

BAYOU BLUEBIRD NEST NEWS

Volume 34 Evelyn M. Cooper, Editor

September 2010

LOUISIANA BAYOU BLUEBIRD SOCIETY 2010 ANNUAL MEETING



COME HEAR ABOUT BLUEBIRDS AT BIEDENHARN!

LBBS will hold its annual meeting on October 23, 2010 at Biedenharn Gardens & Museum, 2000 Riverside Drive, Monroe, LA. The meeting will be from 9:30 A.M. until 1:30 P.M. The picture on the upper left is the new Coca Cola Museum and the building on the right is the new Education Center. Our Annual Meeting will be held in the Education Center.

Speakers for the meeting are Mary Jane Shearer, Tucker, GA, LBBS Board member and James Dean, Marion. They are charter members of LBBS. Each of these speakers have monitored and maintained a trail for many years. James has battled the problem of snake depredation as he has some of the longest in the state. He states he has come up with a guard that works. We look forward to both presentations.

The meeting will begin with the social hour and registration. We will have nice door prizes and it promises to be a great meeting. There is no registration fee. Please call 318-878-3210 or e-mail emcooper@bayou.com to register.



From The Perch

By:
Evelyn Cooper
President

Photo By:
Wendell Long
Waynesville, OH

LBBS has a new webmaster. Starting in July, Frank Dutton, Many, will be taking care of it. We look forward to working with him. Frank will be upgrading the site and uploading information and pictures. He has a wonderful website with his photography on birds and other wildlife at <http://www.toledo-bend.us/> listed on our links section.

We deeply appreciate Kenny's commitment and dedication in building our website and being the webmaster when he took over in 2004. Many, thanks, Kenny!

September is membership renewal month. If your membership is due, you will receive a renewal form. Please fill out and support us. Your monies help build boxes, guards and the purchase of poles, along with the usual necessities of running the organization. We depend on you!

Our Annual meeting is approaching and we will vote in new officers and board members. I am really excited about the new people coming aboard. All of these people are so capable and talented. There's plenty of parking space on the streets around the museum.

I would like to say Congratulations to Emily Winners, Lecompte, and her group for winning national awards for her project, "Bluebirds On The Bayou:" at the Garden Club Convention. You can read her story on pages 3 and 6. Emily is a mover and shaker!

If you can bring a door prize to the meeting, it will be appreciated.

Evelyn

Shown at right: Tommy, The Soda Jerk at the Biedenharn Coca Cola Museum. You'll want to visit with him.



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Carolyn Martin, Many

www.labayoubluebirdsociety.org





Photos
By:
Emily
Winners

Top Photo: LA Bayou Bluebird Society members and Jr. Garden Club directors Gladys Ford and Emily Winners display the 1st place award received in the National Garden Club Competition.

Bottom Photo: Lecompte Jr. Garden Club members Alyssa Case, Remy Winners and Lacey Tanner display the 1st place awards received at the State, Deep South and National Garden Club levels. Con't on page 6

Do Bluebirds Mate For Life?

By: Bet Zimmerman, Environmental Scientist, Woodstock, CT

The answer maybe sometimes. Bluebirds do form pair-bonds during the breeding season. They are generally "socially monogamous," meaning that a single male and female form a basic social unit in breeding territory. One study of Eastern Bluebirds (EABL) in Georgia and South Carolina indicated that about 95% of the time, nestings involve one male and one female (Gowaty 1980). Backyard bluebird landlords have noticed that pair bonds can last a long time. Over a 12 year period in California involving Western Bluebirds (WEBL), scientist found that, out of 117 pairs, only 7 changed mates when both mates returned to breed in a second year. In between years, out of 106 re-nests, there were only 3 cases of mate switching (Dickinson et al 1996). 10% (2 out of 20) females that tried to re-nest in a single year apparently switched mates between broods (JAB and PAG, BNA).

Pairs are considered "bonded" when the female enters a cavity with a male for the first time (Kreig 1971). EABL usually pair up in late fall or winter time. (This is a good indication that the pair may use the box, but is no guarantee) There is no data on pair formation for Mountain Bluebirds (MOBL) before they arrive at breeding grounds. Pairs can remain together between seasons, even when they are in non-breeding grounds. Pairs can remain together between seasons, even when they are in non-breeding season flocks.

During nesting season, the male guards the female to keep her from mating with another male. He is trying to ensure that her progeny are his. However, studies in South Carolina and Ontario with EABLs indicated that 25-30% of broods were sired by more than one male. This appears to be more common when neighborhoods are densely settled (Gowaty 1996 and Gowaty and Bridges 1991b) It may also be more

more common with younger males and older females. Promiscuity in other bird species (like Saltmarsh Sparrows) may be because they are at high risk of nesting losses, which might encourage them to seek other or multiple partners in a desperate scramble to reproduce.

In another study of WEBLs in California, 45% of broods had at least one nestling sired by a different male, and about 17% of nestlings were extra-pair (Duckworth 2006a). Another WEBL study in Montana found 13% of nestlings in 27% of nests were extra-pair (Duckworth 2006a). Gowaty found that as many as 20% of EABL (?) nestlings may be fathered by a different parent.

If a nest is unsuccessful, will the pair bond break? Pairs are more likely to stick together if a previous nesting was successful. One study of EABL showed that 70-85% of successful pairs re-nested with the same partner in the same season, compared to 30-50% of unsuccessful pairs. However, backyard bluebirders have anecdotally reported multiple failed nesting attempts that appear to have involved the same pair, where the eggs were infertile and did not hatch despite repeated attempts. (Can more than one female tend a nest? Bluebirds may breed cooperatively (jointly)- i.e. more than one female may lay eggs in the same nest, and they both incubate the eggs (either at the same time or one after the other) and cooperate with a male in feeding the babies. This may be because nest boxes or males are limited. The joint nesters may be the mother and a daughter from a previous season's brood. Social polyandry (one female nesting with more than one male) can also occur. Bluebirds may also have juveniles from an earlier brood who help feed the babies from a subsequent brood. WEBLs, helpers may be adult males, adult pairs or juveniles from earlier broods (BNA)



Dot Walker is one of our newest members. She is my neighbor and lives less than a quarter of mile from me. We celebrated her 90th birthday earlier in the year. She has a nice bluebird story.

She called me one morning last season very upset. She said Bluebirds were nesting in the open rafters in her car port and something had spooked them and the three babies were on the ground. I hurried to her house and found her sitting in the living room with a box in her lap with a towel wrapped over it. Later, I regretted I did not have my camera with me and that would have been a priceless picture. We were both pretty excited!

I told Dot that I had a couple of nests with nestlings the same age and I could foster the babies to them.

One of the boxes was the one in my backyard that had the nest cam in it and had four babies. I placed one with it. The other box was farther out from my house on my trail and near our garden. I put two babies there with three already in the box. We watched on the nest box cam as the parents fed the baby and in about 30 minutes, I couldn't tell which one he was. They all fledged successfully.

Clayton and I put a nest box with stovepipe guard up for Dot in her yard. The bluebirds took to it immediately and she had another brood to fledge.

This year, Dot lost the first brood like many of us did on the first cycle. However, she raised a brood of five on the second cycle with no problems.

Kudos to Dot for caring!



When I check box (#23) on my trail this season, I found this hay string hanging out of the hole. The female had worked the end of it into the nest. I have found strings hanging out of the box on several occasions. If it is not removed, it could get the nestlings tangled up in it and keep them from leaving the box and they could perish.. Another reason it is so important to monitor! (Information and Photo by: Evelyn Cooper)

Con't from page 3

Members of the Lecompte Jr. Garden Club have a big reason to celebrate! The club recently won 3 awards at the State, Deep South, and National Garden Club levels for its "Bluebirds on the Bayou" project. The goal of "Bluebirds on the Bayou" is to place nest boxes in the yards of those interested in learning more about the Eastern Bluebird. Participants in our project learn how to properly maintain and monitor their own boxes for these fascinating little birds. To date, over 40 boxes have been erected in the Lecompte, Cheneyville and Alexandria communities. Residents of Lecompte are pleased to report they are now spotting bluebirds on a regular basis - in areas they've never seen them before! Several generous donations and a new table saw will keep us busy expanding our project over the next few years!

Emily Winners

**LBBS LIFETIME MEMBERS
(Listed in order as they joined)**

Dave Cagnolatti, Baton Rouge
Kenny & Antoinette Kleinpeter, BR
Jimmy & Marianne Strong, Delhi
Jeff & Debbie Kleinpeter, Baton Rouge
Charles & Nell McCullen, Monroe
Nelson Able, Monroe
Ben Kleinpeter, Baton Rouge
Kleinpeter Farms Dairy, Baton Rouge
Pat Moss, Slidell
Hal Moss, Slidell
Joe & Tal Broyles, Baton Rouge
Bobbie Boykin, Prairieville
Tom & Hannah Allen, Oak Ridge
Jerry Hornsby, Baton Rouge

ROBIN FEEDS GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER NESTLINGS

By: Bob Rickett, Monroe, LA



Photo By: Bob Rickett

A friend in western Ouachita Parish invited me over to his house to see the interaction going on in his yard between a pair of Great Crested Flycatchers and an American Robin. The flycatchers had built a nest in a gourd that Larry Savage, retired wildlife biologist for LA Wildlife and Fisheries, Monroe, LA, had drilled and hung at the edge of a shed. There were six babies in it, almost ready to fledge. Larry had noticed a Robin checking out the gourd on several occasions. So yesterday (June 10), I grabbed the camera and we monitored the activities for approximately four hours. As Larry had suspected, the Robin was delivering food items to the babies in the gourd. When Larry had first noticed this activity, the Robin seemed to wait until the parents were absent before visiting the gourd, but as time progressed yesterday, the Robin became more bold, and eventually some very enthusiastic, feather-pulling fights broke out between them and the Flycatchers. Of course, the Flycatchers frequently attacked the robin when it was at the nest, but the Robin also became more and more aggressive and would initiate attacks on the parents as they came to the

nest. All of this conflict did not seem to inhibit the overall delivery of food items to the nest by all parties. Real-time observations plus later examinations of photos showed that the Robin was often bringing earthworms, as one might expect, to the nest, but on a few visits he brought unidentifiable insects. The Flycatchers delivered an impressive variety of items. From direct observations and from later examining the photos, we saw many horseflies, many cicadas, (a small species, much smaller than the non-periodical cicadas we usually see later in the summer), several green katydids or other green hoppers, a robber fly, a few moths, a small butterfly, a dragonfly piece (abdomen only), at least one caterpillar, one item that I think was a stink bug, and several other items unidentifiable to me.

It was difficult to tell exactly what was going on inside the gourd when parent or robin attended, but in one photograph, the beak of the robin can be seen inserted into the mouth of a baby bird. The parents could often be seen removing fecal sacs. We never saw the robin do that, but on one visit, he reached inside and then leaned back with apparent swallowing motions. We know that Robins sometimes swallow fecal sacs, especially when their babies are very young. We believe the intruder robin was always the same individual, and was a male, judging from the black head and dark back. Larry had previously seen two robins in the area at the same time, but we suspect this was only a coincidence. I have heard and read of non-parent birds tending the nests of their own or other species, but this was my first chance to observe and photograph such activity. And, I surely am thankful for digital cameras!

Bob Rickett

LOUISIANA BAYOU BLUEBIRD SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

www.labayoubluebirdsociety.org

1222 Cook Road
Delhi, LA 71232

New Member Renewal

NAME: _____

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E-MAIL & TELEPHONE: _____

- Individual-----\$ 7.50
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Your cancelled check will be your receipt.

LBBS is recognized as a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization and contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law.



An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society