

Bayou Bluebird Nest News

Editor: Christina LeGuin June, 2003 Volume 5



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An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

LBBS BLUEBIRD SPRING EVENT

The Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society enjoyed a Spring Event on May 3, 2003 at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, 10953 North Oak Hills Parkway in Baton Rouge, LA, from 2:00 until 5:00.

The day's events were kicked off with morning birding tours at the home of Brenda Hayden, of Holden, La. This was a real treat for all who attended.

In the afternoon, a program was held at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, Baton Rouge, LA. After a short social period, Evelyn Cooper, President, LBBS, gave welcoming remarks and then introduced the speaker for the afternoon gathering. Prof. Robert Rickett, Ret., ULM, Monroe, La., gave a splendid program on Bluebirds and other native small cavity nesting birds. He shared a wonderful video program of Bluebirds, their behavior, habitat, and of other native birds in their splendor. He had some wonderful, unusual shots of antics of the Prothonotary Warbler that stole the hearts of all in the audience. The video shown was filmed in its entirety by Professor Rickett.

Members and non-members attended from towns and cities across the state. Communities represented included Westlake, LA, Prairieville, LA, Livingston, La, Henderson, LA, Baker, LA, Baton Rouge, LA, Gonzales, LA, Monroe, LA, Delhi, LA, Hammond, LA, and Leland, MS.

Bobbie Boykin, Prairieville, La. and Betty Lard, of Hammond, LA, provided refreshments for the gathering.

Great door prizes were donated by Pat Quinn, Westlake, LA, Betty Lard, Hammond, LA, Tim Domingue, Henderson, LA, Cecil Tarver, Livingston, LA, Bobbie Boykin, Prairieville, LA, Sheryl Bassi, Leland, MS, and Ed Hoek, Baker, LA.

New This Year

The Observatory is proud to bring together nature and astronomy through the development of our new [Bottomland Hardwood Forest Walking Trail](#). Each child who attends Stargazers Camp will have the opportunity to hike portions of the trail path, monitor the bluebird nest boxes that were donated to the project by Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society, and participate in nature related games, activities and crafts.

Highland Park Road Observatory in Baton Rouge, La., celebrates its grand opening June 21, 2003 and LBBS will join the celebration and present nestboxes as door prizes. Shane and Emily Marcotte, Denham Springs, La. will be representing LBBS. LBBS is proud to be a part the Walking Trail project.

Mary Jane Shearer: A Louisiana Girl AtHeart

Mary Jane Shearer of Tucker, GA, is a Charter Member of LBBS, and is a Louisiana girl at heart. Mary Jane was born and raised in Jackson, LA, and is an avid bluebirder. Last summer, she was the driving force behind the creation of a new trail in the Tucker, GA area. At left is a photo of "MJ" monitoring a box along the trail as her friend, Jean Smith, takes notes. Below is Mary Jane's Story.

Mary Jane's Story

Last summer when the president of the Lake Ivanhoe Garden Club (Tucker, Ga.) asked board members to recommend a club project for the coming year, it didn't take long for me to suggest a bluebird trail. Of course, the first question Alice, our club president, had for me was, "Where would we put a Bluebird Trail?"

That, too, was easy because ever since they cut down the woods adjoining our subdivision in Metro Atlanta, I'd wanted to see nestboxes installed on that huge area of perfect habitat for our Eastern Bluebirds. Since Alice is an avid birder, it didn't take much persuading to get her to bring it up for approval at the first meeting in September. Now, all we had to do was convince the Heritage Golf Course that they needed a Bluebird Trail!

Alice and I met with the club manager to discuss the possibility of co-sponsoring a trail with our garden club. He seemed interested as we shared the NABS information that explained how and why trails are monitored, but he said he would need permission from the Heritage board before proceeding with the project.

When we finally got approval to go ahead with the trail, we had to confront the big problem of financing our project. As club treasurer, I knew we were limited in what we could spend for the houses, but this trail was just meant to be. Ken, the carpenter who had done work for both Alice and me, said he would cut out a few houses for us, so I printed out the plans from Birdhouse Network for him – expecting him to use some of his scrap lumber. Maybe Ken caught bluebird fever by hanging around our yards, but he really got into this project. He brought new cedar boards for the boxes, conduit fittings for mounting, screws and even offered to come to our December club meeting when our program was Bluebird nestbox assembly. What a guy! He was a little concerned whether the ladies could handle the job, but he'd never seen a bunch of ladies armed with Phillips screwdrivers – in few minutes, we had completely assembled our six nestboxes.

In January, Alice and I met with Randy, the Heritage superintendent of grounds, who helped us locate sites for the nestboxes. We were pleasantly surprised when he offered to supply the conduit, make the stovepipe guards, and mount the boxes for us. The boxes were installed January 22, and by March 28, we had a Bluebird nest started in one box and a Nuthatch building in another. Several club members are enjoying learning how to monitor the trail, and they now know how to monitor the nestboxes in their yards.

To date, our trail has fledged 7 Eastern Bluebirds, and 4 nestlings in another box should fledge in a week and we have a new nest under construction.

We had one disappointment when House Wrens removed the Nuthatch eggs, replacing with their own nest with 7 House Wren eggs.

As you can see, this small Bluebird trail involved a number of people. Its success is due in great part to the cooperation and help of Randy and his crew at Heritage Golf Course, our carpenter, Ken, and all the ladies of Lake Ivanhoe Garden Club who help build, support and monitor the project. And, as Randy said, maybe the sweet song of the Bluebird will help soothe the nerves of the golfer whose shot has gone awry.

Mattie Akin Elementary School Greenville, MS

LBBS Member Sheryl Bassi and Math and Science Teacher Cissy Horton are working with Mattie Akin 4th Graders to establish their trail on the grounds of the school. This is an ongoing project sponsored by LBBS.

Look for more about Mattie Akin School's Bluebird Trail, and other LBBS sponsored projects in upcoming issues of the Bayou Bluebird Nest News!



Dr. Shirl Brunell feeds the rescued bluebirds that she named Samson and Baby Sister. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Shirl Brunell)

DR. SHIRL BRUNELL
SPEAKER FOR SEPTEMBER 20, 2003 ANNUAL MEETING
LOUISIANA BAYOU BLUEBIRD SOCIETY
ROBERT E. LEE JR. HIGH, 1600 NORTH 19th STREET, MONROE, LA.
2:00 until 5:00

Dr. Shirl Brunell was already a well known as a clinical psychologist when she added “author” and “environmentalist” to her list of credits. The latter designations came after she wrote a book, I hear Bluebirds, her sensitive story of how she received two baby bluebirds, raised them until they could make it on their own and set them free.

She was recently appointed the contact person in the state of Arkansas for the United States Bluebird Rescue project. Among her most recent accomplishments is the establishment of the first bluebird trail in Hodges Garden in Louisiana, the largest privately owned horticultural gardens in the United States.

Dr Brunell is a past director of the North American Bluebird Society and a contributing writer to Bluebird News. I Hear Bluebirds won the Arkansas Press Women’s Book of the Year Award.

More than 150 radio and television shows and publications have aired and published interviews with Dr. Brunell and she has made numerous public appearances at meetings related to her professional work and on book tours including the Audubon Naturalist Society and The Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. She has a reputation as a fighter for endangered species.

She was the subject of the “Southerner of the Month” featured in Southern Living magazine and she has presented papers from Canada to the southern border of the United States and in the Soviet Union on her professional work and bluebird conservation.

I Hear Bluebirds was selected for translation into Braille for the visually handicapped, and is available through the Texas State Library in Austin. It was also selected by Houghton Mifflin book publishing company to appear in textbooks to demonstrate a journal form of writing.

Dr Brunell is a member of numerous environmental societies and professional organizations.

After receiving her doctorate of philosophy in clinical psychology from the University of Houston, Dr. Brunell accepted a position with the Model Cities Program in Texarkana. As a consultant, she established the Juvenile Services project; as a project director, she wrote the grant that got children out of jail for status offenses for the first time in the Texarkana area.

She was the first female chief psychologist at the Northeast Texas Mental Health and Retardation Center. Resigning that office, she became the first full-time clinical psychologist in private practice in the Four States Area. After her appointment by Governor Dale Bumpers to the Arkansas State Planning Council for the prevention of juvenile delinquency, she was elected Vice President of the council.

Dr. Brunell was born in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Before receiving her Ph.D., she completed her Bachelor of Arts and Sciences and Master of Arts and Sciences degrees through her attendance at the University of New Mexico, Woodbury College in Los Angeles, UCLA, and the University of Houston.

A professional model, she was one of the busiest on the West Coast, appearing on Queen For A Day and the Ernie Kovacs show on television. Among her college-days titles she lists Miss California College Queen of America and Miss New Mexico Maid of Cotton.

Recently, she was selected one of Texarkana’s most remarkable pioneer women.

Among her talents are also photography and playing the musical saw.

BOBBIE BOYKIN'S STORY
PRAIRIEVILLE, LA.

My parents taught me to love all animals. I include birds in that category. They always fed hummers and put out feed. We had bluebird houses for over twenty years. Mind you, I was not well versed on the houses or birds and their upkeep. When we first had bluebird houses, they were the kind you could not open...they were never cleaned out but always full. After I was married, some twenty-one years ago, I got houses for gifts. Watching Bluebirds always amazed me. My houses were always full and I did clean the old nesting material out. I even snuck peeks at the babies now and then. When we lived in Haughton, Louisiana (N.W.), we had about four houses. Again, not much knowledge, but the bluebirds came. I moved to Baton Rouge three years ago and my houses came with me. I had them on the fence line until I attended the first LBBS meeting and saw a nestbox displayed on a pole complete with snake guard and echo roof. I begin to read and talk to others and decided that I really needed to move the nestboxes and put them on a pole. I also decided to put snake guards and the echo roof on them. I talked my sweet hubby into building four houses with snake guards. I find that hard to call a trail but I guess it is. We have 15 acres of land behind us and the houses will be out behind the house. There are bluebirds everywhere out here...just beautiful. I am so looking forward to the new season and seeing how the new houses do. . Hope we all have a great season full of blues.

Bobbie Boykin
Prairieville, La.

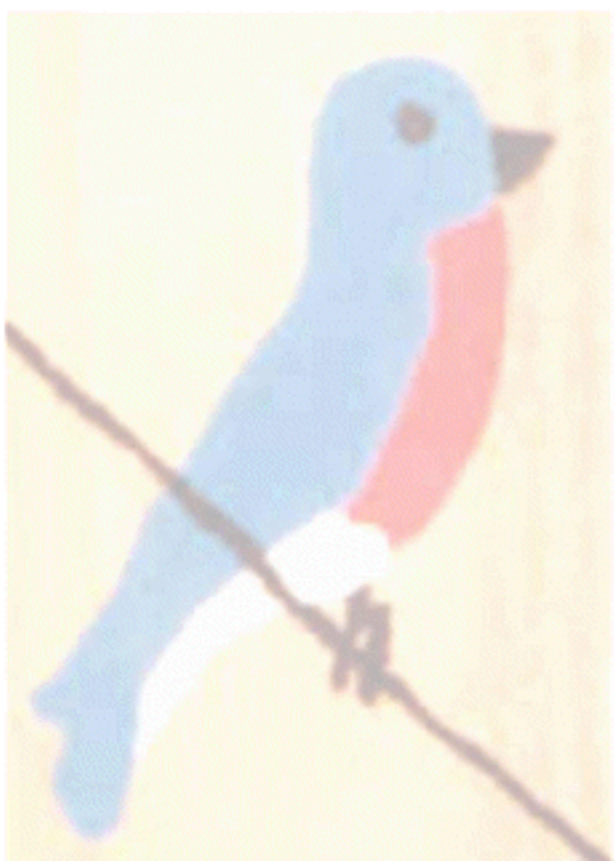
Bluebird Tidbits

Snakes are very intelligent creatures. It doesn't take very long for Mr. Snake to discover an easy, delicious lunch of "Bluebird on a Stick" just waiting for him if you haven't protected your nestbox by installing a good predator guard.

Snakes most often strike on the day of fledging as they are attracted by the noise and commotion of the babies as they prepare to leave the nest. A snake can strike and leave the nest completely undisturbed, leading you to believe your birds have successfully fledged. One way to keep a check for this is to ring the mounting pole with grease. While the grease does not deter snakes, it does deter ants. As an added advantage, it will leave tell-tale signs if a snake has invaded your nestbox.

As you monitor your nestboxes, remember that Mr. Snake can be lurking nearby or even in your nestbox. Opening a box to find him there isn't a pleasant experience, so always use caution in opening your nestbox.

From The Perch



Our upcoming Annual Meeting in September promises to be an exciting event! You won't want to miss the opportunity to hear Dr. ShirI Brunell speak about Bluebirds and her Trails of Hope that are so much a part of her practice of Clinical Psychology for children and adults. Dr. Brunell's book, "I Hear Bluebirds", will be available for purchase after the meeting. We look forward to seeing you there.

Just a reminder! Dues for the upcoming year are due in September, so watch your mail for renewal notices in August. Our membership dues are the primary support of LBBS and it's wonderful projects. Thanks to all of you who have already renewed.

See You in September!

Evelyn Cooper
President
LBBS