

BAYOU BLUEBIRD NEST NEWS

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Editor: Sheryl Cooper Bassi

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Leo Terzia's Story

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Leo Terzia, seated, Monroe, with Tom Miles, Baton Rouge, check out the trail at the LA Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry at Monroe, LA

Leo's Story

In the early 1980's, Leo Terzia became a devoted bluebirder. He blazed a trail of nestboxes from Ruston to Monroe, LA, where he began his bluebirding adventure. He has established trails all over northeast LA, building many nestboxes for individuals, helping place them in yards and giving monitoring instructions and advice.

Leo says he enjoys every aspect of working for the bluebirds -- rounding up scraps of lumber, taking nails out of it, sawing it, making it fit, and putting it together.

He joined the North American Bluebird Society in the first year of its organization and has been a lifetime member ever since. Leo is also a charter member of LBBS and has been a board member since 2002. He is totally dedicated to the organization, bringing in a great number of members. He is always on hand to talk with members and give advice. Leo makes it his business to welcome all newcomers to our organization.

Despite being slowed by illness recently, the 83-year-old Leo has not stopped doing what he loves to do most. He established a trail at the Veteran's Home in Monroe, which produced Bluebirds this year. He was instrumental in establishing a beautiful trail on the Louisiana Department of Agricultural and Forestry grounds east of Monroe, LA., and monitors the trail with a group of fellow LBBS bluebirders. This trail has been very productive.

LBBS is fortunate to have such a wonderful, enthusiastic bluebirder like Leo and to show our appreciation for all his efforts, he was named the first "LBBS Bluebirder of the Year, 2002". He is a shining example and inspiration to all who know him!

WHY MONITOR NESTBOXES

By: Kevin Berner

Article copied from "Bluebird" North American Bluebird Society Journal

It is very important that bluebird nestboxes be actively monitored (checked) at least once a week. Doing so increases the chances of success for bluebirds using the box and also is valuable for determining population trends. A box that is not monitored may be MORE HARMFUL than helpful to bluebirds.

To make monitoring easier for you, all bluebird boxes should be built so that they can be opened either from the side, front or top. (continued on page 3)

Monitoring nestboxes will alert you to problems the birds may be having with blowfly parasitism. Uncontrolled, the larvae of this species may weaken or possibly kill the nestling bluebirds. If you identify larvae in the nest, you should replace all the nest material with dried lawn clippings tightly packed in a shape similar to that of the original nest. This will increase the chance that the chicks will survive. Many bluebird enthusiasts replace all nest holding chicks periodically even before the blowfly larvae are visible. You should also replace any nest with young birds that has been saturated following rainfall. This is especially important during cold periods.

Being aware of 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. Species such as Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens and Chickadees are all native and beneficial birds. Mail survey forms submitted at the end of the nesting season allow the identification of population trends for each species.

House (English) Sparrows and European Starlings are non-native species introduced from Europe. Their aggressive seizure of cavity nest sites is the main reason for the rarity of bluebirds today. Starlings nest in many of the natural nest sites but can be excluded from nestboxes by only using 1 ½ or 1 9/16-inch entrance holes. House Sparrows can readily enter bluebird nestboxes and frequently kill bluebirds, destroy their eggs or drive them from their nests. At no time should they be allowed to successfully nest in bluebird boxes. Doing so will increase the House Sparrow population and further reduce bluebird numbers.

What to Monitor

Whenever you monitor a box you should determine what species is using it by examining the nesting material and eggs. You should record the date, and the number of eggs or young that you have observed. Knowing when the eggs were laid will help you determine when they should hatch, and when the young would be expected to leave the nest, or, if neither of those things happen, if the eggs are infertile.

In the case of bluebirds, the eggs are laid one each day until the entire clutch is complete. Incubation will then begin, and will last approximately 13 to 14 days. After hatching, the chicks will remain in the nest for 17 to 18 days. Your monitoring should be done carefully or limited to viewing from a distance after the 13th day or the chicks might fly from the box prematurely.

How to Monitor

Nest monitoring should be done only during calm, mild, and dry weather conditions to reduce the chance of chilling the chicks or eggs. Open the nestbox, being careful not to allow the eggs to fall out or the chicks to jump out. Songbirds have a very poor sense of smell and will not abandon the nest due to your handling the nest, eggs, or chicks. If the chicks are in the nest, look under the nest for signs of blowfly larvae.

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Why Monitor
(continued from page 3)

The chicks themselves should be examined for small scars, particularly under the wings that indicate blowfly parasitism. Sometimes you may observe the larvae attached to the chick. These are easily removed by hand.

Complete the monitoring as quickly as possible to minimize disturbance. When handling the chicks or removing them from the nest, they should be placed in something that will protect them from the sun or wind while preventing their escape. Avoid disposing of used nest material near the nest site or predators may be attracted to the site. Always be certain to close the box door securely before leaving. Record what you have observed.

Upcoming Events!!!

LBBS 2005 Spring Event -- Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society invites you to its Spring Celebration on Saturday, May 7, 2005 at Waddill Wildlife Refuge Center, 4142 North Flannery Street, Baton Rouge, LA from 2:00 PM until 5:00 PM. Kenny Kleinpeter, 1st Vice President of LBBS, LBBS 2004 Bluebirder of the Year, bluebird trail monitor and purple martin expert will be the guest speaker. He will speak on attracting and managing bluebirds, martins and other cavity-nesters. The public is invited to attend and there is no admission charge.

LBBS Nestbox Workshop (Baton Rouge Area) -- LOUISIANA BAYOU BLUEBIRD SOCIETY will conduct a Bluebird Nestbox Workshop on May 7, 2005, at the Waddill Wildlife Refuge Center, 4142 North Flannery Street, Baton Rouge, LA from 10:00 AM until 12:00 Noon to learn to construct and monitor nestboxes (supplied nestboxes limited to 25). Registration fee is \$15.00. To register, call (318) 878-3210, (225) 752-2139, or e-mail emcooper@bayou.com.

CAROLINA BLUE - NABS Convention: May 19-22, 2005, Crowne Plaza Biltmore, Asheville, NC. For more information and registration packet visit NABS online at www.nabluebirdsociety.org/annual1.htm

BLUEBIRD TIDBITS

The North American Bluebird Society does not recommend cardboard, plastic jugs, milk cartons and large tin cans for cavity nesters. They do not provide insulation from the heat. Installing predator guards can be more of a problem too. Home grown gourds are not recommended for the same reasons.

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BLUEBIRD TIDBITS

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Treated lumber is not recommended for nestboxes. Pine, Cypress, Cedar make very good choices for nestboxes. Dark paints are not recommended as they absorb heat rather than reflect it, but stains and light paints are acceptable. Some people use boiled linseed oil, but black spots may appear on the nestbox after being in the weather and it looks unsightly. Never paint or stain the inside of a nestbox, only the outside may be treated.

Nestboxes should have good vent holes on each side of the box under the roof. It should also have drain holes in the bottom to help keep it dry and also let air in during hot weather.

Tip: The best place to find the true 7/8th thickness that is most desirable for insulation of nestboxes is at a saw mill. Usually, it is a better bargain than purchasing it at a retail store.



FROM THE PERCH

Reports are still coming in from the nesting season. Dennis LaBatt, Manager of the Poverty Point Historic Site State Park gave us great results for the first year on that new trail. They had 5 out of 7 nestboxes used. Many people got to view our work there. If you have not sent in your results, please do so.

A new project is the Kleinpeter Dairy Bluebird Trail. Pine Grove, that will have a total of 200 nestboxes when completed. This is an exciting project! Our spring newsletter will feature their story. Another project is the Jimmie Davis State Park Bluebird Trail, Jonesboro, with 12 nestboxes.

Please be thinking about our upcoming events and mark them on your calendar. Let's all come out and hear our own Kenny Kleinpeter, speaker for our May 7, 2005 meeting. You will have a treat in store!

Please be reminded that if you have not renewed your membership, this will be the final newsletter mailed to you.

Evelyn

*The Officers and Board Members of the
Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society
Wish each and everyone a
Merry Christmas
And Best wishes for a Joyous New Year!!*