



BLUEBIRDS FLY!

California Bluebird Recovery Program's newsletter

—sponsored by National Audubon Society-California
—an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

for the encouragement and conservation of cavity nesters—especially bluebirds—anywhere in the West

1999 NABS award goes to Orange County's Mr. Bluebird

Each year the **North American Bluebird Society** recognizes organizations and individuals for their outstanding contributions to the field of bluebird conservation. For the third year in a row, Californians have been so honored.

This year, **Dick Purvis**, Coordinator for Orange County, received one of the five individual awards given. He was commended at the NABS annual convention in Great Falls, MT, in June for his exceptional work.

Orange County is a small county but one of the most heavily populated in the State—think Santa Ana, Anaheim, Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, John Wayne Airport, Huntington, Newport, and Laguna Beaches—much of it wall to wall houses. As Dick has put it, he found himself “smack in the middle of a mega metropolis.” True—the eastern portion is less developed—a part in the Cleveland National Forest, but most of that area is chaparral and coastal sage scrub, hardly bluebird habitat.

Still, Purvis had a dream over 15 years ago of bringing bluebirds back to the cities. In 1984, he put up 10 boxes in the foothills, and added to them annually. He found that each year the range of the bluebirds expanded a mile or so from the original locations. As he spread out he began to use the extensive golf courses, public parks, and, of course, cemeteries in the cities—areas that provided short grass with trees for shade. Naturally none of the trees were allowed to have dead branches with cavities suitable for bluebirds, but Dick's nestboxes took care of that. However, there were problems with these locations. Nests were often vandalized or drowned by lawn sprinklers.

At the 1994 NABS convention in Boise, ID, he heard **Roger Thompson** describe a technique of hanging boxes from limbs in trees rather than attaching them to the trunks. Recognizing this as the solution to his problems, Dick immediately implemented the system back home.

By 1995, Dick had 263 boxes in place and fledged 978 birds, of which 704 were Western Bluebirds. There was only one other monitor reporting from Orange County at that time: **James D. Cox**.

In 1996, Purvis reported 334 standard hanging boxes fledging 1,111 cavity nesters, all but a hundred being the blues. He also had erected and monitored 30 Wood Duck boxes and fledged 237 ducklings.

As County Coordinator of the fledgling **CBRP** which had gotten its start in the fall of '94, Dick began to recruit other monitors in Orange County. By 1997, 9 monitors with 225 nestboxes reported in from Orange; most of them with hanging boxes modeled after Dick's or formerly his. Dick's boxes then totalled 283 and he had expanded into neighboring Los Angeles County.

Last year, 18 monitors from Orange County produced 2,384 fledglings—2,077 bluebirds, 40% of all reported in California. Now in Riverside County as well as Orange and Los Angeles, Dick's 346 nestboxes successfully produced 1,235 chicks.

No one has been more effective. No one deserves the award more. **BLUEBIRDS FLY!** joins in the widespread appreciation of **Dick Purvis's** accomplishments.

Annual Reports flow in; the rest are still needed

Reports from monitors on their 1998 activities are being received by Program Director Don Yoder and a few Co. Coordinators. Last year about 360 reports were received. Less than half that many had been received as of November 1.

Some monitors were pruned from our mailing list because we never received a subscription from them. We still want their report, so we must rely on our County Coordinators to contact them. All those reporting will receive a copy of our next newsletter with the tabulation.

For those of you reading this who have not yet reported: we will track you down! Please don't cause us to do this. County Coordinators have lives, too. Don't spoil the holiday season for them. Just fill out the form and send it in. If you had no birds, it is just as important that you let us know. With your name, write across the form, “NO BIRDS TO REPORT.”

If you have time to jot a note on the back with any interesting experiences you had, we'd love to share them on these pages. Some of the Notes From the Field are included inside as interpreted by **Don Yoder**.

By the way, our new report form has received mixed reviews—from “confusing” to “like your new form.”

Try to fill in the clear lines and, if you can, the shaded lines. We have been pleased to see that most of you got it right. The compiler thanks you.

The editor's desk



The brochure included with this issue came to my attention at the Annual Meeting of the **Western Bird Banding Association** in Reno in late September. **Kathy Klimkiewicz** of the USGS Bird Banding Lab, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, MD passed them out.

Since I am a cat owner, I was impressed with the balance presented in the brochure. I confess I have had a cat who was not an indoor cat.

While her experiences were interesting to me as a student of animals in the wild, I must say that she got her share of birds; the Dark-eyed Juncos stopped nesting in the vicinity of our house. Worse, from my standpoint, she also killed many of our alligator lizards (*Gerrhonotus* sp.) that I encouraged in the wellhouse because of their effective elimination of black widow spiders. She was also hard on the population of the western fence lizards (*Sceloporus occidentalis*) around the woodpile which are believed to immunize deer ticks from Lyme disease.

Kitty had her own problems. She was nearly taken by a Great Horned Owl one night but escaped, frantic and shaken, with deep puncture wounds in her thigh from the talons.

She was bitten by another cat and spent much time on antibiotics with a drain in her rump. The bill for the large splinter in her eye made her a very expensive cat.

Finally, in spite of immunizations, she contracted feline leukemia and died at the relatively young age of 10.

Our new cat, Phantom of the Opera, is a rescued cat, neutered, and definitely an indoor cat. She is allowed outside on the upper deck but doesn't actually leave the house. She gets her hunting in when the occasional hummingbird strays into the

house. And she has rid us of 3 pantry mice.

As the brochure points out so well, cats never lose their prey drive.

I know many of you are cat lovers and have outdoor cats. Consider moving them in this winter and keeping them as indoor cats. Failing that, at least resolve to turn over a new leaf and make your *next* cat an indoor cat. In the meantime, carry your share of guilt.

BLUEBIRDS FLY! is late in climbing on this bandwagon. Our affiliate groups in other States have had cat articles for some time. In the Winter 1997-98 issue of their *Newsletter*, **Bluebirds Across Nebraska** had four pages on the problems with cats. In the February 1998 *Bluebird News*, put out by the **Bluebird Recovery Program, Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis**, is a report on the **National Audubon Society's** resolution on prohibiting free-roaming cats. The *Newsletter* of the **Hubert Prescott Western Bluebird Recovery Program, Oregon**, has an article on the **CATS INDOORS!** program of the **American Bird Conservancy**, producers with **Humane Society of the U.S.** and the **American Humane Association** of the enclosed brochure. Finally, the professional organization, **The Wildlife Society**, ran a quarter-page ad in its Sep-Oct 1998 issue of *The Wildlifer* explaining the **CATS INDOORS!** campaign.

Be a responsible pet owner. Keep your cat indoors...



For free information on how to make your outdoor cat a happy indoor cat:
www.abcbirds.org

Support our colleagues



Founded in 1978, the **North American Bluebird Society (NABS)** is a non-profit organization determined to increase the populations of the three species of bluebirds on this continent. Inasmuch as the populations of these birds have diminished due to the maladroitness of human beings, as well as natural disasters, the society strives to explain the importance of preserving native cavity nesters.

The society works within the bounds of effective conservation to study obstacles impeding bluebird recovery and to promote ideas and actions which might reduce their effect.

Membership is \$15. NABS's mailing address is PO Box 74, Darlington, WI 53530.

National Audubon Society



There are local chapters of the **National Audubon Society (NAS)** in all fifty states, Guam, and Latin America. In California there are over fifty local chapters. Chapters have newsletters, monthly programs, and field trips to local areas of interest.

To join NAS, contact your local Audubon Chapter, or call NAS-California at (916) 481-5332. National dues are \$20 for new members, and include a bimonthly magazine as well as membership privileges in your local Audubon chapter.

California Bluebird Recovery Program

Founded in 1994, supported by National Audubon Society-California and affiliated with the North American Bluebird Society, CBRP is "for the encouragement and conservation of cavity nesters—especially bluebirds—anywhere in the West."

CBRP is non-profit, has no paid staff, and is supported entirely by the efforts of volunteers and donations accepted by the Mt.Diablo Audubon Society on CBRP's behalf.

CBRP members had located and reported on 4,142 nestboxes by the end of 1998, with more than 11,000 cavity nesters fledged—nearly half of them western and mountain bluebirds.

CBRP welcomes membership from the public who wish to support its program, and especially seeks those who will place appropriate nestboxes in the proper habitat, faithfully monitor the birds' progress through the nesting season, and report yearly on the results.

CBRP can furnish nestbox plans, a monitoring guide, forms for monitoring and reports, technical advice through a network of county coordinators, and sometimes the nestboxes themselves.

Membership, which includes this quarterly newsletter is available for a donation of \$5 or more made payable to "MDAS—Bluebirds" and mailed to CBRP, 2021 Ptarmigan Dr #1, Walnut Creek, CA 94595. Donations are tax-deductible.

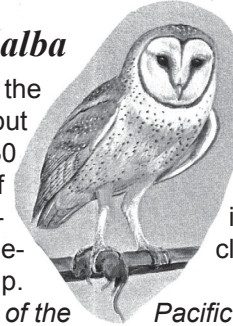
California Bluebird Recovery Program

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Spotlight on our cavity-nesters Barn Owl

Tyto alba



Often called "The Cat with Wings," the Barn Owl has been common in parts of its range but has shown a serious decline in California in the past 30 years, according to the Breeding Bird Survey. Lack of suitable habitat is likely rearing its head, though widespread pesticides may also be a problem. A decline of 78% makes it the cavity nester most in need of help.

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In 1927, **Ralph Hoffman**, in his *Birds of the Pacific States*, said "Only the shadowy form is occasionally seen in the gathering dusk, flying with noiseless strokes to the hunting ground. In the daytime Barn Owls may be observed on the rafters of favorite barns, blinking their yellow eyes, or they may be detected hiding in some thick tree or in the crevices of a barranca in the hills. When seen in daylight, the whitish or tawny underparts, gray and tawny upper parts, the long legs and the characteristic 'monkey face' with white or whitish areas encircling the eyes, easily distinguish them from other owls." Perhaps the favorite barns, thick trees, and barrancas have become subdivisions.

Tom Hoffman, San Joaquin Co. Coordinator and vineyardist, says "Barn Owls are world class rodent controllers, hunting gophers, rats, and mice from dusk until dawn. The owls seek their prey either from a perched position or on the wing, looking for hungry rodents to emerge from their burrows to browse on tender greens, seeds, or small insects." Each adult will consume one rodent per night. Over 40% of these are gophers and they make up 73% of the volume of the diet. This makes the Barn Owl a valuable ally of the farmer who is battling rodent infestations.

Through efforts of folks like Tom, a member of the **Lodi Grape Growers Association**, and **Steve Simmons**, longtime bird bander, member of the **California Waterfowl Association**, and a woodshop instructor at Merced High School, the Barn Owl may be making a comeback in the vineyards and orchards up and down the Central Valley. Driving through, one often sees the big rectangular boxes on 10 to 20 ft poles above the groves, orchards, and vineyards.

Working with **Sunsweet Dryers** and other co-ops in the Sun-Diamond family who donate scrap lumber from their old fruit bins, Steve has a group of his students building and marketing Barn Owl nestboxes throughout the valley. UC Davis, Fresno State, and Cal Poly help test the various designs for owl boxes. Tom, too, builds boxes and has brochures promoting the merits of Barn Owl gopher control in the vineyards.

Barn Owls nest in February and March, although some fledgings take place later in the fall.

Owls use no nesting material although they may make a shallow hollow in existing debris which often includes their own pellets. An inch of wood shavings is recommended for a new nestbox. A clutch consists of 3 to 11 (usually 5 to 9) white, elliptical eggs about 1½" x 1⅛".

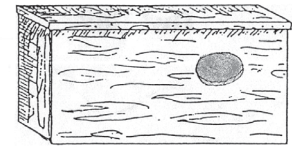
Unlike most smaller cavity-nesters, owls are asynchronous; that is, they start incubating the eggs as they arrive. The owlets hatch at different times and several sizes will be in the nest together. Incubation may vary from 21 to 34 days. The first owlet may be 2 weeks old when the last egg hatches. Two broods are not uncommon. Sex is indistinguishable in the nestlings.

While tough to monitor and more of a challenge to erect, one or two nestboxes for Barn Owls is a worthy project. A nestbox plan is included in this edition of *BLUEBIRDS FLY!*

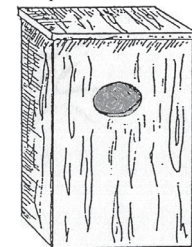
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BARN OWL NESTBOX

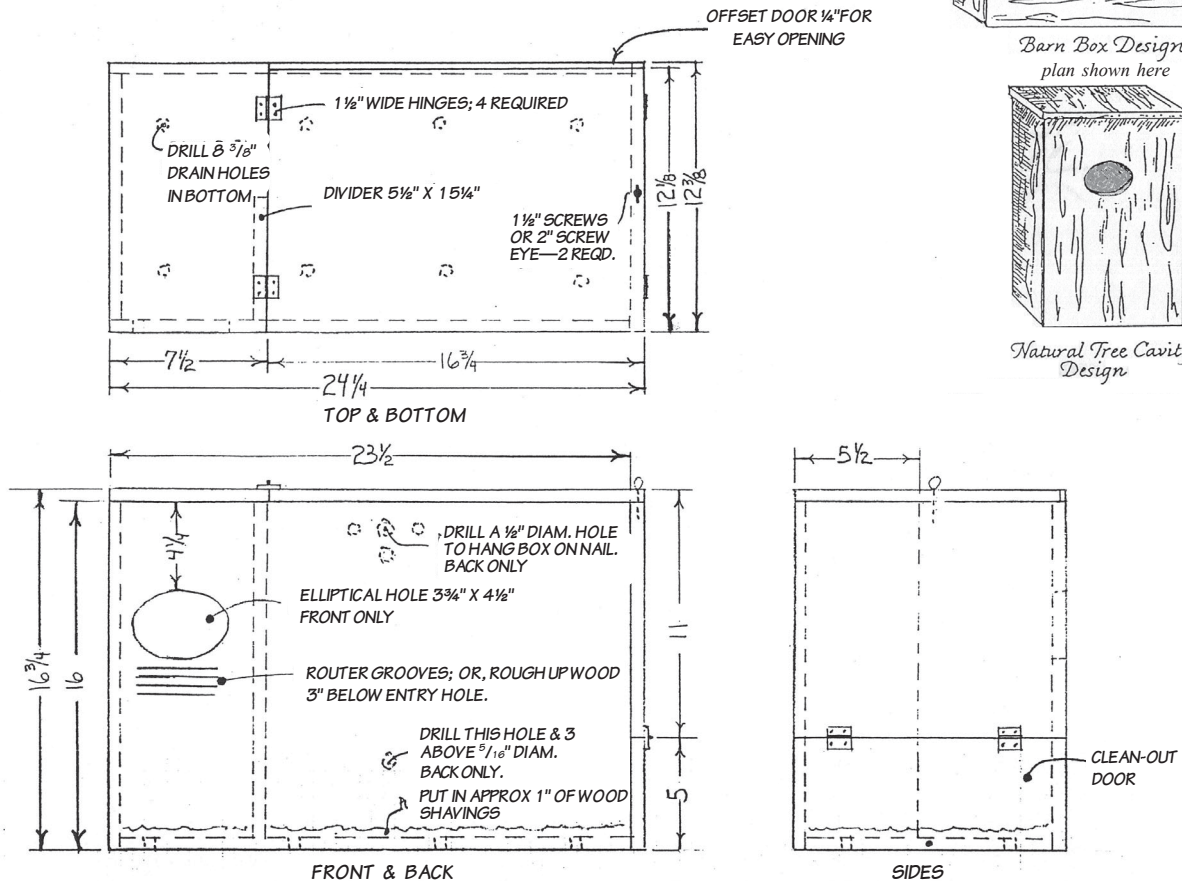
design by
Steve Simmons,
 The Raptor Works, Merced, CA



*Barn Box Design
 plan shown here*



*Natural Tree Cavity
 Design*



Bill of Materials:

- 1/2 sheet (4'x 4') 3/4" exterior plywood
- Deck screws or galvanized nails (staple gun suggested)
- 4 ea 1 1/2" wide hinges
- 2 ea 2" screw eyes (door latches)
- 4 ea 5/16" lag screws with fender washers
- 16d framing nail for hanger

Equipment Needed:

- Table saw or rotary saw
- Electric drill with 1/2", 3/8", 5/16", & 3/16" bits
- Staple gun, screwdriver, or hammer

- Socket wrench with 5/16" socket
- Jig saw (for entry hole)
- Sturdy ladder

Notes:

At the top of the box is a four-hole pattern—three 5/16" holes and one 1/2" hole. The 1/2" hole is the hanger hole. Nail a 16d flathead nail (4" long) into a post or pole leaving it stick out 1" and hang the box like a picture frame. This will free up your hands for easy installation of the lag screws.

Use three 5/16" lag screws with fender washers for installation. The length of the lags will depend on

the post material:

- 4"x 4" post—2 1/2" to 3"
- Utility pole— 3"
- Barn side— 2" (or bolt and nut can be used if you can reach both sides).
- Tree— 3" to 4" long, depends on thickness of the bark

For best results and ease of putting in the 5/16" lag screws, after hanging the box on the hanger nail, use a battery-powered drill and a 3/16" bit to drill a pilot hole for the lag screws.

Use a socket wrench to secure the screws.

Use care with the ladder.

Messages from the Program Director:

DON YODER URGES EARLY PLACEMENT OF NESTBOXES; REPORTS ON NEW AFFILIATES; NEED FOR ANNUAL REPORTS

We continue to emphasize—but sometimes don't succeed in practicing—the importance of getting nestboxes placed and made available early in the season. Early—January and February—even December — can be houselooking time for some species. When the migrating birds reach your area is probably too late for you to start thinking about putting out boxes if you want to attract early arrivals. Your particular climate, weather and yes, even altitude can be influential in box-picking time. Males probably want to poke around and make some selections before the females show up. But if he can't do his work because there are no choices available, it could be a poor reproductive year for all concerned.

Earlier we mentioned that we are privileged to receive Newsletters from several NABS- affiliated bluebird organizations, thus learning of their progress, successes and activi-

ties as well as some problems which are part of all our efforts. The last two to reach us are *THE NESTBOX*, Sherry Linn, ed, newsletter of the Southern Interior Bluebird Trails Society and *The Bird Box*, Bob Sindermann, ed, from Virginia Bluebird Society. They are new NABS Affiliates located in British Columbia and Virginia. SIBTS covers “a very large area of the province,” and VBS is centered around Woodbridge.

The BC effort is a surefire indication that many people are also actively devoting time and energy to helping bluebirds, with outstanding results. In 1998 they had 5070 nestboxes in place from which 2502 Western Bluebirds and 11,803 Mountain Bluebirds took flight. Each of those figures can certainly challenge us as we try to expand the territories covered by our trails and the nestboxes we can provide.

Our CBRP Annual Report for 1998

carried some pretty good figures, both with respect to numbers of nestboxes and birds fledged. However, we are also very certain that a lot of people are providing nestboxes but have failed to send in their annual figures, perhaps feeling that a low production total is too insignificant to be counted. Two things need to be said to such landlords: first, if you have nestbox(es) hung and available, you are expected to monitor or arrange with someone to monitor for you; and second, we want your Annual Report with whatever the figures may be. If you are not a subscriber, that is the only way to receive the final newsletter edition of the year. Our aim is not just to run up the box numbers totals but to learn where those boxes are located and what came out of them. And if any further reminder is needed: your subscription does help pay the cost of printing this newsletter for you.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Compiled by Don Yoder & Staff



They are almost everywhere—house sparrows, that is. In Orange County **Woody & Jane Morf** took aggressive action against them, rousting eggs and several nests. New locations for several boxes may prove worthwhile in the offensive.



And almost as troublesome for **Bill Scheuner**, El Dorado, who finds his nestboxes so filled with sticks by house wrens that “it is impossible to see what is going on....”



For reasons we haven't yet learned **James D. Cox**, Orange, is looking for someone to take over his 43 nestbox trail next year. He had bluebird production and attempts by

Tree Swallows and ash throated flycatchers. James also has additional nestboxes “to give the new person...” and videos and books. Sounds like a leg-up start for an exciting enterprise. If not taken over, James will probably take down those boxes as they wouldn't be monitored. What a production loss for '00! Call him at (714)544-4294.



Surely not because of the altitude in Amador: **Richard Colby** reports that his bluebird and titmouse nesters simply deserted their nests, and some unknown agent vandalized the nuthatch nest. It's hard to deal with such odds.



We have to wonder whether

there is any similarity in nesting conditions for Richard and for **Marion Kunkel**, also in Amador. During very hot weather Marion added a cardboard panel to shade the nestbox roof and sides. The panel allowed air to flow around the box, which with a nearby birdbath, seemed to make the occupants very happy. No complaints were heard about the added construction.



In Tuolumne, **Larry J. Bodiford** offered 38 bluebird nestboxes and 15 for kestrels. The smaller ones were shared by bluebirds and 4 other varieties but the kestrels snubbed their intended units and probably moved to some warmer locations in the face

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What about Mealworms?

Experts disagree on supplemental feeding; if you do it, how do you do it? We gather the arguments and the methods.

Bluebirds are generally insectivorous in the spring, summer, and autumn. In winter, they will turn to fruits and berries, and when offered, combinations with peanuts, suet, soaked chopped raisins, bits of canned dogfood, hardboiled egg yolk, and cornbread.

In the east where snow and ice storms can occur in early spring, the unavailability of both insects and fruit and berries may create critical conditions for many birds.

When this happens, **Lawrence Zeleny**, in his book *The Bluebird* (1978), suggested, “every effort should be made to provide food for bluebirds and any other fruit-eating birds that may be in the vicinity.”

POETSCORNER

Dear Reader,

*My mate and I and brood of three
nest in a fence post cavity.
A favored place to tend a hatch
protected by a thistle patch
of stinging spines so awful that
we do not fear the 'coon or cat.*

*But now and then we view with pain
the ravage of a slanting rain.
And though it isn't orthodox
we crave to own a bluebird box!
Of course we know for that effect
we'd need a human architect.*

Could He Be You?

Yours Truly,

Blue

—Carlyle Cory

Wisconsin Bluebird, Summer 1999

BLUEBIRDS FLY! welcomes poetry and light verse provided it meets our standards of craftsmanship or humor or both. Send your inspirations or favorites to *Poetry Editor, Bluebirds Fly!*, PO Box 39, Somerset, CA 95684.

In the 1993 edition of her book, *Bluebird Trails, a Guide to Success*, **Dorene Scriven** speaks of various foods as “supplemental offerings and emergency food.”

On the Bluebird-L internet list, **Lanny Chambers** offered this opinion: “[Eastern] Bluebirds are year-round residents over most of the eastern US and southeastern Canada, and they do fine with or without our help. Why on Earth should they suddenly ignore millions of years of genetically-programmed expertise, honed over millions of generations of natural selection, and forget how to forage on their own? ...”

Arlene Ripley, Maryland, replied, “I’ll have to strongly agree with Lanny on this issue. While wild birds do become regulars at home feeders, studies have been done to show that they are not dependent on artificial food sources for their survival. The only exception might be weather so severe that all food sources are unavailable to the birds (such as deep snow or an ice-storm).”

Dick Purvis, Orange Co, seems to be in agreement, in part. “Feeding bluebirds is not necessary. They are very competent in finding their own food. It is acceptable to feed a small amount of food for our own interest in attracting them but it shouldn’t be a significant proportion of their food supply.

“The argument that they don’t become dependent cannot be supported by logic or reason. I don’t think there is any doubt that the habits of birds in the US have been radically changed by the fact that about 1/3 of the households in the US feed birds. An example is the spread of House Finches throughout the US. I think it is evident that many birds including bluebirds now winter further north than ever probably because of birdfeeders.

“About every decade or so a severe

storm severely reduces a bird population. Although feeding would prevent many deaths, there can be positive results in the natural pruning process. The remaining pool of birds are genetically superior after having the weaker individuals culled out.

“Even here in the west where it is very arid and insects are much more scarce than in the east, bluebirds have no difficulty in finding sufficient food. I think it is a mistake to feed the bluebirds. They don’t really need it and the tendency would be to alter their natural habits and make them even more dependent than they are already. Let’s keep bluebirds as wild as possible and not turn them into a bunch of yard pets.”

From Pennsylvania, **Chris Statton** joins the discussion: “I first started feeding bluebirds several years ago. I did so with trepidation at the accusation of making them dependent. Also being in snowcountry – where bluebirds do winter—I made the seriously considered decision that I would feed them, and, if they became dependent would honor the commitment to do so as long as they would grace my feeder. I carefully watched the feeding habits. The first pair I fed moved into their nest-box in late October, that year. I subsequently began feeding—meaning food was by no means the attractive element. I gave them as many mealworms as they chose to eat. They made it through that comparatively mild winter well-fed and well-nourished by spring.

“They began nest building in January, laid eggs in a mid-March snow blizzard, and had hatchlings on April 3. In spite of the fledglings being confronted with still-bare deciduous trees, heavy rains, and quite bitter temperatures, the adults would not bring the fledglings to the feeder. Rather, I observed extremely dedicated teaching of the fledglings of how to hawk for their own food. It appeared that only after the fledglings were proficient in hunting their own food did the parents,

who already had a next clutch of eggs well on its way, bring the 'kids' to the feeder. Allowing the 'kids' to visit the feeder was a short-lived luxury for them. After only a week or two, each family would be quite soundly booted out. This scenario repeated for four clutches of eggs – well, three (one clutch fell to a predator). By Fall, all kids were raised as, what appeared to be, skilled hunters of natural food.

“The parents also then took long (very long) hiatuses from the feeder even though abundant mealworms continued to be available. Visits to the feeder, of course, steadily increased from occasional to regular-as-clock-work as cold temperatures and heavy snow hit in late December. Currently, I am feeding 3 bluebirds (not including the original pair) in the same fashion—as many worms as they choose to eat. (I do feed year round.) Still I find that these 3 also choose nature's table as often—sometimes more so—as they choose the free-meals. I realize this is a very narrow observation, but I have seen absolutely no inclination at dependency from bluebirds being offered a continuous supply of mealworms. I have also not seen it be an influence on their decision to or not to winter here.

“I live near a wildlife refuge and use the bluebirds there as my ruler against which I gauge the bluebirds in my backyard. I am certainly not feeding the large flocks of bluebirds in the refuge—who also stayed the winter. However, I do not feed the bluebirds for my entertainment.

“Most bluebirders that I know who feed for entertainment carefully meter out the number of mealworms they offer. My feeder is so far away from the house that I have to use binoculars to see it and the bluebirds. Starting at this time of year I also provide them with crushed egg shells. With the first pair I fed, I knew within 24 hours when the first egg of a new clutch was going to be laid—Mrs took egg shells and

always spilled the little tub of shells in the process....

“Because of the abundance of mealworms provided, I do, of course, raise my own. Quite inexpensive and only a little work with monster rewards.

“Lastly, I also feed the mealworms while they are in the bluebird feeder. I use a high protein dry dog food and offer apple for moisture. The dog food does not raise the protein level of the mealworm, per se. However, some undigested dog food remains in the beginnings of the worm's digestive system and is ingested by the bluebirds when they eat the mealworm. Just my opinion, but I also believe this added source of nourishment is a boost to the nutrition and health of the bluebird.

“Obviously, none of this is the least bit scientific and is certainly dipped in my own biases and mere backyard observations.”

Linda Violet, Orange Co, comments, “I'm beginning to put out a few mealworms as I monitor each of my 40 boxes as kind of a ‘hello’ and to compensate the birds for the stress of disturbing their boxes.”

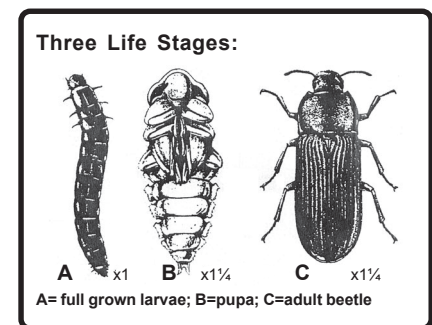
And **Janet King**, Mendocino Co, writes, “I've been enjoying the Bluebird listserve conversations. A couple of things come to mind. First I do feed mealworms, especially when the weather is bad and there are fledglings in the nest. I put them in a little feeder near the nestbox and have had no trouble with the parents finding them. I also put them on top of the nestbox on the lid if I can't find a place to put a feeder. It helps to have active worms. After the parents get used to me coming, they are waiting for me to come and I barely get turned around before they are at the feeder. Since most of our birds are resident, they don't forget from year to year and the little ones learn quickly also. I'm hoping to get them to come into the yard in the winter, but will have to work on that.”

In Oregon, **Patricia Johnston** and **Marilynne Keyser** report that they regularly supplement mealworms for their resident populations of Western Bluebirds when the weather gets bad. Both Pat and Marilynne are bird banders and, beside supplemental feeding, they use mealworms as bait for trapping bluebirds.

It appears that the idea of supplemental feeding is as controversial as some other political issues. In the meantime, what are mealworms, anyway?

Darkling Beetle Larvae

The two species of mealworms (dark and yellow) are of the genus *Tenebrio* and develop into darkling beetles. The larvae is wireworm-like rather than worm-, caterpillar-, or grub-like.



Mealworms are found world wide in cereal and grain products. They are the largest larvae in these products—often over an 1" long. They are widely raised for captive animal food and fishbait.

Sources of Supply

Bluebirders who use mealworms report these suppliers. No endorsement is made of any by CBRP.

Grubco Inc., OH
5000 for \$26.90
1-800-222-3563

Rainbow Mealworms, Compton, CA
2,000 for \$13.75.
1-800-777-9676

Nature's Way
1-800-318-2611

Hiram Peoples Hatchery, PA
717-786-7346.

Sunshine Mealworms, OR
503-873-8989

Georgia Mealies, Tifton, GA
912-382-8874

Fae's Mealworms, Oakland, TN
901-465-2531

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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of a cold snap at nesting time. (Has anybody designed a heater for a nest-box?)



Adding to the influence of the Program in El Dorado, **Ray & Pati DiBasilio** raised 25 bluebirds and other varieties in their 15 nestboxes. With encouragement by our energetic Editor, they also energized several neighbors and expect placement of quite a number of additional nestboxes to start the millennium.



Surely it isn't smoke—that blue haze obscuring the view of the ground—that pilots report as they fly over El Dorado County. It just must be the sun's reflection from the bluebirds fledged from nestboxes over the entire area. Orange County also has air vision shrouded by many scurrying nestling feeders. Keeps the State from tilting too far either way.



In Shasta, right in the shadow of the Mountain, **Elizabeth Crispin** had a double clutch season in the same box that produced 7 fledglings. Interplay between 2 apparent pair of adults added to her interest in watching the development of the resident families.



Ken Hashagen, Placer, reports a "Bad year!" with bluebirds around the area early, but only a single nest attempt that failed. **Anna M. Eckstein**, currently in San Diego County, has had one box and raised 5 bluebirds. With a new location in Monterey County for the millennium year, she plans to continue the effort to attract the blues.



Typically good habitat for nestboxes was utilized by **Peter Wetzel**, Orange, in a park and cemetery where 100% of hatched young suc-

cessfully fledged. **Richard A. Willey**, Santa Barbara, monitored 14 boxes and plans to expand to 20 boxes in the new year. One unmonitored box of three in a neighbor's yard produced uncounted birds but surely will be watched for developments.



If he suspects pesticides might be present, **Sully Reallon**, Orange, makes mealworms available near nestboxes. The adults carry "fresh protein" directly to the hatchlings, thus avoiding the risk of unfavorable chemical contacts.



Temperature swings may have influenced results for **Tony & Donna Stieber**, Fresno. But they monitored 4 nestboxes and proved that bluebirds can be fledged in the San Joaquin Valley.



And in Alameda County, **Irvin Tiessen**, monitored around 80 nestboxes, and raised several varieties in addition to bluebirds. Location is all-important and he plans to move about one-half of the cavities for more productive use in the new season.



Signs of real dedication to the support of cavity nesters are seen in reports that have come to us. Too often, health and family problems make regular nest monitoring especially difficult. Just ask **Karen von Barga**, Santa Cruz, whose 31 boxes were attended but had nesting activity in only 3. Along with her 2 yr-old's concussion and personal illness she still kept admirable records. **June C. Persson**, Sacramento, endured circulation problems which kept her from walking as much as desired. In times past we have had reports from monitors that the exercise they got from covering their trails greatly im-

proved general health and endurance. Both the birds and individual monitors receive great benefits from the effort, physician willing.



Odd doings in Sutter & Yuba Counties: coordinator **Kevin Putman** writes, "this year, I found a nestbox where parents (not banded) were raising 6 chicks, as last year and before; there was also a banded male hanging around, helping out. I couldn't catch him, but it's highly probable that he was one of their chicks that I banded last year. Kinda funny."

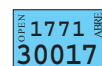


Two more threats to the welfare of our bluebirds, titmice, and other cavity nesters have lately come to our attention. They are not *new* but both add emphasis to the real importance of our efforts. Residents of Marin and Sonoma counties are no doubt aware of the growing threat to tanoak and coast live oak caused by an invasive virus which kills the trees. Frankly, we have too little information but it is reported that bark *continued on next page*

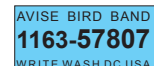
FIND A BAND?—CALL IT IN

With more and more birds being banded, it's possible you will come upon a banded bird that has died in a box in the winter; has flown into a window, or has been hit by a car.

Carefully record the band number. It will consist of a 3 or 4 digit prefix with a larger 5 digit suffix, such as



or



The USGS-Bird Banding Lab has established a toll-free number:

1-800-327-BAND (2263). You keep the band. You'll be sent a certificate and information about the bird.

Mealworms— grow your own

Linda Violet, Orange Co, writes:

“I wanted to be prepared for any emergency on my trail and purchased a small container of mealworms to grow. **Dorene Scriven**’s excellent *Bluebird Trails* has instructions and I used that to get going.

“I put my worms in a 5-gallon bucket along with bran & cornmeal; added a few potato slices for moisture and for the adults to lay eggs on. A few squares of paper towels were laid directly over the top and given a few sprays of water about every other day (whenever the toweling was crisp again).

“In a couple of months I had a bucket full of worms (larvae really) along with adult beetles and pupae and old grayish used food & castings. Mealworms will crawl between the damp paper toweling so all I had to do was take off the top toweling and shake it over a tin to have a pile of mealworms. I return any adult beetles and pupae to the bucket.

“About every third week you want a fresh start. I pour the contents of the old bucket into a strainer to get the beetles, pupae and mealworms out of the fine debris. These are put into a fresh bucket of food (corn meal, bran, old cereal, etc.). I keep the contents of the old bucket so any small mealworms or eggs have a chance to mature, then in a few weeks they can be sifted out and the old food is finally dumped.

“Other people who have grown mealworms for their frogs or fishing have been surprised that my buckets don’t have any odor. Could be because of the paper toweling I use rather than damp socks or burlap that some use—or could be that I rotate my bucket material more frequently.

“Hope this helps.”

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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beetles invade the trees allowing entrance by a virus which then obstructs the tree’s ability to absorb water. Results are pretty obvious, and a lot of dead trees will be removed when they are seen as hazards, or unattractive, or any other excuse for removing them. If trees go, so will many natural cavities—and so will cavity nesters. Up with nestboxes!



The second threat comes from another menace of nature. **Lena Yee Hayashi**, Orange County, reports that golfers have seen crows at bluebird nestboxes, one with a bird in its bill. She expects multiple losses were caused by these villains whose population is increasing on her golf course trail. (Possible solutions: an 8" Noel guard; a generous roof overhang—at least in front; a deeper box or lowering of the nest to keep chicks out of reach of probing beaks.)



Debate continues over the efficacy of top opening vs side or front opening nestboxes. Try them either way. It’s possible to build a box in both formats. Doubt it? Contact us for particulars.



Be sure to let us know when you have a change of address. The Post Office will not forward **BLUEBIRDS FLY!** and you will not receive copies to which you are entitled for the balance of your subscription. *Sorry about that—but be forewarned!*



Another natural predator causes losses: In San Bernardino, **Robert E. Scudder** found ants had killed three bluebirds nearly ready to fledge. He finds that watching nestboxes is a learning experience for monitors.



In San Joaquin, **Valerie Calegari** supervised two trails with some 20

boxes at Nature Conservancy’s **Consumnes River Preserve** where “our staff and a number of thrilled volunteers took turns going out to monitor....” The trail is sure to expand next year.



Among their 48 nestboxes, **Bill & Doris Allison**, Amador, tended 10 pairs consisting of 1 standard NABS and 1 Peterson located \approx 15 ft apart. 6 NABS boxes had no starts; all 10 Petersons had starts and fledged 24 chicks in the 1st brood.



An El Dorado trail of 6 nestboxes, monitored by **M.A. Morris & L.J. Herrig** near the Upper Truckee River went unused, but they are not ‘giver-uppers.’ “Wait until next year,” they write.



In Lake County, **Jeannette Knight** may shift her attentions to swallows because they cooperate by using her boxes. In 2 previous years she found 2-3 nesting pairs. This year (wow!)—43. Good numbers of bluebirds (2 weeks late nesting) in the area but seem to have had but one family.



To an even greater degree bluebirds were 2 months later than usual in Ventura County, where **Richard Kempton** tends 5 boxes at 3200 ft. elevation.



Donald Johnson, Kern County, had no second nesting in any of his 30 nestboxes. “From mid-June until August there was a very noticeable shortage of insects.....A number of species of insect eating birds went elsewhere for food. This was the worst....I have ever seen, but some of them have returned.”



Up in Placer County, **Joan Jernegan** increased her box count by 1/3, hoped for a stellar season but cold weather seemed to discourage

continued next page

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nesting efforts; fledges came from only 2 of 3 nests. She also caters to titmice but feels their population is also declining. And as many birders do, she says she starts “to feel responsible for my feathered friends.”



Phil Persons, Santa Barbara Co., ‘adopted’ a trail originally installed in 1996 by Boy Scouts at **La Purisima Mission State Historic Park** but not monitored until 1998 when Phil found the boxes. It is great to see Scouts become interested and involved in helping reestablish habitat. Too often, however, such trails are gung-ho start-up projects with all good intentions and enthusiasm but lacking arrangements for follow-up care—even during the first season. Once the boxes are placed, provision for regular monitoring and care needs to be firmly established. We place nestboxes for the welfare of the birds—not for our own satisfaction.



Tom Schramm & Dee Doyle, Alameda Co., rediscovered what is a truism for many trail operators. Tom reports “Our boxes were installed early spring and were not used this year. Maybe next year...” Many birders find that boxes placed in springtime, especially if they are made of new wood, will not attract occupants until the boxes have weathered for a couple of seasons. Maybe it is something about their feeling like an old pair of shoes, once exposed to the elements for a time, before they really appeal to would-be tenants. Hope the exposure will change your fortunes



Lake County’s **Don Johnson** had a first brood of seven (7!) fledge then shortly return to the area while the parents started a 2nd nest. Don thought the youngsters had come to

help feed the next crop. With but three newbies next time around, the older kids lost interest and left the feeding to the experienced older generation.



From **Tustin Ranch Golf Club**, Orange Co., **Cecilia G. Perez** has submitted a very colorful and graphic representation of bluebird production on the links. Fledging 6 bluebirds from 11 boxes in 1994, a steady annual rise has produced 132 bluebirds from 31 boxes. It looks like the birds appreciate the short grass. The course subscribes to the **Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System**.



Also in Orange Co. **Bob Franz** fledged 510 bluebirds from 101 boxes. We haven’t learned of too many triple clutches in California, but he had his first triple clutching in 4 boxes; only 1 box fledged successfully, however. He keeps some detailed statistics to further his interests and hopes to complete a book on bluebirding which he now has in progress.



Lloyd Cook, Shasta Co., had bluebirds checking out his territory in March but they apparently moved somewhere else for the season. Tree swallows and an Ash-throated Flycatcher took over in mid-May; a starling took advantage of a Barn Owl box and fledged 4.



Maybe it’s the climate but in Orange Co. **Joe Chandler** also had 3 clutches all in the same box with a total of 20 eggs but, again, none hatched.



And still more activity in Orange Co: **Dick & Lee McDowell** were alerted by a recent article in **BLUE-BIRDS FLY!** about the potential predation caused by several varieties of rats. Dick found droppings and bluebird feathers in and around one of their boxes. It is mighty hard to defend against these critters.

TBT POWWOW IN SACRAMENTO

The Co-Executive Directors of **The North American Bluebird Society** will be visiting California in late November. **John D. Ivanko** and **Lisa Kivirist** will meet with **Donald E. Yoder**, CBRP Program Director, and **Hatch Graham**, Editor, to discuss plans for the Transcontinental Bluebird Trail (TBT).

Owing to its emphasis on public lands and because CBRP has a Memorandum of Understanding with the US Forest Service, Region 5, representatives of the Forest Service will also attend. **Diana Craig**, Regional Wildlife Program Manager and **Susan Yasuda**, Animal Inn Education & Cavity Dependent Species Coordinator will meet with the others at **National Audubon-California** headquarters in Sacramento.

National Forests occupy 20% of all lands in the State and serve as a huge reservoir of suitable habitat for many dependent species.

The **California Bluebird Recovery Program** has grown in its five years of existence to represent cavity nester enthusiasts from both ends of the State and in between.

The Transcontinental Bluebird Trail is to be a large, coordinated network of bluebird trails across the North American Continent. The TBT is *not* a linear, connected or continuous trail, since it is impossible to find appropriate habitat, enough volunteer trail monitors, and resources to create such a trail. Therefore, as envisioned, the TBT does not follow any route or path, but rather it will take on the appearance of a web—an appropriate symbol in that we are all a part of the web of life. The TBT will include both privately managed trails and newly created Adopt-A-Box trails with the assistance and guidance of Affiliates such as CBRP.

Call your coordinator if you need help—

Are you having problems identifying your birds? Are you having problems with wasps, blowflies, mites? Have your nestlings been abandoned. Are your nestboxes being invaded by House Sparrows? Your County Coordinators can give you advice and assistance, or have resources they can call on to help. Keep in touch.

COUNTY	COORDINATOR	STREET	CITY/STATE/ZIP	PHONE VOX	PHONE FAX	EMAIL
Alameda	Ann Kositsky	1090 Miller Ave	Berkeley, CA 94708	(510) 527-5091		ajpa@pacbell.net
	Raymond A. Fontaine	P.O. Box 92	Livermore, CA 94551	(510) 447-0213		
Amador	Penny Brown	20624 Parkside Dr	Pine Grove, CA 95665	(209) 296-3849		penny@cdepot.net
Butte	Emily Harbison	3536 Butte Campus Dr	Oroville, CA 95965	(530) 895-2449		deb@cin.butte.cc.ca
Calaveras	La Verne Hagel	466 Thompson Lane	Copperopolis, CA 95228	(209) 785-2363		
Contra Costa	Shirley & Warren Engstrom	232 Tharp Drive	Moraga, CA 94556	(925) 376-4695		wlese@juno.com
	Oscar Enstrom	21 Manti Terrace	Alamo CA 94507	(925) 837-8392		bigo@lanset.com
El Dorado & Amador	Hatch Graham	P.O. Box 39	Somerset, CA 95684	(530) 621-1833	(530) 621-3939 fax	birdsfly@innercite.com
	Viola Sampert	5655 Hollow Ln	Greenwood, CA 95635	(530) 333-0318		
	Jim or Martha Fletcher	3731 Leisure Ln	Placerville, CA 95667	(530) 644-4895		
Lake	Jeannette Knight	PO Box 152	Cobb, CA 95426-0152	(707) 928-5250		
Lassen	Edward Bertotti	470 413 Wingfield	Susanville, CA 96130	(530) 257-3774		
	Mike Magnuson	PO Box 767	Chester, CA 96020	(530) 258-2141		
	Tom Rickman	PO Box 2017	Susanville, CA 96130	(530) 257-2151		
Los Angeles	Doug Martin	13066 Shenley Street	Sylmar, CA 91342	(818) 367-8967		
Madera	William Rihn	PO Box 1648	Coarsegold, CA 93614	(209) 683-3052		
Marin	Ruth Beckner	15 Portola Avenue	San Rafael, CA 94903	(415) 479-9542		
	Meryl Sundove	37 Greenwood Beh Rd	Tiburon, CA 94920	(415) 388-2524	(415) 388-0717 fax	
Mariposa	Lawrence Punte	9443 Banderilla Dr	LaGrange, CA 95329	(209) 852-2559		
Modoc	Charles Welch	PO Box 825	Alturas, CA 96101	(530) 233-4534		
Napa & Sonoma	David Graves	1500 Los Carneros Ave	Napa, CA 94559	(707) 257-0843		
Nevada	Lorry Hukill	15954 Wolf Mtn Rd.	Grass Valley, CA 95949	(530) 477-7165		
	Richard Nickel	107 Bawden Ave	Grass Valley, CA 95945	(530) 273-2600		
Orange	Dick Purvis	936 S Siet Place	Anaheim, CA 92806	(714) 776-8878		Dickersly@aol.com
Placer	Lesia Chan	9720 Oak Leaf Way	Granite Bay, CA 95746	(916) 791-4529		habitat@jps.net
Plumas	Patricia Johnson	PO Box 767	Chester, CA 96020	(530) 258-2141		
Riverside	Melissa Browning	10154 Beaumont Ave	Cherry Valley, CA 92223	(909)845-9266		
San Bernardino	Glen Chappell	1923 Abbie Way	Upland, CA 91784	(909) 981-1996		Chappell@CHS.Chaffey.K12.CA.US
San Diego	Rosemary Fey	PO Box 1245	Borrego Spgs, CA 92004	(619) 767-5810		
San Francisco	Don Wolff	1376 6th Ave	San Francisco, CA 94122	(415) 665-6938		
San Joaquin	Thomas Hoffman	10122 E Woodbridge Rd	Acampo, CA 95220	(209) 369-8578		thoffman@lodinet.com
San Mateo	Howard Rathlesberger	230 Ridgeway	Woodside, CA 94062	(650) 367-1296	(650) 369-4788 fax	Rathles@aol.com
Santa Barbara	Richard Willey	4172 Vanguard Dr	Lompoc CA 93436	(805)733-5383		willey@utech.net
Santa Clara	Garth Harwood & SCVAS	5901 Pescadero Crk Rd	Pescadero CA 94060	(650) 879-0724		GarthHar@aol.com
Santa Cruz	Nanda Currant	530 Amigo Road	Soquel, CA 95073	(408) 462-3703		hearth@cruzio.com
Siskiyou	Mike Hauptman	PO Box 92	Yreka, CA 96097	(530) 841-1669	(530) 842-4332 fax	writeidea@snowcrest.net
Sonoma (see Napa)						
Sutter & Yuba	Kevin A. Putman	2884 Coy Dr	Yuba City, CA 95993	(530) 755-1480		dputman@syix.com
Tehama	Pete Flower	331 Oak Street	Red Bluff, CA 96080	(530) 527-0392		
Tulare	Peter C. Morrison, MD.	325 So. Willis	Visalia, CA 93291	(209) 733-1154		
All Other Counties	Don Yoder	2021 Ptarmigan #1	Walnut Creek, CA 94595	(925) 937-5974 vox & fax		cbrp@value.net



Find out more about your birds—have them banded

When you have determined your estimated hatching date, call a bander if one is near. Schedule permitting, the bander may be able to band the adult incubating the eggs and/or the nestlings a week or so after they pip from the eggs. Banding helps us learn about the site fidelity of the adults, the dispersal of the chicks, longevity, and other elements of population dynamics.

BIRD BANDERS:

Amador & southern El Dorado	Hatch Graham	(530) 621-1833	birdsfly@innercite.com
Northern El Dorado	Dave DeLongchamp	(530) 333-2304	selkaijen@jps.net
Placer & northern Sacramento	Dee Warenycia	(916) 786-5056	warbler5@aol.com
San Francisco Peninsula	Lee Franks	(650) 592-7733	
Sutter & Yuba	Kevin Putman	(530) 755-1480	dputman@syix.com
Ventura	Jan Wasserman	(805) 987-3928	bandlady@west.net

Anyone desiring to band who can commit 2 or 3 days per week is encouraged to contact Hatch Graham.

CBRP MOURNS LOSS OF TWO DEDICATED BIRDERS

We have just learned and are sorry to report the passing of **James A. Guthrie**, recently named Co-Coordinator at Lodi, San Joaquin County . Jim has been a devoted supporter of bluebirds for years, building hundreds of nestboxes, speaking to numerous groups of all ages in the area—all in addition to maintaining his own trails of nearly 100 nestboxes. His loss is perhaps best described by **Tom Hoffmann** who shared the county coordinator assignment with Jim : “I know that bluebirds were very much a part of his life, and as far as his trail inhabitants are concerned, he was very much a part of theirs as well.”

One of Jim’s last efforts on the part of bluebirds was to provide nestboxes and establish a trail at the **Cosumnes River Preserve** which is monitored by staff and volunteers at the preserve. Jim’s bluebird legacy will live on.

In early September, **Malcolm D. King** was killed in a tractor accident on his farm near Ukiah, Mendocino County.

Long active with the **California Waterfowl Association**, Malcolm has been monitoring and banding Wood Ducks for several years.

Malcolm had a 42-box bluebird trail on his farm as well. He obtained his permit to band bluebirds in 1997 and pioneered in studies of roosting bluebirds and titmice in his nestboxes during the winter of 1998-99.

He had expanded his banding operations to nearby wildlife refuges and expected to continue his winter roosting studies.

Malcolm is survived by his wife Janet who intends to monitor his trails and carry on with the banding program.

All who knew Malcolm will certainly miss him.

What do bluebirds and ducks have in common?

Duck Days! UC Davis will hold their annual celebration of ducks on the Davis campus on Feb 19 & 20, 2000.

Featured speaker on the 20th will be our own **Don Yoder** giving his slide show on bluebirds and nestboxes.

In addition, Yuba-Sutter County Coordinator **Kevin Putman** will be building nestboxes in the box workshop as will **Hatch Graham** from El Dorado. Come join us.



CATS INDOORS!

THE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFER BIRDS & CATS

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