



By Peggy

BLUEBIRDS FLY!

California Bluebird Recovery Program Newsletter

—Assisted by Mount Diablo Audubon Society —
An affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society

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www.cbrp.org

“For the encouragement and conservation of cavity-nesters — especially bluebirds — anywhere in the West”

MR. BLUEBIRD OF ORANGE COUNTY, DICK PURVIS IS ON THE MEND

In April this year **Dick Purvis** emailed the members of the Southern California Bluebird Club that he had to cut back monitoring his 385 nest boxes in Orange and Los Angeles County to take care of some blocked arteries. Dick had a triple bypass procedure. He missed the May meeting of the club, but sure enough, there he was in June at the club meeting with his devoted wife and caretaker, **Katie**, giving us advice and his presence to the relief of everyone. The club did its best to cover most of his nest boxes during his absence. Dick is recovering nicely and when shaking hands with club members demonstrated his strength. Welcome back, Dick. The bluebirds have been asking about you.



Dick Purvis with “Ole No. 1,” the first nestbox he placed in O’Neill Regional Park in Orange County in 1984. In addition to founding the Southern California Bluebird club, constructing hundreds of nest boxes, inventing the “Purvis Lifter” basket to hang boxes on tree limbs, Dick routinely monitors 350 to 400 bluebird nest boxes in Orange and Los Angeles Counties. Dick is cited in birding magazines, appeared on numerous radio and television programs, made countless lectures and presentations and has won numerous awards, including a Lifetime Achievement award from NABS in 2012 in Newport Beach, CA.

Yeah, Mr. Bluebird



The Director's Chair

Here it is mid-June already and the 2014 nesting season is well underway. Activity at my home and neighborhood nest boxes (Santa Clara Valley) seems to be over early this year and the drought seems to have had a significant impact on the number of fledglings. Many unexplained deaths of eggs and hatchlings! I hope that your experience is better.

Many thanks to those of you who generously donated \$1325. These funds will go toward the publication and mailing of our newsletter and toward the CBRP/Audubon Nestbox grant program.

Two numbers after your name on the mailing label for this issue of *Bluebirds Fly!* Represent the date of your most recent contribution in the form yyyymm and your donation amount in the form \$\$\$\$. If these fields are blank then you have not made a contribution in the past three years. My practice is to remove monitors/contributors after three years with no activity (report or donation). My attempt to do this in the previous newsletter did not succeed because of a misunderstanding with the printer.

I hope you have a very pleasant summer.

Dick Blaine - dick@theblaines.net

CBRP Web site - <http://cbrp.org>

CBRP On-line data entry instructions: <http://www.cbrp.org/EndOfSeasonReport.htm>

CBRP On-line data collection data file: <http://ar2013.cbrp.org>



Larry Fulton

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Jim Semelroth, Editor,— jimsemweed@cox.net

Dick Purvis, Recruiting — dickersly@aol.com

Donors since January 2014 2014 Total: \$1325

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With much gratitude, we accept these donations.

To donate to the CBRP, please use the form or information on the last page of this newsletter.



Elaine Miller Bond

About the California Bluebird Recovery Program Founder - Don Yoder; Emeritus - Hatch Graham

Our Mission

Enlist current bluebirders and recruit others who will help reestablish bluebirds to their normal habitat

- ◆ Locate preferred habitat for the placement of nestboxes suitable for bluebirds
- ◆ Secure monitors to care for the boxes and keep systematic records of the development of young birds during the nesting season
- ◆ Record and analyze all annual summaries of nestbox records
- ◆ Provide a forum (newsletter) through which fellow trail monitors can exchange information and secure help in solving problems encountered in the field.

Learn More

To learn more about the California Bluebird Recovery Program and other cavity nester conservation programs, visit the below web sites:

<http://www.cbrp.org>

<http://www.nabluebirdssociety.org>

<http://www.socalbluebirds.org>

<http://www.sialis.org>

If you are looking for a mentor, start by contacting the county coordinator in your county listed on page 12. You can also contact **Dick Blaine** (dick@theblaines.net) or **Dick Purvis** (dickersly@aol.com).

Please consider supporting our efforts. There is a donation form on the back page of this newsletter. Your contribution is tax-deductible and goes a long way in helping us conserve the bluebird population in California.

Montana's Bluebirds suggest a review of nest box provisioning

Research has revealed a serious turf war in Western Montana between Mountain and Western bluebirds. Thanks to a twenty-year study by scientist Renee Duckworth, Ph.D from the University of Arizona, we learn that Mountain Bluebirds are losing ground in lower elevations to their Western cousins, in part because the population size of the latter has likely risen beyond historic levels due to the provision of thousands of nest boxes by bluebird hobbyists.

Turf wars between the two species actually has a long, natural history which benefited both species. Natural fire cycles resulted in an ebb and flow between them. After a fire, the wider-ranging and more adaptable Mountain Bluebirds were the first to arrive and nest, only later to be gradually displaced by the Western Bluebird when the post-fire habitat became more suitable to them. The cycle was repeated when fire returned. In this way expansion and contraction of their respective ranges moderated population numbers and permitted evolving habitats to benefit species best suited to them at the time.

Things changed dramatically in the 1930s. Fire suppression, logging, clear cutting and farming altered the landscape of Western Montana upsetting this natural tide of co-existence and territorial time-sharing. By the 1940s the Western Bluebird had virtually vanished.

In the early 1970s when Montana conservation activists launched a campaign to help the Western Bluebird, they accomplished their mission in spades, but with unintended consequences. By installing 8,000 boxes in the lower valleys, they increased the Western Bluebird population, widened the species' range and created an artificially stable habitat which enabled the more aggressive Western Bluebird to squeeze out the Mountain Bluebird.

These conditions restrict the Mountain Bluebirds to much higher elevations where the Western Bluebirds cannot thrive.

What further exacerbates the problem is that boxes are placed 100-300 yards apart. Research revealed that Mountain Bluebirds will not remain in areas when their Western cousins are too close. Apparently over 300 yards apart is more to their liking. These findings open the door to a conservation compromise for Montana's nest box monitors and those in other regions of the country where the range of the two overlap. Scientists suggest that in suitable regions some boxes should be more widely spaced to allow the two species to peacefully co-exist and thrive. These revelations may have relevance to regions where Tree Swallows and bluebirds compete, scientists say. Tree Swallows often lose to Western Bluebirds because swallows are smaller, weigh less and are less aggressive.

Contrary to popular belief, bluebirds are not endangered or threatened. To what degree this popular species currently deserves special consideration over other native birds is a discussion among hobbyists that is often driven more by emotion than science. Research reminds us that there is much we do not know about the impact of change in habitat conditions and population size, and that when our well-intended efforts greatly increase the numbers and range of any species it is a worthy and responsible undertaking to periodically review our goals and methods. **Gillian Martin**

In the bluebird world we know and so love in southern California, we have placed nestboxes in parks big and small, in golf courses, mostly big, and in cemeteries, both big and small. but for one pair of bluebirds in Yorba Linda, none of these sites were good enough.

In mid-April, I received a call about a pair of bluebirds that were nesting inside an orchard supply hardware store. I immediately went there, and sure enough, inside the nursery area a pair of bluebirds were nesting in a large multi-level multi-room condo-like bird house that was mounted on a ten-foot pole. As I watched, both male and female were busy flying in and out of the nursery through an opening in a side wall with fresh food for their brood. subsequent photos through the bird house entry hole revealed that their offspring consisted of two very healthy-looking nestlings that would be fledging soon. I checked in a week or so, and both had fledged. I checked again about ten days later and found no further activity



By Janel Pahl

Do you think this is a rare occurrence? one would think so but last year at this very site, a brood of bluebirds was raised in the same bird house and in the same room – probably by the same pair! There is no way that orchard can close-off access to this area in their store, so I will expect a repeat next year. **Bob Franz**

My daughter Casey is now helping me each week with my 34 boxes at Tustin Ranch Golf course. We were quite dismayed when we approached this box and saw that it had been broken. The parents were fluttering around the box, so I was pretty confident there were babies or eggs inside. We were unable to fit the box into the basket, so Casey, quick thinking, removed the basket, stuck just the pole into the inside of the box and carefully lowered the it to where I could grab it. There were two 4 day old babies inside with a very wet nest to boot! Fortunately, we had a replacement box AND nest. We carefully placed the babies into their new home, hung it back up and waited to see if the parents bought into it. It took them a few tries, but finally went into their new home.

Casey called it; Extreme Makeover, Bluebird edition". The only answer we came up with as far as the box getting broken, is that it was hit by a golf ball!



Janel Pahl

FUNDERS HELP YOUNGSTERS HELP CAVITY NESTERS

The Southern California Bluebird Club ended the 2014 school year celebrating its youth program which to date has helped 1548 Orange County youngsters understand the need for more dead trees. The grand finale was an event held for 270 Girl Scouts in a community park. Scouts, in nine rotating groups of thirty, attended a program provided by Club volunteers. A fun project followed. They created a large mural and several posters illustrating how dead trees not only help cavity nesting birds but add to habitat diversity. The mural will be displayed in the Scout's headquarters.



The Club's youth program titled, The Wonderful Life of a Dying tree, is funded by the Pasadena Audubon Society and The Fund for Wild Nature. Bringing snag ecology into classrooms and creating youth advocates for snags is one goal of the Club's Cavity Conservation Initiative (www.cavityconservation.com) which was launched in 2012. Changing land manager's policies regarding snags is another.



However, when the 2014-15 school year begins a new component of the youth program will too. A free Teacher's Loaner Kit will be available to elementary schools thanks to a community grant from the Edison Company. Two containers will deliver a bounty of educational resources for both teachers and students thereby allowing this Life-Science-based program to be delivered by teachers themselves rather than depend totally on delivery by SCBC volunteers. The project has yet another partner, Sea and Sage Audubon Society. They will add the kit to their own inventory of loaner kits, provide taxidermy birds for it and promote it to educators.



The SCBC knows that because of loss of snag habitat the provision of nest boxes will continue for the foreseeable future but is proud that they have begun to look beyond nest boxes to this more sustainable and ecologically beneficial solution to the problem. They are changing public perception of dying trees, impacting policies, supporting youth leadership and preparing the next generation to be better stewards.

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When I was a kid we had a pat phrase when asked a prying question we didn't want to answer: "None of your beeswax (business). Well, this is my beeswax.

Here's what I found in a box I had left to the bees earlier in this season. On several occasions I have avoided nestboxes taken over by wild honey bees. I informed the golf course manager of the bees in this box and he said the bees usually abandon their comb after a while. I have also called bee keepers who wanted a steeper fee than I was willing to pay. Once I called **Dick Purvis**, who formerly was a bee keeper and he took care of the bees.

Once I received a call from a golfer telling me a bluebird box was on the ground. I went to the tree and found the box on the ground at the base of the tree, the number 8 wire straightened and about twenty pounds of honey and comb inside.

Despite the reports of hive collapse, we in Orange County are plagued by bees taking over our nest boxes. I also had bees take over an owl box twice in my back yard.

Jim Semelroth

For several years a pair of bluebirds have been nesting in a 3 ft. high red steel pipe in full sun at my small church in northeast Oceanside. I was always amazed that the pair managed to raise 2 broods in the hot pipe. Last year their second brood came to a tragic end when someone, perhaps a child, thoughtless stuffed an empty chip bag into the pipe. The nestlings were still alive when I found them but even a day without their mother's care would be too much I feared. This proved to be correct. All perished.

I had placed a bluebird box about 30 feet away from the pipe two years ago. The funds for the box were generously donated to the Girl Scouts by the Bluebird Recovery. The pair had rejected the box in favor of their beloved pipe for two seasons. The pair had shown interest in the box during the winter as evidenced by sitting on the pole and the box! To help matters, the fire dept. finally covered the pipe! I am pleased to report that the pair successfully fledged 5 young in their first brood in the cheerfully decorated, comfortable bluebird house and are getting close to fledging two more in their second brood!

Paula Theobald

B&B for Titmice



Female Titmouse with grub

A pair of titmice has graced my back yard for several years, either nesting in one of the small boxes or in the hollow of a neighbor's tree. The visitors appear to be the same returning individuals. The female is sleek and sits tall and erect on a branch. The male is a little darker, with slightly fuzzier feathers and tends to sit low. Throughout the year they use our birdbath, visit the seed feeder and appear regularly for a scattering of bread crumbs.



Male Titmouse with kernel

This nesting season they took an extreme interest in the rafter area of my front porch, intimidating the chestnut backed chickadees who were building in a nearby box. I had never seen titmice stay so close to the house, but fixed a hanging nest box to the eaves to see what would happen. Not only did the titmice build a nest and

fledge 5 chicks, they did it within 4 feet of my window. Moreover, as long as I sat motionless, I could be in full view with my camera at the ready. I could see every morsel that they fed. As the hatchlings grew, I could watch the chicks come out of the box – first just a tenuous beak, then a head, then head and shoulders, when insisting to be fed.



Male Titmouse with Mosquito hawk

The feedings were, of course, often – grubs, flying insects, seeds - usually one parent or the other feeding and then quickly darting off to continue to search for

food. But, when the individuals of the pair were close to one another, a curious thing would happen. The female would land in the nearest branch and call (even with a full beak) until the male landed near her. She would then continue to vocalize, flatten her crest and flutter her wings until he fed the chicks and flew away. Only then would she go to the front of the box to feed the chicks. She would never feed first.



Female with food, fluttering wings and waiting for male to feed first.

About a week after the nest emptied, the parents were re-investigating the box, but ultimately decided not to rebuild this year. Instead, they are again frequenting my back yard. Right now they are enjoying some left over bagel. The restaurant is open but the B&B is closed for the season.

Patricia Beck

The bluebird box in front of our house yielded five fledglings. Within days, we noticed there were only three chicks accompanying their parents for our mealworm snacks. The weeks have gone by, our pair has a second nest and six eggs in the second clutch. Only now, when I put out mealworms, there are *six* chicks coming for the goodies! I tend four other boxes in the neighborhood and know that juveniles like to form gangs. Apparently word has gotten around about our freebies. Who knows how many moochers we'll end up with before the season's over!

Elena Hery

California Bluebird Recovery Program County Coordinators, 2014

'County'	'First'	'Last'	City	Home#	Email
Alameda	Georgette	Howington	Martinez	925-686-4372	Georgette@birdscape.net
Amador	Doris & Bill	Allison	Plymouth	209-245-3135	allison1932@att.net
Contra Costa	Georgette	Howington	Martinez	925-686-4372	Georgette@birdscape.net
Los Angeles	Dick	Purvis	Anaheim	714-776-8878	joann1@socal.rr.com
Madera	Bill & Megan	Ralph	Raymond	209- 966-2250	bill@dryadranch.com
Mendocino	Michael &	Arago	Fort Bragg	707-962-0507	mbarago@mcn.org
Merced	Steve	Simmons	Merced	209-722-3540	simwoodduk@aol.com
Nevada	Kate	Brennan	Grass Valley	530-268-1682	wolfcreekfarms@goskywest.com
Orange	Dick	Purvis	Anaheim	714-776-8878	dickersly@aol.com
Placer	Heath	Wakelee	Granite Bay	916 797-4536	
Riverside	Erin	Snyder	Riverside	951-683-7691	snyder@rcrcd.com
Sacramento	Vicki	Butler	Sacramento	916-448-8030	butlerrowe@sbcglobal.net
San Bernardino	Glen	Chappell	Redlands	909-794-3470	
San Diego	Martin	Marino	Encinitas	626-826-4336	martin.marino@sbcglobal.net
San Louis Obispo	Paul & Judy	Burkhardt	Creston	805 438-4491	tinhornranch@sbcglobal.net
San Mateo	Pat	Neumann		650-712-0642	pneumann716@gmail.com
Santa Barbara	Richard	Willey	Lompoc	805-733-5383	willey@willeyweb.com
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Shasta	Larry	Jordan	Oak Run	530-472-3131	larrytech@frontiernet.net
Solano/Yolo	Melanie	Truan	Davis	530-754-4975	mltruan@ucdavis.edu
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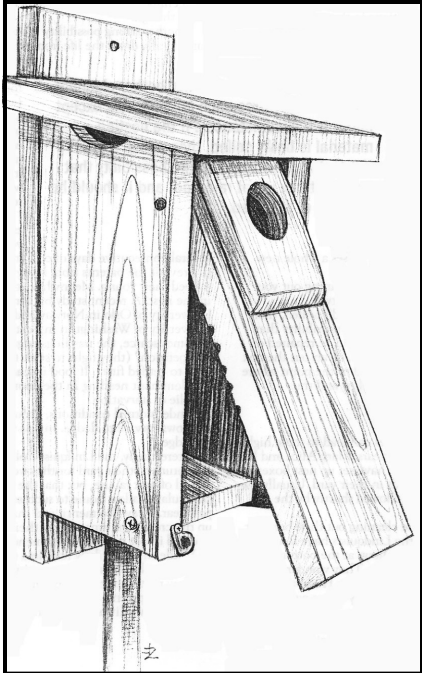
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