

BAYOU BLUEBIRD NEST NEWS

Volume 30

Evelyn M. Cooper, Editor

September 2009

LBBS ANNUAL MEETING
LSU Museum of Natural Science
September 19, 2009
9: 30 A.M to 1:30 P.M.
Register Now!



Shown are two shots taken at the “Behind The Scenes” tours with Steve Cardiff at our annual meeting at the LSU Museum in 2007. We saw the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and also all three species of Bluebirds. That is as close as most of us will ever get to seeing all three species of bluebirds, and, seeing the specimens of the Ivory-billed was awesome.



From The Perch
By:
Evelyn Cooper
President

Photo By:
Wendell Long
Waynesville, OH

LBBS is excited to have our Annual Meeting again this year at the LSU Museum of Natural Science. Dr. Frederick H. Sheldon, Director, will be our tour guide.

We met there in 2007 and it was a wonderful experience to see the Museum and go on the tours guided by Steve Cardiff and Donna Dittmann. The attendance was good, but many people were not able to come and we wanted to give those that didn't make it a chance and also many said they would love to see the Museum again.

Please register (at no cost) so we can get a count for the tours.

We will be giving some great door prizes which will include a set of Nikon binoculars, complete units (poles, guards and boxes) and other prizes that anyone would like to donate. I will paint Bluebirds on the box I use on the complete unit.

Please try to attend our meeting as we know you will enjoy the speakers and the great tours planned. Anything you want to know about bluebirds will be just a question away.

We have two excellent bluebird speakers, Kenny Kleinpeter and Tom Allen. Kenny can answer Purple Martin and Wood Duck questions too. Each speaker will give their own experiences and what works for them on their trails. You will not be disappointed.

Contact information to register at no charge is: 318-878-3210 or emcooper@bayou.com.

See you there!

September is membership renewal month. If your newsletter label has 09/09 on it, your membership is due. Membership renewals have been sent out. This will be your last newsletter if not paid by December 1st.

REGISTER NOW!
(no charge)
318-878-3210 or
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DIRECTIONS TO LSU MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

From I-10

- 1. Exit Dalrymple Drive**
- 2. Turn right onto Dalrymple Drive**
- 3. Follow street through 3 stop lights (if you are east bound on I-10, or 4 stop lights if you are west bound on I-10)**
- 4. The last stop light is Highland Road. You are on campus. The gates will be open and no parking tags are issued on that day.**
- 5. On to the Museum: Continue down Dalrymple past the parade Grounds and Tower Drive (on left). Pass Infirmary Road.**
- 6. You will see a row of pine trees on the left side of Dalrymple. A sign for the Greek Theater and the top row of seats are visible to the right. A circular drive drops from behind the pine trees.**
- 7. You may park anywhere along the street, but you must have a parking tag.**
- 8. You are now behind Foster Hall. Walk up the steps at either end of the building and around to the front of building. The Museum entrance is in the middle of Foster Hall on the main level, facing the courtyard.**



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www.labayoubluebirdsociety.org

Bluebird Nest Boxes Have Many Kinds of Tenants



This beautiful Prothonotary Warbler nested in one of Bobbie Boykin's bluebird boxes in Prairieville. What a lucky lady she is!

Photo By: Bobbie Boykin



Mama Titmouse looks so adorable in one of Kenny's nest boxes on the Kleinpeter Farms Dairy Bluebird Trail. They normally prefer nesting in tree cavities or a box on a tree which would require some good protection on the tree.

Photo By: Kenny Kleinpeter



One of Al and Yvonne Bordelon's, Covington, nest boxes has more than one tenant , although not inside. I love frogs! Photo: By Al Bordelon

GRAYWOOD BLUEBIRD TRAIL, LAKE CHARLES



Shown above is Alton Puckett, Lake Charles, who established the bluebird trail at Graywood. LBBS donated five boxes to get him started. Following this, fourteen other home owners paid a family membership and received a nest box making a total of 19 boxes put up. (Shipping has to be paid by anyone wanting the free box with a family or individual membership)

Alton had Bluebirds to nest in the pipe under his mail box last year and he said that was the first time he had ever seen Bluebirds in Lake Charles and he is nearing retirement. He built a box and put it on a proper pole with guard this year and he has had success with them nesting in his yard.

Alton stated that when he was riding his bike over the neighborhood during June, he saw three bluebird nests in pipes under mailboxes. He got his neighbors and friends interested and got together a presentation to give them. He and his wife, Giselle, helped to install the units on the Graywood Bluebird Trail. The habitat is beautiful and they have great prospects for increasing the bluebird population there.

In June, Evelyn Cooper and Sheryl Bassi traveled to Lake Charles and gave a presentation to residents of the Graywood Community and also had as guests Nan Himel, president of the Lake Charles Garden Club and Ellie (member) and her husband Chuck Lemoine. Nan hopes the Garden Club can establish a bluebird trail in her area. They have a Jr. Garden Club that will be also be involved.

FEEDING MEAL WORMS

By: Linda Ruth

Bluebirds love mealworms and we all love to watch them gorging themselves with these little treats. However, as with everything, moderation is the key.

Mealworms are high in fat, low in calcium and have a tough exoskeleton that can be hard for younger birds to digest. In moderation, that isn't a problem, because the birds obtain missing nutrients from other components of the diet.

However, foods that are high in fat taste better than low fat foods. In addition, when harried parents are trying to fill a lot of hungry mouths, it is tempting to grab a quick and easy meal (sound familiar?). As a result, mealworms, if fed free choice, can make up a very substantial portion of the nestlings' diet.

Captive birds and reptiles fed a diet consisting primarily of mealworms, especially when growing rapidly, can develop severe bone disorders caused by an abnormal ratio of calcium to phosphorus in the diet. People who feed a lot of mealworms to their pets routinely dust the mealworms with calcium powder or feed a calcium and vitamin enriched diet to the mealworms (called gut loading) just before feeding to make them more nutritionally complete. Breeding birds are also offered calcium in the form of ground oyster shell or cuttlebone to supplement their diet. Eggshells are mostly composed of calcium. When my parakeets are laying, they develop a craving for calcium and will devour a cuttlebone in a few days. Calcium deficiency can also cause egg-binding in laying birds. A calcium deficient bird may produce eggs whose shells are softer or more fragile than normal. It is very difficult for a bird to lay a soft-shelled egg, since the muscles that push the egg out tend to deform the egg rather than moving it.

push the egg out tend to deform the egg rather than moving it. An egg-bound bird can die of exhaustion, or from an infection following rupture of the egg inside the bird. This is probably the most common reason apparently healthy birds are found dead in a box.

Many areas in the Northeast have also have soil which is severely calcium deficient because the calcium has been leached from the soil by acid rain. This article, based on research done by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, explains how calcium deficiency affects reproductive success in woodland birds. <http://pages.cthome.net/rwinkler/acidrain.htm>

There is nothing wrong with feeding mealworms. Certainly they have saved many birds from starvation during cold, rainy times when natural food is scarce. During good weather, however, it is best that mealworms be offered as snacks, forcing the birds to feed their young a varied diet. If lots of mealworms are being offered, it is a good idea to offer oyster shell to help balance the diet. Linda Ruth (retired veterinarian)
Coventry, CT

Evelyn feeds stewed chopped raisins and chunky peanut butter/lard stiffened with dry quick cooking oats and corn meal. Photo:Evelyn





Shown above are participants at the presentation in Lake Charles. Nan Himel, (far right) Lake Charles Garden Club president is hoping their organization can establish a Bluebird Trail.



On July 3rd, I was astounded to find this tiny Bluebird egg in one of my boxes. I had read about them and seen pictures of such abnormalities, but I was really amazed to find it. The egg on the upper left was larger than a normal size bluebird egg. I was told by several experts that it probably had a double yoke.
Evelyn

NABS ANNUAL MEETING

The 31st Annual North American Bluebird Society Conference will be held September 9-13 at Grantville, PA. Registration has been extended to September 1st. You can go to www.nabluebirdsociety.org and get more details. You can also contact the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania at www.thebsp.org for more information.



Bluebirds Love Clean Boxes

Cindy Brown, Lafayette, shown cleaning the nest box after babies have fledged. The reason for her stool support is the top opening box. Cindy sent a picture of the clean box and it was nice. Cornell studies showed Bluebirds do prefer a clean box if the site is successful. According to Cindy's reports, it a successful site. Shown in the picture on the right is Papa Blue inspecting the box shortly after she cleaned it out. She had not even closed the top of the box for drying and he was inspecting!. Isn't the habitat beautiful!

Top openings do provide for good photographic shots. However, they are harder to monitor and to clean when fledging has taken place.

Many of you may remember Leo Terzia of Monroe who was one of the most avid bluebirders and supporters of LBBS before he passed away a couple of years ago. When he was at the Monroe Veteran's Home, he got his son to establish a small trail for him and he had some top opening boxes about 4 ft. off the ground. He could go in his motorized wheel chair and check the boxes. I went with him one day and saw his babies in the box.

To clean the boxes, some people just scrap the sides and bottom with a putty knife. Boxes that open from the top down are especially easy to clean.

When you monitor a large number of boxes, I find that it is easy to have a couple of extra boxes that are already clean and switch them out on the pole and take the dirty box back home with me.

I spray the nest down with a solution of Clorox water before taking it out of the box. That keeps any grit and filthy particles from flying around to be inhaled. I spray the sides and bottom with the Clorox solution and then take a nozzled hose and spray the box until it is completely clean. I let it sit with door open to air out and dry and is ready for the next use.

Regardless of which method you prefer or use, it is wise to take precautions. Wear a mask and disposable gloves.

Anytime a nest is removed from the box, it should be bagged and put in the trash to burn. Throwing it anywhere near the nest box during nesting season could entice predators to the area.