

BAYOU BLUEBIRD NEST NEWS

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Evelyn M. Cooper, Editor

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SPRINGTIME AT HODGES GARDENS

As you enter the grounds of Hodges Gardens, you see the beautiful sign LBBS placed at the gate. You will actually pass a couple of nest boxes before you get to the gate. Margaret and Hill Kemp repainted the frame of the sign late summer last year and did a wonderful job. Margaret and her helpers, Carolyn Martin, Sylvia Kidder and Hill Kemp take excellent care of the trail. Cris Gary from Zwolle just joined the team.

If you want to have a nice spring trip, plan to see the Gardens and the Bluebird Trail founded by Dr. Shirl Brunell at Florien LA in the spring when the flowers are in full bloom and bluebirds are singing everywhere!





From The Perch

By:

Evelyn Cooper
President

Photo By:

Wendell Long
Waynesville, OH

Our state is rich in ideal habitat for native cavity-nesting birds. State parks are loaded with all that they need. Cemeteries and golf courses are another wonderful place to establish a trail. LBBS furnishes the units, but will need a signed "Pledge" they will be monitored and maintained and can be removed if not done so.

The biggest problem is getting someone to commit to monitoring and maintain the trails.

There are some organizations that get all enthused and decide to put up many boxes by highways and roads and after they install the boxes, not a single visit or routine monitor of the boxes is implemented.

Do you know what happens to these boxes? Some may actually raise some native cavity nesting birds for a year or so. However, there's a chance the most likely scenario will be a non-native species such as the House Sparrow that takes over and raises her young. Since there is no one that cleans out the boxes, they fill up with three nests and are no longer of any use to any species. I have seen this many times over. The boxes sit there and deteriorate with old nests in them. What good is that to the propagation of the Bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds?

LBBS has some wonderful, dedicated members that have made the trails they are monitoring even more prosperous and eye appealing than they ever were. We've also had some disappointments.

I monitor a trail at the Poverty Point Reservoir State Park north of Delhi. It is a beautiful park and the trail is very easy to monitor. I can drive right up to most all of the units and do the check. My main concern is that when I am no longer physically able to monitor, is finding someone to take over. I would rather take the units down than leave them for House Sparrows to take over should I not be able to find someone. If anyone reading this lives close enough to help me on this trail, please contact me so that I can help train you to help me monitor. I am not unable to monitor it, but would love to have someone help with it. It is a great outdoors experience! You could monitor every two weeks and I could take the other two.

It always saddens me when people get all hyped up to put a box or boxes, then for some reasons, just let them/it sit there unattended. It has been proven by many long time bluebird monitors that even cleaning out the box once a year is not really doing the birds justice.

Some think you just put the box up and let nature take its course. They say the birds build in the trees and we don't tend them. One bluebirder stated that he did studies and found a 64% fledging rate in natural cavity in trees and raised in boxes on poles with proper guards and monitoring, it can be as high as 90%. Predators not only find them by scent, but also by sight.

I hope you will think about this and give some consideration to putting some boxes on one of our wonderful places that can provide good habitat. The native cavity-nesting birds are always going to have to depend on us to give them a place to raise their young. The habitat situation is not going to get better. Let's help them!

Evelyn



Margaret Kemp, Many, accepting her award of appreciation at the 2008 LBBS Annual Meeting. She accepted a position as an LBBS officer. She oversees monitoring of Hodges Gardens Bluebird Trail.

Teaching Baby Songbirds To Sing
By: Tina Mitchell
Coaldale, CO

The birds pour forth their souls in notes
Of rapture from a thousand throats.

William Wordsworth, *Devotional Incitements*

Somewhere, always, the sun is shining; and somewhere, always, the birds are singing. As spring and summer oscillate between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, so too does this singing planet pour forth song, like a giant player piano, in the north, then the south, then back again, as it has for the 150 million years since the first birds appeared.

Donald Kroodsma, *The singing life of birds*.

Bird songs are not just beautiful, entertaining, and up-lifting to the human ear. They also serve a vital function in one of the most basic avian drives: the process of reproduction among songbirds. As one
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branch of the order of Passerines (perching birds), these marvelous songsters are referred to as “oscines,” from the Latin for “a bird from whose note omens are taken.” Oscines have extraordinary brains that are hard-wired for learning and producing songs. Their double voice boxes—“syringes” in plural; “syrinx” in singular—are complex, with multiple pairs of tiny muscles controlling these dual membranes (Kroodsma, 2005). Think of any lovely bird song you might hear in the spring—some of our native sparrows, any warbler, a finch—and you’re thinking of an oscine. The other major sub-order of Passerines are the “sub-oscines”—rather arrogantly meaning “beneath the songbirds,” implying that they are more primitive. Sub-oscines have much simpler songs, less elaborate syringes, and brains that lack the intricate neural controls needed for complex songs. The most common sub-oscines in the U.S. are the phoebes, kingbirds, pewees, and flycatchers. Oscines generally need to hear and practice their songs in order to develop typical songs while sub-oscines never need to hear even a peep from an adult to produce perfect adult songs. So to be able to sing appropriately as an adult, an American Robin needs to hear other robins singing. But a Western Kingbird doesn’t have to worry about its song as an adult—the song, such as it is, is genetically pre-programmed. The kingbird will produce its song just fine, without any help from human or bird. Pigeons and doves don’t need to hear adult song either. And although hummingbirds aren’t oscines, they also appear to require experience with adult songs when they are growing up.

Birds use songs to establish and defend territories and to attract mates. If baby songbirds don’t hear adult songs during the appropriate learning period—e.g., they are orphaned and raised by a licensed wildlife rehabilitator far from their home environment—they tend to develop simpler

MONITOR	SPECIES	EGGS	HATCHED	FLEDGE D
Travis Freeman	EAsEtern BLuebird	12	8	8
Ricky & Cathy Cooper	EABL	9	4	4
Evelyn Cooper	EABL	219	163	161
Home Trail	CArolina CHickadee	8	4	4
State Park Trail	EABL	39	30	25
James Dean	EABL	1962	1812	826
	CArolina Wren	55	49	35
	CACH	230	215	160
	WODU	75	70	70
Samuel & Joyce Scurria	EABL	18	16	16
	CACH	4	4	4
Carolyn & Randy Martin	EABL	26	23	23
Margaret Kemp	EABL	197	141	141
Hodges Gardens Trail	CACH	11	11	11
Margaret Campbell	EABL	36	30	30
Leonard & Eva Colvin	EABL	15	15	15
Joe Herring	WODU	64	62	62
Paula & Richard Gates	EABL	48	45	45
Carolyn Dove	EABL	24	23	23
	CACH	7	7	7
Carolyn & Helen Presley	EABL	20	12	12
	CACH	20	18	18
Gerald Degeyter	CACH	13	4	4
Tom & Becky Garza	EABL	3	3	3
Gary Sutton	EABL	12	12	12
Amos Strain	EABL	9	9	9
Bobbie Boykin	EABL	9	8	8
Judy Betz	EABL	16	15	15
Tom Allen	EABL	57	32	30
Madeline Rogers	EABL	9	4	4
Kenny Kleinpeter, Highland	EABL	22	15	15
Kenny Kleinpeter	EABL	60	56	56
Woods Trail	CArolina Wren	31	25	25
	CACH	16	12	12
	PRothonotary Warb.	8	6	6
Kenny Kleinpeter	EABL	444	271	260
Dairy Farm Trail	CAWR	8	6	6
	CACH	19	9	9
TOTALS on page 6				
EABL=Eastern Bluebird	CAWR=Carolina Wren			
CACH=Carolina Chickadee				
PROW=Prothonotary Warb				
WODU=Wood Duck				

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Using Recordings To Attract and Drive Off Birds

By: Tina Mitchell
Coaldale, CO

I think about this issue--calling birds in--from several vantage points. To me, the activity has a number of different components:

- 1) breeding season vs. not breeding season;
- 2) a recorded call vs. a human imitation;
- 3) a call to arouse curiosity vs. using a song that might arouse territoriality
- 4) for science vs. for pleasure or profit.

First, in breeding season, I really want to do as little as possible to disturb birds courting, mating, nest-building, and raising young. (Of course, I do monitor nest boxes--see #4 below.

Second, I would think that a recorded call, if you have the local dialect, could be much more arousing than a human imitation. (No matter how good you sound to us humans, you probably still sound like an out-of-towner, at best, to the birds.)

So, I would be very reluctant to use a recorded song during breeding season, since it has the

potential to create much more furor than a human imitation.

Third, a number of birders that I hang out with will "pish" to bring little birds out of vegetation for a quick look. This "pishing" isn't related to songs and the territoriality issues; it seems to just arouse curiosity that brings the little birds out to see what's making that noise. Maybe I just hang with not-great pishers, but "pishing" doesn't seem to arouse much response during breeding season--too much else of importance going on, perhaps. But in the fall and winter, pishing can bring little skulkers like Swamp Sparrow up out of the reeds where you can finally confirm that that "chip" call truly was an unusual winter Swamp Sparrow rather than its ubiquitous Song Sparrow cousin. Since my team is assigned the wetlands area of the Salida Christmas Bird Count, we are the only folks in the circle who have even a chance at finding a Swampie. So our expert's pishing skills has chalked up at least one for us each year we've participated.

Fourth (and finally!), I believe activities done for science (revealing my pro-science bias) serve a greater good to a larger extent than do activities done for personal pleasure or profit.

But it's all very, very gray for me and most of my thoughts are just opinions--not based on hard science but simple concern. Birders I deeply respect use recordings and that's up to them. Personally, I tend toward doing less rather than more and missing a bird or three. I love hearing birds nearly as much as I love seeing them, so that's rarely a problem for me. I have never used a recorded call. I myself am too embarrassed and/or unskilled to "pish", although I appreciate those skills in others.

(Con't from page 5)

Using Recordings To Attract and Drive Off Birds

I have most likely enjoyed pictures taken by photographers who have artificially called in birds. I certainly have appreciated the science gained by efforts such as the CBCs and NestWatch, even though some of the data are probably gained using less-than-best-scientific practices.

Above all, do no harm. But we often can't discern when we have done harm. So my preference is to just appreciate what I can see and hear while I'm passing through their worlds. And always try to travel with someone who is unbelievably good at spotting movement, getting his binoculars on the creature, and giving terrific directions to his wife so she has a chance to see it too. Lucky, lucky me.

(Tina Mitchell is a research psychologist at the American Indian and Alaska Native Programs at the University of Colorado Denver. She was a licensed rehabber for several years and still does volunteer work for a large center and writes grant applications to support them. Tina says "I have been a student of birds for over a quarter of a century, reaching voraciously and hanging out whenever possible with better birders than I am".)

Nesting Summary Totals From Page 4:

EABL: 3,654 Eggs, 2,712 Hatched, 1,720 Fledged

WODU: 64 Eggs, 62 Hatched, 62 Fledged.

CARW: 94 Eggs, 80 Hatched, 66 Fledged

CACH: 316 Eggs, 280 Hatched, 225 Fledged

PROW: 8 Eggs, 6 Hatched, 6 Fledged

Join us at the "Bluebird Conferences at:
<http://www.purplemartins.com/RTC/index.php>

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Teaching Baby Songbirds To Sing

songs with fewer frequencies than their parent-raised peers have. Since song complexity and richness attract females to singing males, males with less interesting songs are at a clear disadvantage in the mating game. Even though females of most species don't sing, they too need exposure to adult songs as they mature or they may not recognize and respond to an appropriate male's song. Research suggests that babies learn their songs best about 10 – 50 days after hatching. For babies that are raised by rehabbers, though, this prime learning period overlaps with the period that the nestlings are in a rehabber's care (Dolinsky, 2004). If these baby birds don't hear appropriate adult songs when they are with a rehabber, they may never be able to successfully compete and reproduce after they are released.

Babies don't usually develop their adult songs until long after they have fledged. Instead, they pass through several stages as they mature. First is an early *sensory* stage, where they listen to the songs of adults of their species. They encode only a very specific set of songs, suggesting that they have some kind of a mental template. Next, in the *subsong* phase, they utter various sounds—much as a toddler babbles all sorts of noises that aren't quite recognizable as human speech.

During the *sensory motor* phase, they produce bits and pieces of their adult song—but it clearly sounds like a work in progress. Sometimes, in the fall, you might hear a bird song that seems just a bit off. (Was that really a chickadee? Did I just hear a robin? The tone was right, but the rhythm was off...) Those are this year's kids, honing their songs to match their memories of the adult tutors they heard in their younger days.

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Con't from page 6

In the *mature* phase, they are off and running (well, singing) with a totally recognizable adult song.

Of course, hearing a live bird is the best situation, but youngsters can also learn from recordings (Dolinsky, 2004; Kroodsmas, 2005). Baby House Finches, American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds—or whatever wild birds hang around a rehabber's yard—will hear plenty of their own songs. But species that are far from home need help to develop their vocal repertoires. At the wildlife rehabilitation center where I volunteer, several of us put together a CD of the songs of our common species—sort of a party mix for baby songbirds. To help us in this effort to give baby birds their songs, the Macaulay Library at Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/MacaulayLibrary/>) graciously worked with us to create a CD that contains the western songs of the common species listed above. We set up a simple CD player with speakers in the baby bird room and the bird song tutorials began. And although more exposure is good, even just an occasional playing gives the “kids” a leg up, song-wise. With all of these songs playing one after another, how on earth does the baby figure out what to learn? It will store only its own songs because its brain filters out all but the relevant pieces. (And if you think of nestlings in the wild, you can picture this for yourself. Surely a great many species of birds sing in various woodlands, fields, and marshes. Babies raised in these areas have no trouble homing in on the right songs in the midst of these those marvelous symphonies!)

Sometimes, people want to “rescue” baby birds that seem to be abandoned by their parents. Indeed, sometimes nestlings truly need some help and bringing them to a licensed rehabilitator is the best thing. But sometimes people are mistaken about thinking that a nest has been abandoned.

For example, the parents aren't always at the nest, since they need to be out and about, beating the bushes to find food for their growing youngsters. So don't be in too big a hurry to remove the babies to get some help, thinking it's always a good thing. Rehabbers can give baby birds nutritious food; a clean, safe environment; and enrichment activities so that they can develop physically and mentally. But nobody will be able to teach these babies their songs better than their parents and the other birds of their species in the area, so that they develop the full complement of skills they'll need to lead rich, productive adult lives. Before you rush to help nestlings, be sure to contact your local rehabber to get some hints about how to determine when to intervene and when to sit tight for a while.

And if you're interested in reading a wonderful book about this subject, I highly recommend Kroodsmas's book—a story beautifully told by a man who has dedicated his life to studying bird song.

References

Dolinsky, Melissa B. (2004) Song development in songbirds—Are rehabilitators missing a crucial step? *International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council 27th Annual Conference Proceedings*, Portland, OR.

Kroodsmas, Donald. (2005) *The singing life of birds: The art and science of listening to birdsong*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

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(Note from Editor) A special thanks to Tina for her tireless efforts and these two fine articles.

Monitored vs. Non-Monitored—A Wasted Trail

By: Bet Zimmerman, Certified Environmental Professional and a member of the local Conservation Commission—Woodstock Valley, Connecticut

I got an interesting letter in response to one of the articles I wrote on monitoring in the NABS “Bluebird” Journal. The author was concerned about undue emphasis on monitoring, and what he viewed as people treating bluebirds as pets, and micromanaging them (weekly monitoring, feeding, putting up predator guards etc.) He felt we should just put up boxes and leave bluebirds alone, and they would do fine. I replied with what I see as the benefits of monitoring (from <http://www.sialis.org/monitoring.htm>) and gave him some info on an unmanaged trail I have experience with. He also expressed concern about the lack of science behind NABS recommendations. I noted that it is hard to conduct a scientific study of the value of monitored vs. non-monitored boxes if you don't monitor....

Last year Doug and I looked at 17 boxes on a beautiful golf course in town. The boxes were installed by a volunteer maybe 5+ years ago, and had never been monitored. The wooden boxes (slot and round entrance) were located NEAR great bluebird habitat, but almost all were placed in overgrown brambles on metal poles without baffles. Most were wet inside due to poor design and cracking roofs. When we cleaned them out in early 2007, we made forensic guesses on occupants. It looked like there had been historical bluebird nests in 2 or 3 boxes. The rest appeared to have been used by mice/flying squirrels, ants, paper wasps and House Wrens.

Because of the spread and number of other boxes we are managing, we decided not to modify or manage this trail until 2009. This also enabled us to establish a baseline, and show the difference between the unmanaged and managed trail results.

We cross-country skied the course yesterday (a FUN way to monitor, but it did involve some falling down)

and cleaned out the boxes.

We found that 11 of the 17 were used by mice/flying squirrels (with live mice jumping out of some of them), 4 apparently by HOWR or HOWR + Mouse, and 1 questionable – nest I could not ID. I had spot checked them in April and found 2 bluebird nests – both failed.

In contrast, we managed 9 boxes across the street in a park. That trail had four bluebird nestings, with 18 eggs, 16 fledged, plus 1 Black-capped chickadee nest (2 fledged) and 4 House Wren nests (with about 14 HOWR fledged).

Log is here: <http://www.sialis.org/trailroseland2008.htm>

I would say the four biggest reasons the golf course trail was so unproductive were:

- 1) Improper placement of boxes
- 2) Failure to clean out boxes (making many unusable)
- 3) Failure to put up predator guards (to prevent use by mice)
- 4) Failure to control paper wasps

Related info:

- Why and how to monitor: <http://www.sialis.org/monitoring.htm>
- Convincing someone else to monitor: <http://www.sialis.org/pleasemonitor.htm>
- Cleaning out nestboxes: <http://www.sialis.org/clean.htm>
- Paperwasps: <http://www.sialis.org/paperwasp.htm>
- Box placement: <http://www.sialis.org/habitat.htm>
- Predator Guards: <http://www.sialis.org/baffle.htm>
- Welcome to the Mouse House (video clip): <http://www.sialis.org/videomousehouse.htm>
- Mice and rats in nestboxes: <http://www.sialis.org/mice.htm>
- Flying squirrels in nestboxes: <http://www.sialis.org/flyingsquirrel.htm>

Winter Bluebirds in the Central Atchafalaya Basin, Louisiana

By: Dr. Jay V. Huner

Eastern Bluebirds are conspicuous birds because of their penchant for perching on utility lines. To me, their silhouettes are reminiscent of small raptors. That is appropriate as they are birds of prey ever searching for and diving to catch insects, worms and other invertebrates on the ground below them.

Prior to my retirement several years ago from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Naturalist Bill Fontenot and I collaborated on a survey of the bird fauna of accessible areas of Louisiana Atchafalaya Basin to develop birding trails. Our project was funded by the Atchafalaya Basin Program in the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and administered by Ms. Sandra Thompson. A number of prominent birders assisted during our two year project.

Bill and I conducted a number of surveys ourselves and an area that I found especially interesting bird was the Indian Bayou area of about 40,000 acres located north of I-10 and south of US 190 immediately to the west of the Atchafalaya River and to the east of the Basin's western guide levee. The US Army Corps of Engineers owns and is responsible for these properties.

My personal surveys began in the spring of 2001 and continued for two years. I regularly found a few bluebirds as the first year progressed as I drove north from the Butte Larose exit on I-10 towards Krotz Springs at US 190. However, I was surprised in the first winter to encounter flocks of tens of bluebirds. These birds congregated on utility lines about 6-8 miles north of I-10 at the Butte Larose exit where bottomland hardwood forests blended into agricultural fields that were, themselves, being converted back into bottomland hardwood forest.

It was not unusual to find 100-150 bluebirds in that area.

It is not clear if these flocks of wintering bluebirds are local birds, migrants, or a combination of local and migrant birds. But, they do present an impressive spectacle to those who enjoy watching Eastern Bluebirds. Note that the Indian Bayou Seasonal Bird Checklist references bluebirds as Uncommon in Fall and Winter but Common in Spring and Summer in forested areas. Remember, Uncommon in checklist parlance means that you have to look for the birds but they are otherwise present in suitable habitat. I'd classify them as Abundant at the referenced concentration site.

If you are interested in visiting the Indian Bayou area to see the wintering bluebirds and numerous other species, especially sparrows, expect to encounter fair to bad roads depending on how wet the weather is at the time of your trip. Louisiana 107 goes south from Krotz Springs to the northeastern corner of the Indian Bayou. It is paved but is rough with many potholes. Once the Indian Bayou area is reached, the road becomes mud and gravel below the levee. There is a road on top of the levee but much of it is private property. Virtually all vehicles use this road. Much of the road at the base of the levee has been covered with crushed limestone and most of the 8 miles or so between the end of Louisiana 107 and I-10 is now passable in pick up trucks and SUVs.

However, there are some areas where drainage is poor and several sections of 50-100 yards can only be described as quagmires during wet periods.

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(Con't from page 10)

Prior to the upgrading of the lower road, much of it was a quagmire so there has been significant progress in improving accessibility to the Indian Bayou area.

The Corps of Engineers has done remarkable work in developing nature trails, parking areas, and rest room facilities along the eastern side of the Indian Bayou area. Over 200 species of birds have been documented in the area and a very complete and useful bird seasonal checklist is available from the Corps' office in Port Barre' or on the internet by putting "Indian Bayou Corps of Engineers" in your search engine or going to www.mvn.usace.army.mil and searching for "Indian Bayou". In good weather, one can reach the wintering bluebird flocks in 15-20 minutes from either I-10 at Butte Larose or US 190 from Krotz Springs. Exercise care on such visits during hunting seasons as the area is open to hunters.

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Behavior of the House Sparrow Only!

Keith Kridler Mt. Pleasant, Texas

The most powerful urge birds have during the summer is to breed and raise young. Sparrows are very much like bluebirds that if something steals their eggs they simply move to another location to attempt again or may use the same site. Historically sparrows have been reported to successfully fledge EIGHT broods in a 12 month period. Modern days (the last 20 years or so) they seem to try to fledge about 34 broods per summer laying up

up to 10 eggs per clutch but may attempt 20+ nestings in the same general area if they constantly have their nests/eggs removed.

People must understand that when you remove their eggs and or nest that these birds ARE going to find another nest site VERY close to their home roost area and WILL be strong enough to take it away from ALL of the smaller native cavity nesters! This will happen within hours or even minutes of removal of the eggs or nesting material. This is a "natural" response with nearly all living creatures that can control ovulation! "Very close" means about 35 minutes of flight time or about a 5 mile circle!

IF you want to practice "passive" House Sparrow control then you MUST leave the eggs in the nest and render them infertile to help keep the population down on your trail. Applying mineral oil or vegetable oil once or twice a week to the sparrow eggs for the first two weeks should smother the developing embryo. This may or may not fool the female and the male as he also "sits" on the eggs to guard and keep them warm while the female is off the nest.

People ALSO must realize that after nest building and incubation starts the male House Sparrow continues to look and call for other females to breed with! Most birds are polygamists when it comes to breeding even if they stay with one mate for life! A male House Sparrow can feed twice a day at a bird feeder for 5 minutes and then have 1216 hours of daylight to visit other nest boxes and try to breed with other female House Sparrows. THIS IS ALL HIS HORMONES ALLOW HIM TO DO FOR THE ENTIRE SUMMER! The more empty nest boxes he can keep open near him the better his chances of attracting other females in the area.

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This means that periodically he will remove other nesting birds "nearby" anytime during the breeding season. DO NOT be surprised when this happens!

Even with a female patiently sitting on eggs that will not hatch the male will continue these "college Toga" party habits that have allowed them to become the most numerous bird on nearly every temperate continent! They did not explode across the continent and the world by being content with one nest box and one female! When a female House Sparrow is about to lay eggs she will mate with EVERY available male House Sparrow in the area! This encourages the males to always be on the look out for nest sites and keep up their calling for mates (singing) all summer!

We should NEVER be surprised when a House Sparrow "suddenly and out of the blue" appears and takes over a nest box in our yard. THIS IS what they DO! They are constantly EXPANDING their territory into your yard where you have now created the needed nest sites in an area where there were none before you placed the boxes.

KK

USING THE SPARROW SPOOKER

The sparrow spooker has captured the attention of many bluebirders as an aid when they are battling House Sparrows (HOSP). It is not intended to be used as a main source of protection as you only drive the HOSP other places and possibly on your trail or neighbors yard or trail. It is put on after the first egg is laid and the HOSP will leave it alone. You can put up a trap box and trap the HOSP so it will not attack your bluebirds and eggs.

Last season, I had my first experience with them on the state park trail. As Keith said above, they can come "out of the blue" and that is what they did. I was in a hurry to get some protection and all I could find was an insulated grocery bag that was shiny to make a home made one.



I cut strips of it and Clayton made the sparrow spooker for me very easily. It has a piece of wood attached to the back of the box and you can see the rest. I tacked the strips of shiny material on with some thumb tacks I had on hand. I did trap the male that was harassing the pair of bluebirds and this pair of House Sparrows followed the Bluebirds through four nest boxes taking it away from them before I trapped the male. When I would remove the nest, they would go to the box where the Bluebirds had started again and take it over. It was hair raising for a while and I could only imagine if I'd had more than one pair. I ordered a Van Ert inbox trap and I can move it around to other boxes if need be. You can order the traps and spookers at Van Ert's website, Just Google his name and traps and sparrow spookers.

Evelyn