

BLUEBIRD NOTES

WINTER GREETINGS, BLUEBIRDERS!

We hope this season finds you well as we approach 2022. It is a time to look forward to new beginnings. We are excited to share with you plans for our annual meeting to be held at Sylvan Heights Bird Park in Scotland Neck, NC. We are really looking forward to our first get-together in three years! We have a day of fun activities and education on the agenda ... learn from our speakers and see birds of many colors.

Mark your calendars for May 14, 2022 if you want a chance to see a wide range of our feathered friends, enjoy beautiful scenery, and spend time relaxing with other bird enthusiasts. The beautiful peacock photo below is courtesy of the park. See more pictures and information about the park and our upcoming conference on pages 4-5. Check out the website for Sylvan Heights Bird Park at shwpark.com.



North Carolina Bluebird Society (NCBS) Mission Statement

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

Nest Box Monitoring Data Needed ... We have extended our deadline for you to report your 2021 Nest Box Data. See the survey form in the autumn newsletter or ncbluebird.org (1st option at top of left menu). If you need help getting a form or submitting the data, let Kari know. If you previously submitted your form by email, please check with Kari to make sure she received it. If she did not, please mail it to her at her mailing address on the form. Thank you! We hope to publish the nest monitoring data in the spring newsletter.

Annual Meeting, May 14, 2022 ... A grand event at Sylvan Heights Bird Park in Scotland Neck, NC. This is your chance to see a wide variety of birds that you would not likely encounter in nature or your yard in North Carolina. See more on pages 4-5, on ncbluebird.org, and in the Spring *Bluebird Notes*.

Volunteer Opportunities ... We have two Director slots open for members who are in the Coastal and Eastern Piedmont regions. Reach out to one of the Co-Presidents if you are interested in serving on the Board. We have counties across the state that could use help. To hear more about County Coordinator opportunities, contact Bill Zitek.

Upcoming Board Meeting ... The next Board Meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2022 at 7 pm. All members are welcome. Please contact Marti for the Zoom link.

Memoriam for Jim Jochum ... We want to honor our fellow Bluebirder, Jim Jochum, in this edition. We were very sorry to hear of his passing in September. Our thoughts are with his family during this difficult time. Read more on page 6.

Bluebird Notes

Vol. 36 Issue IV

North Carolina Bluebird Society, Inc. publishes *Bluebird Notes* quarterly:
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter

Your bluebird stories and photos are welcome for newsletter/online content.
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Deadline for submitting 2021 Nest Survey Data has been extended to: 01/15/2022
Contact Kari if you need help finding the form

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This fall, I've been busy cleaning, caulking, roofing and painting nest boxes to get them ready for next spring. I've followed John Allen's advice (see his article in the fall issue of Bluebird Notes) regarding how to keep the Eastern Bluebird Rescue Group nest boxes from rotting and splitting. Great tips! Thanks, John! I've also been winterizing my Bailey bluebird boxes here at home with a square of insulation in the floor of the box and pieces of an old wool scarf on top of that. (The birds will pick at the insulation so make sure it is covered with wool or felt.) Usually I add a "jacket" of black vapor-barrier plastic around three sides of the box to act as a wind shield. The bluebirds like to "pig pile" in a cozy box when it gets really cold. Just call me the Crazy Bird Lady!

I had the sad duty this fall of removing 15 nest boxes from the Wil-Mar Golf Course in Knightdale when it was recently sold. This bluebird trail was in operation for 25 years, installed in the 1990s by our own Bill Satterwhite. I took over Bill's trail in 2020 and replaced all the boxes, poles and predator guards. This year, more than 70 bluebird chicks fledged from the boxes. It is sad to see such a successful population of bluebirds impacted by habitat loss and loss of nest boxes. The golf course is slated to become another one of those high-density housing developments we've all seen popping up like fire ant hills across the Triangle and throughout our state. Most of the mature pines on the golf course have already been marked for timber harvesting. I've encouraged the golf course owner to save a few small grouping of pines so that a remnant of the current population of Brown-headed Nuthatches might survive. (See article on nuthatches in this newsletter.)

The logging has been rampant in my little town of Youngsville too. In October, loggers clear cut 150 acres of forest land right down to my property boundary. Most of the upstream portion of the Mill Creek watershed has been deforested including the so-called "stream buffer zone." The barren land is slated to become another high-density housing development. I wish the state regulators had been able to make the loggers repair or mitigate the damage to the stream buffer, but our state's environmental laws are insufficient and logging is exempt from most of the laws. The result has been flooding in my yard and sedimentation in the creek that runs through my yard.

Last year, when Ray and Ken asked me if I was willing to be a co-president with Dr. Bill Zitek, I agreed. My plan had been to work for at least five years after my retirement in 2019 on bird counts and bluebird trails in the Triangle area. So, a two-year stint as co-president was easy to commit to. I never imagined the environmental damage that I would experience this past year and the flooding threat to my home. As a result, I have had to greatly speed up my plans to move to New England where most of my family members reside. I am very sad to leave you and the bluebirds.

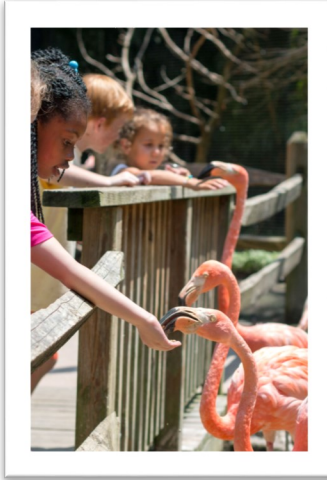
I've lived and worked in North Carolina for 41 years! I am not sure of the timing of the move; it could be as early as this spring. (It depends on the finances of the house selling/buying/moving.) I promise I will continue to work for you and the bluebirds right up until the day I leave.

Thank you for your dedication to the birds and to this society! If you want to do more to help NCBS, see volunteer opportunities on page 2. We need more members to take on leadership roles and help with educational outreach to the public. I hope you will consider doing more to help bluebirds and other cavity nesters in this challenging time!

Marti Kane, Co-President



SYLVAN HEIGHTS BIRD PARK



On September 21, 2021, David and Kay Hindsley and Bill Zitek visited the Sylvan Heights Bird Park in Scotland Neck, NC. They met with Karen Parker, the event coordinator, and one of the owners, Ali Lubbock.

We had hoped in 2020 and 2021 to hold our conference at this Bird Park. Unfortunately, Covid-19 intervened, and both of those meetings were cancelled. We hope and believe that 2022 is the year our plans will work out!

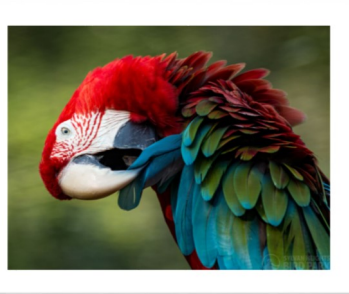
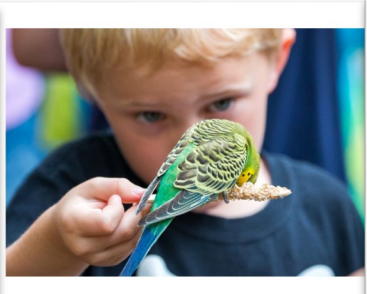
The Bird Park is on the outskirts of Scotland Neck, NC and houses over two thousand birds from around the world and a bird breeding laboratory for endangered bird species. Throughout the walkways of the park there are exhibits featuring many species in their regional habitats along with a trail along a wetlands area with our own native species.

The entry place, a building named Gold Leaf Room, is where registration for the meeting will take place. Immediately after signing up, attendees can move to Toad Hall, a 70 X 40-foot meeting room. This open building with drop sides is roofed, in case of inclement weather. A deck on one side offers outside seating at picnic tables. Buffet arrangements will be provided by Duck Landing Café, a catering company associated with the Park. Rest rooms are a few steps from this room. This area is off to one side of the park and paths lead from it to the nearby bird habitat displays.



The Board dinner and meeting will be held on Friday night. Details to follow in the next newsletter and on nbluebird.org. The Scotland Neck Inn motel is right in town. It is conveniently located about one mile from the park and they have given us a very good rate. There are other motel choices nearby as well. Tarboro, about 30 minutes from the park, has hotel options. Lodging can also be found a little further away in places such as Rocky Mount and Greenville. Exhibit space will be available for County Coordinators to show off the activities in their county and bring members' efforts to light!

Dean Rust, current president of the Pennsylvania Bluebird Society, will be our featured speaker. Other items on the agenda include a brief introduction to the Park by the staff, general meeting, silent auction, time for questions and answers about bluebirds, etc., and a trip through the park's many interesting bird features. We will have some displays and look forward to this spectacular event. Registration form/agenda on page 5 and will also be posted on nbluebird.org and in the spring newsletter. Contact Kay Hindsley at 252-823-0737 or annualmeeting@nbluebird.org with questions.



Photos on this page courtesy of Sylvan Heights Bird Park. See more pictures and information at shwpark.com.

BIRDS, BIRDS, BIRDS @ SCOTLAND NECK

SYLVAN HEIGHTS BIRD PARK

500 Sylvan Heights Park Way, Scotland Neck, NC 27874 | Phone 252-826-3186

MAY 14, 2022 AGENDA

- 8:45 – 9:45 Registration in Gold Leaf Room (Coffee & Danish, Meet & Greet, Welcome Film)
9:30 – 10:00 Go to Toad Hall after registering to check out Silent Auction Viewing/Bidding, Door Prizes (each guest will receive 5 tickets for chances to win, additional tickets can be purchased)

Options of where to spend your time. You can visit the Landing Zone from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, with choices of other activities as you prefer per timeline below:

- 10:00 – 11:00 Welcome, Introductions, Annual Business Meeting
11:00 – 12:00 Speaker – Dr. Dean C. Rust
President of the Pennsylvania Bluebird Society
Author of *The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird*
12:00 – 12:45 Lunch – Catered by Duck Landing Café. See their website: ducklandingcafe.com
Menu includes BBQ Pork with delicious sides and desserts
12:45 – 1:00 Information Sharing, Silent Auction Bidding
1:00 – 1:30 Speaker – Kat Lewandowski, Lead Keeper at Sylvan Heights Bird Park
1:30 – 5:00 Tour Sylvan Heights Bird Park (park is open until 5:00)
1:30 Announcement of Door Prizes and Silent Auction Winners
3:30 Prizes and Silent Auction Items must be picked up by this time
4:00 Toad Hall (meeting location) closes
5:00 Sylvan Heights Bird Park closes

REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return this form with check payable to NCBS by April 30, 2022 to
Charles Brewer, NCBS Treasurer, 3900 Bamburg Lane, Apex, NC 27539

Attendee #1 _____
Phone/Email _____
Attendee #2 _____
Phone/Email _____
Attendee #3 _____
Phone/Email _____

_____ Number of Registration(s) – \$40 per person (*Park Entrance Fee and Saturday lunch included*)
_____ Total Payment Amount Enclosed

Can you donate a door prize or silent auction item? If so, email Kay Hindsley at kchind@embarqmail.com
or describe it here _____

MEMORIAM — JIM JOCHUM

The NCBS was very sorry to hear of the loss of Mr. Jim Jochum of Greensboro. His family is in our thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. We hope that focusing on the wonderful memories & photos we have to offer from his involvement with bluebirds will help ease the pain. Jim was an integral part of NCBS for many many years. He has served in various roles for our organization, including President, Board Director, and the Guilford County Coordinator. The smile on Jim's face shows that helping the bluebird cause was his passion. The efforts he set in place will continue to provide inspiration to other Bluebirders and benefit future generations of bluebirds. We are sharing words from other NCBS folks who knew him.

I met Jim in June 2007, when I started with NCBS. A review of *Bluebird Notes* archives provided much knowledge on the long-term commitment of Jim to bluebirds and the society prior to my time with NCBS. He served as President for two years (Spring 1996-1998), per editions in this time frame. Highlights of accomplishments during his Presidency included implementing the NCBS mission statement, revising By-Laws, lift off and growth of the County Coordinator Program (with help from Chuck Bliss, another Past-President), and establishing the quarterly newsletter. Photos below were of Jim at annual meetings when he was President, held 1997 and 1998 in Wake Forest. Glenda Ryan, Webmaster/Newsletter Editor

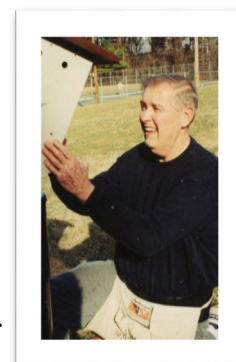


In the sadness that I was feeling when I learned of Jim Jochum's passing, there also came a reflection of joy in having known this wonderful man. I first met him about 10 years ago at his home in Greensboro as he hosted a NCBS Board Meeting. As a new board member, he made me feel so welcomed! During our break, I recall talking with him about his involvement and leadership in the NCBS. He was so encouraging! Thanks to this interaction, I called on Jim many times for advice and guidance. His love for bluebirds, his devotion to our society and his helpful, kind and considerate nature was and will continue to be so encouraging for me. I am sharing a photo my wife Peggy snapped at the 2018 annual meeting at Haw River State Park, which includes (left to right) myself, Ray Welch, Chuck Bliss, and Jim. I am so grateful for memories of this nice time with Jim and two other past NCBS Presidents. Ken Kernodle, Past President, Durham, NC



I remember the many meetings we had at Jim Jochum's home during the 16 years I was involved with the North Carolina Bluebird Society. Jim was always the quiet voice that got things done.
Helen Munro, Past President/Newsletter Editor

Photo at left was taken outside Jim's home and includes Chuck Bliss, Hank Moss, Jim (3rd from left), Dave Hindsley, Kay Hindsley, and Helen Munro. Photo at right shows a happy memory of Jim installing a nest box.



THE MYSTERY OF LAUREL PARK REVISITED

In our fall 2021 newsletter we published a story from member Anne Hartig in Henderson County. Anne had observed a bluebird nest in Laurel Park that “came back to life” two months after eggs were laid and seemingly abandoned. We asked you to help us solve the mystery.

David Kilpatrick from Pinehurst submitted the photo shown at the right (9 unhatched bluebird eggs at Pinehurst No. 2 golf course) and the following information via email:

“I have experienced this many times and in nearly all of the cases close examination of the nest material after the young have left will reveal unhatched eggs beneath the newer nest material.”



“During this season (2021), I had one box with five eggs that were past their normal viability date. Due to an abundance of caution, I left them for five additional days only to discover that new nest material had been built over the unhatched eggs and there was already three eggs in the box. Ultimately there were five eggs in this new nest attempt. Again the eggs remained unhatched and again I left them alone. Upon a subsequent visit, I found nine eggs in the box (see photo) and again none of them hatched. Being a slow learner, I left them alone only to discover a new nest built on top of the nine eggs and in which there were now four new eggs. I’m happy to say that these four hatched and the young successfully fledged. When I performed nest box management and cleaned out the box I counted 14 unhatched eggs.”

Now we have another mystery to solve.

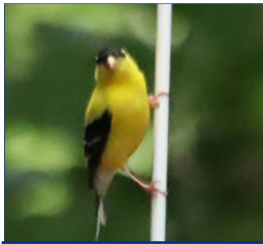
- * What was going on in David’s box regarding those unhatched eggs and repeated nesting attempts?
- * Was this an example of “egg dumping,” when a second and/or third female lays her eggs in another bird’s nest?
- * Why didn’t the birds put new nesting material over the second clutch of eggs before laying the third clutch?

David has seven boxes on Pinehurst No. 2 golf course. He informs: “...this has never happened in my 14 years of monitoring those boxes nor has it happened to me before, period. I monitor 40+ boxes.”

Co-president Bill Zitek has some ideas: Bill says, “Seems like we have received a number of reports of clutches failing to hatch this year—more than the usual numbers. In your case, it is interesting that there were four clutches in that one nest box and only the last managed to hatch and fledge. Is this a stand-alone nest box at a great distance from any other possible nest sites? That might explain the same pair nesting 4 times (?) since it may be their only option. Of course the situation might be explained by the loss of one of the pair and a new clutch therefore started with a new mate. Possibly, also there was competition for the one box between another pair that caused the abandonment of the clutch. Early season cold/wet weather could be an explanation of the first failure. This is where setting up a camera would have been a help. I guess we can work only on conjecture.”

Any other thoughts or comments? Send to editor@ncbluebird.org

SONGBIRDS OF APEX



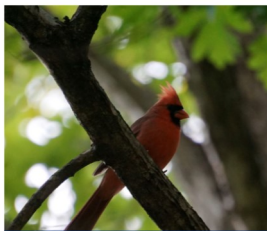
American Goldfinch

I have been involved with NCBS as the Webmaster since May 2007. When I signed on with NCBS I knew very little about any kind of bird, other than I liked seeing and hearing them. My education about bluebirds and other songbirds has been a gradual, but steady, process. I have slowly and surely picked up information while preparing and posting Web content, attending meetings (NCBS Board, Wake County Bluebirder Club, and annual conferences), reading, assembling the newsletter, and talking with other bluebirders. Photographing wildlife has branched out from a way to motivate myself to walk to a favorite pastime that provides first hand sights of birds in action. During the times of uncertainty in 2020 & 2021, nature and songbirds have offered hope, peace, and tranquility.

My friend Tammi of Apex also turned more focus to songbirds to help lifes' recent challenges. Her backyard is a haven for songbirds and humans alike. Bird houses, bird baths, a plethora of well-stocked bird feeders, as well as a patch of forest with natural bird shelter and food, provide a welcoming environment for many feathered friends in Apex. Her yard and surrounding wooded area offer a great mix of amenities from Mother Nature and people. Tammi has been attracting many different species, with quite an assortment of bird visitors of many colors, sizes, and shapes. I spent some time at her home in late July and was fortunate to see a wide mix of winged creatures, including chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, titmice, cardinals, blue jays, woodpeckers, finches, and a cute little yellow guy that I found out from Marti Kane is a Pine Warbler (pictured above).



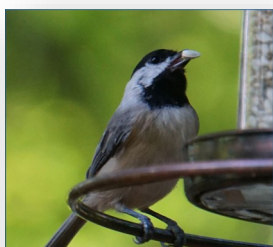
Pine Warbler



Northern Cardinal

Tammi has always loved birds, but being home more during the pandemic ... it is extra nice to see the array of birds outside her windows. Tammi became more aware of bluebirds from my involvement with the nbluebird.org website and role as Newsletter Editor. She has made an effort to provide food geared toward bluebirds, particularly mealworms and black sunflower seeds. Some recommendations Tammi knows about from my knowledge with NCBS include *Bluebird Tips*, NCBS website, and NABS (North American Bluebird Society) website nbluebirdsociety.org. She has also been relying on her own observations, such as how fast the food disappears and what species she is seeing, to gear her future bird feeder choices. Her menu has been appealing to bluebirds, as she reports seeing them often. Unfortunately, I did not see any Blues during this July visit.

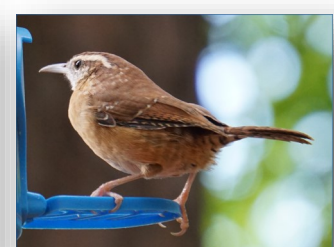
A visit in early fall with Tammi proved even better for relaxing in nature and photoing birds. Tammi and I were sitting among the bird oasis with coffee in hand, windchimes swaying in the breeze, and a variety of birds zooming around to perch on tree branches and metal poles while checking out the feeders. Bright red & yellow cheer from cardinals (state bird of North Carolina) and finches, mixed in with the cuteness overload from chickadees, wrens, and nuthatches, three cavity-nesters supported by the mission of NCBS.



Carolina Chickadee



Brown-headed Nuthatch



Carolina Wren



I told Tammi I really hoped to see bluebirds this autumn day, as that would make this photo session extra special. She added fresh mealworm to her bluebird feeder to see if that would welcome them to the bird party. Within minutes two Blues were on the scene!!! Enjoying a nice Sunday afternoon meal together.

Many more soon arrived, perching in the tree branches and swooping in for a snack when they thought the coast was clear. A testimonial to the value of offering food sources that bluebirds like and they may pay a visit soon.



Squirrels are critters that also visit Tammi's yard frequently, so her husband, Brad, put up feeders especially for them. Having corn available in places that are easy for the squirrels to retrieve helps keep them away from the bird feeders. Additionally, their bird feeders are on metal poles with predator guards, which deters squirrels from access to the birds' supplies. It is heartwarming to see nature's creatures co-existing in harmony with resources for all. Photo snapped on Thanksgiving of Mr. Squirrel at the Oak Tree Café. He has his own food supply, which reduces the chance he will seek the resources intended for the songbirds.

A good mix of nature and supplies from humans can help songbirds flourish. See more on nbluebird.org and nbluebirdsociety.org for ways to enhance your landscaping and/or offer food choices that can help attract bluebirds and other songbirds to your yard. We hope sharing these words and colorful photos will bring cheer and brighten your winter. Let's take a cue from bluebirds and other Songbirds of Apex and enjoy sunshine and nature, visit positive places, live with others in peace, and sing with happiness. See story on pages 10-11 with more details about a cavity nester songbird, the Brown-headed Nuthatch.



Glenda Ryan (Knightdale), with input from Tammi Smith (Apex)

BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH

Cavity Nester of Conservation Concern

What's not to love about the tiny Brown-headed Nuthatch and its squeaky, dog-toy call? If your bluebird trail is in or near mature pine trees, you are probably familiar with them. They hang out high up in the canopy so you're more likely to hear them than see them. These little guys are cavity nesters just like bluebirds and chickadees. If you find strips of bark and/or pine seed wings in one of your nest boxes, you probably have a Brown-headed Nuthatch nesting there. They tend to nest in the early spring, sometimes before the bluebirds nest. Their eggs are small, like chickadee eggs, but are usually more heavily dotted with brown spots. Brown-headed Nuthatches have a nestling period of 18-19 days, a bit longer than the bluebird's.

The Brown-headed Nuthatch (*Sitta pusilla*) lives only in the southeastern United States in areas where there are mature pine trees. They are not migrators; they live year-round in the same small area, flitting from tree to tree. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, their population declined by about 24% from 1966-2015. These little nuthatches are of a higher conservation concern than bluebirds due to their limited range and the continued logging and fire suppression in southeastern pine forests. Bluebirds have a Continental Concern Score of 7 out of 20, while Brown-headed Nuthatches rate a 13 out of 20. The higher the score, the greater the conservation concern.



So, if you should be lucky enough to have a Brown-headed Nuthatch nesting in one of your boxes, please give it the protection and care it deserves. I have been fortunate to see their eggs and nestlings in a nest box. My photos here show the start of life for these precious creatures.



Bluebirds can be aggressive and attempt to take a nest box from the nuthatches. As soon as I find a nuthatch nest in one of my bluebird boxes, I tape an entrance-hole protector with a diameter of 1 and 1/8 inches over the entrance hole. This will make sure that the bluebirds can't get into the nest box and bother the nuthatches. (I described this technique in my article on the Carolina Chickadee in the 2021 summer issue of Bluebird Notes.) If the bluebirds continue to harass the nuthatches, I put up another nest box within about 50 feet of the nuthatch box for the bluebirds. That usually does the trick!

Brown-headed Nuthatches are cooperative breeders; sometimes a fledgling will return to help the parents feed the latest group of nestlings. In one of my boxes at Wilkerson Nature Preserve, I was convinced that two females were laying eggs in the same box. Maybe it was just a "helper" bird? Sometimes adult nuthatches will help another nuthatch with her nest if their own nest fails. They are very sociable birds.

I'll never forget the day I watched a pair of nuthatches working on their nest cavity in a pine tree in a park in Jacksonville, NC. While mama (I think) was inside the cavity arranging it to her liking, papa was on the hunt for strips of bark and such to line the cavity. I am not sure what possessed him, but I watched as he picked up a piece of waxy paper that looked like it had been wrapped around a fast food hamburger. It took papa awhile but he managed to fly up to the nest hole with the greasy paper in his beak and began stuffing it into the cavity. I heard a loud, indignant squeak from mama. She pushed the paper back out of the hole and gave papa a piece of her mind. They went back and forth over this nasty bit of litter until papa finally gave up.

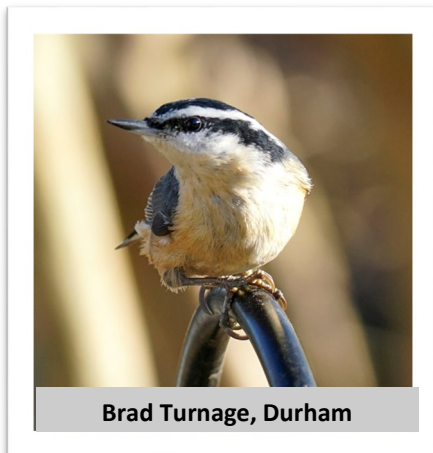
During the warmer months, Brown-headed Nuthatches feed on insects and spiders they find hiding in tree bark. They are one of the few songbirds that sometimes uses a tool! They utilize a piece of pine bark like a chisel to chip off more pieces of bark to find hidden insects. During the winter months when insects are scarce, nuthatches eat mostly pine seeds. They are frequent visitors at backyard bird feeders where they munch on seeds and suet. You may see them flying back and forth, taking a seed, caching it in a tree, then coming back for another. If you don't fill your feeders fast enough to suit them, you are likely to get a loud, squeaky scolding.

We have three species of nuthatches in our state: Brown-headed, White-breasted and Red-breasted. See photos in this article. The Red-breasted Nuthatches are here only in the winter and only occasionally, not every winter. Last winter (2020-21), we had quite a few visiting us here in the Raleigh area. I enjoyed hearing their calls, which sound like the tooting of a little tin horn. Since they usually irrupt in two-year cycles, we may not get to see many this year (2021-22). The White-Breasted Nuthatch is here year-round and is usually associated with mature deciduous forests. It is larger than the Brown-headed Nuthatch and makes a “yank – yank” call. The White-Breasted Nuthatch can nest in a bluebird box, too, but in all my years of bluebird work, I have yet to see it. Have you? The images below, courtesy of Wake Audubon Society (left & right photos) and member Brad Turnage (center picture), demonstrate different nuthatches.

White-Breasted Nuthatch



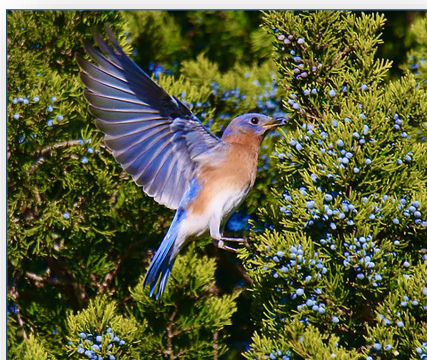
Red-Breasted Nuthatch



Brown-Headed Nuthatch



Marti Kane, President Team, Youngsville



Visitors from New York

These bluebird pictures are from my good friend, Jim Colligan, on my old nest box trail. Bluebirds love cedar berries especially in winter when other food is in short supply.

Bill Zitek, Co-President, Chapel Hill



Check out nabluebirdsociety.org, website for the North American Bluebird Society (NABS), and our website, ncbluebird.org, for landscaping tips to help attract bluebirds and other songbirds to your yard. If you would like to report experiences and/or pictures of your bluebird/songbird sights, let us know at editor@ncbluebird.org.

NEST BOXES SERVE MANY CAVITY NESTERS

Nest Boxes Near Water Attract Tree Swallow Residents

Tree swallows are the third most common bird that uses my nestboxes. Of course bluebirds are the most common, followed by Carolina Chickadees. They are relatively recent nesters in North Carolina, with the Birds of North Carolina website stating that the first confirmed nest was in 1979. They have spread amazingly fast to the Southeast US, including North Carolina.



When I go on bird walks with our local Franklin Bird Club, I notice that people think the sight of the Tree Swallow poking its head out of my nestbox is the cutest thing. They get their cameras out and take pictures. If you haven't seen a Tree Swallow nest, you are in for a treat. It is loaded with feathers, usually white, which gives it a unique look. One reason I get so many using my boxes is that the majority of the boxes are along the Little Tennessee River. Tree swallows love water.

The mating pair will often get assistance from "friends and relations" in protecting the nest. When I monitor the Tree Swallow nest, I am used to being dive-bombed by not one, but up to four Tree Swallows. Since they are competitors of the bluebird for nestboxes, some of us may not like them. I enjoy having them. I have read that one trick to reduce competition is to have 2 boxes side by side, one for the bluebird, another for the swallow. Usually this is not a good idea, but these two birds apparently are willing to be good neighbors. I've read that it is even possible to mount the boxes back to back on the same pole! William Zitek said he has used similar setups successfully, so I intend to try it next year.

My first introduction to Tree Swallows was witnessing their incredible murmuration. I mean thousands and thousands of swallows appearing out of nowhere, and descending in a tornado of birds into their evening roost. It remains one of the most thrilling sights of nature I have been witness to. This occurred in the Cockroach Bay Nature Park wetlands south of Tampa, Florida. You can see several videos of the phenomenon right now on Facebook.

Let's enjoy all species of native birds that use nestboxes.

Article and pictures submitted by George Kaye, NCBS Director and Macon County Coordinator

Storage Needed for NCBS Sample Nest Boxes and Display Material



Can you help us store the NCBS display items?

- The display contains a 3 ft x 4 ft display board, a large box with sample bluebird boxes, a duffel bag with literature and other display items, and a stand to hang a nest box on.

If you think you can help, contact Marti Kane.

NEWS FROM WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Bluebirds of Henderson County: Fabulous pictures shown below were taken this summer (late July/early August) by Nick Ponzio in his yard in Hendersonville. Read his cool story below.



I had this nest box set up for about three years and this is the first time I had bluebirds. Last year I had swallows in the spring. By the time I realized that bluebirds were using the box they were well on their way with feeding. So, I set up my camera for a week and had a lot of fun taking these photos. I actually took almost 400 photos and videos. I even put together a picture movie to show my friends. Since I was “late to the game” so to speak, I do not know how many eggs hatched, but I do know that feeding was hectic for about a week. I have one confirmed fledge on August 1, but I am sure one or two fledged the day before.



I also noticed that there were several bluebirds doing the feeding as if they were from an earlier hatch. Some of the birds looked “young” and not full of color. Nick Ponzio, Hendersonville

Words from Marti Kane, President Team: Wow! Those photos of older fledglings visiting the soon-to-be fledglings are great! I have observed this before but Nick has the photographic proof! Now that’s a story worth telling!

Awesome Bluebird Gifts from Hickory: A beautiful flock of 7 hand-carved bluebirds is a generous gift to NCBS from Don McHugh of Hickory. Dan is an award-winning wood sculptor. His work is displayed and sold at fine galleries across our region. Widely known as a master carver, Don is an active member of the National Wood Carvers Association Core Sound Decoy Carvers Guild and the Catawba Valley Woodcarvers Club. Over the years he has received prestigious awards in national competition, most notably at the Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition, and as International Wildfowl Carvers Decorative Carver of the Year twice (2006 & 2008).

Intended as an auction-style fund raiser at the 2020 Annual Meeting, the project was put on hold due to pandemic-related cancellation. THE BIRDS ARE WAITING TO FLY, and NCBS is offering them to the membership at the price of \$300 each. These are to be sold to anyone who would like one (as they last). The proceeds will go to the NCBS. Early buyers may request a specific item, from items numbers shown in the individual photos. The carvings range in height from 7” to 11”. Make your choice(s), write your check for \$300 to NCBS, and mail to: **Robert Warmuth, 1310 10th St. Place NW, Hickory, NC 28601.** Birds will be shipped pre-paid, from Hickory, and every effort will be made to honor your selection. (Please list 3 choices and include your email address in case of questions)

Great gifts! Email questions to: warmuthrobert34@gmail.com

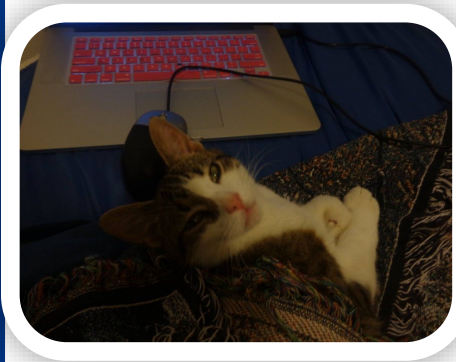


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OSCAR'S WINDOW VIEW

Winter Greetings & Report from Oscar



I was glued to the window & taking notes when Ken Kernodle, Immediate Past President, stopped by to check our nest box and ensure it was cleaned

properly after the last nesting season of 2021. We got a check mark that it is winter-ready! Per Ken, winter is a great time to perform any repair and maintenance to your nest box. See nest box tips and other bluebird-related advice on nbluebird.org and nbluebirdsociety.org.

Have you submitted your 2021 nesting data report? I heard that most people have, but there is a time extension until **January 15, 2022**. This information is very important to help some scientists track birds. Contact Kari per page 2 if you need help submitting.

Spring 2022 is just around the corner and NCBS is planning a fabulous event for you! See pages 4-5 about the annual meeting at Sylvan Heights Bird Park. I am not allowed there, but it will be a fun time for humans. Check out their online resources ...

<https://www.facebook.com/SylvanHeightsWaterFowl>
<https://www.shwpark.com>

Best Wishes from Oscar, your bird-friendly feline.



Ken Kernodle checking out Oscar's nestbox in Knightdale

NCBS MEMBERSHIP

NCBS memberships options are one or three years.
Dues: \$10.00 per year or \$25 for three years

Gift membership from _____ to:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

County _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

A member's email address will be used only for NCBS official business and considered private and confidential.

[] Check box if you prefer to access the *Bluebird Notes* via the Internet instead of a printed copy by postal mail.

Please complete this form and send it with your check payable to "NCBS" to:

**North Carolina Bluebird Society
4600 Chandler Grove Court
Raleigh, NC 27612**

Additional tax deductible donation \$ _____

New Membership []

Renewal []

Check Amount: \$ _____

Please indicate if you also have an interest in:

- _____ Assisting with the annual meeting
- _____ Serving as a NCBS Board Member
- _____ Helping with the newsletter
- _____ Conducting a bluebird workshop
- _____ Contacting my local paper with news
- _____ Volunteering to be a NCBS County Coordinator
- _____ Monitoring a nestbox trail
- _____ Other (please explain)

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BLUEBIRDS SEND WISHES OF JOY & PEACE IN 2022



We hope you have been blessed with bluebird sightings and heard their sweet song in 2021. The new year is another chance to enjoy nature and our feathered friends. Photos by Elke Hoffmann, Bahama, NC.

See ncbluebird.org for more about NC Bluebird Society and a wealth of tips to help you help bluebirds. Direct questions to a representative in your county, a nearby county, or Past President, Ray Welch.

Join the happy bluebird above left and sing with cheer and hope as we sail into a new year.