

Bayou Bluebird Nest News

Editor: Christina LeGuin March 2, 2003 Volume 4



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Bobbie Mayer's Story

Prairieville, La.

The summer of 1998 my husband, Troy, and I decided we wanted to purchase our own land. We found a wonderful piece for sale across the street from his dad's place. We were very excited clearing off trees and walking the property line discussing what we needed to do to get it ready for the day we would move on the property. Well, the nesting bug got the better of me and I was off and running to set out bird feeders and baths. Not having any knowledge of what I was doing, my father-in-law told me he had a bluebird nestbox in his back yard and he thought that would be a good start. I ran to local hardware and feed stores looking for the nestbox. Lowe's had a bluebird box that I purchased and I ran home to get it set on the land. With no knowledge in hand and bluebird dreams inspiring me, I did exactly what everyone does; follow the directions, which states to mount the nestbox on a tree, which I did right away. Two weeks after the nest box was in place and not being monitored, red squirrels had eaten the entrance hole out of whack and inside was a huge snakeskin.

Troy took the nestbox down for me. Before trying again, I surfed the Internet. Wow, it was loaded with information and people who were willing to help me. Mrs. Evelyn Cooper was one of them. Soon my moving day was closer and with Evelyn's assistance, another bluebird nestbox was in place and I was off and running again. She explained I had to check the box frequently and I needed to keep close visual on it. She told me to set out a birdbath, and this is when my pair started showing their faces. They loved the bath. I was also tickled when they were making a home out of the box. I did everything Evelyn said. I just knew I would have chicks soon.

One day while checking on the pair, I saw that something wasn't right. Ward and June (my nesting pair) were not acting right. All of a sudden I saw the reason why. A female House Sparrow had landed on the top of the nest box and then her mate joined her. I ran as fast as I could and wrote Evelyn. She told me I had to remove the Sparrows from the area or they would possibly kill my pair. This is not what was supposed to happen. I was so upset. Again, I did just what she advised and bought a trap and got rid of the aggressive little pair. I ended up "taking care of" 5 male House Sparrows and 2 females. I had done for my bluebirds what they couldn't do for themselves. I was proud to assist with 5 new blue eggs and later four chicks. This was a very proud moment for me. I was telling everyone the news.

This is my 2nd year and my 2nd nest box is up this year. I have them in both the front yard and back yard. The Bluebirds can't see each other's nest boxes; I have them placed out of sight of one another. I plan to put another bath in the back for the other nest box, and also dream of having a trail someday. I owe my success to wonderful people who assisted me in my quest, and to Ward and June, who trusted that I was a landlord they would be able to tolerate.

Bobbie Mayers, Bluebird Dreamer (Picture on Page 6)

LBBS Nest Summary 2002

Boxes Occupied	#Nest Attempts	Total Eggs	Total Fledged
1,160	1,535	4,070	3,599
# Eggs & Birds Destroyed by House Sparrows	Eggs & Birds Lost due to other reasons	Total # Young	
4	437	3,658	

Cub Scout Pack 158 Starts Bluebird Trail

On January 11, 2003, the Cub Scout Pack 158 Bluebird Trail was born, or should I say , hatched! Twenty-one boys and 18 Dads from Pack 158 participated in the establishment of the bluebird trail. Not even overcast skies and 40-degree weather could dampen the spirits of the boys as they set up 14 nest boxes along the trail. While our friend, Dave Cagnolatti, built the boxes, the scouts were thrilled at the opportunity to paint the boxes and predator guards, donated by LBBS. The boys also learned how to use tools such as screwdrivers, hammers, and electric drills as they mounted and installed the boxes and guards. Most of the kids thought it fun to paint the boxes camouflage, although a few peace signs were noted on a couple of boxes!

The trail is situated on the grounds of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. This property, near Carencro, Louisiana, is called The Center for Ecology and Environmental Technology and contains experimental greenhouses, riparian areas, and acres and acres of coastal prairie and pasturelands. Cub Scout Pack 158 is based out of Lafayette, Louisiana in affiliation with Asbury United Methodist Church. The pack comprises over 40 cub scouts, ages 6-10, and participates in numerous camping outings, the Pinewood Derby, and Scout-O-Rama. While Pack 158 has participated in numerous "conservation" type activities before, the establishment and monitoring of a bluebird trail was our first true conservation effort. All the boys are eagerly awaiting the first signs of bluebirds nesting along our trail. We look forward to seeing their faces light up when they witness a bluebird nest for the first time.

Cub Scout Pack 158 Bluebird Trail used 14 of the 21 nest boxes that Dave Cagnolatti built and presented to them. Dr. Jay Huner, Director of the Crawfish Research Center, USL, Lafayette, volunteered to install and monitor the remaining 7 nest boxes for LBBS. We appreciate Dave and Dr. Huner's help with establishing Cub Scout Pack 158's Bluebird Trail and their efforts on behalf of LBBS.

Clay Green, Leader
Pack 158, CSA
Lafayette, LA

(Picture on Page 6)

MALE HOUSE SPARROWS LOVE... THEIR HOUSE

There is a quirk in the behavior of male House Sparrows that helps this species compete so successfully with native birds.

House Sparrows have a weak pair bond meaning they don't form significant attachments

to their mates. The bond that that seems to be stronger is the male bird's attachment to a chosen nesting site. The male sparrow falls in love with his house, not his favorite girl.

Understand this concept and you realize that the commonly recommended means of sparrow control (removing the nest and eggs) will not deter the male. The lack of success in using this method often frustrates people who are trying to attract bluebirds and other cavity-nesting species.

This bonding behavior is not typical of native bird species. If a bluebird or a chickadee nest containing eggs is disturbed or vandalized, the pair usually leaves the area. The same seems to be true for Tree Swallows and other cavity-nesting species.

The male House Sparrow, however, will continue to stay in the area even after the female has left following the destruction of her nest and eggs. The male Sparrow must be removed from the area if the problem is to be solved.

(This information was adapted for use from an article published in the North Dakota Game and Fish Department publication Watchable Wildlife Notes and published in "Bluebird" Journal of the North American Bluebird.)

BLUEBIRD TIDBITS

Did you know that 5 percent of all Bluebird eggs are white? This is caused by a genetic defect in the female. When the female lays the egg, in the final hours as it is being passed through the oviduct, colors are from pigments produced by glands as the egg moves down the tube and are squeezed out onto the shell.

White eggs produce blue Bluebirds, not albinos. If a blue egg is found in a clutch of white eggs, it is the result of dumping by another female, which is quite common.

Copied from Jim McClochlin's Best of Bluebird,"

"Bluebirds Forever", by Connie Toops

HOUSE SPARROW

The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is in the Finch family.

From The Perch...



Nesting season has begun and we are all looking forward to a successful year. LBBS is proud to be a part of helping bluebirders. We have our five projects all in place and as a result of hard work of LBBS members, 59 new nestboxes are in place and helping to teach our young people the joys of birding and helping to educate them in our conservation efforts. We will be doing write-ups and have pictures in our future newsletters to share with all of you these wonderful endeavors.

Our May 3rd meeting is getting closer. I encourage all of you to make the effort to join us as it will be a wonderful program and a learning experience.

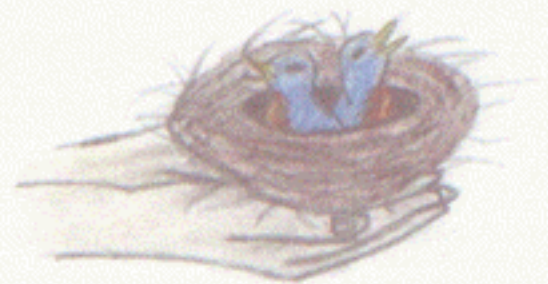
Make plans to join us on May 3, 2003, at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center from 2:00 until 5:00 for our Spring Event. Bob Rickett will be our speaker. A trail walk will be held at Brenda Hayden's home that morning. Details will be announced as soon as possible.

Evelyn Cooper
President

Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society



*Bluebirds along the bayous....
where we lend a helping hand!*





Bobbie Mayers' daughter, with Bobbie's nestbox. The Mayers are from Prairieville, LA.



Cub Scout Pack 158 gets ready to set up boxes on their new trail. Their trial is on the grounds of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.