

BAYOU BLUEBIRD NEST NEWS

Volume 23

Evelyn M. Cooper, Editor

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BLUEBIRDER OF THE YEAR 2007 Dr. Dorothy Gammel, Denham Springs, LA



LBBS President Kenny Kleinpeter presents “The Bluebirder of The Year’ award to Dorothy Gammel, Denham Springs. Dorothy has faithfully served on the board of directors for LBBS for three years. She has been active also as chair of the committee for the booth for Earth Day Festival. She has tremendous talent in providing materials for the children’s table at the festival.

Dorothy put together an LBBS bluebird showcase for several libraries in her area showing for at least six months total. These are some of the libraries she served: Baker Branch of East Baton Rouge Parish Library, Pontchartrain Branch of the St. Tammany Parish Library, Bluebonnet Branch of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library and Livingston-Walker Branch of the Livingston Parish Library. She will help with Special Saturday a program for children at Foster Hall, Museum of Natural Science LSU on April 26, 2008. She will chair the Earth Day Festival in April 08. Dorothy is much deserving of this award and LBBS congratulates her!

From The Perch
By:
Kenny Kleinpeter
President



As the seasons change again, it's a good time to do a little reflection. Here in Louisiana, especially South Louisiana, there really are only two seasons—winter and summer. Fall and Spring just sort of form the beginning and end of winter. While our blues' northern range is reporting food scarcities and southward migration already, I'm watching "my" blues enjoy the good life of moderate temperatures giving them ample time to train their new young. Once our fledges leave the box, our jobs are not done. We should be building habitat just as fervently as boxes. "Habitat" is a scary word for a lot of us—especially city and suburban dwellers. Bluebirds like to flock and hold in deep cover during cold fronts. When temperatures are below 45°F, they need berries to replace insects. Finding a way to construct that environment can mean some serious planting and property designation. With as little as one or two acres of land, even in a city, such as a park or private un-used parcels, it can be done. Plant trees along with berry-producing bushes and vines and throw in a little supplemental mealworm feeding, you could keep your blues year-round.

Several months ago, Antoinette and I moved from a house in the suburbs to a townhouse next to LSU. I had to leave two serious bird endeavors that took 15 years to develop. First, a 150-pair colony of purple martins. Thankfully, the colony was designed to be disbursed throughout the neighborhood through 20 separate martin houses but I did most of the management and many neighbors will not. Then, a 15-box wood duck trail around the small lake we lived on also got left behind. probably fall to sub-standard.

I'll still be making periodic checks of those boxes but frankly, I had no choice but to leave them up. The birds are compelled to return to their natal sites. Sometimes the process of learning or un-learning breeding locations can be painfully if not deadly slow. I regret not getting my neighbors more interested and involved but maybe, they have to learn the "hard way" like most of us. Just what causes us to become conservationists rather than mere "watchers" is a little tricky. For me, there's the emotional component of seeing that first splash of blue on a cool, sunny February morning, or hearing the first Wood Duck squeals through the January lake fog or, hearing the warble of a returning martin scout. Those special annual events are "fast-forward" mirrors of our own lives and once I made that connection, I was hooked.

Already, in our new home, I've attracted Carolina wrens, titmouses and chickadees with water and food. Habitats are being assessed and boxes will be going up. We're very close to the University Lakes which supports a wide variety of wintering birds so I'm sure, they'll be many new sights and sounds to further "break my heart."

As we retreat inside during the colder times, let us retreat inside our hearts as well as homes. Let's be thankful for the beautiful cycles of life—sometimes sad, sometimes happy. We can foster the habitats of family and friends with the "planting" of love, respect and cooperation everywhere we go.

Kenny

ATTENTION:

Please take time to fill out the 2007 Nesting Summary included in this issue. LBBS will take the final totals and send the report to Cornell's Nest Box Watch program. In the past, we have only about 10 to 15 participate and that does not do our state justice. Every bird that fledges counts. Please help us and mail or e-mail your results in.

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LBBS members and guests are in awe as Steve Cardiff, manager of the museum, shows an Ivory-billed Woodpecker pair collected in 1887 on the “behind the scenes tour.



At Left: Keynote speaker for the annual meeting, Dr. Fred Sheldon, director of LSU Museum of Natural Science and Kenny are having a nice visit and chat before the meeting

LBBS ANNUAL MEETING 2007

The LOUISIANA BAYOU BLUEBIRD SOCIETY held its annual meeting September 15, 2007 at Foster Hall, Museum of Natural Science, LSU-Baton Rouge. Registration and social hour began at 9:30. LBBS and visitors were then taken on a VIP “behind the scenes” tour led by Steve Cardiff and Donna Dittmann, Baton Rouge, where participants learned about the preparation and storage of specimens, and enjoyed viewing of many specimens. Crowd favorites were the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, collected in 1887, and Bee Hummingbird specimens.

Following the tours, President Kenny Kleinpeter, Baton Rouge, called the meeting to order. Two new board members, Mildred Hyde, Monroe and Yvonne Bordelon, Covington, were installed.

The “Bluebirder of The Year” award was presented to Dr. Dorothy Gammel, Denham Springs, by President Kleinpeter. Dr. Gammel has been on the LBBS Board of Directors for three years, has chaired the committee for Earth Day Festival participation, and provided informative and eye-catching bluebird displays for Baker Branch of East Baton Rouge Parish Library, Pontchartrain Branch of the St. Tammany Parish Library, Bluebonnet Branch of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library and Livingston-Walker Branch of the Livingston Parish Library for more than six months running. She will also chair the Special Saturday program for children on April 26, 2008 at the Museum of Natural Science, LSU. She also provides homes for bluebirds in her yard.

After the business meeting was adjourned, President Kleinpeter introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Fred Sheldon, Director of the Museum of Natural Science. He delighted the audience with his informative and entertaining presentation of “Swallows”.

Door prizes of complete units for bluebird nesting and a pair of binoculars were given to the appreciative winners. Out-of-town members and guests included: Terry and Melinda Johnson, Longview, TX, Yvonne and Al Bordelon, Covington, Alethea Brown, Mandeville, Mildred Hyde, Jack and Deb Hoover, Monroe, Evelyn Cooper, Delhi, Sheryl and Nessa Bassi, Leland, MS, Patt Roberson, Baker, Cecil Tarver and Brennan, Livingston, Pat and Michael McCormick, guests, Hammond, Bobbie Boykin, Prairieville, Dorothy Gammel, Denham Springs, Joshua Johnson, Pineville, Timothy and Caleb Johnson, guests, Pineville, LA and Tom Allen, Oak Ridge, LA.

LBBS 2008 meeting will be in north LA, place and time to be announced. Check our website www.labayoubluebirdsociety.org for upcoming dates.

**E-MAIL QOUTES FROM MEMBERS ABOUT OUR ANNUAL
MEETING AT FOSTER HALL, NATURAL MUSEUM OF SCIENCE
LSU BATON ROUGE, LA**

Alethea Brown, Mandeville writes:

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the meeting last Saturday. The museum was fantastic! I feel so inspired, I want to go back to school. I'm actually talking about it with my friends and may talk with a couple of my professors to see what is involved and if it is something that I can undertake while working.

Bobbie Boykin, Prairieville, writes:

I just loved it Evelyn. I was just in awe of all the "behind the scenes" of the museum...it was just wonderful. The bluebirds were beautiful.

Melinda Johnson, Longview, Texas writes:

Terry and I really enjoyed our trip to Baton Rouge for the Bluebird workshop and meeting. The tour through the Ornithology department was especially enlightening. Of course, the fact that we won a prize did not hurt either! We appreciate the efforts of all who had a part in putting this together. Keep up the good work!

In fact, I thought during the tour, "Why didn't I major in ornithology and attend LSU?"

Cecil Tarver, Livingston writes: (Brennan is his 8 year old grandson)

Evelyn, it was a very enjoyable visit with you and the rest of the group. Brennan has been talking about it to everyone since we got home and just wants to know when he gets to go back. So thanks to you, Kenny and Sheryl for making it so wonderful for him. I am so lucky to have such friends as the group.

Jerry Hornsby, Baton Rouge, writes:

Just a note to thank you and Kenny and others responsible for the annual meeting yesterday. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Also, it was nice to finally meet you and Kenny - you all were so busy, we did not have time to visit.

Al Bordelon, Covington, writes:

Yvonne and I had an extremely enjoyable time last Saturday. It was a pleasure to meet such a quality group, who are dedicated to wildlife conservation. Congratulations to you, Kenny and others, for the quality, yet informality of the annual conference. You made it very comfortable for us. The tour by Steve was very educational and we really enjoyed the presentation by Dr. Sheldon which was very interesting as well as informative not to mention humorous. I also found out how little I know of the age and evolution of our feathered friends. Also, wished we could have talked to more of the members before leaving. Alas, we won a door prize and later that night we watched TigerVision (sparkling restrooms with no lines and refreshments within 15 feet) as LSU won again. I'd say that it doesn't get much better than last Saturday. Yvonne says that she is honored to be a member of the board and we both hope to enhance the public's awareness of the need for blue bird houses.

(Con't from page 5)

Joshua Johnson, Pineville writes:

The museum was GREAT. I really enjoyed getting to see all the different kinds of birds. I wish we could have gotten to see all the different kinds of birds they had but, then we would have been there forever! Ha-ha.. I was so excited to get to see the Bee Hummingbird. People have told me it was the smallest bird but you don't really think that the bird is that small! I was thrilled have the privilege to see what few breeds of birds I saw. Out of all of them I think the Bee Hummingbird was the best because I always wanted to see one. I got home that day and told my family how great the museum was and how they missed out! Thanks for inviting me and I wish we had more than an hour in that museum!

Tom Allen, Oak Ridge, writes:

I did enjoy the tour of the museum. Especially entertaining was the portion of the tour where we examined the hummingbird specimens. It was also interesting to review the ivory billed woodpecker specimen. The meeting was enjoyable and the presentation was very informative. The "bluebird oriented" door prizes added a nice touch (especially since I won one!). All in all, I must say that the meeting was well worth the drive. Of course, as a Tiger fan, I enjoyed the result of the ballgame later that night as well.



LBBS members and guests enjoy the meeting.

WINTERIZING AND MAINTENANCE OF BOXES

The end of August usually wraps up nesting season. Now is time for maintenance work.

First, I would ask, do you have a predator guard on your box? If you don't, you are doing your bluebirds one of the greatest injustices you can imagine. If you can make the guard, the stovepipe is considered the best there is. In the last issue of our newsletter, you had a picture and instructions how to build one. I would like to tell you how we modified some of the things listed on the materials needed. You do not have to buy the expensive pipe that is recommended. One inch electrical conduit works and is not as costly. We like to use "T" posts. You can also use 2" PVC pipe and wood. If you have these things available, they will work.

The recommendations were for 36 inch stovepipe, but it is very hard to find. We use the 24 inch stovepipe and it works fine.

There are also plans for the cone guard in our handout information that can be made. They are successful too.

If you cannot make your guard, cone guards are available in plastic and metal at many stores. These have a 30 inch diameter and are very effective. Kenny uses them on all his poles.

You need to place any guard you use right up under the nest box. Placing it lower gives the predator some advantage.

Please take these recommendation seriously as it will increase your fledging rate greatly. By not having guards on the poles, you sacrifice many birds lives.

If your boxes have been out for a couple of seasons or more, you may notice cracks where the sides and back meet. You can buy some clear silicone caulking and it doesn't take long to fill the cracks. This helps in the cooler spring weather on eggs and babies and if you have some roosting, it helps. I always have at least five of my boxes used for roosting.

It seems like each year more are used. It helps to stuff foam in the vent holes. Placing some foil on the floor and a little grass or pine needles helps keep the cold air from coming in the bottom vents. In the spring, you can easily slide it out.

Some people take the boxes down and clean them thoroughly with a very mild solution of Clorox water and then rinse thoroughly and let dry. I find that I can carry jugs of water and a brush on my trail and do the job with the box on the pole. Some people do this between nesting cycles when the boxes get so filthy and most times they do.

If you decide you want to paint your box, paint it a very light color, preferably white as it reflects heat better than dark colors. Do not paint the insides of the boxes.

Some people stain their boxes. I personally do not like stain as boiled linseed oil (which is recommended) tends to have black spots to show up on the box after it has sat in the elements and is most unsightly. I leave mine natural and even the pine boxes that are ten years old still look fine.

The thicker the material used for a nest box, the better insulation it will have for heat and cold. People that are making their own should check out sawmills for their materials. Rough lumber is a bluebirder's dream box. It gives the birds something to cling to inside and outside of the box when time comes for fledging and parents have something to hold on to also.

Do not put perches on the entry hole as it attracts other birds and can be dangerous for its tenants.

If you have a box that was not taken by a bird and it's been there two or three years, move it to another location.

Evelyn

These beautiful Ivory-billed Woodpeckers are in the glass cased section of the museum. I only got part of the one on top, but I was aiming for the one on the left on another tree. also. If you look carefully, you can spot it. It is a beautiful sight to see. LBBS member Senator Robert Barham tells me the Barham family sponsored the display and the tree in the display was taken off the Barham farm in Oak Ridge.



REMINDER: If you have not paid dues for 2008, they are past due. Dues are payable in September. This will be the last issue of our newsletter you will receive if they are not paid. Please consider looking into this matter and renewing as we need your support. We depend mostly on memberships for our operational expenses, projects, etc. to keep LBBS going and growing! Many thanks!
-Evelyn

This season, Kenny put a “Hotline” service on our Home page of our LBBS website for bluebirders to have instant answers to problems. Below is a story that is the result of a person coming to us for help and how it turned out. If you ever have a need for instant help, it is there with numbers to call and e-mail addresses.

Blue Angel
By: Barbara Helms
Pensacola, FL

I’ve had quite an adventure this year with my bluebirds. The female built her nest then laid 4 white eggs. by July 4th, all the babies hatched. By July 21st, all the babies were in the air but one. This is his story!

For two days, this little guy remained on the ground in our backyard unable to fly. Our neighborhood is near Perdido Bay and we have many hawks that are constantly looking for prey in our area. The morning that this little bird fledged, I saw a large black snake sunning near his nesting box. This little bird seemed doomed



His parents were totally devoted to him even though they had 3 healthy babies that were flying. One of the parents remained close by keeping an eye on this little guy constantly. I immediately noticed how very blue he was as you can see from his photo. He was much bluer than the average babies that young. I would see him hopping all over our yard flapping his wings and yet he remained on the ground. At the end of the second day, I saw that he had somehow made it to our privacy fence and I thought we were home free! My last glimpse of him, he was wobbling down the fence with Mother right beside him.

Two days later, I hear chirping coming from the yard next door. I peeked through the fence and saw the baby on the ground. I watched as his parents took turns bringing him food. He would hop along the back of the fence line still not flying and now I’m getting concerned again. I observed him through the fence for two more days. His devoted father remained in the top of the tree facing this little guy while his mother would take him food and then disappears, most likely caring for the other 3 babies.

Two days later (being six days later), I saw that he was still on the ground in the same area and just hopping along. I could not believe that a hawk or a snake had not gotten this poor thing as he was always out in plain view; easy pickings for a hungry predator. He has now been on the ground for 6 days and he had shown no improvement. At this point, I became desperate! I just couldn’t let this helpless little creature become a meal for a hungry predator.

(Con’t on page 10)

(con't from page 9)

I went online and discovered this wonderful bluebird society. I e-mailed Evelyn (LBBS) who immediately responded to me. She was most helpful and supportive. I don't know what I would have done without her encouragement and support. She told me that I needed to get him to a rehabber if he was showing no signs of flying by this time. The rehabber confirmed the parents would stop feeding at some point. She gave me detailed instructions as to how to go about catching him safely. She felt that I should do something as soon as possible if I really felt there was something wrong with him. The thought of taking him from his parents was very upsetting to me. I didn't want to be the villain but I didn't want him to die or become dinner either.

The neighbors had left town for a long weekend which meant their gate to the 6 ft privacy fence was locked. I had no way of getting to the little bird without using a ladder so that is exactly what I did. With the help of my husband, I climbed up the ladder and onto our shed roof then he put the ladder over on the other side of the fence. I climbed down, gathered my towel for throwing over the little guy to catch him, his cardboard box, and I had on my disposable gloves. I searched all over the yard and couldn't find him anywhere. Just 30 minutes before I had seen him under a small bush in the shade as it was a very hot summer day! I just couldn't believe I couldn't find him; and then there he was. He had managed to hop up about 4 inches onto a small branch of a shrub bush. All of a sudden, our eyes connect. He looked me squarely in the eye and I can almost say I saw him "wink" then.....he flew up to the fence and onto a large tree without any hesitation! I shocked but so excited! He could fly! I didn't even mind the fact that I had to climb back over the fence to get home. He was in the air!

A couple of days later the parents returned. I saw 3 babies that day with them; but only 3. My heart sank a little but I knew I had done my best for the little guy. The next day the parents returned only this time there were 4 babies with them. As the one baby flew to the rooftop, I recognized that vibrant blue. I named him "Blue Angel" as he surely had an angel watching over him those 6 helpless days on the ground. My greatest thrill will be to see him again in the spring! I'll know him by his "wink".



Yvonne and Al Bordelon, Covington shown at our 2007 Annual Meeting. Yvonne was installed as a member of the board at the annual meeting.

The LSU Museum of Natural Sciences had a huge impact on all attendees.