different species. I have recently been putting more focus on some other cavity-nesting songbirds native to North Carolina supported by the mission of NCBS. In looking over nesting data in past years, I have noticed reports of chickadees, nuthatches, titmice, and wrens in nest boxes. Some examples are listed below.

- CJ Richardson of Apex mentioned chickadees in 2020 as other species in her nest data monitoring.
- Several brown-headed nuthatches, wrens, and chickadees were seen in the nest boxes monitored by Anne Runyn of White Deer Park in Garner in 2020.
- Martha (Marti) Kane advised of house wrens in the nest boxes at Mordecai Historic Park in Raleigh.
- Kay & David Hindsley of Tarboro informed that their 2020 visitors included chickadee and titmouse.

Visitors in my backyard on Christmas Day 2020 included tufted titmice and wrens. I was excited as this was my first known photo of a titmouse (I had snapped a few wren pics last summer). Per discussion with Ken, I wanted to get photos of chickadee and nuthatch. On New Years Day 2021 I had time to sort thru pictures taken last year. I was pleasantly surprised to see I already had chickadee and nuthatch photos taken from Mordecai Park in downtown Raleigh (shown below).

Also, some great pictures of these 4 North Carolina native cavity-nesting songbirds can be seen on page 6. Thanks to Brad Turnage of Durham for those and some very nice bluebird photos (see one on page 9).

Glenda Ryan, Webmaster/Editor



WHATS HAPPENING IN DURHAM COUNTY

Bahama Lady Finds Joy in Seeing & Photographing Bluebirds

Elke Hoffmann recalls seeing a bluebird for the first time about 10 years ago near her home in Northern Durham County. She was hooked immediately after seeing the precious winged creature. She searched online and found nbluebird.org and other bluebird sites to learn as much as possible about this fantastic feathered friend. She soon put up her first nest box and was delighted that a bluebird took up residence immediately.

Elke was fortunate to witness the process of seeing blue eggs become baby blues and fledge last April. After spotting the first egg, it was exciting to see egg after egg appear daily until there were 5. Seeing the mother and father taking such good care of the little ones was very emotional. This experience really meant so much to Elke and strengthened her resolve to keep helping bluebirds. She shared some snapshots of the memory.



Elke is currently a member of our organization, as well as NABS (North American Bluebird Society). There are three nest boxes in her yard at this writing, including two Credit Union boxes, which are made by Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group (EBRG). Elke's husband, Paul, was very helpful in putting up the nest boxes. Originally they had three Credit Union nest boxes. When one needed to be replaced, Paul built a nest box.

She has captured many wonderful photos and shared with us. Her pictures have been in several past *Bluebird Notes* issues, including the covers of Spring 2020 and Winter 2019 editions. We appreciate the value she is providing to NCBS and the sweet bluebirds. We look forward to more pictures and stories from this devoted Bluebird Lady in Durham County.

Duke University Engineering Students Donate 24 Nest Boxes

The NCBS has received 24 bluebird nesting boxes made by the first year engineering students at Duke University. These boxes will be used to establish new or extend existing trails, as well as replacement boxes on existing trails. This is the second consecutive year we have been gifted with nest boxes from Duke.



Don't these Bluebird nesting boxes from Duke students look fabulous? Thank You Duke University for helping the NCBS help our precious bluebirds (again). A shout out to Greg Burnpass and Murad Maksumov for loading the bluebird boxes for transport.



SONGBIRD BUNCH OF DURHAM

White-Breasted Nuthatch



Tufted Titmouse



Reporting all species using your nestboxes, not just bluebirds, is recommended by NABS (North American Bluebird Society). Per NABS, titmice, chickadees, wrens, and nuthatches, as well as tree swallows, are beneficial birds. Reminder: It is illegal to remove an active nest of any native cavity-nesting bird. See more at nabluebirdsociety.org to learn to identify various bird eggs and much more about bluebirds and other feathered friends that NABS educates about and strives to help.

These birds are often mentioned in the nest data survey comments as other species benefiting from the nest boxes. We are glad to know that bluebirds and various songbirds, as suggested by NABS, are being helped by North Carolinians. The cuteness overload and songs of happiness these winged creatures provide are great rewards for our efforts. Thanks to Brad Turnage for these awesome snapshots of four Durham songbirds that are supported by the conservation mission of NABS & NCBS. Don't these pictures motivate you to keep on monitoring, or start this year? Questions: Ask Senior Bluebird Consultant, Ray Welch, via email contact@ncbluebird.org or phone 336-764-0226.

Carolina Wren



Carolina Chickadee



2020 — A GOOD YEAR FOR GRANTS

Bluebirds throughout North Carolina will be benefiting from the nine grants awarded in 2020 by the North Carolina Bluebird Society (NCBS). All parts of the state — north, east, south and west— were represented in the grant applications and awards. The NCBS Board of Directors believes that awarding these grants fulfills our mission — “Our goal is to support activities that foster the resurgence of bluebirds and other cavity-nesting birds in our home area.”

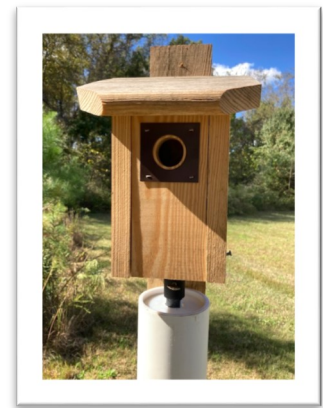
The NCBS Board is fortunate to be in a financial position to award grants that are reviewed and approved by board members. Grants are financed by member dues, member donations, memorial gifts and gifts from other entities. NCBS received a major gift in 2020 from the Greensboro Science Center as part of its admission-price sharing program, and we have been using that money to finance some of our grants.

Grants can be used for educational purposes, nest boxes, or bluebird trails. In 2020, all of the grantees applied for grants to either create new bluebird trails or improve existing trails and boxes. One of the new trails in Waxhaw, NC, created by Eagle Scout applicant, Henry LePage, includes very informative signage all along the trail — achieving both NCBS’ educational and habitat goals. This YouTube video highlights the new trail in Waxhaw Town Creek Park that Henry created: https://youtu.be/bvPWzN_c034.



As you look at the list of 2020 grants below, perhaps you will be inspired to envision a project you can implement in your community and apply for a grant in 2021.

Questions about grants can be directed to Kay Cameron at 703-336-2865.



Location

2020 NCBS Grant Project

Yates Mill Park, Raleigh

New trail — 5 nest boxes

Walker Inn, Andrews

New trail — 5 nest boxes

Lonnie Poole Golf Course, Raleigh

Improve trail, install predator baffles

JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh

Improve trail, install predator baffles

Turnipseed Nature Preserve, Wake County

New trail — 10 nest boxes with baffles

Finley Golf Course, Chapel Hill

New trail

Yadkin River Greenway, Wilkes County

Improve trail, install predator guards

Lindley Park, Greensboro

Add 3 boxes and install predator guards

Town Creek Park, Waxhaw

New trail with signage —10 boxes

BLUEBIRD SIGHTINGS ACROSS THE STATE

Hello from Moore County

This cheery bluebird nestled among a colorful natural setting is sure to brighten your day. Thanks to David Kilpatrick of Pinehurst for this awesome snapshot taken last November.

This area of North Carolina is known for an abundance of golf courses. Bluebird nest boxes fare quite well on golf course greenways and offer mutual benefit for feathered friends and their human sponsors. Other locations good for nest boxes include cemeteries, parks, meadows, pastures, library and school grounds, quiet natural settings, and your yard.



Spring Greetings from Oak Ridge

Edward Hayne sent in the wonderful photo that captures a charming bluebird among Spring flowers. Great sign that bluebirds in central NC did well last year. Proper nesting solutions are critical for bluebird. See tips below from North American Bluebird Society (NABS), and more at their website (nabluebirdsociety.org) for ways to help our bluebirds flourish all over North Carolina..



NABS Bluebird Nest Box Tips

- Well ventilated, watertight, include drainage holes
- Easy to open, monitor, and clean
- Made of solid, untreated wood
- No perch (competitive birds are attracted)

Warm Wishes from Durham

Brad Turnage submitted the splendid bluebird perching on a pole. It is beautiful, posing in a serene and peaceful manner. Great to see such a clear closeup of a Durham Blue looking so good. See some ways you can help bluebirds in your area below.

Recycled Options for Nest Boxes

Spring is time for bluebirds to start new families. We want to help by providing nesting solutions any way possible. Some bluebird monitors have had good luck with the following items used as nesting boxes:

- Recycled plastic
- 4 inch diameter PVC drain pipe
- 5 x 5 inch PVC fence post cladding



Tips on this page were retrieved in part from nabluebirdsociety.org. Visit this website for a wealth of helpful bluebird information.

JOHNSTON COUNTY NEWS & PHOTOS

We are pleased to welcome Michael D. Nolan to our team. Read more about Michael below in the summary he provided to help us know him, his family, and their love of bluebirds better.

Family Who Love Bluebirds of the North and South

I am a retired federal auditor/accountant, originally from New Jersey. My wife is not as retired as I am.



She teaches on-line Nursing college courses. We have been residents of Clayton since 2014. We're the parents of three sons, two of whom also live in North Carolina. Our third son loves his Connecticut bluebirds. We have lived most of our lives in upstate New York, but moved down South to be near our two grandchildren (and their parents). We are blessed to have three grandchildren, who all love bluebirds.

Looking back over the years I have always fed wild birds, but I did not have nesting houses. I remember, when we moved to Clayton, seeing a bluebird in our back yard that borders a natural treed area. I had not seen one at a feeder before. So, in what seems like thousands of meal worms later (Thank God for Amazon's quick and free delivery of 10 pound bags) we're seeing whole families of bluebirds at the feeder. The adults are using our feeder to train the fledglings where to go for an easy meal.

Inspired by a NCBS newsletter, we put up a bluebird house last August. We're hoping it'll be occupied this season. My youngest grandson, age 2, has been learning about and enjoying the birds for the past year and a half and even lets me know every day when it's time to feed them. He has a habit of sprinkling worms/seeds on the porch deck for birds that I guess he innately believes may not want to go to the feeder. We've made a fun game of it as I pretend that I don't want him to do it. We see almost no squirrels at the feeders since I started also using safflower seeds for the other birds. I'm looking forward to furthering the NCBS mission in Johnston County by assisting people to foster and enjoy the birds.

Michael Nolan, Johnston County Coordinator

Sights of Clayton Bluebirds Doing Well Last Year



Thanks to Jay Langham for sending these great snapshots from Johnston County last year. Good to see a snake guard on the pole, which is so valuable to help protect the eggs and babies and increase the odds to see the fledglings take flight.



NEST BOX MONITORING / NABS TIPS

Update: 2020 Nest Box Survey Report Data & Comments that were not included the Winter edition of *Bluebird Notes*.

| 2020 NEST BOX SURVEY DATA REPORT ADDITIONS | | | BLUEBIRD | | | OTHER SPECIES | | |
|--|--|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| County | Name | Boxes | Eggs | Hatched | Fledged | Eggs | Hatched | Fledged |
| Catawba | Lynn B. Spees | 25 | 93 | 56 | 49 | 42 | 11 | 6 |
| Craven | Clay & Kathy Hodge | 55 | 253 | | 146 | 33 | | 21 |
| Harnett | Lisa Spainhour/Barbara Taylor (Keith Hills Country Club) | 40 | 374 | 280 | 280 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Totals --- > | | 971 | 5,571 | 4,327 | 4,250 | 912 | 645 | 566 |

Lynn B. Spees, Hickory (Catawba County): There was a great deal of house wren (HOW) predation this season. At least 25 bluebird eggs were lost to them; maybe more. Black rat snakes may have invaded 2 boxes despite predator guards. One HOW nest was raided by a raccoon. All three Carolina Chickadee nests were raided by HOWs, with the loss of 13 eggs and 5 nestlings. Four of my boxes have smaller entrance holes for serving chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice. An owl box I mounted in March 2020 and did not check until this February I found to be housing a screech owl. I cannot tell if it raised a family. Incidentally, there were blue jay feathers in the box.

Barbara Taylor & Lisa Spainhour (Harnett County): 2020 Buies Creek Garden Club Birdwatch on the Nancy Blair Eliason Bluebird Trail along Keith Hills Golf Course experienced another successful year. Four Flying Squirrels in a bluebird box that all survived!

Monitoring Tips from North American Bluebird Society (NABS)

- Nest monitoring should only be done during calm, mild, and dry weather conditions to reduce the chance of chilling chicks or eggs. Open the nestbox carefully, and do not to allow the eggs to fall out or chicks to jump out. Songbirds have a poor sense of smell and will not abandon the nest due to monitoring the nest, eggs, or chicks. Even so, you should avoid touching eggs or nestlings.
- Complete monitoring as quickly and quietly as possible to minimize disturbance. Avoid disposing of used nest material near the nest site as it may attract predators—instead put it in a paper or plastic bag and dispose of it in the trash far from the nestbox. Always be certain to close the box door securely before leaving. Record what you observed.
- A paper wasp or mouse nest will drive nesting birds away from the box, and should be removed. Take appropriate precautions to avoid breathing the dust from a mouse nest.
- Knowing what species is using the box is also beneficial. Bluebird societies would like you to monitor and report all species using your nestboxes, not just bluebirds. Tree Swallows, titmice, chickadees, Carolina and House Wrens and nuthatches are all native, beneficial birds. Keeping records on a weekly basis, and sending survey forms in at the end of the nesting season increases our knowledge of cavity-nesting birds.
- Knowing when the eggs were laid will help you determine if they are infertile, or when they should hatch and when the young would be expected to leave the nest. In the case of most cavity nesters, one egg is laid one each day until the entire clutch is complete. Incubation will then begin. For bluebirds, incubation typically lasts approximately 12–14 days. After hatching, the chicks will remain in the nest for about 17–21 days. Your monitoring should be limited to viewing from a distance after the 12–13th day, or the chicks might jump or fly from the box prematurely.

Remember: It is illegal to remove an active nest of any native cavity-nesting bird.

Resource: North American Bluebird Society - *NABS Factsheet Getting Started*. See link below to view entire article.

<http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/PDF/NABSfactsheetGettingStarted>

BLUEBIRDS STAYING BUSY LOOKING FOR GOOD HOMES

Forsyth County Bluebirds Seek Pools Near Housing

Thanks to John Holland for these photos of Winston-Salem bluebirds. The Blues need a place with close access with clean fresh water for drinking and bathing and food sources. How lucky that these bluebirds found safe housing and basic needs. Finding a safe haven for their eggs is especially important in the Spring. Check out nbluebirdsociety.org and nbluebird.org for ways you can make your yard bluebird-friendly.



Bluebirds Make Wise Home Choices for Their Young

Elke Hoffmann of Bahama submitted the photos below last year. The Blues in her yard have a nice place to house their family and adequate options to find food for their young. Insects such as spiders, crickets, and other bugs make up a big part of the babies' diet in the Spring and Summer. Mealworms make a great supplement during the warmer months, but are more important when colder weather strikes.

See page 4 for more about nest boxes, which are key to bluebirds' survival. Monitoring advice can be found on page 11. Also, check out page 6 to learn how Elke got started caring about bluebirds.

Check out nbluebird.org, nbluebirdsociety.org and sialis.org for a wide range of tips, including important information regarding feeding bluebirds, landscaping for bluebirds, and providing nest boxes.



NEST BOXES KEY FOR BLUES IN SPRING

Bluebird Couple Scouting for a Residence in Cary



Bill Zitek, Chatham County Coordinator (Highway 501 North), submitted this snapshot of some bluebirds checking out their options for a Spring condo. They both seem to be impressed with this one.

A sturdy slanted roof to keep out the rain and wind, an entrance hole that is sized favorably for bluebirds, but not competitive birds, are housing elements that are important for the Blues.

Bluebird parents have a big job in the upcoming months, to keep their eggs & babies safe, provide adequate food, and guide them to fledge.

They need a proper homes in safe locations. Nesting boxes sitting on a metal pole, with a predator guard, are critical for their best interest. Give the bluebirds a key to their future success by providing a suitable nest box and monitor it regularly. People are the real estate/property managers and alarm systems for the Blues. Take that responsibility seriously. Their livelihood depends on it!

Good construction material choices for bluebird nestboxes:

- Solid wood: ¾ to 1 inch thick
- Exterior grade plywood (made with water-resistant glue)
- Softwoods (such as pine) sealed with a water-based paint or stain

Do NOT use birdhouses with following materials:

- Clay or ceramic (concerns of heat retention and fragility)
- Metal (concern of overheating in hot weather)
- Pressure-treated plywood (preservatives or resins can be toxic to birds)

Additional features that are very beneficial for bluebirds

- Nest box with heat shields to lower internal temperatures on hot days
- A metal plate serves as a hole guard & prohibits enlargement by rodents or woodpeckers

Our bluebird friends need nest boxes desparately. Article above assembled in part with recommendations found on nabluebirdsociety.org. Check out this resource for a wide range of valuable information.



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HAPPY SPRING 2021

NCBS MEMBERSHIP

I am thrilled that a new beginning is on the horizon with the time of year heading into the season of renewal. Hope is all around. Nature is coming to life again after the winter sleep. Spring is always my favorite season, but especially wonderful this year. We have made it through 2020, with extra concern, challenges, and duress shared by everyone.

The Bluebirds of 2020 helped me deal in this time of excessive stress. I was unable to visit Mordecai Park as much as I would have liked, but did see bluebirds on several occasions. They brought joy and distraction from the pandemic and helped me stay positive. I believe that 2021 will be a better year, but no matter what issues come along...the bluebirds will bring beauty, peace, and happiness. Happy Bluebirding!



Glenda Ryan

Glenda Ryan, Webmaster/Newsletter Editor

websitebloom.com

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- Other (please explain)

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HAPPY SPRING! WELCOME 2021 BLUEBIRDS!

Hello from the North Carolina Mountains

Thanks to Mike Duncan of North Wilkesboro for these fabulous photos of some Western NC blue feathered friends. The Blues on the North Carolina state flower, the Dogwood, are simply marvelous. What wonderful symbols of Spring. We are lucky that sightings of bluebirds will be increasing in the upcoming months. The first nesting season begins in March. So much natural beauty is coming our way!



Can you recognize bluebird nests/eggs? Per NABS (North American Bluebird Society), look for 1–4 inch tall, cup-shaped neat nest cup comprised of fine grasses or pine needles. Powder Blue is the usual color of bluebird eggs, but they are white on occasion. Numerous tips in this newsletter were retrieved from NABS. Learn more at their website, nabluebirdsociety.org, and check out our website, ncbluebird.org.