

BAYOU BLUEBIRD NEST NEWS

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Evelyn M. Cooper, Editor

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EMILY WINNERS

LBBS BLUEBIRDER OF THE YEAR 2011

The Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society is proud to honor Emily Winners, Lecompte, LA as “Bluebirder of The Year 2011” for her hard work for the conservation and propagation of the Eastern Bluebirds and all native cavity nesting birds in her area. She established “Bluebirds on The Bayou” in 2007 at Lecompte a trail with five boxes. Her trail begin in homeowners yards. Each year since, her work has expanded in the area and the boxes total 55.

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From The Perch

By:

Margaret Kemp
President

Photo By:

Wendell Long
Waynesville, OH

If you missed our annual meeting at Hodges Gardens, you missed a fun time. Keith Kridler was awesome. The setting was beautiful even in a drought. Eagles flew over the lake in front of the building. Their nest is nearby but not visible from the group camp facility. So many people were there and we enticed some new members. I look forward to seeing the photos that a number of people were taking.

I am already looking forward to next year when we will go north again. I have been so busy that I have not gotten out to Hodges since the meeting. I need to do maintenance on the houses and clean them for winter. Hope you all are ready for winter. It has been in the 40's here several nights. It's such a nice break from all of the hot weather this summer. We still have not had much rain though. Hope you all and your bluebirds weather the winter well. Please let us know how everything is going and if you see anything different. Photos are always appreciated.

Thanks to all that made the effort to come. It was a great meeting!

Margaret



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In January, 2011, the wood ducks joined their conservation effort. Many homeowners who have a bluebird nest box live near the water with wood duck populations, so it seemed only natural to provide housing for both species. They're looking forward to a productive nesting season in 2012!

Emily currently serves on the board of the Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society, is a member of the Speakers Bureau for the North American Bluebird Society, and a member of the Wood Duck Society. She is a licensed rehabber and specializes in injured and orphaned squirrels. For more information about the "Bluebirds on the Bayou" project, you can contact her at 318-776-5356.



Emily Winners, left, accepts her award from LBBS President, Margaret Kemp.



Dr. Jerry and Jane Beaugard , Monroe, LA, chat with Keith Kridler, (center) Mt. Pleasant, TX (center) before the meeting. Jerry's picture of a male Eastern Bluebird feeding five juveniles on top of his nest box is on page 77 of "The Bluebird Monitor's Guide."



Left to right: Marilyn Lewis, Ruston, Melba Williamson, Monroe, Evelyn Cooper, Delhi, Margaret and Hill Kemp, Many Sheryl Bassi, Leland, MS., Emily Winners and Gladys Ford, Lecompte. This group pitched in and helped set up for the meeting.



Emily Winners and Gladys Ford, Lecompte, (seated) signing Marilyn Lewis Ruston, in at the registration table.

HOUSE SPARROW RE-CLASSIFIED

By: Tina Mitchell, Coldale, CO

First and foremost, nothing--and I repeat NOTHING--is set in stone in the world of avian taxonomy these days. DNA testing has changed everything. I wonder if we won't someday find ourselves trying to differentiate species through our binoculars that differ only at the cellular level. That's when I'll no longer call myself a birder, I fear.

Okay--to House Sparrows. The simplest answer, in case you don't want to read any further, is that House Sparrows (along with Eurasian Tree Sparrows) have been moved to the family Passeridae, which are the Old World sparrows. ("Family" is the next major taxonomic grouping, above species and genus.) These are the only 2 members of this family in the US, both introduced species. They used to be classified in the Ploceidae family, which are the weavers or weaver finches. If you have a subscription to *Birds of North America Online*, you will see this family designation for House Sparrows. My guess is that most bird field guides don't specify family, just genus and species (and sometimes subspecies). I know Sibley's guide doesn't.

I'm not a taxonomist and I follow these changes just enough to update my old battered copy of Sibley's field guide. But another Sibley book--*Sibley guide to bird life and behavior*--states this: <snip> The Passeridae formerly was classified as a subfamily (Passerinae) allied with two other Old World groups, the Ploceinae (typical weavers) and Bubalornithinae (buffalo-weavers) in the family Ploceidae (weavers). The groups are similar in their shared manner of weaving nests, but each has been elevated

to family status. <snip>

So Passeridae genuses have moved up from a subfamily of weavers to their own family. I believe (although I'm not 100% sure of this) that the other 2 subfamilies noted above (Ploceinae and Bubalornithinae) aren't really their own separate families; those genuses in those groups are still classified in the family Ploceidae.

My copy of this book is dated 2001, so the changed occurred sometime before that. In trying to track that down, I found this paragraph : <snip> "the Ploceid group is sister to the remaining Passeroidea. The next exact ordering of the next two families is made clear by the genetic code. The nine-primaried oscines and the Motacillidae (wagtails and pipits) share a genetic trait that other birds lack. They have DNA that codes for an extra three amino acids in a particular location on the *c-myc* gene (Ericson et al., 2000). Old world sparrows don't have the insertion. Wagtails and pipits do. Nine-primaried oscines do. That means the wagtails and pipits are more closely related to the nine-primaried oscines than the Passeridae are. Moreover, the traditional view that the Passeridae are closer to the nine-primaried oscines than the Ploceidae is, is also correct" <snip>. So, DNA shows that Passeridae are more closely related to nine-primaried oscines (e.g., a huge group of songbirds with only 9 easily visible primary feathers on each wing; includes new world finches host of others) than are birds in the Ploceidae family (the weavers). At least that's the current status, as I understand it. It looks like this change probably

Are House Finches Driving Down House Sparrow Populations?

It seems that the bane of bluebirders, the introduced House Sparrow, is declining in North America. This species was introduced to New York City from Europe in 1853 and wasted no time dispersing—in about 50 years the aggressive and adaptable species had spread across the continent. The House Finch, normally a western species, was introduced into New York City in 1943, and promptly spread throughout the East. While the House Finch population was growing in the East, the House Sparrow population was declining. Coincidence? Or do House Finches enjoy a competitive advantage over House Sparrows?

Analysis of these species' populations in the Northeast seems to show that, even though House Sparrow populations had already started declining when the House Finch arrived on the scene, the presence of the House Finch accelerated the House Sparrow's decline. Score one for the House Finch.

But in the Southeast, even though House Sparrows are declining, there does not appear to be a link with the House Finches. If the finches were out-competing the sparrows for, say, food or habitat, we would expect to find these areas where House Finches had driven out all the House Sparrows. But this study could find no sparrow-free zones with House Finches. The authors concluded that, although House Sparrows compete with House Finches—the real reason remains elusive.

Article from *Bluebird Journal* of the North American Bluebird Society, Fall 2011, Vol 33 No. 4 (used with permission)

Christopher J.W. McClure, Laura K. Estep and Geoffrey E. Hill. 2011 A Multi-scale Analysis of Competition Between the House Finch and House Sparrow in the Southeastern United States.

Condor 113:462-458.

Note from editor:

Even though some declines have been noted, and many people have thinned the House Sparrow (HOSP) population on their trails and backyard nest boxes, we have to remain ever vigilant to ensure the safety of the bluebird parents, eggs and babies.

The "off season" is an ideal time to get prepared for the upcoming nesting season and have on hand tools and information that makes this task easier. Andy Troyer's catalog has excellent inbox and ground traps. His number is 800-872-0103. He also sells Sparrow Spookers. Sparrow Spookers are very easy to make yourself and attach to the roof of the box. Anything shiny dangling above the roof keeps the HOSP's away! In my case, the larger birds left it alone too!

Evelyn

(Con't from page 5)

House Sparrows Re-classified

happened sometime around late 2000 and 2001. So there's probably a lot of old information out on the Internet and elsewhere, since probably very few regular folks care much about this change.

If you want to read the Ericson work, here's the citation: Ericson, P.G.P., Johansson, U.S., Parsons, T.J., 2000. Major divisions of oscines revealed by insertions in the nuclear gene *c-myc*: a novel gene in avian phylogenetics. *Auk* 117, 1077–1086. You can find the original on SORA; <http://elibrary.um.edu/sora/ark/v117n04/pol69-pol1078.pdf>. Be forewarned--it's pretty technical and it went WAY over my head. And of course, the New World sparrows--e.g., Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, juncos, towhees, and myriad more--are their own huge family (Emberizidae). No relation to House Sparrows. At all. Never have been. Ever.

LOUISIANA BAYOU BLUEBIRD SOCIETY 2011 ANNUAL MEETING

The Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society held its Annual Meeting at Hodges Gardens State Park on October 1, 2011. President Margaret Kemp welcomed all attendees from different parts of the state and those out of state. Then, she asked that each one stand and introduce themselves, tell where they were from and a little about their bluebirding efforts. Following introductions, Margaret called a short business meeting. The Minutes of the 2010 meeting were read by Emily Winners, Lecompte.. Motion made, seconded and approved as read. The treasurers report was read by Hill Kemp, Many. It was approved as read.

Keith Kridler, Mt. Pleasant, TX, the keynote speaker was introduced to the group. He gave an outstanding program that touched on all that is required to properly monitor and maintain a trail or backyard boxes. One of the most interesting things was that he showed pictures of boxes taken along roads on trips he made. Many points were made pro and con on how and where they were erected.

Keith also brought with him for silent auction a flying squirrel nesting box. It looked like it measured around 3 or 4 ft. tall and had several compartments in it. Each floor had a hole in it that the squirrels could escape to the floor above it if need be. It was quite a conversation piece and some lucky person got it for \$40.00. He brought some nice nesting boxes for door prizes too.

A special thanks to the ladies in the Many, Zwolle and Ruston areas for providing such delicious refreshments for the meeting. We had quite a few breaks and enjoyed them along with visits with old friends and new alike.



Jack and Deb Hoover, West Monroe register for the meeting. They stayed in the cabins on the park grounds and reported seeing a flock of Bluebirds outside their cabin the morning of the meeting. We appreciate their faithfulness in attendance and support!

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS (upgraded their regular memberships)

Yvonne Bordelon, Covington

Becky and Tom Garza, Ruston



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(LBBS members get a discount price)

