

BAYOU BLUEBIRD NEST NEWS

Volume 29

Evelyn M. Cooper, Editor

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An Affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society



**LOUISIANA EARTH DAY
APRIL 19, 2009
Baton Rouge, LA**



Earth Day workers, left, Alethea Brown, Mandeville and Cheryl Kirk, right, Baton Rouge, getting the Childrens' Table ready. Upper left, Madelyn Rogers, Baton Rouge, making contacts for memberships and helps with display of nests and eggs.



From The Perch

By:

Evelyn Cooper
President

Photo By:

Wendell Long
Waynesville, OH

Nesting season is in full swing. Exciting things are happening in my backyard box on the camera and the boxes are full on my trail. I will share with you on page 5 the excitement we've enjoyed in our backyard box.

Earth Day is always exhilarating and we come home with a sense of such accomplishment even though we are tired to the bone. We are truly blessed to have such workers as Alethea Brown, Cheryl Kirk, Madelyn Rogers, Sheryl Bassi and Kenny Kleinpeter to do every job that is required to make our booth a success. These talented people worked non-stop when we set up at 10:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. We communicated with hundreds of young children with our arts and crafts that carried a Bluebird theme. We also answered many questions about the nests and eggs on one of the tables that is always a huge attraction. The LBBS Board approved of Sheryl Bassi's idea to purchase a clear cover made from a Lexan sheet of plastic for the nests and eggs and it was a great way to display them and not have to constantly worry about little hands that found them so irresistible. One little boy asked if he could have some of the eggs and when he told we couldn't take them out of the nest, big old tears rolled down his cheeks. One of the most popular questions was "are they real"?

It was great to meet a couple of LBBS members, Barbara Bullock from Zachary and Gabrielle Hebert from New Iberia as they stopped by to say hello.

Other good news is about our sponsorship of two new trails. We will be presenting information and photos in our newsletters about these trails and also updates on older trails we have established.

Emily Winners, Lecompte, contacted us in January needing help with giving presentations and we learned about her 21 nest box trail she established a year ago. Talking with her, we learned they didn't have guards on their units, so LBBS supplied guards for the 21 boxes, Emily and her helpers installed the guards. Emily joined LBBS and she has given seven bluebird presentations for various groups in her area since January to May.

We were contacted by former Governor Mike Foster, Franklin, in mid-February about helping him establish a trail on his home property. LBBS supplied twenty-five nest boxes to establish his trail.

We have plans in place for our annual meeting in September. Below is the meeting information, time and place. You need to register so we will know the number in each to tour. Contact info below.
Evelyn

LBBS ANNUAL MEETING

**WHERE: LSU Museum of Natural Sciences, LSU Campus
Baton Rouge, LA**

**WHEN: September 19, 2009
9:00 A.M until 1:30 P.M**

**Behind The Scene Tours: Led By
Museum Personnel**

Speaker: Tom Allen, Oak Ridge

**Keynote Speaker: Kenny Kleinpeter
Baton Rouge**

**Please register: 318-878-3210 or
emcooper@bayou.com**

OFFICERS

President: Evelyn Cooper , Delhi
1st Vice President: Kenny Kleinpeter
Past President , Baton Rouge
2nd V/P: Dorothy Gammel, Denham Springs
Sec/Treas: John Tidwell, Monroe
Recording Secretary/Public Relations: Margaret Kemp, Many
Historian: Christy LeGuin , Madisonville

BOARD MEMBERS

M.J. Shearer , Tucker, GA
Alethea Brown, Mandeville
Tom Allen, Oak Ridge
Sheryl Bassi , Leland, MS
Bobbie Boykin, Prairieville
Jay McCallum, Farmerville
Mildred Hyde, Monroe
Yvonne Bordelon, Covington

www.labayoubluebirdsociety.org



Evelyn Cooper presents to former Gov. Mike Foster a Cypress nest box with bluebirds painted by Dr. Sam Scurria, Delhi.

Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society Sponsors Bluebird Trail For Former Gov. Mike Foster

Former Governor Mike Foster, an avid birder, has partnered with Louisiana Bluebird Society in establishing a bluebird trail on the grounds of Oak Lawn Manor, his family home. Located in Franklin, LA, Oak Lawn Manor serves as Gov. Foster's private home. The trail is established on the grounds, is monitored by Gov. Foster and Oak Lawn Manor personnel. The house and grounds are open to the public year round.

Even though Governor Foster has not seen Bluebirds on his property, he has hopes that they can be attracted there by the nest boxes placed for them. Evelyn Cooper, President, presented the beautiful cypress nest boxes on behalf of LBBS to him in mid February. She states that she has reports from bluebirders south of I-10 at New Iberia and Abbeville that say they have nesting bluebirds, which is not far from his property. Evelyn says there's a saying "if you put the boxes up, they will come". She states if Florida and south Texas can be successful in enticing bluebirds where they've never been, we can too!

You can read more about LBBS and Oak Lawn Manor at:
www.labayoubluebirdsociety.org and
www.oaklawnmanor.com

ATTENTION

LBBS no longer has a P.O. Box Address. It is 1222 Cook Rd., Delhi, LA 71232, Make Note!!!!



The Children's Table is busy, busy.



The nests and eggs display always draws a crowd. The nice Lanex cover enhanced the table for viewing. LBBS workers Madelyn Rogers, Kenny Kleinpeter and Evelyn Cooper were on hand to answer questions about the nest and eggs and there were many. One clutch of white Eastern Bluebird eggs supplied by Kenny always brings surprised faces. LBBS has a legal federal and state permit to collect abandoned nests and eggs. We display that information and we are asked by several if they can collect them and we explain the procedure.



Kenny helps with the origami bluebirds at the Childrens' Table at Earth Day. He's a man of many talents!

TWO EASTERN BLUEBIRD FEMALES SHARE NESTING BOX

By: Evelyn Cooper



I have been privileged to see something in nature that may be a once in a lifetime experience for me. I have a nest cam in the backyard box. On March 28, a female completed her nest after one month of building it and she started laying her three eggs. The fourth day after laying, another female entered the box with a mouth full of grass while the nesting female was sitting on the nest. She stood there on top of her and dropped the grass. The sitting female got up and left. For two days, the intruder would bring in grass and the resident female would come in and uncover the eggs. Finally, the intruding female won.

The next morning, I heard a commotion on the cam and ran to look out the den window and saw three bluebirds chasing a Blue Jay off the top of the nest box. I thought it was a little unusual for three bluebirds to be there at the box. That day, I saw a female bluebird bringing grass in helping the intruding female rework the nest. Sometimes they were in the box together. Several times there was some head pecking, but never violent. This went on several days and then, I saw what I knew was time for the egg laying. The first female came in breathing heavy.

The first day, both females laid an egg one hour apart. After the first egg was laid, I heard a lot of commotion on the nest cam and looked out and saw a pair of House Sparrows (HOSP) on the box. We have not had HOSP's in our yard for 12 years! Papa Blue was dive-bombing and chasing them as hard as he could. Ms. Blue flew out of the box. One of the HOSP's landed on the ground and Clayton grabbed his shot gun and blasted away at him and he flew, but Clayton thought he had some pellets in him. A few minutes later, the male and female bluebird came back to the box and stayed around for a while. The HOSP's never showed again. I installed a Sparrow Spooker immediately and was very proud of Mama Blue as she was back in the box in five minutes after we installed it. It never bothered Papa Blue either. It has kept all of the birds off of the box.

The pictures above were made from my TV with the nest cam on.
Con't on page 6

Con't from page 5

Six of the nine eggs hatched. One baby died immediately after hatching and three days later, one was gone from the nest indicating the female removed it because of death. The remaining four are very healthy and hungry.

We got to see nature at its best when a Starling appeared and was feeding very close to the nest box. The male Bluebird started dive-bombing and quickly there were three other Bluebirds joining him and they ran the Starling completely out of the yard. I am sure these were the resident pairs that came to help Mr. Blue. Twelve eggs were involved from the beginning and only four so far have made it. That's life in the wild!



Emily and some of the Jr. Garden Club members check the boxes.



Bluebirds On The Bayou Lecompte, LA

By: Emily Winners

The name of our trail is "Bluebirds on the Bayou". Each of our homeowners monitor their own boxes. Myself and Gladys Ford check in with our homeowners regularly, and our Jr. Garden Club members get to monitor when we get together. Altogether, we probably have about 30 folks monitoring boxes. What a non-traditional bluebird trail we have!! "Bluebirds On The Bayou" is monitored by individual homeowners and members of the Jr. Garden Club of Lecompte.

The Jr. Garden Club meets 5 times per year during school holidays - Thanksgiving, Christmas, Martin Luther King holiday, Mardi Gras and Easter. They get to check the boxes at Mardi Gras and Easter. Gladys and I observed at our last meeting that our older kids are starting to lose interest. Fortunately, we still have a group of younger kids that are fascinated by the whole process, and we will have a few new members at Easter that have never gotten to look into a nestbox before! We even have a box at our church, and our kids in Sunday School (most of whom are in our Jr. Group) get to check that box each Sunday throughout the nesting season.

We keep in contact every couple of weeks. Each homeowner gets a little class after we install the boxes - how to approach the box, how to open and check, and what to look for - is the nest in good shape (dry), is there any sign of predators (broken eggs, dead chicks, etc). If they find anything disturbing, they are quick to pick up the phone and call me. Each gets an information sheet where they can list the dates their eggs are laid, date hatched, how many left the nest, and a "comments" section.

Con't from page 6

Not all are good about filling out the form, but they are all diligent about checking their boxes (most of them monitor once a week, but we have a few that are looking in 2-3 times a week). Most even have grandkids that help out. We also stress to them the importance of not looking into the box after the 12th or 13th day to prevent the babies from leaving prematurely. It surprises me how many people are just terrified of looking into that box!!

Emily Winners is a certified rehabber and is working to get her banding license. Her work in these fields and also with bluebirds and the people she has involved in this endeavor is outstanding. Thank you, Emily!

The Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society Board of Directors voted to recommend the slate of incoming board members replacing those rotating off. They will be presented to the LBBS membership at the annual meeting September 19, 2002. They are as follows:

Madelyn Rogers, Baton Rouge

Sylvia Kidder, Many

Alethea Brown, Mandeville



Sheryl Bassi joins Alethea, Cheryl and Kenny at the Children's Table.



PALS DONATE NEST BOXES TO LBBS

On Tuesday, January 20th, the Zwolle PALS presented thirty-two handmade bird-houses to representatives of the Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society (LBBS). Twenty-five of the houses were given to individuals who bought a membership to LBBS and the remaining seven boxes were placed on the trail at Hodges Garden. On hand to accept the bluebird boxes on behalf of LBBS were Margaret Kemp and Sylvia Kidder, Many, LA

Participating in the building the nest boxes were PALS students shown above: Miracle Whittington, Channe Fones, Inesha Willis, Kenzie Barnard, Torri Sistrunk, Ryan Parrie, Norriw Brazzle, John Charles Lee, Jeanette Hargrow, Brett Shoemaker, Curtis Mitchell, Darrayl Hall, Dekedrick Lynch, Johathan Rogers, Konner Parrie, Michael Remedies, Luciano Garza, Nautia Lynch and Malik Richards. The students were assisted by Lead PALS teacher Julie Dean and Behavioral Health Technician (BHT) Mike Wagley.

PALS (Positive Alternatives to Learning Supports) is an after-school and summer program that provides a safe, enriched learning environment for students in Kindergarten through eighth grade. The program was set up to help children in areas they may find difficult and also to provide different learning experiences such as crafts, arts, music, dance and more.

Lucina Garza, along with Lead PALS teacher, Julie Dean, presented the boxes to Margaret and Sylvia the beautiful boxes. Margaret took one of our NABS approved boxes apart for them to use as a pattern to make the nest boxes.

Margaret took the boxes to the Master Gardner Seminar and were given to individuals purchasing an LBBS membership.

Handling Bluebird Eggs

By Linda Ruth, Retired Veterinarian
Coventry, CT

Many disease-producing bacteria can penetrate the intact egg, causing poor Hatch ability or reduced chick survival. Among these are Salmonella and E. coli. This has been extensively studied in poultry because eggs contaminated in this way can be a source of illness in humans when the eggs are eaten without proper cooking. It has also been studied in endangered species such as whooping cranes, because each egg is so precious. In commercial poultry production, incubators are routinely fumigated with disinfectants between batches, and eggs are dipped in disinfectant solutions prior to incubation to reduce bacterial contamination of the shell surface. Sterile surgeon's gloves are recommended for handling valuable eggs.

Another cause of embryo damage is rough handling of the egg. Eggs must be turned frequently during incubation, but the movement must be gentle to avoid tearing the membranes which attach the embryo to the shell. Eggs should never be turned over 180 degrees all at once. As a matter of fact, shaking or "addling" an egg is a method of killing an embryo without damaging the egg. The parent bird will continue to incubate the non-viable eggs for the normal incubation period, or sometimes even longer (this is sometimes done as a method of controlling the population of nuisance birds).

Eggs should not be handled at all, if possible. If handling is necessary, disposable painter's gloves should be worn, and changed between nests. This precaution not only protects the eggs, but also protects your own health. We all know what part of the bird an egg comes from, and bacteria on the shell surface can also be transmitted to you.

Bird embryos obtain all their oxygen through the porous eggshell, so anything which prevents the free flow of air into the egg may be harmful to the developing chick. Presumably the amount of harm done would depend on the size of the obstruction.

Since eggs are so fragile, I wouldn't try to remove anything stuck to the shell, because it is more likely that you will harm the egg by handling it than by leaving it alone. Bacteria on the surface are much more likely to pass through the shell if it is wet, so trying to rinse the stuck shell away will make matters worse. Besides, if the obstruction were large enough to harm the chick, the damage would have already been done by the time you discovered the problem.

As they say in medicine - first, do no harm.

Linda Ruth
Coventry, CT (retired veterinarian)
Written with permission.

Bluebird Tidbits

By: Evelyn Cooper

1. Ivory Bar soap is recommended by NABS to put on the ceiling and walls of nest boxes. Ivory liquid is not recommended because the female could get it on her feathers and transfer it to the eggs. The eggs are porous and the chemicals in the liquid detergent could seep in and harm the eggs.
2. Most bluebirders remove eggs from the nests that are infertile and babies are still in the nest. Using a small spoon to scoop the egg up would keep from breaking it and making a mess in the nest or on the babies.
3. Experienced bluebirders can foster eggs that have been abandoned and using a spoon really helps from more breakage. It is absolutely imperative when fostering bluebird eggs to place them in boxes that have the same incubation days as the one being foster. I have done this before and it worked beautifully placed with a clutch the same age.
4. If you see a blue egg and a white bluebird egg in the same nest, there's been some egg dumping going on.