Come join us on September 28, 2013 at Smith’s Landing (pictured above) in Lecompte, LA. for our annual meeting. The meeting will be begin at 9:30 P.M. with the social hour and adjourn at 1:30 P.M. Kenny Kleinpeter, Baton Rouge, is the keynote speaker. We will have a Question and Answer period which is a favorite of novice and seasoned birders alike. Door prizes will be awarded. A pair of Nikon Binoculars will be given and you have to pre-register to get your name in the drawing and be present to receive them. Contact info is: 318-878-3210, or emcooper@hughes.net.
Directions to Smith’s Landing are on page 3 and you can contact Emily Winners at emilywinners@msn.com if you need additional help when you get to town.
Please come out and support us and let’s keep the skies blue!
Our 11th annual meeting will be held Saturday, September 28 at 9:30 am at historical Smith’s Landing in Lecompte. Built in the early 19th century on Bayou Bouef, Smith’s Landing (originally known as White’s Landing) was a well used trading post. At the time, Bayou Bouef was the only means of transportation for farmers to get their crops to market. But the bayou was unreliable due to fluctuating water levels and narrow passageways.

In 1840, Ralph Smith Smith (yes, his middle and last name were both “Smith”), an area engineer, built the first railroad from Alexandria to Smith’s Landing, a total of 16 miles. Although the train was slow and crudely built, it could make one round trip a day, and operated for over 20 years. The train and the landing allowed settlers in the area to more efficiently get their crops to market. The railroad was destroyed in 1864 during the Civil War, but the original landing remains, now owned by the Lecompte Garden Club. It is a popular tourist attraction, and serves the community as a centrally located meeting place.

Please make plans to join us, and feel free to invite a friend or two, or even three! Come early and make a stop at Lea’s Luncheon for breakfast, or visit one of the many nurseries in nearby Forest Hill. If you would like to bring a dish or donate a door prize, please give me a call at 318-776-5356 or 318-613-0219. You can also e-mail me at emilywinners@msn.com. Hope to see you there!

For directions, see page 3

Emily

Con’t on page 3
Con’t from page 2

Directions:

From Hwy 71 South: Turn right onto Hwy 112 at the caution light in Lecompte just past Lea’s Lunchroom. Go over the RR tracks and take the first left onto Hardy Street. Go to the stop sign – Smith’s Landing is the white brick building on your right. Parking is available on both sides of Hardy Street, & in front of the building.

From Hwy 71 North: Turn left at the caution light in Lecompte just before Lea’s Lunchroom. Cross over Hwy 71 South onto Hwy 112. Go over the RR tracks and take the first left onto Hardy Street. Go to the stop sign – Smith’s Landing is the white brick building on your right. Parking is available on both sides of Hardy Street, & in front of the building.

From I-49 South: Take the Lecompte exit and turn left onto Hwy 112. Come into Lecompte and take a right onto Hardy Street just past Red River Bank (on your left). Go to the stop sign – Smith’s Landing is the white brick building on your right. Parking is available on both sides of Hardy Street, & in front of the building.

From I-49 North: Take the Lecompte exit and turn right onto Hwy 112. Come into Lecompte and take a right onto Hardy Street just past Red River Bank (on your left). Go to the stop sign – Smith’s Landing is the white brick building on your right. Parking is available on both sides of Hardy Street, & in front of the building.

Again, if you have any problem coming into town and getting to the meeting place, call Emily at emilywinners@msn.com
Mockingbird builds in abandoned box at Sheryl Cooper Bassi’s new home in her backyard, Oak Ridge, LA. The Mocker is looking out in the top picture and leaving the box in the bottom picture. Sheryl took these from her back porch with her tripod and it took lots of patience as Ms. Mocker is fast! Sheryl plans to take the nest box down. See story on page 5
Photos: by Sheryl C. Bassi
What Happens To Unmonitored And Abandoned Boxes?

When Sheryl Bassi purchased her home in Louisiana, just south of Oak Ridge, a wealth of habitat for all kinds of birds came with it. She (and I) certainly never expected to see a Mockingbird nesting in a nest box! We were amazed to see her build a nest on the second floor of the three story Martin house. Most of the top of the dilapidated box was gone and it looked like the top and bottom floor was full of pine needles and grass. We watched the Mockingbird in awe as she was building, incubating and feeding babies in a nest box. I have never seen them nest anywhere but in trees.

We were expecting to see House Sparrows in such a mess of a box, but so far, to Sheryl’s delight, she has not witnessed the presence of any House Sparrows.

On April 1, 2013, the first trip to her new home, she carried three nest boxes, poles and guards and they were installed. The next day, a bluebird pair was inspecting two of them and shortly thereafter, built in the box in the front yard. She fledged 3 babies out of 5 eggs. The second cycle had one hatch of a four egg clutch. These were Sheryl’s first bluebirds ever. She had tried in 2000, but her habitat in Leland, MS where she resided was not suitable for native cavity-nesting birds. She put her two boxes on my trail. She did establish a trail at a Greenville Elementary School, but House Sparrows overtook it.

She has seen other species of sparrows, 5 species of Woodpeckers, a nesting pair of Summer Tanagers, Hummingbirds and a Blue Heron was standing on the building in her backyard! Sheryl has ten acres of this bird paradise.

Sheryl is one of the founding members of the Louisiana Bayou Bluebird Society, has and is serving as an officer. She has served as a board member. She was editor of the newsletter for several years and many other things she has done too numerous to list.

Congrats to Sheryl for her success with Bluebirds at her new home. Also, words cannot say enough thanks to her for all she has done and still does for LBBS.

Top photo: Sheryl’s newborn babies hatching.
Middle Photo: Box in front yard the bluebird female chose.
Bottom Photo: Box in backyard close to house. Papa Blue loves this one so much. It was a gift from Sheryl’s boss when she retired.
Is It Okay To Peek In Winter Roosting Boxes?

On cold winter nights, bluebirds and other cavity-nesting species sometimes seek shelter in natural cavities, nest boxes, or boxes designed specifically for winter roosting. The boxes provide protection from wind and precipitation, and if more than one bird climbs inside, the box helps the birds to stay warm through huddling or just the extra body heat.

If you have a box that you think is being used for winter roosting, you might be tempted to take a peek inside some night. Is there any harm in that?

Researchers in the Czech Republic found that opening boxes at night and shining a red light inside did not seem to bother roosting Great Tits (a close relative of our chickadees and titmice)—the birds did not flush from the box and they continued to use it on subsequent nights throughout the winter. However, if a white light was used, and the birds were handled (to band them), they were much less likely to return to that box on subsequent nights and the box would be essentially abandoned that winter.

The take home message seems to be that a white light and disturbance will cause birds to abandon your roosting box. If you want to peek, use a red light (red filters are commercially available for some types of flashlights) and minimize the amount of time and disturbance.


Are Parasites To Blame For The Decline of American Kestrels?

American Kestrel populations have been showing widespread declines commencing in the 1980s. The cause(s) of the declines are unclear, although researchers have pointed fingers at habitat loss, climate change, growing numbers of Cooper’s Hawks (a predator on Kestrels), and West Nile virus, among other problems. One area that has not received much attention is parasite loads on nestlings.

Ectoparasites (parasites that live on the outside of animals) can weaken and even kill nestlings. Depending on the parasite, nestlings may suffer blood loss, feather loss, skin irritation, secondary infections, and other unpleasant conditions.

Researchers in New Jersey worked with a set of kestrel nest boxes. At the start of the nesting season, they cleaned out all the old nesting material from half of the active boxes. They returned at regular intervals to remove all ectoparasites from those nestlings and replace all the nesting material with fresh material; they visited the nest boxes of the other group just as often, but did not remove nestlings or replace the nest materials. When the nestlings were 20-22 days old, both groups were weighed and measured.

The result: All that careful work of removing parasites and replenishing the nesting materials was for naught. There was no difference in size between the two groups and no difference in nestling survival.

Much scientific research is conducted to find out what isn’t true, which is usually easier and more definitive than finding out what is true. This study was a good example of this approach. Although we still do not know what is causing the population declines among American Kestrels, we can probably scratch parasites off the list.

Mark J. Kesko and John Smallwood. 2012

Con’t on page 7
Janine Robin, Folsom, LA posted links to some fantastic pictures she took of some native-cavity nesting birds and a hummingbird eating pears in her back yard. I asked her for permission to share them with you because I think they are very special. Mr. Pileated Woodpecker and Ms. Red-Bellied Woodpecker are having a feast there, very close to each other. You can enjoy the other pictures she sent to me on page 8. Janine posted these to LABird Listserv in Baton Rouge.

Con’t from page 5
Are Parasites To Blame For The Decline of American Kestrels?

Article used with permission
NABS Bluebird Journal
Winter 2012-2013
Vol. 35 No. 1
Isn’t Mr. Pileated Woodpecker magnificent in the top photo? Baby Juvvie Red-Bellied is in the photo at left and he is pigging out on the pears. The Female Ruby Throat Hummingbird had a gorgeous pose for Janine. Our many thanks to her for sharing these photos!
Photos by Janine Robin, Folsom, LA
Here’s one of my yard fledglings. She posed just perfect for me. Looks like she’s kinda mad because there’s no food! The parents bring them to the feeder and they sit and beg to be fed. If the parents fly off, they can most certainly feed themselves. Two of them came to the feeder this day (July 18, 2013) and there was a female and male Cardinal on the feeder. They sat there begging the Cardinals to feed them. I saw two of the juvenile bluebirds dive-bombing Mr. Red-Bellied on the feeder.
{ } New Member  { } Renewal

NAME:______________________________________________
ADDRESS:___________________________________________
CITY:_______________________________________________
STATE & ZIP:________________________________________
E-MAIL & TELEPHONE:________________________________

{ } Individual-------------------$ 7.50
{ } Family------------------------$ 15.00
{ } Lifetime----------------------$250.00
{ } Organization-----------------$ 25.00
{ } Small Business--------------$ 25.00
{ } Corporation----------------- $100.00
{ } Donation---------------------$________

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.