



BLUEBIRDS FLY!

California Bluebird Recovery Program Newsletter

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

\$2.50 Per Issue
Suggested
Donation

www.cbrp.org

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

IN MEMORIAM

Long-time Bluebirder and co-founder of the Southern California Bluebird Club, **Sully Reallon**, 91, passed away July 5 in Mission Viejo. Sully began monitoring bluebird nestboxes in the 1990s in South Orange County, eventually checking up to 150 boxes. He was a south county coordinator, and mentor to many new monitors. He stopped regularly monitoring boxes several years ago after turning over his trails to others. Sully regularly attended the monthly meetings of the SCBC and came as recently as May 2019. The SCBC is setting up a Founder’s Scholarship fund to continue to support our young bird and environment enthusiasts, and graduate research students. Since we are a 501 (c) (3) organization your gifts to the fund are tax deductible. Please consider a contribution in honor of **Sully** and our founders so we may continue to support future bird and nature enthusiasts. You may write a check to the SCBC with a notation **Scholarship Fund** and send to:



Sully Reallon

Jo-Ann Coller, Treasurer

18132 Larkstone Drive
Santa Ana, CA 92705

You may also donate using Paypal by going to our website donation page <https://bluebirdssc.wordpress.com/donate-2/>.

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

Did you ever wonder if what we are doing is legal? Did you know it is illegal to bother nesting native birds, including bluebirds? There is another interesting article in the new *Bluebird* journal of the North American Bluebird Society, *Know the Laws Regarding Nestbox Trail Management* by NABS President Bernie Daniels. The article includes a reprint of Myrna Perlman’s 2006 article, *It’s the Law*. Many of the things we do when monitoring are technically against the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), but because we are aiding wildlife we are given a pass and can continue monitoring our nest boxes. However, it is a good idea to keep in mind what is permissible and what is not. To read the full article obtain a copy of *Bluebird* or join NABS for \$20 per year. You may subscribe online at www.nabluebirdsociety.org.



The Director's Chair

I underwent an aortic valve replacement via the TAVR (transcatheter aortic valve replacement) procedure the morning of February 28 and was home in the evening of March 1! No pain, one week at home and back on my bike after two weeks with no more chest pains. This is an incredible procedure and is the future of valve replacement. No more open heart surgery. Amazing!

I want to welcome **Michelle Unger**, who is the new (and first) County Coordinator for San Francisco. She has already made a number of contacts with various birding organizations and has gotten off to a great start. **Mike Azevedo** (Santa Clara) and **Georgette Howington** (Alameda and Contra Costa) coordinators were instrumental in helping her to get started – many thanks to them as well. See list of county coordinators elsewhere in this issue.



Please enter your end-of-season data into the CBRP data-entry spreadsheet. I would like to start working on the 2019 annual report early and so would like to have all of your data entered by December 1, 2019. **Attention Santa Clara County (CNRP) trial monitors:** I would like to have your (preliminary) data by September 1 in time for our annual meeting later in the month.

CBRP data entry spreadsheet:

CBRP collects aggregate data by species and trail (not detailed nestbox by nestbox data)

<https://goo.gl/jgMK5v> or

[https://drive.google.com/open?](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1haZZCx2HM_n8zg_yKJrMlnAbsLulCRQorvFi1vi3WiI)

[id=1haZZCx2HM_n8zg_yKJrMlnAbsLulCRQorvFi1vi3WiI](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1haZZCx2HM_n8zg_yKJrMlnAbsLulCRQorvFi1vi3WiI)

Cornell's NESTWATCH:

Nest Watch collects detailed box-by-box by species by trail information suitable for scientific research. Please participate in their program as well.

Documentation for Cornell NestWatch Bulk Upload Template:

Download to your computer for your reference.

<https://goo.gl/PqHXiX> or

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14Irq7cS02GrClgj-q5ENVZ6Q14M3LpkWFR4Fh24YcM/edit>

California Bluebird Recovery Program (CBRP) Board Members

Dick Blaine, Program Director — dick@theblaines.net

Dave Cook, Board Member — justdave50@comcast.net

Georgette Howington, Asst. Program Director—
ghbirdscape@gmail.com

Jim Semelroth, Editor,— jimsemweed@cox.net

Dick Purvis, Recruiting — dickersly@aol.com

NestWatch Bulk Upload Template (Spreadsheet)

Download to your computer, review the instructions sheet (sheet1) and then enter the data for each nest box and each trail into sheet2. Send to me (dick@theblaines.net) and I will review and forward to NestWatch.

<https://goo.gl/6eQA9f> or

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B8OLjlvu4wKIZm5NcDhHUFNKX2s>

Special thanks to those of you who made donations to CBRP this year - see the donor list elsewhere in this issue. Donations barely cover the cost of printing and mailing this newsletter. I am reluctant to ask for dues and prefer to encourage donations. If donations decline from present levels I will revert to on-line newsletters only. Following your name on the mailing label for this issue of *Bluebirds Fly!* are two strings of digits. The first is the date of your most recent contribution in the form yyymm and the second is the 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 from the contact list after three years with no activity.

If you receive this issue by mail but do not receive any e-mail notification or my infrequent email announcements, I do not have your email address. I would appreciate it if you would sent it to me.

Many thanks for participating in the California Bluebird Recovery Program.

Dick Blaine - dick@theblaines.net

**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>

sdbluebirds@cox.net

<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.

**Welcome Michelle Unger, County Coordinator for San Francisco
AN INTERVIEW**

By Georgette Howington

July 14, 2019

When Michelle drove all the way from San Francisco to meet me while I was staging an exhibit at The Beaver Festival in Martinez, I knew immediately she is an extraordinary young woman. Her radiant, contagious smile; clear, determined eyes and exuberant energy are reflections of passion she has for life and for Nature. Since she grew up in a small town in Indiana, I could only wonder how she ended-up trailblazing at the Presidio!

How did you learn about the nest box program?

I work in financial service technology, but my passion is wildlife. I've volunteered at the Smithsonian National Zoo, a wildlife rehabilitation center, and a research facility for wolves. After moving to San Francisco, I Googled "cool animal volunteering", which led me to the amazing world of birds. I volunteer with the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory to band birds, help the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory on day projects like installing artificial nest boxes for Burrowing Owls and surveying Least Terns, and now I'm starting a nest box trail in San Francisco.



Michelle and Georgette

What brought you to Golden Gate Audubon?

After learning how to be a nest box monitor through the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's (SCVAS) fantastic mentoring program, I reached out to the Golden Gate Audubon Society (GGAS) about setting up trails in San Francisco, which currently has none. GGAS put me in touch with the Presidio Trust and a few other organizations that might be interested in nest boxes. Everyone has been extremely helpful in getting this program launched.

What made you decide to revamp the Barn Owl and Passerine nest box trail at the Presidio?

This nest box trail will help me give back to nature and help the bird population close to home. I get so much enjoyment from hiking and watching wildlife, I want to make it easier for them to live in cities. As the human population grows, we have to find ways to make room for nature. The Presidio attracts many visitors so I'm also hoping my

nest box trail will provide opportunities to talk about what I'm doing and how every person can promote wildlife where they are.

What's happening with the trail at the Presidio?

Mike Azevedo met with me to identify sites for nest boxes. **Lee Pauser** said, "The Presidio reeks with opportunity." There's some really good habitat that should support a variety of cavity-nesters.

Mike put me in touch with **Lee Pauser and Steve Simmons**. Both have taken me out to show me their extensive nest box trails, and shared wisdom learned from 20+ years of nest boxing. Lee let me take over one of his trails for the season to mentor me on running the trail and collecting data.

I'm going to set up 3-5 test boxes in each location, then, add boxes where there is success. We're going to focus on hanging boxes since putting in posts requires additional permitting throughout most of the Presidio.

I've already applied for a Research Permit and Jonathan (Wildlife Ecologist for the Presidio) will submit the rest of the paperwork needed.

We also assessed the condition of the present Barn Owl boxes. Some require moving to new locations, adding plates to make the entry holes smaller and all boxes, and both Owl and Passerines need to be cleaned.

Note: Michelle hopes to start an educational program for families and children at the Presidio in the future. If you would like to contact Michelle regarding her trail at the Presidio or want to start your own trail in San Francisco, you can contact her at: ungering@gmail.com

For many years I've had a nestbox in my backyard liquidambar tree. I really haven't been expecting a nesting pair because I'm not located near a cemetery, school or golf course with a large expanse of grass/. Nevertheless, this year, a pair moved in and presently are on their second brood. Trying to encourage these Bluebirds to return next year, I purchased a large number of mealworms of varying sizes so that they would last the entire season. Every day at 5 PM I feed them a fairly decent quantity of mealworms and they greet me with exciting flight patterns. It wasn't long before a pair of Phoebe's discovered the food trough and began raiding the mealworms set out for the Bluebirds. And while the Bluebirds are no match for the flight skills of the Phoebes, there is plenty for all.

Having the Bluebirds in my backyard has allowed me to even better observe the dynamics of a Bluebird family and to simply learn more about the Bluebird. They have brought me great joy.

Don Baldwin

These watercolors are a record of an amazing journey I had with Western Bluebirds that nested in a bluebird box I placed under the eave of our side porch just outside of our kitchen window in urban El Cerrito, just north of Berkeley. I placed the box in February, 2016, after sighting Western Bluebirds on the telephone wires in front of our house. Two years later, on April 1, 2018, my husband and I looked out the kitchen window and saw a pair of bluebirds bringing nesting material to the box. I was unable to get guidance from other local birding organizations, but I had the good fortune of happening upon the California Bluebird Recovery Program website. I contacted **Georgette Howington**, whose guidance and friendship enhanced this journey immensely. We were also fortunate to have a neighbor who was committed to this journey and provided a large water dish, took photos, and shared observations from his viewpoint (and, like us, maintained "weeds" to support a thriving insect population).



For the next 12 weeks (yes, there were two broods!), I had the joy of witnessing day in and out the nesting habits of these beautiful birds, who were about five feet away outside the kitchen window, and decided to document this wonderful experience with a series of watercolors. On May 18, 2018, I looked out the kitchen window as the first young bird fledged. I had been quite watchful all day as their loud fledgling calls had attracted some larger birds, including crows. So, crouched down in our driveway for more than 90 minutes (except for a few times to wave off crows), I witnessed all four nestlings fledge from the box and soon join the adult birds, who were waiting in the neighbor's plum tree. I even managed to capture with my iPhone a video record of the last fledgling leaving the box.

Then, just two days later, a second male bluebird, who had aggressively, but unsuccessfully tried to take ownership of the box on April 2nd (the second day of nest building by the first pair), began making a new nest with his mate. This second brood fledged on July 5th, all with-

in a half hour while I was out in the garage and unfortunately missed the event. There were three in this second brood, with one unhatched egg left behind. I truly could not have navigated through this experience without the advice, support, and friendship of **Georgette Howington** of CBRP. It is such a special bond to have shared this experience with her.

Since July, 2018, we have seen a flock of five bluebirds on occasion. Of very special note was late in the fall of 2018, one foggy Sunday morning I opened the front door to get the newspaper and saw three bluebirds up on the telephone line in front of the house. One flew down and fluttered in front of the screen door, hovering right before me almost like a hummingbird, flew back up to the wire and then flew back down again and fluttered again, not assertive or appearing territorial, almost as though it was simply curious.

This year (2019) we have seen a male and female a few times up on the telephone wires in front of the house, but this spring there have been much fewer bluebird sightings in the neighborhood and our box is sadly unoccupied. Another established nesting box about a mile away also appears to not be inhabited. We wonder if this is simply a response to different weather patterns this year affecting their food sources, and we remain hopeful that we will have a brood again sometime in our urban nesting box.

I was born and raised in Oakland, California, and from the time I could hold a pencil, my love of nature expressed itself by creating imagery of the natural world around me. As a teenager and in my freshman year of college, I studied at what was then called The California College of Arts and Crafts. I then attended the University of California, Berkeley, and graduated with a bachelors degree in Art. My art work as an undergraduate was primarily figurative, with Joan Brown as my faculty advisor. After receiving an MS in Occupational Therapy I worked in health care physical rehab settings. In 2006 my career took another turn as I began experimenting with textiles. My felted art wraps were exhibited and sold in artwear shows/sales in San Francisco galleries, at the yearly Artwear at the deYoung Museum show, as well as boutique venues.

The past few years I have come home to my passion of drawing and watercoloring. My inspiration and imagery come from wildlife -- birds, mammals, botanicals -- as well as many of the animal companions that have graced my life and the lives of friends. A selection of Giclée prints of some of these bluebird watercolors are available at Abrams Claghorn Gallery, at 1251 Solano Ave., Albany, CA 94706 (gallery@abramsclaghorn.com, <https://abramsclaghorn.com>). I can be contacted at mlpetch@icloud.com.

Thank you **Dick Blaine** for your invitation and opportunity to share this story and my watercolor images.

Marilyn Petch

A clutch of six chicks was due to fledge and the parents were looking at the hole and flying near it appearing to try to coax the chicks out. For two days no chicks were seen at the holes. Finally one or more chicks peered out the hole on and off. I began to think maybe one or more was tangled with something so I made plans to take the box down, place it in an open clear trash bag arranged so it provided about a 12" high 'container' where the escaping chicks would be contained within the soft walls. When I arrived with this gear chicks were already out but two were on the ground along a chain link fence and some bushes. Parents were watching them. Why weren't they in the trees? I left them alone to give them time to solve their problem. In the afternoon they were still on the ground so my husband came to help me catch them. One was easy to get. It was very dirty so I took it home to clean up. It could not fly because the caked feathers were not functioning. After a call to a songbird rehabber it was suggested to wash the chicks with baby shampoo or 7th Generation dish soap. I only had Dawn detergent which was stronger than needed for this purpose but could be used. I washed the chick using a pan of soapy water. It was difficult to wash such a mess out of the feathers and keep the head out of the water. After the chick was rinsed and dried on Low with a hair dryer we went back to try and get the other chick out of the bushes. It appeared to me the parents watched the bushes intently but never tried to get in to the chick. I decided I was going in and get it no matter what it took. Took a step into the edge of the shrub and out popped the chick right near my foot! He scrambled as best he could to keep out of my reach but my husband blocked him and I got him. He was covered in poop also. I called the rehabber for permission to bring him to her since I was not comfortable with my washing procedure. Permission granted I took both chicks to her and she washed the second one using running warm water from her kitchen faucet and puddles of baby shampoo and 7th generation soap nearby on the counter in which to dip her fingers. She made it look easy but it was not quickly done. After the bird was dried with the hair dryer she weighed each chick. Their weights were only 18 grams and 22 grams, very low indeed.

I took the chicks home and fed them mealworms that evening and the next morning. Then I took them in their nest of tissues within a large cottage cheese container back to their home territory. Mom and Dad were still there. The container was set on the ground and the lid replaced with Plexiglas so they could get their bearings. They were eager to get out so in 2-3 minutes the Plexiglas was removed and they flew into two of the nearby trees as their parents watched.

Why were they in such poor condition?. Examining the nest revealed many Carrotwood seeds from the Carrotwood tree that was about 20 feet from the pine tree where their box hung. This fruit made their poop difficult to remove from the nest of six chicks and does not provide adequate nutrition.

Knowing their condition I have been taking mealworms to the parents a couple times a day so the chicks get better food and gain weight. Sadly I have never been able to get a clear view of the chicks to count how many survived. The parents are very good at protecting them from the clever resident hawk, crows and me. **Sue Bulger**

A pair of White breasted Nuthatches took up residence in a box outside of my kitchen window. This is the earliest I have ever had residents and the first time for WBNH in years.
Dick Blaine



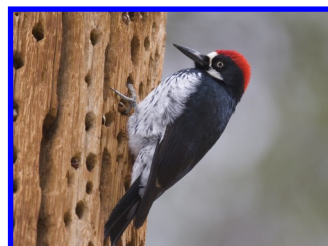
Over the years I've had Acorn Woodpeckers use my bluebird nest boxes as a granary by storing acorns in the box without having the ability to retrieve them given the size of the box's entry hole. However, there is a new record for the number of acorns stored in a nest box--in this case it is a Barn Owl nest box. As the photos show, the acorns are piled from a thin layer in the box's entry to an estimated depth of 10 inches at the back of the box. Given the dimensions of the box, I estimate there could be 1000 cubic inches of acorns. Unfortunately I haven't been able to find a cubic inch to number of acorns calculator.

I wanted to answer the question of how many acorns could be in the box, and a friend told me where I could easily pick up Coast Live Oak acorns. (There are 3 varieties of oak trees at/near the Barn Owl box site--Coast Live Oak, Blue Oak, and Valley Oak.)

1. I filled a 1/2 gallon container with 445 acorns
2. Calculated that space inside the 1/2 gallon container is 109 cubic inches
3. That meant 4.08 (small) acorns per cubic inch and 1,000 cubic inches can contain 4,080 acorns.

I think Acorn Woodpeckers from all over the county have heard of this new granary, and have contributed. Acorns are even jammed into the drain holes on the bottom of the box. Note the obvious holes bored thru the end of the box, though there are more elsewhere. After seeing this, I decided to put a hole reducer on the box to keep Barn Owls out, and resign myself to allowing the Acorn Woodpeckers use it as a granary. The fact that the box is hard to get to helped me arrive to this decision.

Lee Pauser



**Donations in 1H 2019 - \$1330
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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.

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County Bluebird Coordinators Meeting

Please send correspondence to CBRP
22284 N. De Anza Circle Cupertino, CA 95014

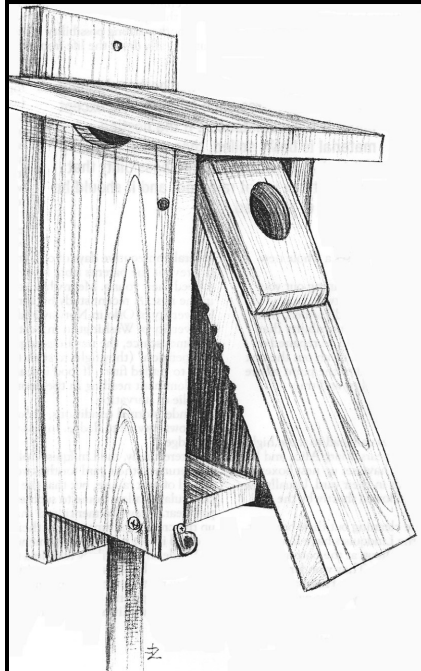
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